A Critical Study of First-Person Narrative in Modern Persian Novels

Nikoo Farigam

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

2018

School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics
SOAS, University of London

To the sun and the moon of my life, my niece Ava and my nephew Soren: may they grow with love and passion for the Persian language and its literature, and never forget their roots although they were born and raised far from their homeland, Iran.

To my beautiful parents who cared for me day and night.

To my kindest siblings, Yeganeh and Shervin, for their incredible, endless love and support throughout my life; and

To my sister- and brother-in-law, Sara and Ali, for believing in me and supporting me.

Abstract

This thesis is a critical study of the first-person narrative in modern Persian novels. To my knowledge, the first-person narrative, which I define in this work as one of the thorniest issues in literary criticism in Iran, has never been thoroughly discussed before in an academic context, within the purview of Persian Studies. The thesis aims to address the confusion caused by first-person narrator/author identification with respect to modern novel writing in Iran by tracing the issue back to the beginnings of the Persian novel, reviewing modern literary criticism and narratology studies in contemporary Iran and offering a detailed analysis of the first-person narrative in Şādeq Hedāyat's *The Blind Owl*, the first and most evident case of author/first-person narrator identification in the history of the Persian novel. The thesis investigates the possible cultural and literary reasons for the rise of the first-person narrative in novel writing over the past fifteen years in Iran, including the role of blogging and creative writing workshops, and how the widespread use of first-person narratives has been affected, but not restricted, by government censorship. The thesis also inclusively considers the role of gender, stressing its importance in any analysis of first-person narratives, and looks at the way in which female novelists approach and popularize some narrative techniques such as shifting point of view, employing them as a bargaining chip in order to bypass state censorship and obtain permission to publish their work. Last but not least, the thesis aims to introduce Iranian readers to a new perspective on the point of view: a component of narrative that is not merely formal, but encompasses social, economical and literary circumstances. It is hoped that, by shedding light on author/narrator identification, the thesis will represent a solid initial step towards the development of literary criticism studies in Iran.

Contents

Notes on Referencing

This thesis was referenced according to the Harvard Referencing Style system, with the additional inclusion of page numbers throughout to provide increased accuracy and ease of access. Where page numbers are not inserted, the citation is either a website or a personal interview: in the latter case, to avoid confusion, the interviewee's surname is always quoted at the end, accompanied by the date according to both the Gregorian and the Persian calendar, unless the source is in Persian but dated according to the Gregorian calendar only (as is the case with some websites). Other interviews are cited with the surname of the interviewer as the author. The dates of personal interviews and access of websites in the Persian reference list are given according to the Gregorian calendar for the sake of consistency. All other Persian names are fully transliterated, except for the names of websites, which have been reproduced in their online form.

All English translations of Persian book titles and extracts are mine unless otherwise stated.

In keeping with the Harvard author-date approach, most dates are given in both the Persian and the Gregorian Calendar; any dates starting with the figures '25' refer to books published between 15 March 1976 and 16 September 1978, during which period the Persian Royal Calendar was the official date-keeping system in Iran.

The reference list is divided into two separate sections, including respectively the Persian and non-Persian materials used.

Wherever a book or article is simply mentioned in the body of the thesis, without any specific further details, the date in parentheses after the title refers to the first publication.

Table of Transliteration

Consonants						Vowels		
	Capital	Small		Capital	Small		Capital	Small
ء	ʾ	ʾ	ص	Ṣ	ṣ	آ	Ā	Ā
ب	B	B	ض	Ż	ż	ُو	U	U
پ	P	P	ط	Ṭ	ṭ	ىِ	I	I
ت	T	T	ظ	Ẓ	ẓ	◌َ	A	A
ث	T̲	T̲	ع	ʿ	ʿ	◌ُ	O	O
ج	J	J	غ	Ḡ	ḡ	◌ِ	E	E
چ	Č	Č	ف	F	f	ه		A
ح	Ḥ	ḥ	ق	Q	q	َو	Ow/Aw	ow/aw
خ	K̲	k̲	ک	K	k	َى		ey/ay
د	D	D	گ	G	g			
ذ	D̲	D̲	ل	L	l			
ر	R	R	م	M	m			
ز	Z	Z	ن	N	n			
ژ	Ž	Ž	و	V	v			
س	S	S	ه	H	h			
ش	Š	Š	ى	Y	y			

* The table of transliteration above follows the Encyclopædia Iranica transliteration system (Iranica 2015). I have added capital letters in English to facilitate transliteration for fellow academics.

Introduction

This thesis is a critical study of the first-person narrative in modern Persian fiction in Iran, with a specially close focus on the past fifteen years (1380-1395/2001-2017). The main points of discussion in the research will be the relationship between author and first-person narrator, the factors that have influenced the wider spread of the first-person narrative among fiction writers in Iran and particularly among female authors, and the reasons for the hostile reception met by first-person novels, most important among which is the prevalent confusion caused by author/first-person narrator identification. The first-person narrative has been discussed in this thesis as a "movement". For this reason, extended analysis of individual first-person novels, has been kept to a minimum, while the focus has been placed on the political and cultural issues related to production of such novels in Iran.

The primary resources used in the thesis are narratology books in the original language (mostly English), and the works of modern and contemporary Iranian novelists who either reside in Iran or have had their fiction published in Iran, including very recent works published in the past fifteen years. Persian fiction published outside Iran by diaspora or exiled writers is not included in this study: although it is my view that equal importance should be given to the study of Iranian works of fiction being published in Iran and to those published outside the country, it would be difficult to extend the scope of the research to the latter, as one of the main purposes of this thesis is the study of government censorship and its relation to first-person narrative in fiction publications. Clearly this cannot include any works published outside Iran, which by and large are not affected by state-imposed censorship: thus, excluding the Persian 'fiction diaspora' will result in more accurate findings.

The thesis is divided into four chapters, as follows:

The first chapter consists of an overview of the history of Persian fiction, its reception in modern literary criticism and narratology studies in Iran, and a discussion of how Iranian Persian scholars have contributed to better understanding of the subject of the first-person narrative. The development of narratology and literary criticism studies in Iran is related by following a chronology, with reference to narrator and to point of view (the two main subjects of our research) as considered within the framework of narratology studies; the subject of point of view is also examined in light of literary criticism studies.

The second chapter reviews Iranian fiction from its beginnings, with a specially close focus on the persistent problem of author/narrator identification and its possible causes. In Chapter Two I will look at this issue beginning with the first modernist Persian novel written as a first-person narrative, *The Blind Owl* by Ṣādeq Hedāyat, and discuss the way in which author/narrator identification was erroneously assumed and consolidated at the time by literary scholars such as Parviz Nātel Ḵānlari and prominent fiction writers such as Jalāl Āl e Aḥmad. A brief study of *The Blind Owl* will show how the structure of the novel does not necessarily suggest that the author and the narrator are identical. The second chapter aims to trace author/narrator identification back to its beginnings and to show how any explanatory materials provided by the author or by fellow intellectuals, including literary critics, might have facilitated a better understanding of the novel, at the time a new literary form for Iranian readers.

The third chapter will discuss the changing fortunes of first-person narratives in Iranian fiction, as well as their wide diffusion in Persian fiction over the last fifteen years. This chapter aims to build a bridge between the increase of first-person narratives and the social, cultural and historical changes in Iran, and in particular to establish a link between the creative writing workshop movement that began and took hold in the Nineties. Chapter Three also studies the relationship between governmental censorship and the first-person narrative, leading organically to the development of related themes in the following chapter.

Chapter Four examines the relationship between first-person narratives and gender. Taking Susan Lanser's feminist narratology as a starting point, I shall be looking closely at the way in which a novel centred around a female protagonist and written as a first-person narrative is much more likely to be singled out for heavy government censorship. Blogging and the influence of feminist movements in Iran could be regarded as two of the main reasons for the employment of the first-person point of view by Iranian female novelists. I will also discuss the use of shifts from the first-person to the third-person narrative, and the way in which censorship and self-censorship affect the narrative itself. It is my intention that this discussion should clearly show how the choice of point of view, far from being a mere internal component of the narrative, can be effectively used by female writers as a cultural device deployed to support them as they navigate the discouragingly difficult process of submitting their work to government censorship.

Methodology

This thesis applies an eclectic method. It is a critical study of first-person narrative in Iran, with narratological and cultural studies forming the basis methods throughout. Its ultimate aim is to offer a fresh perspective on the subject of point of view as a component of narrative which is not merely technical or formal, but rather encompassing cultural, social, economical, psychological and literary trends. Closely focused on the first-person point of view, the thesis will investigate its historical (diachronic) development in detail. However, several of the scholars referenced in this work are structuralist narratology scholars such as Genette, Rimmon-Kenan and Todorov. This is because such structuralist narratologists have studied the author/narrator relationship with particular precision. While drawing on the useful opinions of structuralists throughout, the thesis has not been developed by applying structuralism as its sole methodology, since employing any one method would fail

to do justice to a work that delves into many non-structuralist spheres. For this reason, analysis at the semiotic level remains minimal throughout. A brief explanation as to why structuralist views have found their way into the thesis might serve to avert any risk of confusion: the fact is there is no one perfect theory for the study of literature, and each theory shows its own blind spots or pitfalls, which makes it more satisfactory to apply a combination of literary theories rather than relying on a single method. Narratology falls under the umbrella of literature, so it cannot be excluded. As narratology scholar Wallace Martin states, there is no all-inclusive theory of narrative available – for if this were the case, such theory should work for any narrative, whether written in the past or the future. However, unlike scientific theories that can be discarded and replaced, literary theories maintain their productivity and are applicable to new literary works (Martin 1986, 30). Therefore, structuralism might sound outdated, limiting or not fit for the theses written in this day and age. However, the structuralists' views were included in this thesis for the qualities Martin mentions. Particularly, in terms of narratology studies, structuralist views have shown the flexibility to expand and embrace other literary theories, such as feminist narratology, whose role is also examined in this thesis.

Limits and obstacles

Research for this thesis has encountered several obstacles that are worth describing here.

One of the central points of the thesis (as thoroughly discussed in Chapter Four) is the steady increase in the use of first-person narrative in novels published in Iran over the last fifteen years, notably in the works of female novelists. The argument is supported by findings derived from extensive reading in the relevant fields, as well as other direct sources, such as reports from the فرهنگسرا (*Farhangsarā*), local cultural associations affiliated to each borough in the main cities of Iran and active

in organizing book groups, readings and literary criticism events; contacts with informal literary circles; and original interviews with authors, scholars and journalists. However, no formal statistics are available on the number of novels written with a first-person narrative in the past fifteen years. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, whilst it is true that the website of the National Library of Iran is a reliable reference resource, listing each book's date of acquisition, number of pages and general physical characteristics, there is no record of the narrative point of view employed in a novel. Designing a database to help with this issue might be difficult in terms of time consumption and expense, even though individual records of the narrative point of view of each novel would enable researchers to access accurate figures on which to base further study. As I argue in this thesis, the point of view in fiction is far from being a mere technical element, and the availability of such records would not only further the scope and value of narratology and literature studies, but also prove helpful for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of cultural and social changes during the timespan examined, and the way in which such changes can affect a literary trend during a certain period. Also, gathering this sort of data is not as technically impossible a task as it may seem: recent advancements in digital technologies have made processing of natural languages using computers an everyday reality. Natural Languages Processing (NLP) is a field that studies the application of artificial intelligence and machine learning to both analyze and generate human languages, using either grammatical or statistical methods. NLP is now routinely being utilised for both scientific and commercial purposes in applications such as machine translation, automated internet bots, speech recognition and numerous others. In light of this it seems perfectly possible to use NLP to assist with the study of literature, and in particular with detecting and analyzing the narrative point of view employed in a work of fiction (Niknežād 2016/1395). For some examples of the application of NLP in the field of narratology, we can refer to Mani (2012), an investigation of the many challenges of computational models as applied to the various facets of narration

and offering computational modelling maps applicable to classic literary and narratological concepts. Sagae et al. (2013) examine data-driven methods to extract and classify the narrator's intent, categorizing them into diegetic or extradiegetic levels, while Eisenberg and Finlayson (2016) have specifically explored the problem of automatic identification of the point of view as well as narrative diegesis in the English language. A gold-standard corpus has been developed, annotating 270 English novels. It has been observed that for detecting the point of view, the frequency of personal pronouns provides the best feature, achieving high accuracy. Support Vector Machines (SVMs) have been employed for automatic classification of both values. Point of view in the text is often straightforward to detect by using the frequency of personal pronouns (Eisenberg and Finlayson 2016, 36): if the narrator refers to him/herself in the first person, the first-person pronoun is bound to be used. Hence, novels with first-person point of view narratives will naturally contain more uses of the first-person pronoun, which can be detected by statistical processing of the text. This same is also true, albeit to a lesser extent, for the third-person pronoun, which will be used more often in third-person narrations; however, the third-person pronoun has other uses in the text, which introduces noise and requires more complex processing to be usefully employed. In conventional machine learning applications, a number of these frequencies are provided as input features to machine learning methods (such as SVMs) to make the classification. These methods will then use a training set of data to understand the relationships between the input features and the classifications in order to automatically reduce noise and improve the accuracy of classification. Subject to the availability of data and careful linguistic investigation of the Persian language and its differences with English in this regard, it should be possible to apply a technique similar to the one described by Eisenberg and Finlayson (Ibid.).

Secondly, as we shall discuss in Chapter Three, there is a strong link between government censorship and the publication of first-person narrative novels: however, not surprisingly, this is not mirrored in any official statistic relative to the

number of books, including first-person novels, censored in Iran. To obviate this problem, this thesis will provide some original interviews with relevant figures. Interviewees such as ʿAli Aṣḡar Rameżānpur, former deputy of cultural affairs at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and head of the International Tehran Book Fair, at present living in exile in London, stated that government websites such as خانه کتاب (*Ḵānea Ketāb*, or The Book House), which keep a record of published books, tend to manipulate figures and data, and are highly unreliable – as might be expected in a country ruled by a religious autocracy, in which any statistics that might refute official government findings will be suppressed or altered. In addition, the statistics drawn by اداره کتاب (*Edārea Ketāb,* or The Book Bureau) are highly guarded and have never been officially released. The Book Bureau is part of اداره فرهنگ و اداره فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی (*Edārea Farhang va Eršād e Eslāmi,* or The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance), which is in charge of approving or refusing any book published in Iran. The ministry has never released any statistics on the number of books which have been refused publication or have been published after being censored. Feedback on these decisions is only given to the authors, who are generally unwilling to share it with researchers, for several reasons, not least personal safety. The ministry does not make any of this feedback public or allow researchers to access any part of it in any way. Overall, accessing any reliable figures is very difficult in Iran: the government is highly protective of figures and data, fearing that any sharing of information might be damaging to its rule or its image. This does not solely apply to the number of literary works being published or censored, but also to fields such as sociology and economics. The difficulty becomes more evident when the researcher needs any information pertaining to the field of the human sciences: it is not an overstatement to say that access to any reliable official data is impossible in Iran to anyone not working for the government. Thus, that the complete information about a book or the characteristics of a novel should be recorded and available in Iran today is a rather extravagant expectation. As mentioned, I have tried to compensate for the lack of official data and figures to

some extent by providing first-hand interviews conducted with a range of relevant figures.

To my knowledge, this is the first thorough critical study of the first-person narrative and its evolution in modern Persian novels. Whilst the function of the first-person narrative has been considered by literary critics, the problems and issues this raises have not in my view been fully thought out by Iranian literary scholars, who have so far always regarded the narrative point of view solely as an internal element of fiction. Neither has the relationship of the narrative point of view with feminist issues, or with historical and social factors, been studied before in Iran. This thesis is an attempt to 'scrape the surface', as it were, and to show how a specialized study of the narrative point of view might open a new door to comprehension of literary trends in a certain period and their relevance to social and cultural situations, while in addition pointing to a possible resolution of the problem of author/first-person narrator identification in Persian literary criticism.

Chapter One

The beginnings of Persian fiction

Almost a century has passed since the beginnings of fiction writing in Iran, and yet the field, in particular as regards the novel form, is still vital, constantly improving and evolving. One of the main reasons for the long delay after which Persian fiction became established lies in the fact that fiction writing is, as we have mentioned, a literary form imported from western countries such as France and England. The precise time at which Persian fiction began has been at the centre of much controversy. Persian literature scholars have not reached an agreement on a certain time or one particular novel to mark the exact commencement of fiction writing in Iran, although what is clear is that the Persian novel was born under the influence of novel writing in the west, and particularly in France. According to author and literary critic Moḥammadʿali Sepānlu, novel writing in Iran was sparked by the publication of French novels translated into Persian, and that novels such as Alexandre Dumas' The Three Musketeers and The Count of Monte Cristo, published and serialized between 1844 and 1845, played a large part in widening and changing the taste of Iranian readers (Sepānlu 1987/1366, 25-26). Other literary scholars think that viewing the Persian novel as somehow 'borrowed' from the west would imply the notion that Iranian prose writers had failed to produce original fiction. Whilst Iranian fiction has clearly been influenced by indigenous Persian prose, mainly in terms of theme and atmosphere, it does seem excessive to view novel writing in Iran as solely derived from the influence of writers of fables and anecdotes, and to ultimately trace its origins back to long romances such as *Samak e ʿAyyār*, a story transmitted orally until its first transcription in the twelfth century.

At this point it might be useful to hark back to the generally accepted definition of 'fiction' and 'novel'. From the Oxford Dictionary: 'fiction, *n*: literature in the form of

prose, especially novels, that describes imaginary events and people'; 'novel, *n*: a fictitious prose narrative of book length, typically representing character and action with some degree of realism'. According to these definitions, Şādeq Hedāyat's بوف کور (*Buf e kur,* or *The Blind Owl*) (1936/1315), is the first Persian novel. The generally agreed definition is that *The Blind Owl* is the first 'modern' Persian novel. I view this qualifier as less than helpful and, with Golširi (1999/1378, 294), hold that *The Blind Owl* meets the criteria by which we define a novel much more fully than the lengthy prose works that preceded it. It is worth remembering at this stage that *The Blind Owl* is not only the first Persian novel, but also the starting point of the author/narrator identification in Persian fiction. A more detailed discussion of this point, of Hedāyat's construction of the first-person narrator and of the impact of *The Blind Owl* on Persian fiction writing will be initiated in Chapter Two.

Although a full exploration of the historical background of Persian fiction is beyond the scope and primary focus of this thesis, the background of the Persian novel will be referenced as needed in the course of our discussion.

Modern prose writing in Iran started with the rise of the Persian Constitutional Movement (*Enqelāb e Mašruțea*), leading to the Persian Constitutional Revolution which took place between 1905 and 1911 (1284-1290). With the rise of translation from western books into Persian and increased opportunities for large print runs, a new form of prose was introduced to Iranian readers, and this in turn prepared the ground for the reception of western fiction. Although our primary focus is novel writing and its development from its inception to the present, a discussion of fiction writing in Iran would in no way be complete without a mention of the importance of the short story form. It is widely agreed among scholars of Persian literature that, on account of his short stories, Moḥammadʿali Jamālzādea is the father of Persian fiction in Iran. Jamālzādea was born in Eṣfahān in Iran in 1892 and passed away in Geneva in Switzerland in 1997. One of the foremost Iranian intellectuals in the twentieth century, he left Iran at the age of twelve to study in Beirut, later leaving for Europe. His first collection of short stories, یکی بود یکی نبود (*Once Upon a Time*),

published in 1921/1300 in Berlin, is often referred to as marking the rise of the realist school in Iran; the preface by which the author opened the book offers a most important contribution. Jamālzādea was the first author to write about the benefits of the novel as a literary form (1977/1356/2536, 8-10), criticizing the old-fashioned perfectionism of his contemporaries. Although Jamālzādea has been deemed the father of Persian fiction and Golširi the father of experimental fiction writing in Iran, Jamālzādea could, in my view, rightfully claim both titles, since it was Jamālzādea who for the first time encouraged young writers to experiment with new literary forms, particularly the novel, in the preface of *Once Upon a Time*. Thus, Golširi refined and expanded what had originally been Jamālzādea's idea. As a resident of Switzerland, Jamālzādea had a chance to encounter the work of western writers and to compare it with that of Iranian writers, coming to the conclusion that a change of style, along with experimentation in new literary forms, was necessary for Persian prose to evolve and be revived, and acting on his intuition by publishing short stories written in a western style. Whilst Jamālzādea's works are not generally classified as modern fiction at present, his groundbreaking contribution to fiction writing in Iran should not be overlooked.

Before the publication of *Once Upon a Time*, Iranian society, influenced by the Persian Constitutional Revolution, had slowly been moving towards change: young students being sent to Europe to study, particularly to France and Britain, were returning to Iran after graduation; travel journals flourished, western fiction, including novels, was being translated into Persian, as were history books, and printing techniques were also improved. All these factors prepared the ground for Iranian readers to embrace the novel as a western literary form (Kāmšād 2010, 11-25).

Literary criticism in Iran: a chronological overview

Literary criticism has been a part of the Persian literary tradition since the pre-Islamic period. In this section I shall limit my discussion to the western literary criticism which influenced Iran in the nineteenth century; I shall however also offer a critical study of literary criticism in Iran, considering that literary criticism unsupported by literary criteria has for the most part descended into the extremes of idolatry or iconoclasm. Most traditional Persian literary criticism was either descriptive or based on personal taste rather than on certain criteria, and heavily biased towards biographical criticism. Thus, a writer's life and his/her work were not two separate things to literary critics, and there was no middle ground between either praising or attacking a writer. Contemporary Persian scholars have tried to find a new approach to literary criticism by exposing the pitfalls of traditional literary criticism in Iran. Many of these critics derived their new outlook on literary criticism from looking up to their western counterparts: whilst it was their achievement to provide a critique of literary criticism in Iran, they failed to introduce any new methods and theories. At this point a brief overview of the development of the reception of western literary criticism in Iran since the nineteenth century might prove useful towards a better understanding of the particular narratological context we are proposing to examine. This will be structured chronologically by listing a few of the key figures in the field.

Mirzā Fathʿali Ākundzadea (1812-1878), the first Iranian playwright in the Qājār period, was also the first author who wrote about the necessity of literary criticism in his dissertation ایراد (*Irād*, or roughly *Critically Speaking*), written in 1861/1240. His statement is worth quoting at length: 'This [literary criticism] is common in Europe and there are many advantages to it. For instance, if one writes a book, another person writes a criticism on it, but the criticism should be done very carefully without being unpleasant towards the author's personality... this is called critique in French' (1976/1355/2535, 11).

The writer and critic Sepānlu states that Ākundzadea was the first person to comprehend the necessity of literary criticism in Iran and to believe that Europe's prosperity and development is a result of criticism (Sepānlu 1987/1366, 248). Ākundzadea practised realism as a playwright and wrote reviews on Ferdowsi, Neẓāmi, Homer and Shakespeare. His view was that the main purpose of art is to aid human beings to evolve towards virtue by pointing them to right path. Ākundzadea was also familiar with poetry criticism and believed that poetry is superior to prose for Iranians (1976/1355/2535, 15-16). This is clearly brought out in the history of Persian literature, and is likely one of the reasons for poor prose literary criticism in Iran. In his essay قریتیکا (*Criticism*), written in 1865/1244, Ākundzadea stated that a literary work should gather beautiful words and meanings together. Thus, Ākundzadea's literary criticism was a combination of aesthetic criticism and moral criticism.

Literary scholar and critic Fātemea Sayyāḥ (1902-1948) was the first person to be awarded the title of Chair of Comparative Literature at the University of Tehran. In her address to the First Writers' Congress in Iran in 1946/1325, she spoke of the necessity of literary criticism in Iran, stating that despite having always had a poor reception, literary criticism had a significant role to play in the evolution of worldwide literature for the new times (Sayyāḥ 1975/1354, 265-266). The importance of Sayyāḥ's speech lies in the introduction of three categories of literary criticism: normative criticism, interpretive-evaluative criticism and theoretical criticism (Ibid., 264). Like Ākundzadea, Sayyāḥ believed that poetry was superior to prose and that prose could also be seen as belonging to different traditions (Ibid., 281). She also thought that literature evolves solely through criticism, and that the main purpose of literature should be to serve society (Ibid., 277).

ʿAbdolḥoseyn Zarrinkub (1953-1999), one of the foremost writers, historians and literary critics in Iran, was mostly known for his studies of literary criticism and widely credited for bringing some order to the field of literary criticism studies in Iran. Zarrinkub held the view that literary criticism in Iran was 'ailing', and that the

influence of journalism made it 'sloppy' (1997/1376, 9). In his view, textual criticism is the main pillar of literary criticism and the starting point for studying other fields of literary criticism (1983/1362, 28). Zarrinkub wrote more than fifteen books on prose, poetry and literary criticism and compiled a volume of literary criticism of Persian literature. Later, Naṣrollah Emāmi, one of Zarrinkub's students, followed in his footprints and wrote a book on literary criticism in Iran and its problems. Emāmi believed that there are two main reasons for the weakness of literary criticism in Iran: firstly, the biographical approach in Persian literary criticism, and secondly, the journalistic approach to literary criticism, which focuses on the author's private life rather than drawing on accurate criteria for the study of a literary work (Emāmi 1998/1377, 163-194).

Literary scholar and linguist K̲osrow Faršidvard (1929-2009) tried for the first time to provide an accurate classification of literary criticism in his book درباره ادبیات و نقد ادبی (*About Literature and Literary Criticism*) (1984/1363, 181). He spoke of the unhealthy state of literary criticism in Iran and of the reasons for literary criticism in Iran relying mostly on readers' taste rather than on the opinion of experienced literary critics (Ibid., 206). Faršidvard held the view that the type of literary criticism prevalent in Iran is descriptive, dealing mostly with giving an outline of the work rather than criticizing it. Faršidvard expresses surprise at the fact that, despite their rich literary heritage, Iranians have not had a single literary critic like western literary critics (Ibid., 14). In his book (which represented a huge step forward for literary criticism despite being poorly received on publication), Faršidvard provides a combination of eastern and western literary criteria, listing what he considers are the weak and strong points of each and showing the necessity of literary criticism in the study of literature by offering a critique of literary criticism in Iran. He opens new paths for readers by enabling them to understand literary criticism from a different perspective. Combining western literary criticism theories with eastern theories (including Persian and Arabic ones), he also takes a step forward towards

introducing western literary criticism in Iran and making its contribution more accessible.

Novelist and poet Reżā Barāheni, also recognized by Sepānlu and Golširi as a prominent literary critic (Sepānlu 1987/1366, 170; Golširi 1999/1378, 778), moved literary criticism a step forward in his book قصه نویسی (*Fiction Writing*, 1969/1348). Although he is himself barely impartial in his views towards other writers' works, Barāheni states that the Iranian readership inclines towards idolatry or iconoclasm rather than criticism (1969/1348, 423) — and that western literary schools have met with hostile reception, which in turn has caused western literature to be misunderstood by most Iranian readers. Barāheni also warns Iranian readers to be aware of the semantic shift undergone by western words: for instance, in his view, most Iranians do not use the word 'nihilism' in the right way, and understand by it something completely different from what a western reader would (Ibid., 425). Barāheni's book raised many questions, most of which he left unanswered; a more accurate referencing apparatus would probably have helped interested readers to trace quotes more easily. It was in any case the first book to take a critical approach to fiction writing; before its publication, Ebrāhim Yunesi, a prominent translator and novelist, had published a book titled هنر داستان نویسی (*The Art of Fiction Writing*, 1962/1341), which was however geared to teaching how to write fiction.

In his book باغ در باغ (*Garden in Garden*), published in 1999/1378, Hušang Golširi (1938-2000) writes that literary criticism in Iran is inefficient as it lacks all the criteria needed to study a literary work and is mostly aimed to building friendships among literary figures rather than creating a productive atmosphere for their works to be studied and criticized (1999/1378, 779). Golširi thought that the other reason for the weakness of literary criticism is lack of knowledge of western literary criticism, and that Iranian literary critics should therefore familiarize themselves with different schools of literary criticism, including western ones (Ibid.). Although Golširi stated in the same book that he was excited about the recent efforts to translate western literary criticism materials, almost seventeen years after the publication of

his book there does not seem to be any significant advancement in the field of literary criticism in Iran. Whilst there have indeed been many efforts to translate relevant works and to create literary criticism events of different kinds, and whilst the number of academic journals of literary criticism is proof that the literary community in Iran is aware of literary criticism issues, such studies and initiatives seem to be remaining unproductive in many ways: in particular, the issue of setting out literary criteria to study a literary work remains somewhat intractable. I suggest here that one of the reasons for the hostile reception of western literary criticism in Iran is that the Persian equivalents suggested for the terminologies used in western literary theories, literary criticism, literary schools and literary devices are for the most part incomprehensible to Iranian readers. To begin with the novel itself, there is no original historical background to novel writing in Iran: the novel was merely a literary form borrowed from western countries. Devices and instructions would have been needed so that this new literary from could be produced and studied, but the lack of such devices made the spread of novel writing in Iran similar to the purchase of a product without instructions for use. To understand a novel and how it works, Iranian readers would have needed to know about different western literary schools such as realism, surrealism, existentialism etc., just as western readers of the 18th and 19th century had to familiarize themselves with such categories. Novel writing in Iran was buried under the names of all these different literary schools, but these were not rooted in any historical background, and readers had no clear idea of what they really were, despite efforts to widen understanding of western literary schools, such as those initiated by leading magazine سخن (*Sokan*), published from 1953 to 1979. One of the most common ideas about the weakness of literary criticism and the poor reception of western literary forms such as the novel in Iran is that all these shortcomings are solely the result of not enough translations of western books being available. However, I suggest that the more likely reason is that knowledge of these literary schools is deeply rooted in an understanding of the philosophical and sociological backgrounds of western

countries. These schools have highly influenced not only the literature, but also other aspects of culture in western countries, whereas Iranian readers first encountered them through literature, in such a way as made them unable to consolidate their understanding through slow-paced, gradual exposure. As we shall discuss in Chapter Two, whilst modern Iranian intellectuals such as Moḥammad ʿali Jamālzādea, Ṣādeq Hedāyat, Bozorg ʿAlavi and others opened a door to western literature for Iranian readers, they failed to provide a solid background that would guide readers to a better understanding. To my mind, this lack of consolidation was a more significant factor in the depletion of the vitality of mainstream literary criticism in Iran than the lack of translations of works from western countries, a deeper understanding of even a limited field being more desirable, in my view, than the opposite situation. Lack of consolidation and understanding also caused literary critics to fail to fully understand the terms referring to various schools and the aims and features of each school, and such misinterpretations were in turn transmitted to a large reading public. To compound this situation, western primary resources for the study of literary criticism (and only a few of them at that) were translated in Iran decades after they were first published in the west, without a systematic approach and often in multiple versions making use of diverse and inconsistent terminologies. To fully discuss the reasons for this situation and its underlying politics would probably require a separate research; suffice it to say that it hardly seemed to help readers towards a better understanding of western literary criticism.

Among publications, راهنمای کتاب (*Book Guide*) magazine, published from 1961 to 1979 (1340-1357), was the first to attempt accurate literary criticism (Sepānlu 1987, 268). Today, about ten different journals publish papers on literary criticism: among them فصلنامه نقد ادبی* (*Journal of Literary Criticism*), published since 2008, is one of the best, -along with فصلنامه ادبیات (*Literature Journal*), جهان کتاب (*World of Books*) and نقد کتاب (*Book Criticism*).

This brief overview of the progress of literary criticism in Iran shows that no significant improvement has been made in the past fifty years. Despite the large

number of literary reviews being published, and transcripts of literary criticism meetings and events being available on the Internet, literary criticism seems to lack criteria, and most literary critics are hardly impartial. Further problems are raised by the fact that not many works are written by Iranian literary critics, and that the works chosen for translation are not primary resources for the study of literary criticism.

The question of the author/narrator relationship

Author/narrator relationship and point of view are two of the subjects studied under narratology studies, a discipline derived from literary criticism studies. The two subjects are tied together in studies of narrative in fiction. In general, early fiction writers in countries such as France and England would offer clarification on the author/narrator relationship, considering that their inexperienced readers, approaching a new literary form, might find it difficult to distinguish the author from the narrator. For instance, in the nineteenth century, Balzac opens the first edition (1836) of his novel *Le lys dans la vallée (The Lily of the Valley)* with a preface in which he warns the reader against identifying the author with his first-person narrator, and states that using the *moi* is risky for the author, as almost all readers tend to identify the author with the narrator. Balzac has little faith in his readers, stating that the increase in their numbers is not matched by the level of their intelligence, since they still assume that the author is a partner in crime with his fictional characters (Balzac 2014, 10). As structuralist literary theorist Gérard Genette shows in his 1972 book *Discours du Récit (Narrative Discourse)*, the problems inherent in the author/narrator relationship have persisted for a long time. Genette criticized readers and literary critics alike, stating that the role of the narrator, like that of other characters in the story, is fictional (1972, 213); in particular, he took issue with the poor reception of first-person narratives, noting that for a long time, not only inexperienced readers but also literary critics have understood the narrating 'I' solely as referred to the author. Whilst this is clearly

understandable in the case of the narrator of a historical book or an autobiography, the narrator of a work of fiction, as a creature of the author, also has a fictional role (Ibid., 212-213). As an example, Genette states that having access to Marcel Proust's biography does not provide the reader with a better understanding of his famous novel *À la recherche du temps perdu (In Search of Lost Time)* (1913), and stresses that readers should not be concerned with Proust's biography when reading his novel. The book is a work of fiction. Thus, the fact that Marcel in the book becomes a writer does not prove he is identifiable with Marcel Proust, the author: 'Marcel becomes a writer not Marcel the writer' (Genette 1972, 227). Genette also quotes a letter from Proust to writer and literary critic Jacques Rivière, in which Proust laments the fact that the actions and words of the narrator in his book were attributed to him, and states that he would rather readers avoid this sort of judgement (Ibid., 223-224).

It can be argued that fiction writing in the west has always been concerned with author/narrator identification; thus instructions on this would be given by some authors, mainly in the preface of their books. In Iran, on the contrary, no such instructions are available to this day for readers who embark on reading a novel, who seemingly are expected by authors and literary critics alike to be able to leave a distance between the author and the narrator of a fiction. Confusion over the author/narrator relationship thus persists. As writer Amirḥoseyn Khoršidfar notes, 'Iranian readers, as a whole, tend to identify the first-person narrator with the author of a work of fiction. It seems that the damage caused by writers, literary critics and intellectuals by failing to provide an explanation is irreparable. Today, even many writers are stuck in the same trap: if asked by readers how they could describe a city in such beautiful detail, they would answer that they know the city and have narrated it in a first-person narrative. Now the writer should know that in fiction he is not expected to provide a true or false account of any subject, so his work does not need to be justified or represented as a factual report: he is different from his narrator and characters. Fiction is fiction! And this is how it differs from

writing a report, for instance. In fact, the writer often knows all this, but he lowers his standards to suit inexperienced readers, and even thinks that his novel will lose credibility if he says that the city is fictional and that he has never seen such a place' (Koršidfar 2017/1396). Koršidfar shows how there is a lack of understanding of this issue in Iran, as opposed to the west, where the sensitivity of the issue of author/first-person narrator relationship was understood and explained. I suggest here that another difference in the way the issue was treated in the west and in Iran is the fact that Iranian literary critics tend to give the impression that the whole responsibility for the distinction between author and narrator rests on the writer's shoulders, and readers are not encouraged to take their share of responsibility: for instance, literary scholar Sirus Šamisā considers it to be the writers' responsibility to leave a distance between themselves and their work, including their narrators (Šamisā 1999/1378, 337).

In the past five years, the numbers of narratology books published by Iranian authors has increased. However, the number of studies on the author/first-person narrator relationship has remained severely limited: only a few online publications specifically address the question, and only an insignificant number of narratology studies discuss the author/first-person relationship.

One of the first attempts in distancing the author from his first-person narrator is that made by Reżā Barāheni. In the book discussed above, *Fiction Writing*, and in greater details in his later book جنون نوشتن (*The Urge to Write*) (1989/1368), Barāheni states that the author is searching for a lookout where his second self can sit so as to narrate the story. Thus, the narrator is not the author himself, it is his second self (1989/1368, 556). Whilst closer to a description of the difference between the author and the narrator, Barāheni's construct of the second self seems to be equivalent to that of the implied author. These terms were coined by Booth in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). Barāheni referenced Booth's book in his essay, and was clearly influenced by his views, but it is important to highlight that the author is different from the second self (or the implied author) and the implied

29

author has a different function to that of the narrator, as we shall discuss later. Also, several of Booth's concepts are discussed with what seems to be insufficient understanding: for instance, Barāheni (1989/1368, 560) states that the first-person narrator is never neutral towards the characters or actions in the book, as its role is to support the author's belief or, in other words, to speak for the author. In a postscript to his book, Barāheni conceded that the book was not complete (thus his understanding of a few foreign terms might be faulty), since he had not been to any foreign countries during the time the book was written. (Ibid., 745-747) Overall *The Urge to Write* does in any case represent a widening of the path for further discussion of the author/first-person narrator relationship.

A few years later, in his book *Garden in Garden*, Hušang Golširi would state that the first-person point of view (first-person narrator) is not necessarily the author (1999/1378, 364). Considering his background in fiction and his influence as the leader of creative writing workshops in Iran, Golširi does not offer a thorough discussion of the author/first-person narrator relationship. In one of the essays contained in *Garden in Garden*, دوراهه من و من دیگر (*The Dilemma of 'I' and the other 'I'*), Golširi states that by constructing a first-person narrator (the 'I'), the author creates a نقاب (*neqāb*, or persona), so that the other 'I' can recount the story (1999/1378, 584). Against this, I would argue that the author does not employ the first-person narrator as a persona, since, if we accept Booth's terminology, the persona is equivalent to the second self (Booth 1983, 83) or implied author. The implied author is a concept used in literary criticism to distinguish between the author and narrator. I shall discuss this in greater detail later, but will briefly stress here that persona and first-person narrator are different concepts. In the same book, as we have seen, Golširi mentions the poor reception of first-person narratives in Persian fiction. It can be argued that he is the first critic to raise the author/narrator question: 'One of the problems of fiction writing in Iran' he states 'is that readers assume that the author is the same as the first-person narrator. Even if they are not identical, censors assume they are, and the proof of their

misapprehension is that they critique authors in (government) newspapers by referring to their first-person works' (1999/1378, 493). Golširi's statement is important because it not only raises the question of author/first-person identification and offers a detailed discussion of it, but also speaks openly of the fact that censors and censorship in Iran have an influence over the publication of novels written in the first person, as I shall thoroughly discuss in Chapter Three.

The point of view

The point of view, as a technical component of narrative in fiction writing, has not thoroughly been studied in Iran. In the west, for that matter, it was not until the early twentieth century that the study of point of view became a centre of attention for literary critics. Martin (1986, 21) describes this evolution as a 'noteworthy change' in twentieth-century literary criticism, leading to a huge level of concentration on the point of view as 'a primary technical device in narrative'. Thus, early in the history of fiction writing in the west, point of view was not considered as important as it is today. It was later in the twentieth century that Genette introduced the terms 'focalization' for the point of view and 'voice' for the narrators. Genette's accurate studies of point of view cleared up much confusion on the subject, although his terminology was not widely adopted by later structuralist literary critics: Lanser, for instance, stated that Genette's terminology was 'unproductive' (1981, 133): indeed, Genette's terminology was immensely complex, and hardly understandable even to a scholarly readership. Whilst a few narratologists, such as Rimmon-Kenan, employed Genette's terminology in their work, most preferred to stick with the old-fashioned terms when discussing point of view. Seymour Chatman states in his book *Story and Discourse* that 'point of view' is one of the most problematic critical terms because of its plurisignification (1978, 151). Stanzel, on the other hand, contends that 'point of view' is a precise term, but

that the problem lies in its not being applied consistently (1984, 9). One of the reasons narrative criticism looked to invent other equivalents for the term 'point of view' probably lies in the need to distinguish it from the common use of the term (meaning 'belief' or 'opinion'). I suggest that this is why Genette opted for 'focalization' and Todorov preferred to use the word 'perspective'.

