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# Voices of Transformation: Women's Poetry of the 1990s and 2000s

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## Introduction

The historical dominance of patriarchy in Iran has long marginalized women poets, contributing to the exclusion of many from the classical literary canon. However, with the growing advocacy for modernism from the late Qajar era onward, women poets began to challenge traditional constraints and maintain a continued presence in Iran's literary and social spheres. In the 1370/1990s and 1380/2000s—two pivotal decades in the development of contemporary Iranian women's poetry—an entirely new generation of women poets emerged. Following the end of the Iran-Iraq War and the relative easing of political tensions, Iran's sociopolitical landscape began to open, allowing for the publication of a significant number of journals and books and contributing to a more dynamic literary field. This shift allowed women poets to publish their works more freely, firmly establishing their presence in contemporary Iranian poetry. This article examines the works and contributions of selected women poets from these two decades, offering an analytical-historical overview of their contributions to the development of modern Iranian poetry.

An analytical-historical overview of women's poetry from the 1370/1990s and 1380/2000s, even if brief and selective, is necessary for two key reasons. First, Persian and English-language academic scholarship has rarely engaged seriously with the techniques, movements, and figures of contemporary Iranian

poetry. In fact, most academic studies on contemporary Iranian women's poetry tend to stop at the 1357/1979 revolution. Meanwhile, non-academic critical and literary studies (e.g., essays written in popular Iranian literary magazines, websites and books, that are not peer-reviewed) have largely been limited to lists of names and selected poems. Although the reasons for this gap are multifaceted and beyond the scope of this paper, one contributing factor is scholar' reluctance to examine Iran's dynamic publishing landscape. Another factor is the rapid socio-political and economic transformations of Iran, combined with shifting global perspectives on literature, which have contributed to a democratization of the field. As a result, rather than a narrow pantheon of a few towering names, today's poetry readers encounter a vast array of books, journals, and informal publication spaces that complicate classification and independent analysis. Second, this study highlights the significant literary and social roles played by women poets in Iran's evolving social and cultural milieu. Despite the numerous challenges they face, their active participation in literary production during this period is particularly noteworthy.

By offering a relatively comprehensive overview of the works and contributions of selected women poets, this study takes an initial step toward illuminating a neglected niche in contemporary literary history. It includes poets selected based on three key criteria. First, they began publishing professionally during the 1370s/1990s and the 1380s/2000s. Second, they have played a significant role in Iran's literary landscape, either by introducing new poetic ideas or by shaping trends and inspiring other writers. Third, they have produced more than a single collection of poetry and maintained an ongoing presence in the professional Persian poetry scene. While some notable names might be absent from this selection, this study does not aim to compile an exhaustive index of poets, nor does it seek to provide a generic classification or thematic analysis of their works. Instead, it offers a broad perspective on poetic efforts that both extend the long tradition of Iranian women's literary and so-

cial movements—dating back to the Constitutional Revolution (1284–1290/1905–1911) and heavily influenced by Forough Farrokhzad’s poetry—and simultaneously pioneer new movements in response to the social and literary developments of their time. From this historical perspective, I argue that the diversity and volume of women’s poetry published during the 1370s/1990s and 1380s/2000s have contributed to a pluralistic approach in contemporary Iranian poetry, one that continues to shape the literary landscape today.

### **Pre-1370s/1990s: Setting the Context**

Before turning to the poets of the 1370s/1990s and 1380s/2000s, it is essential to provide a brief review of women’s poetry in Iran prior to these decades in order to contextualize the literary and social origins of the works under discussion. While figures such as Rābi’ah Balkhī, Mahsatī Ganjavī, and Jahān Malik Khātūn were largely relegated to footnotes in the patriarchal history of classical Persian poetry up to the AH 13th century/19th century CE, the emergence of poets like Rashhah Isfahānī and Tāhīrah Qurrat al-‘Ayn during the rise of modernity in the AH 13th century/19th century CE marked a pivotal shift. Later, Parvīn I’tisāmī, Simin Behbahani, and, most notably, Forough Farrokhzad in the 14th /20th century, contributed to significant turning points in the evolution of Persian poetry.

