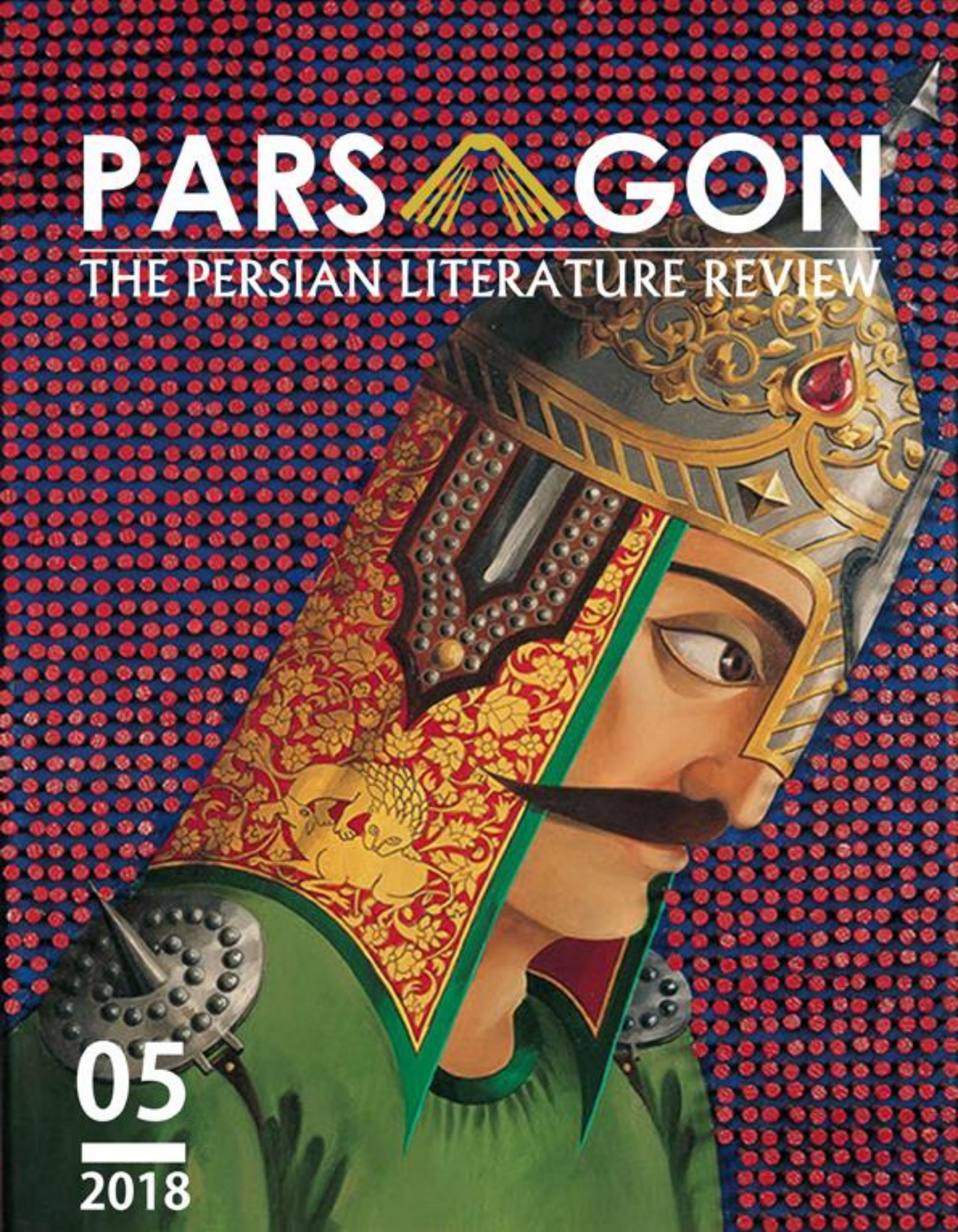


# PARS GON

THE PERSIAN LITERATURE REVIEW

05

2018





Founded in November 2013, Parsagon attempts to present a vista of the latest achievements of Persian literati and artists/writers of Iranian origin, and to serve as an authentic archive of books coming from Iran. The team's activities are diverse:

- **Translation and localization** of literary texts,
- **Editing and consulting** services to Iranian writers whose work are found apt for translation,
- **Promotion** of Persian/Iranian literature and culture in the English-speaking world,
- Completion of an **online database** of contemporary Iranian/Persian literary and cultural figures.

**PARSAGON** is an Iran-based private, non-partisan, and non-political project. If you are interested in our activities, do not hesitate to contact us.

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Parsagon welcomes submissions of original and translated poetry, fiction, nonfiction and drama coming from Iran; reviews of Persian books or translations of books on/from Iran; original essays on contemporary Iranian literature and arts; and suggestions for author profiles, literary awards, or related events. Do not hesitate to contact us if

- ↗ you know any writer or literary figure of Iranian background (as well as literati from other Persian-speaking regions and countries);
- ↗ you are or know a translator who has recently rendered/published a Persian text to English;
- ↗ you want to embark on a translation or research on Iranian literature and seek further sources or help on a writer indexed in Parsagon;
- ↗ you have written a review or criticism of a Persian book and would like to publish it on Parsagon or have it linked under the book title;
- ↗ you have written an original piece (fiction or nonfiction) in English that you think is related to or interesting for Parsagon.

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### **ESSAYS & BOOK REVIEWS**

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### **VOLUNTEER TRANSLATORS**

We always welcome enthusiastic volunteer contributors who like to dedicate their time to the promotion of Persian literature and arts.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

- ↗ All submissions should be sent as one Microsoft Word attachment (as a .doc file, please) to [parsagon.review@gmail.com](mailto:parsagon.review@gmail.com). The Microsoft Word attachments must be labeled with the last names of the author and translator: `authortranslator.doc`.
- ↗ Your submission must include the original work in .doc or .pdf format along with a statement granting us permission to publish both the original work and the translation online, as well as declaring that you are in a position to grant us such rights.
- ↗ Translations submitted for the print issue must not have been previously published.
- ↗ Submissions for Parsagon must not be previously published online, but printed materials with no online references are permitted.
- ↗ Simultaneous submissions are permitted, but we ask in return that you notify us by email as soon as you learn of an acceptance elsewhere.
- ↗ We try to respond to each submission within one to three months. Please query after three months if you have not heard back from us, and would like to know the status of your submission.
- ↗ Our finances do not permit us to pay contributors at this time. Apologies.

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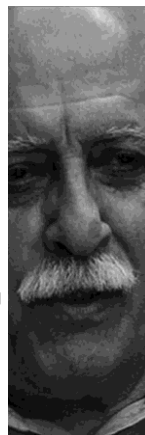
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Summer 2018 witnessed the death of some of the best Iranologists across the world.

On 6 August 2018 Dr Leonard Lewisohn passed away at age 65. He was an American author, translator and lecturer at the University of Exeter in the area of Islamic Studies and Sufi literature. He studied Persian literature and Iranian religion and history at the Pahlavi University, Shiraz, and wrote a PhD thesis at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London on the Divan of Maghribi. Lewisohn was also the editor of the annual *Mawlana Rumi Review*. He has published tens of books on Sufism, Attar, Hafez, and Jalal al-Din Rumi.

Professor Ehsan Yarshater, a towering figure in the field of Iranology also passed away this summer, on 1 September 2018 at age 98. A Hamadan-born historian, linguist and Iranologist, Yarshater was best remembered with his ambitious project *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Yarshater was a pioneer of Iranian studies at the U.S. among his Iranian peers who also edited the 16-volume *History of Persian Literature* and was granted notable awards such as a UNESCO award (1959) and he Giorgio Levi Della Vida Medal for Achievement in Islamic Studies from UCLA (1991).

A few days after the demise of Yarshater (aged 98), Dr Gilbert Lazard, eminent French linguist and Iranologist passed away (also aged 98). His works include the study of various Iranian languages, translations of classical Persian poetry, and research on linguistic typology, notably on morphosyntactic alignment.

Dr Heshmat Moayyad was another influential scholar who passed away on June 25 at the age of 90. Moayyad was the founder of the Persian program at University of Chicago and had been teaching Persian literature, especially the Sufi tradition of poetry for about four decades. In an obituary written on the death of his 'mentor,' Dr Franklin Lewis, Associate Professor of Persian Language and Literature at the University of Chicago, praised him for his "abiding interest in mysticism, in works that showed us about daily life in pre-modern Iran, in the classic Romances ..., in works of humor, and everyday letters, not to mention in modern fiction."

Iranian studies still suffers from the Orientalist Effect, and only a particular portion of contemporary Iranian fiction had a way into the Western academia. Let us hope that the younger generation of Western scholars also embrace Persian literature of the present along with their passion for the past.

The year 2018 also witnessed the loss of another significant writer whose books had an undeniable impact on generations of Iranian youth before and after the 1979 Revolution: Dariush Shayegan. A complete profile of him is included in the present volume.

Since Parsagon's mission is by no means limited to be an obituary of the dead, our fifth volume is devoted to the presentation of living eminent Iranian scholar Ahmad Samiee Guilani (the 99 year-old editor and translator), and two outstanding octogenarians: linguist and intellectual Dariush Ashouri and the amicable artist Ali-Akbar Sadeghi. You will also read five rare poems by the painter that were written at a time of severe depression when he could not produce anything visual. With Mehrnaz Shirazi-Adl's story of a young woman, you will take a journey to the core of tradition and feminine identity. To breathe more in the air of contemporary cultural arena of Iran, Parsagon's exclusive interview with the founder of Angah archival magazine and the newly founded Abolhassan Najafi Translation Award are included in the 2018 volume. Hope that you will enjoy the journey and do not hesitate to share your ideas and suggestions with us.

Farzaneh Doosti  
Editor-in-Chief



## Birth of Bahram: a memorial

**On January 8,** 1936, Bahram Sadeqi (Sadeghi) was born in Najaf-Abad. Son of an illiterate man who was in love with books and stories, Bahram soon migrated to Isfahan together with his family in order for his sister (Iran Sadeqi) to pursue her studies – in a time when many Iranian girls were denied proper education.

Bahram started writing at an early age (he published his first story at age 20 and his masterpiece five years later) and although he had become a physician (in an interview he had mentioned his fascination with Russian Literature and especially Chekhov – had he modeled on him or probably a coincidence?), he never took his job seriously. He had a deep sense of humor that is seen in almost all his short stories.

