FICTIONAL UNCERTAINTY IN MODERN PERSIAN LITERATURE: POLYPHONY, BECOMING, AND AMBIGUITY IN SHAHRIAR MANDANIPOUR’S WORK

by

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Parvaneh, without whom this effort would have been worth nothing. Her love, support and constant patience have taught me so much about sacrifice, discipline and compromise.

To my mother, Ferdos, who has been always worried about my education, my career, and me.
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ABSTRACT

Fictional uncertainty is a complex technique that utilizes literary devices such as changing points of view, multiple themes, and fluid characterization. Fictional uncertainty enables an author to create a layered narrative based upon multiple perspectives and a deep look into the characters’ individual personalities and inner lives. Every work of fiction involves some amount of uncertainty, but in modern Iranian literature there was a distinct transition in the late twentieth century from greater realism to greater uncertainty. Indeed, the mode of fictional uncertainty is central to Iranian authors’ modernist project, focused as it is on the psychological aspects of the characters’ lives and narrative aesthetics. Fiction prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution usually focused on sociological matters, but post-revolution modernist fiction has been distinguished by emphasis on the deeper realities of characters’ individual lives.

Fictional uncertainty is the most significant literary technique that authors have used to portray the complexity of Iranians’ post-revolutionary experiences. It has provided a tool for a number of Iranian writers to oppose the dominant social, cultural, historical, and religious certainties of post-revolutionary Iranian society. Shahriar Mandanipour, one of the greatest users of this technique, has extended the boundaries of Persian fiction through his experimental fiction. Although Mandanipour does count some traditional realist fictions among his works, his efforts in applying fictional uncertainty make him unique and exemplary. Under the influence of Russian Formalism, Mandanipour mostly uses his content as a pretext for formalist fictional experiments. Mandanipour’s focus on “literariness” is the basis of his interest in the technique of fictional uncertainty and his understanding of the essentiality of “form” in fictional works.
Fictional uncertainty is not always guided by one particular ideology or discourse, but rather by the ways in which devices such as changing points of view, multiple themes, fluid characters, and unstable settings function in the text. In the case of post-revolutionary Persian literature, fictional uncertainty has also provided authors a way to investigate and recreate the complex dynamics of revolutionary and post-revolutionary life, which is to some extent ultimately related to ideology and discourse.

A close reading of Mandanipour’s short stories and novels will show that his application of fictional uncertainty is related to the Bakhtinian concepts of “polyphony, dialogue, unfinalizability”¹ and becoming, which are embodied in the plots, characterizations, and points of view in his works. Using these fictional devices, Mandanipour portrays an atomized Iran full of violence, despair, fear, infidelity, revenge, and loneliness. However, his works go far beyond Iran as a historical nation-state and discuss a number of universal subjects like love, death, loneliness, and revenge by application of the technique of fictional uncertainty.

**Keywords:** Fictional Uncertainty, Modern Persian Fiction, Shahriar Mandanipour, Plot, Characterization, Unfinalizability, Becoming, Polyphony, Literary Modernism, Literary Realism

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Much has already been written about fictional uncertainty, particularly as it appears in the works of modern Western writers.¹ Fictional uncertainty is a complex technique in which literary devices such as changing points of view, multiple themes, and fluid characterization interact within a given narrative. Fictional uncertainty enables an author to make multi-perspective and multi-layered narratives based on characters’ individualities and inner lives. Although every work of fiction is uncertain to some extent, the use of the technique of fictional uncertainty is more marked in later, modernist works than in earlier, realist works. As such, fictional uncertainty is located at the center of Iranian authors’ modernist project.

As a literary technique, fictional uncertainty recreates the chaos of reality by the use of internal literary devices such as parallel points of view, multiple themes, and invisible-limited narrators. In this dissertation, I will investigate the role of fictional uncertainty in Persian fiction following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, suggesting that it represents a conscious effort to portray the complexity of post-revolutionary Iranians’ experiences. I argue that some writers have

Kamali experimented with fictional uncertainty as a way to oppose the dominant social, cultural, historical, and religious certainties of post-revolutionary Iranian society. In support of my argument, I will create an abstract concept of “fictional uncertainty” based upon its use in the works of one of its best representatives, Shahriar Mandanipour.

Mandanipour has extended the boundaries of Persian fiction by his experimental and formal efforts. Although the reader can find both certain and uncertain fiction among his works, his application of fictional uncertainty makes him unique and exemplary. Under the influence of Russian Formalism, Shahriar Mandanipour uses content as an excuse for formal experience and fictional experiments. Russian Formalism was introduced to Iranian authors after the 1979 Iranian Revolution and helped them to develop what would later be called fictional uncertainty. Formalists’ focus on linguistics and the “literariness” of literature was the basis of their understanding of the essentiality of “form” vs “content” in fictional works (Eagleton 3). As we will see in Mandanipour’s short stories and novels in chapters three and four, his preoccupation is not just content. To understand fictional uncertainty as a literary technique, we first need to define some basic terms and concepts.

**Definition of Terms**

- **Plot**: Plot is the storyline that determines the relationships among fictional devices such as characterization, setting, point of view, and fictional prose. It creates a fluid, organic relationship among these fictional devices on one hand and between them and the reader on the other. Thus, plot is not merely a chain of events in which each event is related to the next based upon a series of cause and effect relationships through a linear time (Forster 20–29). Plot with empty spaces is an essential part of fictional uncertainty, rejecting as it does the solid plot of traditional–realist
fiction. I will discuss the importance of fluid plot in Shahriar Mandanipour’s short stories in chapter three.

- **Point of view**: Point of view concentrates on the questions of who the narrator is and what lies in the narrator’s mind: “. . . considering the relations between narrating subjects and the literary system . . . then we confront a complex network of interactions between author, narrator(s), characters, and audiences . . . [through point of view]” (Lanser 13). Changing points of view is one of the characteristics of Persian fictional uncertainty. I will explain the role of point of view in modernist Persian fiction by analyzing Mandanipour’s short story “Again Facing the River” in chapter three and his novel *The Courage of Love* in chapter four.

- **Characterization**: Characterization takes place when the writer, mostly by using either figural or neutral types of narration, creates a fictional situation and puts the character in it in order to discover and understand the character’s reaction. Franz Stanzel defines these two kinds of narration in his excellent book, *Narrative Situations in the Novel*. According to Stanzel, “If the reader has the illusion of being present on the scene in one of the figures, then *figural* narration is taking place. If the point of observation does not lie in any of the novel’s figures, although the perspective gives the reader the feeling of being present as an imaginary witness of the events, then the presentation can be called *neutral*” (23). Characterization in this way rejects a solid plot in which the roles of the characters are determined a priori; it means that the author cannot rely on characters’ fixed and eternal characteristics. Therefore, the fictional reality is really created when the readers engage in the process based on their own understandings of the traits and feelings of the characters; this type of fluid characterization enables the readers to identify the association between the traits of characters and the progress of action. I will compare fictional elements of characterization in realist and modernist Persian literature in chapter two. I will also
describe Mandanipour’s experimental approach to characterization which has been shown in his novel *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* in chapter five.

- **Literary technique**: According to Jo Ann Midelton, “Literary technique encompasses the many ways of writing down the language to communicate an artistic whole from writer to reader . . . that its elements can be identified, defined, and taught. . . . Plot, character, setting, and theme are inert ingredients; the technique by which they are assembled produce the art of literature.” (32-33) Therefore, literary or “narrative techniques are the methods that writers use to give certain artistic and emotional effects to a story . . . [in order to make it] a ‘narrative.’ Many key narrative techniques fall into four categories: plot, character, point of view, and style.”

- **Fictional uncertainty**: Sabine Gross defines fictional uncertainty as a literary technique that “[I]s characterized by ambiguous and shifting forms of language, such as the various intersections and blendings of auctorial voice and character consciousness” (Gross 60). She also refers to uncertainty as the source of pleasure and excitement: “[T]exts that leave us in suspense as to the status of the story world or events within it provide their own reading pleasure, one that does precisely not result from immersion in a plausible textual reality, but from appreciation the repeated acts of subverting the illusion” (61). Overall, fictional uncertainty can be defined as “. . . a strategy used in the making of a narrative to relay information to the audience and, particularly, to "develop" the narrative, usually in order to make it more complete, complicated, or interesting.”

The goal of this research is discussing different aspects of the technique of fictional uncertainty in modernist

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Persian fiction. I will define and describe different aspects of fictional uncertainty throughout this dissertation.

- Unfinalizability and becoming: These two Bakhtinian concepts relate to Persian literary critique mostly as open-endedness of both plot and fictional characters. Bakhtin advances “the term unfinilizability (nezaversennost) as an all-purpose carrier of his conviction that the world is not only a messy place, but is also an open place. The term appears frequently in his works and in many different contexts, it designates a complex of values central to his thinking: innovation, ‘surprisingness,’ the genuinely new, openness, potentiality, freedom, and creativity—terms that he also uses frequently. His paraphrase of one of Dostoevsky’s ideas also express his own: ‘Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world is not been yet spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future’ ” (Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics p. 166, quoted in Morson 36–7). In chapters three, four, and five, I will show that unfinalizability and becoming are inseperable concepts of most Persian fiction in general, and Shahriar Mandnaipour’s work in particular.

- Polyphony: Polyphony can be defined as the presence of different voices in a literary work. According to Bakhtin, polyphony is “the position of the author in a text” (Morson 232). A polyphonic author expresses “his ideas and values” in the text, but not as a dictator who imposes his own language and tone to the characters. Bakhtin stresses that a polyphonic text is shaped in opposition to a monologic one and needs “a radical change in the author’s position” (Bakhtin 1984, 67).  

\[\text{Quoted in Morson & Morison, p. 235.}\]
ideology. In chapter two, I will show that the contradiction between monologic and polyphonic literary texts dominated in post-revolutionary Persian fiction.

- **Literary modernism**: Despite the lack of an accepted definition of literary modernism, one can find some established criteria of the modernist literary paradigm such as its psychological, aesthetical, ahistorical, and anti-traditional characteristics.

  Emphasis on the psychological aspects of human existence is a relatively new phenomenon which has been explained by Sigmund Freud and his followers. This approach opened the path for stress on the internal features of fictional characters, especially in literary modernism: “Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis greatly influenced the writers of that time, and his discoveries found their way into modernist literature. While nineteenth century literature was mostly concerned with sociological matters, modernist fiction often focused on the psychological phenomena of the individual.”

  Matei Calinescu explains the ahistorical and aesthetical characteristics of literary modernism when he says, “True modernism is not historically but only aesthetically forward. False modernism, then, is reducible to ‘faith in history,’ while genuine modernism is nothing more than ‘faith in the immediate, the new doing of poems (or poet or poetry) as not necessarily derived from history’ ” (84). Astradur Eysteinsson also refers to these characteristics of literary modernism in his own words, “Modernism is viewed as a kind of aesthetic heroism, which in the face of the chaos of the modern world (very much a ‘fallen’ world) sees art as the only

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5 www.student-online.net/.../673/Modernist_Fiction.doc - Germany.
dependable reality and as an ordering principle of a quasi-religious kind. The unity of art is supposedly a salvation from the shattered order of modern reality” (9).

These features make literary modernism difficult to understand for ordinary audiences. In *Five Faces of Modernity*, Matei Calinescu discusses this challenge, “... the most outstanding feature of ‘modernist’ poetry is the difficulty it presents to the average reader. Their [Laura Riding and Robert Craves] survey is to a large extent an attempt to explain the ‘unpopularity of modernist poetry with the plain reader’... and to point out the specifically aesthetic reasons for ‘the divorce of advanced contemporary poetry [italics mine] from the common-sense standards of ordinary intelligence’ ” (83).

- **Literary realism**: Literary realism is defined as a communicative–representative type of writing in opposition to the aesthetic features of modernist literature (Culler 23). This kind of literary representation mostly is based on a ‘dialectical unity’ between individual and society, “For, in this literature, average man is simply a dimmer reflection of the contradictions always existing in man and society...” (Lukacs 31). Lukacs accuses the modernist writers of not only emphasizing the individual existence of their literary characters, but also denying their social and historical existence: “Their [literary characters] human significance, their specific individuality cannot be separated from the context in which they were created. The ontological view governing the image of man in the work of leading modernist writers is the exact opposite of this. Man, for these writers, is by nature solitary, asocial, unable to enter into relationships with other human beings” (20). Thus, literary realism cannot be separated from a work’s socio-historical context, the characters’ actual relationships, and the dialectical unity between individual and society.
In terms of narration, realism is accompanied by an “omniscient reliable narrator,” whom readers are meant to accept as a trustworthy storyteller. According to Sabine Gross, “Traditionally realist narratives are marked by unrestricted—that is, ‘omniscient’—narration, and the appearance of boundless knowledge on the part of the narrator is essential in making us trust narrator and narrative, of abandoning ourselves to its authority and accepting the narrator as reliable” (69).

**Theoretical Framework**

Uncertainty first came to fiction indirectly from the discipline of physics. Borrowing the term from Werner Heisenberg’s famous uncertainty principle, it was used to refer to the role that the reader plays in constructing the meaning of the text. The reader (similar to the observer in Heisenberg’s theory) is able to change the meaning of the text based on his or her desires, intentions, world views, and experiences; according to Sherman, “the observer alters the observed” in literature (11). The implication of this is that every literary work can have innumerable interpretations, despite its author’s intention.

While fictional uncertainty is a relatively new technique for Persian literary scholars and writers, there are many books about the role of fictional uncertainty in the works of prominent Western authors, mostly in English. Jonathan Culler in *Flaubert: The Uses of Uncertainty* (1974) addresses the characters’ non-fixed positions and “empty places” in Flaubert’s works. He states “[Flabert work] have established the autonomy of the novel by freeing it from various social functions . . . but, by so doing, have rendered the novel itself extremely problematic” (14). “Rendering the fiction extremely problematic” is the situation in which traditional fixed positions of characters and narrators/mediators have been refused. So, “fictional uncertainty” can be defined in direct contrast to linear fixed techniques as the main source of realist literature.
Fictional uncertainty refers us to the role of fictional devices such as point of view, plot, and characterization through which the critic can interpret the relationships among the writer, the narrator, the reader, and the text. Culler states that he admires Flaubert because of the existence of empty places in his works that should be filled by the reader or critic’s knowledge (24). These empty places are the bases of “fictional uncertainty” because the reader’s participation in the process of filling these places enters a kind of ambiguity in the progression of meaning creation in the novel. Culler’s work on Flaubert is one of the models which can be used for searching for fictional uncertainty in post-revolutionary Persian fiction.

The core characteristics of fictional uncertainty have also been discussed in different terms by a number of Western thinkers. Umberto Eco’s opposition to “the utopia of a definite, original, and final authorized meaning” (2), Paul Ricoeur’s major concern in seeing the written text as a capable object for indefinite interpretations (91), Roland Barthes’ rejection of the idea that an artistic text has any “fixed meaning,” and Jacques Derrida’s rejection of the idea that there are predetermined massages in literary texts (Sarup 34) help us to understand different definitions of fictional uncertainty as it has existed in post-revolutionary Persian literature.

In her chapter, “Get Real: Narrative and Uncertainty in Fiction,” Sabine Gross points out the linguistic and polyphonic aspects of uncertainty. She states that “narrative literature is characterized by ambiguous and shifting forms of language, such as the various intersections and blendings of authorial voice and character consciousness” (60). According to this view, certainty appeals to readers through “Plot events along a timeline with a healthy dose of causality, establish interesting characters . . . with an authoritative storyteller who knows what he or she is talking about” (61). In contrast, she says, “texts that leave us in suspense as to the status of the story world or events within it provide their own reading pleasure, one that does precisely not
result from immersion in a plausible textual reality, but from appreciating the repeated acts of subverting that illusion” (ibid).

Understanding of fictional uncertainty as a technique requires us to consider the twofold “[I]ntrinsic/extrinsic, formalism/historicism, and textual/contextual…While the first parts . . . are involved in literary criticism through their attention to the text itself, the second parts have paid attention to the factors outside the text” (Ahmadzadeh, 22). These twofold exists in almost all literary critiques and, as other fictional techniques, fictional uncertainty bridges the text and the external world including readers. When we are talking about the role of readers in the construction of the meaning of a text, we inevitably reject any fixed and stable interpretation of a given text. According to Ricoeur, “text has an authority in relation to the writer, and also in relation to the reader” (92). Gadamer emphasizes the role of the interpreter concerning the meaning of a text:

The real meaning of a text, the way in which it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on contingencies that the author and his original public present. At least, it is not exhausted by them. It is also always codetermined by the historical situation of the interpreter. The meaning of a text goes beyond its author not only occasionally but always. (263–64)

Talattof has similar understanding about modern Persian works. According to him, "[M]odern Persian literary products, when being deciphered, insist on being viewed within their discursive context in order to convey their full meanings and signs” (Politics of Writing 176 ). Fictional uncertainty takes its part in this process of meaning creation.

As much as Gadamer emphasizes the “historical situation of the interpreter,” Franz Stanzel highlights the “narrative situation” which works as an internal device in fiction. He
defines and explains extensively the term “narrative situation” in his books, *Narrative Situations in the Novel: Tom Jones, Moby-Dick, the Ambassadors, Ulysses* (1971) and *A Theory of Narrative* (1979). While Stanzel classifies three basic narrative situations—authorial, figural, and first-person—the foremost intention of *A Theory of Narrative* is to, “elucidate the relationships, correspondences and contiguities between different structures of narration” (3). In *A Theory of Narrative*, Stanzel put the narrator/mediator at the core of fictional creativity because “Mediacy is the generic characteristic which distinguishes narration from other forms of literary art” (4). Without Stanzel’s emphasis on the centricity of the narrator/mediator in fiction, Gadamer’s conceptualization of the “historical situation of the interpreter” will remain incomplete; the former as the internal device and the latter as the external element. In Stanzel’s terms, the fictional narrator/mediator and the interpreters’ historical situations create the fictional certainty/uncertainty contradiction mostly through using different types of points of view, characterizations, and themes.

Another literary theorist, Susan Sniader Lanser, works on the philosophy of point of view, and the role of point of view in literature in her classic book, *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (1981). Like Stanzel, she puts “point of view” at the core of literary debates and states that “human perception is always structured upon a relationship of perceiver to perceived — upon a *point of view*” (4). But, unlike Gadamer’s emphasis on the “historical situation of interpreter,” Lanser highlights the role of the writer. She extends the function of point of view as “a bridge…between formal and sociological approaches to literature … [which] facilitates an understanding of the relationship between the writer’s position as literary communicator and the point of view of the fictional work—an understanding that is pivotal to the socio-historical analysis of form” (62–63). Lanser’s bridging “between formal and
sociological approaches to literature” partially explains the literary effort to forge a new conceptual relationship between fictional devices and their non-fictional context in an uncertain environment. This uncertain environment was experienced in Iran after the 1979 revolution through a crisis of representation when Iranian authors were confused about what they could represent and how to represent it. The crisis of representation led to fictional uncertainty and the improvement of modernist fiction in Iran. I will return to this in chapters two and three.

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983), Wayne Booth presents his ideas about a wide range of issues such as plot, point of view, types of narration, the author’s voice in fiction by applying them to selected works of fiction. His concerns of “objective” or “impersonal” modes of narration and implied author “force us to consider closely what happens when an author engages a reader fully with a work of fiction . . .” (8). Booth’s “implied author” is not the author in real life, but the author implied by the novel. The relationships among this “implied author,” the reader, the narrator, and the characters create the fiction. All these relationships are constructed through point of view, which can make a sense of “impersonality” and “showing rather than telling.” Here, the work of Booth is comparable with the work of Stanzel when he talks about figural and neutral narrative situations.

Morton Levitt aims to complete the work of Wayne Booth in his book, *The Rhetoric of Modernist Fiction* (2006). He mentions that through innovative uses of points of view, modernist writers replace the authorial presence in a novel with the presence of the reader (9) because of the importance of the reader’s response “to the demands made on him or her by the novelist’s construction of what the novel is” (35). From this perspective, modernist points of view locate the reader in the center of modernist fiction. Using new types of points of view, modernist writers encourage “the modern reader to become virtual co-creator of the text” (10) that
definitely is fictional uncertainty. Levitt’s idea regarding the role of the reader is close to that of Stanzel, who talks about “absent author” or Roland Barthes’ “death of the author,” both of which are the pillars of the technique of fictional uncertainty.6

In Ellipse of Uncertainty: An Introduction to Postmodern Fantasy (1987), Lance Olsen uses two terms, uncertainty and indeterminacy, as synonyms and searches their origins in the history of philosophy, physics, linguistics, and literature. He explores these concepts in reference to a wide range of writers from Jane Austen and Franz Kafka to Gabriel Garcia Marquez and J. M. Coetzee. From Olsen’s point of view, uncertainty or indeterminacy is the main characteristic of the phenomenon he names “postmodern fantasy”

. . . the fantastic confounds and confuses reader response, generates a dialectic that refuses synthesis, explores the unsaid and unseen, and rejects the definitive version of “truth,” “reality,” and “meaning.” Its function as a mode of discourse is to surprise, question, put into doubt, produce anxiety, make active, disgust, repel, rebel,

6 Also significant are Seymour Chatman’s books, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film and Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narration in Fiction and Film, which are about fictional devices as well as cinematic ones by using new concepts of implied and real author, narrator, and reader through which he explains the concepts of point of view and narrative situation.

Other books, dissertations, and theses which can be helpful for my study include Erich Auerbach’s Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (1953); two books of David Lodge, Working with Structuralism: Essays and Reviews on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Literature (1981) and After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism (1990); Narrators and Narrative Contexts in Fiction (1981) by Susan Jane Ringler; Three Paradoxes of Fiction: A Study in the Logic of Fictional Language by Lisa Elliott (1979); The Narrative Techniques in Some Novels of T. N. Maumela by M. J. Mafela (1988); and Narrative Perspective and Thematic Issue in Selected Short Prose Works of Marie Von Ebner-Eschenbach (1994) by Nancy R. Kuechelmann.
subvert, pervert, make ambiguous, make discontinuous, deform, dislocate, destabilize. (116)

Applying Olson’s conceptualization of fantasy to post-revolutionary Persian fiction, I argue that the authors have added an experimental characteristic to modern Persian fiction. They have experimented with adding myths and legends to their writings that “reject the definitive version of “truth,” “reality,” and “meaning,” and increase fictional uncertainty.”

Methodology

A close reading of individual texts as “great products of creative or interpretative imagination” (Said, xxiv) is the method of this study. The role of the text is a crucial theoretical premise that has been followed in this study: “[T]he task of criticism is not to bring out the work’s relationship with the author, nor to reconstruct through the text a thought or experience, but rather, to analyze the work through its structure, its architecture, its intrinsic form, and the play of its internal relationships” (Foucault 175). Searching for possible interpretations which can be found through close reading of fictions, I do not attempt to indicate the author’s “real” and “absolute” aim through his or her literary works. My purpose of close reading of fictions is to discover how the authors apply fictional uncertainty as a technique in their works. I assume that this technique cannot be separated from the function of fictional structure and devices such as point of view, theme, and characterization. I want to investigate if “[T]he play of [the text’s] internal relationships” is the main tool for applying fictional uncertainty.

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The Importance of this Research

Increasing the number of Iranian authors who point to fictional uncertainty as the most important literary technique applied in their fictions affirms the importance of this study. As an example, seven out of ten famous Iranian authors who are interviewed in *Nasl-e Sevvom-e Dastan Nevisi Emrooz* (The Third Generation of Today’s Fiction Writing 2001) including Bijan Bijari, Reza Jolai’i, Abutorab Khosravi, Mansoor Kushan, Amir Hasan Cheheltan, and Shahriar Mandanipour refer to fictional uncertainty as their own approach or fictional technique (Alikhani 2001). Their reference to fictional uncertainty is important for anyone who wants to study post-1979-revolutionary Persian fiction from within.

Understanding the function of fictional uncertainty and its role to portray the complexity of Iranians’ experiences after the 1979 revolution also makes this research necessary. Moreover, the use of universally accepted terms and definitions in this study makes Persian fiction—regardless of its social, historical, or political functions—less purely local and allows it to compete in the world of mainstream literature.

Review of Literature

In the case of Persian literature following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, a number of authors have tried to create a theory of fictional uncertainty using the Persian term *adam-i ghatiyat-i datani* (عدم قطعیت داستانی). Although uncertain fictions were hard to find in pre-1979-revolution Iran\(^8\), it has had more influence on Iranian literary circles after the revolution. The literary circles of Houshang Golshiri (1937–2000) and Mohammad Mokhtari (1943–98) in the 1980s used this term frequently and emphasized it more than other groups. They defined literary uncertainty as a

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\(^8\) Sadegh Hedayat’s *Buf-e Kur* (Blind Owl 1936) and Bahram Sadeghi’s *Malakut* (1962) are the examples of these pre-1979-revolution uncertain novels.
technique for individualizing literary works in response to the dominant literary movements of the time. Abdi Kalantari, a literary critic who lives in the United State, explains this contradiction as Populism versus Modernism. According to him, what separates modernist literature from populist/realist one is its preoccupation with literary form. It does not want to create a reflection of reality; instead, it wants to show its artificial, uncertain, openness characteristics (45). In contrary, populism wants to reflect reality as a series of certainties and as an understandable whole (46). From this perspective, fictional uncertainty is a part of literary modernist project in Iran. Dalia Sofer, an Iranian-American writer, describe modernists as a group of writers who rebel against seeing the novel as the carrier of a content or a message. They insist that a novel should be read because of its aesthetics, its literary technique, its style of narration, its imagination, and its language. According to her “. . . unfortunately, Persian literature is reduced to a moral or socio-political message.”9 The goal of many Iranian writers were (and are) to change this content-message-oriented approach.

Golshiri in fiction and Mokhtari in poetry recognized the impossibility of creating an integrated narrative in chaotic social, political, and cultural situation in post-revolutionary Iran (Mokhtari “Together but Different” 39-40; Golshiri Eight Stories 8). With their activities, Mokhtari, Golshiri, and Reza Barahani draw the intellectuals and authors’ attention to uncertainty, without using the term, as a fictional technique in order to portray post-1979-revolutionary puzzled situation in Iran. Darioush Mehrjoui, Iranian famous movie director, used the term of adam-i ghatiyat (uncertainty) in his movie, Hamoon (1989) for the first time after the 1979 revolution. Hamid Hamoon, the main character of the movie, bewildered between tradition

and modernity, gradually loses his faith and sees everything uncertain. Golshiri, Mokhtari, Kalanatari, and Mehrjou encounter a crisis of representation and choose fictional uncertainty as a tool for revealing it.

The number of authors who apply fictional uncertainty as a narrative device has increased in late 1980s; although each of these authors uses fictional uncertainty in his/her own way. For example, Jaafar Modarres Sadeghi and Mohammad Mohammad Ali, who were once realist writers, try to apply fictional uncertainty in their works. Modarres Sadeghi’s *Baloon-e Mahta* (Mahta’s Balloon 1989) is about Mahta, a legendary Indian man, who uses his balloon for transportation. He makes a trip by the balloon, taking Sima, the female character of the novel, to America for a short visit of her parents’ house and brings her back to Iran. Using unusual characterization, Modarres Sadeghi creates an extraordinary character, Mahta, who has influence on all other characters in the novel. He can take Ramin, one of his neighbors, down into the ground or take Sima to America by a balloon. Modarres Sadeghi’s emphasis on unusual themes and characters, as well as the story’s open ending makes an uncertain world where any unusual event is possible.

*Jahan-e Zendegan* (The World of The Living 2012), Mohammad Mohammad Ali’s last novel, is an example of desirable but unsuccessful effort to apply the technique of fictional uncertainty. In one of his interviews, Mohammad Ali shows his interest in using fictional uncertainty in his novel by directly stating that *The World of The Living* is multi-narrative and based on uncertainty. Mohammad Ali’s emphasis on fictional uncertainty, despite his work’s certain realistic atmosphere, shows the popularity of this fictional technique among Iranian writers. By silencing some of the characters of the novel such the narrator’s father, Mohamad Ali

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makes the novel ambiguous rather than uncertain.\textsuperscript{11} The narrator’s mother is suspicious about her husband’s sexual relationship with another woman. She makes life bitter for herself and her family. Without any reason, the father remains silent and does not defend himself. In addition, the novel is full of exemplary sentences that obviously have the author’s accent; the author’s dominant voice is incompatible with applying the technique of fictional uncertainty. In fact, these sentences are so certain that do not leave room for multiple interpretations and uncertainty. Here are two examples of these sentences: “We go neither left nor right. We neither go to any direction nor come from any way. We do not have any objective and subjective flight. Nothing! Nothing of nothing! Silence of Silence” (19) and “I ask sometime myself that why the beliefs should not sacrifice for human beings’ sake” (100).\textsuperscript{12} I will search the role of the technique of fictional uncertainty in post-revolutionary Persian literature through both its successful, such as Modarres Sadeghi’s fictions, and unsuccessful, such as Mohammad Ali’s stories, applications. Alongside previous literary movements such as Persianism, committed, feminist, and Islamic literatures, the importance of uncertain novels and short stories lies in showing uncertain characters in uncertain conditions, avoiding straightforward messages, and suggesting multi-theme narratives.

Explaining the characteristics of fictional uncertainty, Houshang Golshiri—one of the pioneers of this literary technique—stated that dominant ideologies and meta-narratives such as Marxism tricked people with impossibly big ideals, while the small things were actually more


\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
important because they were what made up the real lives of the population. Opposing ideological approaches, he asked authors to focus on details more than broad ideas and on everyday life more than abstract concepts and beliefs.\textsuperscript{13} He stated that post-1979-revolutionary Persian fiction writing has required authors to deeply change their fictional language, themes, and the ways they are using fictional devices.\textsuperscript{14} Applying fictional uncertainty also was a reaction to the emergence of Islamism as an ideology that wanted to control everything includes literary creativities.

As a shared technique in many post-revolutionary Persian novels, fictional uncertainty has built on a series of metaphors that directly point to the Islamic government’s control on Iranian society. For example when Iranian readers see a “buzzard” in the kitchen of Mr. Farwaneh in Shahrriar Mandanipour’s first short story “Sayeh-i az Sayehha-ye Ghar” (A Shadow of the Shadows of the Cave 1989), first of all they take it as a metaphor of an Islamic government agent. The agent is, in his/her turn, the symbol of the government’s control. In Hossein Mortezaian Abkenar’s Aghrab Ru-ie Pelleha-ie Rah Ahan-e Andimeshk (Scorpion on the Steps of Rail Road of Andimeshk 2006), a wounded bewildered soldier is the metaphor of Iran under the useless war with Iraq. Shortly, metaphors that are produced by fictional uncertainty literary technique, alongside multiple narratives and themes, function as double-voiced words that make the fiction uncertain, and consequently, multi-layered. From this perspective, fictional uncertainty functions as a literary technique within a literary episode.

Kamran Talattof in his book, \textit{The Politics of Writing in Iran}, believes that metaphors go beyond


\textsuperscript{14} Houshang Golshiri, “Neveshtan-e Roman Sabr Ayyub Mikhahad” (Writing a Novel Requires Jacob’s Patience), \textit{Bagh dar Bagh}, Tehran: Niloofar, 1999, 683–85.
mere “linguistic feature[s],” finding meanings in social relations, and “as they function on behalf of ideology in literary texts, act as agents in social movements” (12). Thus, a literary episode is a cluster of texts with a shared ideological paradigm and its related metaphors (8 & 12-13).

In an uncertain situation, metaphors can have ideological or social roles or not; but always they link uncertainly characters, points of views, and fictional themes. Fictional themes watch over the main issues raised in the works of these authors who, like other Iranians, participated in or were influenced by the 1979 Iranian revolution. I assume that absorbing, representing, and codifying diversities, ambiguities, and contradictions arising from the revolution guided the authors “[T]o recognize the impossibility of representing the world in a single language. Understanding had to be constructed through the exploration of multiple perspectives” (Harvey 30). In other words, the revolutionary and post-revolutionary chaotic situations pushed Iranian authors to a crisis of representation where they were not sure about how they could represent what they wanted. Using the technique of fictional uncertainty was to some extent the result of this crisis.

The danger of government control certainly did threaten Iranian writers with everything from physical removal to imprisonment and social isolation, potentially causing their liquidation as individuals and their removal from the community of authors. In these frightening circumstances, every single work could count as a part of the author’s beliefs, lives, and

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15 Also significant to this concept is Reza Barahani, Bohran-i Rahbari-i Naghd-i Adabi va Resaleh-i Hafez (The Crisis of the Leadership of Literary Criticism and Hafez’s Pamphlet), Tehran: Vistar, 1996, 38–45.

16 Reza Barahani has written about “the crisis of critical leadership in Iran” which is the basis of my understanding of the crisis of representation.

17 Shahriar Mandanipour, personal interview with Mehrak Kamali, December 20, 2012.
interpretations of the real conditions under the regime and, consequently, as an indictment of them.\textsuperscript{18} Abandoning metanarratives, deserting typical characters, and relinquishing god-like omniscient narrators helped Iranian secular authors to distinguish themselves from their works and, as an unexpected consequence, could reduce the government’s censors’ suspicions of them.\textsuperscript{19} By rejecting revolutionary, committed, and political ideologies, they could protect themselves as individuals and fiction writing as a secular act.