In Iran, however, زاویه دید (*zāviyea did*, literally translated as 'angle of vision'), has always been a technical word in literary criticism: there was no need for Persian literary critics to become more adventurous and suggest other equivalents for the term. Thus, زاویه دید remains the most commonly used term in Persian for 'point of view'; نظرگاه (*naẓargāh*) or دیدگاه (*didgāh*) are the other two equivalent terms, although their use is more limited. Between these two terms, نظرگاه (*naẓargāh*) was widely used by Golširi (1999/1378, 19), and it is used to this day by his workshop students, while دیدگاه (*didgāh*) was the term preferred by Barāheni (969/1348, 196). Golširi also opened up a discussion of the importance of point of view in novel writing. He considered point of view as the fictional technique most relevant to defamiliarization (1999/1378, 19 and 403), as theorized in 1917 by Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky. I suggest here that Golširi is likely to have been influenced by Shklovsky's defamiliarization theory in his discussion of point of view, although it is difficult to know whether this effect came directly from reading Shklovsky or from other scholars' interpretations of his theory. For instance, Stanzel notes the same thing in *A Theory of Narrative* (1984): in his discussion of Shklovsky's statement on how art imparts the sensation of things, 'makes the stone stony', he states that Shklovsky's 'estrangement theory' (Stanzel suggests 'estrangement' as equivalent to the German 'Verfremdung') is indeed a point of view theory since it 'refers to perspectival means of estrangement' (Stanzel 1984, 10). Similarly, Golširi believed that the importance of point of view was derived from the importance of defamiliarization. Golširi stated that defamiliarization should be accepted while discussing point of view, since it is the author's perspective that makes readers look at the world from a different perspective. The author's aim is not to show reality but

to represent his perspective of what reality is (1999/1378, 403). Golširi's statement could be taken further, since the author constructs the narrator, but the reader deals with the narrator's perspective and experiences, not the author's. Stanzel (1984, 10) believes that this tendency towards estrangement is taken to its extreme when the narrator is shown to have a mental health issue or is otherwise 'debilitated', since these 'outside' narrators produce estrangement, thus pushing readers to familiarize themselves with the distinctly unfamiliar reality described by the narrator – as is the case in such books as Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury* (1929) or Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962). A good example in Persian fiction of this approach to producing estrangement by using point of view is Hedāyat's *The Blind Owl* (1936).

Point of view theories have become popular in Iran in the last five years with the spread of narratology books, mainly translated from western languages such as English and French. Jamāl Mirşādeqi, a pioneer in Persian fiction research in Iran, published زاویه دید در داستان (*The Point of View in Fiction*) in 2012/1391. The first book written in Persian entirely on the subject, *The Point of View in Fiction* is a thorough study, following on from Mirşādeqi's earlier and briefer discussions of the subject in books such as عناصر داستان (*Elements of Fiction*) (1988/1367). *The Point of View in Fiction* opens a door for readers to an understanding of different types of point of view and different point of view theories. It is true that many of the examples cited by Mirşādeqi are taken from books that have not been published in Iran, or, when published, did not reach a second print run, and hence could not be said to be widely known (this is one of the main pitfalls of books written by Iranian literary critics, many of whom are familiar with at least one foreign language and likely able to access a range of foreign books); yet Mirşādeqi's book is fairly balanced, providing a number of examples derived from Iranian as well as foreign authors and widely known works of fiction. Wayne Booth relates in the foreword to his *Rhetorics of Fiction* (1961) how one of his readers complained that to read and understand this book one would need to read all the works of fiction he mentions (1983, 12);

but Booth's examples are taken either from fictions written in English or from such widely known works as *Madame Bovary, In Search of Lost Time* or *Crime and Punishment*, and thus accessible to a much larger group of readers.

In recent years, Gérard Genette's point of view theories have also become very popular with literature students in Iran. Genette is particularly interesting to academic scholars and students, and his views and theories are widely employed in academic papers and dissertations; yet it seems clear that his work, as a whole, has not been correctly received in Iran. Genette's terms are not used accurately in scholarly works, much of which are based on the very few translations of works of narratology published in Iran: thus many of these terms have been through a significant semantic shift. This is further complicated by the overabundance of Persian equivalents generally suggested for each term in the translations – a largely superfluous effort in my view. Scarcity of translated materials and proliferation of equivalent terms are also cited as the two main obstacles to the progress of narratology studies by literary scholar Moḥammad Šahbā, a pioneer in translating foreign narratology books into Persian (Book City 2009/1388).

One of the most useful books towards an understanding of the issue of point of view is Jaap Lintvelt's *Essai de typologie narrative (le 'point de vue'),* accurately translated by ʿAli ʿAbbasi and Noṣrat Ḥejāzi. First published in Paris in 1981, Lintvelt's book, a careful study on the typology of point of view, was published in Tehran in 2011/1390: an example of how primary narratology resources are translated into Persian decades after their original publication.

In early western narratology studies the importance of point of view as an element of fiction was commonly overlooked: Booth, for instance, held that whether the narrative is written in the first or the third person, what is truly important is the narrator's level of reliability (1983, 158). It can be argued that Booth, although a pioneer in the clarifying and explaining of fiction and fictional terms, underestimated the importance of point of view as a primary technical device. Yet

Booth is not alone in ignoring point of view as a significant element of fiction: Todorov, in his *Introduction to Poetics* (1973), states that point of view (or perspective, to use his preferred term) is no longer fashionable as it was in the times of Henry James, and no longer as important, owing to a long period of viewpoint interplay from James to Faulkner (Todorov 1981, 37-38).

It is only gradually that the point of view acquires more importance in the work of western narratology scholars. In his *Narratology* (1982), Gerald Prince states that the importance of the point of view derives from its effect on the types of events recounted, their recounting and the interpretation one gives of them (1982, 54). Interestingly, Prince argued that one of the advantages of studying narratology lies in finding the ability to understand why a certain point of view is employed in a narrative (Ibid., 60); Martin, in his *Recent Theories of Narrative*, states that the value of the point of view is to demonstrate the function of form and content together (1986, 16); and Susan Lanser, in *The Narrative Act (1981),* precisely and beautifully discusses the importance of the point of view with regard to genre and gender. Lanser believed that a look at the history of the point of view in the west shows that the crucial issues in play had to a certain extent been neglected by western literary critics. However, literay theorists did confront the issue, and the point of view has become more and more central to the definition and study of fiction today (Lanser 1981, 21). We shall return later and in greater detail to Lanser's valuable insights on the point of view.

Because of the increase in the number of works of narratology translated in Iran, the novel is accepted as the most widely employed literary form in contemporary Iran; also, several studies have finally moved the issue of the point of view to the centre of attention as a worthwhile subject of academic and general interest alike within the Iranian literary community, as shown by the number of book criticism events, academic publications and reviews published in newspapers or magazines.

The first-person point of view

Although separate entities, the narrator and the first-person point of view as an element of fiction are closely related by mutual relevance. I shall therefore discuss them both: the focus of this research is the author/first-person relationship, which necessarily involves at least a brief look at narrator, point of view and first-person point of view, as well as at the author/narrator relationship.

There are many types of first-person points of view (such as I-witness and I-protagonist) in fiction writing; to discuss them all in detail would far exceed the scope of this research, but it is worth noting that a thorough categorization of the first-person point of view is offered by Stanzel in A *Theory of Narrative* (1981, 202).

As I shall discuss, the author/I-protagonist relationship is one of the thorniest issues in modern literary criticism: in other words, not all categories of first-person point of view are as open to dispute. For instance, there is almost no risk of author/first-person narrator identification if the narrator is an I-witness such as Nick Carraway in Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925). It seems to me that readers (including literary critics and scholars) are not inclined towards author/first-person narrator identification unless the first-person narrator is an I-protagonist placed at the centre of the narrative.

Open discussion of the author/I-protagonist in literary criticism in Iran is extremely helpful for the purpose of an improved understanding of the I-protagonist narrator, and also to obviate the huge confusion on this issue. The I-protagonist is central to the narrative, which makes it more easily identified with the author. To discuss this might lead to a better understanding of the author's position in literary criticism and of such vital issues as government censorship, self-censorship, and readers' understanding of the distance between author and narrator. This should in turn lead to a better appreciation of literary works, helping authors to create better fiction, and literary critics to refine their work.

The reader

It is probably fair to say that, in general, literary criticism in the west and in Iran has moved toward a reader-centred approach. Most fictions written in present times leave the reader free to take part in the interpretation and understanding of the work. The figure of an intrusive all-knowing narrator (which is in fact the author himself), spoonfeeding the reader with his ideas, thoughts and moral judgements, is being effaced.

Despite its many weaknesses, literary criticism in Iran has recently begun to change, and readers are more often expected to join the author in the interpretation of his/her work. This approach to the reader, widely known as سفیدخوانی (*sefidkāni*, or blank reading) or سطرهای سپید (*saṭrhay e sepid*, or blank lines), alluding to the reader's supposed ability to read the unwritten text, has become popular with fiction writers. It began with the diffusion of the *nouveau roman* in Iran and with the literary activities of the Eṣfahān school (Hušang Golširi being its best-known exponent). Reader-centred fiction was born in Iran through the influence of Alain Robbe-Grillet and his 'uncertainty principle', leading to creative writing workshops and, most importantly, to the birth of the experimental novel in Iran. The role of the author became marginalized and the elitist literary approach gradually made way for a new role for readers, who became central to the work of fiction and found new responsibilities. This shift also meant that fiction writers had to become more concise in their narratives, avoiding intrusive narrators, judgemental attitudes towards their characters or overdetailed descriptions. Sepānlu believes that in the Sixties and Seventies (1340-1350), Persian fiction writers moved towards employing a sort of sign language as authors, not giving away too much information but trying to build a closer relationship with their readers and to help them find 'the moral of the story' for themselves (Sepānlu 1987/1366, 109-110). In recent years, the

number of academic papers emphasizing the role of the reader has increased in Iran. Many of them are based on the theory of reception; however, Iranian readers were hardly influenced by literary theories on reader response, and the theory of reception probably did not enter their field of attention. Rather, the reader-centred approach has gained ground smoothly and naturally in Iran, mostly influenced, as we have noted, by Golširi and the Eṣfahān literary school, which in turn were influenced by the *nouveau roman,* and particularly by Robbe-Grillet. In recent years, the publication of narratology books has also helped readers towards a better understanding of reader-response theories in literary criticism.

In the west, however, the reader-centred approach was more systematic. Literary critics such as Booth emphasized the role of the reader, stating that modern fiction needs the contribution of the reader more than earlier fiction, that readers need to choose for themselves, and that they feel the value of the truth more deeply when it is attained or lost by the hero's failure (1983, 293). Although Booth encourages readers to take part in extracting the truth from the fiction, he is wary of readers who identify the first-person narrator with the author (Ibid., 367). I argue that Booth puts the author and the reader on the same level, and holds that a work of fiction is a sort of 'communication' belonging to the reader just as much as to the author (Ibid., 397). The author writes and makes his/her works accessible, and the reader wants to understand and appreciate the work. Booth puts both readers and authors in categories, and accurately represents their relationship by means of a diagram (Ibid., 428-431). For Wallace Martin (1986, 27), reader-response theories such as, most notably, Wolfgang Iser's are the most influential contributions to literary criticism in recent years. On the process of reading, Martin enables us to see things from a different angle, and this is what Booth (1983, 397) considered as a kind of communication. In *The Narrative Act* (1981, 53), Lanser states that Iser's 'reader-text interaction' has gained huge acceptance in recent times. Gerald Prince also tries to put readers in different categories, such as 'ideal readers, virtual readers, implied readers […]' stating however that all readers, regardless of the categories to which

they might be seen to belong, should have one thing in common, i.e. the ability and willingness to ask relevant questions about the work (1982, 103-104). Prince suggests that the reader needs to be armed with a variety of skills in order to read a text, and should be able to answer and raise certain questions about the text itself. Readers might also need to employ their interpretive strategies to decipher many codes and sub-codes, symbolic codes, narrative genre, hermeneutic codes and character codes in a text. (Ibid., 131-132). Overall, structuralist literary critics and narratology scholars such as Booth, Prince, Rimmon-Kenan and Todorov postulate that there is a reciprocal relation between text and reader. Booth seems to take an easier approach to readers, even implicitly encouraging the author to make his/her work accessible to a larger readership, while Prince on the other hand might be seen to expect more from the reader. Following in Prince's footsteps, Rimmon-Kenan (1989, 118) also distinguishes between different groups of readers, while Todorov (1981, 4-5) goes further in giving credibility to the reader, stating that although it is said that the text should speak for itself, the text needs its readers: it is a passive piece of writing that becomes active through being read, since two readings of the same text can never be identical.

Rimmon-Kenan states that both the Anglo-American New Critics and the French structuralists treated the text as a more or less autonomous subject (1989, 117). I on the other hand suggest that the text might not be entirely autonomous, as the reader's active participation in the interpretation of the text can lead to the extraction of much meaning that the author might not have deliberately included in the text: the text, however, still takes priority, since even 'the unwritten text' – assuming the reader can access it – is created within the text itself. In other words, it is difficult to accept that the author has not wanted to convey any messages to his readers. Todorov states – quite plausibly in my view – that to say everything is interpretation does not mean that all interpretations are equivalent, since we all know in practice that some readings are more faithful than others (1981, 5).

Narratology studies in Iran

Since both point of view and narrator are the subject of narratology studies, a brief overview of the development and quality of narratology in Iran might be useful at this stage.

The first thing one notices is that the number of narratology texts translated from foreign (mostly western) languages is far higher than the number of those originally written in Persian – which is understandable, given that narratology is a relatively new discipline in Iran, and Iranian literary scholars have not yet contributed any established theories to the field. An essential list of the main works that introduced narratology studies to Iran (whether or not they applied structuralist methods) would begin with Vladimir Prop's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), translated by Fereydun Badreayi into Persian in 1989/1368. Later, in 1998/1377 a booklet titled روایت و ضد روایت (*Narrative and Anti-Narrative*) was published by انتشارات بنیاد سینمایی فارابی (*Entešārāt e Bonyād e Sinamāyi e Fārābi*, or the Farabi Cinema Foundation Publication), and contained a few articles by Todorov and Barthes. These early translations of narratology works were followed by the translation of Todorov's *Introduction to Poetics* (1981), published in 2000/1379 as بوطیقای ساختارگرا, of Martin's *Recent Theories of Narrative* (1986), published in 2003/1382 as نظریه های روایت, of Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (1994), published in 2004/1383 as زمان وحکایت (Behnām 2011/1390). Jacob Lothe's *Narrative in Fiction and Film: An Introduction* (2000) was translated by Omid Nikfarjām as مقدمه ای بر روایت در ادبیات و سینما in 2007/1386, while *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction* (1988) by Michael J. Toolan was translated in 2004/1387 as درآمدی نقادانه بر روایت. Rimmon-Kenan's *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (1983) was translated by Abolfażl Ḥorri in 2008/1387 as بوطیقای معاصر , while in گزیده مقالات روایت (*A Selection of Articles on Narratology*) (2009/1388), Fattāḥ Moḥammadi has translated and compiled a few articles by narratologist Martin Mcquillan.

Translation and reception of narratology books can be said to have much advanced in the past five years in Iran (1390 onwards). More efforts have also been made in the compilation of these works, as translators prefer to publish articles and essays in books rather than in newspapers and journals. Publications such as هرمس (*Hermes*) and مینوی خرد (*Minovi Kerad*, or roughly, 'Heavenly Wisdom') are the best and most active publishing houses for narratology books. Among the most important works published in the past five years in Iran are *Narratives and Narrators* (2010) by Gregory Currie, translated in 2012/1391 by Moḥammad Šahbā as روایت ها و راوی ها, نظریه روایت و روایت شناسی (*Narrative Theory and Narratology*) (2013/1392), and edited and translated by Abolfażl Ḥorri, a compilation of works by narratology scholars such as Chatman and Lodge. Lastly, the list should include Gerald Prince's *Narratology,* translated by Moḥammad Šahbā as روایت شناسی (2016/1395), and درآمدی بر روایت شناسی (*An Introduction to Narratology*), an anthology including different essays on narratology by Prince, Barthes and Todorov, translated and edited by Hušang Rahnamā (2015/1394).

Original Persian publications

The first steps towards narratology in Iran were taken around the Nineties. In 1989/1368, Qadamˁali Sarrami published his book از رنگ گل تا رنج خار (*From the Rose's Colour to the Thorn's Pain*), a morphology of Šāhnāmea stories. In the book, Sarrami discussed the narrative of Šāhnāmea, but made no reference to any narratological framework or terminology. A few years later, Aḥmad Okovvat published دستورزبان داستان (*The Grammar of Fiction,* 1992/1371). Okovvat, a pioneer in narratology studies, analyzed the elements of fiction and structuralist narratology, and introduced narrative theories. His book is one of the primary resources for narratology studies in Iran, treating these subjects for the first time and in fact opening a discussion on narratology (Behnām 2011/1390). Okovvat

attempts to introduce a few narratology theories by scholars such as Todorov and Barthes, and discusses the narrator and its role in fiction. I suggest here that this book is also the first to mention the issue of 'distance', while in addition providing a wide range of Iranian and foreign examples that facilitate the reader's understanding of the narratology theories presented. Fatḥollah Biniyāz's درآمدی بر روایت شناسی و داستان نویسی (*An Introduction to Fiction Writing and Narratology,* (2008/1387) offers a brief discussion of fiction and narratology and provides a glossary of fiction terms (Behnām 2011/1390). Also very helpful to narratology studies is a work by Bahrām Meqdādi, فرهنگ اصطلاحات نقد ادبی از افلاطون تا عصر حاضر *(Dictionary of Literary Criticism Terms from Plato to Today)* (1999/1378). Meqdādi is an English language and literature professor at the University of Tehran, and states that the book was the fruit of his thirty years of teaching and research. This is the first literary criticism dictionary published in Persian, and also includes many narratology terms. The second edition, enlarged by 1200 pages, was published in 2009/1388.

Lectures and seminars

Over the past twenty years, the field of narratology studies has been steadily gaining importance in Iran. The leading role of فرهنگستان هنر (The Iranian Academy of the Arts) in this advancement is indisputable. The Academy has hosted many narratology events, inviting several narratology scholars to debate and analyze different works. The foremost Iranian scholars in the field, such as Moḥammad Šahbā, Amirʿali Nojumiyān, Farzān Sojudi and ʿAli ʿAbbasi, have all taken part in such events and shared their ideas in the debates. انجمن نقد ادبی ایران (The Iranian Academy of Literary Criticism) and انجمن ترویج زبان و ادب فارسی (The Iranian Society for the Promotion of Persian Language and Literature) are two other organizations holding literary events and supporting narratology studies. (Behnām 2011/1390) شهر کتاب

(*Šahr e Ketāb*, or Book City) is a bookstore chain which holds literary criticism events and uploads a report of each on its website. Book City also very actively supports narratology studies, and many of its events discuss written or translated narratology books.

Whilst narratology studies have also been a subject of particular interest to Iranian universities, until 2017 no official seminar was held on the subject. The first seminar in narratology studies (روایت در انواع ادبی , or Narrative Across Literary Genres) was held at the University of Kurdistan on 10 and 11 May 2017. Among the subjects discussed by participants in the seminar were the narrative of fiction, drama, and critical approaches to narrative.

Weekly, monthly and quarterly journals

According to literary scholar Minā Behnām, advances in narratology studies over the past ten years have led to many academic literary journals publishing at least one article on narratology in each issue (Behnām 2011/1390). Although such journals – most notably *Academic* پژوهشنامه زبان و ادبیات فارسی (*Literary Studies*), ادب پژوهی (*Persian Language Journal of Persian Language and Literature*), پژوهش زبان فارسی (*Persian Language Studies*), پژوهش های ادبی (*Literary Studies*), مجله دانشکده ادبیات کرمان (*Journal of the Literature Faculty of Kerman*), مجله دانشکده ادبیات دانشگاه تهران (*Journal of the Literature Faculty of the University of Tehran*) and فصلنامه نقد ادبی (*Literary Criticism Quarterly*) – do publish literary essays, to say that there is one essay on narratology in every issue seems rather overstated. Also, it is unfortunate that many of these essays are based on what seem to be wholly irrelevant theories and methods, coming across as the hasty compositions of young students who, whilst obviously fascinated by the field, do not exactly know how to apply narratology theories to the study of classical or modern texts.

Among non-academic journals, مجله کارنامه (*Kārnāmea Magazine*), ادبیات داستانی (*Adabiyāt Dāstāni*), which has published many western narratology essays translated by Abolfażl Ḥorri, کلک (*Kelk*), بایا (*Bāyā*) and گلستانه (*Golestānea*) also publish articles on narratology studies.

Recapitulation

Considering that the author/I-protagonist relationship in fiction has always been a source of confusion and misunderstanding in Iran; that a better understanding of the author/narrator relationship is rooted in good knowledge of literary criticism and narratology; that a discussion of author/narrator relationship, point of view and the role of the narrator falls within the purview of narratology studies; and that the latter are derived from literary criticism, I have offered a chronological overview of the reception of these fields in Iran to prepare the ground for an attempt to clear up the confusion relative to the author/narrator relationship, one of the thorniest problems for literary criticism in Iran.

Chapter Two

The Blind Owl and its first-person narrative

The previous chapter discussed the importance of distance between author and narrator in fiction writing, particularly distancing the author and the first-person narrator. Discussing the author/first-person narrator relationship in the history of Persian fiction leads us to a discussion of Ṣādeq Hedāyat's novel, *The Blind Owl*.

Writer and translator Ṣādeq Hedāyat was born in Tehran in 1903 and committed suicide in Paris in 1951. *The Blind Owl*, his most celebrated work, was first published in Mumbai in 1936, serialized by an Iranian newspaper in 1941 and reprinted a year later by Iran Newspaper Publication under Hedāyat's supervision. *The Blind Owl* is one of the most famous Persian novels in the world: it has been translated into many languages (the French and English versions were published in 1952 and 1958 respectively). Hedāyat was a prolific author, but none of his works became as famous as *The Blind Owl*, which is still considered a masterpiece by Iranians, widely read by the public and discussed by literary critics inside and outside of Iran. Despite the predominant trend in modern Iran, by which literary works are much in favour for a short period but very soon forgotten, *The Blind Owl* still holds its unique place in Persian literature almost eighty years since its first publication in 1936. Its importance extends to the main concerns of this thesis, for several reasons, aside from the obvious fact that *The Blind Owl*, the first Persian novel, is written in the first-person narrative. The fact that Hedāyat and the first-person narrator in *The Blind Owl* have always been assumed to be identical by most readers, including literary scholars and critics, is of particular import for our purposes.

As we have noted, *The Blind Owl* is the first modernist Persian novel. It was published in Iran at a time when novel writing in the west had already started its journey, finding its beginnings with realism. By that token, The *Blind Owl* was a

strange beginning for fiction writing in Iran: a modern, surreal novel with a sophisticated non-linear narration, with no 'hero' in the conventional sense and a main character without a name, it was an atemporal, aspatial novel basing much of its strength on uncertainty and indeterminacy. As such, while perhaps inviting the reader to find certain correspondences, it surely does not allow author/narrator identification. Hedāyat had become familiar with the work of French fiction writers, particularly the surrealists, during the time he spent in France (Farigām 2013/1392, 40). In fact, as Kāmšād notes, André Breton considered *The Blind Owl* a surrealist masterpiece (Kāmšād 2010, 178). In the history of fiction in Persian literature, no work has ever drawn as much attention as *The Blind Owl*, which was always seen as a model for the writers who came after Hedāyat. Iranian psychologist and novelist Taqi Modarresi suggested that the importance of *The Blind Owl* was such that a series of fictions were created after its publication solely due to its influence, but that none of these works was on a par with Hedāyat's original work (Modarresi 1958/1337, 989-990). Hušang Golširi wrote his famous novel شازده احتجاب (*Prince Ehtejab*, 1348/ 1969) under the influence of *The Blind Owl* (Golširi 2001/1380, 347). Moḥammadʿali Sepānlu considered that Golširi was initially very much influenced by Hedāyat and *The Blind Owl*, but that he later found his own style (Sepānlu 1987/1366, 118-119). Most Iranian fiction writers, I would agree, have been influenced by *The Blind Owl* at some stage or other, and although a full discussion of its importance and influence is beyond the scope of this research, much of our work on first-person narratives will be facilitated by an analysis of this specific technique as applied in *The Blind Owl*.

A closer look at the first-person narrative in *The Blind Owl*

The narrator of *The Blind Owl* is a young painter. He lives in an illusion and sees the world around him as filled with darkness and pessimism. He is never sure of what he

sees or hears. At the time the novel was published, readers in Iran (including literary scholars and literary critics) were not familiar with 'the novel' as a literary form. Most assumed the author, Hedāyat, and his fictional narrator – who has no name – to be identical, and believed there was much similarity between Hedāyat and this narrator: Hedāyat also perceived the world as full of negativity, doubts and darkness; and, like his narrator, he was a writer and a painter. This assumption (which led some readers – not necessarily the most inexperienced – to try and identify some of the book's characters with their supposed counterparts in the author's life) was further reinforced after Hedāyat's suicide. Thus *The Blind Owl* has rarely been read carefully for the work of art that it is, and marks the starting point of author/narrator identification – we might say, with Moḥammad Moḥammadʿali, that *The Blind Owl* is the first victim of the first-person point of view in Persian fiction (Moḥammadʿali 2013/1392) – a victim, that is, in terms of being poorly received at the time of publication, but certainly not in terms of its appreciation as a work of literature for decades afterwards.

As noted, *The Blind Owl* was published in Iran when the author/narrator question had already been discussed to a certain extent in the west. However, as we have seen, Iranian readers were faced with a literary form with which they were wholly unfamiliar, and towards which they were as yet unreceptive: this made it particularly difficult for them to properly appreciate a complex novel like *The Blind Owl*, which in fact moved Persian literature an enormous step forward. As mentioned, even though *The Blind Owl* is a surreal fiction, detailing incidents that cannot happen in the real world, the author/narrator relationship in the book was problematic, and by no means only for the general public. Mojtabā Minovi was just one of the prominent literary scholars who also failed to disassociate Hedāyat from the narrator: note the letter dated 27 June 1937, in which Hedāyat explains to Minovi that his narrator is different from himself (Katirāyi 1971/1349, 135); and even after several years, writers such as Mirṣādeqi and Jalāl Āl e Aḥmad described *The Blind Owl* as Hedāyat's autobiography, while Moṣṭafā Farzānea, Hedāyat's close

friend, called *The Blind Owl* 'Hedāyat's manifesto' in his book آنچه صادق هدایت به من

گفت (*What Ṣādeq Hedāyat Told Me*), published in 1988. Moḥammad Šahbā and

Amirʿali Nojumiyān (both professors of narratology studies and members of the

Tehran Circle of Semiotics founded in 2003) have very different views on the

author/narrator identification in *The Blind Owl*. Nojumiyān holds that the failure of

readers, including literary critics, to understand Hedāyat and his narrator should be

traced back in time to before *The Blind Owl* was even published, as readers have

always widely assumed that author and narrator are identical. Nojumiyān suggests

that the reason behind this assumption is rooted in old literary criticism in Iran,

which was biographical criticism. Knowing about a writer's private life was the key

to interpreting his work. Thus, author/narrator identification was by default the only

way readers could approach and interpret a work of art (Nojumiyān 2016/1395). In

contrast, Moḥammad Šahbā states that as far as he knows, no one has ever

assumed that the author and the narrator in *The Blind Owl* are identical, and that

although some readers and critics might have noted a few similarities between

Hedāyat and the narrator in *The Blind Ow*, this cannot ever mean that these two are

identical (Šahbā 2016/1395). Considering that Šahbā is a prominent translator of

primary narratology resources into Persian, his statement seems strange: the

question of author/narrator identification has been discussed in most narratology

books published in western countries, and the issue of confusion in the early stages

of novel writing is hardly unheard of in the west.

It is argued here that Hedāyat and the first-person narrator in *The Blind Owl* have

been wrongly considered identical in the early stages of novel publication in Iran,

and that this identification has continued through later years; but the real problem, I

contend, concerns the ultimate relevance of asking questions as to whether such

identification is correct or not.

Several literary critics have applied a psychoanalytic approach to writing about

Hedāyat and his *Blind Owl*. As mentioned in the introduction, the methodology used

throughout this research is based on structuralism, and structuralists have shown

little interest in applying psychology while analyzing fiction. Therefore, while speaking of literary critics and their views on *The Blind Owl* here, only literary criticism which focuses purely on the literariness of a work will be discussed. As mentioned before, whilst Hedāyat's suicide could not of itself lead readers to assume that Hedāyat and the narrator in *The Blind Owl* were one and the same person, it nonetheless certainly strengthened this idea in readers' mind. It also opened a path for psychoanalysis-based studies of *The Blind Owl*. The number of psychoanalytical works of criticism on Hedāyat is huge: especially after his death, almost every magazine, newspaper or book about him offered this sort of critical analysis, for the most part based on *The Blind Owl*, his masterpiece. According to his brother ʿIsā, after attempting suicide for the first time by throwing himself in the river Marne in 1928/1307, Hedāyat was referred to a consultant neurologist who spent eight days reading all the works he had written in French (his *Nouvelles*) and, with the help of a translator, also trying to understand his works written in Persian, his notes and his letters (Jamšidi 1995/1373, 55). If the psychoanalytic approach to Hedāyat's work was of any use, it was so only for his therapist who needed to help him while he was still alive. In my view, psychoanalytic criticism of Hedāyat's work has rarely been useful for an understanding of his work and his legacy. This view is shared by critics such as Moḥammadʿalī Homāyun Kātuziyān and Reżā Barāheni, who emphasize the literariness of *The Blind Owl*, something that 'psychoanalyst critics' have generally failed to consider as a basic criterion while reading a literary work. In his book صادق هدایت و مرگ نویسنده (*Şādeq Hedāyat and the Death of Author*) (1993/1372), Kātuziyān, influenced by Roland Barthes' views, attempts to create a distance between the author and the narrator of *The Blind Owl* by applying Barthes' theory. Kātuziyān states that according to Barthes' views, *The Blind Owl* is a readerly (*lisible*) and not a writerly (*scriptable*) work, and as such should only be studied on the basis of its literariness (Kātuziyān 1993/1372, 59-60). It is worth noting here that, contrary to what Kātuziyān argues, *The Blind Owl* is indeed a writerly work, since the reader must engage with it and reproduce it in the act of reading.

Although Kātuziyān's research is enlightening, it lacks consistence, as I shall discuss below, and ultimately fails to convince readers that he is himself able to fully distinguish between Hedāyat as a flesh-and-blood author and his fictional characters, including the narrator of *The Blind Owl*. Similarly, Barāheni (1987/1366, 113) also highlights that in reading *The Blind Owl* the literariness of the work is the most important factor, but confuses author and narrator while analyzing the work, thus failing to prove his own point. The author/narrator question has not been digested and fully understood by these scholars, making it more difficult for them to transfer their findings to their readers. However, both Kātuziyān and Barāheni agree that *The Blind Owl* should be solely judged for its literariness, as any other approach would be reductive.

Writers and literary scholars' views on the author/narrator relationship in *The Blind Owl*

One of the most interesting views on *The Blind Owl*'s narrator and its relevance to Hedāyat is the one offered by Āl e Aḥmad. Āl e Aḥmad, one of the most influential writers in modern Persian literature, had his own unique style, which left its mark on the younger imitators following in his footprints. No ordinary author, Āl e Aḥmad was familiar with French literature, and had translated a few books from French into Persian, notably Sartre's *Dirty Hands* (1948) and Gide's *Return From the USSR* (1936). He was also thoroughly familiar with the issue of author/narrator relationship, had read many works of fiction, both by Iranian and foreign authors, and had huge influence as a literary critic. Āl e Aḥmad states that whilst Hedāyat did not write many works in the first person, he had no escape from employing this point of view in *The Blind Owl*, as *The Blind Owl* is Hedāyat himself: therefore, he adds, to understand *The Blind Owl* we should know Hedāyat, and to know Hedāyat we should understand *The Blind Owl* (Āl e Aḥmad 1995/1373, 736), and stresses

that *The Blind Owl* is Hedāyat's autobiography (Ibid., 754). Āl e Aḥmad's misunderstanding of the first-person narrative does not stop here: we shall discuss later how this wrong idea of the first-person narrator being equal to the writer also had a huge impact on Āl e Aḥmad's work as a whole.

Moṣṭafā Farzānea, a writer based in Paris who claims to be one of Hedāyat's close friends, states that neither Āl e Aḥmad nor other critics have been able to put any distance between Hedāyat and his first-person narrator, and this is the main reasons why Hedāyat's *Blind Owl* has not been understood correctly. However, Farzānea himself calls *The Blind Owl* Hedāyat's manifesto and praises Hedāyat for his sharp and blunt criticism of the people and government of the timespan in which the novel is set. Yet *The Blind Owl* is not a manifesto written by Hedāyat: what is spoken in the novel are not his beliefs. Farzānea (1988, 185) highlights that Hedāyat told him he was not the narrator of *The Blind Owl*, but seems to be stranded, at first unable to decide whether the narrator is Hedāyat himself or not, but then merging the two to such an extent that he blames Hedāyat's family for not disclosing information about his childhood and life events so he could have a better understanding of his close friend's work (Ibid., 98). Thus although he challenges Āl e Aḥmad and his peers for having wrong ideas about the author/narrator relationship in *The Blind Owl*, Farzānea himself is barely any different in his approach: it is crystal clear that he also fails to draw a line between Hedāyat as an author and his unreliable narrator in *The Blind Owl*.

Writer and literary critic Eḥsān Ṭabari (1917-1989), also a close friend of Hedāyat's, stated in his first speech at the Writer's Congress in Iran in 1947/1325 that Hedāyat and the narrator in *The Blind Owl* are identical, as Hedāyat was a hopeless melancholic, the same as his narrator (Ṭabari 1948/1326, 244). Several years later, Ṭabari blamed literary critics for falling into the same trap of author/narrator identification in *The Blind Owl,* and stated that these critics had considered *The Blind Owl* a certificate to prove Hedāyat's insanity (1981/1359, 100). Disregarding his own earlier failure to distinguish between author and narrator, he added that he

51

was told by Hedāyat personally that *The Blind Owl* is a cerebral novel (*roman cérébral*); but as the distance between author and narrator had not been consolidated in his own mind, he again started ascribing the narrator's actions to Hedāyat, looking at events in Hedāyat's childhood to decode the mysteries of the novel, and following other critics in their erroneous assumptions.

Ḥasan Kāmšād, a prominent scholar of Persian literature, devoted almost half of his doctoral thesis 'Modern Persian Prose Literature', published in 1966, to a discussion of *The Blind Owl*. Kāmšād states (2010, 165) that *The Blind Owl* was a self-analysis work by Hedāyat, and that in order to understand it, one should know about Hedāyat's life. Kāmšād also notes that Hedāyat used the first-person point of view deliberately as a self-revealing tool, although this was an unusual style for him, and that he wanted to present his self-perceptions and self-doubts (Ibid., 167).

Another foremost Persian scholar, Parviz Nātel Ḵānlari (1914-1990), takes a step further in his article نقد و بررسی بوف کور (*Criticism and Study of The Blind Owl*), in which he calls the narrator of *The Blind Owl*, and not Hedāyat himself, the hero of the fiction, and compares *The Blind Owl* to Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (Ḵānlari 1999/1378, 332). However, he later concludes that this hero is Hedāyat himself, since both author and narrator see the world as a dark place and people as questionable (Ibid., 337). Ḵānlari's article, besides its critical importance in discussing *The Blind Owl* and its narrator, also shows a scholar's failure to distance the author from his created fictional narrator. Ḵānlari was one of the best-known linguists and literary scholars in Iran between the Fifties and Seventies. He was minister of culture from 1962-1963 and the founder of leading literary magazine *Soḵan*, which was published between 1953/1332 and 1979/1357 and had a leading role in improving the understanding of modern literature, including modern western literature, in Iran. Ḵānlari was also one of the pioneering advocates of opening up to western literature: his view was that practising modern western forms and methods in Persian literature is not equal to 'occidentosis' (a term coined by Jalāl Āl e Aḥmad to show how Iran's society was highly intoxicated by the west and its culture and

lifestyle). K̲ānlari states that Hedāyat, in *The Blind Owl*, is the first writer to create a finely crafted character, and tries to distance Hedāyat and his character (narrator); but he adds that although every work projects its author's ideas and thoughts, the reader should not single out sentences to use them as quotations, as the author does not expect or want his readers to turn his work into a life manual (Ibid., 340). K̲ānlari's statement shows that he was relatively able to distance the author and his character/narrator, but that he was not familiar with the role of the narrator as a mediator for telling the story. K̲ānlari and Minovi's views on the author/narrator relationship in *The Blind Owl* demonstrate that a gradual process was needed for readers and critics alike to achieve a better understanding of the author/first-person narrator relationship.

Distancing Ṣādeq Hedāyat from the narrator of *The Blind Owl*

As we have seen, Moḥammadʿalī Homāyun Kātuziyān takes the first step in distancing Hedāyat from the narrator of *The Blind Owl* in his first book *Ṣādeq Hedāyat and the Death of Author* (1993/1372), followed by the publication of his second book *Hedāyat's Blind Owl* (1994/1373). However, Kātuziyān generally fails to prove his points by employing literary criticism criteria: he tries to justify the actions and words of Hedāyat's characters by referring to the characters themselves; he states that distancing Hedāyat from his narrator in *The Blind Owl* is necessary, but attempts to prove his point by differentiation – suggesting for instance that the narrator in *The Blind Owl*, unlike Hedāyat, is not sociable or that, again unlike Hedāyat, he is impotent (Kātuziyān 1994/1373, 173-174). Kātuziyān also raises a question about Hedāyat and the role of women in his works, suggesting that in Hedāyat's works (including *The Blind Owl*) women remain emotionally and sexually inaccessible and asking: what if women were the same to him in real life? (1993/1372, 145). Although Kātuziyān makes the first efforts to distance Hedāyat

from the narrator of *The Blind Owl* in both of the books*,* and writes a book specifically on this subject, he goes back to square one by asking irrelevant questions about the role of women in Hedāyat's personal life versus his works, or about how sociable or virile he was.

Šāpur Jowrkeš, a literary critic and translator, states in his book عشق، زندگی و مرگ از دیدگاه صادق هدایت *Love, Life and Death from Hedāyat's Point of View* (1999/1378, 49) that Kātuziyān was correct in distancing the author and the narrator of *The Blind Owl*, and takes a step forward by stressing that *The Blind Owl* is absolutely not Hedāyat's autobiography. However, he also holds to some elements external to literary criticism and to the novel itself in order to prove his point. Jowrkeš himself is very careful in drawing a line between the author and the narrator in *The Blind Owl*. He insists in the preface of his book that not only the author and the narrator of *The Blind Owl* are different, but also that Hedāyat deliberately chose to criticize his own narrator by crafting a type of narrator that had previously been unknown to Iranian readers (Ibid., 14). It is my view that the unknown type of narrator in Jowrkeš refers to the unreliable narrator, which will be discussed later in this chapter. However, Jowrkeš also seems to be getting stranded halfway through his book, from the beginning of his third chapter: instead of focusing closely on *The Blind Owl* and trying to prove his points by literary criteria, he looks at Hedāyat's other works to prove that he was neither a misogynist nor superstitious as his narrator is in *The Blind Owl*. He states that looking at Hedāyat's other works proves that he had always been a supporter of women's rights and never a superstitious person (Ibid., 147). Jowrkeš thus makes exactly the same mistake he has blamed on Kātuziyān earlier in his book. Also, looking at Hedāyat's other works in order to understand *The Blind Owl* might be less objectionable than giving in to curiosity about the author's private life as other literary scholars did; but nonetheless proves (albeit indirectly) that Jowrkeš is himself confused while attempting to distance the author from the narrator – something he also does by holding on to elements external to the narrative of *The Blind Owl*. Despite these flaws, Jowrkeš's insistence on

distancing the author and its narrator is still in my view an important contribution. Another case of criticism effected by using entirely extratextual elements is that of Moḥammadtaqi Ḡiyāt̲i, a prominent translator and scholar of French literature, who states that *The Blind Owl* cannot be an autobiography because Hedāyat, unlike his first-person narrator, was too decent to have sexual fantasies about his wet nurse, and, as an unmarried man, immune from the troubles suffered by the narrator owing to his wife's promiscuity (1998/1377, 9). Most research done so far on the author/narrator relationship in *The Blind Owl* has failed to escape the idolatry/iconoclasm trap with respect to Hedāyat. In the wake of *The Blind Owl*, many books and articles have been written on the book and particularly on its author and its narrator, but none has accurately dealt with the author/narrator relationship on the basis of narratology studies (i.e. literary criteria). All these studies suffer from failure to employ narratology theories as well as from poor knowledge of literary criticism, and none considers the literariness of *The Blind Owl* as the only criterion for literary criticism – some may have intended to do so, but failed to fulfil their aim. Research done on *The Blind Owl* could be more reliable if the study of the novel were simply based on the text itself, rather than on looking outside to prove what might have come into the novel.

Thus, to comprehend the distance between author and narrator in *The Blind Owl*, the author/narrator/reader triangle must first be understood.