Following the developments of the Constitution era, the growing presence of women in all social domains, and the literary revolution of Nīmā Yūshīj, Persian poetry was no longer defined merely by classical forms or dominated by masculine voices. During a period when the ghazal still adhered to complex classical prosody, Simin Behbahani introduced new prosodic meters while incorporating contemporary political and social themes, challenging both the formal structure and content of classical poetry. Almost concurrently, Forough Farrokhzad expanded the boundaries of women’s poetry by breaking taboos surrounding themes of love in her first three poetry collections.



While Farrokhzad's early works demonstrated her burgeoning talent, it was the publication of *Tavvaludī dīgar* [Another birth] in 1343/1964 that truly revolutionized Persian poetry.<sup>1</sup>

Forough Farrokhzad's revolutionary language and themes in the 1340s/1960s and 1350s/1970s left an indelible mark on subsequent women poets, despite attempts by patriarchal literary history to suppress her feminine poetic voice. Her influence is particularly evident in works like *Maymanat Mīrsādiqī's Bā āb'hā va āyīnah'hā* [With waters and mirrors] (1356/1977) and *Batūl 'Azīzpūr's Khvāb-i Laylī* [Layli's sleep] (1351/1972), where the tone and diction clearly echo Farrokhzad's style. Farrokhzad's poetry incorporated words that were previously uncommon or taboo. Terms associated with physical intimacy, desire, and the body such as "lovemaking," "sin," "hug," "pleasure," "breath," "gratification," "desire," "heat," "breast," "arm," "body," "thirst," "physique," and "need" became more prevalent. She also employed words expressing rebellion and emotional intensity, such as "rebel," "burning," and "wild." These terms, along with others like "useless" and "fear," were not common, or allowed, in women's poetry before Farrokhzad, yet they gained increasing prominence in the literary landscape after her work. Addressing an earthly, tangible, beloved alongside the idealized man, as well as incorporating elements of social satire, became defining features of women's poetry from this period onward.<sup>2</sup>

In the years leading up to and following the 1357/1979 revolution, women's poetry was deeply shaped by Iran's immediate social and political upheaval. As Bihzād Khvājāt observes, "poetry becomes a weapon in the hands of the revolutionaries."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, 'Alī Bābā'chāhī notes that "in some of [the] women's poetry collection[s], an element of bravery and resistance can be observed along with idealism and windows open more or less towards bright horizons."<sup>4</sup> Among the women poets of this period, Mīnā Asādī and Zhīlā Musā'id stand out, as does Tāhīrah Saffārzādah, whose poetry, rooted in a neoclassical format,

<sup>1</sup>See Bihzād Khvājāt, "Shi'r-i mu'annas, naqsh-i shā'irān-i zan dar shi'r-i imrūz-i Irān" [Female poetry, the role of women poets in Iran's poetry today], *Zan va Farhang* [Woman and culture] 4, no. 15 (Spring 1392/2013): 17.

<sup>2</sup>'Alī Bābā'chāhī, *Shi'r-i imrūz, Zan-i imrūz* [Today's poetry, Today's woman] (Tehran: Vistār, 1386/2007), 120–21.

<sup>3</sup>Khvājāt, "Shi'r-i mu'annas," 15.

<sup>4</sup>Bābā'chāhī, *Shi'r-i imrūz, zan-i imrūz*, 121.

<sup>5</sup>Muhamad Shams Langarūdi, *Tārīkh-i tahlīlī-yi shi'r-i naw* [Analytical history of modern poetry] (Tehran: Markaz, 1377/1998), 3:85.