These efforts were based partly on the authors’ analyses of the life and death battle in which they were engaged. After Iran’s state repression in early 1980s, execution of the poet Saeid Soltanpour (1981), the exile of some prominent Iranian writers and poets such as Gholam Hossein Saedi and Esmail Khoi, and the Islamic government’s attack on all independent organizations including the Iranian Writers’ Organization, all non-government artists was afraid for their lives. In these conditions, the vital goal of the writers was keeping themselves alive and active, mostly by strengthening their fictional language and forms and abandoning things outside of their control, such as Iran’s political environment. In the battleground of authors surviving and remaining active, these changes not only deprived the government of its excuses for repressing the authors, but also led the authors to the emphasis on uncertain situation in ambiguous languages. Thus, the frequent practice on fictional uncertainty was the result of an interaction between at least two factors: the government’s repression and the desire of the authors to make themselves free from external influences. I briefly introduced this cluster of literary works in my

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
MA thesis as “alternative literature” in which the roles of authors, narrators, and characters have an unbreakable bond with their individualities and their self-imaginations more than past. The other critics also refer to this feature of post-1979- revolutionary Persian fiction as its modernist characteristic (Payandeh 15 -21) and fictional uncertainty (Talattof). In his recent articles on Simin Daneshvar and Simin Bebehani, Kamran Talattof also points briefly to fictional uncertainty and its features.

In his analysis of Simin Daneshvar’s *Jazireh Sargardani* (The Island of Wandering) (1993), Talattof sees escape from ideology as the main feature of the novel, whose “... goal is ... achieving a civil society.” He also refers to “ambiguity,” “relativism,” and “uncertainty” as the most important characteristics of *The Island of Wandering* (244). From a literary point of view, Kamran Talattof analyzes Simin Bebahani’s “Dobareh Misazamat Vatan” (I Will Rebuild You, O My Homeland) as a poem in which “the narrative of self ... is increasingly gaining significance,” ( “Bebahani’s work ...” 31) although in uncertain and fragile conditions. The result was often highly fictional characters’ referential stories which refused to be “a mirror of society” (Harvey 21) or a reflection of authors’ wills. Tracing these features, I expect that they will indicate empowering individuality in recent Persian literary works. That is why I expand

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Talattof’s conceptualization of the “literary episode” in his book, The Politics of Writing in Iran, and emphasize more on fictional themes and fluid point of view which in the case of post-1979-revolutionary Persian fiction indicate fictional uncertainty.

In Talattof’s model of literary episodes in modern Persian literature, “ideological paradigms [such as] nationalism, Marxism, feminism, and Islamism . . . influenced the form, characterization, . . . [and] figurative language of literary texts” (Talattof Politics of Writing 3). I posit that fictional uncertainty, as a shared technique among a large number of post-1979-revolutionary novels and short stories, suggesting new styles of writings. I will search in this cluster of literary works to find out the relationship between fictional uncertainty, polyphony, becoming, unfinalizability, and multi-perspectives on one hand and ideology on the other. In this regard, fictional uncertainty makes a fictional analysis possible by paying more attention to internal fictional devices such as “point of view,” “theme,” and “narrative situation.” The key concept which opens the path for a study of fictional uncertainty is the term episode.

I have benefited from Kamran Talattof’s notion of a literary episode as presented in The Politics of Writing in Iran. He describes a literary episode as a “[T]hematic and temporal” “cluster of interrelated, aesthetically significant literary texts” in a particular time (8). He also stresses the influence of ideologies on literary episodes and states that ideologies like Marxism, feminism, and Islam determine “the . . . paradigmatic rules of expression” (11) and “specific figurative language” of the texts in each episode (8). In my opinion, the role of ideology is as crucial as the shared technique of fictional uncertainty in which the roles of characters have an unbreakable bond with their becoming and the polyphonic feature of the text. This autonomy can be defined in terms of characters’ relationships with each other, the author, fictional objects, or fictionally created social, cultural and political environments. What connects all uncertain
fictions to each other is a shared theme: fictional characters’ quest for keeping or achieving their individuality and autonomy. Consequently, fictional uncertainty can apply (or not) to ideological or non-ideological works. For instance, I classify Zoia Pirzad’s *Cheraghha ra Man Khamoosh Mikonam* (I Turn the Lights Off 2001) ideologically as a part of the feminist literary movement and thematically as possessing a the technique of fictional uncertainty, and Ahmad Mahmoud’s *Madar-e Sefr Darajeh* (The Tropic of Zero Degree 1991) as part of the realist/committed literary movement influenced by fictional uncertainty. I will investigate the features of these works later in this dissertation.24

In post-revolutionary Persian fiction, the question is how fictional uncertainty is created by the combination of characters’ internal monologues, dialogue between different characters, dialogue between the characters and the work’s internal dynamics, and dialogue between the reader and the text. Fortunately, this question has become easier to answer now, because for the first time in the history of contemporary Persian fiction, one can find a large number of complex literary texts that provide the materials required for an internal analysis of the texts. My premise is that fictional uncertainty is associated with psychoanalytic representation. This forces one to accept diversity in literary expression, reject simple representations of external reality, and pursue close reading of the literary text. As a result, I strongly reject the rigid principles of traditional realism which put the core of fictional interpretation outside of the work itself and stress the representative feature of literature. It should be mentioned that a large segment of the Iranian audience wants Iranian writers to show directly what has happened in Iran following the 1979 revolution, so rejecting the representative feature of Persian fiction is not easy. Fictional uncertainty is the technique that has allowed this rejection.

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The authors influenced by fictional uncertainty realized that they were not able to deal with the new questions and complex experiences of Iran’s post-revolutionary period without expanding their world views and perspectives, and without trying to convince the government that they were not trying to threaten its power. Indeed, what happened after the revolution, as Mohammad Mokhtari stated, made Iranians reflect on their own individual and social roles: “[T]his revolution put us against ourselves . . . and revealed our [dictatorial] essence. It showed us that self-understanding could not be separated from understanding others” (Mokhtari 1991, 33). Although he did not refer to fictional uncertainty directly, his pluralistic approach became one of the bases of this literary technique.

The main literary criteria for many Iranian critics such as Mehdi Yazdani Khorram, Hafez Mousavi, Abdolali Dastgheib, and Ebrahim Younesi is the extent to which the work reflects external reality. They admire report-like narratives which mirror reality as it is, emphasize Iranians’ shared experiences and their collective memory, and make people aware of their conditions and history. From their perspectives, fictional uncertainty ruins Persian fiction by creating a useless complexity of fictional characters’ relationships and a confusing diversity of fictional elements. For instance, Mehdi Yazdani Khorram interprets Houshang Golshiri’s work based on what Khorram names “the traditional restless mind” that leads to his fictional characters’ uncertainties and “causes their break with the world.”25 This breaking with the world is an allegory for what he considers the unreal and incomprehensible characteristic of most of Golshiri’s work. Hafez Mousavi criticizes Houshang Golshiri because of his uncertain, formalistic, and antirealist attitudes, at least in his early fiction: “[G]olshiri opposed realism,

neglecting it as the basis of modern literature . . . [and as an antirealist writer] maybe unconsciously deviated from the progressive process of our modern literature.”26 Because of his stress on the surface of reality—namely simple, visible character actions selected by the author in order to express his or her ideology—Mousavi neglects linguistic, formal, and structural complexities of Golshiri’s works.

Ebrahim Younesi, the other Iranian realist literary theorist, states that “the author should write simple and clear. He or she is not allowed to write complex sentences so that the reader is obliged to read them twice . . . the reader wants to read a story and take the author’s moral and social messages.”27 Message is the main preoccupation of these critics when they ask Iranian authors to write for “the masses” and educate them. It is not strange if these critics condemn fictional uncertainty as an elitist and intellectualistic technique of writing. But fiction is not a simple construction in order to educate ordinary people. Instead, as Barahani, Golshiri, Mandanipour, and Mokhtari say, fiction is the ground of dialogue and uncertainty, as life is. Fictional uncertainty helps passive readers of report-like fiction to train themselves by giving them the possibility of searching, discovering, and participating in chaotic fictional situations.

From some critics’ points of view, the other criterion of realist literature is the valuing of the author’s direct, real experience. For instance, Abdolali Dastgheib admires the human element of participating in the Iran–Iraq war and values many of its veterans’ memoires higher than war

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fiction, “[the memories of war veterans] are more realistic and exiting than these [war] stories . . . no one can describe death without fighting it in reality.”

Dastgheib does not mention anything about form, structure, and characterization in a fiction; giving the appropriate message is enough for him. In contrast to Dastgheib’s opinion, fictional uncertainty provides an atmosphere for representing individuals’ desires, potential agencies, and specific figurative languages; its function is more than mere report of an event. Stress on experiencing, watching, and participating in so-called real events is perhaps necessary for a news reporter, but it is not essential for an author.

Abbas Ma’aroofi and Faraj Sarkoohi believe that the value of a story depends on its mirroring of historical and social events. The more that fiction reflects its age, the more artistic it is. From this viewpoint, if fiction can be used by future scholars for understanding a period of time, it has succeeded. In the case of The Island of Wandering, written by Simin Daneshvar, Ma’aroofi and Sarkoohi are its supporter and its opponent, but from the same perspective. Abbas Ma’aroofi supports the novel as a historical reference for future generations (Rasoolzadeh 211). Faraj Sarkoohi rejects the novel because of its betrayal of real history (Ibid). No one thinks about the literariness of the novel; both groups gauge its accordance to historical realities and, surprisingly, their results are opposite. The concern fictional uncertainty applied in The Island of Wandering is more about discovering new narratives with stress on language as a system of individual and collective signs in which every word and utterance is “loaded by [the author’s and characters’] intentions” (Mikhail Bakhtin The Dialogical Imagination 293).

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These intentions embedded in specific figurative languages and metaphors enable authors and narrators as well as fictional characters to choose a series of signs and benefit from some language abilities in order to create their own individual voices that, simultaneously, constantly limits other voices. Despite the individuality of their speech, characters are obliged to use the words that are “half someone else’s” and “populated—overpopulated with the intentions of others” (Ibid). Here, language connects to fictional points of view, and both of them are the tools of communication that “[L]ies on the borderline between oneself and the other. . . .” (Ibid 294). This feature of each character’s language and point of view causes a specific work’s “world of signs” and its meanings which are understood only through dialogue between characters. Namely, the meaning is made only within humanistic interactions which are presented in the text. Based on Bakhtin’s theory, the specific use of language is what separates traditional realism from fictional uncertainty. While language is a tool and a mediator for representing reality in traditional realism, it is itself an object of representation in fictional uncertainty whose works, to a varying extent, are dialogical systems of representations of languages, writing styles, and concrete consciousness inseparable from language (72).29

After the 1979 revolution in Iran, more Iranian fiction writers applied fictional uncertainty as a technique in their works. At first look, the lack of typical characters, the existence of individuals with their personal languages and accents, and the emphasis on characters’ becoming should be considered the characteristics of fictional uncertainty.30 Simply put, fictional uncertainty should be the area of its characters’ mental and emotional becoming as

29 This part of Bakhtin’s argument is also quoted in Tezvetan Todorov’s valuable book, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, 66.

30 Bakhtin defines “becoming” as individuals’ activities through which they grow up and change their lives.
a process and not as a moment in the fiction. Fiction never achieves a complete structure in which everything has found its place; it is “never whole” and ever uncertain. Searching for the characteristics of fictional uncertainty, I must explore the literary background in which fictional uncertainty has been born and its links with modern Persian literature.

The Structure of the Work

The second chapter of this dissertation is about the emergence of fictional uncertainty as a literary technique through searching the works of the most important scholars of Persian studies. The third chapter analyzes fictional uncertainty as embedded in Mandanipour’s three short stories: “Sayeh-i az Sayeh-ha-ie Ghar” (A Shadow of the Shadows of the Cave, 1989), “Beshkan Dandan-e Sangi Ra” (Shatter the Stone Tooth, 1996), and “Baz Roo be Rood” (Again Facing the River, 1998). The fourth chapter is devoted to an analysis of Shahriar Mandanipour’s Dili Dildadigi (The Courage of Love, 1998). Chapter five is about Mandanipour’s last novel, Censoring an Iranian Love Story (2009), which is published only

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In the conclusion, I examine briefly my findings about fictional uncertainty in post-1979-revolution Iran and draw a picture of its present and future.

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CHAPTER TWO

EMERGENCE OF FICTIONAL UNCERTAINTY
AS A LITERARY TECHNIQUE

While the works of ideological literary movements emphasize the characters’ social and political beings rather than their personal lives, in modernist literature and through its technique, fictional uncertainty, the focus is instead put on the characters’ unique personal, mental, and emotional experiences. This shifting emphasis helps the characters escape from society’s control and express their individual emotions and thoughts. Hossein Payandeh has formulated the process of flourishing literary modernism in post-revolution in Iran. According to Payandeh, realism was the dominant trend in Iran during 1960s and 1970s:

The golden age of realism was 1970s when literary modernism was flourishing, too.

Modernism became the dominant trend in Persian short fiction from mid 1980s.

Modernism provided a ground for applying complicated techniques [such as fictional uncertainty] and bringing up new fictional subjects that had been rejected by the limitations of realism. In other words, modernism extended fields of the interests of Iranian story writers . . . (Payandeh, vol. 2, 16).1

There is not necessarily a dichotomy between ideological literary movements on the one hand and fictional uncertainty on the other; the latter can sometimes combine with some types of the former. Accordingly, the present study completes Kamran Talattof’s model of literary episodes distinguished by their specific ideologies of representation. In Talattof’s model, ideology determines themes, figurative languages, and metaphors. I add fictional uncertainty to this list

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1 My translation.
and argue that it is the main literary technique in many works of post-revolutionary modernist Persian fiction.

I will start by explaining the emergence of modern Persian literature and then continue with an analysis of its literary movements and their relationship to fictional uncertainty. I will describe the context in which modernist fiction and fictional uncertainty developed and I will provide a conceptual framework based upon fictional themes, styles of narration mostly derived from Bakhtin’s polyphony and dialogue, and fictional points of view. In the other chapters of this dissertation, I will discuss the way in which modernist Persian fiction has been characterized by the new purposes to which these fictional devices have been put.

**Emergence of Modern Persian Literature**

Modern Persian literature came into being following the 1906 Constitutional Revolution when strong classical traditions were altered by more modern socio-cultural conditions. This synthesis led to the development of literary movements which were in many ways totally different from those of classical Persian literature. A number of literary studies have detailed this emergence of modern Persian literary movements and their subsequent evolution. In this regard, different scholars have different approaches: some of them emphasize concepts like ideology and discourse, whereas others stress objective elements like the socio-economic conditions of society. What the majority of scholars agree is that literary representation in this period was influenced by both of these points of emphasis.

The Persian language itself was going through a number of fundamental changes at this time, and this was one of the main factors that led to these literary developments. Written Persian had for a long time been a very formalized language (Talattof 2000, 19) that was disconnected from the popular spoken language, but in the new political environment of the twentieth century,
especially and after Iran’s Constitutional Revolution (1906-11), this was starting to change (Ibid 20). The changes in Persian had such an influence on the development of new Persian literary discourse that Reza Barahani talks about “a revolution in the language,” *(Bohran-i Rahbar-i 38)*. From the late nineteenth century to the present, the drive towards purification and simplification in the Persian language has differentiated modern Persian writers from pre-modern authors.² As an indication of this nationwide movement in the early twentieth century, Kamran Talattof shows how literary journals emphasized the use of simple Persian and encouraged their contributors to write in a language that could be understood by ordinary people (Talattof 2000, 20).

We know that the issue of language was not a simple issue but a battlefield on which traditionalists and modernists fought with each other. The modernists considered it a “struggle for the preservation and purity of the Persian language and literature and its [writing system]” against the traditionalists, who rejected any innovation in the language (Ibid 21). The tales of Ali Akbar Dehkhoda (*Charand o Parand*), the poems of Sayyed Ashrafadin Gilani, Nasim Shoaml, and Jamalzadeh’s *Farsi Shekar Ast* (“Persian is Sugar”) are examples of Iranian writers’ first efforts towards simplification of the Persian language (Ahmadzadeh 90, 100). All of these changes provided the foundation for the emergence of multi-voiced narratives, followed years later by uncertain fiction. Before this point, fictional characters had their authors’ accent. Also, the influence of social changes such as the rise of newspapers and magazines and the peoples’ rights-based revolutionary movements, as well as the influence of the West and its notions of individuality are undeniable (Talattof 2000, 20–21).

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² Just as after the Islamic Revolution, the style of modern writers is quite different from the government-affiliated writers who emphasized the use of Arabic words and styles.
However, it was not a simple matter to move from these earlier forms of Persian fiction to more modern forms which utilize the technique of fictional uncertainty. Prior to the twentieth century, the purpose of Persian fiction was to represent what was at that time still a very traditional society. Gradually, however, it became merely a reflection of external reality that depicted and represented types, not individuals. While the earlier forms of Persian literature were “irrelevant to the problems of the modern world,” Persian new poetry and fictional prose were new forms which reflected the uncertainty of the modern era in Iran (Gheissari 51). It is necessary to mention that the evolution of new fictional forms, due in part to the resistance of the traditional forces, could not in and of themselves produce this uncertainty. Authors could put aside the traditional forms, but they had still been captured by a series of restricted, “realistic” themes that obliged them to give certainty to their fictional worlds. An unexpected result of the 1979 Islamic Revolution was the promotion of individualistic fictional uncertainty.

Most historians of the period agree that radical changes took place in Persian literature after the Constitutional Revolution and especially after World War II. For instance, Ehsan Yarshater emphasizes two distinct periods of Persian poetry, “One traditional, from the tenth to nearly mid-twentieth century; the other modernist, from about World War II to the present,” (Yarshater 1988, 20). Fatemeh Keshavarz avoids dividing Persian literary works into traditional and modernist schools, based upon their thematic and formal differences. Instead, she makes a hermeneutic framework based on “continuity” and “non-secularity,” interrelated characteristics of Persian literature (Keshavarz 140–41). In her work on sacred-making in modern Persian poetry, Keshavarz demonstrates the conceptual overlaps between different literary works from different literary eras.
Although scholars of Persian literature have different opinions about the starting date or the length of literary periods, almost all of them emphasize three important turning points in modern Persian literature: the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, World War II, and the Islamic revolution. Constitutional Revolution provided the bases of flourishing secular humanist literary movements. World War II corresponded with realist-committed fictions. The Islamic Revolution led to the reinforcement of the technique of fictional uncertainty and modernist Persian literature (Payandeh 17).

Regardless of what caused this radical change from traditional to modern Persian literature, I argue that there are always overlaps between classical works and realist modern ones, specifically in the types of characterizations: both characters of classical Persian and those of realist modern fictions serve given and typical models. As an example, the contradiction between good and evil is the dominant factor in the story of Zahhak in the Shahnameh (Golshiri Garden in Garden 607). The destiny of the characters is determined by the logic of the story's archetypes. We can find the footsteps of these predetermined individuals in modern realistic works where the author’s ideology determines the characters’ fate.

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4 The main cause of the change is defined by different scholars in different ways: the impact of the West (Hasan Mirabedini and Peter Chelkowski), the emergence of bourgeois class (Mansur Shaki), the change of the ideology of representation or dominant discourse (Kamran Talattof and Saeed Honarmand), and the internally changing potential of literature (Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami).
I believe that most modern fictions have some classical elements including the given characters. For example, in *Hamsayehha* (The Neighbors 1974), a contemporary Persian novel by Ahmad Mahmoud, the characters act based on their desires, and the fate of the characters is mostly determined by the author’s ideology. The narrator’s transfer from a simple type, a kid with emotionally individual relationships, to an ideal political activist (Ibid 346) is what Mahmoud’s ideology contributes to the novel. *The Neighbors* moves from a series of relatively uncertain, complex fictional situations to a certain simple one in which everything is predetermined. In another example, Keramat, the antagonist of *Tehran Shahr-e bi Aseman* (Tehran, a City without Sky 2003) by Amirhasan Cheheltan, is an unchanging villain who benefited from social and cultural conditions under both the Shah and the Islamic government in Iran. From first pages of the novel, the reader realizes who Keramat is and how he deals with fictional events; what draws the reader to the end of the story is not the pleasure of discovery, but it is the readers’ desire to read about familiar issues and experiences.

In most of the ideological fictions, the languages of the stories were the language of its author. All of the characters in *Nefrin-i Zamin* (Cursed Earth 1967) by Jalal Al-e Ahmad talk in his accent, and not in their own words (Barahani *Gheshehvisi* 472). In contrast to these fixed characterizations in realist, the reader can find a large number of “specific figurative languages” in the works of Shahriar Mandanipour, Razieh Ansari, Zoia Pirzad, and Hossein Mortezaian Abkenar. Post-1979-revolution fictional uncertainty represents individualized characters in Persian fictions, characters whose acts are not predictable. Although completely independent characters are very rare in modern Persian literature, there are some relatively independent characters in recent literary works. The examples of these characters are Kelaris in *Cheraghha ra Man Khamoosh Mikonam* (I Turn the Lights Off 2001) by Zoia Pirzad; Nuzar in *Madar-e Sefr*
Darajeh (The Tropic of Zero Degree 1992) by Ahmad Mahmoud; and Nazi in Shabih-i Atri dar Nasim (Like a Scent in Breeze) by Razieh Ansari.

Kelaris, the main character of I Turn the Lights Off, is an example of a character who narrates fictional events and her everyday preoccupations. We do not see the footprint of the hidden author, the dominant ideologies, or the artificial circumstances which naturally threaten the autonomy of the characters. The narrator recognizes the world through her personal and emotional experiences and her relationship with Emil, who is Kelaris’s new neighbor who shows some shared interests with her. This experience helps Kelaris to autonomously think about her conditions, review her life, and revise something that seems wrong. The other characters in the novel are individualized, as well. Becoming is defined here: these modern characters are not fixed or typical characters; they actively react to fictional themes and, as much as they can, change them.

Nuzar Esfandiari\(^5\) in Madar-e Sefr Darajeh (The Tropic of Zero Degree 1992) by Ahmad Mahmoud seeks his autonomy during the chaotic day of the Iranian 1979 revolution. In a scene of the novel, a person is shot by the government agents and Nuzar Esfandiari puts the injured in a Jeep and ask the driver to take him to the hospital. When the driver refuses his request, Nuzar gets angry, punches and forces him to get off the car. Although he does not know how to drive, Nuzar turns on the car and begins to drive. As we can see, he does not want to be a mere audience; he wants to be an actor and the circumstances of the revolution allow him to be an agent in spite of his limited abilities. Ironically, he can drive a few kilometers, although at last he cannot control the car and prevent its clash to a wall; the result is an accident and his death. His

\(^5\) Nuzar Esfandiari is one of the main characters of The Tropic of Zero Degree that the novel ends with his ironic martyrdom. He has the most important role in making carnivalesque atmosphere of the novel.
fault does not prevent the others to consider his death as martyrdom and transcend him as a national hero. This comicoserious\(^6\) conditions provides a free space for even novel’s characters’ irrational deeds. This space offers the characters an opportunity to have their particular interpretations of the events and consequently, a free dialogue together and to the narrator without the presence of a dominant voice. Some of the critics like Faraj Sarkoohi consider *The Tropic of Zero Degree* as a polyphonic novel in its Bakhtinian term:

> Ahmad Mahmoud is of the few Iranian writers who has created polyphonic novels. His characters … think with their own specific thoughts and act based on it … and speak with their own tone and language. Mahmoud’s best fiction are narrated from various points of view; there is no special person or thing in the center of his narratives.\(^7\)

Unlike his previous works, Mahmoud’s *The Tropic of Zero Degree* is categorized as a modernist, polyphonic novel that applies successfully fictional uncertainty as a technique.

*Shabih-i Atri dar Nasim* (Like a Scent in Breeze) by Razieh Ansari is a story of a group of Iranian exiled friends in Germany. Behzad, Peyman, Kiya, and Nazi have been friends from years ago. Except Nazi, the others are defeated and disappointed. The Novel’s characterization, specifically regarding Nazi and Behzad, shows their transition from emphasizing idealism to stressing on normal needs; namely, from typical characters towards individuals. Nazi not only manages her private life and social activities, but also helps her male friends to be more feminine. Using fictional uncertainty “*Like a Scent in Breeze* destroys the counterfeit boundaries between males and females. Masculinity corresponds to ideology and dominance, whereas

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\(^6\) This term in coined by Todorov in his *Dialogical principle*, page 79.

femininity resembles individuality and indeterminacy.”

Scent is the metaphor for Nazi who helps the others to find their voices, escape from their painful past, return to routine life, and the last but not least, overpassing the counterfeit boundaries between man and women. The novel could not cover these themes if it did not use fictional uncertainty as its technique.

**New Fictional Themes**

The other difference between classical and modern Persian literature that helps us to understand the characteristics of the latter is their themes. According to Hamid Dabashi, the subjects of Persian literature transmitted from ethnos/nezhad to logos/sokhan to ethos/hanjar to chaos/ashub. He states that emerging modern Persian literature in the early twentieth century coincided with chaos/ashub in terms of literary themes, forms, and figurative language (Dabashi 189). In my opinion, the chaos became one of the characteristics post-1979-revolutionary Persian fiction, when a large number of Iranian authors tried to apply fictional uncertainty as a literary technique.

The long history and the old established traditions of Persian classical poetry hindered any radical changes in the poetical discourse, at least in the beginning “So respected were the canons of the Persian classics, and so powerful was their grasp over the poets, that obvious deviations appeared suicidal,” (Yarshater “The Modern Literary Idiom” 285). On the contrary, the lack of such a strong precedence for the novel and short story made it easier for the modern writers to establish the new literary genres. “[W]hen the impact of Europe began to be felt, prose began to respond more radically than poetry, and with little conflict and opposition.” (Katouzian

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8Kamali, Mehrak. “Destroying Artificial Boundaries between Male and Female”
http://www.radiozamaneh.com/98539
The difference between the fight of modern poetry and literary prose against the earlier literary traditions in Persian has been formulated by Yarshater in this manner:

If modern poetry had to fight for its individuality against classical tradition like a rebellious adolescent against strict and powerful parents, modern fiction had to fight like an orphan for its very existence (Yarshater Ibid 303).

Also, he states that every poetry genre has its own theme. He refers to court, epic, lyric, didactic, satiric, literary revival, modern, and modernist poetic themes (Yarshater *Persian Literature* 20–32). The first six genres are categorized as classical Persian poetry illustrating general issues, portraying ideal human beings, and creating typical characters.

A new era begins with modern Persian poetry because it is “more receptive to fresh ideas, new forms, and original imagery,” and opens a new path for a radical modernist change after World War II (Ibid31). In contrast to Yarshater, who divides modern from modernist poetry, Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak talks about them together as “new poetry” and emphasizes its difference with pre-modern poetry based on its social and political concerns,

[I]t is widely believed that the new poetry relates to its social context in ways significantly different from the way the classical poetic canon does. . . . Typically, modern poetry is viewed as that which demonstrates its willingness to address important social and political issues, classical poetry is not (Karimi-Hakkak 3).

Confirming Karimi-Hakkak’s attitude, Kamran Talattof pays attention to the ideas of the proponents of modern Persian literature who “[C]laimed to understand modernity and to know their readers’ tastes and expectations for social change” (*Politics of Writings* 23).

Ahmad Shamlu—one of the important Iranian modernist poets—states that addressing the
social issues, showing masses’ requests, and empowering ordinary people are the main duties of new poetry (Ibid 87).

Accepting the relationship between new poetry and contemporary social issues, literary scholars have constructed their theoretical models through ideological or discursive literary conceptualizations. Kamran Talattof proves that the ideology and metaphors of each era determine the themes of literary works. Based on a broad examination, he divides the modern literary history of Iran into four episodes and movements: Persianism, a committed literary movement, an Islamic literary movement, and a feminist episode, each of which has its specific themes. Persianism pursues the theme of “purification of Persian language,” committed literature is linked to “social change,” the Islamic movement is in close contact with “religious rituals” in order to provide a reliable basis for the Islamic Republic, and the feminist discourse deals mostly with “women’s issues” which are raised after the Revolution (Politics of Writing 4-7).

Talattof goes beyond mere description of a general idea—the relationship between social issue and the rise of new poetry—and investigates its actual evidences during a changing environment and time. His stress on the discontinuous nature of literary episodes leads to a focus on different dominant themes during different literary episodes.

My study on post-revolutionary Persian fiction completes Talattof’s idea about discontinuity nature of literary episodes. I posit that although the works of ideological literary episodes have their specific types of characterization, figurative language, and themes, they can simultaneously apply fictional uncertainty because of its changeable and fluid nature. Frequently use of fictional uncertainty, according to Abdi Kalantari9 and

9 Ibid.
Hossein Payandeh⁹, is an inseparable part of Persian literary modernism. From a different perspective, Saeed Honarmand rejects the existence of different themes in modern Persian literature. He talks about one literary discourse and theme in modern Persian literature:

Our fiction writing, from Akhondzadeh to present, has worked only with one theme, “showing ignorance,” which has a positive relationship with the discourse of backwardness–modernity. In fact the shaping of this theme has been the result of a specific interpretation of that discourse (Gozareshi bar Dastan ⁹¹).¹¹

Although the previously mentioned authors have their own distinct interpretations, all of them nevertheless demonstrate the existence of a set of new themes in contemporary Persian literature. These new themes are the products of modern Persian literature and, in their turn, affect the styles of narration.

**Narrator and Narration**

The style of narration is another aspect which differentiates pre-modern from modern Persian literature. Before the emergence of the novel as a literary genre, narration was just a tool for expressing common beliefs. All pre-modern literary genres—epic, romance, fable, tale, etc.—used narration in order to educate people, reflect social and cultural accepted values, and propagate fixed, acknowledged truth. The narrator of these genres was a third-person omniscient chronicler who knew everything about everyone, everywhere, and every time. The Renaissance changed this world completely. The Islamic Revolution played the same role for Iranian authors as the Renaissance for Europeans.

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⁹ Ibid.

¹¹ My translation.
Instead of being a person who served spiritual powers and dominant beliefs, the man of the Renaissance was on the road towards becoming an individual with free will. Attention to free will unavoidably led to concentration on individualistic experiences. And this, in its turn, led to changes in the style of narration. The emergence of the novel was the product of these turning points (Watt 13). In fact, individualistic experiences needed individualistic language which were limited by those experiences. It caused, at the first step, the emergence of different narrators, and at the second level, the appearance of the dialogic novel with impartial or hidden narrator. Therefore, in contrast to single-voiced narrative of pre-modern literature, one can see the diversity of narratives and the emergence of a multi-voiced world of modern literature. Although with a long delay, Iranian society also experienced the same conditions. Ironically, the dominance of a conservative and backward Islamic government in Iran after 1979 revolution led to flourish modernist Persian fiction that is built on the basis of fictional uncertainty.

Classical types of narration dominated Persian literature until the 1906 Constitutional Revolution are mostly constructed by a central myth and a third-person omniscient narrator, and both of them usually serve to express a common belief or a familiar story (Honarmand Gozareshi bar Dastan 13–14). Different kinds of stories flourished from the Constitutional Revolution along with the co-existence of old and new types of narration. In fact, one should consider the gradual change of styles of narration in modern Persian literature.

In his excellent work on Dehkhoda’s Charand o Parand, Christophe Balay states that there is a wide range of different types of narrative in the book; some of them can defined as a modern short story, based on their structure and the style of narration (78–79). From Dehkhoda

\[12\] Almost all times, the narrator and the author were the same.
to present, there are many multi-narrative novels,¹³ novels with impartial narrators,¹⁴ novels with limited narrators,¹⁵ and at the same time novels with third-person omniscient narrators who determine everything. *Kalidar* (1984) by Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, *Savoshun* (1969) by Simin Daneshver, and *The Neighbors* (1974) by Ahmad Mahmoud are three realist novels with a third-person omniscient narrator.

Because of its social and political aspects, *Kalidar* is a modern work that has some characteristics of Greek romance, in its Bakhtinian definition, such as the importance of chance, fate, and “sudden time.” Bakhtin uses two terms in order to explain the time in Greek romance, “suddenly” and “at just that moment” (*Dialogic Imagination* 95). From them, he concludes with the other concept, “adventuristic chance time” through which human life changes mostly based on chance (Ibid 94). Moreover, the characters have fixed identities without any kind of growth and “becoming.” They are not active individuals who shape the events and they cannot plan for their lives; rather they are captured by chance and fate. Escaping from predetermined destinies by author/narrator, new themes cannot be narrated in old literary forms; they are narrated in new styles of narrations by the author who experience new formal rules. In the case of Iran, the world of committed Persian fiction is a limited world with uniform themes and characters who serves the author/narrator’s ideas and is built around explicit social and political messages.


¹⁴ For example, *Madar-i Sefr Darajeh* by Ahmad Mahmud (1992) and *Shabih-i Atri dar Nasim* by razieh Ansari (2010).