Author (and implied author) in *The Blind Owl*

The Blind Owl was not well received by the public when it was published in Iran in 1941. After its first publication in Mumbai in 1936, it was mostly read by Hedāyat's circle of friends. The main reason was that *The Blind Owl* was the very first modernist novel published in Iran. Hedāyat was ahead of his time in writing a novel: he lived in France and was familiar with the different literary forms and literary

schools of his time, which put him at the forefront of Iranian novel writing. However, as mentioned earlier, *The Blind Owl* was not an easy novel to understand, owing to the use of a sophisticated narrative and of complex fictional techniques. If *The Blind Owl* had been well received in its own time, Hedāyat might have tried to explain more about his work, its point of view or its narrator. However, this was not the case. In fact, unlike some of their foreign counterparts, including Balzac, Henry James or Nabokov, Iranian novelists did not by and large offer any explanation to their readers as regards the use of the first-person narrator, and even in the early stages of fiction writing, showed no interest in adding a preface to their works. Regarding Hedāyat, the only evidence about him disassociating himself as an author and distancing himself from the narrator of *The Blind Owl* is the letter he wrote to Mojtabā Minovi, stating that *The Blind Owl* is a historical fantasy fiction in which that person (the narrator) wrote about his own life (Katirāyi 1970/1349, 135). In the letter, Hedāyat does not speak of 'me' or 'my autobiography' but of that person's autobiography. He clearly detaches himself from the narrator of *The Blind Owl* by highlighting that person (آن شخص), and tells his close friend in Paris that *The Blind Owl* is filled with fictional techniques and that he is by no means the character (narrator) of this novel. He also stated that the words are written by him but he is not the character of this novel (Farzānea 1988, 185)– note that Hedāyat uses 'personnage', the French word for 'character', but he undoubtedly means 'narrator', as it is the narrator who is central to *The Blind Owl* and is frequently identified with Hedāyat. When, some time later, Hedāyat told his friend Eḥsān Ṭabari that *The Blind Owl* was a cerebral novel, he meant to say that the novel should be read carefully and that in order to enjoy it, one should look beyond the superficial layers of the fiction (1980/1359, 101). Hedāyat himself never stated that *The Blind Owl* was his autobiography.

Even disregarding such information, we might arrive at the same conclusion by simply relying on narratology: in his *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983, 74-75), Booth tries to explain the line dividing author and narrator by introducing to literary criticism the

term 'implied author' (note that some of the Persian equivalents for 'implied author' commonly suggested by Iranian translators are: نویسنده تلویحی، نویسنده ضمنی، نویسنده مجازی، نویسنده ناپیدا و نویسنده انتزاعی, i.e. implicit, virtual, hidden and abstract author). Although Booth's 'implied author' was elaborated on by some of his structuralist successors, almost half a century since it was first coined his term remains one of the best available to explain the distance between author and narrator – as proven by the fact that other structuralists have regularly attempted to develop the term rather than rejecting it.

If we adopt this terminology and apply it to *The Blind Owl* (bearing in mind that Hedāyat repeatedly states that the words are his but he is not the character – or 'personnage', which he uses to mean 'narrator'), we can see that the Ṣādeq Hedāyat the readers might have in mind is an implied author, different from the flesh-and-blood Ṣādeq Hedāyat who was born in 1903 and died in 1951. Booth draws a careful line between the implied author and the real author, and between author and narrator, with the implied author falling somewhere between the real author and the narrator. Booth insists that the distance between real author and implied author does not mean that there are no footprints of the implied author in the text. He states that although we do not know Shakespeare or the values to which he was committed, it is wrong to assume that the implied author of Shakespeare's plays is neutral towards all values, as he cannot conceal his judgement about his characters (Ibid., 76). Booth also believes that the 'death of author' theory does not help with understanding the necessity of drawing a line between the author and the narrator (and also between author and implied author) as it fails to take into account the author's individuality (Ibid., 70-71). His views on the author's individuality and his concept of the implied author are very interesting, and of much help for the purpose of comprehending the distance between implied author and real-life author – a necessary step for any further studies of the author/narrator relationship.

Looking again at *The Blind Owl*, we might say that readers have an image of the implied author in their minds, and that this image might have been influenced by Hedāyat's correspondence with friends and family, for which he uses the same style and sometimes the same wording. Thus, Hedāyat has not effaced his footprints from his work and therefore the implied author cannot be fully separated from the work. However, these similarities do not mean that the implied author and the narrator are identical. Note also that according to some scholars the implied author and the narrator cannot be fully separated – thus Todorov (1981, 40): 'It would be a mistake to detach the narrator altogether from the implied author'; while others, including Booth (1983, 380) and Rimmon-Kenan (1989, 87) contend that there is a distance by which the implied author and the narrator are detached. In my view, the concept of the implied author can be successfully applied not only to fiction but also further afield: for instance, when reading a letter to a famous writer or any non-fictional text, the reader is dealing with an implied author in the first place, not the author himself. It is necessary to bear in mind that there is a line between the implied author and the author, as well as one between the implied author and the narrator. The reader should not reduce a work of fiction to an autobiography or appraise a book like *The Blind Owl* as anything but a work of art; neither should the novel be rejected on the assumption that Hedāyat is the same as the isolated and morally questionable narrator of *The Blind Owl,* whose values are not easily shared. Booth states that readers assuming that Leopold Bloom (in *Ulysses*) is bad because he masturbates in public, or that Camus' *Stranger* is wicked because he commits murder are failing to appreciate both *Ulysses* and *The Stranger* as fictional works. Also, Camus and Joyce do not care about how good their characters are (meeting readers' supposed moral values and expectations), but whether or not they are good for the author, i.e. finely crafted as characters – and in both these cases, both are first-person narrators (Booth 1983, 144). In fact, distancing the author from his/her fictional narrator is the first step a reader should take when approaching fiction. Todorov (1981, 40) warns readers about author/narrator identification, and

stresses that the writer should not be identified with the narrator, just like an actor taking on a role should not be confused with the role itself.

In fact, drawing a line firstly between author and implied author, and secondly between implied author and narrator does not necessarily require over-complicated narratology theories such as Barthes', which give ultimate autonomy to the text and consider the author as good as dead but at the same time threaten the author's individuality and confuse readers by effacing the image of the implied author – an image that often helps distance real author from implied author, and, consequently, implied author from narrator. The concept of the implied author does raise several questions, first and foremost as to the exact positioning of the implied author (Todorov and Lanser for instance believe that the narrator should not be altogether detached from the implied author): whilst fully addressing such questions would be beyond the scope of this research, I argue that the concept of the implied author is a more empirical theoretical tool than the 'death of author' theory, proving more useful to readers in the process of creating an image of the author and preparing the ground for a clearer understanding of the author/narrator relationship.

The narrator in *The Blind Owl*

The isolated and objectionable narrator of *The Blind Owl* is a young man immersed in a reverie. He writes, not as a professional writer, but only to offer an account of the events which have happened to him. He writes in despair and helplessness, attempting to make sense of the events. He is a painter (in the first section of the novel there is more focus on him being a painter, while in the second chapter we see him more as a writer). He lives in two illusory worlds, and in both of them he murders the woman he loves. Thereafter, he constantly lives with the idea of committing suicide, he considers himself a misfit in society and believes he is different from the people around him, which he calls 'riff-raff' (رجاله ها, *rajjālea hā*).

In my personal view, Hedāyat has tried to challenge the reader by crafting an unreliable narrator in *The Blind Owl*. Booth suggests that the unreliable narrator might help the author by provoking confusion in the reader (1983, 378),that an unreliable narrator does not speak or act in accordance with the norms of the work, and also that he has qualities which the author denies him (Ibid., 159). Stanzel notes that the unreliable narrator is the one whose values are in contradiction with the implied author's values (1984, 80). I suggest that this is what happens in *The Blind Owl*: the narrator feels that he is a misfit and tries to gain the reader's sympathy. He considers himself virtuous and superior to others around him because, unlike them, he is not constantly thinking of the basic comforts and satisfactions of life. However, the implied author, behind his back as it were, presents him as a deranged man who deserves no sympathy from the readers. Accordingly, the unreliable narrator in *The Blind Owl* speaks in words full of paradoxes and is never sure of what he does, says or sees. His world revolves around uncertainty, and he is stuck, stranded in the centre. The unreliable narrator of *The Blind Owl* is somewhat different from the unreliable narrators categorized by Booth in his *Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983, 159), although he is just as emotionally instable and contradictory as most of them are: what he narrates lacks credit, since he constantly doubts his own perceptions and is a deluded, contemptible liar, a murderer who presents himself as a pitiful victim.

According to Booth, the narrator can be distant from the implied author morally, intellectually, physically, emotionally or temporally (Ibid., 156). The narrator does not even represent the implied author's views and values, let alone those of the real-life author's, and is completely unknown to the reader. Rimmon-Kenan adds that although distancing the narrator from the implied author is necessary, it becomes more crucial when it comes to readers' attitudes towards an unreliable narrator (1989, 88). Stanzel also regards the first-person narrator as automatically unreliable because of 'his limited insight' (1984, 151). Since the narrator of *The Blind Owl* is both speaking in the first person and utterly unreliable, distancing him from the implied author is crucial.

Readers of The Blind Owl

In the previous sections we discussed two angles of the author/narrator/reader triangle. In discussing the author/narrator relationship, most narratology scholars mainly spoke of distancing the author and narrator, overlooking or disregarding the importance of the role of the reader. Booth held that work, author and reader are closely related (1983, 39), and other narratology scholars, including Prince, Rimmon-Kenan and Stanzel, have thoroughly discussed the role of the reader in narratology. In this section we shall look closely at the reader/narrator relationship.

Literary scholar Michael Beard argues that *The Blind Owl* has always been in an 'equivocal' relation to its readership, and that readers of this novel fall into four separate categories: first, a small group of intellectual readers, the majority of whom were Hedāyat's acquaintances; second, a larger readership after Hedāyat became a cult figure following his suicide; third, the international reading group who received his work via translation; and fourth, the fiction itself (Beard 1990, 9). Beard's classification of Hedāyat's readers is in my view accurate, apart from the fourth category, which is rather more poetic than empirical.

Farzānea, who as we have seen was a close friend of Hedāyat's, states (1988, 186) that after *The Blind Owl* was published and received coldly by the public Hedāyat never wrote a similar work again, believing that his work was not made for حاجی آقاها or *Ḥāji Āqā hā* (Ḥāji Āqā is a character in a 1933/1312 comedy film, who metaphorically represents the uneducated public and by extension the early readers of Hedāyat's work; in 1945/1324 Hedāyat also published a long story by that title, a social satire in which the main character, Ḥāji Āqā, is a wealthy merchant). Hedāyat had given up hope that readers could understand *The Blind Owl*, and it is not by chance that his later works are less sophisticated in terms of narration and

characters. As Booth notes (1983, 105), in order to be read, an author makes his/her work accessible to some extent.

Hostile reception of first-person narratives is not limited to any one time and place: Stanzel reminds us for instance that Victorian readers were socially and educationally diverse, and that therefore some could receive the novel well and some could not. Also, the interest of nineteenth-century authors was centred on the first person 'because of their interest in the internal perspective', and so the reader could not distinguish between Thackeray and his notorious first-person narrator Barry Lyndon in the novel *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844): following hostile reactions to the first-person narrative, Thackeray added footnotes asking his readers to look at the story of Barry Lyndon from a critical distance (Stanzel 1984, 136-137). Stanzel also proposes that the cold reception of first-person narratives in fiction discouraged writers from becoming more adventurous with narrative techniques in their later works (Ibid., 137). However, this might be a factor intrinsic to the Victorian novel: as Stanzel notes, such novels tended towards a quasi-autobiographical form of first-person narration in which the voice of the Victorian author could be heard, thus encouraging readers to see the novel as an autobiography: this was the laziest approach to the novel on the part of both authors and readers, and the cause of much hostile reaction (Ibid., 7). Stanzel argues that for a long time views on the first-person narrative (most importantly the assumption that the 'I' of a first-person narrator was identical with the writer) prevented the understanding of the peculiarity of this type of narration. Such wrong views were reinforced after the publication of *Bildungsroman* works such as *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Henry Green* (1855) (Ibid., 80). In the nineteenth century, this identification of author and first-person narrator was so strong that German novelist, translator and literary theorist Friedrich Spielhagen suggested that the writer of a first-person novel should first change his 'I' to 'he' and write the story in the third person, then rewrite it changing 'he' to 'I', which would presumably show how far the second 'I' was from the first 'I' – and flag up what was 'old, empirical,

naïve, limited and narrow-minded' (Ibid.). However, even when the novel was far removed from autobiography, readers were often unable to receive a work of fiction with a first-person narrative. As an instance, readers of Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) found it so hard to distance Humbert, the unreliable first-person narrator, from the novel's author, that Nabokov was moved to write in a postscript to *Lolita* that he disagreed with his creature Humbert and that he did not hold out much hope that a portion of the unsophisticated reading public will be able to distance him from his notorious narrator (Booth 1983, 373). Borrowing an example from Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Booth states that to understand a modern work, readers should avoid asking irrelevant questions (questions for example as to whether Stephen, the first-person narrator, is wicked or good) or passing judgment on a character's moral values (Ibid., 329). Booth's point might seem obvious today, but was much less so when first stated by him: it is immensely important that readers bear in mind that the text they have before them is a work of art and a fiction before anything else. Similarly, readers of *The Blind Owl* should understand that by asking irrelevant questions they will deprive themselves of the enjoyment afforded by a work of art, and focus instead on reading the novel, without giving in to curiosity about the real-life author, his mental health or whether a certain character might or might not be based on his real-life uncle – such questions being perfectly addressed by reading Hedāyat's biography rather than his surrealist fictional work. As Booth notes (once again referring to Joyce), most of today's readers are no longer wont to confuse Joyce with Stephen and to overlook distance (Ibid.). In fact, as the author makes his/her work accessible to the majority of his readership, so readers are also called upon to avoid irrelevant questions. Prince (1982, 104) is in agreement with Booth, encouraging readers to ask questions which are relevant to the work. Similarly, in complete agreement with Booth as regards readers' responsibility, I would argue that the success of a fiction depends on good readers as much as good writers. Writing and reading fiction are both arts, requiring accomplished writers and accomplished readers at their finest: there is a

need for a mutual collaboration in which the author allows for an ideal distance by avoiding intrusions and suppressing moral judgements on the characters, and the reader in return asks questions that are entirely and solely relevant to the work.

The Blind Owl has come a long way since it was published in 1936. Readers, including literary critics, have deepened their understanding of the novel over the past eighty years. In his book *Hedayat's Blind Owl as a Western Novel* (1990, 10), Michael Beard defines *The Blind Owl* as a work 'designed systematically to be unreadable within its own culture and its own moment in history'. However, *The Blind Owl* was elaborated on by its readers over the course of time, and a great portion of readers is now able to distance Hedāyat from his finely crafted anti-hero. No survey has ever been carried out on the reception of *The Blind Owl* through time. Considering the heterogeneous mix of readers approaching the novel over time, it has been almost impossible for scholars to gain an understanding of reactions to it through different periods of time. Most scholars have stopped at hostile reception vs. good reception, but no concrete research was done to show the process of reception of *The Blind Owl* through the years. Despite such lack of sustained research on the subject, I suggest that overall and in the course of time, readers have become far better at distancing Hedāyat from his narrator because of advancements in familiarizing themselves with the modern developments of the novel, a form that first emerged in Western Europe in the 18th century. And thanks to discussions on literary criticism. Hedāyat was at the forefront of innovation in Iranian writing, which, as we have noted, makes misunderstanding of his work on the part of early readers less surprising: as the huge number of works still written on *The Blind Owl* shows, distancing the implied author from the narrator has improved over time. In the next section I shall discuss in greater detail how Hedāyat and his *Blind Owl* became the first victims of the first-person narrative in the history of fiction in Iran.

A story, not an autobiography

Among those who describe *The Blind Owl* as Hedāyat's autobiography, most refer to
the opening lines of the novel, in which the narrator says: 'I am writing only for my
shadow' (Hedāyat 1957, 3). I suggest that the majority of readers, whether they are
inexperienced or much involved in literary studies like Jamāl Mirṣādeqi or Jalāl Āl e
Aḥmad, take these lines to be Hedāyat's words, not the narrator's. Also, these lines
are frequently quoted separately as coming from Hedāyat. There have been many
interpretations of the word 'shadow', with readers imagining different types of
'shadow', including the Jungian shadow. However there is no need, in my view, to
consider the lines in the preface as coming out of Hedāyat's mouth: if the work is
read carefully, this is not Hedāyat speaking, and the shadow is not Hedāyat's
shadow. Looking at the novel structurally, we can see that it is formed by two main
chapters followed by a very short third chapter. The first chapter opens with a
preface by the narrator – not the author. The words in the preface do not belong to
the author and are not intended to elicit sympathy from readers or invite them to
listen to his autobiography, in contrast to what most literary critics have always
suggested. It is his narrator's voice:

> There are sores which slowly erode the mind in solitude like a kind of canker.
>
> It is impossible to convey a just idea of the agony which the disease can
> inflict. In general, people are apt to relegate such inconceivable sufferings to
> the category of the incredible. Any mention of them in conversation or in
> writing is considered in the light of current beliefs in particular, and tends to
> provoke a smile of incredulity and derision… If I have now made up my mind
> to write it is only in order to reveal myself to my shadow… I am writing only
> for my shadow. (Ibid., 1-3).

The narrator says that he wants to tell the story of the strange events he has gone
through and he only wants to address his shadow because his shadow is the only

one who is able to listen to him. What follows in the next pages is the story that the narrator recounts:a surrealist story, which means that what happens in *The Blind Owl* cannot happen in the real world, and this work has no trace of an autobiographic or a realist novel. There is also no reason for attributing this preface to Hedāyat himself. There are three main reasons that should induce us to disassociate Hedāyat from the narrator in the preface of the novel. Firstly, the development from first to second chapter: in the first chapter, after the narrator kills the ethereal woman he loves and mutilates her body after the murder, he wakes up outside time. He is scared, knows the police are looking for him. He draws the oil-lamp towards himself, saying almost the same words he had said in the preface:

> It was still twilight. An oil-lamp was burning on a shelf… the source of my excitement was the need to write, which I felt as a kind of obligation imposed on me… Finally, after some hesitation, I drew the oil-lamp towards me and began as follows… (Ibid., 46-48)

The second chapter continues with the same kind of thoughts and words:

> I wish now to squeeze out every drop of juice from my life… drop by drop… down the parched throat of my shadow… the only thing that makes me write is the need, the overmastering need, at this moment more urgent than ever it was in the past… (Ibid., 49-50)

Thus, this is the narrator himself speaking at the opening of the book in the preface, not Hedāyat: he speaks again with the same tone, employing the same words, in the middle of the novel. The narrator is a painter and he writes as well. He writes what he assumes to be his life story in his deranged mind. The words in the first preface cannot be written by anyone but the same narrator as we see in the preface to the second chapter – an unreliable narrator who should be distanced from the author, Hedāyat. Surprisingly, the lines in the first preface have become extremely famous and much more widely quoted than the ones in the preface to the second chapter;

personally, I would argue that readers erroneously assuming that the author and narrator in *The Blind Owl* are identical should find the lines in the second preface at least as quote-worthy. Also, it is an oversimplification to consider the first lines of the novel, the first preface, as Hedāyat's ideas which can be directly quoted, since the preface is structurally incorporated in the novel and thus can form part of the narrative itself. To understand this, it is important to carefully look again at the structure of *The Blind Owl*. The book is written in two main chapters, each preceded by a separate preface. The second chapter opens with the same thoughts and ideas as the first: this is exactly where the inexperienced reader stumbles, assuming the preface is in the writer's voice; but if that were the case, the words in the second preface, quite similar to those in the first, should be as widely quoted, particularly since the second chapter sees the narrator becoming more intrusive. The reader can hear the narrator's thoughts and ideas more clearly in the second chapter, whereas the first is mostly devoted to the unfolding of the story. In the second chapter, the narrator again says that he wants to speak to his own shadow because only his shadow can understand him. Lanser notes that there are many factors affecting readers' textual expectations (including point of view expectations) of the extrafictional voice (a term coined by Lanser and equivalent to Booth's implied author) in a novel. She states (1981, 124) that 'the text may include additional extrafictional information in the form of a preface or foreword, a dedication, an afterword, epigraphs, biographical information about the author or indications of his/her previous publications, chapter titles or other textual divisions, etc'. All these factors have an impact on readers, on their take on point of view in a novel and their constructing an image of the author, his beliefs and identity (Ibid.). Lanser suggests that the author might deliberately employ extrafictional structures to manipulate the point of view for readers, among other things (Ibid., 128). Lanser's idea that a preface can be employed for a fictional reason and actually be part of that fiction (Ibid., 130) can, I suggest, be applied to Hedāyat. Whilst it is true that there are as many interpretations of a novel as there are readers, to assume that

Hedāyat is speaking in the first lines of *The Blind Owl* is the first step to a misunderstanding of the whole novel. In addition, it seems like Hedāyat employed this preface deliberately to challenge the reader. It should be remembered that, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Hedāyat had probably expected to be much better understood by his readers, and after the hostile reception with which the novel was met, he made his later works much more accessible. Moḥammad Moḥammadˁali believes that Hedāyat, although fully aware that a first-person narrator was a big risk to take at the time, poured water into the anthill, so to speak, by employing this first-person narrator for the first time, and that he wanted to slap his readers in the face and alert them to what it means to read a first-person novel (Moḥammadˁali 2013/1392).

In this respect we might want to bear in mind the remarks made by novelist Reżā Qāsemi, much celebrated for his novel همنوایی شبانه ارکستر چوبها (*The Nocturnal Harmony of a Wood Orchestra*). First published in 1996 in the United States, Qāsemi's book was awarded the Best Novel of the Year Prize by the Hušang Golširi Foundation after being republished in Iran in 2001/1380. Its unreliable first-person narrator is an intellectual Iranian living in France. In defence of his decision to employ a first-person narrative, Qāsemi stated that he had made a deliberate choice, reacting to the way first-person narratives are received and perceived in Iran, and referred directly to *The Blind Owl*, stressing that the literary intellectuals of Hedāyat's time were unable to distance the author from his self-destructive first-person narrator. He added that, whether Hedāyat's choice to use the first-person narrative was conscious or not, Iranian novelists have turned their backs on his heritage [creating a first-person narrator], and that the hostile reception of first-person narratives has pushed them to craft unusual first-person narrators who, generally speaking, act like saints. This turns the novel into a work of self-praise [instead of narrating a story]; but – he continued – this is in contradiction with the very nature of literature: literature is no place for advertising or paying off debts [with the readers, who identify the author with the first-person narrator, thus

expecting the narrator to act modestly] just because   the author has accepted the widespread assumption that he or she is equal to his/her first-person narrator (Naakojaa).

In any case it remains difficult to prove what Hedāyat's real intention might have been when he chose this point of view to write the first novel with a first-person narrator in the history of Persian fiction. ʿAbbas Maʿrufi, author of the famous novel سمفونی مردگان (*Symphony of the Dead*, 1989/1368), suggests that employing the extrafictional structure is a way for the author to 'tickle' the reader and also to warn him against author/narrator identification. He adds that in his recent novel تماماً مخصوص (*Entirely Especial,* 2011/1390), he gave his first-person narrator the same name as he has, ʿAbbas, because he wanted to deliberately challenge his readers and to teach them they should not identify him with his narrator (Maʿrufi 2016/1395).

Whether or not Hedāyat deliberately added separated prefaces to confuse his readers, readers must know that the first preface is like the second preface and that they both function in the same way: most importantly, in both, the narrator is speaking, and not Ṣādeq Hedāyat, the author.

Some problematic readings of *The Blind Owl*

In the view of Amirḥoseyn Ḵoršidfar, early reactions to *The Blind Owl* are very disappointing. 'It sounds like a joke' he states 'to identify Hedāyat with the hopeless criminal narrator of *The Blind Owl* [...] It is unbelievable that a prolific author such as Hedāyat, publishing many literary works, can be a victim of author/narrator identification in *The Blind Owl*, and that this misunderstanding can apply to other works as well' (Ḵoršidfar 2016/1395). Ḵoršidfar's views seem to bring out what was stated earlier in this chapter: understanding the distance in an author/narrator relationship has always been challenging in Iran, because the first novel published in

the country raised so many questions around it, most of which remained unanswered at the time. In this respect, the shortcomings of literary critics can hardly be overlooked. While many western novelists, including, as we have seen, Balzac and Thackeray, were induced to write postscripts or prefaces to explain to their readers that the 'I' of their works was not themselves as authors, Iranian fiction writers, particularly early ones such as Hedāyat and ʿAlavi (1904-1997), remained silent about how they should be distanced from their characters or narrators. This is one of the main issues in Iranian intellectual movements, starting in the nineteenth century: most intellectuals were reluctant to transfer their knowledge to the reading public. One of the problems in early novel writing in Iran was the lack of explanation about the form by early novelists. Ḥasan Mirʿābedini states that early novelists such as Hedāyat and ʿAlavi were half-European and half-Iranian as they studied and lived outside Iran most of their lives, and they showed an aversion towards the not-very-knowledgeable Iranian public (1987/1366, 59). Thus, Iranian novelists did not introduce this new literary form, and there is no evidence that technical elements in fiction, such as point of view or the role of the narrator, were discussed in the forewords or in separate books. Even pioneering literary intellectuals in Iran have always shown reluctance in explaining how literary forms are created or employed. K̲oršidfar proposes that this happened in relation not only to novel writing but to almost every aspect of literature. For instance, when Aḥmad Šāmlu, one of the most influential contemporary poets in Iran, was asked how a poem was made, he said that it came down from heaven (as a revelation) (K̲oršidfar 2016/1395). Later, as we have seen, the need to explain how fiction actually works was felt by Ebrāhim Yunesi, who laid out his theoretical views in his book *The Art of Fiction Writing* (1962). Yunesi states in an epigraph to one of his novels, شکفتن باغ (*Blossoming Garden*, 2004/1383), that the author creates the characters, and that otherwise, writing fiction is not difficult; it is a story and characters are crafted, there is no relevance to real people in the fiction universe (Yunesi 2004/1383, foreword).

Thus, writers as intellectuals and readers had a share in the misunderstanding of the author/narrator relationship in Iran: authors failed to explain, and inexperienced readers failed to ask the relevant questions about a work of art.

At this stage it would be useful to look again at Jalāl Āl e Aḥmad's views on *The Blind Owl,* which should be carefully considered, as an entire literary generation was influenced by Āl e Aḥmad and by his views on fiction.

Jalāl Āl e Aḥmad was born in Tehran in 1923 and died in 1969. A writer, translator and essayist, he was married to Simin Dānešvar, the first Iranian female novelist. Jalāl Āl e Aḥmad is often referred to as one of the most influential contemporary Iranian writers, especially between the Sixties and Seventies (1340/1357) (Barāheni 1984/1363, 12-13), and he stands out for his style in writing. Writer and linguist Dāriyuš Āšuri states that the Nineteen-sixties (1340s) should be named after Jalāl Āl e Aḥmad, since he was the most influential cult figure of the decade, and the younger generation was in many ways influenced by him (Āšuri 1978/1357/2537, 64). Jalāl Āl e Aḥmad influenced the younger generation by his thoughts and ideas as well as his writing style. His readership was large and included both ordinary readers and intellectuals – unlike Hedāyat's readership, which was small and included intellectuals only, at the time he published his books. Jalāl Āl e Aḥmad's works and style became popular in his time and the younger generation started copying him very quickly (Tārāji 1979/1357, 34). The reading public agrees that Āl e Aḥmad had his unique style of writing. Thus, it is understandable that his views on *The Blind Owl* were among the most widely accepted with regard to the author/narrator relationship. Even non-Iranian researchers such as scholar of Persian literature Michael Hillman have followed him blindly on the first-person narrative in *The Blind Owl*, without challenging his very popular views. Hillman calls *The Blind Owl* an autobiographical nightmare, and states (1989/1368, 202) that the main thesis of his paper is to prove that the key to understanding *The Blind Owl* is to consider it an autobiography. Āl e Aḥmad insisted that *The Blind Owl* was Hedāyat's autobiography. However, as we have mentioned, Āl e Aḥmad was not an amateur

writer: his views on *The Blind Owl* are extremely important as they show the depth of the problem with author/narrator relationship in Persian fiction writing. Āl e Aḥmad held that the author and the narrator in *The Blind Owl* were the same: he himself did not know the difference between these two, as his works clearly shows. He employed the first-person narrative many times in his works, both in his famous novel مدیر مدرسه (*The School Principal*) (1958/1337) and in his short stories, although he was clearly unwilling to leave a distance between himself and his narrators. Hušang Golširi argues that although Āl e Aḥmad is a good writer, the fact that he started out by writing travel journals makes him unable to fully distinguish between a work of fiction and a travelogue, as he is himself the narrator in both his stories and his travel journals (Golširi 1999/1378, 494). Thus, Golširi indirectly points out a lack of imagination in Āl e Aḥmad's works. Ḥasan Mirʿābedini, on the other hand, contends that Āl e Aḥmad employs the first-person narrative because he wants his voice to be heard in the story. He does not want to wear a mask as an author. He liked being known by this approach to writing fiction, because it was easier for him to promote his ideas and thoughts in this way to influence the younger generation. As well as the role of the narrator, different aspects of each character also play a part, and those characters have no autonomy of their own without the authority of Āl e Aḥmad as a writer (Ḥaqiqi 2012/1391). Mirʿābedini uses the word *neghab* or *neqāb*, translated here as 'mask', the Persian term used in literary criticism for the second self or persona of a writer. Thus, I would argue, Āl e Aḥmad wants to present himself as he is and not to create a mediator (a narrator) other than himself to tell the story. Writer and literary critic Maḥmud Kiyānuš notes that Āl e Aḥmad is first and foremost an essayist: he mixes events from his real life with his critical sociopolitical essays and tries to make a fiction out of that. Whilst different characters are shown to speak, they are all different versions of Āl e Aḥmad, he is always present in the text and his characters only speak to promote his ideologies (Kiyānuš 1976/1355/2535, 12). Kiyānuš also thinks that Āl e Aḥmad cannot detach himself from the text (Ibid., 28). Kiyānuš's view on Āl e Aḥmad's work being half

fiction, half essay is legitimate, since most critics agree that Āl e Aḥmad does not know the difference between an author and a narrator, and so fails to create a fictional mediator, a narrator, to narrate his stories. Among all his works, the best known, his novel *The School Principal,* has drawn the most criticism for blurring the line between the author and the first-person narrator. Many literary critics believe that in this novel Āl e Aḥmad has only written about his personal experiences as a teacher and tried to put the name of fiction on it. Barāheni contends that *The School Principal* is not an autonomous work of art, being too dependent on its author and failing to speak for itself (1987/1366, 113). Āšuri states that for Āl e Aḥmad writing was not separated from being a teacher, and that teaching and writing were combined in his personality (1978/1357/2537, 58). Āl e Aḥmad's brother, Šams Āl e Aḥmad, claims in his book از چشم برادر (*From a Brother's Perspective,* 1990/1369, 257) that Jalāl was wary of defining *The School Principal* a novel, as the book was in fact a reportage-novel. Persian scholar Rafī ʿ Maḥmudiyān believes that *The School Principal* is a first-person novel that clearly avoids giving detailed information on certain scenes (Maḥmudiyān 2003/1382, 76). Although indirectly, Maḥmudiyān gives reasons as to why certain scenes are not described in detail, hinting that Āl e Aḥmad was a conservative writer and did not wish to attract moral judgements from his readers, mistakenly assuming himself to be more or less the same person as his narrator. Clearly I am not speaking of what I see as Āl e Aḥmad's poor understanding of the first-person narrative in fiction to claim that some of the readers of *The Blind Owl* were directly misled by his views on the novel; I suggest however that his views on first-person narratives did have a negative impact on Iranian readers' reception of them, and that his general approach to the employment of the first-person narrative in Persian contemporary fiction reinforced the problem of author/narrator identification. His hostility to the first-person narrative was such that he willed one of his novels, سنگی بر گوری (*A Stone Upon a Grave,* 1981/1360) to be published only after his death (Šams Āl e Aḥmad 1990/1369, 500). Although *A Stone Upon a Grave* is a quasi-autobiographical novel,

his brother claimed that it was only a story about remaining childless, and that Jalāl chose to have it published after his death not because it was his autobiography but because its theme is taboo in an Eastern culture such as Iran (Ibid., 227). In his first-person novel, *The School Principal*, Āl e Aḥmad tried to give a sanctimonious face to his narrator as the narrator was, in fact, himself; but he might not have felt safe with publishing *A Stone Upon a Grave* during his lifetime: the book's transgressive narrator, a complex, well-crafted character, acts in ways that might meet with some readers' disapproval. Āl e Aḥmad did not expect readers to be able to draw a line between him and his first-person narrator, because he himself was not aware of the necessity of leaving that distance.

Recapitulation

Eighty years after its first publication, *The Blind Owl* has retained its freshness, and is still the subject of academic studies and literary criticism. One of the most controversial issues about the novel is the author/narrator relationship: *The Blind Owl* is a novel written in the first person, and also the very first Persian novel published in Iran. The hostile reception given to *The Blind Owl* at the time of its publication showed how readers and literary scholars alike had no knowledge of the issue of point of view in a work of fiction or of how to distance the author from the narrator. Thus, the publication of *The Blind Owl* marked the starting point of the confusion involving the author/narrator relationship that has beset fiction writing in Iran from its inception to the present. In this chapter I have discussed the author/narrator relationship in *The Blind Owl* and the reasons why the author, Hedāyat, should not be identified with his fictional creature, the narrator of *The Blind Owl*. I also looked at *The Blind Owl* in order to highlight issues relative to the role of the reader, and gave an account of how the book was gradually better received as time passed; finally I have discussed in detail the views of one of the

foremost Iranian writers on *The Blind Owl* and on first-person narratives in general, which I deem symptomatic of the depth of the problems experienced by readers when first approaching Hedāyat's novel after its first publication in 1936.

Chapter Three

The process of change in first-person narrative Persian novels in more recent times (with a focus on the role of creative writing workshops and state-imposed censorship)

In the previous chapter I discussed the history of author/first-person narrator identification in modern novel writing in Iran and how the publication of Hedāyat's *The Blind Owl* became the starting point of much confusion among the literary community in Iran. Misapprehensions relative to the author/first-person narrator relationship did not however stop the process of novel writing in the first person – in fact it can be argued that since the beginning of Persian novel writing in Iran, the number of first-person narratives has much increased, rising sharply in the last fifteen years and still continuing to increase. The study of this upward trend can be very complex, owing to multiple cultural and literary factors involved, and an interdisciplinary approach is needed to look in more detail at a few of its aspects: we shall therefore touch briefly on a few sociological factors, noting that the psychological factors involved would be best approached on the strength of concrete research carried out by experts in the field.

In this chapter I shall discuss the two fundamental factors that have directly affected the process of employing first-person narratives in Persian novel writing in more recent times: namely, the birth of creative writing workshops and the role of governmental censorship.

Before proceeding with detailed discussion of these two factors, it will be useful at this stage to sketch a basic history of the first-person narrative in Persian language and literature.

Sociologist, writer and researcher Aḥmad Ašraf states that while Achaemenid and Sassanid kings, specifically Darius, used to frequently write their memoirs in the first person, first-person narratives have generally not been conventional in post-Islamic Persian literature. Even memoir writers and chroniclers would hide themselves behind third-person narratives to protect their own privacy (Ašraf 1996/1375, 20). Ašraf states that the most important characteristic of memoirs and autobiographies is the vivid presence of an 'I' as an agent of the events or an eyewitness, since memoir is a fictional narrative narrated by an 'I', but that the vast collection of prose and verse in the Persian language and literature shows that the first-person narrative has not been a conventional way of telling stories (Ibid., 12). Clearly, speaking of autobiographies here does not in any way mean that fictional works are on the same plane as memoirs or autobiographies, although memoirs and autobiographies can of course contain traces of fiction (e.g. by the writer changing some of the events or writing them down after they came to pass, which leads to a sort of recreation of the truth, whether deliberate or not): the starting point for a fiction writer is very different from that of an autobiographer. In other words, ultimately, memoir writers or autobiographers aim to show a slice of reality, while the fiction author creates a fictional work; yet the fact that memoir writers and autobiographers often relinquish the first person in favour of the third should give us pause for thought.

Persian scholar Farzānea Milāni states in her book *Veils and Words* (1992, 206) that Iranian writers have always been exceedingly timid in their use of the 'I'; in her article تو خود حجاب خودی: زن و حدیث نفس نویسی در ایران (*Women's Self-Narrative in Iran*) (1996/1375), she adds that it is difficult for Iranian writers to use first-person narratives and to put the 'I' at the centre of the narrative (1996/1375, 619), coming to the conclusion that this is all the more so for Iranian female writers.

Moḥammad Moḥammadʿali notes that over a thousand years, Persian literature, whether written in prose or verse, and specifically before the Constitution Revolution (1905-1911), has scarcely seen the use of first-person narratives, and

that poets and writers who did employ this point of view, such as ʿOmar Ḵayyām or Mahasti Ganjavi, were attacked by clerics (Moḥammadʿali 2017/1396).

I suggest that this limited use of the 'I' is deeply rooted in cultural conditions. To this day, most Iranians are reluctant to use the 'I' in their daily conversations: especially when speaking to a person they consider their superior, they replace من ('I') with اینجانب ('this person'), بنده ('slave', 'creature'), حقیر ('humble'), ضعیف ('weak'). To avoid using من ('I') is a sign of modesty and humility, as if the use of this 'I' on its own, as an active subject, were a sign of egocentrism and of arrogance towards one's interlocutors. In Tehran dialect, the expression منم منم کردن (which literally translates as 'saying I am, I am') is synonymous with boasting. Ruḥollah Komeyni, the founder of the Islamic Revolution, is quoted as saying, 'Don't say I. This I is evil' (1999/1378, 199). This might refer to a verse from the Qur'an in which Satan refused to bow before Adam, saying قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ ('I am better than him: You created me from fire while You created him from clay) (The Qur'an, Al-A'raf, 12). Observation shows that the 'I' has until recently been the most unconventional point of view used in the history of Persian literature, and specifically, in mystic literature, in which the use of the 'I' is strongly discouraged as excessively egocentric. To throw away the 'I' is the first condition for being reunited with God. This is perhaps best shown in an anecdote from the first book of the *Mat*navi Maʿnavi by Jalāl-e-ddin Balḵi, also known as Mowlānā and famous as Rumi in the west. In this poem (Balḵi 1926, 167), the lover knocks on the door of his beloved, and when asked who he is, replies 'It is me'; but the beloved won't open the door until he returns and is able to answer the same question by saying 'It is you'. The beloved lets him in, explaining that there is no room for two 'I''s in one house. ('Now', said the friend, 'since thou art I, come in, O myself: there is not room in the house for two I's') (Ibid.). Mowlānā does of course use this image to drive home the point that discarding the 'I' is the necessary premise for mystical reunion with God. It is interesting to note, though, how this notion has permeated not only literature, but also everyday speech: in my view, this is connected to the reluctance shown by

many Persian writers in using this point of view in storytelling, fiction and even memoirs and autobiographies.