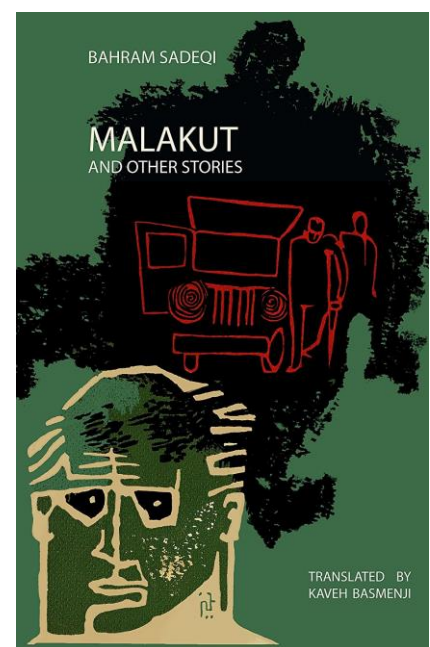
Sadeqi is a purple patch to the body of contemporary Persian literature, but not in a derogatory sense. He was an avid reader of western literature and wrote his favorites in original English, French and Arabic. Graham Greene was his favorite English writer and Detective Literature his eternal fancy as he admired the mastery of suspense in such works. That is why Sadeqi is seen so detached from the literary arena of Iranian literature, and probably why he had very few literary friends as he did not read the works of his peers and looked down on the types of literature written by his contemporaries.

His short stories are about the absurdity and uselessness of urban life. Spiced up with a peerless sense of humor and wit, his stories were avant-garde in form and structure. While a critic has regarded his only published novel *Malakut* as an early practice in Magic Realism, some others have compared it to Sadeq Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* in terms of significance.

*The Trench and Empty Canteens*, his only collection of short stories was published in the 1950s, and that is all one can find in the resume of a bright star that twinkled and faded away. He was never given proper literary attention; this, however, cannot understate his fine craft.

He passed away of heart attack in 1984 in Tehran.

Fortunately *Malakut and Other Stories* by Bahram Sadeghi is available in English with Kaveh Basmenji's translation and a foreword by Ehsan Yarshater (Ibex Pub, Modern Persian Literature Series, 2012 – ISBN: 978-1588140845).





# Dariush Shayegan

**Author of Cultural Schizophrenia Passes Away**



**Photo: Amir Gholami/IBNA**

Iranian thinker and cultural theorist Dariush Shayegan passed away (March 22) at Firouzgar Hospital of Tehran after two months in a coma.

Born in 1935, Shayegan studied at Sorbonne University in Paris and taught Sanskrit and Indian Religions at the University of Tehran. He was also a writer, poet, and translator. His novel *Land of Mirage* received the French ADELFF Award in 2004. An influential comparatist figure in intercultural dialogue, Shayegan contemplated over a wide range of subjects and areas from Avesta to the Quran, from Allameh Tabatabaei's mystic thought to Henry Corbin and Louis Massignon's view of Eastern arts, from Behzad's miniature paintings to Picasso's worldview.

According to Mousavi Bojnurdi, Editor-in-Chief of the Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia, Shayegan elevated Iranian intellectualism and granted it a global stance and credit. He believed in "the marriage of horizons" through "the magic lantern" of words. Although better known among the Francophones, Shayegan served Iranian intellectualism by his writings on Indian Studies and



the cultural exchanges between the two historical civilizations of Iran and India, hence holding a remarkable position in the chain of thought starting with Abu-Reyhan Birouni and flourishing in modern times with figures such as Dr. Fathollah Mojtabaei.

Shayegan severely questioned passive submission to Western thought as a dominant tendency among Iranian intellectuals whose ethnic memories were fading away. As Abdollah Nasr puts it,

According to Shayegan, we suffer from a double delusion, because on the one hand we presume that the nature of western thought is known to us and we can selectively take those elements of their culture that is more adaptable to our cultural heritage, and on the other hand we reckon that we can preserve our cultural identity, whereas in reality our ethnic memory cannot resist the western thought. We are both alienated from ourselves as well as westoxicated.

His “Asia vis-à-vis the West” is, therefore, his most controversial book. While for some, it was a call for return to the eastern self and resistance, for his critics it was the reinforcement of fundamentalist discourses of tradition and opposition to modern thought.

An inevitable result of the Iranian modernity, Shayegan discussed, is “cultural schizophrenia”. We are simultaneously living in two disproportionate worlds. Because, he argues, we have enthusiastically received the western value system without being able to learn about the epistemological pattern that has shaped it.

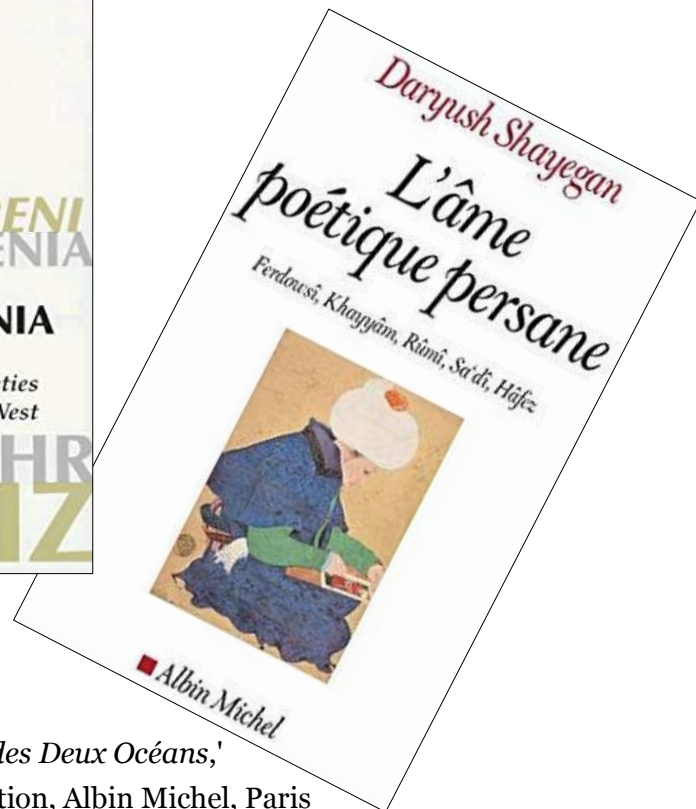
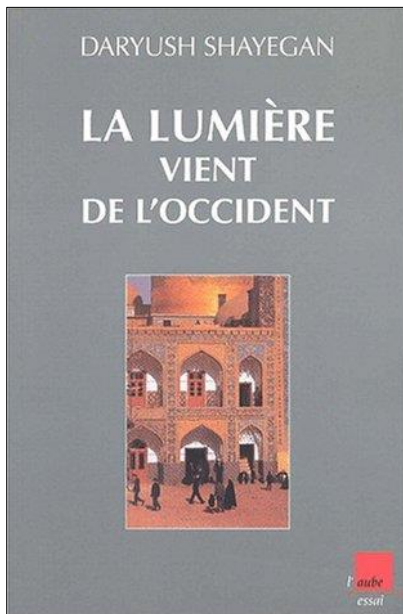
In his recent book “Five Regions of Presence,” Shayegan dealt with the Iranian *poeticism* as a phenomenon that affects the Iranian system of thought in the works of five eminent poets, namely Ferdowsi, Khayyam, Jalaaleddin Rumi, Sa'di, and Hafez, which, according to some critics, has proven to be a failed attempt.

His best-known publications include:

- ♥ *Asia vis-a-vis the West* (آسیا در برابر غرب)
- ♥ *Indian Religions and Philosophical Schools*, 2 vol. (ادیان و مکتب‌های فلسفی هند)
- ♥ *Five Regions of Presence* (پنج اقلیم حضور)
- ♥ *In Search of Lost Spaces* (در جستجوی فضاهاى گمشده)
- ♥ *Marriage of Horizons* (آمیزش افق‌ها)
- ♥ *The Magic Lantern of Time* (فانوس جادویی زمان)
- ♥ *Mythological Insight* (بینش اساطیری)
- ♥ *Mental Idols and Eternal Memory* (بت‌های ذهنی و خاطره ازل)

as well as a recent essay on the impact of Charles Baudelaire on the Western mind.





### Selected French Publications

- ♥ *Hindouisme et Soufisme, une lecture du 'Confluent des Deux Océans,'*

  - Éditions de la Différence, Paris 1979, 2nd edition, Albin Michel, Paris
- ♥ *Qu'est-ce qu'une révolution religieuse?*

  - Presses d'aujourd'hui, Paris 1982, deuxième édition, Bibliothèque Albin Michel des idées, Paris, 1991.
- ♥ *Le regard mutilé, Schizophrénie culturelle: pays traditionnels face à la modernité,* Albin

  - English Translation: *Cultural Schizophrenia, Islamic Societies Confronting the West*, Translated from the French by John Howe, Saqi books, London 1992. Also published by Syracuse University Press, 1997.
- ♥ *Henry Corbin, La topographie spirituelle de l'Islam iranien,*

  - Éditions de la Différence, Paris, 1990
- ♥ *Les illusions de l'identité,* Éditions du Félin, Paris, 1992
- ♥ *Sous les ciels du monde, Entretiens avec Ramin Jahanbegloo,* Éditions du Félin, 1992
- ♥ *Au-delà du miroir, Diversité culturelle et unité des valeurs,* Editions de l'Aube, 2004
- ♥ *La lumière vient de l'Occident, Le réenchancement du monde et la pensée nomade,* L'aube, essai. Paris, 2001, troisième édition, 2005, quatrième édition, essai poche, 2008
- ♥ *Terre de mirages,* avec la collaboration de Maryam Askari, La collection Regards croisés, Éditions de l'Aube, Paris, 2004

## As Though Someone Is Laughing at Little Girls!

By Mehrnaz Shirazi-Adl



I told Rokhsareh-Sadat. Rokhsareh-Sadat who had come to beg forgiveness for the sake of Auntie Khatoon. I said to her, “My Agha-jan and the rest of the family, they know everything. They said so themselves. They came and they went; they decided for me without asking. Then they put me in an oversized dress that began to weep the instant it touched my body. Now that everything’s ended up



the way that I myself had said it would – after I yelled and ranted to make them understand – they’ve come back to me, wringing their hands and asking, “what should we do? What should we do? And they won’t give me a moment’s peace from their carping and complaining; oh, these Gogs and Magogs!”

Rokhsareh-Sadat glances out the window, asking: “What was that?” I don’t tell her that since dawn yesterday the sobs and wails of the neighbor’s wife have been ringing in my ears; her little girl seems to have melted into the ground ever since she found out that her father was going to marry her to a man twice his own age.

“Do you remember what a bratty little kid you were since those days?” says Rokhsareh-Sadat.

I remember.

I feel like it! I love to stand butt-naked in the middle of the stream and cool myself down to my soul. What do you care?!

Khatoon-Soltan comes to the edge of the veranda and lets out her piercing voice that shatters the tranquility of the neighborhood siesta, “Oh my God! Afsar-jan! The little brat is stark naked in the middle of the courtyard again, splashing water on herself!”