¹⁵ For example, *Aynehha-yi Dardar* by Hushang Golshiri (1993), *Namha va Sayeha* (Names and Shadows) by Mohammad Rahim Okhovvat (2003), and *Dar Mahaq* (In Abyss) by Soheila Beski (2009).
Mikhail Bakhtin and Franz Stanzel see point of view not only as a standpoint from which narrators tell their stories, but also as a way of presenting the characters’ philosophies and their roles in the story. In addition, the characters’ specific figurative languages are embodied in their fictional points of view. Based on Bakhtin’s three categories, as discussed previously, this chapter will analyze mentioned novels of Dowlatabadi, Daneshvar, and Mahmoud as the representatives of direct (monologic) and objectified discourses.\textsuperscript{16}

Bakhtin defines monologic discourse according to his interpretation of Greek romance. Bakhtin states that in the world of Greek romance, individuals are “completely passive” and their actions, “are reduced to enforced movement through space (escape, persecution, quests); that is, to a change in spatial location” (105) based only on the author’s will. The characters have fixed identities without any kind of growth or “becoming”; they are not active individuals who shape events and plan their lives; they are captured by chance, fate, and the author’s will. From Bakhtin’s viewpoint, \textit{Kalidar} by Mahmoud Dowlatabadi can be a modern version of Greek romance. \textit{Kalidar} is a novel with a large number of characters, but is still monologic. The story is narrated from a third-person, omniscient point of view in both present and past tense. Everything, from external reality and actual events to the internal thoughts and emotions of the characters, is narrated by the narrator in detail. The novel has only one accent, the author/narrator’s accent; one point of view, the author/narrator’s point of view. As mentioned in chapter 1, a novel’s point of view is not only the point from which the story is narrated, but also affects each character’s philosophy.

\textsuperscript{16} As mentioned in chapter 1, Bakhtin’s three discourses are very similar to Stanzel’s three categories of authorial, figural, and first-person points of view.
The narrator damages, or at least ignores, characters’ personal voices and points of view; everything in the novel serves the narrator/author’s worldview. Also, the novel’s world is the narrator’s description of the events in which we only hear his dominant voice. The coherent, integrated world of *Kalidar* has been built on the authority of the narrator’s voice and philosophy; this is exactly what fictional uncertainty rejects by applying multi-voiced narratives.

Many of the adventures in *Kalidar* present the reader with a sense of change in the characters’ personalities from individual self-consciousness to a collective one which is, in its essence, a political self-consciousness. This is especially apparent in the novel’s protagonist, Golmohammad. This transformation leads to a limited growth in the characters, mostly shown through the dialogues between Golmohammad and Sattar. However, although the novel’s characters gradually enter in a kind of dialogue, it cannot change *Kalidar*’s monological nature. This monologic tone can be found in a number of Persian novels. Far from the Greek romantic characteristics of *Kalidar*, Simin Daneshvar’s *Savushun* is an example of realist monologic discourse. The sequence of events in *Savushun* is not based on accident or fate, but the internal logic of the story.

Unlike *Kalidar*, the characters of *Savushun* are not captured by chance and fate, although, with the exception of Zari, they are still fixed characters. As in *Kalidar*, there is a sharp line between good and evil in *Savushun*, where a number of predetermined social, cultural, and

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17 One might ask why I use the masculine pronoun to describe this narrator, since his identity is never explicitly indicated. This decision is based upon his thoughts about women. For example, when Maral enters Suzandeh, the narrator describes the reaction of other women, “... women don’t like each other in their hearts, even if they are sisters. There is something in them which is jealous... revenge is the first refuge in which woman find herself” (*Kalidar* 39). Not only does the narrator seem to be a man, he seems to be a man with patriarchal beliefs.
individual values and criteria dominate the characters’ lives. None of the characters, including Zari, can go beyond the ideology of the novel and develop their own distinct natures. *Savushun*, as an ideological novel, fits its characters into a tight frame and imposes its message upon the reader.

The story is narrated from a third-person singular point of view, which is limited to Zari, who tells the reader what she sees, experiences and thinks. If we define point of view not only as a fixed standpoint from which the story is narrated, but also as a changeable philosophy of the narrator, we can better understand Zari’s journey from an individual to an ideological person. Although she loves and admires Yusof, she tries to keep her home calm and far away from external conflicts. But when war finally comes, she finds that she is unable to maintain this balance and must take a position. Under this circumstances, her paradoxical and uncertain character changes to a simple ideological one after Yusof’s martyrdom. Kamran Talattof in his article, “Gender, Feminism, and Revolution: Shifts in Iranian Women’s Literature,” insists that Zari’s character does not advance a feminist agenda, and that the book

[F]orces a patriarchal notion of the revolution upon the story, a notion that associates the revolution with the territory of the father. Even when Zari is ready to fully engage in the movement, her role does not transcend that of the traditional sister or wife who dares to publicly mourn the loss of her man (Talattof).

Amy Motlagh states in her book, *Burying the Beloved: Marriage, Realism, and Reform in Modern Iran*, that “Daneshvar’s narratives basically accept— and even reinforce— certain social orders” (Motlagh 65). This concept of gender is supported by Zari’s fulfillment of her role as a wife and mother; she is also non-confrontational and does not stand up for herself when her husband, Yusof, is away, even though she is supposedly in charge of the house and estate.
Zari achieves her selfhood by casting Yusof’s death as martyrdom and entering into the political sphere. But this selfhood, which could be an achievement for Zari, becomes merely a success for the collectivist commitment of the author. *Savushun* ends with the defeat of Zari’s individual life and the victory of the dominant collective obligation. MacMahon’s creation of a beautiful metaphor from trees and wind at the end of the novel cannot save Zari from losing her autonomy and individuality (Daneshvar 306).

If we want to go far from direct/monologic discourses and the novels like *Kalidar* and *Savushun*, we should consider objectified discourse and its novels such as Ahmad Mahmoud’s works. Although both monologic and objectified novels are categorized as realist literary works; in objectified novels the authors objectify their subjects mostly based on the authors’ desires and ideas.

The Bakhtinan category of “objectified discourse” is frequently used narrative in modern Persian fiction.18 This objectification creates a distance between the characters, which destroys the possibility of real dialogue. In other words, the author puts himself at the heart of the narrative by “socially typifying or alternatively individualizing” (Dentith 47) the social and historical events and making (or changing) the characters based on his ideological approach.

Inspired by Richard Freadman and Seumas Miller’s ideas about Marxism as a simulating ideology, I distinguish realist texts from ideological ones. Ideologues view text as a “structured set of claims, beliefs and so on” (Freadman 102). These structured sets leave no room for

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18 Simon Dentith describes this concept from Bakhtin’s viewpoint: “… the second broad division, ‘objectified discourse’, speaks a strong aesthetic and ideological aversion on Bakhtin’s part, for into this category come all those kinds of writing which acknowledge social and historical diversity only to ‘place’ it either in socially typifying or alternatively individualizing ways, without any authentic dialogic engagement” (47).
sovereign objects and people, because everything is seen as a function of fictional messages which, in turn, are determined by ideology. At a formal level, the instructive ideologies of modern Persian literature—Persianism, Islam, feminism, and Marxism—can hardly provide a favorable context for “an experimental encounter with a ‘world’” (Ibid) through fluid objects, people, events, and practices. In the case of modern Persian fiction, I can point to Sadiq Hidayat, Ahmad Mahmoud, and Moniru Ravanipour as representatives of the authors who objectified, simulated, and deformed fictional objects, people, events, and practices for serving their own ideas.

An orientalist author, Sadiq Hidayat, objectifies his characters as ignorant and reactionary people (Honarmand 98). Ahmad Mahmoud, a leftist author, creates typical, objectified characters in order to show their class belongings through their actions and thoughts. Moniru Ravanipour, as a feminist author—especially in some of her short stories like “The Sad Story of Love”—represents her male characters as unconscious persons. In all these examples, the authors destroy the possibility of dialogue between author and character, as well as among the characters themselves. In this part I will focus on the novels of Ahmad Mahmoud because they provide perfect examples of objectified discourse in modern Persian fiction. This discourse does not allow its authors to apply the technique of fictional uncertainty because it challenged the power of authors by making dialogues, creating fluid and uncertain characters, and forming multi-theme fictions.

Ahmad Mahmoud is famous for his Marxist approach, as well as his literary objectification and representation of Iranian contemporary history through his The Neighbors (1974).
The first shared characteristic of Mahmoud’s objectified novels such as *The Neighbors* is the dominance of the author’s attitude. The narrator and protagonist of *The Neighbors* is a kid, Khalid, who grows up, engages with politics, goes to the jail, and then at the age of eighteen is forced into mandatory military service. Although at the beginning of the novel Khalid’s language and behavior is in harmony with his age and knowledge, the author pushes him to change his natural understanding of the world based on the author’s ideological desires. In the second half of the novel, the author gradually empties Khalid of his expected thoughts and deeds and obliges him to be an ideological object. This “metamorphosis” and “becoming” is negative, because they make Khalid unable to dialogue with others. This process of Khalid’s objectification is apparent when he is arrested and goes to the jail. In jail he is surrounded by an artificial ideological environment and its unnamed representatives. The process of Khalid’s objectification ends with his total surrender to the ideology.

The world of Mahmoud’s *The Neighbors* is uncomplicated, polarized, and full of simple characters whose material characteristics determine their present and future (Golshiri 373). According to Bakhtin, dialogue will happen among independent individuals who have their own philosophies and points of view; these kind of characters are absent from *The Neighbors*. In the novel’s simple world, because the characters are objectified by the author and his ideology, there is no possibility for applying the technique of fictional uncertainty.

**Changing Formal Rules**

The external presentations of differences and conflicts between modern and pre-modern literature were in the field of “formal rules.” At least one thousand years of Persian literature had

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19 The political activists do not have ordinary names; they are recognized by their revolutionary assumed names such as Shafaq, Pendar, Bidar, and Peyman.
established a system of rhetoric with its own rules regarding form and content. The challenge of the relationship between form and content shows itself differently in poetry and prose. Regarding the poetry, the fans of the old poetry stressed the authentic rules of rhyme, rhythm, and rhetoric which were shaped through centuries.

Those whose conception of poetry was being violated began to frame the argument in terms of poetry as a highly cherished symbol of cultural purity being threatened by “foreign” influences and “alien” concepts. To them, the new poetry was a highly visible sign of cultural capitulation because it violated the “spirit” of the Persian language and Iranian culture. They saw the kind of poetry written by Nima and his young followers as evidence of their unfamiliarity with a glorious tradition which they imagined as embodying that spirit (Karimi-Hakkak 5).

In contrary, modernists articulated the concept of poetic modernity primarily in terms of an oppositional political stance. They talked about the necessity of a literary change, or even revolution, in order to bring harmony between Persian poetry and contemporary social and political issues. They argued that they could not use the old vehicles for carrying the new concepts. In this regard, according to Karimi-Hakkak, “[T]he new poetry is said to differ from the old in that it no longer follows the rigid formal rules and generic divisions of the classical poetry or of the contemporary practice modeled on it,” (Recasting Persian Poetry 3). Breaking from the formal rules of poetry began in the dawn of the twentieth century by some of the poets.

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20 Karimi-Hakkak avoids creating a cause and effect relationship between different intellectual and literary factors in the process of emerging modern Persian literature. He states that, “[the process of poetic change in modern Iran] First has given rise to an automatic link between the ideals of progress, democracy, and freedom, on the one hand, and the desire to liberate poetry from rhyme and meter, on the other.”
such as Abolghasem Lahuti, Mohammad Taghi Bahar, and Iraj Mirza, with the manifest of the new poetry in *Afsaneh* (The Legend) by Nima Yushij (Talattof, *The Politics of Writing* 43-44).

Regarding prose, these formal rules were broken by the authors who, “... mercilessly attacked the rigid forms of traditional literary presentation and, in doing so, approached literature in a radically different way” (Talattof *Politics of Writing* 23). Like poetry, here was a hot debate over literary and socially appropriate forms, content, and even words and phrases for writing prose. Moreover, literary revolutionaries wanted to create a national voice which could be understood by ordinary people. Therefore, modern prose had to define its new duties in a completely different way from the old ones; the treasure of new forms was the spoken language which was used by ordinary people in alleys and streets. It was so important because historically and culturally, written and spoken languages were different. People spoke in their manner and writers wrote in different manner based on rigid formal rules. In this regard, the quest of literary revisionists or revolutionaries was to reject the old rules of writing by using the spoken language of ordinary people. Return to spoken language and current social and cultural issues not only provided a basis for new themes but also for new ways of approaching fictional devices like characterization, point of view, and characters’ language.

In a historical perspective, one recognizes a back and forth between certain and uncertain expressions of social and political issues in modern Persian literature. We witness obviously political works of authors like Zienalbedin Maraghi’i, Fath Ali Akhondzadeh, Ali Akbar Dehkhoda, Abolghasem Lahuti, Iraj Mirza, and Nasim Shomal before and immediately after the Constitutional Revolution. In 1921, fifteen years after the revolution, political aspects were hided or less pronounced in the works of Mohammmed Ali Jamalzadeh (1892–1997), the inaugurator of modern Persian fiction, Nima Youshij (1897–1960), the father of modern Persian poetry, and
even in those of their immediate successors including Sadegh Hedayat (1901–51) and Bozorg Alvai (1904–97) in their first works. Returning to express political and social challenges, M. R. Ghanoonparver states that

[T] he third generation [of writers and poets] such as Sadeq Chubak, Jalal Al-e Ahmad . . . , and Ahmad Shamlu [and later Forough Farrokhzad, Golamhosein Sa’edi, Hushang Golshiri, Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, Simin Daneshvar, Simin Behbahani] in many ways followed the trend set by the late nineteenth-century writers, a trend that largely continued until the Iranian Revolution . . . (156).

History repeats itself. Again the writers set aside political issues and addressed individual and psychoanalytical subjects after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Five years after the Revolution, with the publishing of Hasht Dastan (Eight Stories 1984) edited by Houshang Golshiri, a literary trend began that led to more usage of fictional uncertainty as a literary technique with its specific types of characterization, fictional themes, polyphony, and becoming. Despite their different careers, Shahriar Mandanipour—as the most important representative of fictional uncertainty—follows in Nima Youshij’s footsteps in many ways including his uncertain language, romantic tone, and ambiguities embedded in prose fiction. Mandanipour’s preoccupation with language ambiguities, characters’ uncertainties, and fictional situations’ indeterminacies are exemplars of modernist fiction in Iran’s post-1979-revolution. That is why Mandanipur is the best representative of modernist writers whose work is worth to research.

New Ways of Literary Creativities

Modernist Persian literature can be distinguished from the classical because of its innovations in characterization, theme, narrative styles, and points of view which come together to shape a new literary aesthetic (Payandeh 23-33). Interaction between new ways of literary creativity and the sources of modern Persian literature has led to a number of authors whose works are totally different from the past. In addition to these innovations, what helps us to define contemporary Persian literature is ideology or discourse. In the first chapter of *Recasting Persian Poetry*, “A Rhetoric of Subversion,” Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak pays attention to the cultural and social context of modernism in Persia poetry. He believes that the critique of the Literary Return Movement - and its symbol and pioneer, Qa’ani – played an essential role in constructing a new discourse and opening a path for modernism in Persian poetry (*Recasting* 25). Later, he explains the mechanism of the emergence of a new poetic culture:

First, the literary historical view initiated and advanced through the Literary Return Movement is solidified and inscribed on the cultural space: Persian poetry is seen as having gone through a golden age followed by a period of decline and decadence.

Second, this perception is combined with the one initiated and advanced by the new intellectuals, namely, that in Europe literature has played an important part in the steady march of modern civilization. The contrast that thus emerges provides the motive force behind the desire for poetic change (62).

Thus, the rejection of the old poetry and glorification of European literature leads to the emergence of a social and political poetry during and after the Constitutional period.

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22 Talattof uses the term “ideology” and Karimi-Hakkak uses the term “discourse.”
Kamran Talattof uses the concept of ideology in order to define contemporary Persian literature and bases his model on the relationship between ideology, discursive literary movement, and metaphor. He believes in dissimilarity among ideologies of representations which leads to discontinuity among different literary movements. Based on his model, ideology and metaphor play the essential role in shaping the contemporary or modern Persian literature. Talattof goes beyond the surface of the debate and tries to answer the question of the sources of these literary ideologies. For this reason, he refers to another concept, that of the paradigm:

Modern Persian literature emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a secular activity and has since demonstrated close affinity to such diverse ideological paradigms as nationalism, Marxism, feminism, and Islamism. Each ideological paradigm has, in its own way, influenced the form, characterization, and figurative language of literary texts. It has set the criteria for indigenous literary criticism and has determined which issues related to politics, religion, or culture are to be the focus of literary journals (3).

Talattof’s analysis of the characteristics of modern Persian literature is ultimately based on ideological and discursive changes. In contrary, some structuralist critics like Christophe Balay stresses on internal aspects of modern literary works.

Using the ideas of Jolles, Tomachevski, Cheovski, and Eikhenbaum, Balay tries to study Dehkhoda’s *Charand o Parand* founded on a formalism and structuralism (78). He cannot categorize Dehkhoda’s works as Persian tale (*hikayat*) nor as western short story (82), but locates them somewhere between traditional Iranian and Western literary genres. Briefly, Balay searches the sources of Persian short story and finds them more within Persian traditions of narration and less in the western imported literature.
I emphasize Balay’s attitude here because most studies on the history of Persian prose fiction begin with the apparently accepted myth that the Persian novel and short story were imported to Iran from the West. For instance, Yahya Ariyanpur in *Az Saba ta Nima* (From Saba to Nima 1972) mentions that “Iranian novelists were tempted to write novels only because they had read and enjoyed foreign novels. . . (v. 2, 283). Similarly, Hasan Mirabedini in *Sad Sal Dastan Nevisi dar Iran* (One Hundred Years of Fiction in Iran 1994) explains the beginning of the modern Persian novel and short story in part through resorting to the same idea (Khorrami 5).

Explaining the root of this myth, Khorrami refers to orientalist discourse:

According to the Constitutional-Revolution versions of this discourse [Orientalist discourse], the two categories of East and West are defined in direct, complete opposition to each other. This oppositional system defines the West as reasonable and progressive and the East as backward, exotic and enchanting and hence bestows upon the West an authority in almost every area and about any issue. It is important to note that these categories and definitions were not limited to Western scholars and intellectuals; they were also internalized by Iranian intellectuals (*Modern Reflections* 7).

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, having internalized the Orientalist discourse offered by the West and accepting the West as the ultimate source of authority, many Iranian writers and intellectuals reproduced this discourse through a so-called autonomous voice. Through this complicated process, the myth of the imported nature of Persian fiction became part of Iranian intellectuals’ self-awareness (Khorrami *Modern Reflections* 8).

Kamran Rastegar tries to find a way to understand the texts primarily through their social context. He successfully operates a methodology that is free from both Eurocentric and
indigenous ideologies, while at the same time producing a new approach that might “go against the conventions of many literary histories” (145). He meets his goal only through moving “. . . between the close reading of a text and the reconstruction of the social context for the production of the text” (146). Mansur Shakki points out the growth of the bourgeois mode of production as the main source of the emergence of contemporary Persian literature. He has studied Persian literature in the light of mostly political changes (qutd Azhand 148).23

As we can see, one cannot talk about a single factor as the main source of modern Persian literature. Although we cannot reject the impact of the West, the role of domestic elements such as traditional styles of narration, recitation, and presentation, as well as social and political changes and dominant ideologies or discourses are more important than external factors. As a part of modern Persian literature, post-1979-revolutionary fictional uncertainty is also influenced by these internal factors with a special stress on fictional characterization and point of view.

Point of View as the Main Constitutive Element of Modern Persian Literature

Most of the scholars who work on Persian literature and Persian literary productions have tended to find one or more shared characteristics including theme, ideology, discourse, and archetype in Persian prose or poetry. Regarding discourse and theme, Saeed Honarmand recognizes only one discourse, modernity–backwardness, and one literary theme, ignorance–awareness, during the last two recent centuries in Iran (Gozareshi bar 91 -114).24 Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami puts

23 Anvai-i Adabi dar Iran-i Emrooz (“Literary Genres in Iran Today”) by Yaqub Azhand is a collection of literary essays. In his essay, Daramadi be Adabiyat Moasr-i Iran (“An Introduction to Contemporary Persian Literature”), Mansur Shakki uses the Marxist theoretical framework and puts the economic and political factors at the core of his debate.

archetypes in the core of the debate and tries to explain the characteristics of Modern Persian productions. Besides binaries such as ignorance/awareness (Honarmand) or God/Satan (Khorrami) I would like to suggest fictional uncertainty as the basis of my analysis of post-1979-revolution Persian fiction. I will examine if fictional uncertainty can be understood without considering point of view as a key concept through which the reader understands fictional characterizations - including their becoming – and themes as well as polyphony in the novel. Narrating the lives of characters simply means recounting or showing individuals’ stories with their accents and from their viewpoints—individual stories that are not recorded in official documents and narratives. Fictional point of view is the most important constitutive element of these narratives.

Many modern literary theorists, from Mikhail Bakhtin to Franz Stanzel, accept the importance of point of view for understanding present voices in fiction. Individuals are shown by their languages that are embodied in fictional points of view. Point of view presents a character’s philosophy, a narrator’s role, and consequently, the “narrative situation” which “elucidate the relationships, correspondences and contiguities between different structures of narration” (Stanzel 3). Stanzel puts the narrator/mediator at the core of fictional situation (4) and classifies three basic narrative situations—authorial, figural, and first-person—mostly based on the different roles of the narrator. Stanzel’s authorial and figural narrative situations are parallels to Bakhtin’s monologic and objectified discourses I posit that the limitations imposed on point of view and the figure of the narrator, in Stanzel’s terms, lead to the flourishing modernist fictional uncertainty in post-revolutionary Persian fiction. Completing Stanzel’s thoughts, Susan Sniader Lanser argues that “human perception” has always two sides: perceiver and perceived “upon a
point of view” that shows the “connections between narrative voice, and the material, social, and psychological context of the writing act, connections between ideology and technique” (Lanser 5).

Mikhail Bakhtin provides three categories of novels based on the relationships among the characters and between narrator, character, and author—all of them based on fictional points of view. These three categories are:

(1) Direct, unmediated discourse directed exclusively towards its referential object, as an expression of the speaker’s ultimate semantic authority [monologic discourse]

(2) Objectified discourse (discourse of a represented person)

(3) Discourse with an orientation toward someone else’s discourse (double-voiced discourse) [dialogic discourse].

Bakhtin considers the first category to be a feature of Greek romance and epic, namely non-novelistic narratives. Both Bakhtin’s monologic discourse and Stanzel’s authorial narrative situation have roots in omniscient point of view. Objectified discourse mostly refers to educational and ideological literature in which the author characterizes everything in order to guide the readers exactly to the point that he or she wants. Bakhtin accepts only the third category as novelistic discourse in which every character has his or her own voice. Bakhtin’s categorization of discourses will be one of the bases of my analysis of modern post-1979-revolution Persian fiction.

Conclusion

Three radical changes took place in Persian literature following the Constitutional Revolution, World War II, and the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Each of these turning points developed its particular literary technique. Persianism, as the paradigm of the Constitutional Revolution and aftermath, used the metaphoric and symbolist technique as well as simplified language (Talattof 2000, 20). After World War II, realist literature used reflexive and representative techniques in order to promote social and political change (Talattof 2000, 70–71). Abdi Kalantari and Hossein Payandeh consider the dichotomy between populism and modernism to be the main characteristic of post-revolutionary Persian fiction. This dichotomy has been shown through the application of representative technique by realists/populists and the technique of fictional uncertainty by modernists (Payandeh 25–26, Kalantari 44–45).

Before the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Persian fiction writers went beyond classical and traditional themes and forms by the application of fictional characterizations, figurative language, and mostly omniscient narrators. Modern Persian literature was based on the dominant ideologies—Persianism, Marxism, feminism, and Islamism—that determined the characteristics of most literary works in their era. The most crucial examples of realist works are Mahmoud Dowlatabadi’s *Kalidar*, Simin Daneshvar’s *Savoshoon*, and Ahmad Mahmoud’s *HamSayehha* (The Neighbors) —in which the authors/narrators make their characters ignore their individual desires and adhere to accepted social ideals, from complexity and diversity to simplicity and uniformity.

In recent years, we have witnessed some relatively successful efforts in giving more power to fictional characters and respecting their individuality. Ahmad Mahmoud’s *The Tropic of Zero Degree* and Simin Danseshvar’s *The Island of Wondering* show us the authors’ efforts to
apply the technique of fictional uncertainty. The characters of *The Tropic of Zero Degree* have their own voices. The novel escapes from imposed hierarchical language and produces a fluid point of view. In addition to *The Tropic of Zero Degree*, the works of Shahriar Mandanipour represent extreme examples of the technique of fictional uncertainty through which fictional characters are allowed to be individuals in the modern sense of the term.

Applying the technique of fictional uncertainty is a response to the monologic and objectified discourses presented in modern Persian fiction. It is a reaction to the rigid realist–heroic atmosphere of novels such as *Kalidar* and *Savushun*, as well as the clichéd worlds of works like *The Neighbors*. These uniform themes, fixed characters, and omniscient narrators—as well as the social changes that followed the 1979 Iranian Revolution—guided many Iranian authors to recognize the impossibility of an integrated world which can be narrated through a single perspective, the perspective of the author. The understanding of this impossibility is the strong point of fictional uncertainty. In chapter 3, I will explain how Shahriar Mandanipour shows this impossibility by applying the technique of fictional uncertainty and creating ambiguous language, changing points of view, characters’ becoming, and polyphony. His efforts have opened new ways of imagining Persian modernist fiction.
CHAPTER THREE

FICTIONAL UNCERTAINTY IN SHAHRIAR MANDANIPOUR’S SHORT STORIES: VIOLENCE, INFIDELITY, AND REVENGE

Formalism was essentially the application of linguistics to the study of literature; and because the linguistics in question were a formal kind, concerned with the structure of language rather than what one might actually say, the Formalists passed over the analysis of literary ‘content’ (where one might always be tempted into psychology or sociology) for the study of literary form. Far from seeing form as the expression of content, they stood the relationship on its head: content was merely the ‘motivation’ of form, an occasion or convenience for a particular kind of formal exercise. *Don Quixote* is not ‘about’ the character of that name: the character is just a device for holding together different kinds of narrative techniques. *Animal Farm* for the Formalists would not be an allegory of Stalinism; on the contrary, Stalinism would simply provide a useful opportunity for the construction of an allegory. It was this perverse insistence which won for the Formalists their derogatory name from their antagonists; and though they did not deny that art had a relation to social reality – indeed some of them were closely associated with the Bolsheviks – they provocatively claimed that this relation was not the critic’s business.

Terry Eagleton

*Literary Theory: An Introduction* (3)

In Shahriar Mandanipour’s short stories, the reader encounters more unfamiliar characters than typical or semi-typical ones, more unfamiliar fictional signs than identifiable symbols, and more
textual metaphors than social and political ones. There is no character in these stories with whom the reader can identify with, no type of familiar society, and no familiar symbols or metaphors. As a result, the reader encounters a group of outlawed characters who are afraid of and worried about their society’s interference in their lives. What is important is the point from which narrator and characters can approach the story; each selection they make contains the possibility of a new figurative language as well as the possibility of expressing an unusual fictional situation.¹

**Shahriar Mandanipour’s Fictional Uncertainty**

Shahriar Mandanipour (1956–) is an exiled Iranian modernist fiction writer, literary theorist, critic, and journalist who has written several essays, short stories, and novels both inside and outside of Iran during the last twenty-five years. His six collections of short stories include *Saieha-ie Ghar* (Shadows of the Cave 1989), *Hashtomin Roz-i Zamin* (The Eighth Day of the Earth 1992), *Moomia va Asal* (Mummy and Honey 1996), *Mah-i Nimrooz* (Midday Moon 1997), *Sharfh-i Banafsheh* (Violet Orient 1999), and *Abi-ie Mavar-i Bahar* (Ultramarine Blue 2003). His three novels include *Del-i Dildadigi* (The Courage of Love 1998), *Hizar va iek Sal* (One Thousand and One Years, a novel for adolescents, 2001), and *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* (2009). *Kitab-i Arvah-i Shahrzad* (Shahrzad’s Ghosts 2004) includes his essays on literary theory and literary criticism. In the introduction, Mandanipour promises to give us not only a new understanding of fictional elements such as characterization, point of view, place, and time, but a modern interpretation of fictional techniques like suspense, the plot of narration, and tone

¹ If illustrating real life is essential for realists, and ideals are essential for idealists, then loyalty to the viewpoints of narrators and characters is essential in fictional uncertainty technique. These points of view can make countless worlds possible.
His editorials as the chief editor of *Asr-i Panjshanbeh* ("Thursday Evening"), a monthly Shirazi literary journal published since 1999 but banned from publication in 2009, also show his insight into modern Persian literature. In addition, researchers should pay attention to his interviews with different journals, magazines, and newspapers during the last 25 years. Mandanipour’s theoretical work is a methodological and purposeful attempt to make uncertainty the main technique of modernist Persian fiction. As an experimentalist, Mandanipour tests different contradictory characterizations and plots located in different times and places, none of which lead to stable situations. Examining these elements in Manadipour’s selected short stories, I will show how his uncertain imagination resists any straightforward understanding, not only of fiction and its created reality, but also of the so-called actual world (Nathan 69). Uncertain imagination is a main part of the creative effort of an author who is aware of his limited abilities to recognize and narrate either external reality or a human’s inner world (Moutz 20).

Mandanipour’s uncertain imagination is not his own invention; he is heir to a fictional tradition which began with “Seh Ghaterh Khoon” (“Three Droops of Blood” 1932) and “Sag-i Velgard” (“The Stray Dog” 1942) by Sadiq Hidayat (1903–51) and “Mardi ke Barnagasht” (“The Man Who Did not Return” 1961) by Simin Daneshvar (1921–2012), and continues to the present day with “Se Shanbeh Khis” (“Wet Tuesday” 1997) by Bijan Najdi (1941–97). I will begin by analyzing “Three Drops of Blood” by Sadiq Hidayat, since it is generally recognized to be the first modernist/uncertain short story in contemporary Persian fiction.

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“Three drops of Blood” is the narrator’s effort to describe his inexpressible internal experience. Perplexed narrator resides in a madhouse and his narrative, and the plot of the story, is totally inconsistency. The result of his efforts for writing something is only some unreadable lines and a phrase: “three drops of blood”. He is an unreliable narrator and everything that the reader cannot trust him. For example when he is talking about the characters, we do not know if they are actual characters or they are only in his mind. In this fictional situation, investigating the message or the plot of the story is useless (Payandeh 350-351). This narrative complexity forces the reader to participate in the process of fictional meaning creation. Hidayat in “Three Drops of Blood” acts as a modernist ancestor of Mandanipour, so unreliable narrator becomes one of the corner stones of his fictions.

Mandanipour formulates his break of certainty around the innovative use of point of view, characterization, time and place, theme, and the capacities of the Persian language. The goal of this chapter is to examine the roles of these fictional devices in regulating the relationship between the author, the characters, the narrator, and the fictional prose in Mandanipour’s short stories.

Fictional uncertainty has at least three different meanings in Mandanipour’s work. In some of his short stories like “Beshkan Dandan-i Sangi Ra” (“Shatter the Stone Tooth”) uncertainty indicates a narrative in which any fictional element can be interpreted and affected in several ways at once (Serpell 99). Another example is Aabi Mavara-ie Bahar (“Ultramarine Blue,” 2003), one of Mandanipour’s short story collections, in which he gathers eleven stories related in various ways to the events of September 11, 2001. The work begins with “Chekavak-i

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3 It is quite evident that these two fictional devices are inseparable and depend on one another. But, because of our limitations as critics, I choose to divide them mechanically and study them separately.
Asmankharash” (“Skylark of Skyscraper”), a short story about a couple whose son died on that
day in New York. Watching the film of the event frequently is their excuse to review their
relationship with the son and with each other. They understand that there are few certainties in
their life, and they are surrounded instead by ambiguity. Here, Mandanipour draws a sharp line
between direct representation of the event and his story, mentioning that he does not want to
simply report on the event:

[F]or making the report, Americans have the best reporters. I, as an Iranian author,
could see the event as a symbol, as a mental event which has been illustrated in my
own language. . . . Don’t forget that fiction should not be only about our normal
predictions and desires.⁴

In a different way, in Dili Dildadigi (The Courage of Love 1998), fictional uncertainty represents
unsure characters who act in uncertain conditions within an indeterminate environment.
Uncertainty can also be derived from the openness of the work, based on Umberto Eco’s opinion
regarding “open work.” According to Eco, literary signs find their meanings when they allow
readers to contribute their shared senses and understandings to the text (14-33). To describe
Eco’s opinion, Saeed Honarmand mentions that “open work” is the consequence of a paradox in
the fiction, the paradox of the existence of structural weakness and structural strength
simultaneously. By structural weakness, he means the existence of some fictional vacuums, some
hidden aspects of the text which let the reader participate in the process of creating fictional
meaning. By structural strength, Honarmand means the fictional wholeness in which everything

⁵ Shahriar Mandanipour, Hanooz Neveshtan Nejatam Midahad, Mehdi Yazdani Khorram, Persian
mine.
serves the ultimate meaning of the text. Therefore, fictional meaning is the outcome of this paradox which shapes the relationship between the writer, the reader, and the text (Honarmand Gozareshi bar ... 65). In this regard, the best example of Mandanipour’s work is his Persian-language novel, *The Courage of Love*.

Mandanipour’s third experience regarding fictional uncertainty occurs in his English-language novel, *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* (2009). This novel represents a distinct break from the complex writing style which he used in his Persian works. Here, uncertainty is more political and ideological than his previous works and stands out directly against the kind of religious certainty promoted by Iran’s Islamic government. Mandanipour takes the novel’s characters on a journey through post-revolutionary Iran’s social, historical, and cultural circumstances, by considering them as both the subject and object of the narrative under the post-revolutionary totalitarian regime.