Relevance of individualism and point of view in novel writing

In his book صدسال داستان نویسی در ایران (*One Hundred Years of Fiction Writing in Iran*), Ḥasan Mirʿābedini discusses the roots of novel writing in Iran focusing on socioeconomical and political conditions. Mirʿābedini seems to have been influenced by Goldmann's *Towards a Sociology of the Novel* (1964), an essay aiming to find links between the emergence of literary avant-gardes and the economic conditions of a specific historical period in the west. Goldmann's work helps literary criticism and the sociology of culture at the same time: his core argument in this book is that taking socioeconomical conditions into account when engaging in literary criticism is immensely important, since there is a correlation between such conditions and the novel form in a society. Goldmann states that a sociology of the novel should treat the relation between the novel as a literary genre 'with a critical nature', and consider the structure of the social, individualistic and modern environment in which the novel was established (1975, 43 and 6). Inspired by Goldmann, Mirʿābedini divided his discussion into four historical periods: first attempts at novel writing to 1941 (1320); from 1941 to 1953 (1320-1332); from 1953 to 1963 (1332-1342); from 1963 to 1978 (1342-1357). While the first, second and third periods are based on historical events such as the Constitutional Revolution and the 1921 and 1953 coups, the fourth period is based on structural sociological changes such as urbanization. The main contribution of Mirʿābedini's book (bearing in mind that it only covers the period from the beginning of novel writing to the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979/1357) is that it looks at the correlation between literary trends, popular literary forms and themes, and historical events in Iran. Mirʿābedini implies that the tendency of Iranian writers to

isolate themselves and to write 'individualistic' novels with an excessive use of the 'I' correlates with the perceived failure of important social movements such as the one culminating in the Constitutional Revolution, and that this is most clearly seen in the decade following 1951 (1330-1340). Although the novel is widely regarded to be an individualist enterprise, it is hard to find any direct link between individualism and the use of the first-person narrative in Iran. It is a conventional belief in the Iranian literary community that socialist realist novels, and basically all novels portraying the lives of common people in a society in such a way as to serve society through art, are mostly narrated in the third person by an omniscient narrator, while novels portraying personal despair and isolation mostly employ the first-person narrative. Whilst there might be some truth in this belief, this is by no means always the case, as our discussion of Ṣādeq Hedāyat and Jalāl Āl e Aḥmad has shown. The general view of the literary community in Iran is that Āl e Aḥmad is a figure of the literature of commitment (*literature engagée*) in contrast to Hedāyat, who represents individualism in contemporary Persian novel writing. Both Āl e Aḥmad's *The School Principal* and Hedāyat's *The Blind Owl* were written in the first-person narrative. While Hedāyat is generally associated with the image of the non-committed individualist, Āl e Aḥmad tends to be seen as the epitome of the committed writer. The common point between both novels is that they were written at a time of despair and that they fail to abide by the social conventions predominant in Iran. Written after the 1921 coup, *The Blind Owl* stemmed from Hedāyat despair at a turn towards increasing authoritarianism in Reza Shah's approach in the second half of his rule (from 1930 onwards), and above all, from the collapse of Hedāyat's idea of a return to the romanticized grandeur of pre-Islamic Iran. Poet and researcher ʿAlireżā Ḥasani (Ābiz) holds that in recent times in Iran, the tendency towards the excessive use of the 'I' is due to the fact that socialist realism has come to an end in Iran, and also to the defeat of socialist ideologies, leading to individualism. Most social realist novels published before the 1979 revolution have omniscient narrators, including most novels published in that period, because

employing the first-person narrative was seen as decadent back then. Choosing the first-person point of view to narrate a story involved the risk of giving readers the impression that the writer had become an individualist who no longer cares about society or about people and their needs. What is frequently said about Hedāyat is that he was a petit bourgeois sitting in his ivory tower holding a pen and writing (Ābiz 2017/1396). Ābiz is correct, I suggest, in noting that the use of the first person is currently on the rise while most of the novels published before the revolution had omniscient narrators, and in pointing out the assumptions shared by the Iranian literary community regarding Hedāyat and his supposedly uncommitted literature. I would add that another reason for this is that the number of political novels is decreasing as a result of extensive state-imposed censorship. Since the revolution, it has become increasingly difficult to treat political subjects in novels: consequently, overtly political novels have been replaced with 'kitchen literature', 'café literature', 'apartment literature' and 'shopping-centre literature': stories that take place in indoor spaces and are concerned with everyday life. However, aside from the obvious considerations about what qualifies as 'political' writing, it is an oversimplification to equate the use of the first-person narrative with individualism. To return to our initial question, as we have seen in Chapter Two, it is important to understand why Hedāyat and Āl e Aḥmad are judged so differently when Āl e Aḥmad has employed the first-person narrative more than Hedāyat and made the 'I' central to his work – an 'I' which, for that matter, could more legitimately be identified with the author, since Āl e Aḥmad and his first-person narrators share more than a few characteristics. We should nonetheless note that although Hedāyat spoke very little of *The Blind Owl* and never mentioned that a historical event might have inspired him to write the novel, Āl e Aḥmad spoke of the sudden shift that moved him to create very different works after the 1953 coup in Iran. Āl e Aḥmad called this 'post-coup' period a time of self-reflection (ʿAliakbariyān 2017/1396). He joined the Tudeh Party in 1944/1323 and left it in 1947/1326; but since the year preceding the coup he had taken a huge interest in the literature of commitment,

translating, as we have seen, Sartre's *Dirty Hands* and Gide's *Return from the USSR* – translation choices influenced by his membership of the Tudeh Party. After the 1953 coup, Āl e Aḥmad wrote most of his works and travelogues, including his most celebrated novel, The *School Principal*, in the first person, with reliable narrators. Writer and Persian literature scholar Šāhrok Meskub wrote in his book سرگذشت ادبیات و داستان اجتماع (*The History of Literature and the Story of Society*) (1994/1373) that the rule of the absolute monarchy in Iran was an obstacle to individualism, and that it was only with the Constitutional Revolution that individualism was born and prepared the ground for the creation of the novel (1994/1373, 125-127). Mirʿābedini also holds that the novel treats the individual life of a person and it is an individualistic experience born in Iran with the Constitutional Revolution and the development of imperialism (1987/1366, 21). Although there is an agreement on the novel being an individualistic enterprise in Iran as well as in the west, I suggest here that individualism is different from identity seeking and creating a new self-image after a historical event. To my mind, it is not correct to speak of individualism in connection with the birth of the novel or its correlation with first-person narrative in novel writing in Iran. Firstly, individualism does not develop overnight or as a result of a few years of social changes in a society. Secondly, even assuming that Iranian society did tend towards excessive individualism following historical events that were perceived as failed attempts at change, one should accept that a society and its people can return to perceiving themselves as a collectivity when a common cause is found. In other words, this is a process, no matter how difficult it may be to accept that social changes can affect a society's behaviour intermittently. Moreover, I would suggest, individualism is one of the terms that have undergone a semantic shift: in other words, do people really know what individualism is in Iran? I suggest here that what happens after a movement's perceived 'failure' is rather an attempt to recreate a new identity, a new self-image, and that one of the ways of achieving that is creating first-person narratives, which is not the same as what is termed as 'individualism'. After each severe 'failure', the Iranian nation has struggled to adapt

to a new atmosphere. In novel writing, these attempts have been effected by constructing a narrator or a traditional protagonist who struggles to cope in a world which is about to collapse, and narrates his/her story in the first person. Zohrea Nāṣeḥi, a scholar of French literature, notes that it is difficult to recognize the association between the rise of first-person narratives in the Nineties with the development of individualism in French society. Nāṣeḥi holds that between 1950 and 1970 the dominant presence of the *nouveau roman* resulted in a sort of attempted victimization of individuals in favour of objects, and that consequently, the increase of first-person narratives that began in 1980 was mostly a reaction, an attempt by writers to shed light on the identity of modern man rather than an assertion of individualism (2012/1391, 35). Some Iranian sociologists also agree on the fact that 'individualism' never happened in Iran in such a way as to make its influence on Persian literature a plausible subject of study. Ḥasan Qāżi-Morādi, for one, states that Iranians have always been rather self-centred than individualistic, and self-centredness is very different from individualism. This is because the process that led to individualism in the west has failed in Iran. With the Constitutional Revolution, Iranians were brutally cut off from their kinship, relations and tribal ties – but neither did they arrive at individualism with the failure of the Constitutional Revolution and of the traditional imperialist establishment: rather, they were caught in the transition from a traditional to a modern society. Qāżi-Morādi states that the development of individualism depends on four factors that have not arisen in Iran. Firstly, economic factors: in the west, private property affected the way new social classes were formed, while in Iran private property was not established. Secondly, socioeconomical factors: the industrial revolution in the west paved the way for meritocracy and challenged nepotism; whereas in Iran, one's chances seem to be better the closer one is to figures of power. Thirdly, sociopolitical factors: the relationship between the government and its own citizens is immensely different in the west. In Iran, before the Constitutional Revolution, citizenship was not even discussed, and when the Constitutional Revolution failed, Iranians could not attain

citizenship in its true sense. Fourthly, cultural and moral factors: humanist views prevalent in the west are in opposition with the creationist outlook predominant in Iran. In the west, government and religion are separated – not so in Iran (1999/1378, 17-18). Qāżi-Morādi concludes that individualism has never succeeded in Iran because the governments which were formed and came into power after the failure of the Constitutional Revolution pushed Iranians towards striving for personal interest and self-centredness – which is very different from encouraging individualism. (Ibid., 12-15). In other words, Iranians could not develop an independent individualist identity.

Another sociologist, Farhang Rajāyi, notes that there is a correlation between individualism and modernity. Iranians could be said to embody a less than solid incarnation of modernity. Rajāyi states that the process of individualism could have happened in Iran after historical events such as the Constitutional Revolution, the 1951/1329 nationalization of the oil industry, the Islamic Revolution and the birth of the reformist movement, but that since all these attempts failed, Iranians could not achieve individualism. Two of the main pillars of modernity are individualism and freedom, and neither exist in Iran (Rajāyi 2014/1383, 178).

As we have seen, there is much controversy as to whether individualism has ever taken root in Iran, compounded by widespread misapprehension of the concept itself – a fate that individualism shares with a number of other concepts defined by terms received from western countries. Although there is a correlation between the emergence of the novel as a literary form and social shifts towards individualism in the west, there is no need to extend such correlation to the emergence of novel writing in Iran, as we showed in Chapter One. Iranians, as we noted, encountered novel writing as a borrowed western literary form received via a few intellectuals living in the west and willing to experiment with new western forms and to introduce them to Iranian readers. In light of this, finding a correlation between the increase in first-person narratives and the development of individualism in Iran does

seem rather far-fetched, and it is more likely that there was hardly ever any correlation.

During the 1990s, a few years after Persian literature was shocked into inertia by such events as mass executions of Iranian political prisoners in the 1980s, the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and the silencing of political activities caused by brutal repression from the new Islamic dictatorship, the number of Iranian novels written in the first-person narrative began to gradually increase. Hardly visible in its early stages, the spread of this approach reached its peak after 2001 (1380) with an excessive, passionate interest in the employment of the first-person narrative on the part of respected writers and amateurs alike; and it will be discussed in the next chapter, first-person narratives also became predominant in the works of female novelists.

Creative writing workshops and the tradition of 'workshop literature' in Iran

As indicated earlier, it is not easy to find a concrete correlation between the rise of first-person narratives in novel writing and individualism, even assuming that 'individualism' has 'happened' in Iran. However, there is a link between the widespread increase of creative writing workshops and the rise of first-person narrative in Persian novel writing in Iran. A brief overview of the inception and development of such workshops will be useful at this stage.

At various places in this thesis we have mentioned Hušang Golširi, a prominent writer and the author of celebrated novel *Prince Ehtejab* (1969/1348). In the landscape of contemporary writing in Iran, Golširi stands out for two main reasons. Firstly, he thought that writing was not only a creative activity but also a profession which needs practising and improving. Secondly, he was a central figure in the

development of creative writing in Iran, which began with his workshops and Barāheni's basement workshops, and was prepared to engage in experiment with the various fiction writing techniques he would teach his students. His work on the issue of point of view and on its importance in the development of a narrative is entirely relevant to our concerns. Golširi also spoke, however sketchily, of first-person narratives and how they are perceived by the literary community in Iran and by book censors. He relates the beginnings of his workshops as follows: 'In 1990/1369 I started teaching fiction writing in تالار کسری (*Tālār e Kasrā*, a location in Tehran), with only one student. There were classes two days a week. In the next few months, slowly the number of passionate students increased. There were guest lecturers such as Abolḥasan Najafi, Moḥammadʿali Sepānlu and Barāheni. The only books we could refer to were مکتبهای ادبی (*Literary Schools*) by Reżā Seyyed Ḥoseyni, *The Art of Fiction Writing* by Ebrāim Yunesi, and *Realism and Counter-Realism* (1955/1334) by Sirus Parhām.' (Golširi 1999/1378, 17). These workshops had huge influence and importance, teaching different narrative techniques, demonstrating the advantages and disadvantages of each and showing how their success depended on their functionality within a work of fiction. The other major effect of these workshops was to train students such as Ḥoseyn Morteżāiyān Ābkenār, Ḥoseyn Sanāpur, Šahriyār Mandanipur and Abutorāb Ḵosravi, who later transferred their knowledge of fiction writing to future generations by supporting Golširi's views. Golširi's weekly workshops lasted for ten years. Ābkenār, one of his students who has now set up his own creative writing workshop in Tehran, states that one of the most important technical elements of narrative that Golširi introduced to modern Persian fiction was point of view. Before Golširi, most Persian fiction in Iran was written from an omniscient point of view, with an all-knowing narrator (ʿAlinežād 2005). Golširi himself had mentioned his own tendency to replace the omniscient third-person narrator with the 'third-person limited' narrative in Persian fiction. Similar to the first-person point of view, the third person limited, as seen by Golširi, was representative of modern narrative as opposed to traditional narrative, since

modern fiction is characterized by questioning the position of the all-knowing author. Golširi states in his book *Garden in Garden* that the point of view is a small door opened by the author towards characters, events and adventures in fiction. This small door was wider in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, because of the omniscient narrator. If the author makes the door smaller, he can engage better with telling the story (1999/1378, 239). Golširi's interest in moving towards the "smaller door" also explains his interest in the first-person narrative as a modern point of view, as opposed to the omniscient narrator. Golširi stated in the same book that since 1961/1340 there had been a change in the point of view routinely employed in both prose and verse in Persian literature. For instance, in poetry, the omniscient narrator in Siyāvoš Kasrāyi was replaced by the first person in Foruḡ Farrokzād; and in prose, the omniscient narrator of Mošfeq Kāẓemi's تهران مخوف (*Tehrān Maḵuf,* or *Horrendous Tehran*) was replaced by the first-person narrative in Simin Dānešvar's سووشون (*Suvašun*) (Ibid., 447). Besides writing about the importance of point of view and how a limited insight (narrowing down the small door) is more suitable for modern fiction. According to his students, whose comments on the subject will follow, Golširi religiously emphasized the importance of point of view, and specifically the first-person point of view in his workshops, and popularized many western literary terms among aspiring writers. Golširi also published جُنگ اصفهان (*Jong e Eṣfahān*), which along with *Sokan* magazine was one of the most advanced literary journals of the time, and surrounded himself with celebrated translators such as Aḥmad Mirʿalāyi, Aḥmad Golširi (his brother) and Abolḥasan Najafi. Golširi himself had little English, and his fiction writing was to a great extent influenced by Borges and Alain Robbe-Grillet. Whilst Jamālzādea, as we have seen, laid the theoretical foundations of experimental writing in the preface of his first story collection, Golširi introduced it in practice, following the *nouveau roman* movement, and specifically Alain Robbe-Grillet. The sixth issue of *Jong e Eṣfahān* printed an article stating that literature, like any other field, needs research, putting out effort and exploration so new forms can be found (Golširi et al.

1968/1347, 6). The idea that literature, including the novel, is the result of experimentation was borrowed by Golširi specifically from Robbe-Grillet; but other novelists close to *nouveau roman* ideas also held this view – among them, Michel Butor, who stated in his *Essaie sur le roman* (1992) that writing a novel was like a research and a laboratory, or Claude Oillier, who was seen as an experimentalist of forms (Farigām 2013/1392, 59-60). Golširi's influence, consisting of his creative writing workshops, his views on the first-person narrative and his experimental views on novel writing, lasted through the following decades (2000/1380 onward), and the literary atmosphere of this decade in Iran was very experimental. Apart from a sharp rise in first-person narratives in novel writing, I think it is fair to say that the novels written in this decade are excessively similar to one another both in narrative and themes (Ibid., 58). The widespread increase of creative writing workshops promoting a certain type of style and certain techniques in fiction writing, often termed 'workshop literature', has highly influenced the literary atmosphere in Iran. As Mirʿābedini states, Golširi wanted to experiment with new narrative techniques in every fiction work (Mirʿābedini 2000/1379, 300). This decade (2001-2011/1380-1390) is the most significant for novel writing in Iran.

Having looked at the huge influence of Golširi's workshops, mention should be made of some of the issues they raised. Some writers objected to the practices followed in the workshops, noting that Golširi's students, while extremely serious about employing the techniques he introduced, showed little interest in broadening their horizons to other innovative techniques. This was partly due, I would argue, to the atmosphere of idolatry vs. iconoclasm that, as we have seen, characterized Persian culture, and led Golširi's students to follow him as a master with blind obedience rather than entering into a simple teacher-student relationship.The expression used in Persian for such relationship, مرید و مراد بازی , *morid o morādbāzi*, has its roots in the mystical tradition, in which the مرید (*morid*) or سالک (*sālek*), i.e. the disciple, follows the مراد (*morād*), or شیخ (*sheyk*), a spiritual master who is owed obedience in every respect. I suggest that when Golširi's students began to transfer

their knowledge of fiction writing to their own students by starting up their own workshops later, they were reluctant to teach any concepts and terms that might not have come directly from him or that they thought might meet with his disapproval: in other words, anything not suggested by Golširi would tend to lose its educational value and credibility to a high degree. This approach caused a polarization between Golširi's followers and those who followed other literary figures like Barāheni: many students thus wasted their potential by getting embroiled in pointless vicarious rivalries.

In any case, Golširi had a special interest in the first-person narrative, and would include it in his "smaller door" category along with the third-person limited narrative. He seemed to regard both categories, albeit implicitly, as a more modern trend in narrative than the use of an omniscient third-person narrator, which in his view represented an old-fashioned literary approach to narrative. However, he always emphasized that the point of view of a fiction should be fitted to the narrative in the first place, and himself wrote some of his most celebrated works in the third person limited. This and some other of his ideas molded his students in a certain way, making them, as we have seen, far less willing to experiment outside his recommendations and guidelines. Novelist and critic Amirḥoseyn K̲oršidfar states: 'After the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, many literary figures became marginalized – for political reasons, evidently. Listening only to just one person will surely have negative consequences. Take a look at creative writing workshops, all the students come out with the same shape and colour!' (Afrumand 2014/1393). Another critic, Mojtabā Purmoḥsen, states that the atmosphere of the creative writing workshops set up by Golširi students is 'radical', and that the 'wannabee' writers are uncannily similar to their instructors. Purmoḥsen states that Golširi, albeit unwittingly, 'replicated' himself in his students, and adds that while an artist's value lies in uniqueness of method and outlook, the outcome of these workshops tells an entirely different story, closer to a picture of bigotry and bias (Purmoḥsen 2011/1390). In agreement with K̲oršidfar and Purmoḥsen, I believe that Golširi's

students should have followed his 'innovative approach' views about literature rather than slavishly practising what he thought, taught and wrote in his books and taking pride in following in their master's footprints. One of them, novelist Ḥoseyn Sanāpur, states that he teaches his students the same way Golširi taught them (Niknām 2009/1388). Another, Ābkenār, tells us: 'I do not explicitly suggest anything about choosing the right point of view to my creative writing students, but only mention that employing the omniscient narrator will cause the work to end up being classified as a classic work, while the first-person narrator, despite his/her limited insight, is far more striking. The use of first-person narratives is on the rise, and as we move from the past to modern times, the point of view has become more and more limited: in my view, this is deeply rooted in the philosophical insight of modern man' (Ābkenār 2017/1396).

Another of the writers involved in what we might term 'workshop literature', Jamāl Mirṣādeqi, started his creative writing workshops in 1994/1373. He states: 'I personally do not recommend any specific point of view to my students. However, of a thousand student who have come to my classes since 1994 (until today), nearly nine hundred were female writers who showed a tendency to write mostly in the first person. This might be because it is easier to voice female issues such as child custody, divorce and poor relationships with a partner's family in a first person narrative – perhaps because this point of view is better suited to the domestic themes they treat in their novels' (Mirṣādeqi 2016/1395). While noting Mirṣādeqi's observations, I strongly believe there are several other factors involved in the use of first-person narratives by female writers, and I shall return to this issue in Chapter Four.

 Writer, critic and workshop leader Moḥammadḥasan Šahsavāri has yet a different view about the increase of first-person narrative in Persian novel writing. He states: 'The use of the first-person narrative might help some students to craft a narrator (or character) which is closer to the author in terms of personal traits. My experience has proven that to write a successful novel, novelists should start by

writing themselves, so as to free themselves and become able to explore the world of fiction with a broader insight.' (Šahsavāri 2017/1396) Although Šahsavāri does not offer any explicit statement as to whether or not he personally recommends the first-person narrative to his students, I would argue that this is what he means by students 'writing themselves'. Mirʿābedini also thinks that students write themselves, being asked by their mentors to first start by writing about personal experiences, and that this is the reason for first-time novelists writing in the first person (Mirʿābedini 2015/1394).

Let me make it clear at this point that my describing the role of creative writing workshops does not in any way imply that all authors writing their novels in the first-person narrative necessarily took part in these workshops. In other words, the influence of these workshops was not limited to the students involved, but was far more inclusive and widespread: in fact, creative writing workshops in Iran encouraged a certain style of novel writing which is often called نوشتار کارگاهی or 'workshop-style writing'. Students' experimentations in creative writing workshops may or may not be published: whilst in some workshops, such as Šahsavari's, one novel is selected for publication at the end of each creative writing course, this is not necessarily the case with Ābkenār's workshops; but whether or not a writer takes part in a workshop, whether or not publication follows as a result, most Iranian authors today are directly or indirectly influenced by this movement: this trend thus deserves further study by literary scholars. Most novels written in Iran today carry the traits of a work written in a creative writing workshop, with emphasis on certain narrative techniques over others, as shown in the works published from 2001/1380 onward. The preference for what is perceived as modern techniques generally results in more students choosing the first-person narrative over other techniques such as the third-person or omniscient narrator.

In the next section we shall discuss the tendency to employ the first-person narrative among amateur writers and 'wannabees' (as Purmoḥsen puts it).

First-time novelists and the surge of first-person narrative

Moḥsen Ḥakim-maʿani, a writer, literary critic and presenter at رادیو فرهنگ (Culture Radio), states that the first-person narrative is predominant in the works of most first-time novelists. Ḥakim-maʿani claims that he has investigated all the novels published in Iran in the years 2004-2009/1383-1388, and suggests that first-time novelists have an urge to write in the first person because they feel they have a lot to say or assume the world is waiting for them, and also need to show that the words spoken are their own words and not anyone else's. These novels are poorly written and the themes are mediocre; the careless narratives employ a first-person point of view (Ḥakim-maʿani 2009/1388, 34). Ābkenār states that to write and to understand a first-person narrative is easy, and this is why first-time novelists and amateur writers tend to write more in the first person (Ābkenār 2017/1396). Ābkenār and Ḥakim-maʿani both acknowledge that first-person narratives are on the rise, although they both give what I would suggest is a greatly oversimplified account of the motivations of first-time writers for choosing to write their novels in the first person.

To understand this tendency among first-time novelists, it would be useful to look at the way general trends in approaches to appreciation of literary work change over time. Between 1936, with the beginning of novel writing in Iran by the publication of *The Blind Owl,* and 2001 (1380), literary figures have tended to mark literary periods: in other words, literary classifications follow the emerging of avant-gardes and famous authors. This 'elitist' approach, however, started to fade away slowly in the 1360s (1980s) and 1370s (1990s), and roughly by the mid-1370s (1996) novelists no longer represented literary periods and literary figures were replaced by literary movements. While the hallmark of other literary periods were their avant-gardes or famous literary figures, recent times, specifically since 2001 onwards, have not been

marked by any avant-garde or significant writer, and avant-gardism seems to have progressively slid into amateurism in Persian novel writing. Most novels written after 2001 have similar structures, and upon close study show that technical development does not in any way seem to match thematic, stylistic or narrative originality. As discussed earlier, 'workshop-style writing' is a dominant literary movement in Iran at present, affecting novel writing almost in every respect, first and foremost by giving preference to the first-person narrative. On the other hand, the paralyzing effect of state-imposed censorship has also deeply affected writers' decisions with regard to the choice of point of view. The climate predominant in the years after the Islamic revolution, specifically in the eight-year presidency of Maḥmud Aḥmadinežād (2005-2013), pushed Iranian novelists towards a phase of 'identity seeking' after what was perceived as a failed attempt at social change: this led to a rise in the employment of first-person narratives, as discussed earlier in this chapter with regard to the issue of individualism. This interweaving of social factors with literary trends can be said to follow a repetitive pattern: following events such as the Islamic Revolution, the Constitutional Revolution, the coups of 1921 and 1953, and their aftermath of severe repression, Iranian novelists who could not treat such themes as mass execution of political prisoners or the silencing of opposition retreated into themselves. This was mirrored by the sense of despair and failure during Maḥmud Aḥmadinežād's time in power and the crushing of the Green Movement which had gained strength in 2009.

In any case, the significant characteristic of writing in the years between 2001/1380 and the present day is an 'I' which is central to the narrative, trapped in a certain spatiotemporal atmosphere – sometimes atemporal, in fact, since writing of any specific time or place (let alone writing as 'I') may trigger the risks of censorship. Thus, the predominance of the 'I' in the 1380s has various reasons: not only the influence of 'workshop writing', but a change in the attitude of novelists following the failure of an attempt at historical and social change. To this day, Iranian novelists need to be aware of censorship if using the 'I' when speaking of sex, of

drinking alcohol, of politics and other taboo themes, since this 'I' is notoriously and invariably identified with the author.

In Chapters One and Two I discussed the poor reception of first-person narratives among the reading public. In the early stages of novel writing, censors and readers were confused at the same level, so to speak. However this is no longer the case: although readers' understanding of first-person narratives has improved along with their ability to establish a distance between the author and the first-person narrator, the problem today lies with the censors. Thus, quite apart from the role of creative writing workshops, we need to look at the correlation between government censorship in Iran and the first-person narrative. The next section aims to introduce the themes that I shall discuss in Chapter Four, in particular the role of government censorship in relation to the employment of first-person narratives on the part of female novelists.

State-imposed censorship and the first-person narrative

In the previous chapters and sections I mainly discussed confusions over the first-person narrative in Persian novel writing with reference to readers and critics; but it should not be forgotten that one of the most important elements affecting an Iranian writer's choice to write a novel employing a first-person narrative is government censorship. Whilst the issue of censorship in Iran has always been at the centre of much controversy, this has intensified in recent times because of widespread control of book publication on the part of the Islamic government. State-imposed censorship has deeply affected the field of literature, and Persian novel writing in particular. The correlation between censorship and the thematic aspects of a novel has indeed been examined by literary scholars; yet there seem to be no in-depth studies looking at the effects of censorship on the formal and technical aspects of novel writing, and more specifically on point of view, in

particular the first-person point of view. It is a sad reality that censorship in Iran has a long history; but in order to better serve the purpose of my thesis, I shall narrow my focus to the period following the Islamic Revolution, which is directly relevant to the subject.

The Islamic Republic of Iran defines censorship, or *momayyezi*, as control upon the flow of culture in the country. Legal authority to exercise this control is derived from Article 24 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

'Publications and the press have freedom of expression except where there is infringement of the basic tenets of Islam or of public rights. In this respect, detailed provisions will be laid down by law.' (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 13)

This article enables authorities, including those in the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, to scrutinize the press and the publishing industry and to grant or withdraw approval to any written material, depending on whether or not it is deemed safe to publish. The article consists of a few clauses, but generally speaking gives full authority over the field of press and publication to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (Rajabzādea 2001/1380, 5-7). The wording in the Constitution is clear enough, but obvious questions will arise: since views on what constitutes 'infringement of the basic tenets of Islam or public rights' may differ widely, what specifically makes a book unpublishable? Which guidelines are provided for writers who want to make sure their works can be published? The Constitution fails to provide any such guidelines, leaving the hands of ministerial authorities free to exploit their unlimited power to either reject or approve a book merely on the basis of personal taste and personal decisions. The Ministry, as we have mentioned, also refuses to disclose any information about the number of books excluded from publication, or about any of the feedback provided to authors; in fact authors do not know their censors, whose identities are kept strictly secret, let alone have permission to meet with them unless directly summoned by them to answer questions on their work. To my knowledge, the only reliable reference source for

the study of censorship in the post-revolutionary period is Aḥmad Rajabzādea's

ممیزی کتاب(*Book Censorship*): it was published in 2001/1380. Rajabzādea, a

sociologist, was able to access 1400 evaluation and feedback forms that the Ministry

of Islamic Culture and Guidance sent out to authors in 1996/1375, the year that saw

book censorship at its worst in Iran. ʿAliaşğar Rameżānpur, a former deputy minister

of culture who belonged to the reformist movement in Iran, served under Ḵatami's

government (1997-2005) and currently lives in exile in the UK, states that he and his

team promoted Rajabzādea's book so it could be read and seen by people

(Rameżānpur 2015/1394). Although the book only covers one year of post-

revolutionary censorship in Iran, it is an immensely important piece of evidence to

support this study. Whilst one might argue that the same censorship policies may

not always have been applied over the whole post-revolutionary period, works of

this sort are hugely helpful for a better understanding of the entity and extent of the

problem of suppression of freedom of speech in present-day Iran. The book also has

a reference bibliography for further reading on censorship in Iran. In the preface,

Rajabzādea warns against the vicious cycle of censorship and expresses the hope

that his evidence and findings might help censors to improve the quality of their

decision-making when working at the Book Bureau, the department directly in

charge of authorizing the publication of books at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic

Guidance. Having no way to access ministerial feedback forms when developing my

own research along this strand, I chose to conduct many original interviews with

writers who spoke of their personal experiences with censorship in Iran; I also

studied interviews to news agencies in which authors detailed their struggles with

getting their works published, specifically when these works were written in the

first-person. I very much hope that researchers will have direct access to this

important information in future – but until such time, current forms of research,

study and discussion should continue to keep a close focus on censorship in Iran. In

his book, Rajabzādea gives a historical overview of official censorship in Iran, and

states that its beginnings can be traced back to the time of the Qājār dynasty ruling

Iran, and to the reign of Nāṣereddin Šāh (1831-1896), who officially founded وزارت سانسور (*Vezārat e Sānsur)*, a Ministry of Censorship intended to suppress freedom of expression in Iran (Rajabzādea 2001/1380, 24). Faraj Sarkuhi, an Iranian writer and political activist living in exile, states that under the rule of the second and last monarch of the Pahlavi dynasty, Mohammadreżā Pahlavi, the cultural department at SĀVĀK (an acronym for سازمان اطلاعات و امنیت کشور, or Organization for Intelligence and National Security) was in charge of censorship in Iran from 1952 to 1973 – that is roughly until six years before the fall of the Pahlavi government in 1979 (Sarkuhi 2002, 127). Aḥmad Farāsati, a former deputy at SĀVĀK, states however that SĀVĀK had no responsibility over refusal or approval of books, but that control over the media, the press and book publication was held by وزارت اطلاعات (the Ministry of Intelligence), while SĀVĀK was an executive agency: thus at times they would confiscate banned books on the orders of the Ministry of Intelligence (Farāsati 2017/1396). *Censorship in the Mirror*, a book covering 23100 feedback forms issued by censors during the second period of Pahlavi rule, proves Farāsati's statement (Ḵosravi 2002/1381): in some cases mentioned by Ḵosravi, books submitted to اداره نگارش were banned by SĀVĀK from being reprinted, which proves that SĀVĀK acted as an executive agency and was not involved in the process of issuing approval for the book to be published for the first time. For instance, according to the feedback forms recorded by Ḵosravi, three censors looked at reprinting Ṣādeq Hedāyat's *The Blind Owl*: two of them agreed that the reprinting should go ahead while one disagreed; however, the final written result was that 'according to SĀVĀK, reprint of *The Blind Owl* is prohibited, and SĀVĀK has stressed that *The Blind Owl* should be always barred for reprinting.' (Ḵosravi 2002/1381, 165) The feedback form is dated 21 July 1975 (30 Tir 1354).

Sarkuhi thinks that unlike the Pahlavi dynasty, the Islamic government knew very well how to suppress freedom of expression, since clerics historically had a long record of involvement with cultural activities and the ability and powers to put limits on the flow of culture (2000, 128). After coming to power in 1979, the Islamic

Republic went through a period of stabilization lasting roughly until 1981: until that date, almost two years after the Pahlavi dynasty was overthrown, there was no systematic governmental book censorship in Iran and the government did not take active steps to suppress freedom of expression; but soon widespread censorship began to affect the press, the media and the publishing industry, and, starting in 1981/1360, to attack the Iranian Writers Association, which had been founded in 1968/1347. Publishing houses were forced to apply for a permit (Publication Licence) at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, in keeping with a ruling issued on 10 May 1988 (20 Ordibehešt 1367) by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution. The Council became the authority for publication legislation, and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance was appointed as its executive branch (Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution). According to Art. 2, par. 16 of the 'Objectives and Responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance', no publishing house is authorized to print books without holding a permission from the Ministry (Rajabzādea 2001/1380, 53).

A study carried out by the Small Media group in 2015 (and eloquently titled *Writer's Block*) lists the stages of the process of book publication in Iran as follows:

1- Writer finds a publisher after finishing the book.
2- Publisher agrees to publish the book; writer and publisher sign contract.
3- Editing, proofreading, typesetting and designing the book.
4- Publisher applies for Shābak شابک (ISBN) and فیپا (FIPA) from the National Library of Iran.
5- Writer and publisher fill forms to enclose with a hard copy of the book and send them for scrutiny to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.
6- A PDF version of the manuscript on CD is sent along with completed forms and suggested book cover design.
7- Book awaits scrutiny at the Ministry (there is no guarantee of how long this will take – the book might wait at the Ministry for years).

8- Publisher receives list of corrections the author must make in order for the book to comply with the Ministry's publishing rules.

9- Re-submission of the book at the Ministry. A book might be put through this process several times – its destiny meanwhile remains unclear, and it can be rejected outright at any stage of this back-and-forth process.

10- A licence to print is issued for the book.

11- Book is published.

12- Publisher fills out and sends an Acknowledgement of Receipt form along with two copies of the book.

13- Publisher receives a final licence issued by the Ministry.

14- Book is cleared for distribution. (Robertson et al., 4)

This research is very helpful in setting out the steps of a book's journey in the meanders of state bureaucracy; I would add to point 8 that there are no guidelines given to the authors as to what it might be permissible to write. The steps detailed above only refer to the first edition stage, but it should be remembered that the Ministry can also ban the reprinting of books, particularly novels. This is highly likely to happen if the novel arouses controversy after publication. Depending on the feedback received from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, books can be authorized, unauthorized or conditionally authorized: the latter, as the term suggest, will only be published if and when the process of correction satisfies ministerial requirements. At this stage, a brief overview of censorship in general and of the specific reasons for the establishment of certain ministries and organization after the Islamic Revolution might be useful.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Islamic Revolution came into power with the handing over of full authority to clerics who were familiar with the role of culture in the supporting of a government. One of the largest investments and pillar policies of the Islamic government was the production and control of culture. The Fārābi Cinema Foundation (established in 1983/1362), the Centre for Islamic

Thought and Art (1979/1357) and Surea University in Tehran (1992/1372) were among the organizations meant to fulfill the government's Islamic objectives. Investment in such foundations was intended to give the government control over freedom of expression and the ability to interfere with the flow of correct information and to gradually change the population's cultural mindset so as to withstand تهاجم فرهنگی (*tahājom farhangi),* or the so-called 'cultural invasion'. Sarkuhi (2000, 122-123) believes that the term was first used by ʿAbdollāh Šahbāzi in an article published in Keyhān Havāyi, while Ḥasani (Ābiz) states that 'cultural invasion' was a term coined by the 'supreme leader', ʿAli K̲āmeneayi, who 'was the main architect of the theory of cultural invasion' (Ābiz 2016, 11). In agreement with Ābiz, Iranian political analyst and journalist Ḥoseyn Bāstāni states that the term was first used by K̲āmeneayi on 15 October 1989 (24 Mehr 1368) and then again specifically, while justifying censorship in Iran, in a speech he delivered on 28 November 1989, in which he likened the cultural invasion to a chemical bomb destroying with no noise through the publication of the books and videos that might find their way into the country. (Bāstāni 2017/1396)

Bāstāni notes that K̲āmeneayi's employment of this term was the beginning of a certain political and cultural discourse in Iran. After this, the concept of 'cultural invasion' spread in coincidence with ʿAli Fallāḥiyān coming into power at the Ministry of Intelligence in August 1989 at the time of Rafsanjani's presidency, probably through the pages of regime newspaper *Keyhān* (Ibid.). In any case, the 'cultural invasion' narrative, which was in fact a sort of conspiracy theory, soon became the stick used by the government to bludgeon intellectual freedom. Any writer or intellectual fighting for freedom of expression and publication was accused of supporting the cultural invasion. In fact, 'cultural invasion' was a 'one size fits all' concept through which the regime stymied any ideas, lifestyle choices, literary styles, and in fact anything at all that was supposedly taken from or inspired by the west, branding it as an invasion against so-called 'Islamic-Iranian culture'. A look at ʿAli K̲āmeneayi's official website shows that he used this term 5694 times between

1989 and 2016 (Ḥasani 2016, 13). This and a few other terms have been the most frequently used key words in his speeches. Thus 'cultural invasion' was not simply a term, a theory or even a conspiracy theory, but the expression used to give leverage to the government's attempts to control the flow of cultural activities and thought in Iran: state-imposed censorship, interrogation, detention, legal action and even assassination of writers were justified by citing the supposed necessity to stop the 'cultural invasion' presented as a severe threat to the so-called 'Iranian-Islamic values' invoked by the government. The new trends in Persian fiction were seen by government forces as one of the perfect examples of western cultural invasion (Sarkuhi 2000, 126). According to a recent research carried out by the Small Media team in 2015, fiction is the main target of the government when it comes to book censorship, and looking at the number of censored fiction books is the best way to form an idea of the massive scale on which censorship operates in Iran (Robertson et al., 12). On the basis of the 1996-1997 evaluation and feedback forms he has studied, Rajabzādea also concludes that literature, as the most directly imaginative of the art forms, was the main target for state-imposed censorship in Iran during that period (Rajabzādea 2001/1380, 61 and 97). He adds that 'among all genres in literature, the Persian novel was the main victim of censorship in 1997-1998, with feedback forms proving that a huge number of Persian novels remained unauthorized in this year – a true cultural crisis' (Ibid., 105), and that: 'In this year (1996-1997), over 257 Persian novels, 45% received a 'conditional' and 55% were unauthorized' (Ibid., 112). This means that almost half of the novels submitted to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance were forced to apply corrections to the text: in most cases, this is tantamount to mutilating the text and pulling the novel to pieces; and with 55% of novels being rejected outright, not one novel submitted to the Ministry in that year was unconditionally cleared for publication. Rajabzādea holds that most of these novels were rejected as they contained themes such as love and eroticism (Ibid., 107 and 122), two common themes universally chosen by authors around the world. According to the Small Media team study quoted above,

publication of fiction books is nonetheless recovering: whilst during Aḥmadinežād's presidency (2005-2013) fiction only made up 16.7% of the total number of books published, this percentage increased to 22.7% in 2014, only one year after the beginning of Ḥasan Rowḥāni' presidential term (Robertson et al., 12).

Fiction books, as we should bear in mind, do not however meet with rejection only because of containing forbidden themes, but on many occasions, as Rajabzādea (2001/1380, 118) notes, solely on account of the author's political and cultural background. This should alert us to the deep extent of the damage that censorship has inflicted on culture in Iran, where the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance keeps not only a list of of forbidden words, themes and books, but also a blacklist of banned authors. Thus a book submitted to scrutiny might be fully compliant with the censors' idea of 'Islamic values', but still be rejected because of who the author is or is thought to be – again, this process is not regulated by any guidelines whatsoever, either for censors or for authors. With the very far reach of censorship under the Islamic government in Iran, and its relentless effort to suppress authors' creativity and freedom of expression and to control the flow of culture by any means possible, the number of books published since 1979 has oscillated in unpredictable phases. One of the main problems remains the quality of the scrutiny process itself. Censors working at the Book Bureau at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG) can accept or reject a book simply on the basis of their personal beliefs. There is no evidence available to show that censors are following any guidelines relative to 'Islamic-Iranian values' when they reject a work with the motivation that it 'promotes anti-Islamic views'; similarly, there are no guidelines for authors relative to which words, themes and forms they are expected to avoid. As we have noted, censors' identities are kept strictly secret and there is no contact between them and the authors, except on the very rare occasion when a writer might be summoned to a meeting with his/her censors to answer a set of questions and provide an explanation about the problematic parts of his/her book. Prominent translator Ḵašayār Deyhimi is critical of the government's approach to book

censorship: 'Is MCIG the Ministry of Intelligence?' he says. 'We have censor number one, then censor number two, followed by censor number three. Writers should be able to speak to the censor scrutinizing their work.' (Iran Emrooz 2014)

It is important to note here that having more than one censor is not an innovation introduced by the Islamic Republic: in the years before the Islamic Revolution, under Pahlavi rule, controversial books were examined by more than one censor in case of any doubts as to whether they should be authorized or banned (Kosravi 2002/1381). Apart from the lack of clear guidelines for censors and authors, the censors' level of competence in the literary field has also been shown to be dubious at best: Rajabzādea, who as we have seen was exceptionally able to access the feedback forms sent to publishers by censors in the period 1996-97, notes that reading such forms very clearly shows how some censors lack the skills needed to even write a basic feedback letter, let alone examine and evaluate literary works (Rajabzādea 2001/1380, 92-96). Sarkuhi states (2000, 144) that in fact, the Ministry of Intelligence in Iran was always in charge of selecting censors and cultural authorities who would collaborate with the cultural department of the ministry itself, and that the cultural team had responsibility for eavesdropping on authors and prosecuting them. 'The heads of the domestic and foreign press and the head of the Book Bureau located at MCIG were chosen among the members of this team.'

Rajabzādea also notes that looking at the feedback forms shows that inquiring about an author's private life was permitted, and that some feedback letters recommend prosecution of a novelist because of the employment of immoral and immodest themes (Rajabzādea 2001/1381, 94 and 122). In fact, the Book Bureau has not only been a centre for the scrutiny of books, but a place where authors themselves were submitted to inquisition.