<sup>6</sup>Langarūdi, *Tārīkh-i tahlīlī-yi shi'r-i naw*, 3:85.

is characterized by a “usually ethical and nationalist essence.”<sup>5</sup> Saffārzādah embarked on an innovative path, experimenting boldly with language and content in ways that “brought about a new development in the domain of modern poetry.”<sup>6</sup>

Amidst the political and social upheaval brought about by the consolidation of the Islamic Republic, the eight-year war with Iraq, and shifting dynamics in both domestic and foreign politics, the 1360s/1980s witnessed the emergence of a remarkable presence of women in Persian poetry. Rather than responding directly or superficially to these external upheavals, women’s poetry during this period increasingly turned inward, focusing on personal and emotional experiences. The works of poets such as Firishtah Sārī, Banafshah and Khātirah Hijāzī, Nasrīn Jāfrī, Nāhīd Kabīrī, and Nāzanīn Nizām-Shahīdī, who were active in the 1370s/1990s, are marked by a heightened attention to linguistic detail, the exploration of language’s possibilities, and the distinct expression of emotions.

### **The Emergence of a New Poetic Voice: Women’s Poetry in the 1370s/1990s**

At the outset of the 1370s/1990s, a new generation of women poets emerged. These poets, on one hand, had moved beyond the experiences of the revolution and the war, while on the other, they were influenced by global political, economic, social, and literary transformations. This generation faced numerous political, social, and cultural constraints that further limited their ability to navigate historical questions of identity and the challenges tied to their social roles. The weight of these limitations is evident in the love poetry of this decade, where expressions of tangible love are paired with a boldness rooted in individual lived experiences, at times transgressive, subversive, and even critical. In her book *Shi'r-i zan az āghāz tā imrūz* (Women’s poetry, from the beginning to now), Pīgāh Ahmadi considers this development as a form of maturity:



It seems that romantic expression of the sixties/the eighties evolves toward a form of maturity. This maturity is perhaps the product of the lived realities of a generation that, due to the transformations in socio-cultural conditions, is grappling with more complex societal relations and no longer approaches life with the simplicity of the previous generation, instead analyzing their failures. The use of a different kind of romantic expression, which is bold yet bitter and confrontational, can be the outcome of such an existence. In the poetry of the seventies/nineties, a deconsecration of feminine modes of expression takes place, particularly in the domain of lyrical-sensual poetry. Examples of this can be found in the poetry of Shīvā Arastū'ī, Rawyā Tafī, Girānāz Mūsavī, Pigāh Ahmādī, Maryam Hūlah, Farkhundah Hājī'zādah, Farībā Sidīqīm, Āfāq Shawhānī, and Sipīdah Judayrī.<sup>7</sup>

This “deconsecration” and departure from conventional expressions and tones in love poetry led to a new approach in the poetry of the 1370s/1990s. Bābā'chāhī cites Girānāz Mūsavī's poem *Ān kih guft ārī* (He who said yes) as a representative example:

I wish our old picture were reflected in the mirror

I would not have said yes

You would not have signed

And through the wide-open window

We would have sailed the sea together.<sup>8</sup>

This shift in tone, though primarily a result of the new lived realities of Iranian women post-revolution and post-war, was also shaped by literary and cultural influences. The 1370s/1990s witnessed a surge in translations and publications of various modernist and postmodernist literary theories, along with the establishment of new publishing houses alongside existing

<sup>7</sup>Pigāh Ahmādī, *Shī'r-i zan az āghāz tā imrūz* [Women's poetry, from the beginning to now] (2nd repr. ed., Tehran: Chishmah, 1389/2010), 41.

<sup>8</sup>Alī Bābāchāhī, *'Āshiqānah-tarīn'hā 1300–1380* [The most amorous 1921–2001] (Tehran: Sālis, 1384/2005).

