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Key Characteristics of Iranian Women's Poetry in the 1990s

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Introduction

The 1370s/1990s marked a significant turning point in contemporary Iranian poetry, characterized by a bold departure from established norms and the emergence of diverse poetic voices. Among the most transformative developments of this period was the rise of women poets, who redefined the contours of poetic language and aesthetics in Iran. Their work not only reflected broader cultural and social shifts but also challenged literary traditions through experimentation and innovation. This article aims to explore the pivotal role women poets played in shaping the landscape of Iranian poetry in the 1990s. It examines both the historical context of their emergence and the distinctive features of their poetic expression. By investigating the ways these poets navigated and often resisted patriarchal and traditional constraints, the article reveals the complex interplay between gender, identity, and literary form in this vibrant period of poetic production.

The article is divided into two main sections. Part 1, titled "A New Poetic Force: Women Poets and the Literary Shift of 1990s Iran," outlines the socio-political and literary conditions that enabled the flourishing of women's voices in poetry during this decade. It discusses the cultural atmosphere of the time, the influence of preceding literary movements, and the mechanisms through which women poets gained recognition and readership. Part 2, titled "Innovative Aesthetics: Characteristics of Wom-

en's Poetry in the 1990s," explores the defining stylistic and thematic features of this poetic movement. This section delves into the following subsections: Language Games, Polyphony, Rejection of Traditional Narrative Conventions, Colloquial Tone, Semantic Multiplicity and/or Meaninglessness, Ambiguity, Fragmentation and Disconnection, Rejection of Rigid Genres and Meta-Narratives, Individuality, Difference, and the Human Body, Imagery and Figurative Language, Intertextuality, Intertextuality and Humor, Intertextuality and Expressionist Imagery, and Engagement with Urban Identity. The article concludes by reflecting on the broader implications of this poetic transformation, emphasizing the critical importance of women's contributions to modern Iranian literature. It highlights the need for continued scholarly attention to these voices, whose aesthetic innovations and cultural interventions have left a lasting imprint on the literary canon of Iran.

1. A New Poetic Force: Women Poets and the Literary Shift of 1990s Iran

Since the end of the 1360s/1980s, Iranian society has experienced new conditions that shaped its social life. These changes were influenced by the economic and cultural atmosphere following the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), a period that revived many concepts previously overshadowed by the conflict, such as "moderation policy" and "recognition of the presence of others," particularly in political, religious, and artistic domains. In the political arena, while Hashemi Rafsanjani's pseudo-neoliberal government emphasized economic liberalism over political and epistemological reforms, it could not fully contain the societal repercussions of these shifts. Under Mohammad Khatami's presidency, Iranian society witnessed a period of increased openness to intellectual and artistic expression, though still constrained within certain limits, marking a significant change since the Islamic Revolution. Religious pluralism became a key point of contention between Islamic reformists and fundamentalists, with both groups drawing on the traditions of Sufism

and the philosophies of figures like Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. AH 672/1273 CE), whose principles of moderation were reinterpreted through a Western intellectual framework. In the arts, the diminishing focus on themes such as war, resistance, and epic writing gave way to an emphasis on the individual, highlighting personal rather than contextual aspects of this Eastern human, whether overt or hidden, as portrayed in poetry. Meanwhile, the translation of works by Western thinkers such as Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) in the early 1990s influenced Persian literature, leading to a departure from traditional forms in both poetry and prose. Due to the lack of a "proper understanding" of this new cultural-artistic phenomenon in Iran, any linguistic and rhetorical innovations that diverged from the works of the first wave of contemporary Persian poetry—such as Nīmā Yūshīj, Mahdī Akhavān Sālis, Ahmad Shāmlū, Suhrāb Sipihrī, and Furūgh Farrukhzād—were often categorized as "postmodernist poetry."

Contemporary Persian poetry, including the women's poetry of the 1340s/1960s and 1350s/1970s, was predominantly shaped by themes of resistance or and avant-garde movements such as the New Wave and Spatial Poetry. However, I contend that two poets, Tāhirah Saffārzādah and Furūgh Farrukhzād, emerge as notable exceptions to this trend. Saffārzādah's socially engaged poetry does derive its impact from rhetorical or linguistic experimentation; rather, it is rooted in her distinctive perspective on everyday events. Through this unique outlook, often infused with subtle humor, she reframes ordinary occurrences by using the metaphor of concave and convex mirrors to uncover their underlying historical contexts. To achieve this effect, Saffārzādah adopts on a journalistic, non-literary tone that effectively strips away the superficial layers of daily events, as demonstrated in the following lines:

Without annual leave, without the ten o'clock coffee,

Without a boss,

I am returning to the seasons—

Still the same four.

The grass still feeds on its chlorophyll,

The wind brims with passing spears.

The lilies tremble like beetles,

Today I had promised my headache to buy an aspirin or two

I still have time—

Tomorrow afternoon belongs to me, too…[1]

[1]Tāhirah Saffārzādah, Tanīn dar diltā [Echo in delta] (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1349/1970), 76.

Furūgh Farrukhzād is regarded as one of the most modern poets of the 1340s/1960s and 1350s/ 1970s, particularly in relation to her collections, Tavalludī dīgar (Another birth) and Īmān biyāvarīm bih āghāz-i fasl-i sard (Let us believe in the beginning of the cold season). Her work also represents one of the earliest instances in contemporary Persian poetry where the body is conceptualized as both home and message. This perspective reflects her liberation from historical, geographical, and religious constraints, as she emphasizes the erotic and reclaims the body from conventional, grand definitions. At times, this "body-message" manifests as an ordinary aspect of daily life in the work of contemporary poets, irrespective of gender. However, in other instances, contemporary poetry assumes a protest-like quality. By challenging religious and historical taboos, these poems create a new taboo: sanctifying the sexual body, which inadvertently obscures the multiple roles of the modern, native individual. What distinguishes Farrukhzād, however, is her approach to the creative process of writing poetry. Rather than viewing it as an intellectual exercise shaped by external

philosophical or political systems, she treats it as an organic, exploratory process. More importantly, she imbues this process with emotional depth, selecting everyday matters and skillfully refining them. Her poetry, as a result, "is restless and impatient because it is driven by momentary thoughts and emotions rather than by aesthetic values."[2]

We've lost all that was meant to be lost,

We've embarked on the road without a lantern.

And the moon—the moon—that tender mother, remained ever present,

In the childhood memories of a thatched roof.