The narrators of Mandanipour’s stories are close to the “figural narrator” in Franz Stanzel’s narrative theory who “mediates the potential fictional world,” (Stanzel Narrative Situation 6). Fictional events are reflected in the consciousness of figural narrator “at a given moment of the action,” and are narrated simultaneously. For this reason, the narrators/reflectors build their uncertain imaginations upon awareness of shared cultural elements in a given society as well as their limited abilities to recognize and narrate either external reality or a person’s inner world. Mandanipour’s uncertain imagination is based on the characters’ encounters with deadly conditions, mythical atmospheres, and fluid times and places. *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* was written in the United States for a Western audience, and is a good example of this fluidity. Although he always avoids writing autobiographical stories, in this novel the reader can see the

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5 My translation.
footprint of the writer’s memories; such a thing was impossible in the works of his which were written in Iran. In other words, *Censoring’s* uncertainty moves from language and fictional devices to the novel’s themes, times, places, and events.

In a broader sense, “uncertainty” includes all ambiguities derived from fictional plot, point of view, and characterization through which the narrator shows his suspicion about his understanding of reality—customary or fictional—and invites the reader to participate in the process of creating the story. Regarding the plot, Mandanipour rejects the idea that a plot is simply the chain of events which relate to each other based upon a series of causes and effects through linear time (Forster 20–29). In this traditional understanding of plot, the writer acts like a god who creates and regulates everything in order to persuade the reader to trust and follow him (Mandanipour *Shahrzad’s Ghosts* 129). In Mandanipour’s works, the plot is a variable phenomenon that is located in all the fictional devices such as character, setting, point of view, and fictional prose. In this situation, the plot goes beyond the writer’s creation of a cause and effect chain and acts as a fluid, organic relationship among fictional devices on one hand, and between them and the reader on the other.

Point of view shows another aspect of Mandanipour’s uncertainty. Point of view concentrates on the questions of who the narrator is and what is in his mind. Here, figural and neutral narrators (Stanzel *Narrative Situations* 23) open the path for the researcher to understand the polyphonic fictional atmosphere by which Mandanipour shows his bewilderment regarding

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6 Franz Stanzel defines these two kinds of narrator in his excellent book, *Narrative Situations in the Novel*. According to Stanzel, “If the reader has the illusion of being present on the scene in one of the figures, then *figural* narration is taking place. If the point of observation does not lie in any of the novel’s figures, although the perspective gives the reader the feeling of being present as an imaginary witness of the events, then the presentation can be called *neutral*” (23).
the basis of a proper narrative. In some of his short stories and all his novels, he rejects the authorial and omniscient narrator in order to create different voices. Because different characters have their own voices by which they can present their various understandings of fictional reality, the reader does not face a single authoritative voice. In fact, the author provides the reader with tools of interpretation and makes him/her participate in the process of constructing meaning. In addition, to create multi-narrator fictions, Mandanipour creates a polyphonic narrative even when using first-person or I-narrator in some of his short stories. In these cases, the narrator plays the role of different characters or explains different parts of the narration in different situations and before different people. For example, the main character of Mandanipour’s “Again Facing the River” recounts several versions of one story before different people: his former comrades in a political organization, his friends, his lover, a stranger, Mr. Farvardin’s friend, and Mr. Farvardin. Here, polyphony is not only derived from six different descriptions of one event narrated by one character, but also acts as a tool for creating uncertainty based on those narrations. In terms of characterization, fictional characters are fluid and act based on different situations; it means they have no fixed characteristics derived from their essences, class belongings, or typical traits. According to Mandanipour, “Each fictional character is an ensemble of possible deeds, but only one of them appears in a specified situation,” (Mandanipour Shahrzad’s Ghosts 47). Thus, the story is created when the writer, mostly by using figural and neutral types of narrations, sets up a fictional situation and puts the character in it in order to discover and understand the character’s reaction. This viewpoint rejects a solid plot in which the

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7 Mr. Farvardin is one of the characters of “Again Facing the River” who reminds Iranians of Jalal Al-i Ahmad, although in a strange way. The story is published in Mandanipour’s short story collection, Sharfh-i Banafsheh (“Violet Orient,” 1999).
roles of the characters are determined a priori; consequently, the author not only has little control of the characters, but also cannot rely on their fixed and eternal characteristics.

In “Toward a Literary Laboratory: Architectural Fluidity in Mandanipour’s Short Stories,” Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami talks about the shock produced in contemporary Persian fiction by Mandanipour’s short stories. This shock has opened the way for examination, investigation, and exploration of “various issues and problematics . . . from a literary point of view” (Khorrami 16). My understanding of this phrase is that our point of literary departure has moved from fiction towards ordinary reality rather than vice versa, as was formerly the case. Khorrami also defines the phrase “from a literary point of view” as “… approaching the world and its problematics (be it major social dilemmas or everyday issues) in an exclusively literary universe . . . [in which] the result of such literary approach cannot necessarily and directly be translated into the languages of other social, intellectual, and artistic fields” (17). In this chapter, I will go further and examine how fictional devices such as theme, characterization, and point of view are used in Mandanipour’s short stories. For this reason, I will choose his three main short stories: “Sayeh-i az Sayeh-ha-ie Ghar” (“A Shadow of the Shadows of the Cave” 1989).  

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Focusing on these three short stories, I argue that he creates increasingly complex narratives of the mental lives of Iranians, especially Iranian intellectuals. “Shadow...” has a fairly straightforward narrative which is shaped independently of the story’s protagonist, Mr. Farwaneh. “Shatter...” has two narrators, a man and a woman, and the man’s narrative is nested within the woman’s. “Again...” the most experimental among these three stories, challenges the nature of reality by showing the internal chaos in the mind of its main character through his different narratives. Here, Mandanipour’s fictional uncertainty is defined by invisible certainties that function in indeterminate conditions mostly through the fictional characters’ nightmares.

**Literary Background**

Post-1979-revolutionary Iran was an area in which some Iranian intellectuals doubted their own simplified black and white thoughts. The chaotic situation after the revolution showed them the complexities of Iranian society and erased the sharp pre-1979-revolutionary line between good and evil in their minds. Esma’i Khoi, a prominent Iranian intellectual, speaks of the highly polarized mood that characterized the intellectual circles in Iran in the twenty-five years

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preceding the revolution as well as in the complicated post-revolutionary environment.

According to Khoi, Iranian intellectuals found analysis easier in pre-revolution period and encountering post-revolutionary situation for them meant encountering an unfamiliarity and uncertainty,

In the Aryameher period [the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi], you could distinguish between “good” and “bad” from the first look. “Good” was that which was considered ‘bad’ by the shah’s system, and “bad” was that which considered this system, either directly or indirectly, as “good.” . . . Everything was easy, the factions were clear, and you were either on this side or on that side. . . . [T]oday, we have a situation in this country where there is a diverse and multifaceted texture… (Khoi, quoted in Nabavi 98)

In this “diverse and multifaceted texture,” the first sign of this type of post-revolutionary Persian fiction was “Fathnameh-ye Moghan” (“The Victory Chronicle of the Magi” 1980) by Houshang Golshiri.

“We,” the narrator of The Victory Chronicle of the Magi, is a group of friends who narrate what happened to them before, during, and after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Narration in the first-person plural was a unique point of view for its time. Before the revolution, “we” drank alcoholic beverages, watched Western movies in cinemas, and deposited money in banks. During the revolution, this group became indifferent to the religious authorities and goes so far as to attack bars, theaters, and banks. Finally, against their will, they obeyed the Islamic hard-

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liners’ orders in the years following the revolution. Shifting from an individual *I* point of view to collective *we* one creates a collective identity; a *we* that is guilty about what it has become.

In the last scene of the story, the Revolutionary Guard attacks people, including the narrators, and chooses some of them for punishment. Submitting to fate, the narrator says, “And until it was time for us to receive the Islamic lashes, . . . we put our heads and faces to the ground, on the cold, dew-covered dirt, our ancestral earth, and we waited” (Mozaffari 36). “*We*” is uncertain about itself, and does not know what it did wrong. “*We*” accuses itself and searches in its deeds and thoughts to understand what happened after the 1979 Iranian revolution. After *The Victory Chronicle of the Magi*, fictional uncertainty gradually became a powerful technique in Persian fiction. Four years later, Golshiri edited a short story collection of a number of young writers that had used the technique of fictional uncertainty in order to go beyond committed literature. The title of this collection was *Hasht Dastan* (Eight Stories 1984).

In the preface of *Eight Stories*, Houshang Golshiri suggests the authors to set aside the idea of representing the tangible reality and accept their role as narrators of the ambiguities and uncertainties of modern life (8). Some of the stories of that collection, such as “Hofreh” (“The Pit” 51-64) by Ghazi Rabihavy (1956–) and “Sang-e Siah” (“The Black Stone” 23-50) by Mohammad Reza Safdari (1957–) provide indications of the dark literature that developed after 1979.12

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12 Uncertainty showed itself also in post-revolutionary Iranian cinema. *Hamoon* (Dariush Mehrjui 1989) was the starting point of this discourse. Many Iranian movies such as *Mosaferan* (‘Travelers’ by Bahram Beyzai 1991), *Rooban-e Ghermez* (“Red Ribbon” by Ebrahim Hatami Kia 1998), *Darbareh Elli* (“About Elly” by Asghar Farhadi, 2008), and *Jodai-e Nader az Simin* (“A Separation” by Asghar Farhadi 2011) used uncertainty as their main technique.
“The Pit” is narrated from an Iranian soldier’s point of view of on the battlefield during the Iran–Iraq war. He is hiding in a trench when he sees himself in an Iraqi uniform, staring at himself from the top of the trench. Encountering himself in the uniform of an Iraqi soldier is the end point in a series of disappointed moments in his life. The simple plot of the story rejects the latent certainty in the government’s propaganda, which is based on drawing a sharp line between “the right front,” Iranians, and “the wrong front,” Iraqis. “The Black Stone,” by Mohammadreza Safdari, is about Abdollah, a man from southern Iran who has gone to Kuwait for work and doesn’t want to return to his hometown. The story is full of details about Abdollah’s life that run through his mind. He has memories without any hope, he lives a life without anything new or exciting, and he has no desire even to visit his wife. His mental challenges portrayed in the story makes it uncertain. “The pit” and “The Black Stone” are the old brothers of “Sayeh-i az Sayeh-ha-ie Ghar,” Mandanipour’s first short story in which he unsuccessfully has tried to apply the technique of fictional uncertainty. The study of “A Shadow of the Shadows of the Cave” is necessary because it shows us the starting point of Mandanipour.

“Sayeh-i az Sayeh-ha-ie Ghar” (“A Shadow of the Shadows of the Cave”): Limited Point of View and Language Ambiguity

Mandanipour began his literary career with “A Shadow of the Shadows of the Cave,” published in Mofid Monthly Magazine in 1987. The short story is his starting point to show the complexities of Iranians’ contemporary lives through a slippery fictional world. The title of the story, derived from Plato’s allegory of the cave, prepares the reader for encountering an illusionary representation of reality. Plato’s allegory suggests that what we see around ourselves are the shadows of the objects, not the objects themselves (Plato 198-225). Choosing the title of “A Shadow of the Shadows of the Cave,” Mandanipour informs the readers that they do not
expect to meet reality in this short story; on the contrary, the story is about illusions and the reflections of reality in its main character’s mind. From this perspective, the story should use ambiguous language appropriate to its bewildered character, Mr. Farwaneh.

This is the story of Mr. Farwaneh, a middle-aged, educated man and former political prisoner who believes that animals threaten the minds of human beings not only from outside, but from inside people’s minds, too. He lives in an apartment overlooking the city’s zoo, and from its window he constantly monitors the animals with his hunting camera as they publicly make love like humans and, he believes, predict the future and make plans to control humans’ actions: “Gradually, they will make us addicted to the conditions they have imposed on us” (3). Mr. Farwaneh talks about a wolf in the zoo that has learned to find a trap and goes to it in order to fool humans and penetrate the human community. He talks to his neighbors about his preoccupations and tries to convince them of the threat of barbarism posed by the animals and encourage them to act against it, but he cannot; it is as if the people have absolutely no sense and do not appreciate the threats that he sees. In his neighbors’ eyes, he is a distracted man who has gradually lost touch with the real world. Disappointed by his neighbors’ response, he continues his propaganda against animals; he helps the police to follow an ape that has escaped from the zoo, and he celebrated the death of some other animals. Fearful of the animals’ revenge, Mr. Farwaneh, who has hitherto avoided interacting much with the public, gradually becomes a lonely man who needs others’ presence in his home, but no one is willing to spend time with him. He turns all the lights on in his house so that he can sleep at night, but it does not help. Mr. Farwaneh’s death, or assassination, the destruction of his hunting camera, and the disappearance of his books at the end of the story shed a new light on his nightmares about animals: only human or animals that were trained as humans could enter his house and do such things.
The plot is recounted by a narrator who is absent from the story. This absence limits the narrator to what he or she has seen or heard. For instance, the narrator can talk only about what Mr. Farwaneh does on the outside, but nothing about his internal dialogue. Lack of information about Mr. Farwaneh’s inner life makes the story’s fictional vacuums determine how the story is told and what should be told or not. Mr. Farwaneh’s understanding of the world is contrasted with his neighbors’ incuriosity. He is isolated and alone, and is seen as a deluded individual by his neighbors. Fictional uncertainty derives from the contradiction between fact and illusion, between the animals’ being and Mr. Farwaneh’s perception of their presence, between what happens in the real world and Mr. Farwaneh’s observations of it. The story begins when Mr. Farwaneh says, “Imagine it is not correct. . . .,” and continues with his fear about the presence of animals in his kitchen. With “Imagine it is not correct” in first sentences of the story, Mr. Farwaneh expresses his uncertain opinion about reality and its certain borders with illusion.

As a paranoid and mentally isolated man, Mr. Farwaneh’s words, deeds, and bewilderment represent the concerns of Iranian intellectuals after the revolution. The story was written and published during the years of political violence legitimized by Islamic principles, of the Iran–Iraq war, and of Iranian intellectuals’ fear and retreat from public life. Illustrating indirectly the government’s strong censorship and control of Iranians’ lives, the story reconstructs some Iranian intellectuals’ nightmares and anxieties, derived from their years of isolation. The people do not respond to Mr. Farwaneh’s efforts to save the community from the animals’ savagery; they leave him alone and make him depressed. The story’s deliberate uncertainty comes partly from the complex nature of Mr. Farwaneh’s inner life, partly from the story’s limited external point of view, and partly from Mandanipour’s awareness of government censorship.
The contradiction between barbarity and civilization, the theme of “Shadow,” is the starting point of a series of treatments of those topics including Iranian intellectuals’ nightmares, anxieties, and depressions. Beginning with the world of “Shadow,” where Mr. Farwaneh’s nightmares constantly come true, Mandanipour’s works represent and recreate these nightmares in literature, while examining some new experimental elements. “Beshkan Dandan-e Sangi Ra” (“Shatter the Stone Tooth”) is one of his successful efforts in this regard.

“Beshkan Dandan-e Sangi Ra” (Shatter the Stone Tooth): A Story of Loneliness and Archetypes

“Beshkan Dadan-i Sangi ra” (“Shatter the Stone Tooth”) reinvents a nightmarish situation through the use of fictional objects (a carved image, a dog, mud huts, and dust), characters, space (the village of Guraab), and time (urban time, rural time, and the mythical time of the carved image). Again it is the story of a man who wants to help the people of a village, but who instead finds himself isolated, crazy, and perplexed. Gradually, the people’s enmity makes many difficulties for him and his loneliness pushes him towards friendship with a dog. The people of the village hate the dog and want to kill it. The dog takes refuge in the cavern where the man is living. Because both of them are strangers and alone in the village, the man and the dog become attuned to each other. This companionship increases the villagers’ hatred of them both. At last, the villagers set the dog on fire and the flaming dog runs to the fields and sets them on fire, burning the villagers’ crops. Again, like “Shadow,” the main character of “Shatter the Stone Tooth” is doomed to loneliness and depression.

- Summary

The story begins with a woman who talks to her friend about her fiancée, who serves as a representative of the Reconstruction and Development Corps (RDC) in Guraab, a poor southern
Iranian village. Historically, formation of the RDC aimed to train “villagers in the modern methods of farming and keeping livestock,” and was one of the elements of the shah’s White Revolution in 1963\(^{13}\). The RDC was made up of youths who were forced to go to Iranian villages for their two-year mandatory service to the government. They had to go to Iranian villages in order to, as the Shah mentioned in his 1968 speech at Harvard University, “. . . educate the illiterate, to improve the health services, or generally to reconstruct the district concerned. They take with them the newest ideas and principles of progress and civilization” (Westad 290). The specific duties of the RDC were to train the villagers, namely the majority of Iranians in the 1960s and 70s, in new agricultural techniques and provide them with better seeds and fertilizers. But it had its own unintended impacts; sometimes the members of the Reconstruction and RDC were not able to establish an appropriate relationship with the villagers, so that the villagers saw them as strangers or meddlers. The main character of “Shatter” is an example of these people who encountered the villagers’ enmity.

In “Shatter,” referring to the RDC puts the story in the context of a progression of events which led to the 1979 Iranian revolution. In fictionalizing this term, Mandanipour makes the reader confront contradictory pre-revolution circumstances based upon the big gap between rural and urban residents, environments, and even times. This use of the RDC adds a historical and cultural interpretation to every event, character, and object of the story. I will focus on the enmity between the protagonist and the villagers.

The essential elements of the story—Guraab, a cavern, a stone image, a dog, and the villagers—are introduced in its first sentences: “He [the man, the protagonist] writes of the

\(^{13}\) History Lesson, http://www.negroschronicle.com/web-archives/opinion/HISTORY%20LESSON%20%28ZDs%20Trivia%29.html
untimely heat in Guraab, of its sun that seems to shine a blinding purple, of a cavern with forty-four stairs and an image carved on its wall” (341). The narrative situation is built on the reaction of the man to these elements within a three-sided time (urban, rural, and the mythical). The man goes to Guraab as the representative of the RDC and finds a cursed place with poor soil and abstemious people who do not want to improve their abilities or increase their knowledge. Although he expresses his personal emotions to his fiancée, the woman, during his first year in Guraab, his mind is changed after seeing the dog and discovering the carved image in the cavern, which is to say, after his encounter with mythical time. Thereafter, the man’s attempts are focused on advocating for the dog and uncovering the secret of the carved image. At last, he cleans the mud from the carved image, which shows a man plunging a knife into an animal’s head. Out of the cavern, the villagers set the dog on fire. The man writes about all these things in his last letter that someone puts in front of the gate of his fiancée’s house, which is the last that she hears from him.

The above summary only conveys the sequence of events and the surface of the story. In fact, an exact summary of such a short story is impossible because the sequence of events is less important than its latent psychological, archetypical (Mohammadi 99-101), and historical aspects. In the first layer, the problematic situation begins when the man gradually pays more attention to the carved image, the dog, and Guraab and its people’s enmity to him than to his fiancée. The fiancée narrates the man’s story to an unidentified interlocutor and expresses her


15 Besides its narrative aspects, all fictional elements have temporal and spatial characteristics, which I will talk about as “analogous chronotopes” later in this chapter.
own uncertainty and frustrations. In the second layer, the author intends to draw the readers’ attention to the man’s thoughts and feelings, although he cannot explicitly write about them because of the limitations of the fictional point of view. Here, all fictional elements and devices can potentially be interpreted as signs of the protagonist’s internal conflicts and desires.

- **Parallel Points of View, Analogous Chronotopes, Multiple Themes**

Through interpretative fictional elements, the author shows the protagonist’s mental state which he (the man) cannot narrate simply and directly. Instead of being narrated in a straight line, “Shatter” is recounted through parallel points of view, analogous chronotopes, and multiple themes which are the basis of the fiction’s multiplicity and uncertainty.16

Parallel points of view are not unprecedented in Persian fiction. Besides the traditional examples, such as Quranic stories and *1001 Nights*, Iranian readers have seen how Urhan, Aidin, the father, the widow, and the carpenter narrate their stories separately in *The Symphony of the Dead* by Abbas Ma’aroufi, for a recent example. “Shatter” goes farther and interweaves two

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16 Carla Nanwali Serpell coins the term *multiplicity* in her dissertation, the “Ethics of Uncertainty: Reading Twentieth-Century American Literature.” Explaining the term, she states, “Critics have described multiplicity as plurisignificance, ambiguity, richness of event, multiple perspectives, and so on. . . . The fragmentation of a single story into different perspectives was a popular modernist technique in both the US and Europe and has become almost a standard narrative practice in fiction (from Falkner to Kingsolver) and film (from *Rashoman* to *Crash*). Critics and theorists have traditionally accorded to multiplicity a fullness of representation, a capaciousness of understanding, and an even-handedness that is often viewed as egalitarian. Every possible interpretation, as it comes into existence in the narrative, writes over all other previous interpretations, creating a kind of palimpsest effect whereby all interpretations are visible but also attempt to cancel each other out. Every possibility has a coherence, validity, truth, which does not exclude all other possibilities but rather is entangled in them. . . . This type of uncertainty corresponds to the rhetorical figure of ‘both/and’; though this might imply combinatory or unifying tendencies, multiplicity actually invokes the problem of difference” (103).
points of view presenting the man’s narrative as embedded in and colored by the point of view of the woman who reads his letters.\textsuperscript{17} Mandanipour uses a technique by which the reader hears the voice of the man through his letters, which are read out loud by the woman.

The woman begins recounting “Shatter” from the middle of the story, when the man ambiguously explains his reasons for staying away from the town, “He writes that he doesn’t intend to come to town for the weekends anymore, that the days in Guraab are the end of time and it is best that he wait there” (341). This nightmarish time is placed against the time of comfort, when the man used to come to the town

In those days, if I asked him to talk about the place where he was stationed, he would say, let’s not talk about it . . . and then he would carefully look around to see if we were alone, and he would take my hand. . . . And he used to write nothing about Guraab. Perhaps he thought I would worry if I knew where he was stuck and how he was suffering (341–42).

From this moment, the woman starts to complain that her relationship with the man is being destroyed because the man’s feeling towards her have changed. This change is obvious in the man’s next letters when he writes only about Gurrab, as if he talks about an eternal nightmare:

Then, after two months . . . , a letter arrived in May. The one that is mostly about Guraab. . . . At the end he writes two or three lines about that dog, and says good-bye. With no ‘I hope to see you soon,’ or ‘I kiss your eyes,’ or even ‘Say hello to this or that person’ (342).

\textsuperscript{17} The woman and man are not given names.
These changing times and feelings direct the woman to the man’s ambiguous relationship with her. More and more the man is involved in a series of vague relationships with himself and the environment, the people of Guraab, and the dog (342–43).

While the woman’s tone conveys her feeling of humiliation and her narration becomes more personal, the confusing story of the man reveals historical, mythological, and psychological dimensions. Gradually, the difference between these two points of view becomes the difference between two worldviews; the woman’s domestic and individualistic perspective versus the man’s nightmarish attitude toward the village, its people, the dog, and the carved image. The woman tries to convince him that his condition is temporary; while the man, irresistibly attracted to the deadly circumstances, sees his situation as perpetual. Thinking about temporality and perpetuity engages readers in another aspect of Mandanipour’s work, its chronotopes.

A chronotope, in Bakhtinian terms, refers to the relationship between actions and their time and space. The existing sense of time and space for each literary genre in relation to fictional events forms its chronotope. In each chronotope, “In literature and culture generally, time is always in one way or another historical and biographical, and space is always social; thus, the chronotope in culture could be defined as a ‘field of historical, biographical, and social relations’ ” (Morson & Emerson 371). These social relations are embedded in “Shatter” in an experimental way. Mandanipour, as a part of his work with time, changes the metaphorical meanings of autumn, winter, and spring through the correspondence and contradiction between the time which is described by the woman—autumn and winter—and the time illustrated by the man—May, in the middle of spring. Here, the author defamiliarizes the familiar concepts. In Persian literature, autumn and winter correspond to hate, night, and darkness; while spring is characterized by love, day, and brightness.
The author’s use of time as a dependent phenomenon determined by narrative situation frees time from all the symbolical and allegorical meanings which have been added to it through centuries. It is one of Mandanipour’s goals in his writing: every work of fiction should create its own concepts free from what has been inherited from previous works and traditions; so that the trained reader should discover the function and meaning of a phenomenon based on its fictional position in each single work. Thus, in “Shatter,” autumn and winter are the times of love, comfort and calmness, while spring is the time of hatred and bewilderment. The changing implications of time provides insight into how the text shows fictional uncertainty, reminding us that Mandanipour’s fiction is always about a motion, not a moment.  

Spaces in “Shatter” carry their fictional meanings alongside the changing image of time and history. The city and village described in the text are not simply a set of alleys, streets, and homes; they function as the location of happiness or disappointment, calm or turbulence. Moreover, each is attached to a particular time or a series of time. These time-spaces, and the other important time-space, the cavern, are inseparable from the concepts attached to them. Their roles in the story cannot be described without detaching them from each other. Thus, I begin my explanation by describing the village, Guraab, and its features.

The interchangeability of the rural and mythical times gives the man a sense of eternity, as if there is no change in the village, nothing is new under its sky, and everything repeats. What is carved in the cavern is an eternal image of what happens in Guraab right now, as if time has stood still. The carved image shows a field, a man, a dog, and a dagger; all of these things are present in Guraab now.

18 See Serpell, 106.
The man’s narration finds temporal and spatial dimensions through his going back and forth between past and present inside the cavern as well as outside in the village. But the relationship between the story’s chronotope is not limited to this extent; it extends to urban time and rural time. The contradiction between urban and rural time is one of the preoccupations of both the man and woman. Urban time is constructed at present, when the man and woman walk in the streets with love and hope. The woman describes this time as, “the days when he used to come to town. . . . We would go for a stroll on a deserted street . . . the smell of winter sweet flowers floating from behind the walls of a house on a rainy day. . . .” (341). Like the woman, the man describes the city’s color and health in contrast to Guraab’s rotten soil, deadly heat, devastating poverty, and superstitions (343–44).

In contrast to urban time, the constructed and unchanging rural time captures the man, changes his thoughts and destiny, and obliges him go towards suffering, escape, or death. Although he does not have any sense of improving the lives of the people, he stays in Guraab after finishing his mandatory service for three reasons—two evident and one latent. Obviously, he stays there to advocate for the dog and to discover the secret of the carved image (346–47); but events push both the man and dog toward death, victimization, and displacement (349–52).

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19 In his description of Guraab, Mandanipour responded to two of his predecessors, Gholam Hussein Saedi and Mahmoud Dowlatabadi. Mandanipour is inspired by Saedi’s rural literature in which, after a long period of sanctification of rural life and culture, Saedi portrays Iran’s villages as remote, impoverished, and unfortunate places enclosed in ignorance and misfortune. (Jahed, Parviz http://www.radiozaman.com/culture/silver-screen/2012/11/26/21961). In the case of Dowlatabadi, Mandanipour’s Guraab and its residents stand against Dowlatabadi’s “realist” portrayal of the villagers as hardworking and optimistic people.
Latently, he is captured by Guraab’s unchanging time and his own nightmares and curiosities. The correspondence and contradiction between these times, spaces, and parallel points of view in “Shatter” establish two interrelated themes of the story, a community’s need for violence and victimization as well as the greater power of primitive versus modern time.

- **The Community Need for Violence and Victimization**

By “a community’s need for violence,” I mean a strong tendency among the members of a community to hurt humans or animals. Iranian secular authors such as Sadiq Hidayat (1903–51) and Sadiq Chubak (1916–98) have written a lot about this tendency among Iranians. As an example, we can find a trace of the community need for violence and victimization in Sadiq Hidayat’s *Sag-e Velgard* (“The Stray Dog,” 1942). “The Stray Dog” is the story of the displacement of a Scottish dog in Varamin (a city to the southeast of Tehran) that has lost his owner. Varamin’s citizens regularly beat and abuse him. His European ancestry prevents him from understanding his new situation as a stray dog. He goes toward the people, expecting the same kindness he has received from his European owners, but Varamin’s residents beat him.

The concept of violence and displacement is repeated in Mandanipour’s “Shatter the Stone Tooth.” According to Javad Eshaghian, an Iranian literary critic, Mandanipour is preoccupied by fictional form more than content, in comparison to Hidayat. Mandanipour competes with Hidayat through choosing his motif in order to show how new forms and techniques can add new kinds of interpretation to the story (7).

Like the narrator of “The Stray Dog,” the narrator of “Shatter” announces the villagers’ desire to kill the dog (343, 348, 351). Understanding the roots of the community need for

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20 The fictional vacuum, derived from a limited point of view, does not allow us to understand directly the man’s reasons for staying in Guraab.
violence and victimization raises three possible cultural, social, and mythical or religious interpretations of the story. The cultural interpretation of the community’s willingness to sacrifice the dog is demonstrated in the villagers’ homologous attitude about the man and the dog. The dog’s life is intertwined with the man’s. Throughout the story, the man and the dog frequently merge, represent each other, and act as one entity (346). When the villagers attack the dog because they believe that he is rabid, the man protests, “‘If he’s not like other dogs, it doesn’t mean he’s rabid.’ Sabz-Ali confronted me: ‘He is, he’s rabid.’ He said, ‘let’s not tempt the devil; this year we’ve had no calamities.’” (347).

The willingness to kill the dog derives from either the villagers’ cultural attitude towards dogs as unclean things in general or their social attitude to this dog in particular as a stranger. The homogeneous community of Gurrab does not accept strangers. Although the man has been sent to the village as part of the government’s plan to overcome the barrier between urban and rural communities in Iran; the villagers do not trust him, they fight him, and in the end, they force him to get leave the village and think about killing his companion, the dog (347). The man beats Rostam in defense of the dog and consolidates his relationship with the dog in the eyes of the villagers (347).

The villagers seriously want to not only torture and kill the dog, but to show it to the man. The man wrote in one of his letter to the woman, “The children threw stones at him, they could have killed him then and there, but they wanted to torture me. They looked at me while they beat him with a stick and laughed when he thrashed about. . . .” (348) According to my interview with Mandanipour, he refers also to the villager’s strong, inherent rabidity that shows itself in their willingness to tortuously kill the dog.21 The reader can find the trace of this human rabidity in

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21 Shahriar Mandanipour, personal interview, Merhak Kamali, December 2012
Mandanipour’s other short stories like “Sayeh-i az Sayeha-i Gahr” (“A Shadow of the Cave’s Shadows”) and “Baz Roo be Rood” (“Again Facing the River”). In “A Shadow,” the protagonist suffers from the people’s assimilation to animals and their ignorance of the danger of rabidity. In “Again,” the protagonist, who has admitted to a murder, defends his historic role as a criminal. Mandanipour expresses his opinion about the inherent rabidity of the human mentality in “Shatter,” through stress on its ritualistic and mythical characteristic. This mythical feature of the story reminds us of the ancient scapegoating ritual. A reader who follows the story backwards from its end to the beginning will understand that the carved image cannot be anything other than a representation of scapegoating. The villagers have chosen both the man and the dog to be the victims of a semi-scapegoating ritual in Guraab (Amiri 1).

○ Scapegoating Ritual

A scapegoat (Azazel in Hebrew, Boz-i Taligheh or Balagardan in Persian) is a term from the Old Testament describing “one of two goats chosen for a ceremony on The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur in Hebrew). The first goat was sacrificed, while the scapegoat was taken out to the wilderness and released.”22 Much has been written about the concept of the scapegoat, and its

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22 Blank, Wayne. http://www.keyway.ca/htm2000/20000502.htm. Blank quotes the verses about scapegoat directly from Old Testament: "Then he shall take the two goats, and set them before The Lord at the door of the tent of meeting; and Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats, one lot for The Lord and the other lot for Azazel. And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for The Lord, and offer it as a sin offering; but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before The Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel" (Leviticus 16:7-10).

"And when he has made an end of atoning for The Holy Place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat; and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a
relationship with Jesus Christ, in western literature. One of the most famous fictions in this regard is Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery” (1948). The main character of “The Lottery,” Tessie, has been chosen through a lottery for death by stoning. She has done nothing deserving punishment. But the residents of the community choose her as the victim because they are committed to do the ritual of scapegoating. One critic remarked, “Tessie is the scapegoat for the community as a whole . . . [because] in the community if someone has to be killed it is better to the people than for them to accept change.” As with the town’s residents in “The Lottery,” Guraab’s villagers resist any kind of change.\(^{23}\) The scapegoat is embodied in the man, although both the dog and the man are alien to the village.

The semi-scapegoating ritual sheds new light on the story, especially on the cavern and its carved image which represents the myth of sacrificing as well as the static time and unchangeable people of Guraab. After cleaning “away the centuries-old dirt” (346), the man discovers that the animal in the ancient carved image “is not attacking that man” (349), but it seems he has taken refuge with the carved man. If the reader returns to the second paragraph of “Shatter,” when the man talks about the relationship between the dog and the villagers, it is clear that the carved image narrates a kind of scapegoating ritual among Guraab residents

When they all take it upon themselves to kill a living thing but it doesn’t die and even goes so far as to trust them again, I realize . . . the fantasies of a dog with seven

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man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness” (Leviticus 16:20-22 RSV).

Based on the other version of the legend, the ritual of scapegoating had three sides: the people, the goat, and a pair of the hated man and woman. For their purification, the people should hurt the goat seriously and leave it in the desert. Afterward, one male and one female must be sacrificed.

lives who knows the secret to the engraved image on the wall, and his fifth life is about to end (341).  