I used to hold the hose over my head and let every drip of the water, large and small, slide drop by drop down my burning body. I’d let out a scream and burst into laughter. Khatoon-Soltan would step into the courtyard. She’d run after me, and I’d run

away still clutching the hose in my hand. I’d get her soaked and flee into the alley. I, the daughter of Hajj Seyyed Sadegh, whose father, father’s father, grand and great grandfathers were all men of the turban, minbar, and mosque, would run bare-assed into the neighborhood and my old aunt, too flustered to cover her head, charging behind.

I laugh, I run, and I fly like the wind. The alleyway pavement is hot; it burns my feet. A flood of water gushes down into the street behind me. I run from the alleys into the back alleys, and the tall wave of water runs after me. Khatoon-Soltan glides on the water as though she’s riding the waves. Behind her is my mother, riding atop an even higher wave. The wave that carries my mother rises up, lifts Auntie Khatoon and sets her upon the roof of the home of Rokhsareh-Sadat, who sits there cracking seeds with her teeth. Then they both, from that great height, dive into the water. When Agha-jan, *sangak* bread in hand, steps into the path, a wave lifts him up and seats him beside mother. Hassan and Akbar and Sa’eed and little Fati, still at mother’s breast, run around mother and Agha-jan in circles, laughing and splashing the water. Akbar sprinkles a handful of water over Agha’s face. Water drops trickle down his long black beard onto his cloak; he smiles. Then, the neighbors too, one after another, they each catch a wave from the tops of their roofs and windows. Everything is perfect! Everyone is happy! When water has completely covered everything and swept all the alleyways clean, I too jump on top of a great wave. I throw out my hand and hold on



to the long mane of the wave with all my might.

A sudden pain shot through the back of my head, as though a thousand needles had been driven in at once. Khatoon-Soltan threw out a hand and yanked me off the back of the wave. She dragged me into the courtyard. Agha-jan, *sangak* bread in hand, was standing in the middle of the courtyard. Mother thrust Fati into Akbar's arms and came running down the veranda steps, clutching her chador in her hand. My arms began to burn and grew hot, here and there, anywhere her hand could reach. With her other hand, she enveloped my naked body in the folds of chador. Then she pushed me towards the cellar wishing me every unfortunate end. My height could still not reach the round brick holes near the cellar ceiling that looked out upon the courtyard. I could only hear Auntie Khatoon striking her chest, cursing me from the bottom of her heart.

The wind lashed the water of the pool, and the sound of it turned in my ears.

I fidgeted around in my seat. Why was Agha-jan taking so long? Ahmad's palms were wet with sweat as he took my hand, cold sweat. Everyone cheered loudly. His mother whispered into his ear to take off the bride's veil. Ahmad had beautiful hazel eyes, though. There was something in the depth of his gaze that he wouldn't let me read. As he was removing the veil, he turned his eyes away from me. Fati was standing by my side, holding the hem of my dress. I was leaving home that night, and I didn't know what she

would do without me. Agha-jan read our wedding contract himself. Someone else registered it officially though. As he went out the room, Agha put a hand to his beard. A tear could have fallen. Or maybe it was all my imagination, for I had never wanted to leave. When I were gone, they would all still have each other. Khatoon-Soltan was murmuring to Rokhsareh-Sadat in the corner of the room. What they were talking about and behind whose unfortunate back they were gossiping, I didn't know. The two of them were old anyway. They understood each other well. After mother's death, for a number of years now, Auntie Khatoon had had maternal domination over us. She said so herself. We never saw anything motherly from her though.

I turned to look into Ahmad's eyes. They said he wove silk in Isfahan. Now it seemed I had nobody but him. Isfahan wasn't that far away, after all. I'd be able to visit Agha-jan and the kids every few months. Who knew, maybe we could see each other more often if Ahmad was kind. Would he be kind? I turned back to look at him. I couldn't. He got up from my side and went into the men's section. Only the cold sweat of his palms remained in my hands.

From far away, the sound of someone laughing pours into my ears.

I stare at the lace curtains, impregnated beneath the afternoon sun. Their bellies fill and empty, and the shadow of tall and leafy trees of the courtyard fly over them. The cool breeze swirls inside the sleeping porch. I take

a look at Ahmad. He's put a scarf over his hair so as not to disturb his curls and has crumpled beside me on the mattress with closed eyes. I close my eyes and open them. The sound of the water in the stream cools me. I close my eyes again to see Ahmad opening his eyes. Now I can read the depth of his hazel eyes. He's saying I want you so much, it seems. The whites of his eyes are crimson red. The delicate veins are full of blood. In this cool air sweat boils from both our heads and faces. Ahmad touches my body with his burning hand. He cups my breast and slowly slides over me with his masculine body. I open my eyes and stare at the ceiling. Ahmad's snore swirls in my ears, and the sound of someone laughing from far away pours in them.

Fati said that the room was full of guests from end to end. "Don't be sad," I said, "I'm not leaving that soon." Poor Fati, all in a tizzy, rushed down the cellar stairs two at a time and said, "Sis, Auntie Khatoon wants you to come and bring tea for them." I laughed and said, "My little sister, I'm not the type to rush off and get married. Let the living room get full and empty. I've still got a trick or two up my sleeve to fool them with." I opened the jar of pickled garlic. I picked out a couple of the large ones and peeled them and tossed them into my mouth and kept chewing them as if they were bubblegum. I looked back. Poor Fati stared at me open-mouthed, wondering what I was up to. I grinned and went on to the gunnysack of charcoal dust. I dipped a finger in and then rubbed my blackened finger over my upper and lower teeth. Khatoon-Soltan had opened the window and was calling Fati.

Fati was nervous and unsure of what she should do. I said, "Sis, go tell them I'm coming." She smiled and ran out of the cellar. Then I put on my chador inside-out and followed her. Inside the room I did all I could to exchange smiles with the guests. Khatoon-Soltan, sitting in the corner of the room, turned as red as a beet. She kept glaring at me. When it was time for them to go, I hugged the groom's mother forcibly, asking her to her face how were her close and distant relatives?

The huge courtyard is paved with adobe bricks. It's become my routine now to fill the copper watering can three times a day from the round pool in the middle of the courtyard and water the yard from end to end; the trunks of the firs and sycamores, the flowerless geraniums in their flowerpots. Everything is scattered around in this house. No one talks to anyone. Sometimes I set out to go hop over every other brick and go back and forth. Some other times, on every other brick, I write down the names of the kids with a bit of charcoal, those of my sisters and brothers I mean and the relatives' kids and neighborhood playmates, and hop over the bricks sixteen times, counting up to my age. On each brick that I land, I add up the age of the kid whose name is written on the brick to mine and start to hop again. I jump around so much that I get tired and fall out of breath. Then I sprinkle water over the bricks again and wash them so they gleam, every day, again and again. Since the year that I arrived, I've given the bricks so much water that they are turning green. Ahmad doesn't see it, though. He does not even look to see. When

he comes back from the shop, he goes straight to his mother's room. He eats his dinner, spreads his bed, and goes to sleep right there.

I go to my room and can still hear the sound of someone laughing from far away until I fall asleep.

I couldn't go back. Agha-jan had forbidden it. My heart felt as thin as a sheet of paper, I missed him so much. I missed Hassan and Akbar and the others, too. The first and last time I went back home, I put both feet into one shoe saying I would never go back to Isfahan. Ahmad was there too, with his mother. I said in front of everyone that Ahmad still slept in his mother's room in the nights, and that his hand hadn't yet touched my body. Agha told me to hold my tongue, and Khatoon-Soltan whispered in my ear that God is with those who patiently persevere. They sent me back home.

Ahmad pours the cocoons into boiling water. With a long-necked paddle, he stirs the pot filled with boiling cocoons. The butterflies inside the cocoons are restless. Suddenly the pot fills with color. Thousands of butterflies fly out.

Rokhsareh-Sadat said that Khatoon-Soltan knew everything from the beginning. Well, not from the very beginning, but since the wedding. Even before that, it seems that she heard a thing or two from somewhere. On the day of the wedding, she pried words out of the groom's family. One of them who apparently harbored some kind of grudge let it slip out that the groom "had never been a man" from

the beginning. She has come with Sa'eed, Rokhsareh-Sadat. But he hasn't come in. I saw him from the window though. These last couple years he's grown into a man for himself. Rokhsareh-Sadat says the instant Khatoon-Soltan learned that I had rented a nested room in the bowels of Tehran, she sent her to me to beg my forgiveness. The old woman cannot walk anymore. She's confined to bed and spends her time whining. Fati and her husband take care of her now. I wanted to go see Fati, but she hasn't told her daughters that they have an aunt. Their aunt would be a disgrace to them. Rokhsareh-Sadat is sitting on the blanket and the glass of tea before her has turned as cold as the water in the pool. I want to get up to go and fetch her another tea. She doesn't let me. It's as though she cannot take it to drink the tea brewed by a woman like me. She says nothing though; only shifts her weight from one leg to the other so that she can leave. She's only waiting to hear one word from my mouth that I have forgiven my aunt, and then she can be gone. I don't let her go. Not until I inquire after every one of the kids and hear their news. Everyone knew that Khatoon-Soltan had no kids, nor did she have the patience for them. For what wise purpose fate gave her at old age the burden of playing mother to her brother's grown and half-grown orphaned children, only God knew. Rokhsareh-Sadat kept telling her this was God's reward for all her years of patience. She had spent a lifetime sitting at Mirza's feet and now, without saying a word, she's the mother of a throng of kids.

Now that Ahmad's mother is gone, I set out to come to Tehran any day; once on the bicycle



of the cotton-beater who passes behind the wall of the alley; another time, on the back of the china-mender's mule. Eventually, when the spring comes, I'll catch the butterflies. Just when they land upon a leaf or a branch under the sunlight, I'll creep forward, slow and silent, and grasp their soft wings with my two fingers. Not in a way that they get hurt or lose their wings. Then I'll release them all, one by one, into one of the empty rooms. When they turn into a swarm, I'll tie a thread to the end of each one of their tails and leave the room's door open so they fly away, all of them together. My feet too will rise off the ground with them and I will go out forever, out of the courtyard of the house whose door is always locked, and out of the Isfahan of which I saw nothing but Ahmad's house. I look at my fingertips and see that they are colorful, and the sound of laughter from far away turns in my ears again.

"I will not forgive," I say. The day that I came out of Ahmad's house with only a chador, the walls were all covered with black cloth. It was Moharram, apparently. Then why was someone laughing non-stop alley after alley? Agha-jan himself declared the contract null and void, and the butterflies kept circling above my head. Ahmad didn't say a word and placed my bride-price of a hundred Tomans into my palm. I returned to Tehran with Agha-jan on a bus. When I arrived in Tehran, I followed the trail of butterflies and lost my Agha-jan. I set out to go home. I didn't want to. I reached into my blouse and pulled out the hundred Tomans. I went and spent every

last one on silkworms. While they spun their cocoons, I stood over them like a mother until they turned into butterflies.