And above the young farmlands, quivering in fear of locust swarms,

How much should be paid?[3]

By the late 1360s/1980s, three dominant movements had emerged in Persian poetry. The first was a continuation of the poetic tradition of established by the first and the second generations of modern poetry. The second movement represented a form of neo-romanticism, drawing inspiration from poets such as Firaydūn Tavallulī, Nādir Nādirpūr, and Firaydūn Mushīrī, with Shams Langrūdī's work serving as a notable example. The third was the rise of Spoken Poetry Movement, exemplified by the work of Sayyid ʿAlī Sālihī.

Prominent women poets of this period include Fereshteh Sārī (b. 1335/1956), Nāzanīn Nizām Shahīdī (1333-1383/1954-2004), Banafshah Hijāzī (b. 1333/1954), Khātirih Hijāzī (b. 1340/1961), Mirsidah Lisānī (b. 1335/1956), Nidā Abkārī (b. 1343/1964), Āzītā Qahrimān (b. 1341/1962), Shahīn Hannānah (1319-1376/1940-1997), Fīrūzah Mīzānī (b. 1329/1950), Zuhrah

[2]Ziyā Muvahhid, Shiʿr va shināKht [Poetry and understanding] (Tehran: Murvārīd, 1385/2006), 133.

[3]Furūgh Farrukhzād, Īmān biyāvarīm bih āghāz-i fasl-i sard [Let us believe in the beginning of the cold season] (Tehran: Murvārīd, 1367/1989), 50–51.

Khāliqī (b. 1346/1967), Nāhīd Kabīrī (b. 1335/1956), ʿIffat Kīmiyāyī (b. 1334/1955), Pūrān Kāvah (b. 1330/1951), Parvīn Nigāhdarī (b. 1337/1958), Safūrā Nayyirī (b. 1323/1944), Mīnā Dastghayb (b. 1322/1943), Mīnā Asadī (b. 1323/1944), Mahīn Khadīvī (b. 1331/1952), Farzīn Hūmānfar (b. 1338/1959), Gītī Khūshdil (b. 1326/1947) and Ryrā ʿAbbāsī (b. 1341/1962).

Unlike the previous generation, poets of this period were no longer emotionally or intellectually preoccupied with political groups and organizations. Even when resistance themes appeared in a poetry, they were intertwined with imagery reflecting the poet's personal state of mind. This shift indicated a reinterpretation of contemporary conditions that moved beyond rigid political frameworks, merging political awareness with lyrical self-reflection through an allegorical, imagistic style. A collective consciousness emerged among the poets of this period, marking a transition from revolutionary discourse to a reformist perspective. This transition also shaped poetic technique in the 1990s, as poets moved beyond the conventional use of simile and metaphor toward a more complex "metaphorical contexture," which discarded clichéd metaphors—such as the jungle, stars, thunder, phoenix, and night—in favor of a more sensory and inductive approach. In contrast to the romanticism of early contemporary Persian poetry, this neo-romanticism embraced a modern language, forgoing the heightened passion and intensity of its predecessor in favor of a more introspective and contemplative tone.

By the early 1370s/1990s, mass media experienced a degree of relative freedom, particularly following the election of Mohammad Khatami in 1997, which ushered in a more moderate political climate. The proliferation of media outlets marked the emergence of previously suppressed social, artistic, and literary voices. During this period, women poets faced two parallel challenges: first, adapting their work to the relatively open atmosphere and engaging with a fragmented society that accommodated both traditional and modern perspectives; second,

formulating a new poetics that reflects the changing cultural landscape. Literary societies flourished, fueled by discussions on the philosophy of language, particularly influenced by post-structuralist and postmodernist thought. Among these was Rizā Barāhanī's poetry workshop, which included several prominent women poets of the 1990s, such as Ruza Jamālī (b. 1356/1977), Farībā Sidīqī (b. 1338/1959), Ruyā Taftī (b. 1348/1969) and Shīvā Arastūyī (b. 1340/1961). Barāhanī, whose influential Addressed to the Butterflies… is considered a manifesto for poetry following Nīmā Yūshīj, emphasized the multifaceted nature of poetry, its liberation from fixed meanings, and its focus on language.[4] Whether his students were able to effectively implement his theories remains a question that warrants further exploration.

At the same time, critical literary works, such as Bābak Ahmadī's Text Structure and Interpretation and, later, Husayn-ʿAlī Nuwrūzī's Modernity and Modernism and Postmodernity and Postmodernism, became essential readings for younger poets. Given postmodernism's emphasis on individuality, the reevaluation of tradition, and the rejection of meta-narratives, many poets eagerly incorporated postmodernist elements into their work, labeling it accordingly. However, others, questioned whether postmodernism could take root in a society that had yet to fully experience modernism. These tensions sparked intense debates from the outset. While some argue that postmodernism is not merely a historical period but a critique of modernism and its shortcomings, it is crucial to acknowledge that such critique is shaped by its specific historical and geographical context. As such, postmodernism, which claims to transcend modernism, cannot simultaneously serve as a perspective that looks beyond and within modernism.

What later came to be known as "the poetry of the 1990s" was, in fact, a series of sporadic experiments in the late 1980s, lacking clear direction or guiding principles. This marked a departure from previous literary movements, which were typically

[4] Rizā Barāhanī, Khatāb bih parvānah'hā [Addressed to butterflies], (2nd repr. ed.,Tehran: Nashr-i Markaz, 1388/2009).

defined by manifestos, such as Nīmā Yūshīj's free verse, Ahmad Shāmlū's blank verse, Firaydūn Tavallulī's romantic poetry, and Yadullāh Ruyāyī's spatial poetry. In contrast, while the poets of the 1370s/1990s did publish some manifestos, these were more rooted in individual experiences than in collective consensus or structured poetic expression. Several works from this period reflect attempts to establish frameworks for contemporary poets, including, Guzārahʹhā-yi munfarid: Masāʾil-i shiʿr va barrasī-yi shiʿr-i jadīd va javān-i imrūz [Singular propositions: issues of poetry and examination of contemporary and young poetry] by ʿAlī Bābāchāhī, Harakat va shiʿr [Movement and poetry] by Abū al-Fazl Pāshā, Munāzaʿah dar pirahan (Conflict in clothes) by Bihzād Khājāt, Gūnahʹhā-yi nav-āvarī dar shiʿr-i muʿāsir-i Īrān [Types of innovation in the contemporary poetry of Iran] by Kāvūs Hasanlī, and Digargūnī-yi nigāh, zabān va sākhtār dar shiʿr-i imrūz [Transformation of perspective, language, and structure in contemporary poetry] by Kāzim Karāmiyān.[5]