<sup>9</sup>Muhammad Ramazānī, “Parvandah-’i shi’r-i pishraw-yi zanān ba’d az inqilāb” [An account of women’s progressive poetry after the revolution], *Vīrgūl* 6 (Nawrūz 1396 /March 2017), <https://virgule-mag.ir>.

ones. These developments not only facilitated the presentation of new poetry but also introduced poets and their audiences to innovative critical and theoretical frameworks that helped recognize and legitimize contemporary literary movements. Two decades later, Muhammad Ramazānī, the editor of the literary journal *Vīrgūl*, summarized the situation as follows: “In those years, the preoccupation with modernism and the influx of modernist and postmodernist theories transformed the poetry of Iran; journals were revitalized; literary awards, workshops and circles became influential venues for poets of this decade to present themselves and their works.”<sup>9</sup>

The need to dismantle stereotypical portrayals of women in love poetry, prompted by shifts in social conditions and the emergence of new theoretical frameworks, led to the exploration of new poetic domains. This transformation is evident not only in the perspective and position of the female poet-narrator but also in the semantic structures and linguistic layers of poetic language.

In the 1370s/1990s, concern about linguistic forms gave rise to numerous poetic movements such as shi’r-i guftār (speech poetry, centering on quotidian language), ghazal-i form (form ghazal, aiming to defamiliarize the form of ghazal), and shi’r-i harikat (movement poetry, focusing on dynamic metamorphism). However, perhaps the most dominant movement was postmodern poetry, which in Iran became closely associated with Rizā Barāhanī. Central concepts in postmodern poetry and discussions surrounding it during this decade included the disruption of linear structures, shifts in tone and polyphony, blank space, musicality, narrative fragmentation, the breakdown of grand narratives, the death of the author, narrative interruption, intertextuality, language-focused poetry, and intratextual and extratextual references. Ruzā Jamālī, Rawyā Taftī, and Pigāh Ahmadī were among the pioneers of this approach, emphasizing linguistic deviations and deconstructions. Evidence of this is found in the titles of some of their publications from the pe-



riod, such as Ruzā Jamālī's *Īn murdah sīb nīst; yā khiyār ast yā gulābī* (This dead person is not an apple; it is either a cucumber or a pear) and Pigāh Ahmadi's *Īn ruz'hā-yam galūst* (My days are a throat). The poems in these collections break away from conventional imagery, disrupting logical narration through transformed language and offering fresh perspectives on the relationship between the signifier and the signified, as illustrated in this excerpt from *Īn murdah sīb nīst; yā khiyār ast yā gulābī*:

<sup>10</sup>Ruzā Jamālī, *Īn murdah sīb nīst yā khiyār ast yā gulābī* (Tehran: Vistār, 1377/1998), 24.

We sob, but the apple is a cucumber

We have a request:

And the apple renounces its red color.

In a bit of fork and plate we peel a potato

We offer our fingers mixed with peach repulsion to our beloved  
...<sup>10</sup>

Postmodern poetry faced significant criticism from the Iranian literary establishment. Various forms of linguistic deconstruction were pushed to extremes, moving beyond the mere postponement of meaning, as suggested by postmodern theory, to a complete breakdown of meaning and a focus on linguistic play. In more moderate examples, postmodern approaches with an emphasis on linguistic and grammatical deconstruction paved the way for poetry resembling everyday conversation. Poets such as Girānāz Mūsavī and Mihrnūsh Qurbān'alī created novel images and concepts by deviating from conventional meanings and deconstructing language, as seen, for instance, in Girānāz Mūsavī's poem *Furūd'gāh* [The airport]:

Searching my bag, what's the point?

Hidden at the bottom of my pocket, there is a sigh that has constantly heard: stop!

<sup>11</sup>Kāzīm Karīmīyān, *Sayr-i tahavvul dar shi'r-i imrūz* [The course of development in today's poetry] (Tehran: Murvārīd, 1385/2006), 154.

<sup>12</sup>Rawyā Taftī, *Rag'hā-yam az rūy-i bulūzam mī-guzarand* [My veins cross over my shirt] (Tehran: Vīstār, 1383/2004).

Leave me alone!