When I walk out Rokhsareh-Sadat and come back to the room, a butterfly spreads its wings and comes through the door into the room. It sits upon the closet's curtain. I leave the door open; perhaps when all the noise dies down, the little girl, the neighbor's daughter, will want to leave the closet of my room as she feels like it, fly away and go after her life. I'll take her hand, wherever she wants to go, whatever she wants to do.



- ✦ Written by Mehrnaz Shirazi-Adl
- ✦ From the short story collection *Perhaps That's the Only Way* (شاید تنها راهش همین باشد) – Qatreh Publications, 2016.
- ✦ Translated from Persian by Leili Adibfar
- ✦ Edited by Cameron Lindley Cross
- ✦ (c) Image: Yasaman Moussavi, *Window*, Cyanotype on paper, 11×5.8 Inch, 2013.

# Three Poems

By Hossein Nazari



*for hofy*

# I

you return home  
with a million little hopes  
with love  
with dreams  
with passion  
with memories bittersweet  
with loved ones left behind  
with lips that tremble  
and hands that wave and disappear  
and arms that hold you in tight embrace  
with loved ones wishing you a safe trip  
and praying to God to protect you  
amid the onlookers' puzzled gaze  
you disappear behind sliding doors  
and choke a million unsaid words  
you are heading away  
home

with a million hopes  
you return home  
to land  
to motherland  
to turf  
to other loves and arms and kisses  
to warmth  
to familiar faces  
to the smell of fresh baked bread  
to the smell of home  
only to find yourself  
incomplete  
fractured  
torn apart  
homeless.

# II

i carry  
dismembered memories  
in my suitcase  
fractured dreams  
in my skull  
i carry  
pains  
in my pockets  
scars  
on my back  
i carry  
a million shattered hopes  
in my backpack  
a million cries  
in my eyes  
i keep the smiles  
close to my heart.

i set off to the airport  
and murmur a prayer  
under my breath  
my luggage  
full of You  
and i think to myself  
if only they knew  
what i'm smuggling into their turf!

# III

of heartwarming welcomes  
and heartbreaking farewells  
of always-late arrivals  
and too-early departures  
of loved ones  
that fade away  
behind tears  
and sliding doors

where hearts grow fonder  
and distances reappear  
where fears deepen  
hopes shatter  
lips tremble  
kisses freeze  
and i curse  
all the return tickets  
that took everyone I ever loved  
away  
to unknown horizons  
beyond tears and sliding doors.

airports, bloody airports!

---

Hossein Nazari is a lecturer in English Language and Literature, and also a poet, translator, and researcher based in Tehran, Iran.

Artwork: from "La casa dell'emigrante" by Agim Sulaj

Sulaj is an Albanian painter born in 1960 in Albania.



# THE GAWKY SCHIZOID

Scrambling in drying concrete as her bed every night,  
Pray tell, what comes of a face that can never see the sea light?  
What of the skin insulated from the clumpy beach?  
A dream deferred is what fall narratives preach;  
A dream deterred that fails to stir a speck through a sieve,  
Bogged down, will it shut its eyes forever to grieve?  
Tied down, will it bury its deafened ears?  
As it can never hear the melody of waves?  
A melancholy as smooth as Schubert's notes;  
Aren't dreams a brittle fort of quicksand for dolts?  
The breeze that curdles in every nook?  
The melancholic words of just a favorite book?  
There I see the icy blizzard around the corner,  
Frosting the imagination until hell freezes over;  
It will embrace all the petty dreams,  
Yet there may be some peace in its chills.  
At a later date we will meet,  
Then so be it.

**A poem by Mona Jafari**

PhD candidate in English Language and Literature, University of  
Tehran

Image: detail from "Escape," painting by Iran Darroudi





## Ahmad Samiee Guilani [b. 1920]

Ahmad Samiee Guilani is an eminent writer, translator, and editor. He was born in February 1920 in Sangelaj neighborhood, Tehran. Having received elementary and secondary education in Rasht, he returned to Tehran and obtained his master's degree in Persian Language and Linguistics at the University of Tehran. Renowned as the Father of Editing in Iran, he started his career as a literary editor in late 1970s at Franklin Publishing Company. Samiee has a great command of three languages: Persian, English, and French. Besides his mastery over literary movements and schools, he is best known for his various literary and linguistic anthologies in Persian.

## Quotation

*Translating and editing are parts of literature. In fact, these are techniques to learn just like any other techniques - by way of practice and workshop activity rather than theory. Of course, like translation, acumen plays a key role in this. To edit a text, one should consider different editorial methods depending on its being authored or translated, scientific or literary, fiction or research, as well as its audience. In this technique, talent is equally significant. An editor should also be a critic and capable of diagnosing defects. An editor of a translated text should be a translator himself, and a good one indeed, so that he can skillfully overview both the source and target languages, and fully understand the many attempts the translator has made to come up with a final passage.*

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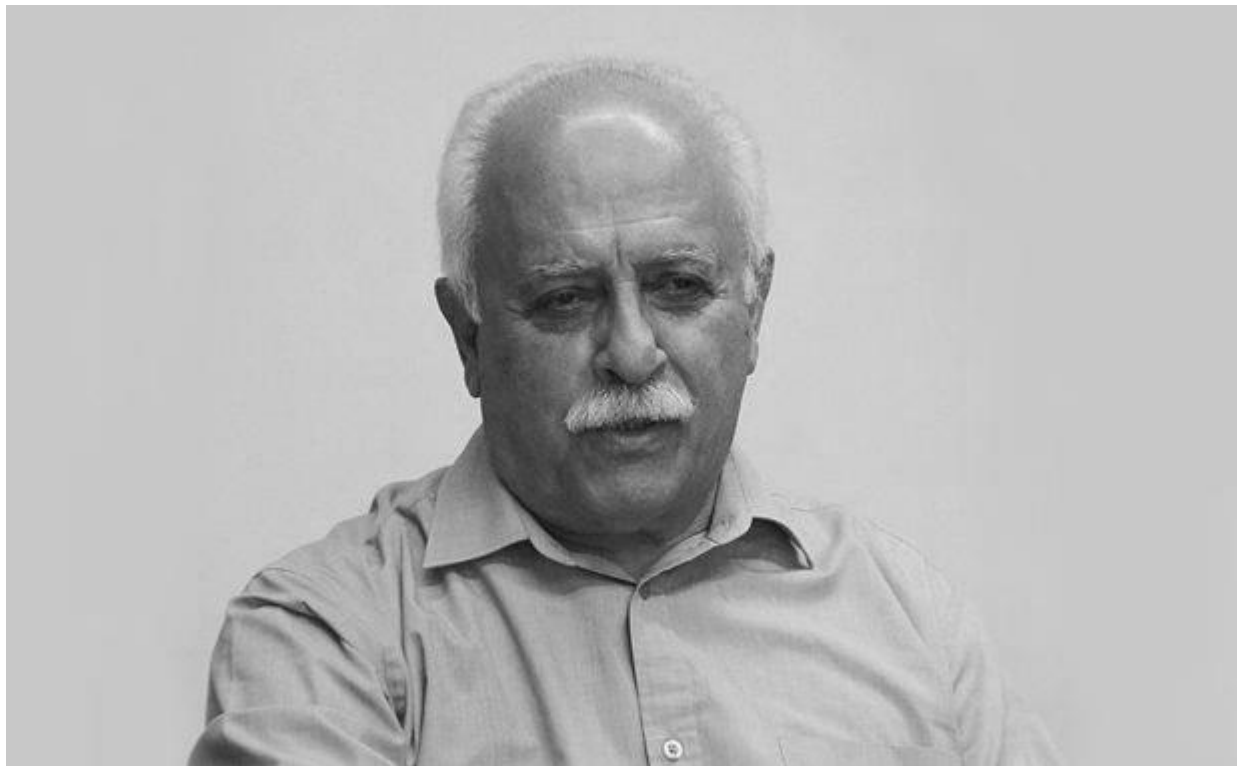
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## Dariush Ashouri [b. 1938]



❖ Farhad Taheri | Encyclopedist and researcher in contemporary history of Iran

Translated from Persian by Farzaneh Doosti

Dariush Ashouri (b. August 2, 1938, Tehran) is an eminent Iranian intellectual, linguist, translator, encyclopedist, sociocultural activist, and Hafezologist.

Ashouri was born in Saqakhaneh Nowruzkhaneh, an old district near the Central Bazaar of Tehran. He attended Khosravi and Razi elementary schools where he voraciously read books, from *Auntie Beetle* and *Forty Parrots* folktales to *Rostam Nameh* and *One Thousand and One Nights*. As his fascination with the world of fiction deepened, he gained intimate familiarity with the *Divan* of Hafez. The book stayed with him and grew roots for the rest of his life. Then he went to Alborz and Darolfonun high school and was awarded a diploma in literature in 1958. In the meantime, having read popular periodicals of the time such as *Ettelaat* newspaper, *Saba* magazine, *Khandaniha*, *Mard-e-Emrouz*, and the Tudeh Party's publications, he gradually gravitated towards Leninist Marxism. In 1957, he joined the Toilers Party of the Iranian Nation (also known as the Third Force). He was only in the sixth grade when he met Bahram Beyzaei as his classmate

and felt deeply moved by his interest in cinema and theater. Meanwhile, the literary personality and writing skills of some of his teachers such as Zeynolabedin Mo'tamen and Mahmoud Behzad inspired him to attempt writing and publishing them in *Jahan-e-No*, *Arash*, and *Ayandegan* magazines.

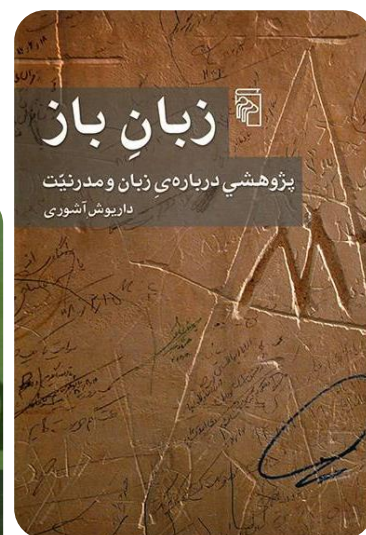
Ashouri gained his Bachelor's degree in Economics from the Law School, the University of Tehran, in 1964. He was then employed by Plan and Budget Organization, taught at the Colleges of Fine Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Tehran, and founded *Nameh-ey Olum-e Ejtemai* (Social Sciences Paper) at the University of Tehran. Upon a recommendation by Dr. Gholamhossein Yousefi, he resigned from the Plan and Budget Organization to become a full-time academician at the University of Tehran and later, at the Dekhoda Lexicon Institute until retirement. In 1985 he immigrated to France, but this did not mark an end to his literary and cultural activities. He has been an editor of *Iranica*, teaching at the University of Oxford Faculty of Oriental Studies, and writing for a number of Persian periodicals across the world. Throughout his fruitful life inside or outside Iran, Ashouri has always been concerned with issues of home, Iranian identity, and sociocultural problems of the country, and more importantly, of Persian language.