While poets of the 1370s/1990s, particularly women poets, agreed on the necessity of breaking from earlier literary traditions, they lacked a shared vision and goal, with each following an independent trajectory. As a result, it is more accurate to describe this period as a "movement" rather than a "style." Whereas "style" implies a fixed, clearly defined framework, "movement" suggests an ongoing process characterized by fluidity, adaptation, and evolution. Women poets of this period fall into three broad categories. The first group, the conservatives, remained largely influenced by the poetry of the 1340s/1960s to 1360s/1980s, occasionally introducing minor innovations while still operating within traditional frameworks. The second group, the moderates, balanced loyalty to poetic tradition with a willingness to experiment, responding to shifts in the political and social climate. The third group, the radicals, often lacked a deep understanding of both classical Persian poetry and early modernist movements, yet were heavily influenced by Western linguistic theories. As a result, their work frequently reduced poetry to a "language-oriented" text, which, in turn, alienated many readers.

[5] ʿAlī Bābāchāhī, Guzārahʹhā-yi munfarid (Masāʾil-i shiʿr va barrasī-yi shiʿr-i jadīd va javān-i imrūz) [Singular propositions: issues of poetry and examination of contemporary and young poetry] 3 vols. (Tehran: Dībāyah, 1389/2010); Abū al-Fazl Pāshā, Harakat va shiʿr [Movement and poetry] (Tehran: Rūzgār, 1379/2000); Kāvūs Hasanlī, Gūnahʹhā-yi nawāvarī dar shiʿr-i muʿāsir-i Īrān [Types of innovation in the contemporary poetry of Iran] (6th repr. ed., Tehran: Sālis, 1401/2022); Kāzim Karīmiyān, Digar-gūnī-yi nigāh, zabān va sāḵhtār dar shiʾr-i imrūz [Transformation of perspective, language, and structure in contemporary poetry] (Tehran, Ravān, 1379/2000).

It is important to note that every poetic movement appeals to a specific audience rather than seeking universal readership. While movements can reject past literary traditions, this is only possible under certain conditions: first, there must be a social context for the change; second, poets must recognize the necessity for change; third, they must possess the literary skill to effectively break with tradition; and fourth, their poetry must match or surpass the poetic strength of the tradition from which it seeks to break away. This distinction explains why, on the one hand, Houshang Irani's poetry and theories faded with his own passing, while, on the other, Nīmā Yūshīj's poetry and ideas continue to shape the poetry of subsequent generations.

Among the three groups of poets, the moderates made the most concerted effort to localize postmodernism by situating it within the material and spiritual conditions of Iranian society. Unlike the radicals, who often relied on fragmented borrowings from Western theories, the moderates aimed to achieve "cultural integration" rather than a "cultural collage." While "cultural integration" involves consolidating elements based on similarities, a collage presents disparate cultural elements without cohesion.

As discussed earlier, poststructuralism and postmodernism emerged as dominant intellectual trends in Iran during the early 1990s, influencing literary circles alongside broader social and political changes. Nearly all literary movements of this period engaged with these theories. "Postmodernism was remarkably popular in the young society of Iran for two reasons: first, in some fields, postmodernist thought resonated with aspects of our cultural heritage (such as mystical teachings); second, due to the damages that inflicted by defective modernism, Iranian society was more receptive to a critique of modernism."[6] At the same time, some postmodernist thinkers rejected the idea of situating this phenomenon within specific historical or geographical contexts, framing it instead as a distinct mode of literary engagement.

[6] Rāmīn Jahānbaglū, Muwj-i chahārum [The fourth wave] (Tehran: Nay, 1392/2013): 83–84.

Following Iran's two major political events—the Islamic Revolution (1979) and the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88)—radical ideological movements, whether leftist or religious, lost much of their appeal. This shift created fertile ground for postmodernist ideas to align with a young society increasingly focused on individualism, both in philosophical and existential inquiries as well as in personal lifestyle choices. From this perspective, "individual beings are seen prior to principles; in fact, individual human beings have become principles themselves, and the previous principles now require human beings to survive in the postmodern atmosphere."[7]

As a result, literary journals and poetry collections of the 1370s/1990s were shaped by the new social and literary climate, often aspiring to be labeled as postmodernist. At the same time, critics such as Shams Langrūdī, Manūchihr Atashī, Abd al-ʿAlī Dastghayb, Mahmūd Muʿtaqidī, and Masūd Ahmadī expressed concerns about a "crisis with the audience." This crisis stemmed from the widening gap between the majority of readers and poetry characterized by linguistic, conceptual, and structural defamiliarization. Some critics argued that such crises are inherent in periods of literary transition. From this perspective, literary change is inextricably linked to moments of disruption. "One of the fundamental differences between the two period before and after the revolution was that in the previous era, thought, especially political thought, was not in crisis… it functioned clearly and purposefully. Therefore, in the poetry of the age, which was essentially epic-political, the character of crisis was not dominant; however, today, thought is restrained and consciousness is in crisis."[8]

Women poets of the 1370s/1990s became integral to this movement within a historical and political framework shaped by feminism. "By negating meta-narratives of truth, one of whose characteristics is giving a definition of everything, including woman and man, postmodernists have actually negated the historical, popular, and absolute definitions of different social and cultur-

[7]Bahman Bāzargānī, Mātris-i zibāʾī [Matrix of beauty] (Tehran: Akhtarān, 1391/2012), 15.

[8]Muhammad Mukhtārī, Chashm-i murakkab [Compound eye] (Tehran: Tūs, 1378/1999), 158.

al phenomena. In this way, postmodernism has greatly helped the emergence of feminism."[9] The integration of postmodernist thought into women's poetry of the 1370s/1990s unfolded within a complex web of local challenges and social realities. On the one hand, this broadened their understanding of feminism; on the other hand, it reduced the concept to a borrowed term. This fragmented position can be traced to the traditional-modern duality that defines Iranian society: "Iranian identity is not only threefold but also multifaceted. Iranians must experience this fragmented identity with all its incompatibilities. The amphibious situation resulting from the existence of these three layers (the ancient, Islamic, and modern Iran) is one of God's blessings when compared with the one-dimensional situation of the modern human being. We, as marginal inhabitants, live among different fields of knowledge, trapped in a network of incompatible worlds that negate and transform each other."[10]