I'll sleep with a raspberry bush and won't be bothered

Why do you always point at a woman

Who deserts the wall

To pin a heart to her dress?

There's nothing in my suitcase

Except for hair that has not committed any sin

Leave me alone!<sup>11</sup>

Overall, the poetry of this decade shares common characteristics among women poets, whether they engage in linguistic transgression or focus more on innovative imagery and meaning. These include experimentation with form and feminine poetic language, the active use of a female narrator, the expression of sociopolitical concerns, critiques of the sociopolitical status of women, eroticism, the integration of personal lived experiences, the subversion of clichés surrounding women in love poetry, breaking taboos to establish feminine identity, the use of intertextuality and metatextuality, and the growing focus on the role of feminine language in poetry and empiricism.

During this decade, women poets also entered the publishing sphere, playing significant roles in bringing many poets to the forefront. One prominent publisher was Farkhundah Hājīzādah, who ran Vīstār Publications and published Rawyā Taftī's collection, *Rag'hā-yam az rūy-i bulūzam mī-guzarand* (My veins cross over my shirt).<sup>12</sup> Farkhundah Hājīzādah was also the license holder, director, and editor of the literary journal *Bāyā*. Another influential publisher was Mahīn Khadīvī, who directed Sālī Publications and published Girānāz Mūsavī's *Pā'birahnah*



tā subh (Barefoot until morning), which brought a new tone to contemporary poetry. The presence of these female publishers, along with earlier pioneers like Pūrān Farrukhzād of Jām Publications and Shahlā Lāhījī of Rawshangarān Publications, helped create new spaces for literary works by women.

<sup>13</sup>Kāmyār Ābidī, *Sad sāl shī'r-i zanān-i Iran: Muntakhab-i shī'r-i āzād, Nīmā'ī va sipīd* [One hundred years of Iran's women poetry: Selection of free, Nīmā'ī, and blank verse] (Tehran: Murvārīd, 1400/2021), 21.

### **New Directions: The Evolution of Women's Poetry in the 1380s/2000s**

In the 1380s/2000s, women poets continued to break free from the confines of love poetry and engaged more critically with social and political concerns, reaching new heights. During this decade, in addition to the continued presence of women poets from previous generations, new figures emerged who significantly influenced the poetic landscape by creating independent languages and perspectives. Notable poets from this period include Rīrā 'Abbāsī, Āydā 'Amīdī, Shamsī Pūr'muhammādī, Sārā Muhammādī Ardahālī, Ātifah Chahār'mahāliyyān, Ma'sūmah Dāvūd'ābadī, Laylā Kurd'bachchah, Rawyā Zarrīn, Rūjā Chamankār, Banafshah and Bahārah Farīs'ābādī, Fātimah Ikhtisārī, Maryam Ja'farī Āzarmānī, and Katāyūn Rīz'kharātī.

The poetry of the 1380s/2000s was more stable and subdued in contrast to the excitement, experimentation, and postmodernist innovations of the 1370s/1990s, which contributed to its wider popularity among readers and critics. Simultaneously, the spread of the internet and advances in digital technology began to reshape poetry by offering new platforms for expression and bringing about significant changes in both form and content. Kāmyār 'Ābidī identifies “the elimination of censorship issues” and the simplification of blank verse as key outcomes of “Persian poetry's shift toward the fast-paced digital world and virtual space.”<sup>13</sup>

In the 1380s/2000s, women's poetry established an independent identity rooted in lived experiences and resisted classification and affiliation within literary movements. However, attempts

<sup>14</sup>Maryam Ja'farī Āzarmānī, An untitled poem, in *Song of the Ground Jay: Poems by Iranian Women 1960-2023*, selected and edited by Mojdeh Bahar, enl. and rev. ed. (Chevy Chase, MD: Gordyeh, 2023), 252.