The man’s feeling here is completed in one of the final scenes of the story, when he describes the last confrontation between the villagers and the dog, an unequal battle in which the dog was doomed to failure and death. This scene reveals the ritualistic link between the villagers and the dog and man, and the ancient image of scapegoating carved in the stone in the cavern (350–51). All these passages focus on the main theme of the story, the rabidity of the community which is the result of its insatiable need for violence and victimization.

Regarding the relationship between scapegoating and the fictional uncertainty in “Shatter,” the reader must be aware of two things: the limitation of the man’s viewpoint since he, as a stranger, can see only the surface of events without knowing the reasons behind them; and the reader’s suspicion about the accuracy of the man’s representation and judgment of the villagers.

The man does not know anything about the ritual and the legend behind it because the gap between him and the villagers prevents either of them from talking to the other. Because the man, as the main narrator of the story, appears to be unaware of scapegoating, the ritualistic part of the story remains uncertain for him and thus for the readers. Both the man and the villagers repel each other; but the situation catches the man in nightmares and illusions mostly because of his sense of loneliness, powerlessness, and otherness in Guraab.

The man’s awareness of his loneliness and that of the dog makes him closer to the dog while he is unaware that the dog and he, as a despicable person, must be sacrificed in Guraab’s

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24 According to Iranian folklore, dogs have seven lives, similar to the Western belief in a cat’s nine lives.
bloody ritual of purification. The thousands year old carved image of scapegoat is the sign of this ritual of purification and Guraab’s frozen time in distant past. “Shatter…” narrates the reflection of this rural frozen time on the unconscious of an urban middle class Iranian through which he is involved in a mythical time and space (342). Social relations in Guraab, as the man narrates, also show a kind of stationary history, as if nothing has changed over thousands of years in the village and the only new thing is the arrival of the man to Guraab.

One can see the man’s failure when he narrates how the villagers attacked the dog, burned him, and burned their own crops as an unintended result of burning the dog. With the death of the dog, the man understands that he has failed since he has not been able to change the villagers’ minds or break the immutable primitive ritual of the village. But he is very angry and should do something; therefore, he goes to the cavern and attacks the carved image, the symbol of the deadly scapegoating ritual (351–52).

Traversing the labyrinth of parallel points of view, analogous chronotopes, and multiple themes, “Shatter” novelizes—to use Bakhtin’s word—myths, spaces, and times. Mandanipour continues to develop his uncertain approach to these fictional devices through his thought-out and systematic effort in “Baz Roo beh Rood” (“Again Facing the River”), in which he defamiliarizes a familiar historical event for Iranian intellectuals, Samad Behrangi’s death.

“Baz Roo beh Rood” (Again Facing the River): Fictional Uncertainty in A Historical Context

In this final short story, Mandanipour wants to create a fictional narrative from a controversial historical event, Samad Behrangi’s death. Thus, the importance of the story derives not only from its experimental approach, but from its historical context. I will begin with a summary of
“Again” and continue with its experimental aspects, its historical context, and a synthesis of both of them.

- Summary

Mirdad, a young author and activist, has drowned in the Aras River in the north of Iran. He has been there with “the Man,” his close friend and the narrator of the story. Mr. Farvardin, a prominent Iranian intellectual, writes a magazine essay full of allegories and symbols, accusing the Shah’s government of killing Mirdad. It implies that the Man is the agent of the government and Mirdad’s killer. Mr. Farvardin asks the Man to be silent, because the death of Mirdad can help the battle against the Shah’s government. The Man agrees and hides under a pseudonym, facing great difficulty, for the next thirty years. The story begins when Mr. Farvardin publishes an essay thirty years later, confirming that Mirdad’s death was accidental. The Man, who has lost all his youth for a lie, goes here and there and confesses that he was Mirdad’s killer. The more the others ask him to tell the truth, more he insists on his role as the killer. He considers the writing of the second essay to be a betrayal, and at the end of the story, he finds Mr. Farvardin and kills him.

At the first lines of the short story, the narrator responds the people’s request decoding the myth of Mirdad’s death. When Mirdad drowned thirty years before, Mr. Farvardin, a leading intellectual who had focused on the case, claimed in an article that “Mirdad had been drowned” (232). The article spread quickly. Soon, it was widely believed that the death of Mirdad was not accidental; the Shah’s Secret Police were responsible for his death, specifically one agent—

25 Because the main character and the narrator of “Again Facing the River” does not have a proper name in the story, I refer to him as “the Man.”

26 All translations of “Again” are mine.
the Man (233). Although he knew it would mean shame and exile, he agreed to play the role of the police agent, because he thought having Mirdad as a hero-martyr would benefit the revolution. He describes how Mr. Farvardin pushed him to play the disgraceful role of Mirdad’s killer, “Then, an article appeared, written in the whispering and figurative language of the time and using three insidious dots [. . .] which no censor can figure out, mentioned that Mirdad had been drowned” (232). This quote refers to Mr. Farvardin’s first article about Mirdad’s martyrdom. The Man goes to Mr. Farvardin’s place to tell him that Mirdad’s death was accidental. Mr. Farvardin believes him, but convinces him to accept the role of Mirdad’s killer and sacrifice himself for his political ideals: “‘Be patient my son. Mirdad’s martyrdom would not bother anyone except tyranny,’ [H]e . . . touched my wet shoulder and said, ‘Be strong. Mirdad’s martyrdom is our excuse to take revenge on the government.’” (233). Gradually, this lie becomes accepted as a historical fact and the Man accepts his role as a betrayer, like Cain’s role in Abel’s death. But thirty years later, everything has changed.

After thirty years, Mr. Farvardin decides to shed light on Mirdad’s martyrdom and writes another article recanting his previous claim, confessing that he concocted the myth of Mirdad in order to discredit the Shah’s regime. He claimed that Mirdad’s death happened accidentally and that the man was innocent. The man, worried that this new narrative would change his life completely, looks for Mr. Farvardin everywhere, asking about his stolen youth, “I hope the author is happy. I wish I knew where he is now. He was a strong tree that surely will become a forest . . .” (232). The myth of Mirdad has become the center of the Man’s life. The thirty-year gap between the two letters has, for the Man, been filled by imprisonments, nightmares, isolation, and anxieties. The plot of the story is based on the Man’s continual effort to live with the mythical Mirdad, which makes his life meaningful and, simultaneously, nightmarish.
In response to Mr. Farvardin’s most recent claim, the man repeats the old myth of Mirdad’s death: “Yes, if even I want to say it now, I will say what I said thirty years ago, that I killed Mirdad. I pushed him into the fast flowing water, not once, but three times . . .” (230). Aware of his role in manipulating people’s memory of Mirdad and responding to their need for a hero, he says ironically, “[Y]ou should know better, because we are from the same generation, a generation that insatiably demanded dead heroes. I’m proud to have added one of them to your history” (232).

- **Experimental Aspects**

The first two words of every paragraph of the story are “I say,” which takes the readers from one scene to another. Although the man narrates all of the scenes, his tone and intonation vary based upon his audience and what he wants to narrate for them. He always shows himself as a confessor and Mirdad’s killer when he talks to his friends as their friend, when he talks as an ex-political activist, when he recounts the tales of an ex-lover, when he argues as Mr. Farvardin’s friend. By putting these variations in the story, Mandanipour experimentally applied fictional uncertainty to relatively separated scenes, their reasons of narration, and their plots. In his new experiment, each paragraph or scene of “Again” can be considered an independent part of the story. The following table shows the features of all thirteen paragraphs or scenes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph 1</th>
<th>Basis of Narration</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Scene, Story Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asking for the Confession</td>
<td>Narrator’s Friends</td>
<td>Present and Past</td>
<td>Political Gathering</td>
<td>Confessing the Murder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1. Fictional Devices in Thirteen Scenes of “Again Facing the River”**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Asking for Mr. Farvardin’s Address</td>
<td>Mr. Farvardin’s Friend</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Plan to Meet Mr. Farvardin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Recounting Interrogation Scenes</td>
<td>Narrator’s Friends</td>
<td>Present and Past</td>
<td>Searching for Reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Recounting Torture Scenes</td>
<td>Cellmate in the Prison</td>
<td>Present and Past</td>
<td>Confessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Clarification of the Role of Mr. Farvardin</td>
<td>Curious People</td>
<td>Present and Past</td>
<td>The History of the Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Impact of Mirdad’s Death</td>
<td>Curious People</td>
<td>Present and Past</td>
<td>Mirdad As a Martyr and the Source of Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Connecting to and Breaking from Totia</td>
<td>A Beautiful Woman</td>
<td>Present and Past</td>
<td>Confessing the Popularity of Mirdad and His Influence on the Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Asking for Mr. Farvardin’s Address</td>
<td>Mr. Farvardin’s Neighbors</td>
<td>Present and Past</td>
<td>Searching for Mr. Farvardin + Confession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Past/Present</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Recounting</td>
<td>The shah’s</td>
<td>Past and</td>
<td>A Contradiction: Being Mirdad’s Killer and a Supporter of the Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Torture</td>
<td>Agents</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Confessing</td>
<td>Revolutionary</td>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Representing the Murder Scene in Detail: Masking and Stoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revolution</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Confessing</td>
<td>Revolutionary</td>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Representing the Murder Scene in Detail: Shooting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Making a</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>A Gathering</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Finding</td>
<td>Mr. Farvardin</td>
<td>Present and</td>
<td>Revenge: Towards Killing Mr. Farvardin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. Farvardin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Past</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Replication</td>
<td>Mr. Farvardin</td>
<td>Past</td>
<td>Revenge: Killing Mr. Farvardin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mirdad and Mr.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farvardin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expanding his bewilderment (and perhaps the reader’s bewilderment), the Man speaks first in a political gathering (231), then with Mr. Farvardin’s friend (231–32), then with a beautiful woman at a wedding party (234–38), and finally to Mr. Farvardin (242–43). It is important for him to talk, to recount and re-invent himself again and again through different stories. Although only one of these stories can logically be true, all the Man’s narratives are true reflections of his
internal complexities, which have taken multiple forms through the decades since Mirdad’s
death. The uncertainty of “Again” shows itself here. If the truth was clear and obvious, and if the
man was sure about his place in the narrative and in his story, the story would become
meaningless.

In the last page of “Again,” Mr. Farvardin asks him to talk: “You can talk now, and you
made me suspicious, too. Tell me about the story of that damned river” (244). The Man’s
resistance to the new version of the narrative returns the reader to the beginning of the story,
when he is asked to decode Mirdad’s myth. Why does he resist the new version of the story, even
though it is beneficial to him? Why does he want to continue playing the unpleasant role of
Mirdad’s murderer? The answer to these questions can be found by examining labyrinths that the
Man makes.

His telling of how he allegedly killed Mirdad is inconsistent. At one point he says that he
pushed Mirdad into the fast flowing water (230), but he also says that he shot him (238); then he
says that he attacked Mirdad with a large stone (241), because the Shah’s agents gave him
money to kill him (238–39). The contradictory nature of his narrative blurs the boundaries
between reality and fiction, between life and story. He drowns in one of his stories and, delighted
to surprise the audience, tells another story. His concern is not the reality but the narration, by
which he shows his desire to continue his murderous role, this time by aiming at Mr. Farvardin
(251).

At the end of the story, he finds Mr. Farvardin and accuses him of stealing his youth by
making him live a lie

Of course, you know me. . . . Fill the place of my broken teeth in my mouth with
your writing imagination. . . . I’ve gotten too old. You are, too. . . . I want only to
know why, after thirty years, you wrote that Mirdad’s death was accidental. . . . This means that it kills both me and him . . . (242–43).

The Man blames Mr. Farvardin for the lie and, at the same time, admires his own role in Mirdad’s myth. He does not want to abandon Mirdad’s myth because it identifies him and gives his life meaning. He sees himself in the position of Cain who fulfilled his divine mission by killing Abel (230).

- **Historical Context**

“Again Facing the River” reconstructs the event of Samad Behrangi’s death from the Man’s point of view, resisting the counter-narrative of the event. Fictionalizing the reality, Mandanipour has chosen “Mirdad” as a stand-in for Samad Behrangi and “Mr. Farvardin” for Jalal Al-i Ahmad.

Samad Behrangi (1939-1967) was an Iranian teacher, social critic, folklorist, translator, and short story writer. He is most famous for his children's book, *The Little Black Fish* (1968), and his suspicious death in the Aras River. Behrangi’s *The Little Black Fish* is known as a manifesto of armed struggle in Iran. Behrangi himself is famous as a leftist revolutionary and also as one of the founders of *Sazman-e Cheikha-ie Fadai Khalgh Iran* ("Organization of Iranian People’s Fadai Guerrillas," OIPFG), which waged an armed struggle against the Shah’s regime in the 1970s. To put the issue in its context, the reader needs to understand Behrangi’s position and, more importantly, the place of his death in Iran’s contemporary history.

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29 The short story is about a small, black fish who leaves his calm and isolated home in order to discover the world, despite the dangers he faces. Like the armed guerrillas, he is a lonely hero who fights against injustice.
In the winter of 1966, five Azeri activists, including Samad Behrangi, formed a group in Tabriz, Iran. In 1967–68, they “reached the conclusion that armed struggle was a necessary response to repression [in Iran]” (Vahabzadeh 23). Behrangi “was only twenty-nine when [he] drowned in a swimming accident in Aras River in September 1968.” His death “motivated prominent writers Gholam Hossein Sa’edi and Jalal Al Ahmad to announce Behrangi’s death as a SAVAK [the shah’s secret police] conspiracy …” (Ibid). His critical pedagogy and political activities had made him a government target. But a question was raised: If SAVAK was behind Behrangi’s death, who actually committed the murder? In his trip to the Aras, based on the myth of Behrangi’s martyrdom, “he was in the company of an ‘unidentified officer’ (by implication, a police agent). The mysterious officer was [none other than] Behrangi’s comrade from his Tabriz cell, Hamzeh Farahati” (Ibid). So, Farahati, the “unidentified officer,” is identified as Behrangi’s killer.

Although he was not actually responsible for Behrangi’s death, he remained silent for more than twenty years because he was ordered to do so by OIPFG: “It was not until 1991 that

30 The other members of this group were Ali Reza Nabdel, Behruz Dehqani, Kazem Sa’adati, and Manaf Falaki (Vahabzadeh, 23).
31 http://www.iranchamber.com/literature/sbehrangi/samad_behrangi.php
32 Gholām-Hossein Sā'edi (1936–85) was an Iranian writer. He has published over forty books including dramas, short stories, novels, screenplays, in addition to the non-fiction genres of cultural criticism, travel literature and ethnography. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gholam-Hossein_Sa'edi
33 Jalal Al-i Ahmad (1923–69) was a prominent Iranian writer, thinker, and social and political critic. Al-i Ahmad is famous for his leading role among Iranian intellectuals and his critical essays regarding Iranian social, historical, and political conditions. He was one of the most prominent exponents of Third-Worldism and his essay, “Westoxication,” was one of the most influential essays in Iran during 1960s and 1970s. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jalal_Al-e-Ahmad
Farahati revealed the circumstances surrounding Behrangi’s drowning” and stated that the close friends of Behrangi knew the truth. But, he recalls, “They all consented to announce [sic] Samad [Behrangi] as a martyr . . . on the condition that there should be no mention of me, only of that ‘officer’ ” (Farahati 1991, 12; Farahati 2006, 153–66; quoted in Vahabzadeh 23–24). Thus, two legendary characters were created: Behrangi the martyr and the murderous officer.

Rejecting the myth of Behrangi’s death after twenty-three years deepens the discussion of Al-i Ahmad’s right to fabricate this part of the Iranian history: why did he change this historical event in favor of his preferred narrative? According to Farzin Vahdat, Al-i Ahmad wanted to fabricate a history which served his purposes—creating a revolutionary ideology opposed to the Shah’s regime and awakening the intellectual class (115). In fact, Al-i Ahmad did not hesitate to subordinate history to his political goals. In this case, he did not care about the impact of the myth on Farahati.

Representing the paradoxical situation of Farahati as the murderer and, simultaneously, as an active member of OIPFG could be a boon to an author who wanted to grapple with a complex plot. Farahati’s published letter in Adineh Magazine in 1991 shed a light on the issue and provided a good source for Mandanipour’s uncertain imagination.

Instead of Behrangi, Mandanipour focuses on Farahati in order to experience a new realm of fictional uncertainty in “Again Facing the River.” Shifting the focus from Behrangi to Farahati after about thirty years leads to consideration of him as a character with a revolutionary–murderer dual status. Farahati’s fictional character is constructed based on the changing, uncertain political conditions following the revolution.
Conclusion

After 1979, Iranian intellectuals found themselves in an unfamiliar environment. They were forced to abandon their familiar ideologies and approaches and embrace new, ambiguous, uncertain ones. When this transition was made in Persian fiction, it was manifested as a shift from archetypical characters to individuals, from omniscient points of view to dialogical ones, and from simple themes to multidimensional ones. This transition is the main origin of fictional uncertainty in which the inner lives of the writer, narrator, and characters are deeply expressed in the context of their own personalities, culture, and society.

Fictional uncertainty, also, was a response to two phenomena: first, a dominant Islamic ideology that tried to control everyone’s activities within a collectivist society; second, a realist literary tradition that tended to use simple literary techniques in order to educate people. The most important figure who has applied the technique of fictional uncertainty is Shahriar Mandanipour, whose short stories and novels are similar to some previous literary works like Sadiq Hidayat’s *Buf-i Kur* (The Blind Owl 1936) and Houshang Golshiri’s *Shazdeh Ihtijab* (Prince Ihtijab 1968) and “The Victory Chronicle of the Magi.” These stories narrate dark, unhappy situations that cause their main characters’ disillusionment; they show characters who live in a deformed and uncontrollable reality. Following Russian Formalism, Shahriar Mandanipour uses content as a pretext for formal experience and fictional experiments. Formalists’ focus on linguistics and the “literariness” of literature was the basis of their understanding of the essentiality of “form” versus “content” in fictional works.

The main characteristics of Mandanipour’s fictional uncertainties are the use of various perspectives, his emphasis on the partiality of our knowledge and the impossibility of a coherent understanding of the fictional world, and the creation of narrative vacuums. These features
demonstrate ambiguity and “discretion” because “every perspective seems to cross out the others” (Serpell 106); partiality of knowledge necessarily implies the incomprehensibility of truth, and narrative vacuums prevent a specific interpretation of the fiction.

All doubts about the reality of fictional characters, the authenticity or falsity of statements, and the sources of people’s behavior indicate how uncertain imagination—as presented in “A Shadow of the Shadows of the Cave,” “Shatter the Stone Tooth,” and “Again Facing the River”—offers fictional uncertainty as a technique through which Iranian writers can create their fictional worlds. In the case of Mandanipour, his short stories show us the possibilities and limitations of his fictional uncertainty. One of these possibilities is the author’s power to make multi-perspective narratives based on characters’ inner lives, which gives the fiction a multi-layered quality. The second is the experimental possibility that gives the authors unprecedented opportunities to represent the mentalities of their fictional characters. Their limitations are mostly about Mandanipour’s insistence on, despite the inner logic of the stories, desperate characters who are doomed to fail. In addition, Mandanipour extends the borders of fictional uncertainty in modern Persian literature through his novels. I will discuss his novel Dili DilDadigi (The Courage of Love) in chapter four and Censoring an Iranian Love Story in chapter five.

34 Abu Torab Khosravi’s Roud-e Ravi (The River of The Narrator 2004) and Asfar-e Kateban (The Trips of the Scribes2000), Bijan Najdi’s Uzpalangani ke ba Man Davidehand (Cheetahs That Have Run with Me 2005), and Jaafar Modarres Sadiqi’s Gavkhuni (The Marsh 1996) are some Persian novels that are the other examples of using the technique of fictional uncertainty.
CHAPTER FOUR

*DILI DILDADIGI (THE COURAGE OF LOVE):*

FICTIONAL UNCERTAINTY AND SOCIAL INSTABILITY

Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one’s own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process.

Mikhail Bakhtin

The Dialogic Imagination (293–94)

Our big problem is that we do not know others and ourselves. The polyphonic novel represents the best and, at the same time, the most difficult way to come to know ourselves. It is difficult because polyphony cannot be imagined without uncertainty. Knowing ourselves means avoiding any kind of certainty that fools us about our situation. The hard core of *Dili Dildadigi* is instability and indeterminacy. There, I defined a duty for myself: writing a novel with the least intervention of the author, so I decided to keep myself away from the novel as much as I could. What I wanted to do was make fictional characters, putting them in different situations, and documenting their reactions without sacrificing the literariness of the text. It seemed an unattainable goal, but I like unattainable goals! Furthermore, I wanted to write a novel which would not be reducible to a message, a plot, or raw material for scientific research. I prefer to categorize *Dili Dildadigi* as an uncertain novel; critics
can classify it as a modernist novel, an ambiguous or incomprehensible text, or whatever they want.

Shahriar Mandanipour
Interview, December 2012

Double-voiced discourse is Bakhtin’s strong preference, the discourse in which we can find “polyphony.” According to Simon Dentith: “Into this division come a whole variety of different categories, in all of which two or more voices can be heard—the voice of the narrator and the voice of the character, sometimes also the voice of a third interlocutor” (47). Double-voiced, polyphonic, and dialogic discourses alongside unfinalizability and total becoming change the functions of fictional devices such as characterization, plot, and point of view. After few Persian modernist novels such as *The Blind Owl* by Sadiq Hidayat, *Malakut* by Bahram Sadiqi, and *Prince Ehtejab* by Houshang Golshiri, Mandanipour’s novels are experimental attempts to attain fictional uncertainty. His two novels, *Dili Dildadigi* (The Courage of Love) and *Censoring an Iranian Love Story*, are the best examples of polyphonic and uncertain novels in Iran’s post-revolution era.

*Dili Dildadigi* (The Courage of Love): Uncertain Interactions between Fictional Characters and Archetypes

Not long after publishing “Baz Roo beh Rood” (Again Facing the River) in *Adineh Magazine*, Mandanipour published his first novel, *Dili Dildadigi* (The Courage of Love), in 1998; it is also his only novel written in Persian. Along with making the transition from short stories to a novel, Mandanipour was trying out a higher level of complexity in *The Courage of Love* by further developing the form he had used in “Again,” showing the complex external and internal conflicts of four main characters: Roja, Davoud, Kakai, and Yahya. Mandanipour—who had
experimented with different, sometimes contradictory characterizations, narratives, and plots in his short stories in the past—attempted to combine them all with the legend of Adam’s creation, apocalyptic conditions, and the four basic elements of classical thought: air, earth, water, and fire (Taslimi 34). By making such a conflicted atmosphere, Mandanipour creates a dialogic setting in which all the characters’ accents, in their Bakhtinian term, are heard through their interactions with each other, and the archetypical background of the novel (Mohammadi 106-107).35

Mandanipour has often insisted that he does not see much in common between himself and the writers who were either his own contemporaries or who belonged to the immediately preceding generation (Mandanipour 10). He found their excessive attention to the role of the author unappealing and old-fashioned, as well as the tendency for the setting and characters to be based on the authors’ ideologies, at the expense of a more critical exploration of cultural concerns (41–42). In The Politics of Writing in Iran, Kamran Tallatof describes how authors’ ideologies are based on different literary discourses and how both ideologies and discourses determine the content and, in most cases, the form of literary texts in contemporary Iran.36 Furthermore, in many Persian realist novels, such as Mahmoud Dowaltabadi’s Kalidar (1984) and Houshang Golshiri’s Ayneh-haye Dardar (Gated Mirrors 1994), the author’s voice is dominant and almost all characters have the same language, accent, and intonation. Mandanipour escapes from these fixed languages and dominant literary movements. Mandanipour uses fiction

35 Bakhtin defines “accent” as the specific, semantic way in which everyone speaks. According to him, “The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes one’s ‘own’ only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention” (294). “Accent” is a linguistic characteristic by which every person shows his or her individuality in the novel.
to express his views on the most urgent issues facing Iranians. He applies his experimental approach to fictional forms through multidimensional narrative structures and languages, interwoven thematic expressions, multiple points of view, and a fluid sense of time and space (Khorrami “Toward a Literary Laboratory…”13).

In applying these fictional elements, Mandanipour has been keen to develop a type of fiction which does not represent a familiar and documented social world. Therefore, Mandanipour’s use of fictional devices connects with his effort to develop an experimental mode of fiction in The Courage of Love. Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami refers to this feature of Mandanipour’s work as a literary laboratory: “I believe Mandanipour has produced a similar ‘shock’ in contemporary Persian fiction by enunciating general principles of a literary laboratory where various issues and problematics can be examined, investigated, analyzed and talked about from a literary point of view. This is the most valuable accomplishment of Mandanipour’s stories,” (12).

The novel begins with a prologue and continues in seven “books,” each of which focuses on one of the main characters. The content of “Book One” begins with the very first minutes of the devastating 1990 Manjil-Rudbar earthquake.37 Roja and Davoud, a wife and husband with two daughters, are struggling to survive the earthquake and unsuccessfully trying to rescue Golnar, their older daughter. “Book Seven” is about the very first days after the earthquake, after burying Golnar. The earthquake is the narrator’s excuse for revealing a critical psychological and

37 The Manjil-Rudbar Earthquake occurred on June 21, 1990. The cities of Rudbar, Manjil, and Lusahn and about 700 villages were destroyed, and over three hundred villages were affected. 100,000 houses sustained major damage or collapsed resulting in 40,000 fatalities, and 60,000 people were injured. Approximately 500,000 people were left homeless. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1990_Manjil-Rudbar_earthquake
social situation through a journey to post-revolutionary Iran and Iran–Iraq war (1980–88) in books two through six.

- Summary

At the beginning of The Courage of Love, the older daughter of Roja and Davoud, Golnar, is trapped under the earthquake’s rubble and is in danger of dying. Roja angrily shouts at Davoud and calls him “Na Mard,” meaning that he is “not a man.” Golnar dies and Davoud is devastated. Prior to this time, Roja has repeatedly humiliated Davoud because of his fantasies and detachment from real life. But this time is totally different; Davoud does not really remember whether he had tried to save Golnar’s life, or had just saved his own and forgotten his daughter. Davoud blames himself, because he thinks that he could have saved Golnar’s life but he did not. He comes out of their home distracted and takes refuge in the home of Yahya, an albino man who is his only friend in town, unaware that Yahya deliberately intends to destroy him. Yahya dishonestly claims that he has been having a secret love affair with Roja, and Davoud, more distraught than before, leaves the house, goes to the river, and commits suicide. Roja and Davoud’s final years of marriage were full of difficulties that came from building their own house, which is now the grave of their daughter.

Another main character of the novel is Kakai, Roja’s cousin, who had proposed to Roja before Davoud did. He has gone to the battlefield of the Iran–Iraq war, counting on his contract with Roja: “[Roja says] come back. Maybe . . . I don’t know. . . . If you come back alive, we will marry” (133).38 But when he comes back to visit his father, he sees that Roja has married Davoud. Kakai goes back to the battlefront and, years before the earthquake, is killed by Iraqi

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38 Henceforward in this chapter, every reference without the name of the author is from Shahriar Mandanipour’s Dili Dildadigi (The Courage of Love). All translations are mine.
soldiers. At the end of the novel, only Yahya and Roja are alive. In the last scene of the novel, Roja gives her uncle's granddaughter shelter after the girl has lost all her family in the earthquake. Roja accepts her in place of her own daughter, Golnar.

*The Courage of Love* is a character-driven story of the coming of age of Roja and Kakai, and Davoud’s growing perplexity. This does not occur through a straightforward narrative line, but rather through the novel’s specific geometric shape, narrative structure, interwoven voices, and changing focus. In fact, the novel provides a wide field for Mandanipour’s experimental approach to literature.

### Characterization

At first, the geometric shape of *The Courage of Love* is a simple ellipse with two foci: Roja and Kakai, two cousins from two northern Iranian villages, Aushian and Sisko. The former is a beautiful and discerning girl who attracts not only Kakai but also two other main characters of the novel, Davoud and Yahya. Kakai is a simple villager who goes into battle during the Iran–Iraq war. The novel is the story of desire and resistance between Kakai and Roja until Davoud, a high school teacher in Rudbar with a leftist background, sees Roja in the city’s square, falls in love with her, and decides to propose to her. Yahya, the albino man, who has long had his eye on Roja, plans to develop a relationship with her by becoming Davoud’s friend. Davoud and Yahya disrupt the simple geometric arrangement of the novel’s ellipse and change it to a more amorphous shape with four foci.

These four characters create a significant amount of centrifugal force. Roja and Kakai are the subjects of positive becoming. Roja’s focus changes from her domestic life, especially after the earthquake and Davoud’s suicide, toward a more social one. Similarly, Kakai, who at first sees everything in terms of his own desires and instincts, eventually develops a heroic approach
which leads him to sacrifice himself for a collective goal. On the other hand, Davoud, who begins with a global understanding of the world, gradually loses his self-confidence and becomes perplexed. Kakai, who knows only his own village, ultimately sacrifices himself for his greater homeland, Iran (Mandanipour 101). By contrast, Davoud, who begins the novel as a very cosmopolitan thinker, is captured by a small house in a small town. In one possible interpretation of the novel, these two opposite movements represent two opposite social trajectories in Iran after the revolution: the rise of self-confidence among the lower classes as a result of their participation and sacrifices in the revolution and the Iran–Iraq war, and the corresponding suppression and fall of the intellectual class because of their idealism.

Kaki must choose between returning to the isolated village of Sisiko and facing death in the battlefield. But as soon as he arrives home, his father dies and Kakai must bury him (451). Now, since his father is gone and Roja is living with a stranger, he has no reason to remain in Sisiko, so “Kakai went down into the fog without looking back. None of the people of Sisko would ever see him again” (463). After completing his mandatory service, he chooses to stay at the battlefront as a volunteer. He uses his military experience and, gradually, becomes a hero of the platoon. His increasing self-confidence shows itself in his language; over time, his shy and timid tone changes to an aggressive and courageous one.

By contrast, Davoud, escaping from imprisonment, is forced to leave Tehran, where he has participated in a variety of social and political activities. He fights his loneliness by reading and thinking about the ways in which people could live better, “[A] genuine thought must end all these disasters. A thought that, as soon as is told, would make all people understand how ridiculous their prejudices, their deceptions, their conflicts, and their hatreds are. I'm looking for this thought” (314). Because Davoud needs someone to talk to and he could not find anyone, he
becomes increasingly frustrated. So he tries to content himself with his small house, he devotes himself to his wife, and he becomes a family guy. But he cannot do these things completely, because of his cosmopolitan ideas (390, 401).

These two fictional moves, alongside the contradictions between the main characters, become more important when the reader encounters the elemental features assigned to them: air, earth, water, and fire. The story mostly revolves around the interactions between Davoud (water) and Yahya (fire) that move around Roja (air). The other part of the novel, no less important than the first part, is the narrative of Kakai (earth) as a villager and later a warrior, which corresponds to the changing meaning of earth from soil to motherland, from the most worthless part of the Earth to the wisest part of existence, Adam. 39

The novel is full of each character’s internal dialogues or, more precisely, dialogue between two or more tendencies within that individual. The farther apart the characters, the more they talk to themselves. Davoud’s feeling of having been betrayed, Roja’s feeling of guilt, Kakai’s heroic action without heroic thought, and Yahya’s treacherous thoughts are revealed through the characters’ internal dialogue.

Reviewing the events of the revolution through his memories, Davoud, who had had left the home after a fight with Roja, suddenly sees himself close to Roja and Zeitoon, but he does not want to contact them and justifies this feeling in an imagined dialogue with Roja. He says, It was you who did not understand it. You humiliated me with that morally corrupt Yahya. I am not

39 Based on the legend of Adam’s creation, Earth’s soil is described as a “part of Hell,” meaning the lowest part of Earth’s existence. Atiq-i Neyshabouri (Sourabadi), Mohammad. Qesas-i Quran-i Majid, 25.
a brave man. I should run away from you. I could not imagine that when I was going to school, you invited him to our house. (790)

This is not just an internal conversation with Roja expressing Davoud’s misery and perplexity, it also shows how his language is becoming simpler and his accent is changing. He tries to understand how, by limiting his world to Roja, he has lost all his dreams, and at last, he has lost Roja too.

Roja returns to their damaged house and, unable to break with the past, blames herself for what has happened:

I was so ignorant that I rebuked him [Davoud], because he did not work to make more money, because he wanted to read so that he could learn to understand everything on behalf of the people. . . . Kakai . . . get out of my mind . . . I was wrong, I was bad [to you] and now I'm going to pay. Don’t come to my mind anymore. . . . (923).

But her feeling of guilt cannot keep her from continuing her life, because she must take care of herself, Zeitoon, her father, and later Titi Pari, her uncle's granddaughter.

Kakai’s actions are heroic, but his thoughts and motives are simple. He fights only because he wants to forget Roja and avenge the death of his friend, Samir, who was killed by the Iraqis. He can do the latter, but he cannot forget Roja. In the last moments of his life, instead of thinking about great ideals, he thinks about nature and the woman he still loves.

“Hi, Roja.”

“Hi, Kakai.”

“I came back. It was so hard. I came back so that . . .”
“I know. It was good of you to come. How I was waiting for this moment. It was hard. It is good that you are here.”

Kakai’s last words focus on nature and God: “It was that, this immaculate, small, green blade of grass. . . . Accept me, God. Come and put your hand on my wound. . . .” (689–90). What remains for him at the end is language that ties him to his beloved, Roja and God.