It is important to recognize that the poetry of the 1370s/1990s does not strictly represent a historical period. Many women poets who began writing in the late 1360/1980s and early 1370s/1990s only published their work in the mid-1990s. As the movement solidified, its influence persisted into later decades, extending into the 2010s. Therefore, any selection of poets and poems from this movement must consider this broader timeline. Prominent women poets of the 1370s/1990s movement include Āfāq Shawhānī (b. 1346/1968), Mihrnūsh Qurbān-ʿAlī (b. 1347/1969), Pigāh Ahmadī (b. 1353/1975), Rūzā Jamālī (b. 1357/1979), Maryam Hūlah (b. 1357/1979), Ātifah Charmāhāliyān (b. 1360/1981), Shamsī Pūr-Muhammadī (b. 1344/1966), Afsānah Nujūmī (b. 1339/1961), Mitrā Sarānī Asl (b. 1340/1962), Āzar Kīyānī (b. 1338/1960), Mahtāb Rashīdīyān (b. 1363/1984), Bahāreh Rizāʾī (b. 1365/1986), Rujā Chamānkar (b. 1360/1981), Rawyā Taftī, Nasrīn Jāfarī (b. 1329/1951), Laylā Gālidarān (b. 1355/1977), Girānāz Mūsavī (b. 1354/1976), Shīvā Arastūʾī, Farībā Sidīqīm, and Sipīdah Judayrī (b. 1355/1976).

[9] Hāshim Āqājārī, "Guft va gū miyān-i sunnat va mudirnītah" [Dialogue between tradition and modernity], Ābān 1, no. 1 (1380/2001): 6.

[10] ʿAbdul-ʿAlī Dastghayb, "Mudirn va pasāʼmudirn" [Modern and postmodern], Āyinah-yi junūb (Shiraz, 1386/2007), 145.

2. Innovative Aesthetics: Characteristics of Women's Poetry in the 1990s

a. Language Games

One of the defining features of women's poetry within this movement is the use of language games, a concept frequently explored in postmodernists works. These language games are often intertwined with semantic and syntactic deconstructive experiments, which may create textual fluidity or, in more radical instances, attempt to break free from the limits of conventional language. At times, this can result in mere wordplay, devoid of deeper linguistic or affirmative meaning. The rebellion against traditional language is grounded in the belief that "in the discursive approach, the human subject relinquished its sovereignty and agency, and was placed in the service of language or the unconscious world of language; and the rule of logic in its humanistic sense was replaced with the anti-humanistic rule of language and discourse."[11] Within this framework, official and even conventional poetic language are viewed as symbols of the dominance and power structures that this movement seeks to dismantle. As one theorist posits, "nothing is more essential to a society than the classification of its languages. To change this classification, to relocate discourse, is to bring about a revolution."[12] This effectiveness of these language games, however, depends on the creativity and skill of individual poets. These language games, which play with syntax, meaning, and structure, come to life in the following poems, where the boundaries of conventional language are both stretched and deconstructed:

A deflated roach passes across (mī-guzarad) the room, mī…

It pulls out (mī-kashad) "is" from beneath the ruins of Tehran, mī…

And the carcass that's split in two

[11]Husayn Bashīrīyah, Inqilāb va basīj-i siyāsī [Revolution and political mobilization] 2 vols. (Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1372/1993), 24.

[12]Roland Barthes, Criticism and Truth, trans. and ed. Katrine Pilcher Keuneman (London: Continuum, 2007), 23.

The roach mī… across the room

Earthquake mī…

I'm willowing in the wind and my wings

mī…[13]

I'll pull my final suicide from the Bihisht-i Zahrā (cemetery)

You fear my deliberate end from assault

You linger in vague, preoccupied conditions afterward…[14]

Amas, alas, I'm you / outa, outrageous! You're me / Bladea you're the body's struggles / screama you're the steed's rattle…[15]

b. Polyphony

At times, these language experiments expand into the realm of polyphonic poetry. The idea of the polyphonic or carnivalesque, first introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, refers to the presence of multiple voices in Dostoevsky's works, voices that are distinct from the narrator's own. In the context of Iranian history and poetry, numerous voices have been suppressed, often due to political or traditional constraints. This suppression often begins at the moment of artistic creation, as a fearful and rigid "I" may prevent poets from expressing unconventional thoughts and emotions. However, the discourse of the 1990s, which promoted "practicing moderation," provides a platform for the diverse and unconventional voices within the poets' minds, as demonstrated in the following lines:

I've come down this byway to return to the same alley, pit, deadlock, 59, that's Shahrivar

[13] Pigāh Ahmadī, Kādins [Cadence] (Tehran: Nigāh-i Sabz, 1380/2001), 25. The prefix mī is used before verbs in Persian to indicate continuous, habitual, or progressive aspects. In the poem, however, it takes on a more interpretive role, suggesting either an incomplete beginning or an unresolved ending.

[14] Ātifah Charmāhāliyān, Baghalam kun, Shiblī [Hug me, Shebli] (Kerman: Aftāb-i Kirmān, 1384/2005), 22.

[15] Ātifah Charmāhāliyān, Baghalam kun, Shiblī [Hug me, Shebli] (Kerman: Aftāb-i Kirmān, 1384/2005), 22.

– Please hand me a sweet bullet to suck and let me circle the rocket in the neighbor's backyard…[16]

Once again, I say: let's die together

Imagine our teeth as the same

And our eyes

Which run over each other at the time of accident (we lost our heads before we even arrived)…[17]

c. Rejection of Traditional Narrative Conventions

Another defining linguistic element of women's poetry in the 1990s is the deliberate rejection of traditional narrative conventions. This shift aligns with the movement's embrace of multiplicity, eccentricity, and textual fragmentation. Traditional narrative structures are supplanted by pauses, breaks, suspensions, and even playful subversions of narrative forms. At times, the authority of conventional language is further challenged by the incorporation of elements from other art forms, such as cinema and theater. This rejection of linear narrative can be categorized as follows: "1. Single narrator with a single narrative; 2. Single narrator with multiple narratives; 3. Multiple narrators with single narrative; 4. Multiple narrators with multiple narratives."[18] Mohammad Mokhtari argues that "delving deeper than the surface of the language and exploring the multifaceted presences are inevitable in the poetry of thought because it goes against the conformity of the traditional language and rebels against it. This movement may itself be one of the reasons for the increasing complexity of poetic structures and atmospheres."[19] Unlike earlier modernist movements, poets of the 1990s did not claim to offer a coherent or absolute narrative. Instead, their poetry reflects a structural rejection of such expectations, emphasizing fragmentation and multiplicity, as the following examples show.

