



KARGAR, DARIUSH

KARGAR, DARIUSH (Dāriuš Kārgar, b. [Hamadān](#), 7 January 1953; d. Uppsala, Sweden, 2 November 2012), Iranist, fiction writer, and journalist ([FIGURE 1](#)).

LIFE

Dariush Kargar was the second of the five children of Yaḥyā Kārgar Zarrin-qalam and Ḳadijeh Ḳorāsāni. His father was a high school teacher, who also taught painting and music at his own studio in Hamadān. He was enrolled at the [Alliance](#) Primary School in 1959 and continued his high school education at the Amir Kabir and 'Alavi high schools in Hamadan; he received his diploma in 1971. During his turbulent life in Iran, Kargar earned a living as a teacher, typesetter, bookbinder, and peddler, but it was writing that shaped all aspects of his life. He published his first short story collection, *Tardid dar se fe'l* (Hesitation in three verbs), in 1976 (see below) and joined the Iranian Writers' Association in 1977. He married Geiti Rāji in 1976. Their two children, Foruḡ and Mazdak were born in Hamadan in 1978 and 1979, respectively.

Kargar joined Sāzmān-e čerikhā-ye fedā'i-e kalq-e Irān (see [Communism iii. In Persia After 1953](#)) in 1978. After the organization split in June 1980 into two factions of 'majority' (*aktariyat*), who abided by the Tudeh Party and its policies, and 'minority' (*aqalliyat*), who retained the original militant policy of the organization in challenging the Islamic government, he stayed with the *aqalliyat*.

With the upsurge in the suppression of political movements in the 1980s,



Kargar, like many members of the opposition, was forced to leave Iran. He fled to Turkey in 1983, before ultimately settling in Sweden in 1984. Kargar continued his political life in Sweden, and after several further partitioning of the organization in 1986, 1987, and 1988, chose to stay with the ‘Core of minority’ (Hasta-ye aqalliyat) in 1988. Within a year, however, he left the newly formed faction and political life forever. He joined the Iranian Writers’ Association in Exile in 1985 and the Swedish PEN in 1995.

Following some introductory courses in Swedish, and a two-year education in techniques of printmaking as a fine art at Stockholm Graphic School, he enrolled at Uppsala University, and received his PhD in Iranian studies in 2010. He worked as a part-time lecturer at the Department of Linguistics and Philology of Uppsala University in 2002 and 2010 and as a full-time researcher on a grant from the Swedish Research Council (2011-2012). Kargar is buried in the cemetery in Uppsala, Sweden (FIGURE 2).

WORKS

Fiction. In his early works of fiction, Kargar primarily remains within the confines of social realism, depicting the torments of living in poverty in an unjust society, shaped by a restrictive political climate that denies its citizens freedom and dignity and hampers their potential for growth, as well as the Iran-Iraq War and the entanglement of life in exile.

The short story collections he published in these years in Iran, in addition to *Tardid dar se fe’l*, include *Tir-andāz* (Shooter, Tehran, 1978), *Ḳasta ammā rahrow* (Tired, but wayfarer, Tehran, 1979), *Inak vaṭān tab’idgāh* (Now the homeland as exile, 1980), *Mā ṣabr mikonim* (Tehran, 1980), and *Zendāni* (Tehran, 1981). He also published a book on the ceramics industry, entitled *Sofālgari* (Tehran, 1981), for young adults.

Kargar’s literary debut in exile was marked by the publication of two short story collections, *Sangsār* (Stoning to death, Sweden, 1988) and *Āvāz-e nān* (The song of bread, Sweden, 1989). “*Zoḡāl*” (Coal), one of the short stories in *Āvāz-e nān*, revolves around the life of an impoverished family during the Iran-Iraq War. The father has no job and is left alone with a six-year-old son, while his two older sons are away fighting on the front lines. The tragic death of the six-year-old boy at the end of the story, mirroring the ever-presence of death in the war fields, also highlights the dead ends of the life of the poor in class-based societies. The story is told from the perspective of an omniscient



narrator, has a linear plot and the characters are confined within the pre-cast molds long identified with social realism (Sheyda, 2013, pp. 43-44).