The quality and intensity of censorship has varied with different governments: although this is not supported by any available evidence, it is widely believed that after 1979, book censorship in Iran was more severe under the fundamentalist than under the reformist government; but neither government ever set any regulations

for either censors or authors. It is in any case true that throughout the long history of book censorship, some periods have certainly been darker than others: one of these was Maḥmud Aḥmadinežād's presidency term during the years 2005-2013. During Aḥmadinežād's presidency, the number of books censored increased to such an extent that intellectuals, cultural activists, publications and even the following government, led by Ḥasan Rowḥāni, became vocal on the issue. Ṣaffar-Harandi, minister of culture and Islamic guidance under Aḥmadinežād's government in 2005-2009, openly requested that writers practice [self] censorship before submitting their books to MCIG to save the government the trouble of censoring their works for them (Ḥasani 2016, 31): in fact he overtly encouraged writers to practice self-censorship so the government could save time and money. Aḥmadinežād's government saw not only an increase in the number of books censored, but also the introduction of new approaches to book censorship in Iran. As we have seen, publishers were under obligation to submit not only a hard copy of any books they wished to publish, but also a PDF file of the manuscript on a CD: this was so that the text could be quickly and thoroughly searched for any of the forbidden words on the Book Bureau's list. ʿAliaṣqar Rameżānpur, a former deputy culture under Ḵatami's reformist government, states that 'it was under Maḥmud Aḥmadinežād's presidency that sensitivity over words became aggravated' (Rameżānpur 2015/1394). Common words such as 'kiss' were blacklisted, and as the text was machine searched, authors would receive requests such as 'line X line on page Y contains the forbidden word 'kiss' – please cut'. The writer had no way to explain that the incriminated kiss may be a mother-child kiss or the gesture of one who kisses the soil of the homeland, and was forced to excise all forbidden words, lines and sometimes whole pages and to resubmit the text: this humiliating and time-consuming process clearly had a deeply discouraging effect on both the writer and the publisher. Interestingly, a few authors have a very different perception of censorship activities under Aḥmadinežād's presidency. Novelists Mahsā Moḥebʿali and Moḥammad Ṭoluʿi both claim that under Aḥmadinežād's presidency writers were given a 'breath of fresh air'

by the fact that censors had so little knowledge of fiction and literature that they could not understand or interpret the works of novelists, and as a result were unable to make informed judgement as to whether a book should be rejected, banned or amended; under reformist governments such as Rowḥāni's or Ḵatami's, on the other hand, censors became more adept at extracting from the text hidden meanings and messages that authors themselves often had not even meant to convey (Robertson et al., 8). While these views are interesting in terms of offering a new perspective, figures give us a different picture, showing that the publishing industry in Iran was more prosperous between 1993 and 2005 (1372-1384) and experienced an unexpected and dramatic decline in later years (Ibid., 6). That this decline in the number of books published began in 2005, in coincidence with Aḥmadinežād's government coming into power, and continued during the years of his term in office is too direct a correlation to be merely accidental. ʿAliaṣḡar Rameżānpur states that one of the main changes in the approach to censorship under Aḥmadinežād's government was the shift from sensitive themes to single sensitive words: before Aḥmadinežād, censors' attention was focused on anti-Islamic, anti-government and erotic themes; the disaster started in 2009 when a sort of 'cleansing' happened at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, where most staff were made redundant, fired and replaced with people coming from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (سپاه پاسداران) and close to the Attorney-General of Iran, دادستانی ' (Rameżānpur 2015/1394).

Whilst these accounts are stark reminders of the severity of the problem of censorship under fundamentalist governments, this sadly does not mean that censorship under reformist governments has not caused its share of shocking events. Another important fact highlighted by Rajabzādea's unprecedented research based on MCIG feedback forms is that in 1996-1997 (1375) the number of foreign novels approved for publication and containing the same forbidden themes as Persian novels was far higher than the number of published Persian novels. Of the 234 foreign novels submitted to the MCIG with an application for license, 73% were

conditionally approved and 27% unauthorized: these foreign books are mostly western novels, and they are listed in Rajabzādea's book (2001/1380, 149). The different approach to publishing foreign novels as compared to Persian novels is more obvious if we are reminded of the figures for Persian novels licensed in the same year, which, as we have seen, was 35% conditional and 55% unauthorized over 257 novels submitted. This is clear evidence of the MCIG's discriminatory approach towards Iranian novelists, which is in line with the government showing a higher level of sensitivity as applied to domestic writers. More importantly, this evidence of double standards in judging imports from western culture (denounced as noxious *a priori* but then not subjected to the same severe restrictions as Iranian works) fully shows the mendacious and inconsistent character of the construct of 'cultural invasion' and its deployment as a decoy used by the government to continue its harassing and prosecution of Iranian writers, and in particular novelists. Rameżānpur notes that, as well as political, religious and erotic love themes, descriptions of a woman's body and her beauty are considered sensitive, and that the list of forbidden words includes, among many others, words such as 'dog' and 'wine' (Rameżānpur 2015/1394).

With Ḥasan Rowḥāni's reformist government coming into power in 2013/1392, ʿAli Jannati was put in charge of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Rowḥāni and ʿAli Jannati were both strongly critical of book censorship under Aḥmadinežād's government. Jannati stated that under the last government even the Qur'an would have been rejected, had it not been the book of revelation (BBC Persian, 2013/1392). Accordingly, Jannati promised in August 2013/Mordād 1392 that scrutiny of a book before publication would be completely stopped (Radio Farda 2013a); he did however implicitly recommend that publishers censor the works of authors, a process he termed 'self-adjusting' as he requested publishing houses to fall in line with the government. Jannati emphasized the role of guidelines in the improvement of censorship, in fact encouraging authors to practice self-censorship and implicitly threatening publishers by reminding them that if a book is banned

from sale after publication, their investment will be wasted, and that they would therefore do better to know which books are allowed and which are not: this casts an entirely different light on his promise that pre-publishing censorship would be fully removed.

It is of course true that publishers have been to a certain extent involved in the process of censoring a book before submitting it to MCIG, either by refusing to publish the book outright or by 'helping' the author to remove or change some risqué parts in their book. Sepidea Jodeyri, a female poet living in exile, states that some publishers who deem the poet's work taboo-breaking or beyond the pale will replace risqué words and lines with neutral ones. This, she adds, is how a publisher is transformed into some sort of new censor, and it is 'really painful.' (Robertson et al., 5). Jannati also promised to challenge the dominant presence of extremist groups working at the Book Bureau (Radio Farda 2013a). Within three weeks of announcing the total dismantling of censorship before publication, on 11 September 2013 (20 Šahrivar 1392) he recanted by stating that there was no possibility for the removal of censorship before publication, and avoided the pressure to provide any further explanations by projecting the issue onto the new government, stating that censorship is a governmental principle and thus concerns the government. All this was happening shortly after the secretary of the Tehran Union of Publishers and Booksellers released a communication stating that publishers have no tendency to be authors' censors (Radio Farda 2013b). Three years later, when Jannati resigned in 2016/1395, Seyyedreżā Ṣāleḥi Amiri was appointed minister of culture and Islamic guidance under Rowḥāni's government. In a talk delivered at the 34th World Award for Book of the Year of the Islamic Republic of Iran in February 2017 (Bahman 1395), Ṣāleḥi Amiri stated that 'the strict censorship era has come to an end and a relationship of trust has been established between the government and writers: following Rowḥāni's policies on censorship, writers and publishers should know the "red lines" along which to censor themselves before the government interferes with the book publication process.' Beside implicitly encouraging publisher-led

censorship and self-censorship, Ṣāleḥi Amiri also underplayed the grievous severity of censorship in Iran by stating that in 1395, over 50,000 books originally written in Persian and submitted to MCIG, only 3,000 books were censored (their status was either 'conditional' or 'unauthorized'), and that this was a trivial number. He then added that Rowḥāni's government was the most stable and peaceful period for the Ministry of Culture and Islamic guidance (Isna 2017/1395) – all the while covertly encouraging writers and publishers to censor their own books before the government censors got involved. Whilst Ṣāleḥi Amiri's picture of the situation is by no means acceptable, reports and interviews do show that book censorship has somewhat relented during the presidency of Ḥasan Rowḥāni: for instance, the waiting period for books under scrutiny at MCIG pending a licence has become significantly shorter. Ānitā Yārmoḥammadi, a young writer, states that under Aḥmadinežād's government, censors would reject novels outright, without even considering requesting corrections or granting conditional status. There was nothing a writer could do to accelerate the process of scrutiny for a book waiting at MCIG, and a refusal letter would sometimes be received after two or three years [from submission]. The pressure was specifically on younger writers as they could more easily become discouraged: some even put down their pens and quit writing (Robertson et al., 10). According to *Writer's Block*, the research carried out by the Small Media group, the waiting period for books under scrutiny has decreased to one month, and the relationship between publishers and MCIG is gradually recovering (Ibid., 11). Although these reports suggest that the gravity of the problem has diminished during the presidency of Ḥasan Rowḥāni, the tendency to encourage writers to engage in self-censorship has been common to Aḥmadinežād and Rowḥāni and to their governments, respectively a fundamentalist and a reformist one. As we have seen, Moḥammadḥoseyn Ṣaffār Harandi, minister of culture and Islamic guidance under the presidency of Aḥmadinežād, encouraged writers to make self-censorship a part of the process of writing a book, while Jannati and Ṣāleḥi Amiri expected publishers to become directly involved in the process of

self-censorship so as to avoid government interference. After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and long before ministers took these positions, writers and intellectuals voiced words of warning against the long-lasting and damaging effects of self-censorship. It can be claimed that self-censorship has even more sustained negative effects than state-imposed censorship, since self-censorship, like a chronic disease, slowly erodes the writer's creativity and freedom of imagination, which are the main qualities that enable a novelist to write. Even if state-imposed censorship is finally abolished, the fear of free expression remains with the author. Whilst a full study of the damaging effects of self-censorship and of its many aspects is beyond the scope of this thesis, I shall briefly discuss these in the next section. A few points need highlighting before doing so, in regard to state-imposed censorship.

Firstly, many researchers carrying out studies on post-revolutionary state-imposed censorship in Iran have difficulty in establishing the time at which some terminologies were created: in general, researchers broadly agree that the term 'censorship' was first replaced by *momayyezi* under the Islamic republic government. One of them, ʿAlireżā Ḥasani (Ābiz), a researcher who wrote his thesis on the censorship of poetry in Iran, states that censorship is not acknowledged in the official discourse of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Instead, the authorities use the word *momayyezi*, which can be translated as 'audit' or 'appraisal' (Ḥasani 2016, ix). Whilst the term was co-opted and widely used by the Islamic government, it seems to have been introduced some time earlier: in his article خودسانسوری (*Self-Censorship*), published on 21 August 1977 (30 Mordād 1356), almost one and a half years before the Islamic Revolution, as part of his book فرهنگ سکوت (*The Culture of Silence*)*,* writer Mahdi Parhām states that use of term *momayyezi* by the government was ridiculous and utterly conservative (1982/1360, 256). This of course refers to the Pahlavi government, and shows that the term was commonly used in the Pahlavi period as well. Also, a study of feedback and evaluation forms from the اداره نگارش or Script Bureau in the second period of the Pahlavi government clearly shows that the censor's feedback is always saved under the heading of

momayez, or *momayezan* if the book was reviewed by more than one censor (Ḵosravi 2002/1381).

Secondly, researchers studying post-revolutionary censorship in Iran tend to draw a very definite line between pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary censorship; but whilst approaches to censorship before and after the Islamic Revolution did differ, they should not in my view be quite so sharply differentiated. These studies are however likely to gain credibility by approaching the history of censorship in Iran and its process of change through time. Books like Ḵosravi's سانسور در آینه (*Censorship in the Mirror*) (2002/1381) prove that some pre-revolutionary approaches to censorship were very close to post-revolutionary ones. It is very likely that *Censorship in the Mirror* was published as the government's attempt to show the extent of censorship in the Pahlavi period, and as a riposte to Rajabzādea's book, *Book Censorship*, published in 2001/1380 and, as Rameżānpur states, supported and promoted by reformists (Rameżānpur 2015/1394). In his study, Ḵosravi gathered and compiled feedback forms accessed from the National Library of Iran for 23,100 books submitted to the اداره نگارش (Script Bureau) and showed how books were scrutinized by the censors (*momayyezān*) one or more times: some were stamped with 'conditional' or 'unauthorized', some with 'no answer given', which means implicitly rejected with no feedback to publishers. The book gives evidence of rejections based on an author's political reputation, of levels of 'sensitivity' on the use of a few words and of the treatment of controversial moral and political issues. There are feedback forms that mark books as banned by SĀVĀK – although as we indicated on page 98, former SĀVĀK agent Farāsati states that SĀVĀK did not have legislative authority. Censors' feedback also shows that the use of the first-person narrative could create problems. Overall, I suggest that the study of earlier periods should necessarily be included in analyses of post-revolutionary censorship, since several of the approaches to censorship taken by the Islamic regime were policies carried over from previous times: it is important to have solid evidence as to what might have been added, changed or removed by different

governments through different periods to arrive at a better understanding of censorship mechanisms in Iran.

Self-censorship

As we have noted, researchers working on censorship in Iran have always sounded warnings regarding a type of censorship different from state-imposed censorship. After the Islamic Revolution, when voicing anything that might be ordinarily unspoken became taboo with the censors at MCIG, the self-censorship that was already ingrained in the minds of Iranian authors grew to a huge extent and came to affect almost every aspect of the narratives in their novels. Iranian novelist Amirḥasan Čeheltan states that the life of Iranians, as shown in the novels, is 'a big lie', and adds that government censorship has trained the mind of Iranian novelists in such a way that they keep their narratives within the four walls of an apartment – an apartment without a toilet, bathroom or bedroom. The only indoor place that can be included in the narrative is either the dining room or the kitchen (Čeheltan 2017/1396). Čeheltan's statement might sound slightly overstated to one who is not very familiar with today's novel writing in Iran, and he might be thought to mean that the novelist's narrator cannot narrate whatever he or she may want; but Čeheltan's literally means what he says, which is true to a great extent. State-imposed censorship has led Iranians to self-censorship through the years, and this self-censorship affects not only the theme they choose for their novels, but also the choice of spatiotemporal setting in their novels. Recent novels in Iran have become strangely atemporal and aspatial, sometimes employing obsolete language. This is directly correlated to self-censorship, and to the need to find the easiest way to escape censors even before they censor the work. As Čeheltan notes, most novels published in Iran recently are narrated in certain spaces, mostly indoors: this trend has gone so far as to give rise to the use of terms such as رمان آپارتمانی ('apartment novel') or رمان آشپزخانه ای ('kitchen novel'), the latter applying to novels written by

female novelists and focusing on women's issues and domestic themes. رمان تریایی ,

رمان مرکزخریدی رمان کافه ای (respectively 'café novel', 'coffee-shop novel' and 'shopping-centre novel') are also terms applied to narratives restricted to limited, mostly indoor spaces and sentimental themes. Most of these novels have non-linear narratives, the language is embalmed in metaphors and ironies, and is sometimes archaic or obsolete. Rajabzādea holds that self-censorship transforms authors into office workers, constantly afraid of disappointing their superiors until they gradually and increasingly adjust to government censorship without even noticing. So self-censorship goes beyond government censorship: the latter, with all its bureaucratic chaos, is still limited to a governmental office and ministry: but self-censorship is carried within the author, everywhere he goes (Rajabzādea 2000/1381, 36-37). Most Iranian novelists seem to have accepted self-censorship as a principle, since novel writing in Iran carries such a high risk. This has been described thoroughly in Faraj Sarkuhi's یاس و داس (*Jasmin and Sickle*), a book studying the Chain Murders of Iran, a series of assassinations carried out by the Islamic government in Iran between 1988 and 1998 and targeting intellectuals and writers. By submitting a novel to MCIG, an Iranian novelist risks not only rejection, but prosecution and false accusations. It is not an overstatement to say that submitting a book for scrutiny means running the risk of turning oneself in, since, as every novelist should by now expect, the process is more similar to an inquisition than to appraisal of a written work, and carries the additional risk of rejection for any future works if an author should be labelled as immodest, immoral or anti-government.

Thus we return to the main questions raised in this chapter regarding the far-reaching influence of state-censorship in Iran, leading to self-censorship: what is the place for a novel in the first-person narrative? How does government censorship treat a novel differently if written in the first person? And what is the role of gender in this? We shall address the last question in Chapter Four, and look at the first two in the next section.

First-person narratives and state-imposed censorship

According to reports, academic articles, literary roundtables and the study of novels on the literary market, the use of first-person narratives has shown an upward trend in the last few years, specifically from 2001 (1380) to the present day; the personal interviews and contacts with literary circles I have sought also show that first-person novels are considered highly sensitive material by censors at the MCIG. As I indicated in Chapter Two, the use of first-person narratives is one of the thorniest subjects in modern Persian literary criticism, owing to the fact that readers, including literary critics, often assume the I-narrator to be identified with the author and his/her own beliefs. Although understanding of the first-person narrative has improved through the years since novel writing first started in Iran, censors are still relying on this mistaken identification.

Moḥammad Moḥammadʿali, the author of five novels written in the first person, is among the writers who have defied the censors on this matter. He states that government censorship (or what he ironically calls 'the gentlemen at MCIG') have created serious problems for the authors who use the first-person narrative. To show how the employment of the first-person narrative affect the censors' judgement about a novel and may change their minds about licensing it for publication, Moḥammadʿali challenges MCIG censors by asking whether a first-person narrator can be a wine-taster and include his examination and evaluation experiences in his narrative (Moḥammadʿali 2013/1392). Although 'wine' is indeed one of the words on the censor's blacklist, what Moḥammadʿali is trying to illustrate is that an author's problems are aggravated by first-person narratives, since, as a consequence of author/narrator identification, the author carries responsibility for the narrator's thoughts and actions, and risks getting in trouble if he or she is thought by the censors to be defaulting on this. Moḥammadʿali suggests that the censors' approach to first-person narrative in novel writing has pushed authors to either avoid the first-person narrative or to construct a first-person narrator who

commits no mistakes as most human do: first-person narrators are thus often disguised as saints, social reformists and 'revolutionaries' – human beings devoid of flaws (Ibid.) Moḥammadʿali suggests that the only way to challenge the censors' approach to first-person narrative is to create universal works such as Hedāyat's *The Blind Owl*, which belongs to a world that has cleared up confusions over first-person narratives long time ago (Ibid.). As we discussed in Chapter Two, readers' and censors' views on first-person narratives very heavily affected understanding of such narratives. A few authors, such as Āl e Aḥmad, unwittingly reinforced this mistaken belief by crafting unsophisticated, two-dimensional first-person narrators with no credibility as human characters. However, to my knowledge, there has not been any sustained research carried out on how state-imposed censorship affects the first-person narrative and how, paradoxically, more novelists write in the first person the more obstruction the censors oppose to first-person narratives. Like Moḥammadʿali, Amirḥasan Čeheltan holds that the main problem with author/narrator identification today is the presence of the censors. As Čeheltan states, the fact that Iran's long-standing literary tradition includes erotic poetry shows that such themes and forms were not proscribed in the past, and that the problem lies with censors at MCIG, since Iranian readers know very well that sex and politics cannot in any way be excluded from literature. It is the Islamic government's censors who insist that the first-person narrator is the same as the author (Čeheltan 2017/1396). My personal view is that in the early stages of novel writing in Iran, readers were unable to differentiate between the author and the first-person narrator and author because of their lack of familiarity with novel, as a western literary form which was new to them. As I noted in Chapter Two, state censorship could hardly have been an issue for Hedāyat while writing *The Blind Owl* – although at a later date, according to a censors' feedback form dated 21 July 1975 (30 Tir 1354), SĀVĀK requested that reprinting of *The Blind Owl* be banned (K̲osravi 2001/1381, 165); but even so, some of the literary scholars of the time, astute critics and writers such as K̲ānlari and Āl e Aḥmad, failed to distance Hedāyat's first-person narrator from the author. Time was

needed for readers to slowly become able to differentiate; today, most novel readers are generally credited with the ability to allow for distance in a novel. Thus, over the past decade in Iran, any issues connected with first-person narratives have mainly been associated with the censors at MCIG. ʿAbbas Maʿrufi, a novelist currently living in exile in Berlin and the founder of the first literary prize in Iran, Gardun Magazine's Golden Pen, states that post-revolutionary censors have caused major problems for authors writing in the first-person narrative. Maʿrufi, who was Golširi's student and was highly influenced by him in terms of narrative and style, states that Golširi told him in a personal conversation that his short story زندانی باغان (*Bāḡān's Prisoner*) was inspired by interrogation sessions he went through (Maʿrufi 2016/1395). The first-person narrator in the story, who is an author, relates the events of his interrogations in an epistolary form. It will I think be helpful at this stage to look directly at a section of this story:

> I look at him. He is an old man wearing a striped coat.
>
> 'What are you waiting for? He asks.
>
> I cannot read. I do not have my glasses with me.
>
> 'Wherever you have committed debaucheries, write all of them. In detail.'
>
> 'What debaucheries?'
> 'Think well… you will remember.'
> …
> He flips through the pages.
>
> 'We know everything: for instance, in the end [of the story], that is a lie you have written […] They could not have drunk all that wine, been lovers for years, and then just lain next to each other like hermits and said good night. Start with this one here. Write the truth.'
>
> I say:
> 'Ebrāhim cannot do it. If even he tries to reach out with his hand [to touch

her], he will be stuck there. He will be stuck there forever. He cannot go back.'

'Forget about Ebrāhim. What about you? Write exactly what happened.'

'But **I am not Ebrāhim**. He is Ebrāhim and he does not want to ruin everything with your so-called debaucheries…'

'If you have not done that, you cannot write about it.' (Maʿrufi 2016/1395)

Although Ebrāhim is a fictional character, the author is expected to explain his love-making, wine-drinking and what the interrogator calls 'debaucheries'. In fact, the narrator Golširi constructed in *Bāḡān's Prisoner*, among other things, implicitly criticizes that censor's failure to understand distance in a first-person narrative.

As a dissident of the Islamic regime, Golširi was evidently under closer scrutiny than pro-government writers: but this does not mean that the latter have been in any way immune from similar accusations. Ḥamidreżā Šekārsari, a pro-government religious poet, has exceptionally spoken out on the issue. Šekārsari states in very indirect, almost quaint terms, that censors in Iran do not like an author to treat any aspects of modern life, and that most of them believe that a certain scene included in the narrative is designed for the author to derive enjoyment from it, whereas the author, by constructing a first-person narrator, chooses a mediator for his narrative to narrate for his audience. He does not choose the first-person narrative simply for his own satisfaction (2010/1389, 48). Šekārsari's statement, in its exceedingly guarded tone, shows how censors' attitude towards the first-person narrative remains the same even if the author has the reputation of being a religious, pro-government literary person.

However, identification of the author with the first-person narrator on the part of censors was also a matter of dispute in the second Pahlavi period. Novelist Moḥammadreżā Bāyrāmi defends his first-person narrative لم یزرع (*Badland*) (2010/1389) against a literary critic accusing him of the acts committed by the narrator in the novel. He states that the fiction world is different from the real

116

world, and adds that we need to distance ourselves from the old assumptions holding sway in the past (even before the 1979 revolution), when authors would be kept in prison for employing the first-person narrative, and had to explain themselves, in the hope that the interrogator might understand that what the narrator did had nothing to do with the author's actions, and that the 'I' is solely used to form a narrative (Bāyrāmi 2010/1389). Thus, as we have seen, the negative attitude of the censors at MCIG towards first-person narratives applies to pro-government and anti-government writers alike, and it would be an understatement to define it as far-reaching. We shall discuss in the next chapter the stronger effects of this approach on the work of female novelists.

Recapitulation

In the history of Persian literature, and specifically since post-Islamic Persian literature until recently, the employment of the first-person narrative has not been conventional. This reluctance to use first-person narratives is deeply rooted in Persian culture, where the use of 'I' is often stigmatized as very egocentric.

Mirʿābedini correlates the rise in the number of first-person narratives in Iran with the aftermath of the perceived failure of a number of social or historical movements; whilst he associates this with what he calls 'individualism', I would argue that the reason for this tendency is more correctly located in a process of identity seeking. Another reason for the wider spread of the first-person narrative in recent times, and specifically after 2001, is the emerging of creative writing workshops and the wide influence of the writers who led them, with the first-person narrative being seen as a more modern point of view compared to the omniscient third-person narrator. First-time novelists becoming more valued and literary prizes celebrating amateur authors are among the other reasons for the rise of the first-person narrative in the past fifteen years; while one of the major factors in play is

the attitude of state censors towards the employment of this point of view – an attitude deriving from author/first-person narrator identification, which seemed to result in the paradoxical effect of incrementing first-person narratives. Whilst this is not directly possible, it is important to bear in mind that novels with a first-person narrative were the books that received the hardest treatment from government censors. A brief overview of post-revolutionary government censorship was also given in this chapter, in order to explain the relevance of censorship to first-person narrative in Iran and to prepare the ground for a discussion of the relationship between gender and first-person narrative and of the ways in which such relationship is affected by censorship.

Chapter Four

First-person narrative and gender

In the previous chapters we discussed how the choice of the first-person point of view in novel writing in Iran is affected by shortcomings in the reception of western narratology studies, by government censorship and by the ensuing self-censorship. Looking at the history of novel writing in Iran, it can be easily seen that the choice of point of view has always been more than a merely technical requirement of the narrative.

As discussed in Chapter Three, every year hundreds of novels written in Iran risk being banned from publication or reprinting, at the sole discretion of the censors at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, who also have authority to mandate major amendments or corrections that will in some cases destroy the novel.

It is important to highlight that government censorship in Iran is particularly harsh against female novelists. The debate on sexual discrimination and segregation as applied to the publishing of novels is very long-standing in the Iranian literary community. Whilst some critics argue that all writers in Iran are victims of censorship regardless of their gender, some on the other hand maintain that gender is one of the main elements affecting censors' decision-making. In Iran's patriarchal society, due to the severity of the laws of modesty as applied to women, novels written by female writers are much more vulnerable to censorship and more often subjected to major corrections than the works of male novelists.

 The core argument in this chapter is that gender is most definitely a factor to be taken into account when considering works of fiction with respect to narrative techniques and choice of point of view, and that it is a very important element in the attitude not only of censors but also of readers and critics, who on the whole

seem more likely to attack the ideology or moral stance of a novel if the author is female. It is known by most novel readers in Iran that hardly any novel, whether written originally in Persian or translated from a foreign language, is published without corrections requested by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, but it is worth bearing in mind that female novelists are under greater scrutiny from the censors compared to their male counterparts, and face more difficulties when writing about proscribed themes such as drinking, smoking, abortion, divorce, adultery, etc. The role of point of view in novel writing (which falls in the category of formal, rather than thematical components) and its relevance to censorship in Iran has never been studied before. Most studies of novels by female authors in Iran tend to focus on thematic issues, labelling the novels by adjectives such as innovative, brave, feminist or taboo-breaking – a relatively new development, especially evident in the last fifteen years. Whilst theme-oriented studies have their value, where is the place of the point of view in studies of the works of female novelists? Can the use of the first-person narrative in the works of female writers be examined in detail?

I shall discuss the issues relevant to this chapter by making use of both Iranian and non-Iranian sources. The first-person point of view and the role of gender in women's literature in countries such as England and France will be briefly discussed, starting from the evidence that women's literary movements in these two countries bear many similarities to what has happened and is currently happening in Iran. This is hardly surprising, considering that literature, and specifically modern literature, is the result of interaction with the outside world – and it is so to a much larger extent than most literary scholars might be able to see or accept. Especially considering the changes in modes and speed of communication, I suggest that scholars should always be aware of other countries' literatures, discussing literary movements and looking at other countries' experiences to further their understanding of their own country's literary phenomena and unearth the many remarkable similarities in forms and themes beyond borders. It is literature itself that finds its own way of

experiencing new forms, themes, genres and aesthetics beyond borders, and not any one literary community that can deliberately derive these from another country.

My research in this chapter draws mainly on Susan Lanser's feminist narratology. In her book *The Narrative Act*, Lanser calls out for gender to be considered in both traditional and structuralist narratology studies (1981, 30), and also aims to clarify that taking gender into consideration is necessary for the encoding and decoding of a narrative voice, or point of view (Ibid., 166). Lanser does not turn her back on structuralist narratology, but takes it to task for failing to discuss genre and gender. She believes that identity consists of profession, nationality, gender, race, socioeconomical class, marital status, education and sexual orientation, and that among all these gender is the most universally central to linguistics activity in western culture, since Indo-European languages are marked for their gender distinctions. There is no reason why gender should not be taken into consideration while discussing narratology, since sex is a central aspect of life, important in cultural communication as well as identity(Ibid.). Lanser also suggests a different angle for looking at the narrator: she contends that because of the dominance of the white heterosexual male writer coming from a certain socioeconomic situation in western societies, the narrator has always been presumed to be male unless the text shows otherwise (Ibid.). She states that if we think of linguistics as the starting point for narratology studies (in western countries where the first linguistic theories come from), we can understand that linguistics and gender could not be separated. Also, what Lanser does in *The Narrative Act* is important because she takes the social identity of the narrator into consideration; but she holds that to understand this idea, the importance of gender should be understood first (Ibid., 168).

Building on Lanser's useful insights, in this chapter I will add a few considerations of my own to discuss point of view. Firstly, looking at gender is useful not only for western narratology, on the basis of the gender markings of several western languages, but also for narratology studies in Iran, although Persian is a neutral

language. Secondly, I will argue in this chapter that there is a relation between first-person narratives by female authors and government censorship: in other words, when female novelists choose the first-person point of view (and particularly a first-person protagonist), changes can be seen in the way they construct and represent their narratives. In fact, the choice of a certain point of view is very strongly affected by government censorship in Iran: novels written with a polyphonic narrative and with shifts in point of view are two examples of these effects. The latter will be discussed in greater details further on in this chapter.

Lanser, a pioneer of feminist narratology

Structuralist narratology had been initiated and formed by scholars such as Genette, Stanzel and Chatman when Lanser began to build a bridge between structuralist narratology and feminism in 1980 (Gymnich 2013, 706). The series of articles Lanser published in the Eighties and Nineties were 'the founding texts of feminist narratology' (Ibid.) and they all shared one central point: taking gender into account when discussing literary works in a narratological context. Later, Robyn Warhol also emphasized the role of gender in narratology studies. Like any other movements, the one started by Lanser and Warhol, respectively a literary scholar and one of the theorists of feminist narratology, elicited both positive and negative reactions from female and male scholars – suffice it to cite Nillie Diengott, who argued in her book *Narratology and Feminism* that 'Lanser's work is her personal interpretation of narratology which can be called neither rhetoric nor narratology' (Ibid., 707).

To discuss all of Lanser's useful views on feminist narratology would be beyond the scope of this research; but her emphasis on the importance of unpacking narratological approaches that do not take gender into account while discussing a literary work is directly relevant to our purposes. In her essay *Towards* a *Feminist Narratology*, Lanser (1986, 342) wrote that no narratology school has ever taken

gender into consideration in analyzing a literary work, citing this as the reason why only works written by male authors are considered as universal texts. Lanser insisted on a type of narratology that can redress some of the failings of traditional (formalist) and structuralist narratology, and thought that women's literature should be studied with the help of feminist literary criticism (Ibid., 346). She claimed that introducing the concept of gender is necessary to overcome the shortcomings of structuralist narratology (Ibid., 343-344). Thus, Lanser was the pioneer of feminist narratology. She gave new explanations on the role of the narrator, on the author/narrator relationship and on the reasons why women started writing in the first person when feminist movements started in the west. In *Towards a Feminist Narratology*, Lanser states that sentences such as 'I repent', 'I know' and 'I am unhappy' are very convincing [to readers] and gain immediate credibility from being written from the first-person point of view, which, with Genette, she calls 'voice', as such voice needs a high level of confidence (Ibid., 348). Lanser concludes that the only way to analyze postmodern narratives is to integrate the concept of gender into narratology studies. This helps to understand texts that may have been written anywhere in the world, including in Asia and Africa. She adds that, as Gerald Prince suggested in his book *Narratology,* this is the only way narratology can help us to understand what human beings are (Ibid., 357).

In a later work, *Fictions of Authority*, published in 1992, Lanser completed her effort to forge a feminist poetics by introducing new concepts into feminist narratology, suggesting specific diagrams for different types of narrators in the stories written by female authors and new equivalents for Gérard Genette's terminology (Gymnich 2013, 709). Most importantly, in *Fictions of Authority* Lanser argued that the voice of the authorial narrator (omniscient narrator) that is given the most significant role in story-telling (because it is the source of information in the story and because the narrator stands in a higher position compared to even the main characters) has always been presumed to be a masculine voice. (Lanser 1992, 16). Therefore, writing stories such as *Jane Eyre*, in which a female narrator speaks in the first

person (or, as Lanser puts it, has a personal voice), was an extraordinary act by which Charlotte Brontë widened the path for the female personal voice in fiction (Ibid., 187). Finally, in *Sexing Narratology* (2004), Lanser argued that 'texts, like bodies, perform sex, gender and sexuality' (Gymnich 2013, 711).

Gymnich suggests that Lanser's views were not initially well received. In the Nineties though, new approaches to analyzing literary works were born which could no longer turn a blind eye on gender as an element of narratology, and notes that in the same years, Robyn Warhol voiced her views on gender-conscious approaches, following Lanser's feminist tradition as she tried to make a connection between feminist narratology and cultural studies (Ibid., 712). It seems that Lanser herself was aware of the hostile reception given to her theory, and states (1992, 5) that her own approach may seem a 'naively subjectivist' one to narratologists. However, Marion Gymnich's useful, concise essay *Gender and Narratology* (2013, 712) expresses appreciation for Lanser, Warhol and a few other feminist narratologists, stating that although feminist narratology has never been considered as it should have been, it has nonetheless opened a path for introducing social, cultural and political approaches into narratology studies. This is exactly the reason why applying feminist narratology suits the aims of my discussion in this chapter.

Despite the controversy aroused by Lanser's work, the feminist approach she pioneered has seeded a continuing trend, with several narratologists and literary scholars giving attention to the role of gender in the understanding and analysis of a literary work. In his book *Gender and Narratology* (2002, 11-12), Jasbir Jain states: 'Gender includes feminism and this is not surprising', adding that since women and men have different life experiences, different social roles, and different analytical and communication approaches, there is no reason why gender should not be a necessary distinction when it comes to narratology. Iranian scholars such as Farzānea Milāni and Ḥoseyn Pāyandea have also given attention to the role of gender in literature. Milāni, the foremost scholar of women's literature in Iran, claims (1992, 12) that ignoring gender is ignoring context and content at the same

time, since gender reorganization is necessary for critical perspective; Pāyandea warns that whilst narrative in fiction cannot be gender-neutral, true art consists in not constraining oneself within the four walls of gender (Āḏari 2012/1391, 30).

First-person narrative and female novelists in England, France and Iran

As discussed in Chapter Three, creative writing workshops have had a huge influence on how the first-person narrative is perceived and used in fiction writing in Iran today, especially in regard to the novel. Both male and female non-professional writers welcomed the opportunity to take part in creative writing workshops; but, as we have seen, the number of women taking part in these workshops was higher. Whilst the influence of the creative writing approach is undeniable, most female novelists in Iran use first-person narratives for cultural reasons, and also as a tool for the empowerment of women in a patriarchal society.

As Adalaide Morris states (1992, 11), 'Pronouns, like all narrative strategies carry out the tasks Jane Tompkins has termed cultural work'. As we mentioned in the opening of this chapter, articles and books written by western authors are the sources most readily available when discussing women's literature, for the obvious reason that the women's emancipation movement started earlier in western countries. Also, by and large, the path taken by western feminists has remained unexplored for many female writers and scholars in Iran. Over the past fifteen years, and remarkably so in the past five years, Iran has been flooded with novels written in the first person by emerging female writers. In trying to ascertain the reasons for the predominance of this point of view, one difficulty was the lack of concrete statistics on the subject: to my knowledge, neither the online resource of the National Library and Archives of the Islamic Republic of Iran nor any other website, whether in Persian or English or any other languages, provides any information on the point of view used in a novel.

Clearly, making this sort of statistic available would be a very time-consuming and costly exercise; but having access to the trends in the use of a certain point of view during a particular period would help understand the corresponding literary trends and movements better, and also be useful for the purposes of cultural studies, since the novel is a social and cultural enterprise. Having taken these difficulties into account, I would still argue that the use of the first-person narrative reaching a peak at the same time as Iranian female novelists became highly prolific points to a link between these novelists' choice of point of view and their ability to establish a sustainable literary position over the past fifteen years. This point might be easier to understand by considering how the same situation was experienced in other countries in the world.

In the second half of the twentieth century, France saw the emergence of several experimental female writers, most of them writing novels. In 1990 in France, a new generation of female writers was born. These writers enjoyed much support from the French media and from high-profile publishing houses such as *J'ai lu* and *Pocket*, which had begun to publish new fiction collections under the name of 'Nouvelle génération' (New Generation) and 'Nouvelles Voix' (New Voices) respectively (Rye and Worton 2002, 1). This phenomenon followed the feminist movement of the Seventies in France. During that time, themes that might be ignored by the male-dominated literary community, such as women's private lives, voices, experiences and bodies, found a new literary importance. (Ibid., 5). Thus, female writers published best-sellers and commercial novels, and male-centred literary criticism only seemed to goad women into writing more. Post-structuralist approaches to literature, despite their failure to consider gender issues in writing, were of much help to female writers, specifically after 1968, with the debate on the role and identity of the writer and the repositioning of the author (Ibid., 5-7). Soon French thinkers such as Luce Irigaray pointed out that the issue of gender was central to any discussion of ethical and political issues in the modern world (Ibid., 9). In my view, the extensive use of the first-person point of view in female narratives was the

most interesting change in the Nineties: on the one hand, the use of the 'I' gave these fictional narratives a strikingly genuine tone; on the other hand, as Rye and Worton note, there was scepticism regarding the fictional nature of what might look like mere self-narratives (Ibid.). The last decade of the twentieth century saw a huge number of female novelists writing about women and their aspirations; the central ideas in most works are almost all the same, and it is also difficult to draw a line between autobiography and novel writing (Ibid., 10). For instance, 'Angot's first-person narrator presents a challenge to the reader… as she (herself) cannot disassociate herself from her textual narrator' (Ibid., 11). During that decade, French female writers were not concerned with writing 'a story', but with writing the story of women, and stories were stranded between experimentation and self-expression (Ibid., 12). Rye and Worton conclude that during that decade female writers used the first-person point of view the most while attempting to experiment with new forms, genres and their specific way of expression (Ibid., 21).

In her essay (خوانشی جامعه شناختی از من سالاری در ادبیات فرانسه معاصر *A sociological study of the dominant 'I' in contemporary French literature*), (2012/1391, 304), Zohrea Nāṣeḥi voices a different view on this period in French literature, stating that apart from trying to put a woman's world at the centre of attention, these 'I-centred' narratives were reactions to the dominance of the *nouveau roman* in the 1950-1970 period, and adding that the object-oriented approach of *nouveau roman* 'victimized humans to save objects' and that 1970 female writers were therefore at the forefront in the fight against this idea. Whilst her view is interesting, Nāṣeḥi does not clarify the reasons why this opposition to the object-oriented approach should only be taken up by female writers. I rather more agree with Rye and Worton (2002) on this subject, although they argue that many of these French works are self-narratives because of the extensive use of the 'I', and this, as discussed in Chapter One, is not necessarily the case. We shall return later in this chapter to the situation as experienced in Iran for the past fifteen years and onwards, where the rise of the first-person narrative correlates with the rise in the number of female

writers published and with the level of support they receive within the literary community.