[16]Shamsī Pūr-Muhammadī, Az may bih ravāyat-i Rawyā [From wine: narrated by Roya] (Ahvaz: Lājivard, 1381/2002), 18.

[17]Mitrā Sarānī-Asl, Aslan biyāyīd bā ham bimīrīm [Let's die all together anyway] (Shiraz: Dāstānsarā, 1382/2003), 56.

[18]Saʿīdah Zuhrah-vand, Jarayāni′shināsī-i shiʾr-i dahah-ʾi haftād [Movements in the poetry of the 1990s] (Tehran: Rūzigār, 1395/2016), 281–86.

[19]Mukhtārī, Chashm-i murakkab, 167.

I won't go back to the beginning of the line.

Period![20]

Behind the old man's back

Let winter settle in slowly,

Let the snow fall,

And let this camera stay zoomed in

On the chimney of his cottage…[21]

How many Hajars have you walked here?

Dissolve.

And all of me—a small straw in Miqat—

Cut![22]

For embroidering the margins of this text,

A simple black lace

I recommend (the cost of transfer

Is on the writer)

And I wander,

Among these papers…[23]

The rejection of master narratives in the poetry of the 1990s manifests itself through a range of techniques, one of which was a deliberate antagonism toward literary conventions. In

[20]Mihrnūsh Qurbān-ʿAlī, Tabsirah [Sidenote] (Tehran: Arvīj, 1383/2004), 20.

[21]Āfāq Shūhānī, Man dar in shiʿr Āfāq Shūhānī tuyī ["I" is "You" in this poem by Āfāq Shūhānī] (Shiraz: Dāstānsarā, 1382/2003), 24.

[22]Mahtāb Rashīdīyān, Dāzāyīn (Tehran: Arvīj, 1383/2004), 58.

[23]Bahārah Rizāʾī, Tashrīfāt [Formalities] (Tehran: Chishmah, 1389/2010), 42.

premodern and even modern Persian poetry, words have traditionally been valued for their literary connotations, with the language of poetry shaped by prior literary traditions and cultural influences. In contrast, postmodernist poetry disrupts this established literary framework by introducing a deliberate process of de-historization. Postmodern poets challenge the meta-narratives, arguing that "the dictatorial rhetorical structure that speaks to others only from above is too loud, boisterous, and harsh, while postmodernist poetry disregards transcendental meanings and grandiose rhetorics:"[24]

Qays?

I flush down all the Qayses…[25]

The one who picks up the phone

Is a happy beloved,

Whose Algebra and Probability exam/

Has made her really ill…[26]

d. Colloquial Tone

Colloquial tone is a prominent linguistic feature of postmodernist Iranian poetry. As Āqājānī notes, "In addition to having an apparent structure based on the pattern of language, colloquial tone has an internal structure inside which flows a hidden and untold narrative."[27] While Sayyid ʿAlī Sālihī notably advanced this approach in the 1980s, often being regarded as a radical sentimentalist, poets of the 1990s embraced it more organically. Their deeply personal and intimate perspectives rendered colloquial language essential for authentic self-expression. However, the use of everyday language in poetry can be traced back to the early 20th century and the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911), when poets first began to explore the potential of collo-

[24]Mukhtārī, Chashm-i murakkab, 162.

[25]Āfāq Shūhānī, Vīrgūl-hā bih kanār-i āmadanam āmadah tū bi-bībinand [The commas have come to witness my arrival, to see you] (Shiraz: Dāstānsarā, 1387/2008), 24.

[26]Shamsī Pūr-Muhammadī, Surkh dar anjām-i urdībihisht [Red in the end of May] (Ahvaz: Lājavard, 1379/2000), 62.

[27]Shams Āqājānī, "Darāmadī bar lahn-i muhāvirah dar shiʿr" [An introduction to colloquial tone in poetry], Bāyā 8–9 (1378/1999): 87–88.

quialism as a vehicle for poetic language.

Here are examples of 1990s poetry by Nujūmī and Shuhānī that illustrate the use of colloquial tone and colloquial language:

Sir, this earthquake, which exists solely for Aphrodite's ankle—

Say, a corn on the trachoma of the eyelid—

It has a number, doesn't it?[28]

I have only a white dress, that's it.

All the islands are your dowry.

I swear on your ancestors,

Don't rummage through the garbage to pick up love again…[29]

e. Semantic Multiplicity and/or Meaningless

In the poetry of the 1990s, particularly in women's poetry, the semantic structure of the poem is characterized by cyclical, whimsical, and multiplex elements. Central to postmodernist poetics is semantic multiplicity, which stands in contrast to the structured, organic worldview of modernism, and challenges the idea that a text must be grounded in a singular, central meaning. This approach often yields poetry that is rich with layers of interpretation, or, in some cases, dissolves into ambiguity and meaninglessness. As Gamader notes, "Not just occasionally but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well."[30]

The following excerpts of poetry illustrate the concepts of meaninglessness and semantic multiplicity. The first, by Taftī, exemplifies meaninglessness, while the second, by Qahramān,

[28]Afsānah Nujūmī, Sīzīf-i part-i khandah-yi ādam [The foolish sisyphus of human laughter] (Shiraz: Chāghdāsh (Dāstān-sarā), 1383/2004), 9.

[29]Shūhānī, Vīrgūl-hā bih kanār-i āmadanam āmadah tū bi-bībinand, 24.

[30]Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1994), 296.

demonstrates semantic multiplicity.

You push me,

And you're on top of me,

More in front of me,

It makes no difference.

Nothing that's distant, or

Distant that's nothing—

It makes no difference

You are further behind

More of my size

How do I express it?

You're the corner

You won't step aside

Don't go

I'm at my end…[31]

The sea drifted over sleep,

The wind swept across us.

I was called by a name without face

The rain rewrote old letters

[31]Rawyā Taftī, Sāyih lāy-i pūst [Shadow through skin] (Tehran: Khayyām, 1376/1997), 19.