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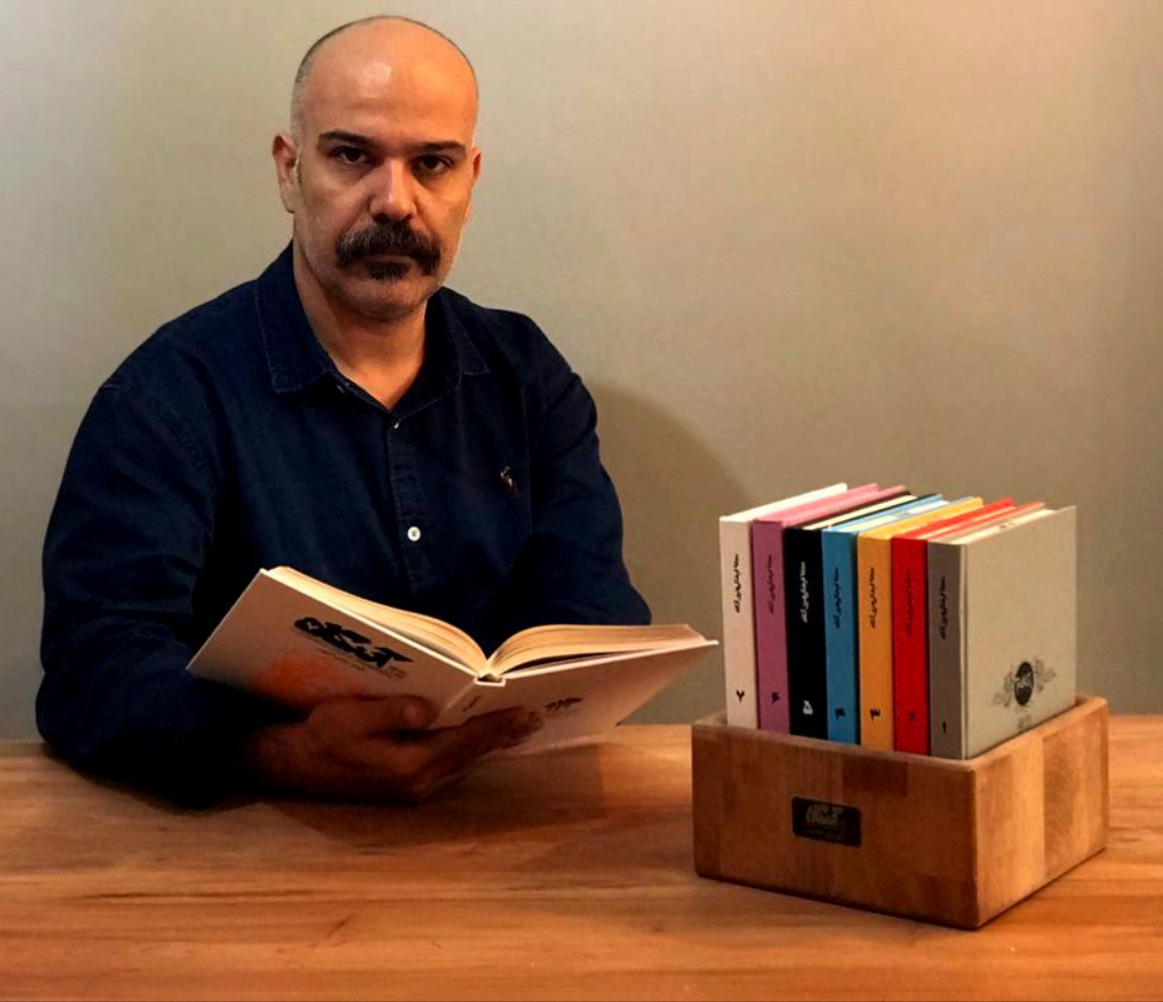
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## Interview with Arash Tanhai

Founder of Angah Magazine

❖ Azadeh Ghahvei



**Azadeh ahvei.** *Tell us about Angah.*

**Arash Tanhai.** *Angah* is a bimonthly magazine with a mission located somewhere in between a book and a local community journal. It looks forward to follow the path of precedent magazines like *Ketab Haftah* and *Andisheh-va-Honar*.

**A.GH.** *What is Angah's main undertaking?*

**A.T.** To find a place in everybody's bookshelves and library archives.

**A.GH.** *And what would be the main challenge for that?*

**A.T.** Well, I don't want to bother you and myself with the story of difficulties we went through. The fact that you have *Angah* in your hands proves that we have done the job and the obstacles for the publication of the first issue have been overcome. In short, we live in an epoch that is not the best time for print journals. They are suffering from and often beaten by online counterparts. And there seems to be consensus among the "sages" of our time on discouraging the "inexperienced youth" from taking the risk. But we dare to step in to prove "when there is a will, there is a way."

**A.GH.** *Why did you choose "café" as the subject of your first issue?*

**A.T.** We often cover a particular subject from different angles and approaches in each issue; the first issue is dedicated to the "Café and Coffeehouse Culture" and the following issues will respectively be on *Kanoon* – or the Iranian Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents, Paykan car, Lalehzar district of Tehran, and Mount Damavand. The subjects, though some belong to the past, still continue to exist.

**A.GH.** *What makes the café and coffeehouse culture attractive for your generation?*

**A.T.** A café, a coffeehouse, or any hangout is meant to be a place for communication in the first place. Drinking a cup of coffee or tea is a good excuse to experience different levels and qualities of communication; to read a story from different vantages; to discuss and contradict, and to recount the story of the life lived there. The Polish chairs of Naderi Café, the benches of Shouka Café, the metal chairs of Nikou Sefat's Stew Corner, the carpeted couches of Darakeh and Darband, the stone steps of the Faculty of Fine Arts, Faculty of Law, and many other places would bear witness all the sounds and furies. *Angah* maintains to be the narrator of those cafés and chairs in the first issue.

**A.GH.** *How did you start Angah?*

**A.T.** It was one of my dreams to have a real journal, which could go beyond the school type magazines we had seen in secondary school. I used to be a big fan of *Keyhan for Kids*. I used to send them my paintings and writings. My first independent shopping was a *Keyhan for Kids*, which I did with my pocket money from a small kiosk on Hashemi

Street. On other week days, I spent the money on a donut from the same place. On other weekdays, the money was often spent on donuts I got from the same kiosk.

Even later on, when I started my profession as a contributor to the magazines *Tandis* and *Chelcheragh*, I still waited for a greater occasion, because not all your ideas are incorporated into other journals no matter how high your endeavors and motivations are. Therefore, I made my decision to go and ask for a publication licence.

**A.GH.** *And it was the first time you applied for a journal licence?*

**A.T.** Yes, it was.

**A.GH.** *Just one point before we move on to the next question: has Keyhan for Kids ever published any of your writings?*

**A.T.** No, I don't think so.

**A.GH.** *And you kept buying it despite the fact that there was nothing published from you, or were you still hoping to see your own writings?*

**A.T.** No, I was buying it notwithstanding the fact that they didn't publish my stuff. In fact, they always answered my letters and that's what I liked about them in *Keyhan for Kids*. They would even make recommendations. For example once I had made a drawing that was modelled after an artwork, and they responded, telling me they were more content with the previous paintings which I did on my own.

**A.GH.** *Can we say that you were experiencing a sense of communication with this journal that was beyond what you did at school and family life?*

**A.T.** Yes, and also when I started using the library of Iranian Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IDCYA) on summer of 1989, I experienced an independent way of communication with the world outside. My mom took me there for the first time to show me the way and I would travel one kilometre every week on my own to read the books there. At that time, the drivers were kinder when they saw a kid crossing the street, compared to nowadays.

**A.GH.** *How old were you then?*

**A.T.** Eight years old. I had just finished my first grade at school. A couple of years ago, a friend of mine reminded me that I had taken him to the library and registered him as well, which I couldn't remember anymore. Apparently, he was not the only one I encouraged to be a member.

**A.GH.** *You are emphasizing the concept of independence. You also said you started Angah because you wanted to see all you expected from a journal embodied in one piece of*

*work. Does Angah satisfy you in that sense? Do you care about what title other people would give to it?*

**A.T.** Yes, I do for sure. Once I was asked if they should call Angah a book, or a magazine, or what. I said it is 'Angah' and I think it would be self-explanatory with no further explication needed. Something like *Bokhara Magazine*. I was aware of the problems in the book market and those dominating the print journal market. I wanted to bridge the gap and make the best of both. We don't hit records of a book selling 550 volumes in a month any more these days.

**A.GH.** *And that is what is happening for Angah?*

**A.T.** Yes, we ran out of all the copies for the first volume [the time of the interview]. There are a number of reasons for this. First, we decrease the final price for customers by accepting advertisement. This is the privilege of a magazine format that we benefit from in order to make the product cheaper for our audiences. A book with the same volume of paper and colours will be no less than 300,000 IRRs (3 dollars).

**A.GH.** *And how much does Angah cost?*

**A.T.** \$1.5 (150,000 IRRs). Almost half of the finished price. And I am determined to keep it at this price... From the very first day I was thinking about it. I didn't want to come up with a product that would be rejected by distributors after a year under the excuse that they don't have enough space in their stocks. I wanted it to be kept in archives like *Book of the Week* which I used to buy, as a teenager, in second-hand and cheap for my archive. Nevertheless, there is still much more to do to reach that state I am looking forward to making *Angah* a cultural product with no expiration date and with regular readers.

**A.GH.** *Who are the target audience of Angah?*

**A.T.** There are four groups. First, art lovers, I mean all the seven arts excluding dancing which cannot find a voice in Iran; second, the art/literature students; third, those who are working in art fields, and forth, art directors in governmental and non-governmental organizations.

**A.GH.** *So you didn't have a general public in mind as audience?*

**A.T.** No, we had estimated about 700,000 people as audience for our journal.

**A.GH.** *How do you incorporate the needs of these audiences in choosing subjects for Angah?*

**A.T.** We do the studies with our team here; you can see some of our brainstorming on the board but I am an artist and therefore very intuitive and I am the first audience of my journal. If I enjoy it, we can hope that other audiences will enjoy it, too. I told this in

another interview, that if you can find five to fifteen good articles out of thirty-five or forty in a volume, you have had a reasonable purchase.