<sup>15</sup>“Āshnā-ī bā jashnvārah-yi adabī-i Parvīn I'tisāmī” [Introducing the literary festival of Parvīn I'tisāmī], *Hamshahrī online*, Ābān 8, 1388/October 28, 2009. <https://www.hamshahrionline.ir/news/93917>

were still made to define poetic trends, such as distinguishing “shī'r-i sādah” (simple poetry), which relies on visual defamiliarization and appeals to general audience, from “shī'r-i pīchīdah” (complex poetry), which continues the linguistic deconstruction prevalent in the previous decade. However, this binary classification failed to achieve consensus due to the diverse linguistic and thematic approaches of individual poets. The postmodern ghazal also emerged as a bridge between classical poetry and postmodernist thought, aiming to innovate the ghazal form. Women poets such as Fātimah Ikhtisārī, Andīshah Fūlādvand, and Maryam Ja'farī Āzarmānī were pioneers of this movement. Like other women poets of the decade, these postmodern ghazal poets challenged taboos, gender norms, and moral conventions, introducing words, concepts, and themes previously considered incompatible with the classical ghazal. This new approach is evident in the titles of their collections, such as Fātimah Ikhtisārī's *Yik bahs-i fimīnistī qabl az pukhtan-i sīb'zamīnī'hā* [A feminist discussion before cooking the potatoes], and in their poems, such as Maryam Ja'farī Āzarmānī's untitled work quoted below:

I like you to be alone with me and these wild ghazals,

No news, no god, no fetters, ha! How many desires I have here,

One can submerge in imagination to emerge somewhere else

Dance and freedom and—forget it! I hate politics here.<sup>14</sup>

Two major literary awards named after women were established in this period. The first, the “Parvīn I'tisāmī's Literary Award,” was initiated by the Cultural Deputy of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in 1383/2004, and overseen by *Mu'asissah-i Khānah-i Kitāb* from Urdībihisht 1386/April 2007.<sup>15</sup> The second, the “Khurshīd (Sun) Award for Women's Poetry,” was founded by Sīpīdah Judayrī on the birthday of Forough Farrokhzad in 1387/2009, with all roles, from founder and judge-



es to selections and sponsors filled by women.<sup>16</sup> These awards highlight both the substantial volume of works published by women poets and the growing recognition of women's voices by both official and independent literary platforms.

<sup>16</sup>Mahdī Rustam'pūr, "In bār jāyīzah-i kāmīlan zanānah" [A totally feminine prize this time], Khabar Online, Āzar 8, 1387/November 28, 2008. <https://www.khabaronline.ir/news/500/>

The 1380s/2000s opened up a new chapter in Iranian women's poetry with the publication of collections such as Rūhangīz Karāchī's *Bā kabūs'hā-yi zan* (With nightmares of a woman), Farzānah Qavāmī's *Guftah būdam, man az nasl-i Shahrzād'hā-yi muztaribam* (I did say, I am from the generation of agitated Shahrzads), Firishtah Sārī's *Shahrzād pusht-i chirāgh-i qirmiz* (Shahrzad behind the stoplight), Sīpīdah Judayrī's *Khvāb-i dukhtar-i du'zīst* (The dream of the amphibian girl), Rūjā Chamankār's *Sang'hā-yi nuh-māhah* (Nine-months stones) and Kī-yānūsh Farīd's *Zanī bā ta'm-i khāk* (A woman with the flavor of dust).

The active presence of women poets in this decade also led to the rise of women-run literary magazines, such as *Shawkarān*, directed by Pūnah Nīdā'ī', or *Sīnimā va Adabiyāt*, edited by Nīlūfar Niyāvarānī, both of which became driving forces in the Iranian poetic scene. In addition, women publishers played an instrumental role in introducing many influential poets of this period. For example, *Sīb-i surkh* (Red apple), managed by Muzhgān Akbarī, was established towards the end of the 1370s/1990s and published collections by Ruzā Jamālī and Āfāq Shawhānī, alongside emerging poets from later generations. The press remains active in the poetry publishing scene, continuing to publish collections by young poets, including Nīnā Razandī, Bahār Chamankār and Nīlūfar Tāhirī.