There was no hand to catch me except for falling…[32]

f. Ambiguity

The randomness, multiplicity, and dissemination often create an obsolete context and increasing ambiguity. As Yūshīj notes, "Deep works are essentially ambiguous. We find this ambiguity wherever we look deeply, in all the windows of life, like fog that is spread all over the jungle."[33] In earlier periods, poets offered double or triple meanings, which readers could interpret based on their literary background. However, in the 1370s/1990s, poetry shifted toward a more professional or semi-professional audience, where poems were expected to have the capacity to generate meaning. This ambiguity is not merely an aesthetic or semantic choice but reflects a fundamental element of reality—suggesting that phenomena are inherently uncertain and imprecise. As a result, readers may find it difficult to grasp the poem's core issues, as they are often confronted with the long-standing expectation that poetry should convey a singular, coherent theme or an accepted meaning. The following excerpts, respectively by Ahmadī and Jāfarī, illustrate the varying degrees of ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning characteristic of the 1370s/1990s poetry:

Someone should wash out my filth so that I may become Jumhūrī (a republic),

And with my private blood, pour it into the lake of Evin

Fall into the old Istiqlāl (independence) with breasts

With long Āzādī (freedom)

So my husband hits the opposite wall…[34]

Under an almond tree

[32]Āzītā Qahramān, Hīpnūz dar matab-i duktur Kālīgārī [Hypnos in Dr. Caligari's office] (Tehran: Butīmār, 1393/2014), 32.

[33]Nīmā Yūshīj, Harf-hā-yi hamsāyah [Words of the neighbor] (Tehran: Dunyā, 1363/1984), 136.

[34]Pigāh Ahmadī, Īn rūzhāyam galūst [These days are my throat] (Tehran: Sālis, 1383/2004), 21.

Which has shaken off its greenest shadow

Make a statue—one that isn't always drunk—

And wipe all the faces off its mind…[35]

[35]Nasrīn Jāfarī, Bih samt-i hargiz, bih sū-yi hīch [Toward never, to nothing] (Tehran: Dārinūsh, 1382/2003), 23.

In this context, the structure of poetry transitions from an arboreal structure to a rhizomatic form. The arboreal structure, typical of modernist poetry, is hierarchical and central to a poem's emotional and semantic coherence. In contrast, the rhizomatic structure, as conceptualized by postmodernist philosopher Gilles Deleuze, is fundamentally unstable, fragmented, and resistant to fixed meaning. Unlike the arboreal model, rhizomes do not seek stability or continuity. They emerge and dissipate unpredictably, without a clear origin or endpoint. Existing in a perpetual state of flux, the rhizome subverts traditional notions of temporal and spatial progression.

g. Fragmentation and Disconnection

One reason for the eccentric nature of 1370s/1990s poetry lies in its unconventional relationship between expressions. In the work under discussion, a given passage may serve as a cause, result, or transition from the preceding phrase, yet it may not hold any lyrical or explanatory value—even from a poetic perspective. This creates a sense of connection between semantic units that lack any intrinsic relationship. Rather than forming a coherent structure, this technique functions as a linguistic bridge between disparate semantic fields. Since postmodernist poetry does not rely on interrelated components, this fragmentation must be understood as a deliberate linguistic and aesthetic choice. As a result, the reader is confronted with expressions that appear disconnected from their preceding lines, challenging traditional expectations of coherence. To demonstrate this unconventional relationship between expressions, consider the following examples from the poetry of Sarānī Asl, Rashīdīyān, and Nujūmī, where fragmented and disjointed structures chal-

lenge traditional expectations of coherence:

And you,

Staying on the line,

Run so relentlessly toward number ten,

That the lines, tinged with fragments of your breath trigger the danger alarm…[36]

They swap the red coat with the black,

For in the world of two lunatics is one rule:

One builds a wall

The other scales it…[37]

In any case, purple was the alley,

Unaware,

The shadow doesn't linger

A few moments beyond night…[38]

h. Rejection of Rigid Genres and Meta-Narratives

The unconventional poetic form of this period further reflects the poets' commitment to multiplicity and their rejection of rigid genres. This movement directly challenges the organic structures once deemed essential to modernist poetry. Poetic form not only mirrors the literary history of a nation but also redefines or even negates that history, signaling transformations that existing frameworks can no longer accommodate. These formal innovations emerge in diverse ways, including concrete

[36]Sarānī Asl, Aslan biyāyid bā ham bimīrim, 5.

[37]Rashīdīyān, Dāzāyīn, 117.

[38]Afsānah Nujūmī, Fīnīqīyah zanī bā kulāh-i mudaraj [Phoenicia was a woman with graded hat] (Tehran: Lājavard, 1381/2002), 12.

poetry, the alienation effect, meta-narration (in which poems self-reflect on their creation), direct engagement with audiences outside conventional narrative flows, and the use of unexpected beginnings and endings. To illustrate the innovative and fragmented nature of this poetry, consider the following examples by Taftī, Shuhānī, Jamālī, and Chārmāhāliyān, which exemplify the rejection of conventional form in favor of a more fluid and experimental approach:

Each day, like a capsule,

At the exact time,

And water drips over it—

Someone thought I had turned into an octopus, sticky,

And time, in this manner, flows through me.

Plop.

00

0…[39]

In this poem, I aim to speak of something unknown to you

I came here countless times, but you weren't here

Otherwise, I wouldn't have left rocks by the door…[40]

At this point, the reader may take a break for coffee

Close the book for a few minutes—

This intermission,

[39]Taftī, Sāyih lāy-i pūst, 43

[40]Shūhānī, Man dar in shiʿr Āfāq Shūhānī tuyī, 61

Is merely written for the reader's mental respite…[41]

[The poem begins:]

Then, a handful of seed shells from my pocket

Scattered over my corpse…[42]

i. Individuality, Difference, and the Human Body

The disruption of centrality in the poetry of the 1370s/1990s shifts the focus from meta-narratives and meta-writing to every-day life and individuality. This rejection of traditional structures replaces grand, overarching narratives with the intimate realms of personal experience. Individuality emerges in the meaning and imagery, particularly in its engagement with mythology and history. The poet's personal identity, which contrasts with the broader postmodernist identity, gains significance primarily in relation to the collective identity. The postmodern poet, distrusting collective identity, views it as overly historical and bound by implicit rules. Therefore, the poet often finds themselves in a state of isolation, foregrounding personal experiences as a means of resisting societal norms. In this way, the poet strives to break away from collective identity by centering their personal world and experiences in their work. As Bāzargānī notes, "after impressionism, the modernist artist puts the individual instead of the predetermined principles and rules on the pedestal…."[43] This focus on individuality also implies an emphasis on difference. ʿĪsā′vand Tawhīdfām note, "the emphasis on individuality can imply an emphasis on difference, too. The quintessential, certain, grand identities of the modernist period which lack internal differentiation—workers, women, people of color, and so on—are no longer relevant; the emphasis is instead on 'difference' and fluid and temporary identities formed around a certain axis for a certain period of time."[44] The poet's embrace of individual identity thus challenges and disrupts the rigid, dominant conceptions of collective identity.