**A.GH.** *Going back to your process of choosing the subject for each volume, to what extent are you concerned about documenting subjects as diverse as ‘café’, ‘IIDCYA,’ etc.?*

**A.T.** Well I have always been concerned about documentation of Iran’s contemporary history. For instance, our forthcoming issue will be on Damavand and I can tell you that compared to the literature available on Fuji in Japan, you cannot even find one piece of work written on Damavand, unfortunately. Rather than nagging and waiting for others to take the lead, I decided to be an initiator.

**A.GH.** *But how are you going to fill the gap between concepts? There is long way from a café in Lalehzar to Mount Damavand, the highest summit of Iran.*

**A.T.** The answer is different approaches that we are going to adopt. For instance, one of our volumes will be on the notion of “bridge”, and the whole concept of “transition” from a literary, sociological, or musical point of view. How the bridges have been perceived and reproduced in movies, architectural entities, photography, etc. We have editors who are experts in each field. We will start with “33 Pol,” Allahverdi Khan Bridge in Isfahan. We need to prepare ten good critical articles, ten high quality interviews, and ten work-reviews. So how we are going to approach the topics is quite clearly classified and decided: oral history, individual narrations, and criticism of available topics. The commonality between all these topics is that they all belong to the public sphere. For instance, we are not working on the “kitchen” but on the “alley”. There have been topics that we dropped after a while because we found them not comprehensive enough. The editorial team decided to work on subjects that were not public enough to become books, such as the “Qandriz Hall,” which has played an important role for visual arts.

**A.GH.** *Please correct me if I misunderstood it. Your topics can encompass a vast area related to public life from an institution, a mountain, or a concept, to a job title, right? Your approach is documenting the folklore with focus on art. Is that how you decide on topics?*

**A.T.** That is right. And to answer your second question, we have a council of editors including Kaboutar Ershadi, Ali Amir-Riahi, Omid Anaraki, Marieh Shahi, Hossein Shahrabi, Behnam Sediqi, and Marzieh Vafamehr, each of which are experts in their own field and are open to comments from others. We meet every two weeks and comment on each other’s work as well.

**A.GH.** *Let me demand more clarification on your approach. It is of a kind of encyclopaedic nature as it concentrates on a single topic. But one might question your approach in choosing topics: you have picked ten topics and there are twenty more which have not been touched. Is it based on your team’s decisions, and not on a survey of the audience’s needs?*



**A.T.** Yes, our work is a cultural study and interdisciplinary in nature, and thus, detached from scientific approaches. Like a friend suggested working on football the other day, and I told him I would think about it. It is very broad but a very good field of study from sociological, literary and artistic viewpoints

**A.GH.** *Phenomena like football has been the subject of sociological research, what can you offer or add to them?*

**A.T.** We will be looking for para- (micro-) narratives of the people unlike the scientific papers or academic journals with limited number of audience. We have finished 2,000 copies in one month and our team has already considered 3,500 copies for next month and has a target of 10,000 copies of circulation very soon. Population of Iran in early 1950s was around 17 million and 40,000 copies of *Ketab-e-Hafteh* were sold every week in the country. Now the population is three times more and the amount of books circulated is one third. We decided we are not going to be seen only in Tehran but in 50 other big cities based on population density. These cities can be used as hubs for smaller ones but at the moment we cannot afford distribution all through the country.

**A.GH.** *How many cities do you cover right now?*

**A.T.** For the first volume I cannot be sure, because all this planning started from the second issue. We know through our distributors that it is now in most of the big cities except from Zahedan, Yasuj and some other ones. But we are not happy with it right now and we are aware of the fact that how distribution is as important as the publication.

**A.GH.** *Going back to our previous discussion, I believe most of the specialized magazines and scientific journals have lost their effectiveness in the society unlike Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents publications which still keeps influencing a vast majority of children and people including those of low incomes.*

**A.T.** We have also taken our targeted audience's economical power into consideration. Like how much one meal costs for a student and whether he/she can afford \$ 1.5 (15,000 Toman) to buy our bimonthly magazine and we came to the conclusion that yes it can find its place on the shopping list of low income people as well.

**A.GH.** *What do you think is the main challenge before your journal? Economic power of your audience or online journals and social media?*

**A.T.** We wanted to increase reading per capita and also the quality of reading. We have chosen 1 % of Iranian book readers as our population. They might not be necessarily those who are interested in journals and magazines, but we offer them same quality of reading materials. We are not there to increase the per capita reading but to promote per capita magazine reading.

**A.GH.** *What are your plans to keep the aforementioned four groups of audience given the variety of the subjects you are dealing with?*

**A.T.** The novelty is in our approach and the quality of the product we are presenting. Once I got a complement from a jewelry designer; he told me buying our magazine gives him the joy of a good purchase. *Angah* is hard-covered and the binding is sewn, which means it will last at least for a good thirty years. The other novelty in our approach is the combination of the images with the passages. We wanted to hire experts of visual arts beside a strong editorial. The strength of *Angah* is not only in the words but in the magic of its pictures. The documentation of visual history is an important part of our plan. For example, if it is about cafés we would go through all the posters exhibited in Shouka café in late 1990s and 2000s. We want for the reader to enjoy paging over the magazine.

**A.GH.** *How does your council choose the right people for each topic? What is the process? Is there any background studies beforehand or do you prefer to work on the topics that you already know their audience?*

**A.T.** It is both. For example, for a topic like Paykan, we came across Shahin Armin's documentary through our editor in the architecture section and we were glad that someone had worked so thoroughly on the subject. On the other hand, for the Iranian Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents, we mostly rely on the people that we knew, like Touka Neyestani.

**A.GH.** *What was the most pleasing experience in terms of discovering a source when you were searching for a topic?*

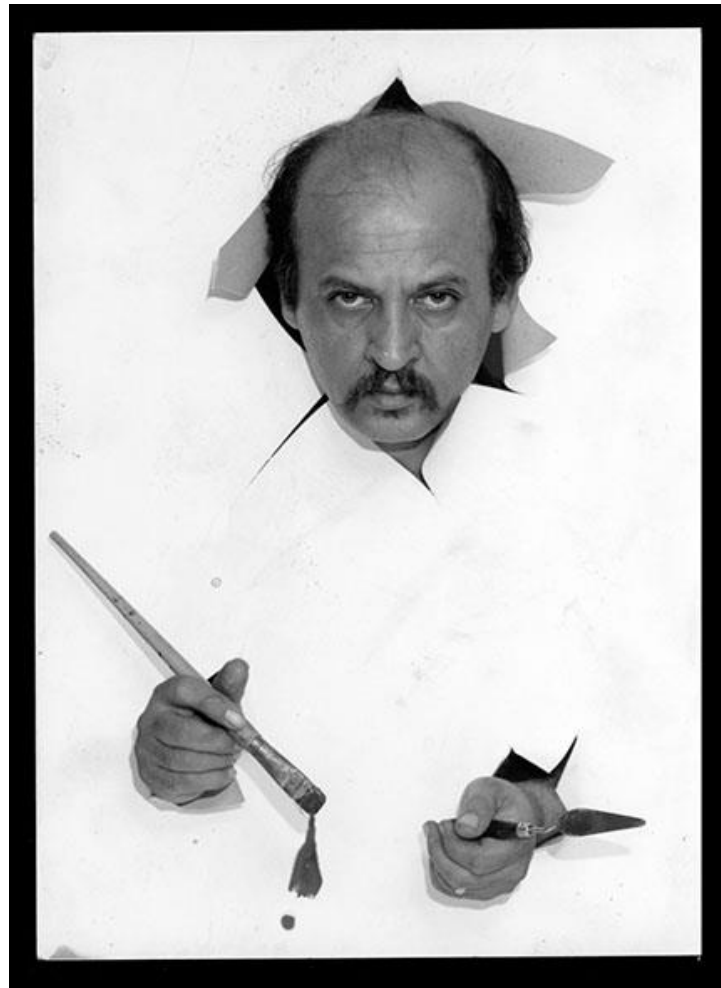
**A.T.** I cannot mention one, because there were many. But I enjoyed Fateh Sahba's article about Morteza Keyvan very much. We also try to introduce a special figure in each volume. For café, Morteza Keyvan was our focal point because he was able to bring people from different ideological spectra together in coffee shops. This article together with photos of Peyman Hooshmandzadeh who visually documented one period of Shouka, and another article about a remote café in Ilam or Tabriz have made *Angah* a very special collection echoing various voices. We are very sorry that we cannot be present everywhere in Iran, but we are open to anybody approaching us. Everybody can contribute to *Angah* by sending us a request to our web-page.

**A.GH.** *If you have any point or want to recap our discussion, please go ahead.*

**A.T.** Only one thing, I don't know whether it is by Aydin Aghdashloo or Shamim Bahar that the "art and thought are nobody's fief", meaning there is no right to possessiveness and exclusion for anybody in these spheres. *Angah* believes in no boundary with the "other" and is open to any critique or cooperation to grow •



**PALETTE**



## **The World of Ali-Akbar Sadeghi (b.1937)**

A graduate of the College of Fine Arts, University of Tehran, Ali-Akbar Sadeghi is one of the most prolific and successful Iranian painters and artists. His childhood infatuation with Shahnameh stories and Persian myths and legends, Sadeghi reminisces, makes an indispensable part of his worldview, “a world whose figurative representations sometimes appear in old miniature paintings or more popular forms of art, including coffeehouse painting, reverse painting on glass, imprints on wood and paper, and stunning images in lithographed books.”

In his evocative paintings, Sadeghi draws on the rich traditions of Persian art but adds to them a surreal edge that involves dizzying spatial manipulations and startling combinations of real and fantastical objects, producing breathtaking kaleidoscopes of color and form. A master storyteller, the varied Persian sources of Sadeghi's tales range from historical Persian iconography, including swords, horses, gardens, warriors, intricate decorative motifs and patterns taken from classic rugs, to the compositions of archetypal Iranian miniatures and portraits, particularly those of the Qajar dynasty.

But Sadeghi's inspiration from the cultural heritage of Iran is not just aesthetic; the presence of Persian sagas and legends, epic poems and philosophies, and even the teachings of Gnosticism loom large in his work. While Sadeghi has undoubtedly been motivated by the varied artistic forms and schools of thought of his country, his productions have undeniable links to the automatic art of Max Ernst and De Chirico, among others. Considered by some to be Iran's Dali and by himself to be simply a narrator, Sadeghi's paintings give a 20th/21st- Century edge to the typical Iranian story or image.

## An Iranian Surrealist

Sadeghi has been artistically active in the past 60 years. His style is a kind of Iranian surrealism, based on Iranian forms and compositions of traditional paintings, the use of Iranian iconography, and the use of Persian cultural motifs, signs, and myths, full of movement and action, in prominent and genuine oil colors, in large frames, very personal, reminiscent of epic traditional Persian paintings and illustrations, with a conspicuous mythical style.

He initiated a special style in Persian painting, influenced by Coffee House painting, iconography, and traditional Iranian portrait painting, following the Qajar tradition—a mixture of a kind of surrealism, influenced by the art of stained glass.