By contrast, Yahya does not think about love, nature, or people. He wants to possess Roja, even in a catastrophic situation like the earthquake. Roja, wanting to find Davoud, goes to Yahya’s home and, inevitably, stays there for a night. Roja’s sleeping there offers Yahya the best opportunity to possess her, but he cannot. Angry at his own inaction, he reminds himself of what he sees as his superiority: “No. I do not want to be like the dotty Davoud whom women like for his lovely words and his sacrificing nature, and the way they can control him. [I am not like that idiot and can’t wait]. . . . Not tomorrow. I want the present moment” (814). Although Yahya’s treacherous thoughts and actions cause Davoud’s suicide, he still cannot achieve his main goal, attracting Roja and making love to her.

**Point of View and Narrative Structure**

Four narratives, several changing points of view, and the four classical elements work together to build the novel; they make *The Courage of Love* one of the most complex contemporary Persian novels. By “points of view,” I mean not only the viewpoints from which the characters see, represent, and sometimes recreate the world, but also the perspectives that are put into the novel by the narrator. This perspective comes from the narrator’s choosing specific words and putting them in a precise order to create a fictional atmosphere.

Furthermore, each narrator/character talks about his or her story from a variety of points of view; sometimes the characters talk about their life experiences in the third-person limited mode
of narration, sometimes they carry on internal monologues, and sometimes the narration is expressed in a stream of consciousness mode. What constructs the uncertainty and ambiguity in *The Courage of Love* is a dialogue between and within these various voices. Functioning points of view on a wide continuum from personal to archetypical create the four main themes of *The Courage of Love*.  

- **Four Main Archetypical Themes**

A close reading of *The Courage of Love* guides the reader to its four main themes: Adam’s creation legend, feelings of guilt, the four basic elements, and external and internal conflicts. The first mostly refers to legendary narratives, the second concerns individual narratives, the third relates to the implied author’s narrative and the symbolic characteristics he assigns to the four main characters, and the last refers to the main characters’ internal monologues and streams of consciousness. Grouping the themes this way aids in the examination of the role of the implied

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40 Uncertainty can also be derived from the openness of the work, based on Eco’s opinion regarding “open work.” According to Eco, literary signs find their meanings when they allow the reader’s shared senses and understandings to contribute to the text (Eco, Chapter 1, 47 - 106). To describe Eco’s opinion, Saeed Honarmand mentions that “open work” is the consequence of a paradox in the text, the paradox of the existence of structural weakness and structural strength simultaneously. By structural weakness, he means the existence of some fictional vacuums, some hidden things in the text which let the reader participate in the process of the creation of fictional meaning (Honarmand, 65). In *The Courage of Love*, for example, Davoud loses his beliefs and principles in order to obtain Roja and build a small house, but nowhere does he talk directly about his beliefs. These hidden things should be in the domain of the reader’s understanding and experiences. In other words, the reader can work with a fiction only if it represents something familiar to him. By structural strength, Honarmand means the fictional wholeness in which everything serves the ultimate meaning of the text. Therefore, the fictional meaning is the outcome of this paradox which shapes the relationship between the writer, the reader, and the text (Honarmand, 65).
author and the characters of *The Courage of Love*, including nature and war, in revealing the function of these theme.

1. **Adam’s Creation Legend**

The reader encounters the legend of Adam’s creation and fall in the prologue of *The Courage of Love* through the four interwoven voices of the narrator, Roja, Davoud, and nature itself. Nature appears as a character that acts on its own and to which the other characters respond. Amidst these narrations, the legend of Adam’s creation is also narrated from a religious book, *Legends of the Holy Quran*, and provides an archetypical framework for the novel through the complex and conflicting relationships between earth, soil, and apocalypse. These archetypical elements engage in a dialogue with the deadly earthquake described in the first pages of Book One.

The first indication of the challenge of uncertainty in *The Courage of Love* is revealed in the legend of Adam’s creation, which is recounted in fragments in the prologue, and which continues as a source of meaning throughout the novel. In Adam’s creation story, God’s will to have a successor is not so powerful that He ignores the Earth’s will. He sends angels down to the Earth to bring Him a part of its soil, but He requires them to get the Earth’s permission first. The Earth does not allow Gabriel, Michael, or the seraphim to take its soil. Then comes Ezra’eil’s turn. This time, God did not tell him to respect the Earth’s wish. “When Ezra'eil (AS) tried to take the soil of the Earth, it asked him not to. Ezra'eil said, ‘I am commanded by God to take your soil, [He is my God] and I cannot accept your request.’ ” (Atiq-i Neyshabouri, 25). Thus, the Earth’s soil, combined with water, becomes the basic material of humans’ bodies.

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41 Atiq-i Neyshabouri (Sourabadi), Mohammad. *Qesas-i Quran-i Majid*.

42 My translation.
The Earth transcends its original nature as an inanimate entity, becoming an agent that God allows to follow its own will; this agency is passed on to Adam and his descendants, particularly the novel’s main characters. But the agency of the characters becomes limited by outside circumstances that determine their fate. The more the characters can act freely, the more the novel achieves uncertainty.

Alongside the earth’s soil, water can add two characteristics to human beings, sorrow and happiness, but the share of sorrow is much greater than of happiness: “Then God rained on the soil of Adam forty days of sorrowful rain, till the soil turned to mud. Then He rained on the soil just one hour of happy rain. . . .” Introducing water as one of the components of the novel’s legendary narrative reveals a new theme of *The Courage of Love*: man’s unavoidable sorrow.

Happy scenes are rare in *The Courage of Love*; its characters are the subjects of sorrow despite their will. They are condemned to live in a state of war, natural disaster, and insecurity. Among them, only Davoud has chosen the place he lives despite his loneliness and isolation in his homeland, Iran. But he is not satisfied; his intellectual characteristics lead him to think about ways to improve an unpleasant world, and because he cannot do anything about it, he becomes disappointed. Sorrow also overwhelms Kakai, although he struggles with his sadness by accepting his heroic and honorable role in the war. Both the disappointed Davoud and the brave Kakai die in the novel. With all her up and downs, Roja has a sense of satisfaction in her life, despite the horrors of the earthquake. She can even resist Yahya, who tries to entice her into adultery. Yahya’s frustration and failure is that he cannot impose his will on Roja.

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43 Davoud’s father was an army colonel during the shah’s regime. He, his wife, and his daughter fled from Iran during the 1979 revolution, but Davoud did not go with them and chose to remain in Iran. He opposed his father because of his father’s job and loyalty to the Shah. Davoud thought that something was wrong in Iran that required people like him to stay and try to correct it (334-35, 729).
The novel begins with the legendary contribution of Ezra'eil to humans’ death, which is embodied in natural and manmade causes of death. It immediately raises a question: what is the impact of these causes on the novel’s main characters’ minds? How does each character deal with the others during and after the events like earthquake and war? This question cannot be answered without referring to another main theme of *The Courage of Love*, the feeling of guilt.

2. Feeling of Guilt

The worlds of the novel’s characters are where they encounter death, as well as suspense, uncertainty, and feelings of guilt which follow their encounters with death, either in war or the earthquake. One can trace these elements from Adam’s creation legend through the novel’s individual narratives. *The Courage of Love* stresses the incompleteness and dissatisfaction of its characters’ worlds that lead to uncertainty.

Uncertainty lies in the way in which events affect the characters, the processes by which the characters encounter suspicion and doubt regarding the meaning of life, war, the earthquake, and their relationships with others. They are drawn by two poles of consistency and inconsistency, stability and instability, in both their mental and physical lives. The field of feelings appears in individual narratives, where events affect the main characters and make them face themselves and others. Here, I argue that the various characters’ feelings of guilt, as a sign of the novel’s suspense and uncertainty, show their strong ties to Iran’s dominant religious and traditional culture, as well as influencing how they deal with Iran’s contemporary issues.

The junction between legendary and individual narratives in the novel appears in the last sentence of Adam’s creation legend, which acts as the starting point of the individual narratives, the recounting of the “forty days of sorrowful rain” as opposed to “just one hour of happy
rain...” One of the individual narrators, Davoud, links this moment, the moment of creation, to Judgment day, when he talks about the earthquake:

Hello, the mothers of mothers, hello the deaths of fathers, hello my daughter. It’s the time [of resurrection]. Come here, insistent ghosts of the past. Become alive, our ancestors, because the horn is blown. It is blown and all of us are gathered [to our fathers]... (Mandanipour *The Courage of Love* 11)

The reference to the apocalypse reveals the related concept of guilt: in Islamic thought, the apocalypse is a direct result of the existence of guilt among the people.

The reader becomes familiar with Roja first through her interior monologue in the prologue of the novel, where she is talking about the night before the earthquake, the last night of safety and integrity

I told [myself] everything is in its own place. The plate is in its own place, husband is in his own place, the hidden dreams of guilt are in their own places... right and

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44 My translation.

45 There are many Quranic verses and prophetic narratives (hadiths) regarding the relationship between the guilt of people and the occurrence of judgment day. In *Ershad Al-Qolub* by Mohammad Hassan Deilami, Mohammad, the prophet, explains the signs of the judgment day: “The hour (Day of Judgment) will not come until knowledge (*Ilm*) is restricted, earthquakes increase, seditions (*fetneh-ha*) increase, and hedonism and hubbub appear, and your desires/whims increase... and adultery spreads and (ostentatious) building/urbanity rises... and the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice decrease, and the prayers are wasted, and the desires are followed...” These signs and conditions categorize the guilt of the people as a precursor to judgment day.

wrong are in their own places . . . submission and patience are in their own places. . . .” (Mandanipour The Courage of Love 11).46

Just when she feels safe, the earthquake occurs and destroys her apparent certainty and calmness. The rest of the novel suggests that the earthquake catalyzes the process of conflict and integration. Unable to understand the actual, physical causes of the earthquake, Roja reviews her own thoughts and deeds, considering the earthquake to be the result of her guilt:

I don’t know. I fear that I have been with the albino male [Yahya] . . . My deed was wrong, that Yahya’s foul eyes looked at me . . . thus it [the earthquake and the death of her daughter, Golnar] had to happen to me [because of my guilt]. . . . If I had prayed always, Golnar would be alive now . . . It means that I was like a prostitute and I didn’t know. (Mandanipour The Courage of Love 81–82)47

Roja’s fear of a sexual relationship with Yahya, “the albino male,” is of a result that did not happen; it exists only in her mind. Her disillusionment about the nature of her relationship with Yahya becomes clear when, after staying one night in his house, she tells him, “But you were right. I thought about you in a wrong way. . . . Thank you” (842). This kind of disillusionment can exist for every woman, especially for Muslim women, where a systematic feeling of guilt is nurtured in her mind, “Everything that she does is weighed with the scale of shame. This shame inundates her life, and comes with a feeling of guilt. This constant burden of shame weighs upon a Muslim woman’s every action.”48 Roja’s feelings of guilt, rooted in her internalized conceptualization of the relationship between her guilt and the earthquake/apocalypse, is the

46 English translation is mine.
47 My translation.
basis of her narrative in the novel. But the feeling of guilt cannot defeat her: she does not give up and continues her life, mostly because of her surviving younger daughter, Zeitoon.

Davoud’s feeling of guilt is totally different from Roja’s. The process of Davoud’s change from a complete, integrated person to a paralyzed and disintegrated one starts with his response to the earthquake, when he cannot rescue his daughter, and ends with his reaction to Yahya’s lie about his relationship with Roja. Davoud begins the process of disintegration by fantasizing about reality and founding his narrative more on his mental responses to the events than the events themselves. Consequently, he enters into a “solitary conversation with himself” which is constructed based on “... a new relationship to [his] own self, to [his] particular ‘I’—with no witness . . .” (Bakhtin 145). Although Davoud has always held a kind of solitary conversation with himself, he enters into an absolute loneliness after the earthquake.

The main force behind Davoud’s disintegration is his feeling of guilt about Golnar. No one knows what happened exactly when Davoud went to his home a few moments after the earthquake to rescue Golnar. We only know that Golnar is on the verge of death when Davoud takes her out. Apparently, he runs spontaneously out of the home without thinking about Golnar, and when he realizes a few moments later what has happened and returns to the home, it is too late. Although Davoud feels guilty over her death, his disintegration begins when Yahya strongly accuses him of killing Golnar because of his ineffectual rescue attempt. Davoud’s disappointment reaches a peak when Yahya lies and claims a sexual relationship with Roja (Mandanipour The Courage of Love 765–74). In contrast to Roja’s motivation to stay alive despite her feeling of guilt, Davoud loses all hope, gives up, and commits suicide.

Yahya, the manifestation of evil in the novel, illuminates the hidden aspects of the relationship between Roja and Davoud. His role is no less important than those of the other main
characters. Everything he does is to obtain gold, Roja, and make a “private life” for himself. Yahya’s cleverness derives either from his personality or his position in the novel as the third person. I have borrowed the terms of “private life” and “third person” from Bakhtin. Yahya’s role as the third person in the private life of Roja and Davoud, according to Bakhtin, puts him above them and gives him a position as a person who does not participate in it [their private life], who has no place in it—and therefore sees it in sharp focus, as a whole, in all its nakedness, playing out all these roles but not fusing his identity with any of them (Bakhtin 26).

Yahya, who has his eye on Roja, plans to develop a relationship with Davoud’s family in order to destroy Roja and Davoud’s private life; his “sharp focus” helps him to confuse both Davoud’s and Roja’s actions and thoughts, so their confusion causes to the uncertain understanding of them.

While Davoud’s and Roja’s feelings of guilt arise from their deeds in connection with other people, Yahya rebukes himself for his confidence and compassion, “Remember! Confidence is a wound. Compassion is a wound. The woman who burns in the concupiscence of a black-haired man is a wound. Friendship is a wound, sleeping is a wound . . .” (Mandanipour 420). He has come a long way, from a submissive employee in Khuzistan to a greedy displaced potter in Gilan. He tries to escape from his past by increasing his hatred of others and, actually, he quickly leaves behind his unpleasant past (for himself) and becomes a greedy Satan figure (Mandanipour, 388–90). As one of his goals, he searches for sexual pleasure and deliberately tries to destroy the relationship between Davoud and Roja. After becoming involved in Davoud

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49 My translation.

50 Khuzistan is a province in the south-west of Iran. Gilan is a province in the north of Iran.
and Roja’s private life and attempting to attract Roja, he now counts strongly on Roja’s loneliness after the earthquake and Davoud’s death. But when Roja takes refuge in his home, something unknown is revealed, maybe his hidden human uncertainty, and he cannot do anything.

Kakai’s narrative is an exception in the novel because of his simplicity and his positive agency. He is Roja’s first fiancé, a peasant who cannot express his emotions and always tries to hide them. Because of his shame, it takes a long time for Kakai to express his love to Roja; she forces him into mandatory military service during the war. In contrast to Kakai, Davoud is not so shy and expresses his love to Roja very soon after seeing her. When Davoud’s romantic love enters the scene, Roja prefers to be with Davoud and marries him. Her marriage to Davoud is the starting point of Kakai’s evolution from a flat character to a round one, in Forsterian terms, from certain to uncertain, from an ignorant person to one who is aware (Forster 30). His narrative becomes more and more social and historical and takes a different path from the other narratives of the novel, which are mostly ahistorical and individualistic. He devotes himself to the war, encounters violence, and becomes an army commander. In comparison to Davoud, who gradually loses his agency, Kaka’i gains his, although totally in a different way. Davoud’s world becomes smaller and smaller, and Kakai’s world becomes larger. On a different level, Davoud and Kakai represent water and earth, two of four basic elements in classical thought, and develop another theme of the novel, the world of the four classic elements.

3. The Four Classic Elements

In the scene of the earthquake in northern Iran, the reader enters an eternal time, from the day of creation to resurrection day, from the dawn of existence to eternity; consequently, the earthquake becomes the symbol of apocalypse. Using the legend of Adam’s creation and presenting the
earthquake on an archetypical level, the story goes beyond tangible reality, and the main characters of the novel acquire semi-archetypical characteristics corresponding to the four basic elements in classical thought: air, earth, fire, and water. *The Courage of Love* becomes the story of conflict and attraction among these elements, narrated not only by the narrator but also by their representatives: Roja for air, Kakai for earth, Davoud for water, and Yahya for fire. According to Carl Jung, air corresponds to thinking and reason, earth to sensation, water to feeling and emotion, and fire to intuition. Thus, the novel’s main characters have the established characteristics of each element that put them together or pit them against each other, based on their essences. Roja (thinking) attracts all three other characters, Davoud (emotion), Kakai (sensation), and Yahya (intuition). Based on classical Persian literature, Davoud (Water) and Yahya (Fire) attract and, at the same time, contradict each other (Taslimi 34).

The interdependence between these basic elements and the main characters can be found in the titles of first four chapters of the novel, each of which is about one of the characters. The first chapter, “Bad va Khakistar-i Zeitun” (The Air and the Ash of the Olive) describes Roja’s life after the earthquake. The second chapter, “Khaki Sheiday-i Sarandib” (The Lovelorn Earth of Serendib), refers to the life of Kakai. The third chapter, “Khonyay-i Aab” (The Song of Water), is about Davoud’s life. The fourth chapter, “Douzakh Asham va Atash Asham” (Hell Quaffer and Fire Quaffer) represents Yahya’s being. By titling the chapters in this manner, the author directs the reader to view the novel from both archetypical and real perspectives (Mohammadi 106-107).

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51 Moss, Bonine. “Four Basic Elements,”
http://goldencupcafe.tripod.com/html/the_four_elements.html
The novel deals with legends which are “in principle invisible” and rejects the straightforwardness of narratives as well as the “visibility and audibility of the existence” (Bakhtin, 134). At first, Roja and Kakai are two foci of The Courage of Love. Gradually, Kaki’s importance is diminished and Roja becomes the main character whom all the other characters revolve around. Roja symbolizes the air, without which life is impossible. Air also can be interpreted as the God’s breath which, when blown into the soulless body of Adam, gave him life, without it “there would be a lack of vision and lack of human interaction” (Moss). Kakai represents soil/earth as the main material of man’s body, and he is, not surprisingly, a patient, reliable, solid, and strong person (Moss).

Yahya and Davoud represent fire and water, two interrelated and oppositional elements which “are repeatedly found in Persian poetry” sometimes corresponding to “... the burning flames of passion and the tears of unrequited love” (Lewis 202), ..... sometimes defined as two oppositional elements which cannot gather in one place,

\[ \text{Digar khalaf nabashad miyan-i atash u ab} \]
\[ \text{Digar niaz’ nayuftad miyan-i gurg u ghanamis} \]

There is no longer opposition between fire and water

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52 This legend is a part of Judo-Christian and Islamic mythology: “Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the [God’s] breath of life; and man became a living being.” (Old Testament, Genesis 2:7), http://biblebrowser.com/genesis/2-7.htm.

53 “Empedocles’s ideas about the nature of physical world were widely accepted throughout the Hellenistic, and later the Islamic, world, so that allusions to the four essential elements are repeatedly found in Persian poetry. Fire and water made not only a phonetically pleasant pair—\textit{atash u ab, ab u atash}—but also a magnificent structural opposition with inexhaustible opportunities for oxymorons and other rhetorical artifacts, many of which flow naturally from some basic motifs of Persian poetry—the burning flames of passion and the tears of unrequited love” (Lewis 202).
No longer a struggle between wolf and lamb\textsuperscript{54}

Davoud and Yahya exemplify the characteristics of their elements: Davoud suffers from Roja’s inattention; Yahya burns in the flames of sexual lust. The other main character of the novel, earth/Kakai, is presence from the dawn of existence to eternity. Earth is “part of Hell,” based on the legend of Adam’s creation, and the main material of the human body (along with water). At the same time, it can refer to the motherland for soldiers and warriors; the personality of Kakai, and the source of calmness for everyone. In the middle of a battle, Kakai lies on the earth thinking about the soil.

Kakai intended to understand it; put his hand on the soil. It was hot. He was certain that the soil of every place has its special heart; this heart determines the habit, intent, secret, kindness or maleficence, smell, and taste of the soil (Mandanipour \textit{The Courage of Love} 536).

Because Kakai is far from Rudbar, the main scene of \textit{The Courage of Love}, he mostly talks to himself and to nature, while the other characters of the novel engage in a series of external and internal conflicts that are mostly expressed through their conversations with each other, their interior monologues, and their streams of consciousness.

\textit{4. External and Internal Conflicts}

The two conflicting narratives of Davoud and Yahya create two different voices and two different focal points. The meaning of the novel partially drives from the conflicting intentions of

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Kulliat-i Sa’adi}, ed. ‘Abbas Iqbal, 4 vols., (Tehran: Iqbal, 1363/1984), 4; (\textit{Qasayid-i Sa’adi}): 38 (quoted in Lewis, 209). Also, “Nasir Khosraw (d. 481/1088), in a didactic poem on the ephemeral nature of the world, puts the four elements all into one misra” (hemistrich):

\textit{Gar nadidi tanab’hash bi-bin}

\textit{Jumlagi Khak u bad u atash u ab}

If you have not seen [the four ropes which hold up the tent of the material world], look close:

It’s all earth and air and fire and water” (Lewis 203).
these characters. Aware of Yahya’s desire for Roja, Davoud invites him to his home and deliberately begins a debate about the meanings and conditions of a competition between a rabbit and a fox. Davoud, implicitly, would like to show that he understands the meanings behind Yahya’s behaviors, to challenge him, and to examine Roja’s reaction. Davoud, who indirectly refers to himself as a rabbit and Yahya as fox, says that being a rabbit is his own choice, although he can be a fox:

“Rabbits are so brave that they can say we are rabbits and not foxes.” Roja said.

“And if one day they were stronger than the fox, they were smarter than the fox, but they still wanted to be rabbits, what happens?” Davoud said. . . . Yahya did not show that he had figured out what was the reason of this debate . . . (The Courage of Love 583–84).55

Here, Davoud challenges Yahya: If Davoud/the rabbit does not fight, it does not mean that he is cowardly or stupid; in contrast, it means he believes in his own inviolable principles, one of which is that he cannot force Roja to accept him if she would prefer someone else. Roja, obviously, understands the meaning behind the discussion when she protects Davoud/the rabbit and says, “Rabbits are so brave that they can say we are rabbits and not foxes.” Yahya, unable to recognize his defeat, returns to her home the next day, after Davoud goes to school.

Roja opened the door. . . . The albino man [Yahya] gazed at Roja and . . . said: “Do you tell to Davoud or let me tell him?” . . . “You understood what he meant last night. I hate hide and seek. He knows. I am brave enough to tell him. How long I can hide it?” Roja was calm [for a few minutes] . . . “I do not hide anything. You are

55 My translation.
responsible for your thoughts. He has become nuts . . . What you think of me is none of my business. . . . Go and don’t come here again,” [Roja said] (587–88).\textsuperscript{56} Yahya, wisely and persistently, tries to bend Roja to his will, but she resists; but this resistance does not prevent her from feelings of guilt.

Alongside the dialogues between the novel’s characters, mental speeches and internal monologues play essential roles in \textit{The Courage of Love}. The main characters’ internal conflicts are mostly expressed in their conversations with themselves, their dreams and nightmares, and their streams of consciousness. But their languages, accents (in Bakhtinain terms), and words are totally related to the others’. According to Bakhtin “[T]he word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language . . . but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own” (293). From this perspective, Roja constructs Yahya’s and Kakai’s dreams, Yahya builds Davoud’s nightmares, and Davoud makes Roja’s language.

Roja’s familiarity with Davoud and Yahya, her encounter with the earthquake, and her confrontation with Davoud’s death make her mind and language more complex, especially when she apparently engages with her memories, interior monologues, and streams of consciousness. A fine example is one of her most beautiful interior monologues, “Awake Davoud! The sun has risen! It no longer rains. Stand up and watch me; see my golden hair; see my eyes that you called green like rice fields; see my face in your poem where you describe it as tyranny . . .” (Mandanipour 32).\textsuperscript{57} Despite its isolated and private nature, her poetical monologue is essentially

\textsuperscript{56}My translation.

\textsuperscript{57} My translation. The quotations from \textit{The Courage of Love} are so much more complicated and beautiful in Persian. I cannot translate the spirit and complexity of the Persian words to English and, inevitably, I undoubtedly oversimplify the quotations.
a dialogue with her dead husband which conveys their shared meanings such as the words he
used to describe her in his poems, “ricefields” and “tyranny.”

The other characters’ experiences are the same, especially in difficult situations like
Kakai’s confrontation with death (676–91), Davoud’s remembrance of the earthquake and
Golnar’s death (695–702), and Yahya’s own memories (810–15). They are not alone even in the
most private corners of their minds. It reminds us that their language is uncertain because it is
overwhelmed “with the intentions of others,” (Bakhtin, 293-94). *The Courage of Love* creates a
situation in which each character’s discourse is oriented toward someone else’s (Dentith, 46).58
Bakhtin observes that the basis of dialogism is the biased characteristic of language, which
consists of a variety of points of view and voices. The biased characteristic of language which
creates the dialogical atmosphere of *The Courage of Love* is apparent in the novel, especially
when Davoud and Yahya discuss human behavior (381–84) or when Kakai and Samir, his friend
on the battlefield, have a conversation about martyrdom and self-sacrifice (559). Furthermore,
the characters’ unique voices, tones, intonations, and linguistic behavior change over time. For
instance, Kakai gradually forgets the words which were his tools for communicating in an
isolated village and learns a series of new words that are useful in his new situation. Also,
Davoud’s manner of thinking and his style of talking changes when his mind loses its integrity
and becomes polarized.

All these changes—using Adam’s creation legend and the four classical elements, repeated
shifting of focal points, and differentiating the characters’ languages—contribute to the

experimental characteristic of *The Courage of Love*. Mandanipour has been able to apply one skill which produces the novel’s uncertainty: putting the characters’ voices alongside the narrator’s and making it possible for the characters to have voices of their own, even though their experiences has to pass through the filter of the implied author’s subjective view as expressed in his writing. Applying his experimental approach to fictional forms through multidimensional narrative structures and languages, Mandanipour distances himself from many contemporary Persian authors who have fixed language in their works. He continues his journey to a new approach to fictional uncertainty in *Censoring an Iranian Love Story*.

**Conclusion**

What aspects of Iranians’ lives are shown in *The Courage of Love*? What is the plot of the novel? What is its message? The answer to these questions can be summarized in two words: uncertainty and instability. The setting of the novel is Iran, its characters have Iranian names, and the historical background of the novel is Iran’s history, but despite all of that it gives us remarkably little insight into Iranian culture. That is because Mandanipour insists on a limited role for himself: writing a novel with the least intervention of the author. Therefore, the content becomes a tool for Mandanipour’s formal experiments. In his efforts to eliminate the author’s presence from the novel, “[C]ontent was merely the ‘motivation’ of form, an occasion or convenience for a particular kind of formal exercise” (Eagleton 3). *The Courage of Love* is not about the Iran–Iraq war, the Manjil earthquake, Davood’s life, or Roja’s bravery; all these things are devices for Mandanipour’s experimental approach, which led to his application of the technique of fictional uncertainty.

*The Courage of Love* begins with a prologue and continues in seven sections, named Books, each of which focuses on one of the main characters. Prologue is about the legend of
Adam’s creation, making reference to the four basic elements of air, earth, water, and fire. The content of “Book One” begins with the very first minutes of the devastating 1990 Manjil-Roudbar earthquake through which the plot of the novel mingles with archetypes and legends. Although the earthquake seems to be the narrator’s excuse for revealing a critical psychological and social situation through a journey to post-revolutionary Iran and the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88), the novel shows very little about Iran. In other words, all of the events which in the novel occur in the setting of Iran can in fact happen anywhere around the world. What happens to the novel’s characters could happen for any character in any other novel. The heaviness of the formal aspects of novel shows Mandanipour’s interest in experimentation.

The amount of the story one may be able to picture is deeply dependent on the imagination of the reader, although it is restricted by the writer’s approach to archetypes as well as fictional devices and themes. Although The Courage of Love subtly hints at the legend of Adam’s creation and the four classic elements, as well as the Rudbar earthquake and the Iran–Iraq War, the goal of the novel is narrating its characters’ individual histories as they engage with their destiny, their nature, and natural and man-made catastrophes. Showing the characters’ mental challenges makes the novel more and more uncertain.
CHAPTER FIVE

CENSORING AN IRANIAN LOVE STORY:
A TURNING POINT IN MANDANIPOUR’S EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH

I have tried to dissuade Dara from what he is planning, but I have been no match for him. I see clearly how my love story is moving in a direction that I never intended. The story is falling apart. The characters are each playing a different tune without being able to collectively create symphonic harmony. I have to think of something. I have to do something.

Shahriar Mandanipour

*Censoring an Iranian Love Story*, 230

Mandanipour wrote *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* for a western audience during a fellowship at Brown University. Comparing the processes of writing his two novels, *The Courage of Love* written in Iran and *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* written in the United States, he said “I was working on *Dili Dildadigi* for more than eight years. I revised it three to four times and changed it a lot, because I wanted the author be absent from the novel. I wrote *Censoring* in less than one year because its narrator was my alter-ego and I didn’t have any trouble creating the narrator . . . Because of the novel’s form and its [Western] audience, the narrator of *Censoring* should talk directly and escape from complexities. In the process of writing *Censoring*, I was under the influence of America’s atmosphere and American literature that encourage the writer/narrator to talk clearly.” Mandanipour’s explanation shows us why *Censoring* was simpler to create than *The Courage of Love*. 
The writer of *Censoring an Iranian Love Story*—the alter-ego of Shahriar Mandanipour—talks from the within of the novel. He asks why the characters challenge him and the novel’s plot with their active existence. The writer’s presence in the novel makes him the object of narration who is blamed by the novel’s characters. The writer’s being subject and object simultaneously not only disturbs the sharp boundaries between himself and the novel’s characters, but also causes to a kind of fictional uncertainty based on interwoven roles and point of views. Because of the presence of the writer inside the novel, the existence of narrative turning points, and the writer’s gaze on the reader who stands outside the novel, *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* reminds us of Diego Velazquez’s *Las Meninas*.

*Las Meninas* (1656), by Spanish artist Diego Velazquez (1599–1660), has a complex and enigmatic composition which raises questions about reality and illusion and creates an uncertain relationship between the viewer and the figures depicted.\(^{59}\) The artist is present in his own painting and stands before the canvas. His gaze guides us to somewhere outside the painting, toward the king and queen, who should be the objects of the work the artist shows himself painting. The viewer, who is actually positioned near the king and queen, can see their reflections in a small mirror. Thus, there are three representations of reality, one in the mirror, the other on the canvas Velasquez working on which is invisible to the spectator, and third one, *Las Meninas*, where Diego Velazquez stands at its center. In fact, the viewer faces an invisible work of art within a visible context. Michel Foucault considers this painting to be one of the first presented scenes of modernity where a person becomes the subject and the object at the same time, where humans begin to see themselves as objects, and where modern medicine,

\(^{59}\) file:///C:/Users/Mani/Desktop/Las%20Meninas/Las%20Meninas%20-%20Wikipedia,%20the%20free%20encyclopedia.htm
psychology, sociology, as well as the humanities in general come to exist. Man becomes the object of his own investigation; it is the dawn of the novel and the autobiography.  

Picture 1 *Las Meninas*, Diego Velazquez, (1656).

I argue that the same thing happened in post-revolutionary Persian literature when authors began to look at themselves and others as the objects. The pinnacle of looking at oneself as an object was reached in the first decade of the twenty-first century, when many Iranians began to write their memoirs in other languages such as English, French, and German. These authors were more frank and wrote more straightforwardly, as if writing in languages other than Persian freed them from the dominant power of censorship and allowed them to be honest about their personal experiences and desires. Azar Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003) and *Things I’ve Been Silent About* (2008)—both written in English—and Marjaneh Satrapi’s comic book *Persepolis*

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(2004) in French are examples of this kind of writing.\footnote{Other examples are Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran (2005) by Roya Hakaian, In the House of My Bibi: Growing Up in Revolutionary Iran (2008) by Nastaran Kherad, Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran (2011) by Shahla Talebi.} In addition to memoirs, some Persian fiction writers began to doubt their understanding of reality and tried to see, analyze, and present everything from an uncertain perspective in other languages.\footnote{Although seeing himself as an object is not unprecedented in Persian literature, it became stronger in post-revolutionary writings. Sangi bar Goorî (A Stone on a Grave, 1979) by Jalal Al-i Ahmad is the most well-known autobiography in which the author talks directly about his sexual and masculine desires, desires that Iranian writers usually hide.} Although Farnoosh Moshiri’s works are good examples of fictional uncertainty,\footnote{Iranian-born writer Farnoosh Moshiri has published plays, short stories, and translations in Iranian literary magazines before the 1979 revolution and in anthologies published outside Iran in the 1980s. In 1983, she fled her country after a massive arrest of secular intellectuals, feminists, and political activists. She lived in refugee camps in Afghanistan and India for four years before emigrating to the U.S. in 1987. Her novels and collections include At the Wall of the Almighty (1999), The Bathhouse (2001), The Crazy Dervish and the Pomegranate Tree (2004), and Against Gravity (2006), http://www.farnooshmoshiri.net.} I chose Shahriar Mandanipour’s Censoring an Iranian Love Story because the writer, the alter ego of Mandanipour, is presented as one of the characters and is judged by both the reader and the other characters. The success and uniqueness of Censoring drives from the role of its author/narrator as both the subject and object of narration.\footnote{Henceforward, I refer to the novel as Censoring.}

Shahriar Mandanipour’s Censoring an Iranian Love Story (2009) works by considering every character, from the author to the censor, as both the subject and object of narration under a totalitarian regime after the 1979 Iranian revolution.\footnote{“Shahriar Mandanipour, a distinguished Iranian novelist and short story writer, was prohibited from publishing in his native country between 1992 and 1997. He came to the United States in 2006, as an}
imagination applied in *Censoring* takes its characters to a journey through post-revolutionary Iran’s social, historical, and cultural circumstances and puts them face-to-face as simultaneously the objects and subjects of the narrative.66

**Summary**

*Censoring an Iranian Love Story* interweaves two storylines. The first narrative is of an author named Shahriar Mandanipour—who has fought for years against the all-powerful censor at Iran’s Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance—and Mr. Petrovich, the censor. Their narrative is constructed within a conflict embodied in their endless dialogue.67 The second narrative is the love story of Sara, a young girl, and Dara, a man.68 Dara falls in love with Sara among the dirty shelves of a library, where they trade secret messages encoded in the pages of their favorite books, such as *Blind Owl*, a novel by often-censored Iranian writer Sadiq Hidayat, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince*, and Milan Kundera’s *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Shahriar tries to write a love story in a country where boys and girls cannot legally be together,

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66 In *Censoring*, Mandanipour shows the reader a new face of uncertain imagination different from his works in Persian. I explained his uncertain approach in “Shatter the Stone Tooth” in chapter one of this dissertation.