The 1380s/2000s also witnessed the widespread growth of the internet in Iran. Poets' personal weblogs, websites, and online magazines, along with new audiovisual platforms, enabled poets to bypass traditional publishing constraints and reach a wider audience, without the need for the approval or censorship of gatekeepers. The digital space facilitated connections between

<sup>17</sup>Bītā Malakūtī, “Balloons,” in *Song of the Ground Jay: Poems by Iranian Women 1960-2023*, selected and translated by Mojdeh Bahar, enl. and rev. ed. (Chevy Chase, MD: Gordyeh, 2023), 342.

<sup>18</sup>Rūjā Chamankār, “Shi‘r-i dahih-yi hashtād va huzūr-i fa‘āl-i zanān” [The poetry of the eighties and active presence of women], *Sināmā va adabiyāt* 62 (Shahrivar 1396/August 2017), 141.

Iranian poets, both inside and outside Iran, enabling them to reach Persian poetry readers both domestically and internationally. This development opened a new chapter in Iran’s contemporary literature. Poets such as Māndānā Zandiyān, Rawshanak Bīgunāh, Shaydā Muhammadī, Laylā Farjāmī, and Mānā Āqā’ī, who resided abroad, also benefitted from these developments.

Towards the end of the decade, a wave of migration spurred by political protests and their aftermath led to an increase in “shi‘r-i muhājirat” (migration poetry), which had already begun to take shape. Poets such as Sīpīdah Judayrī, Pīgāh Ahmadī, Shabnam Āzar, and Bītā Malakūtī emerged as prominent figures in this movement. Themes of exile and homeland became central to diasporic women’s poetry, as exemplified in Bītā Malakūtī’s short poem “Bād’kunak’hā” (Balloons):

Foreign land is a place

In my homeland

Where balloons

Are Not

Memories of birthday

But childish banter of death.<sup>17</sup>

This period was characterized by the absence of a dominant literary movement, with women’s poetry increasingly reflecting individual and pluralistic perspectives. Women poets shaped both the structure and content of poetry by embracing *écriture* feminine and exploring their internalized realities. Their work contrasted with the “timelessness and placelessness of classical poetry” through precise references to time and place and a borderless approach, often combined with a satire, dark humor, and grotesque elements.<sup>18</sup> This style is exemplified in Bahārah



Rizā'ī's Bīvah'margī-yi Tihṙān [The death of widows of Tehran] demonstrates:

The eavesdropping of the crows was constant that time

It was me and Madam Elizabeth's Boulevard

Who had aged twenty years.<sup>19</sup>

As Kāzim Karīmiyān states in Sayr-i tahavvul dar shi'r-i imrūz (The course of development in today's poetry), metonymy, metaphor, and satire are among the defining characteristics and stylistic markers of Iranian women's poetry in the 1380s/2000s.<sup>20</sup> Manīzhah Parvarish and Farzānah Qavāmī, respectively, use these features in the following poems:

She wants to betray,

For her betrayal

She weaves big reasons

To dress

All her faithfulness

And be lost

I.<sup>21</sup>

I should remain at the same weight

stretch my skin

put a line above my eyebrows with a needle

put on eyelash extensions,

<sup>19</sup>Bahārah Rizā'ī, Bīvah'margī-yi Tihṙān [The death of widows of Tehran] (Tehran: Chishmah, 1394/2015), 5.

<sup>20</sup>Karīmiyān, Sayr-i tahavvul dar shi'r-i imrūz, 244.

<sup>21</sup>Manīzhah Parvarish, Rābitah 'i barg'hā gāhī bih ham mī-khurad [The relationship of leaves is sometimes disrupted] (Tehran: Murvārid, 1396/2017), 99.