*Retell, Zal and Simorgh  
Recreated.*

*From Retell Collection 50x50.*

*Film cells.*





The spectacular style and flamboyant use of color in Sadeghi's paintings and sculptures behold the richness of iconography in Qajar Era paintings, particularly a school of painting that has become known as the Qahveh Khaneh (Coffee house paintings). The meticulous detailing, intricate scenes and the subject matter, often heroes in full armor, follow the traditions of Miniature painting. At close inspection a large number of artists' works are, in one way or another, self-portraits. The storyteller, the sleepwalker, seems not to be able to invent without identifying with the characters of his imagination.

Here is a marvelous world where the heroes of the artist do not appear to be fighting the evils of the world; they are either frozen in time or seem to be engaged in their own internal conflicts. From the "Hanged Coat" to the depiction of the old hero with an aid band on his face to the "Torture Armchair", there is a strong sense of defeat, but evil doesn't seem to have prevailed. It appears as if the artist is content with wisdom that age and years of turmoil have brought him. The Emotional power of these self-portraits and their poetic reality overwhelms the viewer and invokes feelings of sympathy that derive from conflict within every human being. The surreal world of Ali Akbar Sadeghi is a world of his own, governed by the strength of his dreams. He successfully transfers his emotions and turmoil, but also creates scenes and objects that are complete and precise; a perfect balance. And when he is not busy pushing nails in to the faces of his heroes, he is ready to play chess—the game of nobility that commands tact, maturity, and dignity.

He is among the first individuals involved in the Centre for the Intellectual Development of Children and the Youth, and was among the founders of the Film Animation department of this institute. In 1991, at the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, Sadeghi was honored for his outstanding achievements in book illustration and film-making, and his participation in more than 50 film and book festivals.

Aside from illustrations, he has published a number of books for the Centre for the Development of Children and the Youth, and has made seven films by using his special style in painting. Films produced by Sadeghi have won more than 20 awards at international film festivals. Also, he has won four international awards for his book illustrations.

**Credit: Official website of Ali-Akbar Sadeghi**

## Three Poems by Ali-Akbar Sadeghi

*Ali-Akbar Sadeghi's poems were written between 2005 and 2006 during his bout of severe depression, when he was unable to pick up his brush and paint. The sense behind his poetry is to be vague and naive about the world surrounding us. The poems were born after the "Nail" series, when the artist was exhausted for painting. The "Rebirth" series is a result of the hope he gained after his poetry period. What follows are three poems translated from Persian by Farzaneh Doosti. In these writings the poet intentionally ignores punctuation and the words follow each other in a stream of consciousness style. In spite of their seemingly illogical composition, one can identify a meaningful and teleological vision of life and a narrative faithful to the patterns of fairy tales.*

(1)

Why is the dagger so bloodstained? Have they beheaded Siavash, is it Siavash's bloodstain on the vertex, like a ruby on a crown with which human beings are drawn to dungeons, and plains are sprinted over, to captivate the fish in the sea? And it's raining still to assuage the open thirsty mouths of drain pipes, to raise the scent of clay-straw plasters of the roofs. I see the desert's open mouth as it swallows the rain to no satisfaction, so that it can emancipate prisoners of within, so that the thorns are changed into bushes of rose of anemone and cover the plains with flowers and saturate the plains with the blood of martyrs who have been lovers once, and quench their thirst, and invade Ahriman, and bury its corpse in the ditch of darkness and conceal the tar-dark night with white snow so that the footprints of a man turning back from his journey appear on the snow, and his voice echoes in the people's ears saying, look how exhausted I am, I've fallen asleep on my steed as I ride back home, I'll throw my bow, my arrow, my spear, my dagger into the black hole, and they won't behead any other Siavash in their eternal sepulcher, and my spear won't hit the chest of a man whose children are awaiting him, over the hill adjacent to love, and the people will salute him and take him to a sweet sleep, and will give him his wings back: He'll be flying to freedom.



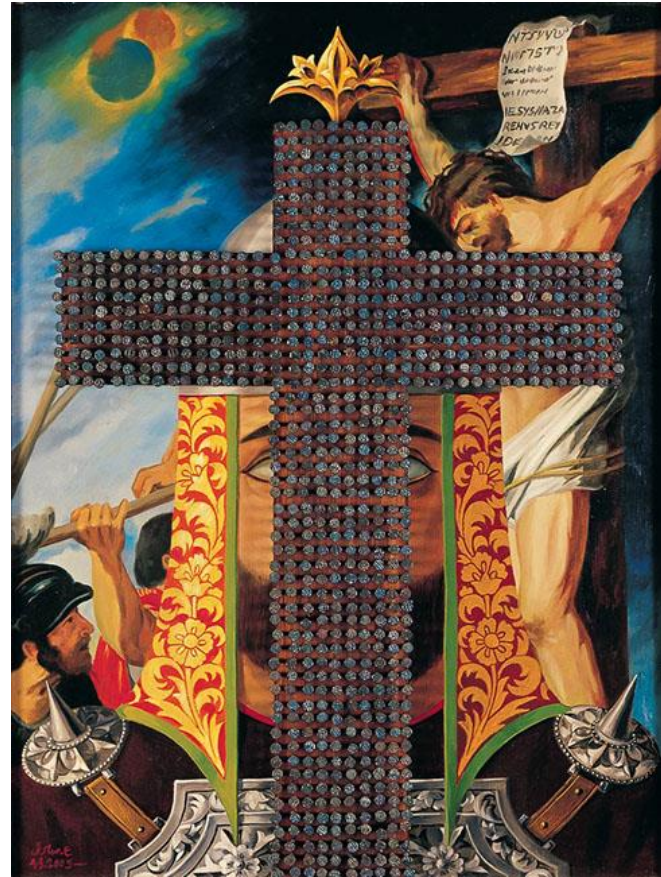
Travel piece 22  
From Travel Pieces  
2010

(2)

I will weave my carpet that I am hanging up only with colors of red and blue that bear my wrath and my love, and I will lay a kiss on the red of my flag, and every morning I will climb up the Alborz Mountain so entangled that I am in iron and steel to set the sun free from Ahriman's gaol, and I take her through the white of dawn to shine over my green plains, and I will let rice germs flutter dance in the fields, and I will glance at the west where Ahriman is standing in the sea to drown my sun in the sea, and that is an interminable battle, and when we destroy the Ahriman of darkness the sun will be up in the sky to strew her light on us, and there won't be any morning when a sheep's throat is gobbled up the meat grinder, and there won't be any morning when the death squad makes guiltless people, who've only stolen a piece of bread, line up before them for gunfire and *coup de grace*. And the heads who'd never bowed to any ruler fall off and stare at unstained soil, their crimson petals nourishing the greedy soil and the rain washing them away. And there won't be any morning when the death squad lines up. Some time when the lights go off the electric chair short-circuits and the meat grinder stops working. It will be day forever and we will grant the Nobel Prize to Africa so that it can create a cistern as vast as the thirst of women and children so that men with callous hands can drink a fistful of water. And it will fertilize withered breasts of mothers whose starving children have swollen bellies. Once again the cattle will endow their milk to hungry people.

(3)

The fire they have ignited for Abraham is still flaring, and Arash the Archer has not reached the summit, and Siavash is standing by the fire with his restless steed, and demons holler at valleys, and the dragon is still pining for the girl whose scent is in the air, and cavaliers are either asleep or drowse on their steeds, and I am that weary cavalier whom no one welcomes any more as they know that my sword is broken and my flag flutters no more even in the storm. I should put it for safekeeping in the safe in my house so that another cavalier could betake himself by the dry river and fight with the dragon, and the aging girl is still waiting for me. Take my steed's saddle and tether and set him free in the plain. He is weary, too. And put my armor and helmet in the safe in my house next to the flag. I will put on a shirt made of my memories, and I will wash my face and hands with morning dew, and I will unknot my eyebrows, and I will set up a black veil at the threshold of my house, and I will write words on it that would read, the house of an old cavalier who lost his sword on his way, and the dragon is still lying at the mouth of the river, and the girl is walking toward him with a cane and white tresses. There must be a cavalier to fight with the dragon and make himself impregnable in his blood, to stop the demons' holler, to make my voice muttering "I love you" echo in the mountains and I love you and I love you and I love you now that Arash has reached the summit, Abraham's fire had gone out, Saivash has passed through fire to prove his innocence, tied down to the dream that keeps him awake every night till morning—in anticipation.



The Nail #15  
From The Nails  
2001

*Courtesy of Ashkan Sadeghi @ Official Website AliAkbarSadeghi .com*

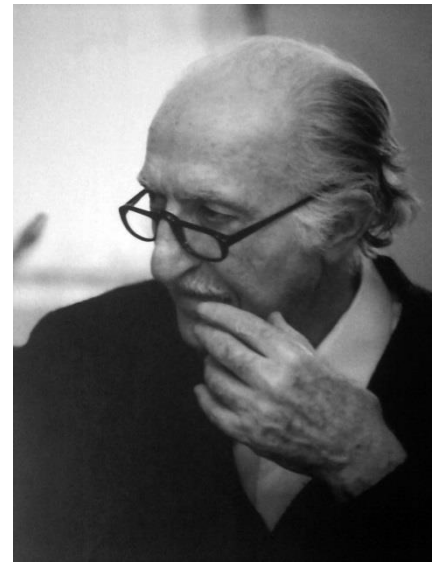




## ABOLHASSAN NAJAFI TRANSLATION AWARD

❖ **Shahraz Savaji**

Renowned Iranian writer and translator Abolhassan Najafi was born in Najaf, Iraq, to a religious family from Isfahan on 28 June 1929 and passed away on 22 January 2016. Contemporary Persian literature owes him a lot for his literary activities for almost seven decades beginning in the 1960s, including superb translations of several books from French into Persian, co-publication of the famous literary periodical *Jong-e Isfahan*, where he developed the literary school of Isfahan along with Houshang Golshiri and the younger Bahram Sadeqi, and his breakthrough monograph on editorial issues of contemporary Persian language and its common mistakes, entitled “Let’s not Write it Wrong” [غلط ننویسیم].



Najafi was a member of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature (1990–2016). He taught Persian at the universities of Tehran and Isfahan, and was an expert in linguistics and Persian meter.

A year after Najafi passed away of lung infection in Tehran, the Iranian Book City Institute founded the Abolhassan Najafi Translation Award in his memory. This annual award tends to evaluate and commemorate young and aspiring literary translators whose works follow the standards set by Najafi himself. The award’s referees are composed of the most eminent senior writers and translators such as Zia Movahed, Hassan Masoumi-Hamedani, Abdollah Kosari, Mahasti Bahraini, Mozhdeh Daghighi, and Mahmoud Hosseinizad.



First Edition 2016 [1394 h.]