67 The censor’s name in *Censoring an Iranian Love Story*, Petrovich, is also the name of the interrogator in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*. Mandanipour creates a strong intertextual relationship between his novel and Dostoevsky’s.

68 “We get the love story itself, but also the author’s commentary on his constant battle with the Ministry of Culture over what he is permitted to write, and what is forbidden, so that to read this novel is to read both a simple love story and the simultaneous, terrible censorship of that story.”

either in public or in private. Writing about Sara and Dara’s meetings and desires would place Shahriar in as much danger as his lovers.

We read not only the scenes Shahriar has written but also the sentences and words he has crossed out or merely imagined, knowing they can never be published. Thus, the story’s movement is made possible through four vehicles, as Chandrakas Choudhury observes: “. . . Dara, Sara, [the] writer, [and the] censor [that] generate the peculiar shape and sound of Mandanipour’s text.”69 The novel is completed when the author’s characters begin to disobey him and act based on their own consciousness. At the end of the novel, Shahriar confesses that he no longer has any control over the story or its characters.70 This fictional crisis raises some complex issues, such as the conflicts between the author and Censoring’s relatively individualized characters on the one hand, and between the characters on the other. The study of these complexities is the first goal of this chapter.

A Shift in Shahriar Mandanipour’s Writing Style

Mandanipour could only write this kind of fiction after coming to the United States. He came to the US in 2006, as an International Writers Project Fellow at Brown University, and became an exile after publishing Censoring. Censoring is a distinctive break from his previous works, in which he creates fictional uncertainty mostly based on defamiliarizing familiar concepts and avoids using his own experiences as material for his fictions. In other words, Censoring is mostly derived from his life experience as a writer in Iran under a totalitarian regime, something he had never directly written about before. Two parallel transitions, first in his personal condition, from

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70 Shahriar Mandanipour, Censoring an Iranian Love Story, 294.
a man living in his own country to an exile, and second in his writing style, from an impersonal narration to autobiography, show an incomparable fictional experience embodied in *Censoring*.

Explaining the shift in his writing style, some critics refer to the western audiences for whom Mandanipour wrote his novel, readers who are accustomed to direct and clear prose. He acknowledges the audience’s impact on his writing style, referring to his new position as an exiled writer finding new opportunities for expressing himself:

> Americans, especially in their literature, talk directly and clearly. [Here] the [cultural and social] atmosphere often encourages me and gives me self-confidence to talk openly about my feelings. Therefore, the form of this novel is based on clarity and unlocking, instead of ambiguity and locking.

This opportunity opened a way for frank and straightforward literary expression, unlike the complicated writing style that characterizes his Persian-language works published in Iran.

The specificity of fictional uncertainty in *Censoring*, like *Las Meninas*, is its approach to the novel’s characters as the potential subject-objects of narration. This kind of uncertainty, alongside his approach to non-Iranian audiences, requires Mandanipour to use simple and direct language. Here, his challenge was that he could not write in English; he needed someone for a kind of collaborative translation from Persian to English.

Mandanipour grew up in Iran with the Persian language as his mother tongue. As I explained in the previous chapters, he has focused on the Persian language as one of the elements

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72 It was a big challenge for Mandanipour, as he mentions, “I wasn’t only physically in exile, but I had been exiled from my mother tongue.” For him, because of his fiction’s close tie to the Persian language, it was difficult to acclimate to English.
of his uncertain imagination and fictional uncertainty. Entering the US, he faced both threats and opportunities. One of the threats, as he himself mentions, is his disconnection from the Persian language and subsequent loss of his language abilities. In contrast, living in the US gave him an opportunity to transform from Persian—a language not only full of metaphors and complexities, but also occupied by fears and suspicions—to American English in which Mandanipour can talk directly about his feelings, interests, and personal preoccupations. Because of his weakness in English, offering his novel to a Western audience was possible only by working with a translator who could mediate this relationship. Mandanipour’s challenge was to write in a manner which could be translated into English without too many difficulties. Although Sara Khalili, his translator, helped him extensively to find proper English synonyms for Persian words, phrases, and sentences, he was forced to change his writing style, which became more simplified and less poetic in comparison to his works in Persian. He describes this difficulty:

Although I tried to use relatively simple Persian, sometimes Sara Khalili and I talked for two hours about the best synonym for a word or a phrase. I tried to explain the highlights of the words and their different meanings and functions in different language environments in order to guide her to find the most appropriate word or phrase in English. (Interview 2012)

This kind of collaborative translation attracted the critics and raised the question of how the mechanism of fictional creativity operated within it. James Wood refers to the contradiction between the Iranian nature of the text, as well as the novel’s themes, which Iranian writers cannot talk about, and English, the language into which it is translated: “His book is thus acutely displaced: it had to have been written with an audience outside of Iran in mind, but in a language
that this audience would mostly not understand. . .”. Marie Ostby discusses the embedded roles of the narrator, the author, and the audience of the novel with regard to their voices and languages:

On the most basic level, the words of the novel in English are dictated not just by Mandanipour, but also by Khalili as translator. . . Subversively and self-consciously, Mandanipour dislocates his own voice from that of his narrator and his own language from that of his audience, disturbing the political agendas and appropriations typically available to the memoirist’s “transparent self” and testimony. (143)

This embedded dislocation is one of the most important constituent elements of uncertainty in Censoring. Who is (are) the subject(s) of narration in the novel? Who is (are) the main character(s) to whom we should look? More important, why should we consider them? To answer these questions, I have had to search for the existence of potential objects of narration in and outside the text. I argue that the most important yet unnamed object of narration in Censoring is the current totalitarian regime and the resulting situation in Iran. From this viewpoint, the novel sets up a paradoxical environment: it scrutinizes the totalitarian situation through the existence of different objects of narration. Here, I will explain the totalitarian situation in Iran that is the dominant focus of the novel. Then I will introduce the other characters and possible subjects: Mandanipour as the actual/historical author, whom I call Mandanipour; the alter-ego of Mandanipour, whom I call Shahriar; Mr. Petrovich the censor; Dara; and Sara.74

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73 http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2009/06/29/090629crbo_books_wood

74 Dividing the novel’s author into this trinity of interrelated personifications is difficult even in theory, because no distinct line separates them. Mandanipour, Shahriar1, and Shahriar2 continuously merge into and separate from each other.
Fiction against Totalitarianism

In *Censoring*, Shahriar Mandanipour offers us a dark satiric explanation of a totalitarian situation in a way similar to that of Frantz Kafka, George Orwell, and Milan Kundera. They, and Mandanipour, show us the hidden irony in the situation, as well as the words and actions of the totalitarian government’s agents. It is not an accident that most novels about an authoritarian situation are full of satire and irony. These authors want to illustrate the stupidity of a stern and harsh government and remind us of the importance of laughter, laughter as a weapon against a ruling group that is inherently stupid and, because of its stupidity, is fearful of intelligent people.

*The Unbearable Lightness of Being* is a good example of another work in which sex plays a liberating role for the protagonists, as it does in *Censoring*. Sex becomes the weapon of Kundera’s protagonists for separating themselves from the totalitarian regime. The main characters of *Censoring* consider love in the same light, as a tool for liberating themselves. In both cases, the protagonists take refuge in an individual desire in order to escape from an undesirable social situation. Despite these similarities, Mandanipour argues that the liberatory essence of *Censoring*’s characters’ love is totally different from that of sex in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*:

For the protagonists of Kundera’s work, sex is a response to the government’s strangulation, while the government does nothing about their making love. The protagonists of my work do not have sex with each other; love in *Censoring* faces more limits than sex in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. The government wants to control Sara and Dara’s love. In fact, when Kundera writes about love and sex, he is not involved with the government, but I become involved with the Islamic government when I talk about love.75

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75 Personal interview with Shahriar Mandanipour, December 2012.
By being involved with the Islamic government, Mandanipour is obliged to work against his novel’s integrity and split *Censoring* into three parts.

*Censoring* contains three texts in one: the “novel” accepted by the censor in bold font, the commentary on the novel in regular font, and the crossed-out sentences and phrases. By crossed-out parts, the reader can see “what he’s rejecting, sometimes in deference to the censor and sometimes because they don’t fit the growing love relationship” (Kirkus Review). In the first pages of *Censoring*, Shahriar, the alter ego of Mandanipour, recounts a demonstration outside the doors of Tehran University, the scene of a struggle between students, police, and the members of the Party of God (*Hizbollah* in Persian). The narrator describes the beautiful, exotic (to Westerners) appearance of the protagonist of *Censoring*, Sara, who “[h]old[s] a sign that reads: DEATH TO FREEDOM, DEATH TO CAPTIVITY” (4). Although this paradoxical slogan appears in *Censoring* only once, I will return to it frequently in the future. The slogan demonstrates the ironic positions of the characters of the novel under a totalitarian regime where they want to escape from values such as *freedom*, which the dominant system deforms. With “DEATH TO FREEDOM, DEATH TO CAPTIVITY,” our eyes stare into the totalitarian situation, which is mostly based on a specific version of religious morality, and the protagonists’ resistance to it.

Protecting the dominant religious morality requires a strong system of censorship, which is not only applied to publishing, but to every individual’s activities. *Censoring* shows the reader different aspects of this systematic governing of Iranians’ actions and words, beginning by describing the function of censorship in publishing, where it goes beyond the religious issues and

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76 Hereafter, the numbers in parentheses indicate quotations from *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* by Shahriar Mandanipour.
becomes a tool for controlling the processes of thinking and writing. In theory, the focus of censorship is on words and phrases, but in practice it targets the personalities of the people in order to prepare them to accept the totalitarian regime.

He [Mr. Petrovich, the censor] underlines every word, every sentence, every paragraph, or even every page that is indecent and that endangers public morality and the time-honored values of society. . . . For Mr. Petrovich this job is not just a vocation: it is a moral and religious responsibility. In other words, a holy profession. He must not allow immoral and corruptive words and phrases to appear before the eyes of simple and innocent people, especially the youth, and pollute their pure minds. . . . From his perspective, writers are generally devious, immoral, and faithless people, some of whom are directly or indirectly agents of Zionism and American Imperialism, and they try to deceive him with their tricks and ploys. (9)

The ultimate goal is that all restrictions should be gradually internalized by authors and readers, so that they think, write, and even act in the manner that the system dictates to them. Censoring’s plot casts the futile resistance of the protagonists and Shahriar—in his two fictional positions, the real and the alter-ego of Mandanipour—against the censor’s dictatorial practice.

Mandanipour, the real author of Censoring, narrates his first encounter with the censor, Mr. Petrovich, who, “part detective, part criminal court judge, and quite imposing, was sitting behind a large desk” (35). The topic of the conversation is “[T]hirteen separate points in [Mandanipour’s first book], all sexy words and phrases. . . . I kept thinking, When did I ever write sexy stories? I could not come up with an answer” (33). One of the scenes in one of Mandanipour’s short stories is about a sixty-year-old woman who lives in a ruined southern village and, “mad from thirst and hellish heat, wildly ripped off her clothes and poured the
remaining water in the ewer . . . over her head.” Mr. Petrovich orders Mandanipour not to write such “vile and filthy scenes,” (37) and directly instructs him,

[Y]ou should describe the beauties of nature, the glory of the sky and the galaxy, meaning all the beauties that God has created. Writing of such images you will be blessed in the hereafter as well, because if your readers are intelligent, from your writings they will discover the greatness of God and their faith will be strengthened.

(38)
The dark, ironic absurdity of this conversation reminds us of The Trial by Frantz Kafka, in which Josef K faces interrogation and trial for an unspecified crime.77 Here, Mr. Petrovich’s order puts Mandanipour in a comic yet dangerous predicament that it is not easy for him to get out of. This scene is the starting point of a dysfunctional relationship based on the fear and need of the author.

Although Mandanipour tries to protect his freedom, the eyes of the censor follow him everywhere, even into his studio and bedroom. One night, when he wants to take a quick rest in his studio, he feels a heavy gaze on his writings:

I froze. I realized that the eyes belonged to none other than Ivan Karamazov’s Grand Inquisitor in The Brothers Karamazov; in other words, that same high priest and investigator of the trial of Jesus who, with the most precise scholastic reasoning, somehow accuses Jesus of sedition and sentences him to death. . . . No, those were

77 Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times reviewer, also refers to other events in Censoring that make it similar to Kafaka’s works, “The novel provides a darkly comic view of the Kafkaesque absurdities of living in a country where movies could be subject of review by a blind censor; where records of enrollment at a university can be so thoroughly erased by authorities that a student can come to doubt even his own name.”
not the eyes of the Grand Inquisitor. Drained, I slumped back in my chair. I turned the pages of my story over and said: ‘How are you, Mr. Petrovich?’ I woke up. I looked at my watch. My eyes had closed only for a few seconds. . . . [it had been] a fleeting nightmare. (140)

On another occasion, Mr. Petrovich chases Mandanipour in the street and calls to him in order to give him some advice. Everything suggests that Mandanipour is obliged to tolerate the continual, unpleasant presence of Mr. Petrovich, who is not just a person; he is the eye of a totalitarian regime, the eye of Big Brother to use the Orwellian term.

**Characterization**

There is no way for Mandanipour to escape from the censor, but what about the other protagonists of the novel, Dara and Sara? Can they overcome all the limitations that the totalitarian regime, its agent, and Mandanipour impose upon them? To understand these limitations, we must reread Dara and Sara’s very uncertain and vulnerable relationship that takes shape under the impact of gender segregation in an authoritarian state. In fact, uncertainty is the characteristic of all personal and communal relationships in the novel.

Dara, a former political prisoner who likes cinema and literature, falls in love with a young girl, first through hearing her voice and seeing her shoes in the library. This form of love only happens in countries like Iran with a strict gender segregation system. As Yvonne Zipp, the reviewer of *The Christian Science Monitor* states,

It’s not your typical love story. Boy sees Girl’s shoes under a card catalog at the library . . . and writes her coded letters in book. The writer goes nuts trying to pen a love scene in a country where Boy and Girl can’t legally be together, either in public or private.
At first, they this type of love has a strong potential to become a fantasy full of imagined and suppressed desires, but Dara, with his persistent pursuit of Sara, makes their love more realistic. As a first step, the lovers break the rules of gender segregation and defeat government constructed morality. Eventually, they meet each other face to face, although in an unusual manner and unsecure situation.

Their first meeting occurs at a student demonstration in Tehran, where Sara holds the strange sign of reading “DEATH TO FREEDOM, DEATH TO CAPTIVITY” which, as noted above, shows the anti-totalitarian stance of Censoring. Afterward, they search for the best places to be together, somewhere they are less likely to encounter the religious and moral police. They usually meet in strange places like hospitals and mosques, and only rarely in ordinary ones such as internet cafés and movie theaters.

Often talking about their feelings and future, they show their anxiety regarding their partnership as well as their will to make their own destiny, as if they are aware of their dependence on the text, author, and censorship. One night, After leaving the movie theater, they walk together in silence for a long time …Dara asks:

“What should we do now?”
“Don’t know, ask your fate.”
“Where is your fate?”
“Don’t know, ask our destiny.”

Dara thinks, I pray our destiny is not in the hands of a gutless, miserable, censored writer . . . (98–99).

Their encounter with the writer makes the novel uncertain. All of us—the reader, the narrator/author, Dara, Sara, and Petrovich—lose the storyline. Sara and Dara are right to be
concerned; they find themselves engaged in a series of events, more bitter than sweet, surrounding their love and influenced by the complexity that Mr. Petrovich imposes on the story. Here, two storylines of *Censoring*, the narrative of Mandanipour–Petrovich and the story of Dara–Sara, intersect. Shahriar, the alter ego of Mandanipour, wants to keep Mr. Petrovich away from the story, while Mr. Petrovich wishes to be more active and even play an authorial role in the novel. Because Petrovich falls in love with Sara, he imposes himself upon the story as a character who tries to kill Dara, away from Shahriar’s gaze. The ironic, almost triple role of Mr. Petrovich, as fictional character, censor, and unwelcome co-author, seem about to ruin the novel (293–94).

**Narrative Strategy**

Mandanipour’s narrative strategy for representing this complex situation is based on dividing the subject of narration into two parts: the actual, historical author and his alter-ego. Mandanipour, the actual author, puts his life inside the story of the novel and talks freely about his feelings and actions. It gives the novel an autobiographical element. Shahriar, the alter ego, clarifies the latent psychological and cultural complexities in every single fictional event, yet taunts and attempts to subvert the official morality and its authority and the threatened consequences.

In the very first pages of the novel, Mandanipour turns to the Western audience and exposes his motive for this narration: why did he write this novel? Explaining the bitterness of his earlier works in Persian, Mandanipour describes his difficult situation as an Iranian author and shows his desire to change his mind and his writing style:

> I am an Iranian writer tried of writing dark and bitter stories, stories populated by ghosts and dead narrators with predictable endings of death and destruction. I am a writer who at the threshold of fifty has understood that the purportedly real world
around us has enough death and destruction and sorrow, and that I did not have the right to add even more defeat and hopelessness to it with my stories . . . (7–8)

With *Censoring*, Mandanipour changes his mind and his writing style: “For these reasons . . . I, with all my being, want to write a love story. . . . A story with an ending that is a gateway to light.” Readers might think this should not be difficult, but Mandanipour wants to publish his love story in his homeland, and “Unlike in many countries around the world, writing and publishing a love story in my beloved Iran are not easy tasks” (*Censoring* 8). Inspired by the ideas of Iwona Irwin-Zarecka about collective memory, I argue that because the Islamic government’s official understanding of love runs counter to most Iranians’ understanding of it, talking and writing about love becomes a rallying point in the struggle for freedom.

Mandanipour puts love at the center of his narrative in order to represent the repressive nature of the Islamic government in Iran, but his share of the narration is not limited to this; he also narrates his autobiography, but he does it far from his homeland. In fact, his exiled situation helps him to achieve his dream by allowing him to write for a Western audience.

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78 “When a country’s official memory runs counter to the memory shared by many of its people (the case of Eastern Europe during the postwar decades), truth becomes less of an analytical category and more of a rallying point for the struggle for freedom. In both of these cases, at the center of claimed or reclaimed truth about the past are hard historical facts—events, people, their actions, their writings. In other words, in large-scale efforts to secure remembrance of once forgotten or once-to-be forgotten elements of collective experience, the operational meaning of truth is that of our common sense notion of ‘this really happened.’” (Irwin-Zarecka, Iwona, *Frames of Remembrance: the Dynamic of Collective Memory*. New Brunswick: Tranaction Publishers, 1994, P: 147).

79 Marie Ostby also points out the autobiographical characteristic of the novel as the last layer of three layers of narrative in *Censoring* “First, an interior bolded text recounts a love story between two subversive Iranian youth named Sara and Dara. . . . Second, supplementing this interior plot are bolded and struck-through lines whose inclusion would have made the love story far more political and sexually charged, but have been ‘self-censored’ and do not figure in the love story’s casual chain.
Mandanipour defines two audiences for his story: Westerners and Iran’s next generation. Writing for American audiences gives him the self-confidence to talk openly, clearly, and directly about his feelings. Regarding Iran’s next generation, Mandanipour, whose emphasis on pure literature has been recognized among literary circles in Iran, has changed his mind and talks about the necessity of recording the events that official history does not wish recorded because “severe censorship has taken root in Iran.” He believes that without his writing about Iranians’ struggle and engagement with censorship, this part of Iran’s history will be overlooked. In his narrative strategy, part of this story is narrated by Mandanipour himself and other parts are narrated by his alter-ego.

**Shahriar as a Source of Uncertainty**

Mandanipour calls Shahriar, his alter ego, into the story as the subject and the object of narration at the same time, a character who is captured by fictional uncertainty. Here, uncertainty is caused by the growing power of the novel’s characters, especially Dara and the censor, Mr. Petrovich. Shahriar separates his fictional narrative from Mandanipour’s autobiographical story. More and more, Mandanipour’s historical narratives become decisive, whereas Shahriar’s narratives become more uncertain and doubtful. Finally, it is Shahriar, not Mandanipour, who makes Dara

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Finally, the narrator juggles these two within his own non-bolded frame story as frustrated author also named Shahriar Mandanipour, who struggles against a fictive censoring bureaucrat . . . Mandanipour . . . insert[s] unspecified amounts of autobiographical material into his narrator character.” (73–74).

80 “The problem we Iranians have is that there has always been a gap, a great divide, between our generations. The new generation does not learn from the bitter experiences of the older generation and only winds up repeating them. Perhaps the reason for this repetition is the severe censorship that has taken root in Iran.” Shahriar Mandanipour, “In Iran today, generation must speak to generation,” http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jul/03/iran-islamic-revolution-coup

81 Interview with Mandanipour
and Sara’s love into a tool for liberation. In the very first pages of the novel, Shahriar has so much power that he can alter the fate of Sara, who is supposed to die:

But the girl does not know that in precisely seven minutes and seven seconds, at the height of the clash between the students, the police, and the members of the party of God, in the chaos of attacks and escapes, she will be knocked into with great force, she will fall back, her head will hit against a cement edge, and her sad Oriental eyes will forever close . . . (4)

To save the life of Sara, Shahriar summons a hunchback from *A Thousand and One Nights* to warn Sara about her impending death:

“Hey! Daydreamer, go home! . . . Today death has it in for you. . . . It’s been half an hour since death fell in love with you. . . . Run while you can. . . .’ Sara peeks through the fence and behind the stone wall and sees the figure of a hunchback midget dressed in clothes that seem to belong to centuries ago . . . ‘Do you hear me . . . ? You will be killed . . . Run! The fighting will start any minute now.’” (6–7)

By introducing this legendary character, Shahriar changes the course of the novel and adds a symbolic feature to *Censoring.*

Instead of Sara, the hunchback dies a few minutes later and his corpse passes from hand to hand until the end of the novel.

As a symbol of the Islamic Revolution, the hunchback returns to Sara her life, but a few minutes later he dies and no one can either keep or dispose of his corpse. The useful, short life of the hunchback is replaced by the corpse which symbolizes the extended existence of a

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82 The story of hunchback or humpback is the story of nights twenty-four to thirty-two of *Arabian Nights*. See also: http://www.bartleby.com/16/401.html
totalitarian regime which requires a strong system of censorship. The regime has built a system of censorship to break everyone who, in its eyes, represents the possibility of independent thought that might lead to an autonomous culture. Mandanipour explains it from his viewpoint:

What we independent authors are doing is murder in the eyes of the Islamic Republic. They are right, because every single good story that is written by an Iranian author plays its own role in killing the hellcat who rules Iran. We are punished for this murder when we are obliged to leave our beloved country and live in exile. (Interview 2012)

Shahriar engages with this strong system of censorship and the narrative strategy of Censoring helps him find a way to express the paradoxical situation in which Iranians are captured.

Shahriar also brings humor into the novel by giving extensive examples from everyday life in Iran; these examples show us the government’s efforts to control its citizens individual actions. This control is not just about the words and phrases that an author uses in his or her fiction, but also about every single personal choice, from choosing the name of a newborn to the way one uses a restroom. The absurdity of these controls sometimes surprises us. For instance, Shahriar’s description of the doors of a public restroom in Tehran, which are designed to control men’s peeing, is comic and somber at the same time:

[H]e rushes into a stall and shuts the steel door. On the top of the door, meaning the upper third of the Rule of Thirds in visual arts, a large uneven hole has been cut out so that if someone is standing in the stall and peeing or doing something else, his head can be seen from the outside. In Iran, from a purely religious point of view,

83 In one scene of the novel, Mandanipour faces a great difficulty in choosing his daughter’s and son’s names because the Office of Birth Certificates does not accept his favorite names. (46–50)
peeing while standing up is as unbecoming as participating in certain activities that take place in the bathrooms of bars and discos in the West. (184)

The reader would rarely find a simple yet thoughtful scene like this in Mandanipour’s previous works; Censoring has many such scenes. With its details and in its entirety, this novel represents a distinctive break from Mandanipour’s ahistorical works in Persian.

**Uncertainty and Transition from Utopianism to Individualism**

The two-faced narrator of the novel shows us how the 1979 Iranian revolution, with all its utopian ideals, has led to a struggle for the little things that make up ordinary life. Here, history is not political or even social; it is an individual history that emphasizes the lives of ordinary people through their encounters with the Islamic government’s controls on all aspects of their personal lives. Mandanipour wants to speak on behalf of the controlled Iranians by showing their ordinary, everyday actions. In the periods of oppression, when we are bombarded with lies, when it seems that everything real is condemned to control and censorship, Shahriar narrates Iranians’ suffering in a humorous manner by rejecting this unwelcome official control. He tries to add untold realities to the nation’s memory because he thinks if we lose an essential part of our memory, we lose ourselves.

The most well-known example is the case of women’s compulsory veiling which is generally neglected on behalf of (so called) more important issues such as establishing a new anti-Western government in Iran. On one occasion, Dara confesses his generation’s fault regarding women’s compulsory veiling and talks about his changed viewpoint, from thinking about big problems before and during the first decade after the revolution to considering small ones in recent years:
Well, like many enlightened Iranian men, he is subconsciously ashamed of his own incompetence and inaction, when after the revolution, mothers, sisters, and wives, through coercion and by having pushpins stabbed into their foreheads, were forced to wear headscarves and chadors, and year after year, their human rights were taken away from them. And at this very moment, the stinging slap of a political inspiration lands on his ear. Dara discovers that during all the years that he and his generation fought for utopia in Iran, they were wrong, and they should have instead fought for this small and basic right. (187)

This social transition from searching for collective utopian ideals to defending “small and basic rights” is associated with the fictional alternation from single to multiple narrators throughout *Censoring*. Mandanipour/Shahriar as a unified but two-faced narrator/subject, is gradually replaced by three interrelated subjects of the novel, Shahriar-Petrovich-Dara. The overlapping roles of Mandanipour/Shahriar, Mr. Petrovich, and Dara cause a fictional uncertainty in which the contradictions between them are unavoidable. Here, Mandanipour’s uncertain imagination creates a complicated multi-subject in the novel based on interrelated themes such as love and death, and control and resistance.

**Conflicts and Contradictions**

The powering down of Mandanipour, the actual writer, causes a fictional crisis in which insecure characters—Shahriar, Petrovich, Dara, and Sara—come into conflict with each other in uncertain conditions within an indeterminate environment. The main conflict is between Pertovich and Shahriar, when the former tries imposing on the latter an official moral and religious instruction that requires him to separate Dara from Sara. Unable to force Shahriar to accept his instructions,
Petrovich decides to interfere in the novel and kill Dara. Shahriar is surprised when he reads a scene in *Censoring* that he has not written:

> The man, as if he had merely swatted a fly from around his face, walks away. In his wake, blood gushes from Dara’s neck, and in the final moment of his life he learns the answer of the final question of his life. That phantom was none other than one of the Hashashin...

No, no... Not again.

Tonight I turned on my computer to continue writing my novel. I realized that last night I wrote this scene. What is going on? I have no recollection at all having written such a scene. Why did I kill the central character of my story right in the middle of the novel? And in such weak prose. I had no such intention. (223)

Shahriar understands that Petrovich, who wants to kill Dara and remove him from the story, has written these sentences. But the crisis is exacerbated because Dara believes that Sinbad, Sara’s rich suitor and an agent of the government, is in charge of planning his death. His assumption alerts us to the second conflict of the story, the conflict between Shahriar and Dara, through which the conflict between Dara and Mr. Petrovich arises.

Because Dara does not know Mr. Petrovich and his role in the process of writing the novel, he blames Shahriar and gets angry with him. Dara rebels against the authority of the novel’s author and, despite Mandanipour’s intention, wants to kill Sinbad. Mandanipour imputes Dara’s rage to “years of tolerating oppression, humiliation, and pain” as a person whose destiny always has determined by others.
This is just the point dictators fail to understand, and even if they do, they have no alternative but to increase the ranks of their tortures and censor, until the day when the insanity of revolution floods the streets and burns and kills (*Censoring* 231).

Dara grabs Mandanipour by the throat and declares that he wants to write his “own murder” (231). It seems he is tired of his dependency.

As a sign of his lack of permanent control of his life, Dara remembers the torture that was inflicted on him in prison and mentions that Shahriar cannot even begin to write about the wounds on the soles of his feet. He accuses Shahriar of covering the reality and enduring any humiliation from the censors in order to publish his books: “And you are so proud of being a writer. The hell with your writing. The hell with all your words . . .” (232). Shahriar, ashamed, leaves him alone.

All these complicated relationships show the reader how Dara is captured by the text, and how Mandanipour and Shahriar are captured by the censoring and controlling system and its agent, Mr. Petrovich. When Dara rebels against Shahriar’s control, he shouts at him, “Dara, go home! You are ruining everything. I am a censored writer. I can easily delete you from my novel if I choose” (235). Both Dara and Shahriar engage in a crisis which is based on their incapacity to create their own lives and write their own stories. Such a crisis is not limited to Dara’s encountering Shahriar or Petrovich but extends to show the blindness of censorship—when Dara is invited to work with a group of film viewers in Iran’s Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (90–95)—and the crux of identity, when the university agent refuses to give him his educational documents (72–76). He senses

[T]he Kafkaesque absurdities of living in a country where movies could be subject to review by a blind censor; where records of enrollment at a university can be so
thoroughly erased by authorities that a student can come to doubt even his own name (Michico).

Everything is like a humorous nightmare that has no end; only love helps Dara to challenge the limitations imposed on his life. Seeing Sara faces him to confront a love that “is structured according to a ‘romantic triangle’ of desire and rivalry.” The rivalry between Dara, Petrovich, and Sinbad, which develops mostly against Shahriar’s intentions, simultaneously makes them subjects and objects of becoming in the novel. They are imperfect fictional characters whose conflicts lead to Censoring’s specific fictional uncertainty that replicates Iranian society under the totalitarian regime. Sara is simultaneously the object of this rivalry and of the triple censorship imposed by the masculine atmosphere of the novel.

Sara’s femininity stands at the center of Censoring and acts as the motivator for the main characters’ activities. Her story remains hidden in the density of subplots and digressions that Mandanipour writes in the original story. In fact, she is triply censored. Her first attempt at subjectivity is in the dreamlike demonstration scene in the very first pages of Censoring, when she holds the sign that reads: DEATH TO FREEDOM, DEATH TO CAPTIVITY. There, everyone ignores her. Students do not trust her because she is not on their side. Police disregard her because they think her slogan is meaningless. And the members of the Party of God (Hizbullah) wait to see what she will do.

The second act of censorship against Sara happens when she wants to get an original script of Nizami’s Khosrow and Shirin from the old peddler poet in exchange for removing her hijab in public and Dara tries to stop her:

Sara opens her lips to say yes to that handsome, besotted, mystic poet.

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84 Girard quoted in McHale, 222.
Dara shouts: “Sara! Sara! What about me?”

I shout: “Sara! Sara! What about my love story?”

And with the power of my pen, I shut Sara’s mouth. . .

**Dara Shouts:** “Sara!”

“Are you sure you want it?”

“I already said I do. What do you want in return?”

The old man looks at Sara’s headscarf, and under his breath, in a way that in this world only Sara can hear, he whispers. . . (109–10)

Although Sara resists Dara’s effort to stop her and takes off her headscarf, Dara’s attempt to censor her is noteworthy. Even after she gets the book, Dara, in all seriousness, asks Sara to burn it (103–10).

The last attempt to censor Sara is made by Mandanipour, the author. Although the reader knows many things about the author’s, Dara’s, Mr. Petrovich’s, and even Sinbad’s lives and emotions, Sara’s life is mostly in shadow; it is often narrated through crossed-out parts of the novel: the passages, sentences, and even words struck through, as if she is only a catalyst to reveal the other characters’ becoming and oblige them to see themselves as both subjects and objects at the same time. It is her presence that convinces Dara to make a strong effort to escape from the destiny imposed on him by the author. Her presence makes Mr. Petrovich decide to become a subject in the novel, although he plays a negative role. And it is her presence that causes Mandanipour to lose his control of the story. Despite this triple censoring, Sara’s life story only makes sense because of the liberatory role of her love.