Returning to my observation of this phenomenon outside Iran, I note with Adalaide Morris that the first-person narrative is central to many stories in the recently established field of 'women's literature', and that Gayatri Spivak calls this a 'high feminist norm' (Morris 1992, 11). Morris states that the 'I' is used in the hope of self-definition and self-discovery, (Ibid., 12) and notes how in the late Sixties and Seventies, simply using the phrase 'a room of one's own' became a constitutive term for feminist literature, politics and criticism. As Judith Kegan Gardiner suggests, the 'I' was a reaction to the repressed content of women's literature and to the world whose social grammar had never defined women as subjects. (Ibid.). It can be said therefore that 'this imperilled "I" on its own, is a crucial shift from she who is object to I who is an experiencing subject' (Ibid., 13). Writers such as Italian feminist and philosopher Rosi Braidotti, however, take position against these views on the use of first-person narratives in the work of female novelists: Braidotti points to the need to look at this female 'I' beyond the femininity of the writer (Tauchert 2002, 53-54); yet in my view, this risks falling back into models enforced by a male-dominated society, indirectly encouraging women to write in a universal language: this can never equal a feminine language, since male critics have always required masculinization of the narrative. Using this imperilled first-person 'I' has been a risk factor for female writers, and has also had consequences for the writer. In *A Room of One's Own,* Virginia Woolf acutely challenges this idea by consistently avoiding the use of 'I' throughout the text, changing the name of the I-narrator a few times, only finally switching to the 'I'. Morris posits that 'there are real dangers in a feminist appropriation of this pronoun I '(1992, 14), and that what happens in I-centred narrations in the Seventies in England is a late answer to *A Room of One's Own* (Ibid., 12). Similarly, Lanser (1992, 189-190) suggests that the use of the first person (or personal voice, in her terminology) was unequivocally less frequent among female writers until 1970, but that by the mid-Eighties the employment of

this point of view became conventional for them. Although it was at the beginning of the eighteenth century that English literature celebrated the contribution of female writers to novel writing, it was only after 1970 that feminist revisionist criticism was introduced to novel writing. Female writers who started writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century were following in the footsteps of their male predecessors or of their contemporaries, and it is therefore difficult to speak of a 'woman's tradition in that time'. (Tauchert 2002, 49-53). Morris holds that the use of the first-person narration, alongside with writing about the same themes, has given women a sense of unity, since women's emancipation is tied to the fate of a larger community, and adds that women's self-esteem is formed through connection rather than separation (1992, 16-17). This is what Lynne Pearce, in her book *Feminism and the Politics of Reading* (1997, 69), calls 'the sympathetic female ally', emphasizing the bond of sisterhood in the community of female writers, which does not necessarily exclude the male reader from entering the world of female writing, but puts him in a place further away than that of female readers. This recalls Lanser's definition of the use of the personal voice (first person) as a 'unifying device' (1992, 171). Lanser states that it was ironic and symptomatic that by the mid-nineteenth century in the United States and England there was a communal voice behind the overwhelming use of the 'I', as female novelists were constructing their narratives around domestic spheres such as church and home to provide feminine answers to a transformed world (Ibid., 239).

In light of these views, I think it is fair to say that the newly-established women's literature in England in the Seventies did not have to rely on a male 'strong hand' to find its way, and was not afraid of literary experimentation.

Experimental female novelists in Iran: an introduction

The feminist literary movement that had surfaced in the Seventies in England and France and continued to 1990 with the mass publication of female authors has a similar counterpart in what is currently happening in Iran. Female writers in Iran are best-seller novelists: they write about their world, their hopes and their everyday life. It is interesting to know that all the limitations enforced on women by the Islamic government had the paradoxical effect of giving female novel writing new impetus. In some cases, these limitations forced female writers to leave Iran and live in exile, or to remain in the country and write under the shadow of government censorship, consequently experiencing the effect of self-censorship. The influence of female novelists on an increasingly powerful literary market reached its peak in 2000, and over the past eighteen years, women's literature has succeeded in establishing a strong position. Female novelists in Iran can no longer be ignored or underestimated, and for every male novelist, there is a female one. As we have seen, the first person is the most commonly used point of view chosen by female novelists in Iran.

As regards literary research in Iran, the most common approach is to analyze a particular literary period by looking at its avant-gardes. I contend that this approach is more useful when the literary community in a certain country, including readers, is elitist and demanding, rather than interested in experimentation. Now for the past twenty years, novel writing in Iran has been influenced by what I would term the 'experimentation tradition' promoted by the emerging of creative writing workshops, as discussed in Chapter Three: thus to research it by focusing on one or more avant-gardes in a certain decade does not seem very useful: rather, at least in the current period, it makes better sense to speak of a literary movement. As we have seen, publishing novels has become much easier in Iran. Most publishing houses agree to print novels even when written by young non-professional authors, provided the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance will clear them for

publication. The literary community and the general public are eager to hear new voices, even if the works published are not very well written. Especially when looking at female writers in Iran, a huge similarity can be found among these works in terms of themes and techniques used, to such an extent that they resemble more a choral work than several different solo voices. Female writers in Iran are experimental as their counterparts in England and France were in 1970-1990. These experimental writers have made their readers experimental as well, but since writing a novel in Iran today does not necessarily mean that the novelist shares certain ideologies, beliefs or political commitment, the image of the committed writer is dissolving in the minds of Iranian readers, who are satisfied with reading an innovative novel. Think for a moment of looking at a jigsaw puzzle frame, but turning your eyes from the beautiful frame to focus on the different small pieces of the puzzle: even though the pieces are insignificant on their own, you can see an image you have never seen before. Looking at avant-gardes is like looking at that frame: it is no longer useful for the study of literary movements in Iran, and the literary puzzle pieces are what we need to look at.

This view is also more in tune with my argument in this section, which is based on the idea that first-person narratives used by female writers also form a bond of union among them. Thus, the 'I' is beyond the personal, intimate, simplifying or creative workshop-style 'I'. The first-person singular point of view has been more than just a narrative device for female novelists, and represents a union that gives a unique voice to their works in this literary period – relative not only to a patriarchal society but also to a male-dominated literary community. We shall discuss in greater detail later in this chapter which elements might limit a female novelist's choice of the first-person point of view or enable her to break free by means of this 'I' and to empower herself and her female first-person protagonist.

First-person narratives in novel writing and female novelists in Iran

At the forefront of female novelists in Iran is Simin Dānešvar, who published her first novel *Suvašun* in 1969/1348. *Suvašun* is narrated in the first person, although Zari, the intelligent and courageous female narrator of the novel, is not central to the narration. She has a voice of her own, but she does not tell her own story and she is not a first-person protagonist, but rather an eyewitness (or I-witness), for the most part narrating the story of her husband, Yusef. Although *Suvašun* is the first novel written in the first-person narrative by a female author, to find the first-person protagonist used for the first time by a female writer in Iran we need to look at contemporary Persian poetry.

In his collection of essays *Garden in Garden*, Golširi states that from 1961/1340 onwards, an individualistic point of view (the first-person) replaced the social point of view (omniscient narrator). The third-person narrator in the poetry of Kasrāyi was replaced by the first person in Foruḡ Farro<u>kz</u>ād; as regards novel writing, *HorrendousTehran* (written by a male author) has a third-person narrator, while Dānešvar's *Suvašun* is narrated in the first person (Golširi 1999/1378, 447). Although Golširi only points this out in passing, what he suggests is, in my view, extremely important. Firstly, he positions feminine voices as central in modern Persian literature by juxtaposing Farro<u>kz</u>ād to Kasrāyi, and *Morbid Tehran*, with its omniscient (and presumably male) narrator, to Dānešvar's *Suvašun* with its female first-person narrator. Secondly, he points out how new approaches to literature have always been initially introduced in verse rather than prose. In the history of Persian literature, verse has always been deemed superior to prose. Readers and the literary community have always shown a special respect towards verse, so if the use of the first-person protagonist by female authors needs to be explored, it is

Persian poetry that will provide the necessary insights as to the roots of contemporary prose.

Foruḡ Farrokzād: 'I said I would be the cry of my existence; but O, alas that I was a "woman"'

One of the most famous poets in Iran, Foruḡ Farrokzād was also a writer and film director. Farrokzād had a leading role in the advancement of the feminist movement in Iran. Her female I-protagonist, the first in Iranian literature, wrote her own life and her own body.

Farzānea Milāni, who has worked on Foruḡ 's works for years, thinks that Foruḡ always faced the hardest backlash among female writers, and that she 'threw herself headlong in harm's way' by using the first-person narrative. Milāni adds that Foruḡ's first-person protagonist was her very personal approach to modernity: she positioned a female narrator in the centre of her work and portrayed a woman who thinks and expresses herself. She brought her 'I' into the public arena and should be considered the first female novel writer in Iran, since her five poetry collections are a *Bildungsroman*. (Milāni 2016/1395)

Whilst defining Foruḡ's poetry books as a *Bildungsroman* challenges common genre convention, the heroine in most of Foruḡ's poems is without compromise an I-protagonist: the voice is her voice, and all that happens around her is worth telling, even the most private things about her life. 'Her poem is a novel in verse' (Ibid.).

Foruḡ's first poem گناه (*Sin*) was published in روشنفکر (*Rošanfekr*) Magazine on 24 September 1954/1333, and received very harsh criticism on account of the female narrator in the poem telling the story of her passionate lovemaking with a man. The poem became highly controversial, and Foruḡ acquired a group of supporters and

also a group of enemies who called for imprisonment of the shameless poet. A few religious scholars even demanded that the magazine stop its activities (Milāni 2011, 136). As Milāni points out, these reactions to *Sin* were hardly surprising. Forūḡ found herself in the eye of a storm of criticism, as her first-person protagonist was assumed to be the same as Forūḡ, the poet (Ibid., 138). It was her poetic persona speaking of female sexual desire for the very first time, but no line was drawn between her as a poet and her I-narrator. Forūḡ gave a voice to the passionate sexual desire of a woman, enjoying her experience. This I-narrator refused to be an object to be enjoyed only (Milāni 1992, 145). It might help to understand the situation better if we compare Forūḡ's situation to that of American feminist poet and essayist Adrienne Rich. Rich wrote in her article *When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision* (1972, 24), that she struggled for years to find a voice of her own in her poems as she had tried very hard to avoid identifying herself as a female poet. She was constantly asked to write her poems in a universal language, which was equivalent to a non-female language (Ibid., 21-24). Rich notes that a lot of courage was needed to use a first-person protagonist which is an I-subject and not a she-object, because a woman has always been she in poetry. Despite trying so hard to find her voice, in her famous poem *Snapshot of a Daughter-in-Law*, written between 1958 and 1960, Rich could not overcome her fear of using the first-person voice, no matter how much she wanted to. She wrote that poem in the third person but overcame her fear five years later when she wrote *Orion* (Ibid., 24). Ellen Mcgrath Smith describes Rich as an avant-garde poet in her time for the use of the first-person voice (Mcgrath Smith 2016, 120). Returning to Forūḡ and *Sin*, I would add that at the time of the poem's publication, the literary community in Iran was unable to distance a female poet from her poetic persona, her private life from her art (Milāni 2011, 140). Forūḡ refused to relinquish her powerful I-narrator as a female poet. She did not want to fit into the box or to accept the prevalent gender-based limitations that had constrained poetry writing. As Milāni states, society, in return, punished and disowned her. Her father and husband became disappointed

with her: she was divorced and lost custody of her child, who was taken away by his father and rarely allowed to see her (Ibid., 139).

Before Foruḡ, another Iranian poet, Parvin Eʿteṣāmi (1907-1941), had tried to introduce the concept of gender to her poetry. There was however a major difference between Foruḡ and Parvin, with the latter distancing herself as much as possible from the I-narrator, while Foruḡ intentionally wanted to be identified with this taboo-breaking first-person protagonist. Although Parvin highlighted in many of her poems that she was a woman and not a male poet, and that the lines of verse before readers' eyes were absolutely written by a female poet (this was necessary, since society assumed a poet to be a male at that time), she carefully drew a line between her poetic persona and the real, flesh-and-blood Parvin. Her language, I suggest, is excessively masculine, and I would add, with Lanser (1992, 18), that her writing could have achieved wider public authority if her voice had not been marked as female. It was hardly surprising that society could not distinguish between the poetic persona of a female poet and the poet herself (Milāni 2011, 140), since 'society was also unable to draw a line between a woman's body and her work'. As one male literary critic once wrote in a commentary on Parvin's poems: 'It is very clear that a man writes her poems for her: how could a woman with a squint eye write such beautiful poems?' (Milāni 1993/1372, 72). This was not only limited to poets and their poems, but extended to novelists and their novels, not only in Iran but also in other countries such as England. Lanser writes in *The Narrative Act* (1981, 24) that most literary critics in the nineteenth century were not able to differentiate between the author and the first-person narrator, so every novel using the 'I' point of view was an autobiography to them. However, she adds, this kind of irrational idea on the first-person point of view was stronger with respect to female novelists: for instance, literary critics assumed that *Jane Eyre* was an autobiography, despite the narrator being a fully-crafted character with her own name and past, who tells a complete story. Lanser emphasizes that although the first-person narrative was discouraged for male authors as well, prescriptive and distorted

135

attitudes limited to the point of view only were reserved to works by female novelists. For instance, as Lanser notes, Frederic Harrison deems *Jane Eyre* an autobiography of Charlotte Brontë, and assumes she was not crafting a story but merely recounting her tale, while English journalist Richard Holt Hutton suggested that women lack imaginative power to such an extent that they cannot create narrators and characters, so all their narrators are themselves and their works autobiographical works (Ibid.).

Kathryn Ambrose's comparative research on women's writing in England, Germany and Russia in the nineteenth century shows that most works written in the first person in the nineteenth century in England, Russia and Germany had male authors. Women in these works are always seen from a male point of view. This is considered a 'textual barrier' in understanding the text. Textual barriers are defined as narrative or textual devices that have the effect of limiting female characters (Ambrose 2015, 21). Ambrose adds that Charlotte Brontë's choice of a female first-person narrator was a ground-breaking, revolutionary act. She used this first-person narrative both in *Jane Eyre* (1847) and in one of her short stories, *Vilette* (1853): it was a feminist move, at that time, to enable female characters to speak for themselves. Thus, the I-protagonist in *Jane Eyre* seeks an independent female voice (Ambrose 2015, 34). Brontë was serious about this, to the extent that maybe her sex-consciousness was harmful to her works: as Virginia Woolf stated, 'Charlotte Brontë, with all her splendid gift for prose, stumbled and fell with that clumsy weapon in her hands' (Woolf 2015).

Ambrose reminds us (2015, 34) that Brontë was also the first female English author who used a male I-narrator (in *The Professor*, 1857) to show her ability to write a story from a male perspective. She places Brontë in opposition to George Eliot, whose persistently omniscient narrators (with the exception of her 1859 novella *The Lifted Veil*) were assumed to be a masculine voice by readers, and tries to show the textual barrier in Eliot's works as compared to Brontë's. Ambrose clarifies that Eliot always tried to leave a distance between herself and her narrators, while Brontë

was never afraid of being identified with her I-narrators, and she paid the price for it (Ibid., 71). Lanser, on the other hand (1992, 92), believes that Eliot's employment of omniscient male narrators was an 'authorizing strategy', and that by employing male-voice-centred narrative strategies, addressed to public readership, Eliot was searching for 'sexual equality' writing under a male pseudonym and 'in the company of men' (Ibid., 101). However, Lanser compares Eliot to Austen and not to Brontë, and voices her admiration for 'Jane's voice', as an extraordinarily defiant fiction of authority, in which both narrator and character demonstrate the powers and dangers of singularity (Ibid., 176 and 185).

In fact, Ambrose and Milāni both draw a comparison, between two female English novelists and two Iranian poets respectively. Foruḡ Farroḵzād and Charlotte Brontë could offer a naked I-narrator placing herself at the centre of events and recounting the story, while, in contrast, Parvin Eʿteṣāmi and George Eliot were distancing themselves from their narrators by creating a textual barrier. As Milāni suggests that Foruḡ's five poetry collections were a *Bildungsroman*, so Lanser (1992, 187) states that Brontë's *Jane Eyre* contributed to fostering the flourishing of the *Bildungsroman* after 1847. Brontë and Farroḵzād share the choice to employ powerful, naked first-person protagonists, while Eʿteṣāmi and Eliot's narrative strategy is mainly focused on following their male predecessors, imitating them in the best way so as to access a larger public readership in their own time.

This section offered some points of reflection on how female writers who used first-person protagonists were met with harsher criticism than their female counterparts who opted for different narrative strategies. As Milāni concludes in *Words Not Swords* (2011), Iranian society never approved of Foruḡ's naked 'I'; similarly, Lanser (1992, 188) holds that the difficulty of saying 'I' in a public voice by no means ended with *Jane Eyre*. This disapproving attitude continues to the present day, and I shall now examine how choices made by female novelists in Iran relative to point of view were influenced by the disparagement they encountered on the part of male critics.

Why 'I'? The story of the female first-person narrative in Iran

After the Islamic Revolution of 1979, despite all the limitations the government tried to enforce on their freedom, women paradoxically started to progress in almost every field. The Iran-Iraq war of 1981/1358, lasting eight years, made high demands for women's involvement in society and even on the war fronts. This factor, alongside others, had an influence on Iranian women and prepared the ground for the advancement of female writers. Clearly this does not mean that there were no female novelists before the revolution in Iran (most of them coming from the upper middle classes, as did male novelists). Women's novel writing in Iran advanced gradually: after 2000, publishing houses supported female novelists more than ever before, and publication of works by female novelists hit record numbers. Women became winners of annual novel prizes and even opened their own creative writing workshops. Milāni states (2011, 244) that Iranian women's literary movement began approximately one hundred and sixty years ago and engagingly calls it a nonviolent, bloodless revolution. Similarly, Virginia Woolf (2005/1384, 100-101) described the literary movement of women in England in the late eighteenth century and the fact that women could make money out of writing as an event more important than the War of the Roses or the Crusades. Today, novel writing is the most common literary form for both male and female writers in Iran.

Women's story writing in Iran could be traced back to the Thirties, and particularly to 1933, the year of publication of Irando<u>k</u>t Teymurtāš' جوان بوالهوس دختر تیره بخت و (*The Ill-Fated Girl and the Capricious Young Man*) and Zahra Kiyā's پروین و پرویز (*Parvin and Parviz*). In the 1930-1960 period there were only twelve female writers published as against 270 male writers. Danešvar's *Suvašun* was much celebrated in the late Sixties. The number of published female fiction writers is 370, approximately the same as that of male writers (Milāni 2011, 184-185). Since Milāni

published her research, the number of female writers has increased further. Women are much better supported by publishing houses, and what is happening in Iran today is very similar to what happened in France in 1990. Publishers such as چشمه (Češmea), with its collection جهان تازه داستان (New Stories World), or ققنوس (Qoqnus) and مروارید (Morvārid), can be compared to J'ai Lu and Pocket in France in their support of female novelists. Talaṭṭof states (2000, 140-141) that the patriarchal society in Iran causes women more difficulties in publishing their books, but that the popularity of their works and the number of books being reprinted is a happy event for fiction writing in Iran.

Several essays have been written on the history of women's literature in Iran, notably by Farzānea Milāni, whose work we have referenced in previous sections. Milāni is the foremost Iranian scholar on the subject, and has thoroughly explored women's literature in her two books *Veils and Words* (1992) and *Words Not Swords* (2011). As we have noted, most research on women's literature in Iran is theme-based, and there are many books and articles analyzing the feminist elements in their works. The gap in research concerning the forms and narrative techniques used by female novelists, as mentioned in the opening of this chapter, remains to be filled. For instance, whilst themes and story lines forbidden by state-imposed censorship have been thoroughly studied, the link between the first-person point of view in the works of female novelists and government censorship has never been analyzed before. In present-day cultural debates, literary circles and lectures, there is widespread agreement on the fact that female novelists tend to use the first-person narrative the most, and to construct a first-person protagonist which is central to a work of fiction, a dominant voice which shows a full superiority of the female and speaks mostly of her love stories and personal issues – issues that might be of scarce interest for the male-dominated society, but can be core themes to female novelists. To my knowledge, no research has yet been carried out to show the link between the first-person point of view and its effect on themes and content

in novels written by female authors in Iran; these topics will be covered in greater detail in the following sections.

Blogging: the stepping-stone of female writers after the Islamic Revolution in Iran

This section will argue that there is a link between the inception of blogging and the rise of the first-person narrative in the works of female novelists. Blogging has become very widespread in Iran since the early 2000, and there are still many bloggers active today. These weblogs deal with different topics, such as autobiography, self-narratives and story writing, but all have one factor in common: the first-person narrative. No research has been carried out so far on the role of blogging in the rise of female novelists and the first-person narratives they seem to favour; I suggest that blogging not only prepared the ground for the development of women's writing but also contributed to the increase in the number of first-person protagonist narrators in women's novel writing. Researcher Maserrat Amirebrāhimi claims that after reading women's weblogs for approximately ten hours a day, she concluded that they have contributed to women creating a new identity for themselves. This new identity has helped them to improve their writing abilities and enabled them to write with no sense of fear. Women wrote blogs under both real names and pseudonyms, and Amirebrāhimi highlights the fact that the writer's identity or factual accuracy is not important to a weblog reader, since the narrator that the writer might have created is nevertheless a real narrator. The 'I' is true, and the new identity which is crafted in the virtual world is also a true identity (Amirebrāhimi 2014). Researcher and sociologist Širin Aḥmadniyā suggests that blogs are the most popular social media for women in Iran (Farzādfar 2013/1392).

On 7 September 2001, Iranians started writing in Persian on the Blogger platform; but the Blogger service could not support the Persian language, so it was not user-

friendly for Iranian users. Thus, Iranian users had to set up their own blogging platforms in a Persian cyberspace called 'Blogestan'. The first blogging platforms created were Persianblog (2002), Blogsky (2004), Parsiblog (2005), Blogfa (2005) and Mihanblog (2006). Iranian users, and particularly Iranian female users, embraced blogging. After Blogestan was created, 'certain groups converged on cyberspace faster than others. For instance, the early years of Blogestan saw a surge of participation among female bloggers sharing perspectives on both public and private matters' (Giacobino et al. 2014, 29). According to a report from the Iran News Agency, thirty-eight thousand Iranian female bloggers were using different Iranian blogging platforms in Iran in 2015. (Irna 2015/1394).

Many reasons have been found for blogging becoming a female-friendly social media in Iran. Psychologist F.D. Żābeṭ states that patriarchal society has never shown a real interest in understanding women, and that because of the many taboos existing in Iran, no media in Iran presents women in as real a way as they are presented in their weblogs (Isna 2008/1387). Dr Ḥamid Mortażvi, a psychiatrist, suggests that female bloggers in Iran tend to be more extroverted and individualistic compared to women from previous generations in Iran, and that blogging is a way of self-expression for women. Blogs are popular with female users, he adds, because they have not had equal rights to self-expression in a male-dominated society (Vista 2017/1396). Whilst traditional media represented them solely as mothers and wives, in Blogestan women experienced fewer restrictions and 'could have an identity outside of these social constructs' (Giacobino et al. 2014, 29). Blogestan also provided a public forum in which women could discuss their views on different issues, such as ideas of sexuality and intimate relationships (Ibid.). Weblogs thus created a safe environment for female writers to develop a new image of their 'I'. Male bloggers were also active, but in fewer numbers and addressing different topics, mostly focused on overtly social and political problems.

The Islamic government showed little awareness of female bloggers' participation in Persian cyberspace, and if any blogs were shut down by government censorship, the

blogger could easily move to another address. Female bloggers were encouraged by the ease of use and openness of the medium, and some of them received awards on the basis of blog polls: Persianblog for instance held annual award ceremonies for female bloggers. In a society where publishing stories was enormously difficult for women, Blogestan was a breath of fresh air. It was free, and did not require particular skills, the availability of a certain place or a set time for updates. Before Blogestan, the main way to produce culture was becoming a professional writer. A writer who wanted to publish a piece of text in a book or newspaper was required to show certain professional skills; but the opposite was not always true: having knowledge and literary taste did not guarantee that one could become a writer. At the end of the Nineties/1370s, however, when the Internet started to become widely used in Iran, and since the creation of Blogestan in 2000, women's contribution to the virtual world increased massively. Cyberspace provided female writers with a safe environment where they could exchange ideas, and enabled them to write in a male-dominated society. For the very first time, women could be widely read by the public: they could check the number of visits made to their blogs and discuss their thoughts in a female world of their own creation. Blogestan empowered women to create a 'bond of sisterhood'. Female bloggers wrote weblogs themselves and encouraged others to do the same.

A women's studies article published in 2010 discussed the role of the Internet in advancing women's position in Iranian society. Nasim Majidi Qahrudi and Fāṭemea Āḏari claim that 'blogging has significantly decreased the level of isolation in women (with 58.7% reading or writing blogs); writing weblogs is a cry for female individualism in a virtual world and has contributed to women's better self-confidence and sense of independence' (2010/1389, 93). Blogging also gave women the opportunity to write under pseudonyms. For the first time women could talk about topics such as sex, love and divorce, considered taboo in Iran. They could narrate their own stories or their crafted narrators' stories. Social class is not important in Blogestan, and female bloggers come from different social classes:

housewives, women working outside, middle-class to upper-middle class – all were active in Blogestan. The topics female bloggers covered could not be found in any newspapers or media, particularly because the Iranian media is heavily censored. There were blogs for political news, news analysis, commercial, educational and entertainment weblogs; whilst these topics could be found in other media, what made female blogging unique was the narration of private lives. This kind of blogging has always been a matter of interest to Iranian scholars and to the literary community. It was in these weblogs that a new 'self' was first created by a wide range of women. As anthropologist Zahrā Ḡaznaviyān notes (2016/1395), these weblogs were I-centred and represented a way to solve the identity crisis forced on women by the male-dominated society. Blogestan was immensely useful to women as it helped them to circumvent the physical limitations put on them in a society in which access to the public sphere had always been more restricted for women compared to men. Blogestan also enabled women to publish their stories more easily. Many female novelists in Iran, such as Šeydā Eʿtemād, were bloggers before they started publishing their novels. Eʿtemād published her first novel, مهمانی خداحافظی (*Goodbye Party*), written in the first person, in 2012/1391. She had started her own blog, خانم شین, (*Miss Šin*) in 2002/1381, with encouragement from women friends who had set up a blog before her. Eʿtemād states that she had an extraordinary feeling about publishing her stories on a weblog, and that through the years she succeeded in creating a rounded narrator, full of paradoxes and complexity (*Miss Šin*) and entirely different from her, like a baby she had birthed but whose character she certainly could not expect to form. She states that the environment of Blogestan had a great impact on her becoming a novelist, and that although many female writers succeed in publishing their works via publishing houses, still Blogestān is the best place for women to share their stories (Link Zan 2012/1391). Again, it is difficult to access accurate information as to the number of female bloggers who have become novelists, since many of them blog under pseudonyms and tend not to mention their weblog experimentations once they

have secured publication for their novels. Amirebrāhimi states that virtual weblogs could not be fully separated from the real world, as female bloggers were unable to speak of their own lives until they succeeded in doing so via creating a different sense of identity (Amirebrāhimi 2014), as a process of going through a sort of identity metamorphosis. I would add that this experimentation with the 'I' has had an influence on the increase of 'I-narrators' by female novelists in the past fifteen years (1380-1395). Whether women wrote about their lives or created characters and narrators, they still were trying to give voice to an empowered 'I' who has a voice of her own: she narrates, she is present in society – but first and foremost, she exists. She can narrate her own story or others', but she crafts a narrator who can speak, rather than being spoken of. Writing weblogs has enormously helped female bloggers in Iran to gradually morph into an identity and to experiment with professional writing. They created many different 'I' s and later poured them into their published works. The other benefit, for female and male bloggers alike, was the opportunity to find a language of their own. Interviewees taking part in a research carried out by the Iran Media Program related how, in the early years of Blogestan, blog content was mainly text-based: in other words, bloggers became known for their writing skills (Giacobino et al. 2014, 31). This was even more visible in the case of female bloggers, who tried to create a female language, challenging the male-centered language conventions prevalent in Iran. Before Blogestan, female novelists mostly used male language, following the path of their male predecessors; but the female forums that women bloggers created in Persian cyberspace contributed to their ability to find a female language.

 What I argue here, however, is not that all female bloggers necessarily became novelists able to publish their works, but rather that blogging, as a movement, had a massive influence on the huge spread of the 'I' in women's novel writing and on the formation of a new female language. Women in Iran, whether reading blogs and blogging themselves or not, have been deeply influenced by the Blogestan movement – a movement that spotlights their ability to write, giving them a better

opportunity to showcase their work and to create a language of their own, even if that language may be in opposition with the 'universal language' which is by and large assumed to be a male language.

Although blogging has become less popular among Iranians because of the growth of new social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, still the role of Blogestan should not be underestimated when speaking of the unexpected rise in the number of female novelists and their work. Female writers might have started out in a virtual environment, but the consequences of their experimentation in cyberspace are very real.

Domestic themes and first-person protagonist in women's fiction in Iran

As we have seen, most female novelists tend to set their narratives in indoor spaces, to the extent that their (mostly male) critics label their works as 'kitchen literature' or 'apartment literature'. These I-centred narratives include women's private lives and the world they live in; once submitted to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance for approval, they are subjected to closer scrutiny and are less easily published than other works. Women novelists are faced with a dilemma: either choose a different point of view, such as the third-person or omniscient narrator, or risk losing any chance of publishing their books. The censors' literary knowledge is not such as would allow them to distance a female first-person protagonist from her female writer, and female novelists pay a high price for using the 'I', which by and large is their preferred point of view. For all the perceived limits of its small-scale domestic themes, 'kitchen literature' places female novelist squarely against patriarchal society, and even against their own families and loved ones. Jamāl Mirşādeqi, a novelist and one of the prominent researchers in Persian fiction, states that the work of female novelists writing in Iran after the Islamic Revolution is

mostly focused on lost women's rights, and that women try to make their own aspirations a reality, while male novelists mostly focus on post-revolution lost hopes and overtly socio-political problems. Thus, he continues, the preferred point of view of female writers is the 'I'; but female novelists (particularly when they are married) face restrictions to narrating in the first person. They want to avoid any problems with their own families, so when it comes to writing about taboo topics they might prefer a third-person narrative; or they tend to use an I-witness instead of an I-protagonist (Mirşādeqi 2015/1394). In his article چه کسی از راوی اول شخص می ترسد؟ (*Who is afraid of the first-person narrative?*), Moḥammad Moḥammadʿali claims that female writers and poets are the biggest victims of using the first-person narrative, because there is no tolerance for them when they write about their femininity or their bodies. 'They cannot be another Foruḡ Farroḵzād', he adds (Moḥammadʿali 2013/1392). The question might arise as to why, despite all these obstacles, in recent years the use of the I-centred narrative in the works of female novelists has been on the increase: paradoxically, on the one hand, the first-person narrative might be seen as an unacceptable choice for female novelist, and on the other hand, the number of novels narrated in the first person is steadily rising. This section will explore the situation in greater detail.

Ḥasan Mirʿābedini suggests that the reason why female novelists prefer first-person narratives is that writing a story from this point of view is more convincing for the reader, more impressive and credible (Āḏar 1391/2012). Farḵondea Ḥājizādea, a female novelist who wrote most of her novels in the first person, states that using the 'I' made her feel closer to her real self while narrating (Mohājer and Amiri 2006/1384); Šivā Moqānlu, another female novelist, states that using the 'I' is easy. Belqeys Soleymāni, a female novelist, and Amirʿali Nojumiyān, a researcher in semiotics, both hold that the rise of the first-person narration points to a new female approach to novel writing, as female novelists tend to create self-narratives, for which the 'I' is more suitable (Soleymāni 2017/1396; Nojumiyān 2017/1396). Novelist Amirḥasan Čeheltan states that the predominant themes in female writers'

novels are small-scale domestic themes, and that these themes fit with their preferred first-person point of view as their world and their point of view are both limited in this case (Čeheltan 2017/1396). Literary critic Maryam Ḥoseyni thinks that the rise of the first person is due to women having no right to speak of themselves in the past, and so the writer's ideas now become manifest in her first-person narrator (Pārsi 2005). Among these subjective views, Ḥoseyni's in particular seems to hold some truth, although claiming that the female first-person point of view is equal to the manifestation of women writers through their 'I' narrators seems an oversimplification. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, women writers' choice of the 'I' is influenced by factors such as the efforts of feminist movements to form a new identity and give a voice to women in their struggle against the repression enforced by the patriarchal society. The writer, in my view, is never identical to the narrator: whilst 'kitchen literature' themes are dominant for female novelists of this period, this does not in any way mean that they only self-narrate. Milāni states in her article زن و حدیث نفس نویسی در ایران (*Women and Self-Narrative in Iran*) (1997/1375, 619) that narrating through a first-person protagonist has never been easy for Iranian female writers, and that as a consequence, female novelists must fight a two-front war, against government censorship on one front and the wrong assumptions of readers' and critics' relative to the female 'I' on the other. Moḥammadʿali suggests that some female novelists do not dare choose the first-person narrative, and that the main factors affecting that choice are censorship from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and readers' expectations. (Moḥammadʿali 2013/1392).

Mohammadali's view is also confirmed by female novelist interviewees: novelist and literary critic Behnāz ʿAlipur Gaskari, for instance, states that after her book was submitted to the MCIG prior to publication, she was summoned in person to answer a set of questions from the censors. The first question was, when and for how long she had been in prison in the Eighties (1360-1370) after the Islamic Revolution. Gaskari was astonished when she realized that the censor had put no distance at all

between herself and her first-person protagonist, Dornā, a young female post-Islamic revolution political prisoner. It is the narrator of her novel who is in prison in the Eighties, but it took her some time to convince the censor that she was not the same person as her narrator and that the book she was trying to publish was not her diary. She finally managed to publish her novel after applying the required corrections (Gaskari 2016/1394). The question 'Why in the first person?' is the one most frequently asked of female novelists in events or interviews on their books. For instance, Sārā Sālār's 2008/1388 novel احتمالاً گم شده ام (*I Am Probably Lost*) aroused criticism after its publication. Sālār wrote it while taking her first creative writing course. The first-person narrator is a married woman describing the daily life of herself and her young son. She seems to be stuck in her own past, haunted by memories of an old friend and a man she had loved before her marriage, until her husband's best friend tries to seduce her. The novel won first prize in the yearly competition organized by the Golširi Award Foundation in 2011/1390, and it was as widely praised as it was criticized. Its main theme, infidelity, had been for a long time a proscribed and at the same time very popular one for both female and male novelists in Iran. The novel ran to three editions, but the fourth reprint was not authorized by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Ever since, in most of her interviews, Sālār has stressed that the novel was not her autobiography, that it is fiction and not reality, and that the fact that she is married with a young son does not make her identical to the narrator in the novel. She has asked readers to carefully distinguish between her and her narrator. Sālār's second novel, هست یا نیست؟ (*Is it, or Is It Not?*), also narrated in the first person, faced similar problems: it was held at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance for two years pending approval, was rejected during Aḥmadinežād's second presidential term, and finally cleared for publication after Ḥasan Rowḥāni came to power and formed a new cabinet in 2013. Sālār has criticized censors' approach to reviewing the works of female novelists many times. She has criticized the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance for failing to provide guidelines for book publication, and drawn attention

to the fact that different censors can have very different views on the corrections and amendments that a work of fiction should receive (Sālār 2014/1393). In an earlier interview (2011/1390), ʿAli Šoruqi, a journalist working for the فرهیختگان (*Farhiktegān,* or *People of Culture*) newspaper, asked Sālār if she was aware of the 'dangerous use' of the first-person narrative. Sālār answered that it is wrong to assume that the first-person point of view represents the novelist and her ideas. The only reason to choose a certain point of view in fiction is that the point of view is suitable to the narrative. Sālār added that in her case, the first-person narrative suited both novels, and that she could not have written them in the third person. Lanser also states that creating a married woman (employing a personal voice in her terminology) can be a 'problematic enterprise' (1992, 142).

Similarly, Belqeys Soleymāni, a novelist and the winner of the Mehregān Best Novel prize for her 2006 book بازی آخر بانو (*The Lady's Last Game*), states that for a female novelist, narrating in the first person is akin to risking her life, since censors, readers and literary critics do not tolerate a female novelist's 'I'. Soleymāni adds that after *The Lady's Last Game* was published, she gave a live interview on BBC Persian with a literary critic who defined her book as an autobiographical novel, which caused her much trouble later. She also states that a famous literary critic (whose name she does not mention) once wrote in his weblog that Soleymāni herself was the prostitute I-narrator of one of her novels. Consequently, her husband chose to seek legal advice on how best to file a complaint against what he considered an istance of slander against his name and his reputation. Soleymāni's worst experience, however, happened when what she only defined as 'a fanatic literary critic' (whom I was able later to identify as Seyyed ʿAref ʿAlavi) wrote a review on her first-person novel شب طاهره (*Ṭāherea's Night)* (2015/1394) in which he claimed that he had travelled to the writer's natal town where he could find all the characters described in her novel. He concludes that Ṭāherea, the female I-narrator, is Soleymāni herself (ʿAlavi 2016/1395). Much trouble ensued, as in the novel Ṭāherea is a member of مجاهدین خلق(*Mojāhedin Kalq* or The People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran) and

thus an opponent of the Islamic regime. The same critic then argues that Soleymāni should be in prison instead of roaming around free to write novels (Soleymāni 2017/1396). Another example is Ruḥangiz Šarifiyān's novel چه کسی باور می کند رستم؟ (*Who Will Believe This Rostam?*), published in 2003/1382 and the winner of the first prize from the Golširi Award Foundation in the same year. The first-person protagonist of the novel is a woman who narrates her own life experiences in Iran and abroad, including an episode of marital infidelity. The editor of literary magazine هفت (*Seven*), a famous literary critic, Aḥmad Ṭālebinežād, wrote that the novel is the writer's autobiography and tells real-life stories of her time enjoying herself abroad (2004/1383a, 4). In the following issue, the magazine printed a reply by Šarifiyān's agent, Fariborz Ḵoruši, criticizing the editor's review as false and stressing that the story was entirely fictional and had absolutely no relevance to Šarifiyān's real life (2004/1383b, 4-5). Šarifiyān states that the fact that the literary critic could not distinguish between her and her narrator resulted from a lack of literary knowledge on his part, adding that Fariborz Ḵoruši, her husband and agent, had to deal with all that trouble, although she had not been aware of him sending an answer to the magazine (Šarifiyān 2016/1395). This example shows how a woman novelist's choice of using a first-person narrative is seen as connected to a man's reputation in a patriarchal society. As Milāni states, '[In Iranian culture], in the proper behaviour of a wife, daughter, mother, sister lies a man's social honour' (1992, 4). Ḵoruši would have helped things along much more by explaining the necessity of distancing the author from the narrator: unless these questions are addressed in much greater depth, chances are that the question of author/narrator identification in Persian novel writing will not be fully solved any time soon. Although the role of government censorship is very important, it should be clarified that critics and readers' wrong assumptions on a female novelist's 'I' are extremely problematic as well. In my personal view, these wrong assumptions also make the path of female novelists more difficult when they choose the first-person point of view. Throughout this thesis I have emphasized the importance for readers and

literary critics to distinguish between a writer and his/her I-narrator, as this distinction is the fundamental imperative of fiction reading. This is more important, vital in fact, when studying the work of Iranian female novelists, as female writers are more vulnerable to censorship in the patriarchal society of Iran. Literary reviews and readers' reception tend to affect censors' decisions on whether to authorize a book for reprint: novels arousing debate in society and incorporating themes that are deemed immoral are less likely to be approved for reprinting when they could achieve wide circulation, even when they are approved for the first and sometimes for further editions. It is thought that novels embodying immorality, particularly if written by female novelists, should not be published in the first place, and if published, they should not be reprinted; but as there are no clear guidelines issued by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, they are sometimes published and then banned after a few reprints because of causing controversy.

All of this notwithstanding, most female novelists know the risks involved in using the first-person narrative: in my personal view, they take this risk consciously and deliberately. This is the reason behind the surge of female I-protagonists in recent novel writing by women. Obstacles and criticisms appear to encourage rather than discourage female novelists, whose work is labelled as self-narrative, memoir and sometimes عقده گشایی ('oqdea-gošāyi), i.e. confessional work in which the author is pouring her own biographical and/or emotional problems into fiction without really crafting it. Women novelists have been very determined to use first-person narratives, despite being attacked from every angle, particularly from male critics labelling their works as merely the products of غریزی نویسی (ḡarizinevisi, or intuition). Female writers mostly used third-person narratives until the early Nineties ('Alinežād 2015/1394, 13), but the number of such narratives gradually increased in the 1390s, and after 2000 there was an eruption in the publication of novels written in the first person. Ḥalimea 'Alinežād (Ibid., 13-14) believes that this female 'I' is one of the characteristics inseparable from post-modern novels written by female writers in Iran, and states that as female writers seek intimacy with their

readers and want them to identify with the writer, choosing this point of view enables them to place female narrators in the centre of the narrative, displacing the male ones from their habitual position as central subjects. There is some truth in ʿAlinežād's statement, as most female novelists believe that using the 'I' moves them closer to their readers and enables them to create a kind of sympathetic identification, making the novel more convincing. However, given the fact that women face many obstacles in getting their works published or being accepted by readers and literary critics within the literary community, it is an oversimplification to argue that female novelists use the first-person narrative merely to create intimacy with readers. This 'I', points to a collective aspiration for female novelists in Iran. Giving their I-narrator personal voice and female gender, female novelists have used a feminist approach. The transition from the passive 'she' to the all-knowing subject 'I' is a shift of power from male to female narrators, giving women the highest position in fiction, which is the role of the narrator. Vaḥid Valizādea (2008/1387, 216-218) states that important ideological changes take place in a novel when male narrators are replaced by female narrators and when the latter are positioned as empowered I-protagonists by their female authors.

To sum up, the 'I' has enabled women to create, through the female narrator, an empowered subject who sees, hears, speaks, experiments and narrates at the same time. Female novelists in Iran, with their first-person protagonists, have joined a wider movement in the world, one that started decades ago, by creating an 'I' which is an empowered subject and not a passive 'she'. It is important now to look at the elements involved in this 'she' to 'I' transition.