Kargar's later works of fiction, written in Sweden, participate in the more modern spectrum of writing in the twentieth century and are characterized by his experimentations with disrupted chronology, non-linear plots, and interrupted language reminiscent of stream of consciousness. The fictional characters often represent a generation of young Iranians who dreamt of and fought for a better world, only to realize that they have been betrayed—a generation whose lives are marked by indelible prints of deluded hopes and a deep sense of loss and despair (Sheyda, 2013, pp. 45-46; Este'dādi-šād, 2013, p. 20).

The novel *Pāyān-e yek 'omr* (The end of a life, Sweden, 1994; [FIGURE 3](#)) is the story of a journey into the depth of night, a journey that seems to have no end. The narrator, a young man, is riding a horse towards the Iranian-Turkish border, experiencing his last minutes in his homeland. During these brief minutes he takes a long internal journey and reconstructs the scenes of a bygone past, dimly colored memories of his childhood, his falling in love with his wife, his brother's execution in a prison of the Islamic Republic, his saying farewell to his wife and her tears, tyranny and repression, and the innocence of the rebels from his generation (Ḥesām, pp. 31; Sheyda, 2004, pp. 117-18; Tiregol, pp. 432-35).

Mention should also be made of *Bāḡ, bāḡ, bāḡ-e mā* (Garden, garden, our garden, 1998), his second novel published in Sweden, as well as his last two short story collections, *'Arus-e daryā'i* (Jellyfish, Sweden, 1996), and *Tu-ye in kāfe-ye šoluḡ* (In this crowded café, Sweden, 2002), in which narrative techniques, sentence patterns, and abandonment of linear plots are more or less influenced by the modernist trends of fiction writing.

Iranian studies. Kargar's most important work in the field of Iranian studies is his doctoral dissertation, *Ardāy-Virāf Nāma, Iranian Conceptions of the Other World* (see [Ardā Wīrāz](#); [FIGURE 5](#)). The work is a critical edition of the Zoroastrian Middle Persian prose version of *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag*, which chronicles the extra-terrestrial soul journey of Ardā Wīrāz; it includes an introduction and sixty episodes. The edition is accompanied by an English translation, a detailed description of the history of the different versions of the book, a discussion of the Other World in other Iranian works, and an appendix about one of the personages in *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag*, named Dawānus.



The critical edition of the text is based on six manuscripts, among which the [T.30] manuscript (896 A.Y./1527 A.D.), belonging to Dastur Meherji Rana Library in Navsari, is used as the main source. According to Kargar, this manuscript is the oldest preserved prose version of *Ardā Wirāz Nāmāg* in Zoroastrian Persian at our disposal. Comparing the Zoroastrian Persian and Parsig versions of the book, Kargar concludes that the Zoroastrian Persian version is the most ancient version of this work and is based on an originally pre-Zoroastrian narrative (Kargar, 2009, p. 196).

In 1991 Kargar founded the literary journal *Afsāne* in Sweden (FIGURE 4), of which eleven issues were published until 1994. He contributed many short stories and articles to literary and academic journals, published in Iran and abroad, including *Āftāb*, *Āraš*, *Baran*, *Češmandāz*, *Iran Nameh*, *Iranshenasi*, *Kabud*, *Makt*, *Mehregān*, *Nāme-ye Bahārestān*, *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān*, *Orientalia Suecana*, *Páž*, and *Sang*.

Kargar also contributed to the *Encyclopædia Iranica* (1989-present; online edition, www.iranicaonline.org). His entries are: *Irānšahri* (vol. XIII, New York, 2006, pp. 539-40), *Jame' al-ḥekāyāt* (XIV, New York, 2008, pp. 459-61), *Jawāme' al-ḥekāyāt* (XIV, pp. 611-14), and *Dawānus* (online edition).

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Short story collections:



Tardid dar se fe'l, Tehran, 1976.

Tirandāz, Tehran, 1978.

Kasta, ammā rahrow, Tehran, 1979.

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