All the pressures on Dara and Sara to repress and hide their love help them to free themselves from the totalitarian regime and the situation in which they find themselves. The
value of their love depends on what they do to keep it. The more conflicts they have, the more they are motivated to strengthen their love. For example, on the last page of the novel, after all their attempts to be alone with each other, Sara and Dara meet in Dara’s home for the first time. There is a jasmine bush in his yard. Their short conversation about the bush provides the best allegory of their love:

Sara tells Dara: “In that flower patch in your front yard . . . That jasmine bush . . .”

“Yes, I have been meaning to prune it, but I haven’t had the time.”

“No, don’t . . . To allow a plant the freedom to spread throughout the garden is beautiful.” (294)

Their love, which defies the dominant order, is like a plant grows freely wherever it wants; it is beautiful and it makes the garden beautiful. With her observation about the jasmine, Sara praises freedom and individuality. Although Censoring does not have an actual ending, praising individuality as a free plant that should be allowed “to spread throughout the garden” finalizes the novel on a positive note.

Censoring an Iranian Love Story shows Iranians’ uncertain spirit in post-revolutionary Iran: they doubt the solid reality which is announced by the totalitarian regime, they are suspicious of any kind of control, and they see themselves as both subject and object in their lives. The novel illustrates how this uncertainty can enable Iranians to ignore or find ways around government and cultural censorship and control. The author’s resistance against the censor, the characters rebellious reactions, and the novel’s celebration of individuality are emblematic of the rise of subjectivity among Iranians that shows itself in the pages of Censoring an Iranian Love Story.
Conclusion

Shahriar Mandanipour’s *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* contains a distinct element of uncertainty, in which the writer likes to have the readers create some of the story for themselves. Although it seems that he is writing in riddles, he really is giving the opportunity for the reader to change the story based on his or her own perspective. He boldly stresses the characters’ becoming in *Censoring* to force the reader to accept them as entities separated from the writer/narrator. The roles of Dara and the interrogator, Mr. Petrovich, change through the story and they rebel against the authority of the narrator. *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* contains a plot in which the main characters fight the writer for control of their destinies and lives. Changing points of view between first- and third-person narrators is another means of producing the novel’s conflicts, contradictions, and uncertainties.

The weakness of the novel is the strong point of Mandanipour’s Persian works: the use of legends and archetypes. While the presence of the legend of Adam’s creation and the archetypes of four basic elements are important because they make *The Courage of Love* interpretable, the presence of the hunchback (from *One Thousand and One Nights*) is not necessary in *Censoring*. Mandanipour has imposed the hunchback to the novel without any reason. *Censoring* is a story that should be narrated directly and clearly. Overall, Mandanipour’s incredible and unusual way of thinking and experimenting in his novels not only puts them far beyond many other Persian ideological novels, but also makes them sources of fictional uncertainty in post-revolutionary Persian literature.
CONCLUSION

Persian fiction following the 1979 Islamic Revolution has been distinguished by the flourishing of literary modernism and its main technique, fictional uncertainty. Ironically, the dominance of an Islamic government which propagated simple ideological representations of reality led to the booming complex of aesthetic fictional creativity which we now know as Persian modernist fiction. This transition manifested as a shift from typical characters to individuals, from omniscient points of view to dialogical ones, and from simple themes to multidimensional ones. This shift is one of the most important reasons for the frequent use of the technique of fictional uncertainty in post-revolutionary Iran. Thus, fictional uncertainty was a response to two phenomena: first, a dominant Islamic ideology that tried to control everyone’s activities within a collectivist society; second, a realist literary tradition that tended to use simple literary techniques in order to educate people and motivate them to act for social change.

From a historical perspective, Iranian readers witnessed a marginal type of fictional uncertainty in novels such as Houshang Golshiri’s Shazdeh Ehtejab (Prince Ehtejab 1968), Bahram Saedeghi’s Malakut (1962), and Bahman Forsi’s Shab-e Yek, Shab-e Dow (Night One, Night Two 1974), all written before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Moving from this marginal approach to a fuller one following the revolution, fictional uncertainty became a guide for many Iranian authors who insisted that the meaning of their work derive from changing points of view, fluid characterizations, and multiple themes and settings.

Writers who apply fictional uncertainty in their works create different fictional worlds. Shahriar Mandanipour is one of the most extreme examples of this. He regularly destroys the
barriers between fictional devices, external reality, and Iran as the setting for his literary works. Mandanipour portrays an atomized Iran full of violence, despair, fear, infidelity, revenge, and loneliness by using fictional uncertainty as a literary technique. However, the Iran that serves as the setting for his fiction should not be mistaken for the historical nation-state itself.\textsuperscript{85} The complexity found in Mandanipour’s works partly arises from the use of Iran as a literary figure as well as the reality of the Islamic government’s repression and censorship.

Most of Mandanipour’s works have been published during the a period filled with political violence legitimized by Islamic principles, the Iran–Iraq war, and Iranian intellectuals’ fear and retreat from public life. Illustrating indirectly the government’s strong censorship and control of Iranians’ lives, his works reconstruct some Iranian intellectuals’ nightmares and anxieties, derived from their years of isolation. The fear and danger present in Mandanipour’s Iran deform the characters’ personalities and lead them toward destroying themselves.

Mandanipour began applying fictional uncertainty with a weak short story, “A Shadow from the Shadows of the Cave.” Although the story has some signs of his future experimental works, it cannot be considered as an appropriate use of the technique of fictional uncertainty. The main character of the story is Mr. Farwaneh whose understanding of the world is in contrast with his neighbors’ incuriosity. He is isolated and alone and is seen as a deluded individual by his neighbors. Using fictional uncertainty, Mandanipour tries to show us the contradiction

\textsuperscript{85} As we can see in the novels of Simin Daneshvar, Mahmoiud Dowaltabadi, Ahmad Mahmoud, Jamal Mirsadeghi, etc.
between fact and illusion, between the animals’ being and Mr. Farwaneh’s perception of their presence, between what happens in the real world and Mr. Farwaneh’s observation of it. But what is shown in the story is a paranoid and crazy man who cannot attract the readers’ sympathy. Like his neighbors, the readers also do not respond to Mr. Farwaneh’s efforts to save the community from the animals’ savagery; they leave him alone and depressed.

Mandanipour in “Shatter the Stone Tooth” is more successful. The story is about a man and a dog in Guraab, a southern Iranian village. The concepts of time, place, and traditional rituals are in the center of the work. “Shatter” shows the impact of the frozen time of the countryside upon the unconscious of the Man, an urban middle class Iranian, through which he is involved in a mythical time and space. Social relations in Guraab, as the man narrates, also show a kind of stationary history, as if nothing has changed over thousands of years in the village and the only new thing is the arrival of the Man. Traversing the labyrinth of parallel points of view, analogous chronotopes, and multiple themes, “Shatter” novelizes—to use Bakhtin’s word—myths, spaces, and times. Mandanipour continues to develop the technique of fictional uncertainty through these fictional devices and his effort in “Baz Roo beh Rood” (“Again Facing the River”), in which he defamiliarizes a familiar historical event for Iranian intellectuals, Samad Behrangi’s death.

Mandanipour in “Again Facing the River” wants to create a fictional narrative from a controversial historical event, Samad Behrangi’s death. Thus, the importance of the story derives not only from Mandanipour’s experimental approach, but also from the story’s historical context. The narrator of the story is a killer whose tone and intonation vary based upon his audience and what he wants to narrate for them. He always shows himself as a confessor and Mirdad’s (Samad Behrangí’s) killer when he talks to Mirdad’s friends as their friend, when he talks as an ex-
political activist, when he recounts the tales of an ex-lover, and when he argues as Mr. Farvardin’s friend. By putting these variations in the story, Mandanipour experimentally applied fictional uncertainty to relatively separated scenes, their reasons of narration, and their plots. In his new experiment, each paragraph or scene of “Again . . .” can be considered as an independent part of the story. Instead of Behrangi (Mirdad in the story), Mandanipour focuses on Farahati (The Man and murderer in the story) in order to experience a new realm of fictional uncertainty. Shifting the focus from Behrangi to Farahati after about thirty years leads to consideration of him as a character with a dual revolutionary–murderer status, which could not be represented without applying the technique of fictional uncertainty.

Mandanipour continues to apply fictional uncertainty in his two novels: The Courage of Love in Persian and Censoring an Iranian Love Story in English. In The Courage of Love, he tries hard to keep himself away from the text and write a novel with the author’s absence; the absence that necessarily leads to creating a polyphonic novel. His other preoccupation was the literariness of the novel. He did not want to write a social, political, and cultural document. Neither did he want to write a novel which could be reducible to a message, a plot, or mere raw material for scientific research. Thus, contrary to what is seen at first sight, The Courage of Love is not about the Manjil earthquake, the Iran–Iraq War, Davood’s life, or Roja’s bravery; all these things are devices for Mandanipour’s experimental approach which lead him to apply the technique of fictional uncertainty.

Although the earthquake seems to be the narrator’s excuse for revealing a critical psychological and social situation through a journey to post-revolutionary Iran and the Iran–Iraq war (1980–88), the novel shows very little about Iran. In other words, although the novel’s events take place in the setting of Iran, the implication is that they could happen to anyone,
anywhere around the world. The heaviness of the formal aspects of the novel, such as internal monologues, changing points of view, evolving characters, and ambiguous/poetic language shows Mandanipour’s desire to make a new fictional experiment that would not be possible without using the technique of fictional uncertainty.

Living in the United States provided an opportunity for Mandanipour to have new literary experiences. He came to the U.S. in 2006 and published his first English novel, *Censoring an Iranian Love Story*, in 2009. *Censoring* is a distinctive break from his previous works in that he applies the technique of fictional uncertainty mostly based upon the defamiliarizing of familiar concepts and the avoidance of using his own experiences to shape the narrative. *Censoring* is therefore mostly derived from his life experience as a writer in Iran under a totalitarian regime, something he had never directly written about before. The specificity of fictional uncertainty in *Censoring* is the capacity of the characters to be the potential subject–objects of narration. This kind of uncertainty, as well as the fact that he was writing for a non-Iranian audience, required Mandanipour to use simple and direct language. In the very first pages of the novel, Mandanipour turns to the Western audience and exposes his motive for this narration. Explaining the bitterness of his earlier works in Persian, Mandanipour describes his difficult situation as an Iranian author and shows his desire to change his mind and his writing style.

Mandanipour defines two types of audience for *Censoring*: Westerners and Iran’s next generation. Writing for American audience gave him the self-confidence to talk openly, clearly, and directly about his feelings. Regarding Iran’s next generation, Mandanipour, who had previously been known for his emphasis on pure literature, made an about-face by stressing the necessity of recording the events that official history did not wish to record because “severe censorship has taken root in Iran.” He believed that without his writing about Iranians’ struggles
and engagement with censorship, this part of Iran’s history would be overlooked. This approach is totally different from his approach in The Courage of Love, which was based instead on the literariness of the text.

Mandanipour’s The Courage of Love and Censoring an Iranian Love Story both contain a distinct element of uncertainty derives from Iran’s unsecure situation which is narrated through archetypes, old legends, and natural and manmade catastrophes. The Courage of Love subtly hints at the legend of Adam’s creation and four classic elements (water, earth, wind, and fire), as well as the 1990 Rudbar earthquake and the Iran–Iraq war. Mandanipour’s other novel, Censoring an Iranian Love Story, contains a plot in which the main characters fight the writer for control of their destinies and lives. The novel’s uncertainty derives from its unique style of writing, in which the characters resist the writer and choose their own destiny. Changing points of view between first- and third-person narrators is another source of the novel’s conflicts, contradictions, and uncertainties. Mandanipour’s way of experimenting in his novels puts them far beyond many other works of dominant Persian literary movements.

Overall, the characters of Mandanipour’s works are ruined because of uncertain situations that they cannot cope with or even understand. There is nothing on the horizon that can give them confidence, no ideology that can gather them together. Their fragmentation comes from their coexisting in multiple, asynchronous modalities: present, past, and archetypical times; new and old places; modern and traditional characters; and totalitarian, religious government versus individualistic, secular people. These complex narrative situations spawned Mandanipour’s fictional uncertainty.
Fictional uncertainty provides Mandanipour, and a number of other Iranian writers, with a tool by which they can illustrate the traumas caused by the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and its consequences. Using multiple perspectives, emphasizing the partiality of the narrator/author’s knowledge, and allowing for narrative vacuums give the writers an opportunity to create narratives that stem organically from the characters’ inner lives and their mentalities. These inner lives always are more complex than the characters’ surface relationships with each other and their environment. Mandanipour goes one step further in his English novel and makes fictional histories of Iranians’ lives, histories of an Iran where nothing is in its right place.

Gradually, fictional uncertainty became more than just a literary technique for Mandanipour. It became a philosophy based on the partiality of our knowledge and the inherent inability of readers and authors to produce a coherent understanding of the fictional world. He tries to overcome the challenge of fictional incomprehensibility by making multi-perspective narratives based on characters’ inner lives, creating fluid and complex characters, and inserting multi-themed plots in a single short story or novel. His efforts are mostly directed toward defending the literariness of his works in contrast to their social or political aspects. From this perspective, his fictional experiments give him unprecedented opportunities to represent multi-layered fictional situations. Mandanipour’s unique experimental attitude and uncertain imagination not only distinguish his works from ideological novels, but also offer an applied type of fictional uncertainty that can be used as a model by other Iranian writers.

There are limits to this study which call for further research. The novels of the latest generation of writers, published in the 2000s and 2010s, show us a variety of approaches towards fictional uncertainty that are worth close analysis. These novels show that fictional
uncertainty has been accepted by a number of Persian fiction writers because it provides an appropriate atmosphere for new fictional experiments that might extend the horizons of modern Persian fiction. Alireza Seifodini’s *Khorouj* (Exodus, 2011), Amir Hossein Yazadnbod’s *Lok Nat* (2013), Ali Changizi’s *Panjah Darageh Bala-ie Sefr* (Fifty Degrees above Zero 2011), Yusof Ansari’s *Ebn al-Vaght* (Opportunist 2013), Peyman Esmaili’s *Negahban* (Guardian 2013), Sharokh Giva’s *Andooh-e Munaliza* (Mona Lisa Sarrow 2012), and Razieh Ansari’s *Shabih-e Atri dar Nasim* (Like a Scent in the Breeze 2010), and Terio Tehran (2014) are some examples of new kinds of uncertain novels. A further issue concerns the necessity of comparative study between Persian-language works and similar literary traditions such as Turkish and Arabic. Comparing Persian fictional uncertainty with recent developments in other areas will help us draw a more comprehensive map of literary exchange in the Middle East.
I say: “They say break your 30-year silence, you can tell the truth now, neither the Organizational left nor creed… So I'd say nice try, but in this shadowy world where past and future have reflected each other, insidious resonance at the time, what can I say or what should I say ... I just know I am Cain which my hands are still blessed of the miracle of the death and .... Yes, if I even want to say it now I repeat what I said thirty years ago that I have killed ‘Mirdad’. I pushed him into the fast flowing water, not once, three times. I punched his chest with palms of my hand and, with every blow, he was forced to take a step toward flowing death and suddenly went down. He screamed my name- to solicit help from the wrath and vengeance- he was inverted, little far, there was a hand like the twigs of a branch that goes away with water, further, there was water and a few water bubbles and water was its own preserver…”

I say: “How? You are Mr. Farvardin’s old friend; does it possible not know their home address? Despite several years of his isolation, it is unbelievable….Don’t fear, I just want to ask him why you would take the pen after years of silence and deny your own words of thirty years ago... I owe Mr. Farvardin, I indebted him my rebirth and your refusal to disclose his address cause me wandering. Yes, I'm little tired…”

I say: “I feel now like to turn the passage of time in solitary confinement. I remember that time constantly asked myself naively what is going to happened. The next time I tried to talk out loud to myself not to break the silence of a dark cellar. The next time I tried to talk out loud to
myself to not let the silence of a dark cellar break me. I had little word and I’ve been saying the same words. My silence was tantamount to confessing the murder and at the same time of my exploratory with crazy speed, my memory of it will remain so worked. I do not know how much more, fear is here, I could not hear myself anymore. I feel that my lips are moving with my fingers but spongy silence strangled my throat voice. I shouted. I was punching and kicking to the door that I did not know what was made of iron or stone till they dragged me out and then the light would blind my eyes, I heard wheezing sounds and it was interrogation again…”

I say: “the breaking voice of jaw bone, seeing cigarette ash inside blister or detected fingers without nails do not torture prisoners as much it bothers interrogators. They were saying you should go out and tell everywhere Mirdad’s death was accidental. I was saying no one would believe. They did not believe me, then I spitted out a broken tooth on the ground and kef, I gave my body and mind to reincarnation forces that no man has been experienced it… you can’t try to understand this soul. Stand close to it will burn you; it is something beyond simplification of good and salvation…. Ha…! Cellmate, its revolution, time is back but you are still in the course of those years… Do not worry, I have killed him. With these hands and this smile.”

I say: “ why they ask me so many questions... you should know better because we share same generation, a generation that demanded insatiable dead hero, I’m proud to present one of them to your history. Why you have doubt?... wow! Look at the yard… all the tiles are covered with maple blades… of course beginning of everything is without thinking and simple. News is published: the young poet was drowned. So short. There is no talk of crime or martyrdom. Mirdad was not idol for anyone. A few of his small books of bitter and biting poetry was published and there was not any attention to it. Shortly after the article was appeared and it noted with whispering and figurative language of that time and using of three insidious dots which no
one could escape from them. All imposed work it out that Mirdad was drowned by someone. I am quoting because hundreds of ironic sentences are mixed in my mind and I do not remember which one is their mother. I hope the author be happy. I wish I knew where he is now. He was a strong tree that surely become forest… after a short time his article quickly filled ear to ear (spread around) thence many other knew their hero and knew that death of Mirdad was not accidental and state of security agents have his head under water (killed) him. The news finally reached my corner too. At night I went to Farvardin’s house, he is the greatest writer of all time and his work has intuitive effect- Immortality for him- he invited me inside. I did not deserve his hospitality, so I refused. I told him there in front of door: newspaper has no mention of murder, I have explained in gendarmerie station that accident incident was mere and I m free now. At time, fortunately my internal force was Subtle and subdued. I was trembling. Maybe it was raining slowly but I remember that man’s stoned and conviction face in fog zone. He pointed with his pointing finger- this is martyrdom finger?… Yes…- he told me : be patient my son. Mirdad’s martyrdom would not bother anyone except injustice, and he said there are some coordination and he touched my wet shoulder that be strong. We raised a flag and the grudge will kill government. I said but what should I say. He was silent. If he spoke I deserve to be cursed forever. His silence was poison to my flesh and the skin for thirty years… it rooted in my blood… I got the eyes of a hawk, which His eyes were full of suspicion and I shook that young man’s hand. Rain was falling on hands… Now I Give hope to meet again… Yesterday I found his house but I arrived a little late. A day earlier he has moved… where? I do not know…. Why so hurry?… I do not know… Please do not be upset of my look, unlike my look I have a regretted heart… let’s go to the yard to watch maple fall morsel feather…”
I say: “But I will answer the questions that I like… That cell became an organization, ready for armed struggle. If Mirdad could stick to Pharaoh’s bread, he would be able to put his finger in his eyes… forgive my sin infested fluently enormity in your good intentions… operate your imagination, many articles written about Mirdad’s austerity.”

His books published many times, also they have forbidden to read but these made him to be famous. I started to re-read his books. I believed his words while I had his swanky face in my imagination. I thought his poems were simple but after his death, i found a very deep meaning in his poems. I had Great distress day’s sir, the torture of keep the secrets and not to tell them to other people. But the secret agents just listen to the sounds. I was waiting for them. They saved my life, because an underground organizations announced to kill the Mirdad’s murder and other agents. Other than these menaces, they broke my house windows at nights which constrained me live under ground. Let me to describe myself: I am the love of master…. I say: this is a nice party, why do you spend the time on past instead of dancing? For sure you have read the new liar article…, but I think I ask a question because you should be a contemplative and silly lady even with this unfortunate beauty. Do not get it wrong, I meant funny by saying silly and also I do not care about the way you dress up and walking around. Look! How beautiful it is when a bride looks at a mirror unbelievably. It was a while that I have not seen a wedding party, I let myself to come around people… the question is: why am I so far from people? Why did Totia break up with me? I met her very accidently two years after I released from jail. She was a powerful in her life which made me scared. I was afraid, the ardency of living alive cause her to death. This reason made me to be more interest for a while. She asseverated that she loved me. Maybe my knowledge of the classified information and my background as a prisoner fooled her. I told her: Totia, there is another side of love that you have not seen it yet, when the good side of the love
gets bigger and nicer the bad side of it also becomes bigger and awful. She was laughing incredibly and innocently. She was college student. We spent a long time at nights, walking in streets with full of trees around the Tehran’s university. I always enjoy looking at the old college buildings behind the green gates and old buttonwood. Totia was talking about the heroic ideas, equality and Sacrifice. Those words were duplicate and boring for me, but I was suspired how Totia could pronounce them powerful. One night Totia came late, her hand was bloody and injured because of punching windows at the college. She also injured by batons. She told me that she lost her bag during the fight with the university’s guard. She was worried about her identifications card and a letter from her mom. I found out that she has some forbidden books and articles in her room. It was possible that they would search her room. I told her: give me you room’s key so I can get rid of them. It was nice to see how we care about each other. We went close to her room, she stayed in the dark and I went to her room. Her roommates were not home, I did not turn on any light but her room was lighted by the light of moon. I saw she had a picture of Mirdad on the wall. When I came back, Totia was afraid because I was late. We throw away the books and articles but we did not have any place to go. I had a room in a dirty motel. We walked in dark and not crowded streets for a while. Every time a pedestrian came from behind or a car from the front, Totia wanted to run away. Where? Finally we went to a desert and sat behind a hill. It was a cold and uncover night fall. I held his hand to bandage her wound. She was still scared of tomorrow and arresting. I smelled her hot hand spontaneously. It was my first touch of an alien body, perhaps she was too. There was a sensation of humiliation of maturity in our bodies. Why undiscovered mental secrets would release in fear. I told Totia the picture of Mirdad in his room……? He said” he was a great man”. She said it was her dream to live like Mirdad. He was looking at desert darkness and some remote small lights. There was a dog’s
yawp from the month. Totia said: “it seems someone is around here”. I put my head on her forearm and said:” did he follow us”. She repeated again “Mirdad was a great man. He had sense of humor. He was river first but then became like a sea and then he got cold and dead”. The weather was cold and dead. Totia’s hand was still bleeding. Her warm breaths touched my neck. Then is said when my head was still below “I was the one who was with Mirdad by the river”. Totia laughed. She thought, I said that to make her smile. I said “believe me, we were together. He went by river and I came back alone” and then I released her fingers. There was a temptation of evil inside my body to show her the power of love. It was the only service I could provide for her in that time. But Totia got weak and weaker by any other sentence just like a Sparrow which pressed between hands. She was breathing fast. She asked “so you were in jail for this, not for…” I answered” yes, I was the special kind of prison in the world, the rest of people are simple and boring, anyway they could be nice or awful. That was started and there was no way back for me. It was like a sad drunk person who know they drank enough but still drink more until they through-up…. I said “Mirdad and I was swimming in a river, we were laughing and enjoying. I held his head under the water for a little while, when he came up, he was mad and scared, then he started to curse me. I told him “you scare, you scare of death”. He answered” no, I just don’t want to die for nothing”. I said” you are justifying, the job that we are going to do is like smiling at death and now look at you…..” Then I went down under the water for a long time until he scared and then he grabbed my hair and pulled me out. I said” you should get to use to it that the death is always with you, you should love it and get ready for it”. And then I pushed him in the water. Totia wanted to release her hand of me. I forced to hold her hand and then I said” I pushed Miradad again and I asked him to go to the middle of river. If you come out alive, you are ready to fight otherwise you would fall and cause others to die. Go and scream, and then I
pushed him for the last time, he went down under the water”. The river is like a nightmare mam, if you scare of it, you would fail, otherwise it could take you to bests. Now I think I remember that he was calling me under the water. Totia’s hand slipped out of my hand, I said” Mirdad went by river to the sea…” Stray dogs was barking and the city became dark. I said” Totia, it was my pleasure. You also should be able to do it, you should be able to love death, otherwise…” And then I tried to hold her hand in that darkness.

The wheeze of hate was protruding from the bottom of her throat. She spitted to my face and scrambled back with her four feet and hands suddenly. She raised herself from the hill. This made me very angry I said: “I had received an amount of one hundred thousand Tomans exactly to kill her. If she stay alive for two years, she will organize an organization which …”

Totia screamed and scrambled to the hill. He slipped towards me. I beat on her soft breast with my palm and said “the naïve girl…”

I beat again and shouted: “you should not fear kiss my hand …” she was choking of airless that I beat on her chest for the third time. She screams bed up, and fell down the other side of the hill and went to the howling darkness. Why did she leave me? I wanted only to say her: “This is me, Toria! Something likes you challenging. “She didn’t understand until after three years I read her name among the killer’s names in a team home and the sense of her wounded hand. The final experience of woman is remained my lips.

A dark desert is on the palm of this hand that is full of disabled ghosts, the frozen dog and the screams of woman who scream bed on the stone and soil … Are you going, lady? You have probably preferred laughing in the group of the relatives of bride and groom to facing to poison of laughing such as me. I say again, I say for your empty place …”
I say: “moving to a new house? They moved at this same month…aren’t they certainly give you their new address? If they come one day here, say to them that I will search them…whatever they escape me … I, … if you know me, you will understand that your insulting words were deserved me …

If the reports of legal physician didn’t perish, everyone has understood now that there was no water drops in the lunges of Mirdad and two deep wounds were identified under his left chest and over his neck.

The wounds that was different from the scratches and smashes resulting from clashing with river’s stones. You don’t care about others word, do you hear the silence of the sealed mysteries … Shut your mouth, I want to scare you…I pulled him to the riverside for an excused and beat him, one to his heart and the other to his neck and when I threw him in the river he didn’t breath any more.

They have denigrated the river, the river delivered a corpse, and the small fishes were swallowing his veins of blood at the corner of the river …”

I say:” they threw me in an individual prison. I became comfortable from the evil prisoners, who behaved me like a leprous man. A dark and wet room which has maintained the smell of ideas and illusions of the hundreds of tortured men in its porous cement is a suitable place for the flying of imagination bat. I thought there that when I cut Mirdad’s neck, I should hear the voice of breaking the knife blade. It was foolishly, they used the Middle Ages torture tools for clarifying a complicated subject; finally they forced me to speak. I insulted and said that I take vengeance on you and will say them what you have given me an amount of seventy thousand Tomans, and I will send the name and the particulars of the high racking officer who called me out of prison. I saw his face one night at the corner of individual prison they came to
cut me nails, I screamed, came here you frog to cut my small nail, write interrogator! I confess
that you came with the treat and subornation until I admitted you can’t challenge with the
imagination of human beings …Killing Mirdad, I deliver your money to the organization for the
sake of being rescued from the conscience agony. It has been a bullet now…You don’t feel any
pain any more when the torture goes beyond the limit…I don’t say you …You don’t understand
…You exhausted me go …Go to cinema “.

I say:” he didn’t give me any excuse …we were friend many years together .I had felt his
chastely. I too was like you.

When one of his sleep came truth, I had faith in him more. I was sure that the thought of
no guilt did not fit in his innocent mind…With his thin and hairy feet, he covered the world. His
word was influential … for these I could not kill him. I wanted to say him this matter during
those three days and nights that we were near each other.

Every summer, we went there to rest .Water is fascinating for you, isn’t it? And we
walked to the riverside for hours and talk together. Finally in the last day we talked about Totia
Mirdad who had an ambiguous feeling to her.

Sometimes we had gone to her home in Tehran .Contrary to the women who resort to
poem for the ugliness of their body and face .She was very beautiful .Please dive a little water,
my mouth is dried because of intense concentration for reminding.

How greed and avarice are you for knowing. Believe me! I don’t make fun of you .I
admire your addiction to awareness …Totia has a big house which is full of wealth. It was used
reluctantly .She reads her poems aloud and we couldn’t stop our infatuation with strict
conscience agony.
I visited Totia away from married eyes occasionally. I said to Mirdad on the last day which I visited Totia occasionally. He asked me: do you like her? He started to conflict with explicitness and with the same humiliating tone. We arrived at the peak of the rock hill.

It was sunny, warm and a gentle wind with the smell of melted snows of faraway mountain. The river passed through the wheat fields spirally. The white stones of its side were shining such as the back of white poplor’s leaves and they sank in a cooper color reflection faraway.

A big bird was flying over its flowing without any flapping the wings. I asked:” what do you mean by it? He said:” I know both of you are the same. I said: you don’t know anything, you are optimistic, if you knew we have stood chest to chest.

He spat in front of my foot and said:” you had attractiveness and seduction of bourgeoisie, perhaps you think this is left over of the dinner cloth...stop...he turned back facing the wheat field. I said:” look at me …Look at my eyes and talk me …He had stared at the green bread waves. A boy with haircutting led a flock toward the river shouted:” what did you say? Go back …The sparkles blind me, water flow caused vomiting me and Mirdad didn’t say ok to me as if I never exist.

I insulted and shouted him for the last time:” look at me …” He didn’t turn back and I beat him .I beat his head by a stone. He tried to be carless. I beat one more time, he kneeled and fell down with a crushed face by the third beat .He felt down the riverside … I threw the stone and the corpse inside the river and ran the sheep ran wild and the river was boiling … you like this part of story : my hands didn’t clean from the blood …”

I say:”the eternal temptation and rule of killing … be conscious! Suddenly, the earth was so proud that it did not swallow the blood, its order was issued .The river didn’t drown; it was
forbidden … many young people who were infatuated of this land, chose the life. Mirhad, It is not important, we should praise the first one that is a torch and it should be burning forever, because the careless about our deeds, but the light of this torch is only for us dear masters, thanks for giving a chance to speak in your meeting.

I am disabled against destiny and it is not a promise in my life except the doubt less praising of death and good deeds … do not care about the whispers that begin these days, I saw with my eyes the cracking of big heart of Mirdad. I pointed the ripple to his left chest. He had stood naked in the river; he stared at drinking water of the flock of sheep. I pulled the trigger and the flock escaped please let me ask a question before leaving here … if everyone knows Mr. Farvardine’s address please inform me…Is he arched for him a lot. I know he lives in one of the north’s villages a while. I have gone to that region but I have defeated…”

I say:” please don’t fear me, this is me. Do you know me … forgive me that I come in through the window, I don’t want to wake up your wife … I looked at your behavior in darkness from the back of the same window all the last night. Why do you have to sleep with a light switching on? Of course you know me.

Fill the place of my broken teeth at my mouth by our writing imagination. Make my rheumatism bones young and take these wrinkles from my ugly face. I recall you easily … I got too old. You are too. I don’t give you time more. You should go to sleep. I want only to know that after three years, why did you write that the death of Mirdad has been accidentally happened … Do you know what this is mean? This means that it kills me and him … I have come out after reading your article and I have revenge you by my weapon … Do you know me, the same ghost which was following you while walking in the forest at the same night before.
you should see me but certainly your eyes is weak. But during those years, the main
different of me is: I talk over your head. I discover it when they had tortured me. I have hanged
but why did you escape me? Why did you become reclusive for twenty years? When you broke
one of the branches of tree yesterday and stick with it. I feared, do you accept the death in the
bed …It is not deserve you, you should had been envy to the eternity of Mirdad can I take your
stick, Mr. Farvardin?

I say:” there was a tree which became a forest and a heavy fog resulting from the extreme
river enclosed it. The old man walked in the forest in the evening to night, I guessed he was
searching for anything. At the 7th day, I knew that he kneeled and stared wherever there was an
ant nest, spider net, mushroom, or the trace of an animal. … He felt that someone followed him,
but I am sure if he could see, he thought that I am a ghost. Yes, I desired to appear in front of
him in the last beams of the evening and with the same smile, say him, “But I am alive, master
you resurrect the dead bodies and do you fear from a lives …? I stood in the back of the window
of his room at night. Sometimes he opened the window and stared to see the darkness outside.
The jackals howled in the ride paddies of around there and the voice of whisper was heard from
the forest constantly in the last night of his life we met each her.

He was a brave man. When his wife woke up from our whispers and com to back of his
room, she said her that I am singing the song and send her to sleep …Excuse me… This is his
pen it is weary and old but it is beautiful … He had sat on the bench and I had stood …I said:”
what a compassionate looking do you have … he smiled. The good behavior of writers is that
they understand satire directly from story contrary to the public.

I said any things to him. He had heard some of them. We laughed and laughed to the
naïve people for many times together. Don’t touch that pen a lot, there is not any supernatural
power in it, its power is for humans abilities. Give it to me. This is the first and the last things of
the word that I have found it. After this figurative gift, he wanted to arise. I had to request him to
sit. His stick was in my hand. There was light rain outdoors and the jacket had been quiet. He
was tired. He said that: those times the officers followed him occasionally. But they didn’t dare
to finish their work.

I said:” Because you didn’t have a friend like me. He laughed and stopped early the grief
of wisdom secreted from his eyes. He said this article will be my final writing. I said: no writing
is complete. The word continues, such as a river that flowers without us. I shouted: words
…words…words…

The old man can’t have much endurance. He rumbled: game is over, you can talk now,
you made me suspicious too. Tell me about the story of that damned river. I asked: What do you
want to know? Truth or reality? This was the last word. We started each other for this reason. I
say that don’t be naïve. Don’t believe newspaper’s news, the master’s heart didn’t have any
reason …A great heart never strikes …Tell me what you want to know: truth or reality.
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