The process of change in women's images as represented in novel writing in Iran

Virginia Woolf wrote in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) that throughout the history of novel writing, men have shown an urgent interest in writing about women, while women have not done this (Woolf 2005/1384, 52). These women created by male authors are 'all but absent from history' (Woolf 2015). According to Woolf, portrayal of these fictional women has been monotonous, too simple and insignificant. Woolf tried to challenge this idea of men creating the image of women while women themselves did not take up the pen to write about themselves. If we look at the beginning of feminist movements and women's quest to write, writing for female authors has always meant saying 'no' to patriarchal societies. Women did not like to be objects to be written about, but also wanted to write. A constant movement from 'she 'to 'I'.

Lanser states (1992, 35) that before female novelists started writing, the female subject was only created by men's pen. This construct was based on male desires, and gave the illusion that women were being heard while they were not. Correspondingly, Jasbir Jain states (2002, 12) that in narratology the woman has usually been described from a man's perspective, and that this approach has also made it familiar to readers to see a woman through a man's eyes. She adds that in present-day literature women try to break this old frame to create a new image of themselves in the narrative. Kathryn Ambrose (2015, 100) takes Theodor Storm's stories as an example, and states that although some of them were named after their female heroine, such as *Veronica* (1861), *Lena Wiese* (1873), *Renate* (1878) and *Angelika* (1885), these heroine-characters were restricted in their movements and development, and deprived of a true voice in the text. Ambrose's statement applies to a few male authors in Iran as well: for instance, to Moḥammad Ḥejāzi's famous novels, named after heroines such as هما *Homā* (1929), پریچهر Paričehr (1930), زیبا

Zibā (1932) and پروانه *Parvānea* (1953). Like Storm, Ḥejāzi is unable to portray well-rounded female characters, so almost all his female characters are caught in the madonna/whore dichotomy and represented on the basis of gender stereotypes. The only dominant voice in Ḥejāzi's works is a male voice and though women are always present, they are, in fact, silenced into absence in his works. Literary critic Moḥammadjafar Yāḥaqi states (1999/1378, 235-236) that women's issues were represented in novels by Dašti and Ḥejāzi, who both came from the upper middle class and wrote about women in their novels; in fact, we do not see any real women in their works. The role and depiction of women in Persian novels has gradually improved: for instance, women are more central to the narration in Behāḏin's دختر رعیت *The Subject's Daughter* (1951/1330), and after that in Bozorg ʿAlavi's چشمهایش *Her Eyes* (1952/1331). However, these are still beautiful, paralyzed dolls, puppets on a string, unable to find a true voice of their own. They are not developed as characters and are only present in the fiction in order to be loved. This is particularly evident in ʿAlavi's *Her Eyes,* which is written in the first person. The male narrator is dominant in the text although he is an I-witness, and ʿAlavi's textual barriers limit the heroine's development and voice. Moḥammad Bahārlu, an Iranian writer, states in his preface to a reprint of *Her Eyes* that Farangis, the female protagonist of the novel, 'makes a move from being an object to becoming a subject' where she takes the role of the narrator in the third chapter (1988/1377, 15). However Farangis here is not technically a narrator, since the reader sees her in conversation with the first-person I-witness narrator (whom Bahārlu wrongly assumes to be the same as the author): whilst Farangi certainly has her own voice in the dialogue, she speaks mostly of her relationship with her former lover, Mākān, who is central to the narrative. Thus although Farangis finds an opportunity to have some sort of voice in this section of the novel, it is hard to imagine that this would be perceived by the reader as an authoritative first-person voice, buried as it is by the male voice dominating the rest of the novel to the extent that Farangis, who derives her self-esteem from her relationship with Mākān, can hardly be seen as a whole person.

Ambrose suggests (2015, 34 and 102) that before women started to write, readers could approach a narration from a male's perspective only, and that particularly in first-person narratives such as Storm's and Turgenev's, the textual barriers are set by male writers: therefore we can see women in the stories only from a male viewpoint.

In Iran, female novelists have come a long way to find a voice of their own, and it was the same obstacles which had held them back for years that drove them to write. Until the early twentieth century, Iranian women were kept from learning to read and write. Literacy was considered an element of corruption for women (Milāni 1992, 55). A woman's silence was idealized in Iranian culture: a modest woman did not speak and no one would speak of her. Even today, despite all the advancements Iranian women have achieved, they face many hardships while engaging in cultural activities such as writing. Governments have put many obstacles in their path, from dismantling Women Studies departments at universities to opposing feminist approaches to scholarship, from holding female writers' books at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance for huge lengths of time to approving the work only after literally mutilating it by numerous corrections. Creating a voice of their own has been of vital importance for women: before they started writing novels, they were only pictured as whores or madonnas in Persian novels written by male authors. As women were not allowed to speak of themselves, male writers were unable to craft a balanced, sophisticated female character which would not be forced into these stereotyped opposites. Female characters were a simplified image rather than a finely crafted one (Ibid., 184): an image that was either extremely abstract or extremely predictable, lacking any sophistication. These characters' fate was always in the hands of the male hero or male narrator – a cliché image that did not change until women started to write for themselves. Milāni states that the number of female heroines, strong women whose stories are not entirely narrated in relation to a man's existence, is very low in the history of Persian literature. The image of a competent, independent, courageous and strong woman, a woman who

155

can go beyond her house walls, is rare. (Ibid., 185). Milāni also believes that the old, awkward portrait of female characters affected not only novels and Persian literature, but almost every type of art. She quotes from a report by Ebrāhim Nabavi, who studied six hundred and ten movies shown on screen in cinemas in Iran from 1969 to 1979: there were only eight women who played the role of artists and writers. All other actresses (over a hundred) simply played the role of prostitutes, dancers, bartenders or vagabonds (1993/1372, 52).

As mentioned earlier, although female novelists' narrations were limited to a restricted space, recently giving rise to labels such as 'kitchen literature', their works were popular with both male and female readers. These female novelists, for the first time, made a female narrator central to their work while writing about 'small', domestic themes. Novels such as Zoyā Pirzād's چراغها را من خاموش می کنم (*I Will Turn Off the Lights*, 2001) and or Faribā Vafi's پرنده من (*My Bird*, 2002) were among the first to be labelled as 'kitchen literature'. Despite the harsh reactions of male critics who attacked the female I-narrator staying within a 'narrow' life experience of motherhood and family dramas, with Valizādea in particular stressing that the works of female novelists are tied purely to the kitchen (2008/1387, 203) and blaming these novelists for failing to reform dominant gender ideologies (Ibid., 221), I would argue that 'kitchen literature' has been a good start for female novelists. Most critics fail to understand that writing is inherently a rebellious act for women, with an emerging and highly increasing number of female novelists writing in Iran today, despite all the constraints they face. Crafting a female first-person narrator and giving her a voice has been an immense step forward, even if this narrator would only speak of trivial domestic themes. The 'kitchen literature' phase was needed for female novelists to move on and create a new space and genre for narration. The criticism they received also empowered female writers to create a different image of their female narrators. Having 'a voice of their own' was no longer enough, and this is how powerful female first-person protagonists were gradually crafted a few years after 2000. Being 'I' was no longer good enough, and this 'I' also had to

develop as a modern female 'I' in terms of its characteristics. An independent, competent, courageous and powerful 'I'. An accurate image of a modern woman in Iran. A human being who could be tempted to have an affair, who could hide and lie. Neither a whore nor a madonna. In fact, 'kitchen literature' was a starting point in the recent history of women's novel writing in Iran, a necessary and significant stepping stone; and labelling their achievements as 'kitchen literature' means overlooking their efforts to progressively craft better I-narrators. Looking at a very similar experience, Lanser (1986, 354-356) states that at the beginning of novel writing in England, the epistolary form was women's preferred genre; to male critics, this was merely writing 'artless' and 'plotless' letters, and the writers were constantly criticized for showing interest in this genre. Lanser concludes that readers can learn more from women's narratives and appreciate their achievements in the twentieth century if they try to find a language which describes women's work in positive rather than negative terms (Ibid., 357). What she suggests is useful for studying the works of female novelists in Iran as well: 'kitchen literature' goes far beyond complaining about the small-scale domestic issues of mundane daily life; most importantly, it is not a lazy way of creating a fictitious world based solely on self-narrative. It is because of the work of female novelists that, according to reports, Persian literature is becoming more and more a 'feminine' literature. Many award-winning writers are women, and literary prizes such as پروین (Parvin) and خورشید(Koršid) were founded particularly for women (Mehrkānea 2015/1394). Aḥmad Masjedjāmeʿi, an academic and the former chairman of the City Council of Tehran, considers that novels written by female writers are very popular, and that best-selling novels are mostly written by women (Tehran News 2015/1394). Thus, when speaking of Pirzād's and Vafi's 'kitchen literature', literary critics should bear in mind that these novels opened a new door for other female novelists such as Šivā Arasṭuyi, Sārā Sālār and Šivā Moqanlu to experiment with their independent female I-narrators, and prepared the ground for female novelists to experiment with new themes in their works. Taboo themes such as infidelity and a woman's sexual desire

found their way, albeit implicitly, into the work of later female novelists. In recent years, women writers have reacted against the term 'kitchen literature', tending to turn their backs intentionally on their female predecessors' work and to craft completely different first-person protagonists. One female novelist who has always fought the clichés of the female I-narrator in her novels is Šivā Arasṭuyi. Born in 1961 in Tehran, Arasṭuyi is a poet, translator and novelist. She won the prestigious یلدا (Yaldā) and گلشیری (Golširi) awards in 2003 for her short story collection آفتاب مهتاب (*Sunlight Moonlight*). Arasṭuyi's female I-protagonists stand out as modern and intellectual women. They carry all the characteristic elements of a woman living in Iran in the twenty-first century (Ṣāremi 2011/1390). Arasṭuyi and her I-protagonist have always been under scrutiny from readers, literary critics and censors who would fail to distinguish between the writer and her fictional narrators. She has received harsh criticism many times for supposedly self-narrating instead of novel writing, and it is a widely held view that her characters are inspired by real people who are present in her life (Khabar Online 2013/1392). She speaks of one of her well-praised novels written in the first person, افیون (*Opiate,* 2004/1383): Šahrzād, the narrator, is a woman reminiscing about her affairs with the different lovers in her life. A novel with a controversial taboo theme and an outspoken narrator, with whom the author does not want to be identified. In an interview, Arasṭuyi stresses that narrating in the first person does not necessarily mean that the writer is narrating her life experiences, adding: 'If what I write are my experiences, why write stories? Why create a work of art? I can simply publish my diary in detail instead… narrating in the first person is not a lazy approach: in contrast, it is very difficult, since I, as the author, have to distance myself from my narrator with every step I take in the narrative […], word after word. Even with all the obstacles though, I love taking the risks of narrating in the first person.' (Ḥoseynḵāni 2008/1378, 11). Arasṭuyi stated in another interview that trying to find real people's footprints in her novels is an extremely unhelpful approach to reading novels on the part of literary critics, as the first-person narration is a movement

towards an individualistic worldview. She stressed that this approach to narrating a novel is worthwhile, even if the author pays the price of being identified with the narrators (Miršakkāk 2013/1392). Arasṭuyi stated many times that although she is interested in confessional literature and self-revelation, she is not the first-person protagonists of her works, adding that on the other hand, if readers strongly assume she is, that does not scare her either (Ḥoseynḵāni 2008/1378, 11).

Manipulating and shifting point of view in first-person narratives as a challenge to readers and censors

Although female novelists face more obstacles when publishing their works in the first-person narrative, they have found a few narrative techniques that have enabled them to bypass government censorship while keeping their narration in the first person. Persian literature throughout its history has always been very symbolic and metaphoric, partly because of the different kinds of censorships applied in different times. This approach to Persian literature has been fully studied, but as mentioned earlier, the link between censorship and point of view has never been studied in Iran before, and neither has the relation between censorship and shifts in point of view. This section argues that a novel not employing any shifts in point of view in the course of the narration has fewer chances of being cleared for publication by the Ministry of Cultural and Islamic Guidance.

Stanzel has studied the shift in point of view more thoroughly than other structuralist narratologists, defining it in his own terminology as 'change in pronominal reference'. While analyzing the shifting point of view in Thackeray's historical novel *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852), Stanzel states that it was Wolfgang Iser who first explained 'the change in pronominal reference' in novels. Before Iser, critics could not understand this and assumed that Thackeray was not following any specific artistic intention in this experiment. Iser on the other hand

considered that the transition from 'I' to 'he' was the author and narrator's effort to emphasize two things. His views, as related by Stanzel, are worth quoting at length: 'First, the relative and temporary nature of the standpoints which conditioned earlier attitudes and events, second, the fact that in the meantime the faculty of conscious self-assessment must have developed considerably since now it can view its past with such detachment' (Stanzel 1988, 101).

Although Stanzel shares Iser's view on the 'I' to 'he' transition in *Henry Esmond*, he adds that changes in pronominal reference affect the experiencing self (protagonist/character) and not the narrating self (narrator) as the I/he alternation is a temporary change. As a tradition, the shift from the 'I' to the 'he', which is less intimate and more detached from one's self, belongs to autobiographies and memoirs (Ibid., 102). Stanzel supports his argument with an example from the text of *Henry Esmond*, taken from the passage in which Lady Castlewood kisses Esmond for the first time, which shows the author's unexpected I/he alternation:

'Next **Esmond** opened that long cupboard… There was a bundle of papers

here…

'**I** put these papers hastily into the crypt whence **I** had taken them, being

interrupted by a tapping of a light finger at the ring of the chamber-door

[lady Castlewood enters]. "I looked into your room… I knew I should find

you here". And tender and blushing faintly with a benediction in her eyes,

the gentle creature kissed **him'** (Ibid., 103).

Stanzel notes that the reference changes three times in this section of the passage, opening in the third person, moving to a first-person narrator and then shifting back to the third person (as shown above in bold); and adds that, strikingly, Esmond receives this kiss as 'he' and not 'I': the 'I' takes refuge in the 'he' to produce distance because of the onrush of Esmond's feelings when he is kissed by a woman

he has loved for such a long time. This change of pronominal reference, Stanzel states, demonstrates a more detached third person (Ibid.). Stanzel concludes that 'the distancing takes place in two steps. First, the narrating self frees itself from the experiencing self, then the reference to the experiencing self is shifted to the third person to achieve an even greater distance' (Ibid.). Stanzel believes that this 'I to he' transition in first-person narratives is 'almost always gradual and thus usually not apparent to the reader' (Ibid., 72). He adds that alternation of pronominal reference has been very frequent in works by English and German modern authors, and cites Botheroyd noting that it is highly probable that 'the increase in the frequency of changes in pronominal reference in the modern novel is an expression of the growing identity problem of the modern man' (Ibid., 106). The reason Stanzel calls this a pronominal reference is that he considers the transition from 'I' to 'he' as temporary within the context of narrative: in other words, the transition only takes place to distance the narrating self from the experiencing self, but returning from the 'he' to the 'I' is returning to the main point of view of the work (Ibid., 104). Stanzel states that in dealing with pronominal reference change one should distinguish between the aspects of content and the form, since in terms of content the alternation is linked with the psychology of split personality: the 'I to he' alternation takes place in the language of children while they are still unable to recognize themselves as individuals; the I/he alternation of a patient referring to himself is a sign of multiple personality [disorder] (Ibid.).

As Stanzel claims, the I/he alternation belongs to the autobiography and memoir tradition. Jaap Lintvelt also notes that this alternation is needed to distance the 'je narré' (narrated I) from the 'je narrant' (I-narrator) in autobiographical novels such as Marie Cardinal's *Les Mots pour le dire* (*The Words To Say It*, 1975), in which the female narrator tells her story as someone who recovered from insanity in the first person, flashing back to the agony of her madness in the third person (Lintvelt 2011/1390, 93-94). It is also worth looking at another example of I/she alternation, the one occurring in Marguerite Duras' autobiographic novel *L'amant* (*The Lover,*

1984), where the frequency of shifts in point of view is striking. American writer Jennifer Murray notes that 'the writer experiments with brief shifts of point of view before narrating the first sexual encounter of the narrator with her Chinese lover' (Murray 2015). These brief shifts are aimed to be an introduction to the love encounter between the narrator and her lover. Duras herself stated in a 1984 interview with Bernard Pivot that she is the I-protagonist of *L'amant* (Ina Talk Show 2014). Thus, as the narrator is in this case identified with the writer, the latter cautiously distances herself from the narrator. Murray suggests that the fact that the novel ends in the third person makes this 'I to she' transition complete: the I-narrator woman is no longer the I-narrator young girl who was on the riverboat when she first met her lover. She has become a different person, a woman, and only a third person narration could show this transition from she (the young girl) to I (the woman). (Murray 2015)

Looking at these examples, we can identify a few points common to all. Firstly, the temporal component: as can be seen in all examples, the narrating self (narrator) distances itself from the experiencing self (the protagonist), but this transition takes place in the past. In other words, 'I' belongs to here and now, while he/she belongs to the past: thus the temporal component is an element of distance itself. Secondly, it is understandable that the alternation takes place in autobiographical novels and memoirs, in which the writer tends to disassociate himself/herself from the narrator, especially in flashbacks or throwbacks describing a traumatic or intimate experience: the narrating self seeks the greater level of disassociation from the experiencing self in such scenes. So although, with Stanzel, form (narrative) and content should be distinguished when dealing with shifts of point of view, in this case form (narrative) is highly affected by content. Stanzel (1988, 212) believes that in autobiographical novels this internal tension always exists between the two selves in the first-person narrative, the hero and the narrator (or experiencing self and narrating self in his earlier terminology), and that narrative distance separates these two phases of the narrational 'I' psychologically, spatially and temporally.

Shifting point of view has been a very popular narrative technique in the work of Iranian female novelists in recent years, and I suggest that it has increased even further in the last five years. What is interesting is that female novelists tend to shift from the first to the third person more than their male counterparts. The novel itself, because it is longer than a short story, allows for a higher number of shifts in point of view. Most Iranian literary critics assume that shifting point of view is only a narrative technique, very trendy among contemporary female novelists. However, this seems a rather simplistic belief, since shifting point of view incorporates several elements that risk being overlooked. As mentioned earlier, the rise in the first-person narrative in the works of female novelists correlates with mass literary production. I argue that female novelists tend to shift point of view more when their female first-person protagonist narrator relates a scene containing taboo elements. This has not only been overlooked by literary critics in Iran, but also considered by most as a sign of weakness and a lack of consistency in the author's style; however, within a narrative, an accurate and well-placed shift in point of view has many benefits. Female novelists do not necessarily want to experiment with shifting point of view and showcase their ability in narrating from different perspectives, as most literary critics argue. The I/she shift serves the precise purpose of distancing the narrator from the protagonist in a scene where she explicitly narrates things that are thought unacceptable for a female I-protagonist, and therefore for the author. As we have seen, narrating in the first person is a risk factor for female novelists in Iran: their books might not be approved by Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, or they might receive more corrections. The line between the female author and her female narrator is not clear to the censors. Author and narrator are tied together, and the narrator's immorality is the novelists' immorality.

Sārā Sālār states that censors' approach is much harsher when it comes to female narrators, and specifically first-person female narrators, and describes the corrections that she was forced to apply to one of her works as 'dismantling the novel'. She states that novels with male narrators (mostly written by male authors,

since creating narrators and characters of a sex opposite to the author's is still not very common in Persian novel writing) face no problems publishing their books, and hopes that one day the same thing will happen for female narrators (and therefore female authors) (Isca News 2015/1394). In other words, Sālār accepts the evidence that the female author is forced to justify herself for the actions of her female narrator in her novel. Kāmrān Talaṭṭof states in *The Politics of Writing in Iran* that in a short story called قصه غم انگیز عشق (*Sad Love Story*) by Moniru Ravānipur, the female narrator shifts point of view from 'I' to 'she' when speaking of her torrid love for a man she knew (Talaṭṭof 2000, 151). Although Talaṭṭof only points this out briefly, this is very helpful, as it shows that he has implicitly stated that there is a connection between shifting point of view and the context of Ravānipur's story. Valizādea also suggests that there is a relevance of form to context in [such] works written by female authors (2008/1378, 220): when speaking of a taboo, such as expressing love for a woman or love-making and infidelity, chances are higher that a female first-person protagonist narrator will shift point of view from 'I' to 'she', to distance herself and put herself in a passive position instead of an active 'I-position'. Shifting point of view, being a narrative technique, also has a strong connection with content. This approach to shifting point of view can be seen in many novels, such as به وقت بهشت (*Heaven Time*) by Narges Jurābčiyān, published in 2009/1388, and سیب ترش (*Green Apple*) by Fereštea Noba<u>k</u>t, published in 2012/1391. In both novels, the theme is infidelity, and the shifting of point of view takes place frequently. In Ruḥangiz Šarifiyān's *Who Is Going to Believe This Rostam?*, the first-person novel mentioned earlier in this chapter, the I-protagonist Širin (Šurā), a married woman, recalls her past loves: at first these are childhood recollections of platonic love, but when the memories move to an adult affair, prompting the protagonist's decision to call her former lover during a trip to Paris with her husband, an oscillation between different points of view takes place in correspondence with the author's need to create distance. Thus the protagonist's inner dilemma and the explicit love encounter are narrated by a shift to the third person, but the narration reverts to

the first person afterwards (Šarifiyān 2003/1382, 165-166, 172-174). As Stanzel would note (1988, 72), the shift in point of view (or pronominal reference) is temporary and takes place gradually, without the reader noticing it most of the time. Šarifiyān states that this shifting in point of view from first person to third person serves to show that the narrator is not a 'natural born unfaithful' woman, and that she had to help her narrator to distance herself from what took place in the story, so that if she cannot help committing adultery, at least she can distance herself as a narrator from herself as a heroine (Šarifiyān 2016/1395). What Šarifiyān does is to distance the experiencing self (the protagonist) and narrating self (narrator), which are yoked together in an I-protagonist narrative. It is interesting how the author cleverly bypasses the censors' red lines with a shifting in point of view – although it is obvious that Širin is constantly justifying herself, with sentences such as 'it was her last time doing this', 'she cannot believe she gave in to [the lover's] indecent proposal', 'it was the first time that she only lived in the moment', etc. Širin's fear is very real as she distances herself from another Širin, who is her experiencing self: it is as if the narrating self were standing further away, looking at the experiencing self in doubt and justification. Although emphasis has been placed throughout this thesis on distinguishing between the author and the narrator, particularly while speaking of the works of female novelists, if the role of the author is not mentioned when speaking of such narrative techniques in novel writing in Iran, an important point will be overlooked. Šarifiyān states in her interview that it was through sheer luck that the censors did not spot Širin's involvement in adultery and that the book was cleared for publication. She adds that although she was not consciously thinking of government censorship while using this technique, she felt the need to justify her first-person protagonist (Ibid.). Censors cannot distinguish between the narrator and the author, and that is why the author has to justify her characters and her female narrator at a higher level. When Jamāl Mirşādeqi states that the shifting in point of view in Šarifiyān's novel is the only weakness in her novel, he fails to understand that this shift has taken place for a reason deeper than

the requirements of narrative technique, and that along with portrayal of a character's psychological impulses, the shift has also been used as the author's bargaining chip to bypass censorship and enable the publication of her novel without having to remove a certain scene.

In Narges Jurābčiyān's novel به وقت بهشت (*Heaven Time*) (2010/1389), the I-narrator, Tarlān, is a married woman who falls in love with her colleague, Reżā. At the end of Chapter Forty-one, she deals with extreme levels of regret and sadness only after her husband finds out about her love for the other man and leaves her. Chapter Forty-two begins with the narration in the third person. Although most critics described this sudden shift in point of view as an awkward technical trick, the shift is in fact rather cleverly crafted: the author has even tried to hide the gender of her constructed narrator in the third-person narrative. The narrator is clearly unwilling to disclose her sex to readers: she leaves hints in the text to show the reader that the narrator is still Tarlān, but she effaces all other textual gender marks. The chapter follows Tarlān as she looks for a shop where she can buy cigarettes; it begins with her looking in the shops and ends as she sits on her terrace, naked, smoking under the rain. In the early pages of the chapter, she waits until the male clients of a small newspaper booth leave so that she can ask for cigarettes. Her waiting and doubts show that buying cigarettes is a taboo to her:

'Excuse me, sir! I would like to buy a pack of cigarettes.'

'What brand?'

'I am not sure! Something not very strong maybe… Aha! Winston Ultra Light.'

'We do not have any. What about Bahman?'

'Bahman? No… Thank you!'

She walks on to a local shop:

'Hi… I would like to buy a pack of Winston Ultra Light, please…'

Customers turn their heads and look at her. She does not care anymore. She

takes the pack. Pays for it and leaves the shop. (Jurābčiyān 2014/1393, 301)

Back home, Tarlān finds herself screaming and crying for some time; then she fetches the pack of cigarettes from her handbag. She takes one:

'She goes on the balcony. It is raining… She takes off her blouse so that the

rain and cold can sit on her skin. She sits on the floor of the balcony. Puts the

cigarette between her lips. Lights the cigarette with a match' (Ibid., 303-

304).

In this chapter, Jurābčiyān intentionally shifts the main first-person point of view, taking advantage of the fact that it is also easier to hide the narrator's gender linguistically by using the neutral third-person, (او), as Persian is a genderless language. The author tries to distance Tarlān, a loving and faithful wife, from this broken woman in love with another man. It is also the only way the author can speak of her smoking and sitting naked on the balcony: smoking is still taboo for women in Iran, and one of the elements censors treat most harshly (this also applies to male narrators sometimes). Fāṭemea Ekteṣāri, a young Iranian female poet living in exile, whose works have always had to face censorship and corrections in Iran, states that when a woman's literary work is submitted for approval at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the only thing censors look at is the female gender, not the literature. 'If a man narrates an experience of smoking, it is not a problem in censors' view, but if I say that "I" or another female character in my poems smokes, either my poems receive corrections or I receive a tone of sexual harassments by censors… None of the characters in my poems are "me". I have crafted my characters; yet this discrimination made by censors when scrutinizing female and male works has always existed' (Qajar 2015/1394). Censor's unforgiving attitude towards smoking can be clearly perceived in recent novels written by female authors, in which no one actually acts on the desire to smoke (especially if the

character's sex is disclosed early in the narrative): there might be expressions hinting at the desire to smoke, but the act itself does not happen. Note for an instance this passage spoken by Sārā, the first-person protagonist in Šeydā Eʿtemād's مهمانى خداحافظى (*Goodbye Party*) (2012/1391):

'I was so angry I could not explain it to him. For the first time in my life I

wished that I was a smoker and I could chain-smoke…' (Eʿtemād 2012/1391, 235)

The question might arise as to how a non-smoker might know how smoking feels and wish to be chain-smoker in a moment of anger! I believe these are evident marks for the readers by which the author, whether deliberately or not, shows that the narrator cannot speak openly, knowing that she will be censored. Similarly, in Sārā Sālār's *I Am Probably Lost* (2015/1394, 3), the first-person female narrator expresses her wish to smoke a cigarette but does not act on it because she cannot smoke in the morning on an empty stomach:

'I would like to smoke… that's ridiculous, cigarettes for breakfast! …'

Ānitā Yārmoḥammadi, a young female novelist, states that narrators in novels written by male authors can be bold, fall in love, smoke cigarettes and have affairs; but if a female author wants to enable her female narrator and characters to do the same things, that is completely unacceptable to censors (Robertson et al., 15). Some writers believe that 'cackling' and 'smoking' are on the list of words forbidden by censors to female authors (Parsine 2011/1390). Thus, the shifting in point of view effected by Jurābčiyān is understandable: she wants to leave a greater distance between Tarlān as the experiencing self and Tarlān as the narrator. Her novel would have run a much higher risk of being subjected to major corrections or even rejected by the censors unless she made that shift, or unless she accepted to completely excise that chapter herself. As the female author is responsible for the actions of her female narrator, based on censors' double standards, Jurābčiyān had to erase Tarlān and her first-person narrative from Chapter Forty-two while leaving

hints by which the reader would know what she was really saying. The narrator's doubts as to whether to buy cigarettes, her waiting for male customers to disappear, buying Winston Ultra Lights (popular with female smokers in Iran) and playing with the word باران (*bārān, '*rain'), which is a homophone of Tarlān's husband's name, are the hints helping the reader to decode the identity of the narrator in Chapter Forty-two. The anonymous third-person narrator is the I-protagonist, Tarlān, who remains the main narrator throughout the novel.

So far, every time the word censorship was mentioned in this chapter, government censorship was meant. As we have seen, publishing a novel in Iran is time-consuming at best: the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance can ban the novel, keep it on a waiting list for a long time so more censors can go through it, or pull it to pieces by requiring amendments and major corrections. As discussed in Chapter Three, the fear of getting stuck in this everlasting loop leads most authors to self-censorship. Whilst self-censorship does not only affect female writers, the male-dominated sociocultural structure in Iran means that women are more vulnerable to it. Female authors have to reckon with more 'red lines' when narrating their stories. Sārā Sālār states that society's expectations and government censorship lead authors to self-censorship. Iranian novelists, she adds, experience such a high level of self-imposed censorship that they are not even aware of it. 'I try my best to avoid it,' she says, 'but it is so ingrained in the minds of Iranian novelists that it takes place automatically and subconsciously and I cannot say that I am successful at avoiding it' (ʿAbdi 2014/1393, 8).

I suggest here that self-censorship also tends to affect mostly the novels which are written in the first person, and, as mentioned earlier, not only their themes but also their narrative techniques, form and language. Looking at novels written by women shows that self-censorship affects their work on a larger scale than government censorship. It is however very difficult to analyze the process of self-censorship in the minds of Iranian female novelists: the only thing that can be done is to look at their works closely. One of the most common patterns associated with self-

censorship, gender and the first-person narrative is the physical elimination of the 'troublemaker' character and the sudden change in the moral personality of the female first-person protagonist at the end of the novel. Stanzel notes that early, quasi-autobiographical first-person novels finish with a revolution in the moral personality of the first-person character (and therefore narrator). He explains his point with an example: in Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), the psychological development of the first-person character was not considered by the author. The fact that the thief and prostitute Moll changes completely at the end of the novel suggests that Defoe has yoked Moll Flanders' experiencing self to the reflections of the authorial 'I'. 'An entirely different person' (Stanzel 1988, 213). I suggest that as a male writer, Defoe was led by the gender of his narrator in *Moll Flanders* to construct this unexpected transformation in Moll's personality. Lanser (1992, 141-142) believes that the difference in how Defoe depicts the hero and heroine of his two first-person novels (respectively *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*) demonstrates womens' struggle to find a public voice. To read more on how the author tampers with *Moll Flanders* as compared to *Robinson Crusoe,* see Lanser (1992, 141-142) and Robert Mayer (2004, 203-205).

In Iran, this does not apply to quasi-autobiographical novels only. The problem is that the experienced reader cannot accept the unexpected moral evolution of the first-person protagonist, and perceives this development as an insult to a modern reader's intelligence. The pattern of the sudden change is easier to follow in the works of Iranian female novelists, for the same reasons by which shifting in point of view takes place in women's novels. The author feels or is made to feel responsible for the moral personality of her female narrator or characters; hence a sudden change in the moral personality of the first-person protagonist can smooth the way for the novel during the phase of scrutiny from the censors.

There is a clear relationship between self-censorship and this sudden change in the personality of first-person female protagonists in the works of women novelists. In Zoyā Pirzād's award-winning novel چراغها را من خاموش می کنم (*I Will Turn off the*

Lights), for instance, the first-person protagonist, housewife Kelāris Āyvāziyān, falls in love with her neighbour, Emil Simoniyān, who is also her husband's colleague. It is easy for the reader to identify with Kelāris' feelings for Emil. The novel is well written, the narration is linear and easy to follow, and the novel has a good plot. The only weak point of the novel is the ending, with the elimination of the 'troublemaker' character, Emil, and the sudden change in the moral personality of Kelāris as a first-person protagonist:

'When Ārtuš [Kelāris' husband] came back home in the evening, he only knew that Emil had resigned. Did no one know why he had resigned and where he had gone?' (Pirzād 2001/1381, 282).

This drastic change in the plot at the end of the novel seems very unrealistic to the reader, especially given the novel's realism. Emil manages to move house and resign, with no one understanding his reasons, and disappears forever. Kelāris gets back to her routine life almost with no struggle or even a sign of suppressing her feelings for Emil: when she finds out that he is gone, she does not react to his disappearance. After Emil vanishes, the novel continues for a few pages: the awkward ending leaves the reader stranded; but jarring as it may be, this is, I would suggest, a clever ruse, Pirzād's bargaining chip to get her novel published. Pirzād has also yoked together her authorial 'I' and her first-person I-protagonist Kelāris. After Emile has left, Kelāris moves on in an incredibly swift way. Emil's disappearance, though, was needed so that Kelāris' reputation (and therefore Pirzād's) would not be damaged: both the female first-person protagonist and the author, held responsible for the actions of her narrator and characters, are thus safe.

A second example of this shift can be seen in Sārā Sālār's احتمالاً گم شده ام (*I Am Probably Lost*). Sālār also received major literary awards for her first novel, which had a good plot and a good narrative, with well-crafted, convincing characters. However, the same pattern as observed above is repeated in her work. The nameless housewife I-protagonist has mixed feelings for her husband's friend,

Manṣur, who insists in his attempts to seduce her. Following them as they go out a few times, the reader finds it difficult to gauge the first-person character's feelings for Manṣur, although she accepts to meet him, thinks about him often, and admits she enjoys his compliments:

'Sometimes I am sick of myself when I am flattered by what he tells me' (Sālār 2015/1394, 11).

But it is only in the last pages of the book that her feelings become very clear to the reader. It seems like she has been changed totally, so as to create an acceptable ending. She tells Manṣur:

'Is that how you have known me? Do you really think that I will have an affair with my husband's best friend? (Ibid., 93)

'I say: "This is how we are [Manṣur], we are friends beyond everything else." (Ibid.).

Manṣur replies:

'How modest you are! You are an angel…! (Ibid., 94).

Although the nameless I-protagonist thinks of Manṣur's answer as a sarcastic one, still the revolution in her moral personality and Manṣur's abrupt disappearance in the last pages of the novel is difficult for readers to accept, as they cannot understand how she can go from thinking of Manṣur often to suddenly becoming entirely indifferent towards him. In my personal view, this approach to novel ending in the work of women novelists has strong links with self-censorship. This sort of ending is in line with the attitudes of patriarchal society and of government censors who see female first-person protagonists in a novel as requiring redemption. The abrupt changes in the moral personality of female I-protagonists in first-person narrative novels in Iran would be a good subject for study: the same pattern takes place in many novels written by female authors in recent years, such as Faribā Vafi's پرنده من (*My Bird*) and Faribā Kalhor's شروع یک زن (*Commencement of a*

172

Woman), which was published in 2011/1390. The common feature of all these novels, however, is having a first-person protagonist who is female and married. As we have seen, Lanser (1992, 142 and 189) notes that restraint in the use of the personal voice (first person) for married women or fiancées as narrators derives from the fact that using the first person was a 'problematic enterprise'. Lanser mostly speaks of how the voice of a narrator is constrained, hardly pointing to the author, since the distance between author and narrator is to a great extent resolved for her readers. However, while speaking of female novelists in Iran, whether the author herself is married or not is also a factor, since being married pushes her towards employing 'a complex language of indirection' and the 'ambiguous voice of the censored woman' (Ibid., 189).

In recent years, a new trend has emerged in the work of Iranian female novelists: although it is too early to speak more than fleetingly of this literary trend and its effects on women's novel writing, and without wanting to reduce such trends to merely a reaction against censorship in Iran, it should at least be touched upon, since it is relevant to the issue of first-person narrative at the core of our discussion. Roughly in the past five years, female novelists seem to have begun experimenting with first-person narratives in the voice of a male narrator, a trend begun by Simin Dānešvar in one of her short stories, تصادف (*The Accident*), published in her first collection, به کی سلام کنم؟ (*Who Should I Say Hello to?*) (1980/1359): this is highlighted in the works of Faribā Kalhor, who has published two novels, عاشقانه (*Romantic)* (2013/1392) and مردی از آنادانا (*A Man From Anādānā*) (2017/1396), whose first-person narrators are both males, and can be seen, amongst other things, as a new approach to bypassing government censorship and challenging the censors at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. Vafāyi, speaking of one of the short stories in a collection titled با شیرینی وارد می شویم (*We Enter Holding Sweets*) (2010/1389) written by Faribā Ḥājdāyi, states that the male narrator of Ḥājdāyi's short story روزی که عاشق زنم شدم (*The Day I Fell in Love with My Wife*) clearly shows more openness in expressing his feelings compared to the first-person female

narrators in other short stories in the same collection (Vafāyi 2011/1390). I believe this approach to narrating a story is a clever new ruse ingeniously introduced by Iranian female writers in order to be able to speak of some of forbidden issues by situating the first-person narrator in a male body.

For years, Iranian female novelists have been held back from being able to look at their own image in the mirror of Persian literature. They have been silenced, and patiently remained silent for years and years, orally telling their stories to their grandchildren and keeping them as secrets, untold, in their minds and hearts. In more recent times, they have tried all possible ways (from avoiding a certain point of view to shifting the point of view and now representing their narrator in a male body), done everything they could in order to be able to write. They have fought and written with bleeding fingers, holding broken pieces of the mirror smashed by the patriarchal literary society to stop them forming a clear image of themselves: now, it is as if each were holding a broken piece of the mirror, and all were working to put all those broken pieces back together, so that finally they can see an image of themselves, all gathered within one frame, smiling in the mirror.

Recapitulation

Although overlooked by structuralist narratologists for years, gender is an inseparable element of narrative. Feminist narratologist Susan Lanser introduced the role of gender into narratology in her prominent book *The Narrative Act*. I note that the use of the first-person narrative by female novelists in Iran has been rising since approximately fifteen years ago, and argue that this trend is affected by female novelists' need for unity more than anything else, a unity needed by a feminist movement in the patriarchal society of Iran. Also, there is a link between first-person narratives and government censorship: in other words, when a female novelist narrates her story in the first person (I-protagonist), there are higher

chances that her novel will be banned, receive major corrections or be kept waiting for a long time at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance before being cleared for publication. However, female novelists have not stopped using this point of view for fear of these restrictions, but rather have tried to find clever ways, such as shifting point of view when narrating taboo scenes, to bypass censorship. Apart from government censorship, self-censorship is another strong reason affecting their narratives. Many of the I-protagonists in women's novels experience a sudden change in their moral personality at the end of the story: in my personal view, this is used to guarantee that the novel will be cleared for publication or to meet the expectations of a patriarchal society.

To sum up, women novelists in Iran have come a long way through the decades to be where they currently are, like their female counterparts in western countries such as England and France did decades ago. The struggle of English and French women novelists was aimed at finding a strong position in the male-dominated literature of their countries. In Iran, the 'I' of women novelists is far from the oversimplified descriptions of it as a self-narrative or memoir-writing device: this 'I' is a strong tool for female novelists to give themselves and their I-protagonists a voice, in alliance with one another – a voice they have been deprived of for a long time in history. Women novelists sometimes pay a high price for the empowering use of the 'I' – but it is their voice and their choice.

Conclusion

This research was a critical study of first-person narratives in modern Persian novels in Iran, investigating the historical development of the first-person narrative by applying an eclectic methodology based on narratological and cultural studies and drawing on the views of structuralist narratologists on the issue of the author/narrator relationship. The research has tried to contribute new findings in Persian literature, aiming in particular:

- To improve readers' understanding of first-person narratives, clarifying the difference between the author and the first-person narrator by applying approaches based on modern literary criticism and on narratology.
- To look at point of view from a different perspective in general, and specifically at the first-person point of view. As mentioned in this thesis, point of view is not merely a technical component of narrative in novel writing: in other words, analyzing the use of a certain point of view in novel writing during a specific period of time is very useful for the study of the literature, culture, sociology and economics of that time, since point of view tends to embody socioeconomical and cultural circumstances. Yet most literary scholars in Iran have long considered point of view a negligible technical element in novel writing. Iranian novelists have hardly ever explained the difference between the first-person narrator and the author, and literary scholars have looked at point of view as merely a narrative tool, failing to look in depth at the issue and to see that any choices made with regard to point of view carry precise cultural and social elements.
- To clarify the reasons for the steady rise in first-person narrative in novel writing in Iran over the past fifteen years by investigating the main factors involved, such as the establishment of creative writing workshops, the spread of blogging and the improvement of feminist studies.

- To find a correlation between censorship and first-person narratives, in order to shed light on how state-imposed censorship and self-censorship affect the use of first-person narratives in novel writing in Iran.
- To find the actual reasons determining recent trends in the choice of narrative techniques in novel writing in Iran, such as shifting the point of view, with regard to governmental censorship and to gender issues.