[41]Ruzā Jamālī, Barā-yi idāmah-yi in mājara-yi pulīsī qahvahʾī dam kardah-am [I've made coffee for the rest of this detective story] (Tehran: Arvīj, 1380/2001), 21.

[42]Ātifah Chārmāhāliyān, Dāram bā rushd-i shānah-hā-yi mayit rāh mīravam [I'm walking with the growth of the shoulders of the dead] (Tehran: Nigāh-i Sabz, 1381/2002), 26.

[43]Bāzargānī, Mātris-i zibāʾī,134.

[44]Laylā ʿĪsā′vand and Muhammad Tawhīd′fām, "Fimīnism-i pustmudirn va tahavvul dar mafhūm-i dimūkrāsī" [Postmodern feminism and transformation in the concept of democracy], Tahqīqāt-i huqūq-i khusūsī va kayfarī [Private and criminal law research], no. 17 (1391/2012): 66.

In the 1990s women poetry, individuality often emerges through the exploration of the body and female experience. In a society where the body is heavily regulated by historical, religious, and cultural norms, femininity is often imbued with numerous taboos. However, "sincerity in talking about bodily and physical issues should not be seen as a hallmark of feminine writing. Rather, it is the hidden function of power in the literary value system, exerted by men, that necessitates such frankness as a form of resistance…."[45]

In postmodernist poetry, emphasis on the body takes precedence over traditional praise of the soul and spiritual qualities, particularly in romantic contexts. As Yaʿqūbī and Mīr-Mahmūdī observe, "One of the defining characteristics of modern civilization, compared to the earlier ones, is the heightened significance of the human body. This does not mean that earlier civilizations regarded the body as insignificant, and a kind of asceticism was dominant over the humans of that period. The difference in this regard lies in the transcendence of the human body, in the sense that today, it is turned into a semantic and identity-forming system, which reproduces itself through habits, signs, and symbols."[46]

Postmodernist poetry also challenges the notion of personal possession in romantic relationships. The concept of noncommitted love emerges as a form of resistance to the possessiveness traditionally associated with modern relationships, disrupting romantic metanarratives. By formalizing both romantic relationships and nonromantic responses, this approach disrupts normative understandings of intimacy and ownership, opening new possibilities for relational dynamics.

Consider the following excerpts from poems that engage with the body, female experience, and challenge romantic conventions, while addressing broader existential and societal themes:

[45] ʿAlī Bābāchāhī, Shiʿr-i imrūz, Zan-i imrūz [Today's poetry, Today's woman] (Tehran: Vistār, 1386/2007), 135.

[46] Hasan Yaʿqūbī and Hādī Mīr-Mahmūdī, "Mudlīsm va buhrān-i huvīyyat" [Fashionism and identity crisis], Avvalīn Hamāyesh-i Millī-yi ʿUlūm-i insānī, huqūq va mudīrīyat [The first national conference of human sciences, law, and management] (Qum, 1395/2016), 65.

My breasts swell with visible veins, stirred by the scent of ripe oranges.

A woman was listening to the nine-month-old fetus in her belly,

Singing this lullaby:

We should prepare ourselves

One of these days, we'll both die…[47]

Tehran is in darkness.

We are exiled to our underwear…[48]

The spider that climbed up and down my gallows every day

Wove a white shirt on my body,

And its flies became its flowers.

Am I beautiful in this lace?[49]

I'm not afraid the limestone Dracula

Who lies lopsided on the hospital bed

Spitting forcefully—

The moon—

Onto the faces of their wives' menopause …[50]

The individuality expressed in the poetry of this decade is often seen as a manifestation of the "rebellion of the margin against the center." However, as society's economic and social structures grew increasingly complex, this rebellion could no longer

[47]Fahīmah Ghanī′nizhād, Gahvārah′hā-yi sākin (Unmoving cradles) (Tehran: Awjā, 1369/1990), 87.

[48]Maryam Fathī, Bih mattah fikr mīkunam [I'm thinking of drill] (Tehran: Nigāh, 1393/2014), 63.

[49]Laylā Gallih′dārān, Yūsufī kih nabūsīdam [The Josef I didn't kiss] (Tehran: Nīm-Nigāh, 1382/2003), 16.

[50]Rashīdīyān, Dāzāyīn, 31.

be a simple opposition between two fixed, opposing positions. A key characteristic of this emerging individuality is the poet's self-reflection and heightened awareness of their own relative perspective. In earlier poetry, human roles were determined by rigid "types"—lover, beloved, rival, cruel, righteous, malicious, kind—each with fixed meanings. In contrast, this new individuality presents humans as possessing layered, multifaceted and contradictory natures, refraining from making fewer definitive judgements about them. Myths, which are seldom referenced in this poetry, undergo a process of reevaluation and reinterpretation. Consider the following excerpts from the poems of Chārmāhāliyān, Qurbānʿ Alī, and Rizāyī:

But I'm thinking about the color of your coat

Beneath all that snow…[51]

Driver or passenger?

The quarrel over the 25 extra tomans

Is settled with curses

Close the door slowly…[52]

Fridays: theater and cinema are banned

I promise,

By the way,

I'll think about children

And a painful cesarian…[53]

[51]Chārmāhāliyān, Dāram bā rushd-i shānah-hā-yi miyyit rāh mīravam, 9.

[52]Mihrnūsh Qurbān-ʿAlī, Bih vaqt-i Alburz [At the time of Alborz] (Tehran: Āhang-i Dīgar, 1386/2007), 38.

[53]Bahārah Rizāyī, Durust bāyad hamīn imrūz tīrbārānam mīkardī? (You Had to Shoot Me Exactly Today?) (Mashhad: Muhaqqiq, 2004), 35–36.

[54]Firishtah Sārī, Shikl dar bād [A Shape in the wind] (Tehran: Gardūn, 1370/1991), 25.

[55]Girānāz Mūsavī, Āvāzhā-yi zan-i bī ijāzah [Songs of the disallowed woman] (Tehran: Sālī, 1381/2002), 13–14.

j. Imagery and Figurative Language

Poetry of the 1990s undergoes a significant shift in its use of imagery. Traditional devices such as metaphor, simile, allegory, and allusion are either significantly constrained or radically redefined. In this context, words function as fluid signifiers, devoid of stable meaning (signified), thereby directing poetry toward greater interpretive openness, commentary, and changing attitudes. The following excerpts from poems by Sārī and Mūsavī highlight how 1990s poetry disrupts traditional imagery, reflecting the era's shift towards fluid and open-ended meanings, where familiar symbols take on new, fragmented interpretations:

The world is folded

Into yesterday's newspaper.