<sup>22</sup>Farzānah Qavāmī, *Ba'd az haft sā'at u bīst u nuh daqīqah giryah* [After seven hours and twenty-nine minutes of crying] (Tehran: Nilūfar, 1390/2011), 38–39.

inject myself

to kill my damn appetite

[...]

I am a bit heavy

to go to the moon.<sup>22</sup>

### Conclusion

Analyzing the poetry of Iranian women from the Constitutional Revolution through to the era of Forough Farrokhzad, the 1380s/2000s and beyond reveals the trajectory of social identity navigated by many Iranian women writers. Forough Farrokhzad marked a significant turning point in contemporary Iranian poetry, heralding “another birth” (a new birth) in the literary landscape. Women poets of the 1350s/1970s and 1360s/1980s continued to write about the historical suffering encapsulated in the “sadness of being a woman,” still focusing on gender, a theme that became the title of one of Khātirah Hijāzī’s poetry collections. In the 1370s/1990s, this focus on gender took a critical turn, manifesting in works such as Ruzā Jamālī’s *Dahān’kajī bih tu* [Making faces at you], and Laylī Galahdārān’s *Zan/makhrūt-i siyāh* [Woman/Black cone]. The 1380s/2000s marked a decade of protest, when women’s poetry engaged critically with their positions both within the family and in broader society. Alongside themes of motherhood, women poets of this era voiced feelings of passivity, frustration, and despair, embedding protest within the very fabric of their poetry. One such example can be seen in the title of Rawyā Zarrīn’s collection of poetry, *Mī-khvāham bachchah’hāam-rā qūrt bi-daham* [I want to swallow my babies]. Experiences like pregnancy, and motherhood gave rise to new poetic concepts and spaces, reshaping the poetic landscape in this decade.



The critical approach taken by these poets—who had experienced revolution and war firsthand—was not limited to women’s issues but also extended to traditionally masculine subjects like war. This is evident in the works of poets such as Laylā Kurdbachchah and Ā’idā ‘Amīdī, as demonstrated in the following examples:

Why, no matter how many channels I change on this damned television,

Does the war not end?

And no matter how much I wipe its screen,

The trace of tears from the faces of childless mothers

Does not disappear

What was our sin?

That warplanes paid us back for it

And tanks that won’t allow

This bitter supper to go down our throats.<sup>23</sup>

I returned home with a heart full of bone and blood

The wolf within me had killed someone

Someone whose beasts inside weren’t ferocious.<sup>24</sup>

This article has provided a summary of the vast efforts of women poets over two decades, whose published works have contributed to amplifying the female voice in Iranian literature. Throughout the analyzed period, many poets helped to inject new life into Iranian poetry by presenting their individual worl-

<sup>23</sup>Laylā Kurdbachchah, “Pādkāst-i shī’r surāyah 28, diklamah shī’r’hā’ī az Laylā Kurdbachchah,” Pādkāst Surāyah, October 11, 2010. <https://sor-ayeh.com/podcast/?p=528>

<sup>24</sup>Ā’idā ‘Amīdī, “Ā’idā ‘Amīdī: ba’d az jang” [Ā’idā ‘Amīdī: After the war], Radiozamanah, Āzar 8, 1395/ November 28, 2016, <https://www.radiozamanah.com/309454>.

views and embracing pluralism. Their contributions form a historical narrative of women's presence during an influential era in contemporary Iran while also reflecting the diverse social and literary movements of the last three decades of the fourteenth/twentieth century. Perhaps this is why echoes of the same individual and formal diversity can be seen in the works of women poets such as Ilhām Gurdī, Niḡīn Farhūd, Tāhirah Khunyā, Kubrā Fadavī, and 'Atīyah 'Attārzādah, who published their first collections in the 1390s/2000s. Despite existing barriers, the similarities and differences in the poetry of these poets—only a sample of which is included here—highlight how the continued active and prominent presence of women poets over these decades has transformed contemporary Iranian poetry into a dynamic and distinguished field.