To the best of my knowledge, there has so far been no concrete academic research done on first-person narratives in modern novel writing in Iran, or on the factors involved in the choice to employ the first-person narrative in novel writing. A good understanding of the first-person narrative and of the factors affecting the decision to employ it, however, is in my view the first step needed in order to gain a better knowledge of what a novel is and how the narration works in novel writing, a most common and popular literary form in present-day Iran.

I contend that what this research represents is the very first attempt to introduce a new perspective to the concept of point of view and first-person narrator in Persian literary criticism. Both concepts are widely believed by Iranian readers to be merely technical components of the narrative; the first-person narrative, however, has been controversial throughout the history of western literary criticism as well. I also intended to show that literary trends and movements, regardless of their perceived literary value or 'avant-garde' status, are worth studying in and for themselves: whilst novels written in Iran in the past fifteen years might not have the literary quality of earlier novels, the widespread employment of first-person narratives, specifically in the work of female novelists, deserves careful academic attention, considering that no cultural trend happens without specific reasons. In present-day Iran, whether in literary circles and events, in newspaper literature columns or critical reading sessions focused on the novel, one of the most frequent discussions regards the rise of first-person narratives – yet very little scholarly attention has been given to any of the factors involved in this trend. I suggest that a better theoretical understanding of the concept of point of view would very much raise

levels of understanding of works of literature and facilitate evaluation of a literary work on its own literary merits rather than based on its author's biography; and would furthermore prove very helpful in interdisciplinary approaches involving fields such as the sociology of literature, exploration of the effects of social situations on the rise of a certain point of view adding valuable elements to literary analysis. A correct understanding of the nature and uses of the first-person narrative would in my view also help authors, freeing them to learn their craft without the fear of being identified with a first-person narrator by their readers (including censors) and to master the art of 'distancing'. This might at first appear as a rather trivial aim; yet, as I have shown in this thesis, the common misunderstanding leading readers (including censors) to identify the author with the first-person narrator and to ask irrelevant questions about the text has caused some writers to slip into the same trap and at times to forget that writing a novel in the first person does not mean having to be identified with the first-person narrator, nor having to prove that the narrative is based on truth, since the question of 'truth or lies' is extraneous to a work of fiction.

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the factors hindering this research has been the extreme difficulty of accessing statistics and figures, specifically those relevant to the subject of censorship discussed in chapters Three and Four. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance does not allow researchers, including this researcher, access to any feedback or evaluation forms, and generally to any evidence that would prove or disprove any of their claims. I therefore tried to obviate this lack of information by conducting first-hand interviews with writers who have been subjected to government censorship, although, generally speaking, many authors are reluctant to share this information with researchers, mainly for safety reasons. Any efforts made to access statistics and figures have been directed to showing the huge scale of government censorship in Iran, rather than to proving that state-imposed censorship exists in the country, since that is crystal clear to any readers who have worked on cultural issues in Iran or are familiar with Iran's

political atmosphere. The same readers will hardly need reminding that it is difficult, if not impossible, to access valid figures and numbers in Iran, and that any book published in Iran, regardless of being written originally in Persian or being translated into Persian, has passed through the barrier of government censorship, and in most cases, has been pulled to pieces before being cleared for publication and distribution.

I very much hope that the outcome of this research will help literary scholars, narratology scholars and literary critics in Iran to see the concept of point of view from a totally different perspective. As regards the issue of censorship, I believe this thesis is a step towards an understanding of the relationship between state-imposed censorship and point of view in Persian novel writing in Iran. Also I hope to have made a contribution useful to literary scholars working on issues of censorship and studying its effects on a literary work produced under the Islamic republic in Iran, facilitating their understanding of the fact that censorship has a correlation not only with theme and content, but also, very clearly and directly, with the formal aspects of a literary work.

Narratology and literary criticism are universal subjects: accordingly, I have tried to offer an inclusive, wide-ranging contribution to current research, in the spirit of sharing with literary scholars around the world the benefits derived from the new findings discussed in this research.

This thesis has been written for an academic audience and targeted to literary scholars; yet, I hope a more nuanced understanding of the differentiation between the author and the first-person narrator will prove equally useful to lay readers and to those involved in studying issues of censorship and self-censorship, whether in Iran or elsewhere.

Another consideration that accompanied me throughout the writing of this thesis concerns what I perceive as the need for a higher level of co-ordination in the field of translation of narratology and literary criticism works in Iran. I suggest here that

founding an association of professional translators working in this field would be very helpful for the purpose of prioritizing the materials to be translated into Persian and establishing a consistent Persian terminology to be used as a resource in the translation of foreign (mainly western) works of narratology and literary criticism.

One of the main steps to take in order to improve the study of point of view is to have access to valid statistics and figures on the number of first-person narrative novels being published in a certain period. As we have seen, one cannot expect to do this by accessing the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance feedback and evaluation forms; but the National Library of Iran could simply provide the number of novels written with a first-person narrative within a certain period of time by means of a simple computer programme. Using such methods, it would be possible to automatically detect the predominance of a certain point of view within a large collection of modern Persian novels. This would have the advantage of quantitatively verifying the qualitative hypothesis, as well as enabling comparative analysis involving other languages or even modern Persian literature written in exile. Furthermore, using more advanced models, it would be possible to determine other narrative features, such as a character's goals, emotions, etc.; this would enable further discussion on the mutual relationships of these concepts and their correlation in the context of modern Persian language novels. Personal research in these fields has convinced me of the complete feasibility of such an approach, and I hope other academics will be able to take steps towards executing this idea in the near future: in the long term, the National Library of Iran might wish to support this idea and to offer the necessary financial support – thus in the first place, the importance of the concept of point of view should be fully evidenced. Study of the first-person point of view will only improve when more people understand that the exact number of novels written with a first-person narrative within a certain period of time can shed light on previously hidden aspects of literary, social and political changes through time.

Persian References

*آخوندزاده، میرزافتحعلی (به کوشش) محمدزاده، حمید (۲۵۳۵) *مقالات فارسی*. تهران، انتشارات نگاه (*مطالبی که در این کار از این منبع نقل شده ، از مقدمه کتاب نقل شده است که جداگانه از متن اصلی کتاب که مجموعه مقالات آخوندزاده را در بردارد شماره خورده است، پس برای رجوع به صفحاتی که در این کار ذکر شده است نگاه کنید به مقدمه کتاب.)

اخوت، احمد (۱۳۷۱) *دستور زبان داستان*. اصفهان، نشر فردا.

اشرف، احمد (۱۳۷۵) سابقه خاطره نگاری در ایران. *ایران نامه*، (۵۷)، ص. ۲۶-۵.

ارسطویی، شیوا (۱۳۸۳) *افیون*. تهران، انتشارات نیلوفر.

اعتماد زاده، محمود (م.ا. به آذین) (۱۳۸۴) *دختر رعیت*، تهران، دنیای نو.

اعتماد، شیدا (۱۳۸۹) *میهمانی خداحافظی*، تهران، نشر هیلا، قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://fidibo.com/book/1110-میهمانی-خداحافظی [دیده شده در تاریخ ۸ ژانویه ۲۰۱۶].

افرومند، کیارش (۱۳۹۳) *خروجی کلاسهای داستان نویسی چیست؟: نشستی درباره ادبیات و حواشی آن- شاگرد یک استاد بودن قداست ندارد*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.madomeh.com/site/news/news/2051.htm [دیده شده در تاریخ ۵ اوت ۲۰۱۵].

امامی، نصرالله (۱۳۷۷) *مبانی و روشهای نقد ادبی*. تهران، جامی.

امیرابراهیمی، مسرت (۲۰۱۴) *وقتی زنان راوی روایت های زنانه ی محیط مجازی شدند*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.dw.com/fa-ir/ وقتی-زنان-راوی-روایتهای-زنانهی-فضای-مجازی-شدند-a-17455060 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۸ سپتامبر ۲۰۱۶].

ایبنا (۱۳۹۴) *میرعابدینی: مجلات "نقد کتاب" می توانند نقد را در جامعه نهادینه کنند*. قابل دسترسی از لینک:
http://www.ibna.ir/fa/doc/longint/226965/%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%B9%D8
%A7%D8%A8%D8%AF%DB%8C%D9%86%DB%8C-
%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%86%D9%82%D8%AF-
%DA%A9%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%85%DB%8C-

%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%86%D8%AF-

%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D9%87-

%D9%86%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C%D9%86%D9%87-

%DA%A9%D9%86%D9%86%D8%AF [دیده شده در تاریخ ۵ جولای ۲۰۱۶].

ایران امروز (۲۰۱۴) *وزارت ارشاد باید از حالت امنیتی فعلی بیرون بیاید: مصاحبه با خشایار دیهیمی*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php/news1/50678/ [دیده شده در تاریخ ۲۱ جولای ۲۰۱۶]

ایرنا (۱۳۹۴) *سی و هشت هزار وبلاگنویس زن در کشور فعالیت دارند*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/81593177 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۲۴ سپتامبر ۲۰۱۶].

ایسکانیوز (۱۳۹۴) *سارا سالار: دوره نگاه ضدمرد گذشته است*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.iscanews.ir/news/500009/سارا-سالار:-دوره-نگاه-ضد-مرد-گذشته-است [دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۶ فوریه ۲۰۱۵].

ایسنا (۱۳۸۷) *زنان و وبلاگنویسی*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: https://www.isna.ir/news/8703-05820/%d8%b2%d9%86%d8%a7%d9%86-%d9%88-%d9%88%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%a7%da%af-%d9%86%d9%88%d9%8a%d8%b3%d9%8a [دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۳ سپتامبر ۲۰۱۶].

ایسنا (۱۳۹۵) *دوران سخت گیری به پایان رسیده است: سخنرانی سیدرضا صالحی امیری در مراسم جایزه کتاب سال*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.isna.ir/news/95111913114/%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B3%D8%AE%D8%AA-%DA%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%BE%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA [دیده شده در تاریخ ۳ اوت ۲۰۱۶].

آذری، پروا (۱۳۹۱) مشخصه های زبان و روایت های زنانه در داستان های نویسندگان زن. *کتاب ماه ادبیات*، (۶۱)، ص. ۲۹-۳۸.

آشوری، داریوش (۲۵۳۷) *گشتها: چند مقاله*، تهران ، انتشارات آگاه.

آل احمد، جلال (۱۳۷۳) *ادب و هنر امروز ایران*. کتاب دوم، تهران، نشر همکلاسی و نشر میترا.

آل احمد، جلال (۱۳۸۵)، *سنگی بر گوری*. چاپ سوم، تهران، انتشارات جامه دران.

آل احمد، جلال (۲۵۳۷) *مدیر مدرسه*. تهران، مؤسسه انتشارات امیرکبیر.

آل احمد، شمس (۱۳۶۹) *از چشم برادر*. قم، انتشارات کتاب سعدی.

باستانی، حسین. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۱۰ اوت ۲۰۱۷).

باقری شاد، زهرا (۱۳۹۱) *ادبیات زنان در ذات خودش عصیانگر است: گفتگو با شکوفه آذر*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://archive.radiozamaneh.com/culture/khaak/2013/03/07/24988 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۳۰ آوریل ۲۰۱۴].

بایرامی، محمدرضا (۱۳۸۹) *دفاع یک رمان نویس از ذات رمان، کدام حضرات، حضرت؟*، قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://ermia.ir/contents.aspx?id=525 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۶ مارس ۲۰۱۶].

براهنی، رضا (۱۳۴۸) *قصه نویسی*. چاپ دوم: متن کامل، سازمان انتشارات اشرفی.

براهنی، رضا (۱۳۶۳) *تاریخ مذکر: فرهنگ حاکم و فرهنگ محکوم*، تهران، نشر اول.

براهنی، رضا (۱۳۶۶) *کیمیا و خاک*. چاپ دوم، تهران، نشر مرغ آمین.

براهنی، رضا (۱۳۶۸) *جنون نوشتن: گزیده آثار رضا براهنی*، شرکت انتشاراتی رسام.

بهارلو، محمد (۱۳۷۷) مردنویسی زن. آمده در مقدمه کتاب: علوی، بزرگ. *چشمهایش*، تهران، مؤسسه انتشارات نگاه.

بهنام، مینا (۱۳۹۰) *نگاهی به پژوهش های روایت شناسی زبان فارسی*، قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://rasekhoon.net/article/show/861774/%D9%86%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%BE%DA%98%D9%88%D9%87%D8%B4-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%B4%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D8%B2%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B3%DB%8C/ [دیده شده در تاریخ ۳۰ اکتبر ۲۰۱۴].

بی بی سی فارسی (۱۳۹۲) *وزیر ارشاد: قرآن اگر وحی منزل نبود، ممیزان آن را رد می‌کردند: سخنرانی علی جنتی در مراسم معارفه*. قابل دسترسی از لینک:

http://www.bbc.com/persian/arts/2013/10/131008_l51_jannati_censorship_books

[دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۹ دسامبر ۲۰۱۶].

بی نیاز، فتح الله (۱۳۹۴) *درآمدی بر داستان نویسی و روایت شناسی*. تهران، چاپ ششم، انتشارات افراز.

پارسی، لادن (۲۰۰۵) *ادبیات زنان مهاجر ایرانی؛ به دنبال حلقه مفقوده عشق*. قابل دسترسی از لینک:
http://archive.radiozamaneh.com/culture/khaak/2013/03/07/24988 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۶ دسامبر ۲۰۱۵].

پارسینه (۱۳۹۰) *کدام کلمات ممنوعه مورد ایراد ممیزان وزارت ارشاد قرار می‌گیرند؟*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.parsine.com/fa/news/40906/%DA%A9%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85-
%DA%A9%D9%84%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-
%D9%85%D9%85%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B9%D9%87-
%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AF-
%D9%85%D9%85%DB%8C%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%86-
%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA-
%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B1-
%D9%85%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%DA%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%AF [دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۱ اکتبر ۲۰۱۶].

پرهام، مهدی (۱۳۵۶) *خودسانسوری*. آمده در کتاب: *فرهنگ سکوت* (بدون سال چاپ).

پورمحسن، مجتبا (۱۳۹۰) *پدرخوانده ها: گزارشی از اختلافات هوشنگ گلشیری و رضا براهنی*. قابل دسترسی از لینک:

http://www.tajrobehmag.com/article/1044/%E2%80%8C%D9%BE%D8%AF%D8%B1
%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%87%E2%80%8C%D9%87%D8%A7-
%DA%AF%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%B4%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D8%B2-
%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%AA%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AA-
%D9%87%D9%88%D8%B4%D9%86%DA%AF-
%DA%AF%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%88-

%D8%B1%D8%B6%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%86%D9%8A

[دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۱ ژوئن ۲۰۱۶].

پیرزاد، زویا (۱۳۸۱) *چراغها را من خاموش می‌کنم*. چاپ ششم، تهران، نشر مرکز.

تاراجی، منصور (۱۳۵۷) معلم من آل احمد. آمده در کتاب: تبریزی، حمید (گردآورنده) *جلال آل احمد مردی در کشاکش تاریخ معاصر*. نشر کاوه، تبریز، ص. ۳۷-۳۱.

تهران نیوز (۱۳۹۴) *نویسنده کتابهای پرخواننده اکثراً زنان هستند: سخنرانی احمد مسجد جامعی*. قابل دسترسی از لینک:http://tehrannews.ir/نویسنده-کتاب-های-پرخواننده-اکثرا-زنان/ [دیده شده در تاریخ ۲۶ نوامبر ۲۰۱۶].

جمالزاده، محمدعلی (۲۵۳۶) *یکی بود یکی نبود*. تهران، نشر کانون معرفت.

جمشیدی، اسماعیل (۱۳۷۳) *خودکشی صادق هدایت*. تهران، انتشارات زرین.

جورابچیان، نرگس (۱۳۸۸) *به وقت بهشت*. تهران، نشر آموت، قابل دسترسی از لینک:
http://fidibo.com/book/65691-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%88%D9%82%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D9%87%D8%B4%D8%AA [دیده شده در تاریخ ۹ ژانویه ۲۰۱۵].

جورکش، شاپور (۱۳۷۸) *زندگی، عشق و مرگ از دیدگاه صادق هدایت*. چاپ دوم، تهران، مؤسسه انتشارات آگاه.

حاج دایی، فریبا (۱۳۸۹) با شیرینی وارد می شویم: مجموعه داستانهای کوتاه. تهران، نشر فراسخن.

چهلتن، امیرحسن. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۸ فوریه ۲۰۱۷).

حسنی (آبیز)، علیرضا، مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۲ ژانویه ۲۰۱۷).

حسین خانی، مریم (۱۳۸۷) جذابیت فریب خواننده: گفتگو با شیوا ارسطویی- بخش اول. روزنامه اعتماد، (۱۷۱۶)، ص ۱۱، (۱۵ تیر ۱۳۸۷).

حقیقی، رها (۱۳۹۱) *ضرورت چاپ انتقادی منتخب آثار جلال: مصاحبه با حسن میرعابدینی منتقد و محقق آثار ادبی درباره جلال آل احمد داستان نویس*. قابل دسترسی از لینک:
http://www.tajrobehmag.com/article/2124/ [دیده شده در تاریخ ۲۲ اکتبر ۲۰۱۵].

حکیم معانی، محسن (۱۳۸۸) حیف از آن زانتیای سیاه!. *آزما*، (۶۸)، ص. ۳۴-۳۵.

خسروی، فریبرز (۱۳۸۱) *سانسور در آینه: نظرات ممیزان در دوره پهلوی دوم*. تهران، انتشارات کتابخانه ملی جمهوری اسلامی ایران.

خمینی، روح الله (۱۳۷۸) *صحیفه امام: مجموعه آثار امام خمینی*. جلد سیزدهم، تهران، مؤسسه تنظیم و نشر آثار امام خمینی.

خورشیدفر، امیرحسین. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۱۶ فوریه ۲۰۱۷).

دانشور، سیمین (۱۳۴۹) *سووشون*. چاپ دوم، تهران، انتشارات خوارزمی.

دانشور، سیمین (۱۳۵۹) *به کی سلام کنم؟*. چاپ دوم، تهران، انتشارات خوارزمی.

رابرتسون، برانون، مرچنت، جیمز، زاهدپور، رها، اسپینلی، والریا (۲۰۱۵) *انسداد نویسنده: داستان سانسور در ایران*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: https://smallmedia.org.uk/writersblock/file/WritersBlock_Farsi.pdf [دیده شده در تاریخ ۲ مارس ۲۰۱۶].

رادیو فردا (۱۳۹۲a) *وعده وزیر جدید ارشاد: "ممیزی قبل از نشر برداشته می شود"*. قابل دسترسی از لینک:

https://www.radiofarda.com/a/f14_ali_janati_censorship_books/25078703.html [دیده شده در تاریخ دوازده ژانویه ۲۰۱۵].

رادیو فردا (۱۳۹۲b) *وزیر فرهنگ و ارشاد اسلامی: ممیزی پیش از چاپ کتاب برداشته نمی شود*. قابل دسترسی از لینک:

https://www.radiofarda.com/a/f4_ali_janati_censorship_not_remove_book/25103020.html [دیده شده در تاریخ دوازده ژانویه ۲۰۱۵].

رجایی، فرهنگ (۱۳۸۳) *مشکله هویت ایرانیان امروز*. چاپ دوم، تهران، نشر نی.

رجب زاده، احمد (۱۳۸۰) *ممیزی کتاب: پژوهشی در ۱۴۰۰ سند ممیزی کتاب در سال ۱۳۷۵*. تهران، نشر کویر.

رمضانپور، علی اصغر. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۱۰ ژانویه ۲۰۱۵).

زرین کوب، عبدالحسین (۱۳۶۲) *یادداشت ها و اندیشه ها*. چاپ چهارم، تهران، سازمان انتشارات جاویدان.

زرین کوب، عبدالحسین (۱۳۷۶) *آشنایی با نقد ادبی*. چاپ چهارم، تهران، انتشارات سخن.

سالار، سارا (۱۳۹۴) *احتمالاً گم شده ام*. قابل دسترسی از لینک:
http://dl.irebooks.com/Downloads/New/Dastan-
[Roman/EhtemalanGomShodam(www.irebooks.com).pdf](http://dl.irebooks.com/Downloads/New/Dastan-Roman/EhtemalanGomShodam(www.irebooks.com).pdf) [دیده شده در تاریخ ۳ نوامبر
۲۰۱۴]

سالار، سارا (۱۳۹۲) *هست یا نیست؟*. تهران، نشر چرخ، انتشارات نیلوفر.

سپانلو، محمدعلی (۱۳۶۶) *نویسندگان پیشرو ایران*. چاپ دوم، تهران، انتشارات نگاه.

سرکوهی، فرج (۲۰۰۲) *یاس و داس: بیست سال روشنفکری و امنیتی ها*. چاپ دوم، سوئد، انتشارات
باران. قابل دسترسی از لینک زیر:
http://ketabnak.com/book/7628/%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D9%88-
[%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B3#versions](http://ketabnak.com/book/7628/%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D9%88-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B3#versions) [دیده شده در تاریخ ۲۶ دسامبر ۲۰۱۵].

سلیمانی، بلقیس. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۶ فوریه ۲۰۱۷).

سیاح، فاطمه ، به کوشش گلبن، محمد (۱۳۵۴). *نقد و سیاحت*. تهران، انتشارات توس.

شریفیان، روح انگیز (۱۳۸۲) *چه کسی باور می کند رستم؟*. تهران، انتشارات مروارید.

شریفیان، روح انگیز. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۱۶ اوت ۲۰۱۶).

شکارسری، حمیدرضا (۱۳۸۹) نقد و بررسی مجموعه شعر عصر پایان معجزات. *کتاب ماه ادبیات*،
(۱۵۷)، ص. ۴۹-۴۲

شمیسا، سیروس (۱۳۷۸) *نقد ادبی*. تهران، انتشارات فردوس.

شورای عالی انقلاب فرهنگی (بدون تاریخ) *اهداف و سیاست ها و ضوابط نشر کتاب*. قابل دسترسی از
لینک: http://ketab.farhang.gov.ir/fa/principles/bookprinciples67 [دیده شده در تاریخ هشت
فوریه ۲۰۱۶].

شهبا، محمد. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۷ اکتبر ۲۰۱۶).

شهر کتاب (۱۳۸۸) کتابی کاربردی در زمینه روایت شناسی، قابل دسترسی از لینک:
http://www.bookcity.org/detail/30 [دیده شده در تاریخ ده فوریه ۲۰۱۴].

شهسواری، محمدحسن. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۲۳ آوریل ۲۰۱۷).

صارمی، مهسا (۱۳۹۰) مردان بدون زنان در ادبیات ایران، قابل دسترسی از لینک:
https://www.radiozamaneh.com/35668 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۲۷ اکتبر ۲۰۱۵].

طالبی نژاد، احمد (۱۳۸۳a) مراتب هفتگانه، هفت، (۱۷)، ص. ۴-۵.

طالبی نژاد، احمد (۱۳۸۳b) مراتب هفتگانه، هفت، (۱۸)، ص. ۴-۵.

طبری، احسان (۱۳۲۶) درباره انتقاد و ماهیت هنری و زیبایی هنری. سخنرانی احسان طبری (۱۱ تیر
۱۳۲۵) آمده در کتاب: نخستین کنگره نویسندگان ایران. تهران.

طبری، احسان (۱۳۵۹) مسائلی از فرهنگ و هنر و زبان. تهران، انتشارات مروارید.

عابدینی (میرعابدینی)، حسن. (۱۳۶۶) صدسال داستان نویسی در ایران. جلد اول، تهران، نشر تندر.

عبدی، بهزاد (۱۳۹۳) گفت و گو با سارا سالار به بهانه چاپ رمان "هست یا نیست؟" . روزنامه اعتماد،
(۳۰۳۱)، ص ۸، (۲۲ مرداد ۱۳۹۳).

علوی، بزرگ (۱۳۷۷) چشمهایش، تهران، مؤسسه انتشارات نگاه.

علوی، سید عارف (۱۳۹۵) شب طاهره یا شب انقلاب؟!: نقد رمان "شب طاهره" نوشته بلقیس سلیمانی،
قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://sayedalavi.blogfa.com/ [دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۴ جولای ۲۰۱۷].

علی اکبریان، فاطمه (۱۳۹۶) جلال در آینه: بخش دوم: داستان و سفرنامه های جلال. قابل دسترسی از
لینک: http://alefyaa.ir/?p=6136 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۷ اکتبر ۲۰۱۷].

علی نژاد، حلیمه (۱۳۹۴) تحلیل ساختار روایت در آثار نویسندگان برجسته زن معاصر ایران. ارائه شده
در: همایش بین المللی نوآوری و تحقیق در هنر و علوم انسانی، استانبول، مؤسسه سفیران فرهنگی مبین.
۲۱ صفحه. قابل دسترسی از لینک: -https://www.civilica.com/Paper-ARTHUMAN01
ARTHUMAN01_319.html کد COI مقاله: ARTHUMAN01_319 [دیده شده در تاریخ نه مارس
۲۰۱۶].

علی نژاد، سیروس (۲۰۰۵) *شهرزاد قصه گو را فراموش نکن: گفتگو با حسین مرتضائیان آبکنار*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.bbc.com/persian/arts/story/2005/06/printable/050609_pm-cy-golshiri.shtml [دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۶ ژوئن ۲۰۱۵].

علیپورگسکری، بهناز مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۲ فوریه ۲۰۱۶).

غزنویان، منیژه (۱۳۹۵) *بررسی علل گرایش به وبلاگنویسی در ایران: با تمرکز بر وبلاگهای شخصی*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://farborz.ir/ بایگانی/۵۲۸ [دیده شده در تاریخ ۲۹ آوریل ۲۰۱۶].

غیاثی، محمدتقی (۱۳۷۷) *تأویل بوف کور: قصه زندگی*. تهران، انتشارات نیلوفر.

فراستی، احمد. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۶ اوت ۲۰۱۷).

فرزادفر، نورا (۱۳۹۲) *زنان، پیشروان وبلاگنویسی*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://mehrkhane.com/fa/news/10305 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۴ می ۲۰۱۶].

فرشیدورد، خسرو (۱۳۶۳) *درباره ادبیات و نقد ادبی*. جلد اول، تهران، مؤسسه انتشارات امیرکبیر.

فریگام، نیکو (۱۳۹۲) بررسی تأثیر آثار آلن رب گری یه بر داستان نویسی جدید در ایران با تکیه بر نظریه دریافت، پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد، دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی دانشگاه تهران.

قاضی مرادی، حسن (۱۳۷۸) *خودمداری ایرانیان*. تهران، انتشارات ارمغان.

قجر، آیدا (۱۳۹۴) *گفتگو با فاطمه اختصاری؛ ممیزی، زندان، مهاجرت و زنانگی*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: https://www.tribunezamaneh.com/archives/93547 [دیده شده در تاریخ سیزده دسامبر ۲۰۱۶].

کاتوزیان، محمدعلی همایون (۱۳۷۲) *صادق هدایت و مرگ نویسنده*. تهران، نشر مرکز.

کاتوزیان، محمدعلی همایون (۱۳۷۳) *بوف کور هدایت*. تهران، نشر مرکز.

کتیرایی، محمود (۱۳۴۹) *کتاب صادق هدایت*. تهران، سازمان انتشارات اشرفی و انتشارات فرزین.

کلهر، فریبا (۱۳۹۰) *شروع یک زن*. تهران، انتشارات ققنوس.

کلهر، فریبا (۱۳۹۲) *عاشقانه*. چاپ دوم، تهران، نشر آموت.

190

کلهر، فریبا (۱۳۹۶) *مردی از آنادانا*، تهران، نشر آموت.

کیانوش، محمود (۲۵۳۵) *بررسی شعر و نثر فارسی معاصر*. تهران، انتشارات رَز.

گلشیری، هوشنگ (۱۳۷۸) *باغ در باغ*. جلد اول و جلد دوم، تهران، انتشارات نیلوفر.

گلشیری، هوشنگ، تیم جنگ اصفهان (بدون سال چاپ) (بی عنوان) *جنگ اصفهان*، دفتر ششم، ص. ۶.

لینت ولت، ژپ (۱۳۹۰) *رساله ای در باب گونه شناسی روایت نقطه دید*. ترجمه: عباسی، علی، حجازی، نصرت، تهران، شرکت انتشارات علمی و فرهنگی.

لینک زن (۱۳۹۱) *از وبلاگنویسی به آرامشی رسیده ام که دنیای واقعی از من دریغ کرده است* (مصاحبه با شیدا اعتماد)، قابل دسترسی از لینک: /http://linkzan.ir/archives/4252 از-وبلاگ%E2%80%8Cنویسی-به-آرامشی-رسیده%E2%80%8Cام-که[دیده شده در تاریخ ۲۵ نوامبر ۲۰۱۶].

م.ف.، فرزانه (۱۹۸۸) *آشنایی با صادق هدایت: آنچه صادق هدایت به من گفت*. جلد دوم، پاریس. نشر م. فرزانه.

مجیدی قهرودی، نسیم ، آذری، فاطمه (۱۳۸۹) بررسی نقش اینترنت در ارتقای جایگاه زنان. *پژوهش نامه زنان*، (۲)، ص. ۱۱۰-۸۷.

محمدعلی، محمد (۱۳۹۲) *چه کسی از راوی اول شخص می ترسد؟* قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.aashti.com/issue-21-3 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۸ اکتبر ۲۰۱۴].

محمدعلی، محمد. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۵ می ۲۰۱۷).

محمودیان، محمد رفیع (۱۳۸۲) *نظریه رمان و ویژگیهای رمان فارسی*. تهران، انتشارات فرزان.

مدرسی، تقی (۱۳۳۷) ملاحظاتی در باب داستان نویسی نوین فارسی. *صدف*، شماره ۱۱، ص ۹۹۱-۹۱۳.

مرتضائیان آبکنار، حسین. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۲۳ آوریل ۲۰۱۷).

مسکوب، شاهرخ (۱۳۷۳) *سرگذشت ادبیات و داستان اجتماع*. تهران، نشر و پژوهش فرزان روز.

معروفی، عباس (۱۳۸۹) *زندانی باغان: داستانی کوتاه از هوشنگ گلشیری*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: https://radiokoocheh.com/article/39700 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۲۰ می ۲۰۱۶].

معروفی، عباس. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۷ می ۲۰۱۶).

مقدادی، بهرام (۱۳۷۸) فرهنگ اصطلاحات نقد ادبی: از افلاطون تا عصر حاضر. تهران، انتشارات فکر روز.

موحدان، محمود (۱۳۹۰) سارا سالار نویسنده رمان تحسین شده "احتمالاً گم شده ام": مصاحبه با سارا سالار، قابل دسترسی از لینک:http://bookz20.mihanblog.com/post/96 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۶ دسامبر ۲۰۱۴].

مهاجر، فیروزه ، امیری، مهرنوش (۱۳۸۴) راوی اول شخص و زن: مصاحبه با فرخنده حاجی زاده. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.zanestan.es/issue1/06,03,04,09,47,39/ [دیده شده در تاریخ ۲۳ اوت ۲۰۱۵].

مهرخانه (۱۳۹۴) ادبیات ایران زنانه تر می شود. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://mehrkhane.com/fa/news/18734/ادبیات-ایران-زنانه%E2%80%8Cتر-می%E2%80%8Cشود[دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۸ ژوئن ۲۰۱۵].

میرشکاک، آزاده (۱۳۹۲) نخست گاهی می ترسیم و بعد همیشه می ترسیم: بررسی رمان "خوف" با حضور ارسطویی، چرمشیر و موسوی. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.khabaronline.ir/detail/326613/culture/literature [دیده شده در تاریخ ۹ دسامبر۲۰۱۵].

میرصادقی، جمال (۱۳۶۷) عناصر داستان. تهران، انتشارات شفا.

میرصادقی، جمال (۱۳۹۱) زاویه دید در داستان. تهران، انتشارات سخن.

میرصادقی، جمال. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۲۳ نوامبر ۲۰۱۵).

میرعابدینی، حسن (۱۳۷۹) سی سال تلاش برای تثبیت ادبیات مدرن. بخارا، (۱۲)، ص. ۳۰۰-۳۰۳.

میرعابدینی، حسن. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۲ دسامبر ۲۰۱۵)

میلانی، فرزانه (۱۳۷۲) از نگار تا نگارنده از مکتوب تا کاتب، ایرانشناسی،(۴۵)، ص. ۵۱-۸۰.

میلانی، فرزانه (۱۳۷۵) تو خود حجاب خودی: زن و حدیث نفس نویسی در ایران، ایرانشناسی، (۵۶)، ص. ۶۱۱-۶۳۸.

میلانی، فرزانه. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۲۲ اکتبر ۲۰۱۶).

ناتل خانلری، پرویز (۱۳۷۸) نقد و بررسی بوف کور. آمده در کتاب طلوعی، محمود (به کوشش)، *نابغه یا دیوانه؟!*. تهران، نشر علم، ۳۴۵-۳۲۷.

ناصحی، زهره (۱۳۹۱) خوانشی جامعه شناختی از "من سالاری" در ادبیات فرانسه معاصر. *فصلنامه مطالعات جهان*، (۲)، ۳۲۰-۳۰۳.

ناکجا (بدون تاریخ انتشار) *جنایتی هولناکتر از کشتن (مصاحبه با رضا قاسمی)* ، قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.naakojaa.com/article/643 [دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۴ ژانویه ۲۰۱۵].

نجومیان، امیرعلی. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۱۷ اکتبر ۲۰۱۶).

نوبخت، فرشته (۱۳۹۲) *سیب ترش*. تهران. چاپ دوم، نشر به نگار.

نیک نژاد، علی. مصاحبه کننده: نیکو فریگام (۱۳ مارس ۲۰۱۶).

نیکنام، لادن (۱۳۸۸) *سه گفتگو درباره داستان نویسی خلاق: سناپور- شیوا ارسطویی- گودرزی*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://ghesseh.blogfa.com/post-12.aspx [دیده شده در تاریخ ۱ فوریه ۲۰۱۵].

وفایی، صادق (۱۳۹۰) *نقدی بر مجموعه داستان "با شیرینی وارد می شویم" اثر فریبا حاج دایی*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://www.chouk.ir/maghaleh-naghd-gotogoo/1134-2012-01-08-06-36-43.html [دیده شده در تاریخ ۴ آوریل ۲۰۱۶].

وفی، فریبا (۱۳۸۱) *پرنده من*. تهران، نشر مرکز.

ولی زاده، وحید (۱۳۸۷) جنسیت در آثار رمان نویسان زن ایرانی. *نقد ادبی*، (۱)، ص. ۲۲۴-۱۹۱.

وولف، ویرجنیا (۱۳۸۴) *اتاقی از آن خود*. ترجمه: صفورا نوربخش، چاپ دوم، تهران، انتشارات نیلوفر.

ویستا (۱۳۹۶) *اینترنت و وبلاگنویسی در ایران*. قابل دسترسی از لینک: http://vista.ir/article/293566/اینترنت-و-وبلاگ-نویسی-در-ایران[دیده شده در تاریخ ۱۳ می ۲۰۱۶].

هدایت، صادق (۱۳۴۸) *بوف کور*. تهران، چاپ دوازدهم، مؤسسه انتشارات امیرکبیر.

هیلمن، مایکل کرگ (۱۳۶۸) بوف کور هدایت: کابوسی اتوبیوگرافیک. *ایران شناسی*، (۱)، ص. -۲۰۲ ۲۱۱

یاحقی، محمدجعفر (۱۳۷۸) *جویبار لحظه ها* . تهران، انتشارات جامی.

یونسی، ابراهیم (۱۳۸۳) *شکفتن باغ*. تهران، انتشارات معین.

یونسی، ابراهیم (۱۳۹۵) *هنر داستان نویسی*. چاپ دوازدهم، تهران، انتشارات نگاه.

Non-Persian References

Ambrose, K. (2016). The Woman Question in Nineteenth-Century English, German and Russian Literature (En)gendering barriers. Leiden and Boston: Brill- Rodopi.

Balzac, H. (2014). *Le lys dans la vallée*. Avrensa Éditions. Available at: https://www.amazon.fr/dans-vall%C3%A9e-Nouvelle-%C3%A9dition-augment%C3%A9e-ebook/dp/B00IVAGJ2O

Beard, M. (1990). *Hedayat's Blind Owl as a Western Novel*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Booth, W.C. (1983). *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. 2nd ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Chatman, S. (1978). *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film.* Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press.

Eisenberg, J.D. and Finlayson, M.A. (2016). Automatic Identification of Narrative Diegesis and Point of View. *Computing News Storylines*. pp.36-46

Encyclopædia Iranica (2015). *Transliteration*. Available at: http://www.iranicaonline.org/pages/guidelines [Accessed 27 July 2017].

Fitzgerald, F.S. (1993). *The Great Gatsby*. Ware, Wordsworth Editions Limited.

Giacobino, L., Abadpour, A., Anderson, C., Petrossian, F. and Nellemann, C. (2014). *Whither Blogestan: Evaluating Shifts in Persian Cyberspace.* Iran Media Program, Center for Global Communication Studies & Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania. Available at: http://www.global.asc.upenn.edu/app/uploads/2014/06/2014_whither_blogestan-1.pdf [Accessed 27 May 2016].

Goldmann, L. (1975). *Towards a Sociology of the Novel*. Translated by A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock Publications Limited.

Gymnich, M. (2013). Gender and Narratology. *Literature Compass*, *10* (9), pp.705-715.

Hassani, A. (2015). Censorship of Poetry in Post-Revolutionary Iran (1979 to 2014), Growing up with Censorship (A Memoir), and The Kindly Interrogator (A Collection of Poetry). PhD. Newcastle University.

Hedayat, S. (1957). *The Blind Owl*. Translated by D.P. Costello. London: John Calder.

Ina Talk Shows. (2014). Apostrophes: Marguerite Duras répond à Bernard Pivot. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BidilIrlVGo [Accessed 22 April 2016].

Jain, J. and Agarwal, S. (2002). *Gender and Narrative*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

Kamshad, H. (2010). *Modern Persian Prose Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lanser, S.S. (1992). *Fictions of Authority*. Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press.

Lanser, S.S. (1981). *The Narrative Act*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Mani, I. (2012). Computational modeling of narrative. *Synthesis Lectures on Human Language Technologies*, 5 (3), pp.1-142.

Mayer, R. (2004). History and the Early English Novel: Matters of Fact from Bacon to Defoe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McGrath Smith, E. (2016). 'Every One For a Moment': Adrienne Rich's Public Poetics as Heroism. In: Hinton, L. (ed.), Jayne Cortez, Adrienne Rich and The Feminist

Superhero: Voice, Vision, Politics and Performance in U.S. Contemporary Women's Poetics. Lanham: Lexington Books, p. 117.

Milani, F. (1992). Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Milani, F. (2011). Words Not Swords: Iranian Women and the Freedom of Movement. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Morris, A. (1992). First Persons Plural in Contemporary Feminist Fiction. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, *11* (1), pp.11-29.

Murray, J.L. (2015). *Writing as the Creation of Self: Point of View Shifts in Marguerite Duras'* The Lover. Available at: http://www.jenandthepen.com/?p=984 [Accessed 22 April 2016].

Oxford Dictionary. (n. d.) Available at: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/novel [Accessed 27 May 2015].

Prince, G. (1982). *Narratology.* Berlin, New York and Amsterdam: Mouton Publishers.

Rich, A. (1972). When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision. *College English*, *34* (1), pp.18-30.

Rimmon-Kenan, S. (1989). *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. New York and London: Routledge.

Rumi, J. (1926). *The Mathnavi of Jalaluddin Rumi*. Trans. R.A.Nicholson. Volume 2, Book 1, Cambridge University Press.

Rye, G. and Worton, M. (2002). *Women's Writing in Contemporary France: New Writers, New Literature in the 1990s*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

Sagae, K., Gordon, A. S., Dehghani, M., Metke, M., Kim, J.S., Gimbel, S.I., Tipper, C., Kaplan, J. and Immordino-Yang, M.H. (2013). A Data-driven Approach for Classification of Subjectivity in Personal Narratives. *OASIcs-OpenAccess Series in Informatics* (Vol. 32). Schloss Dagstuhl-Leibniz-Zentrum fuer Informatik.

Stanzel, F.K. (1984). *A Theory of Narrative*. Translated by C. Goedsche. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Talattof, K. (2000). The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Tauchert, A. (2002). Writing Like a Girl: Revisiting Women's Literary History. *Critical Quarterly*, *44* (1), pp.49-76.

The Qur'an, (n.d.). pp.S.7 A.12.

Todorov, T. (1981). *Introduction to Poetics*. Translated by R. Howard. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Wallace, M. (1986). *Recent Theories of Narrative*. Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press.

Woolf, V. (2015). *A Room of One's Own.* Available at: https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html [Accessed 13 August 2017].

World Bank (no date) *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*. Available at: http://publicofficialsfinancialdisclosure.worldbank.org/sites/fdl/files/assets/law-library-files/Iran_Constitution_en.pdf [Accessed 12th April 2016].