### Shortlist

1. Narges Entekhabi for translating Katherine Mansfield's *Garden Party* (Mahi Pub.)
2. Khojasteh Keyhan for translating Paul Auster's *Report from the Interior* (Ofoq)
3. Ehsan Norouzi for translating Jack Keruak's *On the Road* (Cheshmeh)
4. Ali Masoumi for translating Tim O'Brien's *What They Carried* (Qoqnoos)
5. Abtin Golkar for translating Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev's *Иваан Сергеевич...* (Mahi)

### Winner

- Abtin Golkar

## Second Edition 2017 [1395 h.]

### Shortlist

1. Reza Rezaei for translating George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (Ney Pub.)
2. Amir-Mahdi Haghighat for translating a short story by Miroslav Penkov, in the short story collection *Buying Lenin* (Mahi)
3. Asghar Nouri for translating "L'alphabète" and "C'est égal" by Agota Kristof (Morvarid)
4. Mohammad Hemmati for translating *Le Marche de Radetzky* by Joseph Roth (Nashr-e No)
5. Farzaneh Doosti for translating *Wild Nights* by Joyce Carol Oates (Ney)
6. Bahman Darolshafaei for translating George Orwell's *Down and out in Paris and London* (Mahi)

### Winner

- Mohammad Hemmati
- 

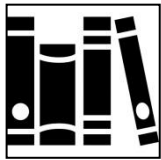
## Third Edition 2018 [1396 h.]

### Shortlist

1. Ahmad Okhovat for translating William Faulkner's short stories, titled *Of Men and Horses* (Ofog)
2. Mojgan Hosseini Rouzbehani for translating *La nebuleuse de crab* (Qoqnoos)
3. Abolfazl Allahdadi for translating *L'extraordinaire voyage du fakir qui était resté coincé dans une armoire Ikea* by Romain Puértolas (Qoqnoos)
4. Zeinab Younesi for translating *Зулейха открывает глаза* by Yakhina Guzel (Niloofar)
5. Abtin Golkar for translating *Kroliki & udavy* by Fazil Iskandar (Ofog)

### Winner

- Zeinab Younesi
- Ahmad Okhovat (winner of the third edition's Special Award)



**Title:** Will Stand, We  
**Author:** Mahsa Mohebbali  
**Genre:** Novel  
**Series:** Contemporary Iranian Fiction  
**Publisher:** Zaryab Pub., Persian  
**Publication Date:** 2016  
**240 pages**



## FROM THE BOOK

*The sound of falling dices disturbs you. Why are they pleased with no game other than backgammon? Why don't they play chess? Because you should shut your mouth up when playing chess, should think twice, should plan. You should make progress on different fronts to blindside your opponent. So that if he moves his knight, you can take his bishop, and if he moves his queen, you can take his rock, and so on until you gradually reach your goal. On the backgammon, however, all you can do is throw dices and boast and dawdle until your opponent is distracted and cannot decide, cannot risk it...You should keep throwing dices and move without thought. Half-chance, half-boasting. Your mouth should keep mumbling and your hand moving. You cannot stop for a second and think. You should crawl from one decision to another, and your hand always relies on the dice and checkers.*

*You shouldn't have opened up your mouth. It's always like this. When you open it, you cannot shut it up on your own. Your mind gets as loose as your mouth.*

## ABOUT THE BOOK

Mohebbali's book offers an account of a girl struggling with the present, thinking of the past, and awaiting her downfall in the future. As a young schoolgirl, one day she is called to the principal's office. The security forces have found photos of family members and acquaintances amongst her books, but she does not know who has put them there. The incident leads to the disappearance of those people. And now she has only one goal: to find about the one who betrayed her. She is living with her family now and all her previous boyfriends are still residing there and are on drugs. At work, she had an affair with her employer—a jerry-builder—although she also meets a few others to benefit from them. Suddenly after twenty five years, the mystery is disclosed.



It is a narrative of a parasitic life, a narrative of determinism, which throws mankind in a void loop of existence where man is granted nothing except by force. In such a society, situations are imposed on man.

Mohebbali's language, like the first volume of the trilogy, *Do not Worry*, is perfectly iconoclastic of female experience. It is a bold, strident, and rebellious language that has long been undercover in Persian literature, especially when it comes to women's narratives. There are virgin spaces and situations in which one cannot say whether the characters are revolting, disintegrating, or revolting and disintegrating at once. The inevitable disintegration is a result of betrayed and deferred ideals of the previous generation. The tangible urban characters are suffering in a space in between reality and delusion where their concerns and affections only make them suffer more.

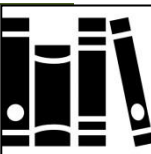
*Will Stand, We* is a story of all members of the society who are struggling with their isolation, are about to fall and drown, and whose loneliness extends to their freedom and desires. The people we know from her previous volume, *Do not Worry*, are here as well: sick people exposed to deception, betrayal, misuse, assault, and narcotics. And the reader is left with a question: where does these people's sickness originate from? How could people who only play with thrown dices win the game? A game that is already doomed and downfallen.

× **Review by Mohammad Ahmadpour**

× **Translated by Farzaneh Doosti**

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Fog</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Kamran Mohammadi</b>
<b>Genre:</b>	<b>Novel</b>
<b>Series:</b>	<b>Contemporary Iranian Fiction</b>
<b>Publisher:</b>	<b>Cheshmeh; Persian</b>
<b>Publication Date:</b>	<b>2016</b>



## FROM THE BOOK

*This is life: constant surprise. I no longer trust any of them. It's as if people were made to disappoint each other. Because they turn to something else right when you need them—to what has nothing to do with your thought. That's life. It's all my life. When you trust people, you cannot get anything except trust. The role of people is to spend time. This is the most essential and difficult task of every human being: filling time spots. All people are loops of a long chain, which wraps around a tighter circle every day, as though everyone thinks they are out of this circle.*

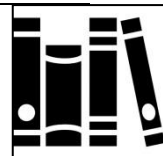
## ABOUT THE BOOK

Mohammadi's novel presents a narration of two parallel stories that are intertwined. A man has entered his house to fulfill his promise given to his friend to take his manuscripts out of the house. This is followed by a series of complicated events through which another man is captured in a written story in a bitter and agonizing situation.

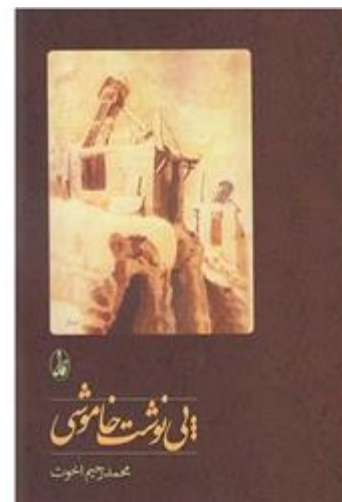
If we divide the assigned human duties into two types, some of them are internal: tasks that are based on beliefs, thoughts, interests, etc. Human beings perform such tasks as assignments, and others are duties imposed from the outside by another person, ethics, religion, law, etc. The existential paradox of these two tasks as to achieve an individual identity and a collective identity makes the most important theme of this work. We can follow traces of Kantian ethics in this context as we move along with flickering identities of characters towards relativity in the context of the story.

Along with the philosophical layer of the narrative, we encounter an intricate pentathlon that carries the author's psychological burden. The two sides of death (with which the story begins with a certain beat) and disappointment (numerous and endless suicides) are also in conflict with one's life and hope, while the human being/audience has no escape within this enclosed space. And this "escape" refers to all the fictional situations that hide the characters, and from this frustration, a fancy is created that the viewer sees the pictures as delusional, moves inside the story, communicates with the characters, reconsiders the events, but cannot trust anyone. What can we trust in this foggy atmosphere?

- **Review by Mohammad Ahmadpour**
- **Translated by Melika Majlesi**



**Title:** Postscript to Silence  
**Author:** Mohammad-Rahim Okhovat  
**Genre:** Novel  
**Publisher:** Agah; Persian  
**Publication Date:** 2016 (1395)  
**148 pages**



## FROM THE BOOK

*This little space gradually grew large and larger until it occupied his whole heart and mind; an all-inclusive mass that, in spite of all his expertise and experience, was unnamable for him. It was not love, or friendship, or pity; rather like addiction. An odd amalgamation of all the things named and unnamed that could glue two persons together and take their liberty and ambulation. Like an encumbrance, but not exactly an encumbrance. He started thus to think. It had nothing to do with love, or pain, or lonesomeness, or what unfaithful lovers did. It only taught him a lesson that no matter how devout and intimate people are, there are often latent layers of being in them which they might not even be aware of. How is it possible then for a person, who hardly knows himself, to initiate an everlasting and multilateral matrimonial life with another one?*

## ABOUT THE BOOK

*Postscript to Silence* is an account of the life of a septuagenarian whose monotonous life is interrupted with the presence of a thirty-some year-old girl. Her presence inspires the old man to explore his memories back to the time of love, his travel to Kurdistan and Kavir, and refuge from loneliness to family gatherings and teaching. Back to the present: A girl, an old student, brings her novel for the old man to edit it for her, but the novel is concerned with his past life with her. Back to the past: when the man's mother was the only appealing female character in his life. The story moves on to a moment of suspension between the past and the present with an interesting intertextual relation with another novel of the author, *Beholding*.

The narrative relies mainly on the psychology of characters and morphology of situations set on broken and intervening timelines. The mode of suspense that Okhovat has created in his narrative is themed on the invisibility of time. The story begins with a third-person point of view

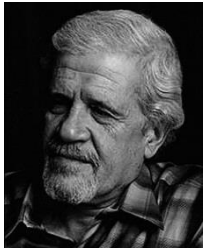
that is gradually lost into the voice of an unknown narrator, and finally fades into an omniscient point of view through which the reader experiences a sense of revelation.

At age forty, the man's life is tied with travel. The concepts of border and freedom are interwoven in poeticity of a lover devoid of a beloved. Women for him are mere sources of inspiration and his episodic poems addressed to them are to explore the concepts of devotion and dependence.

The main motif of the story is a sense of approaching death, which paradoxically causes both fear and hope in him. There is some home in his hopelessness that enables him to speak up, explore his childhood personality, and finally come up with a definition of love and devotion.

Okhovat is a master of playing with the rules of storytelling and the final chapter of his book, in fact, serves as a dissection of his own novel. As is the case with dissection, the story is no more than a corpse. How about its author?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mohammad-Rahim Okhovat was born to a religious family in Mohammad-Abad district of Isfahan in 1945. He started writing as early as his teen years and is best-known for his writings in *Ferdowsi Magazine* during the 1960s. His first book, *Suspension*, was published in 1999, yet he owes his success to his novel *Names and Shadows*. In an interview, Okhovat has called this novel a postscript to his own writing career, simply declaring his retirement.



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