Africa

Blackens under the soot of the pan.

A bunch of red radishes

Covers the chasm of the earthquake…[54]

We went mad

Toward the hotel…

(They didn't welcome us.)

Toward the stamp of the police…

(We gave up)[55]

The following excerpts from poems by Sarānī Asl and ʿArjūnī

evoke myths and historical references for the same effect:

History can be erected vertically from atop Manār Junbān (Monar Jonban)

Without Mosaddeq falling down from up there…[56]

I was thinking of my roots in school

In my scarf

When the smell of blood

In the national anthem and the march of victory

Drove me mad…[57]

This challenge is sometimes extended to religious concepts, as evidenced in the following excerpts from the poems of Kiyānī and Arastūyī:

They say God has returned from Ahvaz,

On the train from Ahvaz to I don't know where…[58]

When I listen,

My voice sits waiting for midnight,

And the prayer between two shades of purple…[59]

k. Intertextuality

The above examples highlight the intertextuality of women poetry of the 1370s/1990s. Julia Kristeva introduced the term "intertextuality" in the 1340s/1960s, drawing from Bakhtin's concept of dialogism from the 1930s—the idea that texts are in-

[56]Sarānī Asl, Aslan biyāyīd bā ham bimīrīm, 49.

[57]Nāhīd ʿArjūnī, Kasī az shanbihā-yi mān ʿaks nimīgīrad [No one takes photos of our Saturdays] (n.p.: Ārās, 1391/2012), 39.

[58]Āzar Kiyānī, Rūy-i āy-inah-am, khamash [On my mirror, his curve] (Bochum: Āydā, 1390/2011), 68.

[59]Shivā Arastūyī, Gumshudah [Lost] (Tehran: Qatrah, 1382/2003), 71.

herently connected through their relationships with one another. Dialogism emphasizes the necessary interactions among parts of a single speech and other speeches, creating a web of intertextual references that can encompass poetry, songs, theater, or film. In this view, no text exists in isolation. Intertextuality, also a central theme in the works of Roland Barthes and Michael Riffaterre, can be classified into three forms: a) explicit intertextuality, where a text is overtly incorporated into another text; b) implicit intertextuality, where references are subtly concealed; and c) implied intertextuality, where only readers familiar with the original text can recognize the intertextual connection.[60]

An example of explicit intertextuality can be seen in the following line from Arastūyī's poem, which contains a clear allusion to the famous lines of the 13th-century Persian poet Saʿdī of Shiraz, which begin with "Human beings are members of a whole"

Humans have eaten each other's organs…[61]

Or:

O dog, you who is unaware of yourself, half-infidel! Afshin!

I've come with you from Bayhaqī's text

Now, who will perform the divine duty and bestow Būdulaf upon me?[62]

l. Intertextuality and Humor

Intertextuality is also a primary mode through which humor, particularly grotesque humor, manifests in women's poetry of the 1990s. Traditionally, humor has been employed to circumvent intellectual or practical conflict; however, in this context, it destabilizes not only societal norms but also the poet's authority. This subversion contributes to the perception of 1990s

[60]Bahman Nāmvar, "Tarāmatniyat: Mutāliʿah-yi ravābit-i yik matn bā dīgar matnhā" [Transtextuality: The study of the relationships between a text and other texts], Faslnāmah-yi ʿUlūm-i Insānī [Journal of human sciences] 56 (1386/2007): 88–89.

[61]Maryam Mīr-Fathī, Khvābgard va jāddah-hā-yi bī pā [The sleepwalker and the footless roads] (Tehran: Nigāh, 1389/2010), 66.

[62]Shūhānī, Vīrgūl-hā bih kanār-i āmadanam āmadah tū bi-bībinand, 7.

poetry as inherently critical, yet it distinctively lacking the conventional moralizing impulse or prescriptive stance typically associated with earlier poetic traditions. This subversion of authority through humor resonates with broader philosophical discussions on the role of humor in challenging societal norms. As Ionesco notes, "There is only one true way of demystifying: by means of humor, especially if it is 'black': logic is revealed by our awareness of the illogicality of the absurd; laughter alone respects no taboo and prevents the setting-up of new taboos that are anti-taboo; the comic alone is able to give us the strength to bear the tragedy of existence."[63]

In the following excerpts from poems by Nujūmī and Rizāī, absurdity and dark humor are used to critique social roles and contemporary issues:

You don't know how many more times

This nurse with her false eyelashes

Should remind me of Florence Nightingale?[64]

Our Sheikh said no one has died of chickenpox yet—

That is the digestive system of industry and technology…[65]

m. Intertextuality and Expressionist Imagery

This experimentation with intertextuality and humor in the 1990s women's poetry occasionally leads to the use of expressionist imagery. In Expressionism, physical reality is often distorted or exaggerated to mirror an emotional or psychological state. The following excerpts from poems by Ahmadī and Chāmankār illustrate this technique, where the dislocation of reality reflects inner turmoil and emotional fragmentation:

Even when I walk straightly on myself

[63]Eugene Ionesco, Notes and Counter Notes: Writings on the Theatre, trans. Donald Watson (New York: Grove Press, 1964), 144.

[64]Bahārah Rizāyī, Durust bāyad, 20.

[65]Nujūmī, Sīzīf-i part-i khandah-yi ādam, 45.

The street is askew

And the alley fills with dreams

That rushed out of the sewer last night…[66]

Every night

Ghosts with heads of fire

Walk through the alleys

Sunset smells of damp henna

And blood and infidelity

Drip from the mouths of the dead…[67]

[66]Pigāh Ahmadī, Dar sūl-i nahāyī [On the final Sol] (Tehran: Nigāh-i Sabz, 1378/1999), 18.

[67]Rūjā Chāmankār, Raftah būdī barāyam kamī junūb biyāvarī [You'd gone to bring me a little south] (Tehran: Nīm-Nigāh, 1381/2002), 11–12.

n. Engagement with Urban Identity

Another defining feature of this movement is its engagement with the concept of urban identity, particularly in relation to the ongoing tension between tradition and modernity. Postmodernist poetry critiques the hierarchical structures embedded in urban environments, and this critique can be studied through two distinct lenses: first, the centralist environmental system and regulations that shape it, inevitably creating a hierarchy within urban habitats; and second, the dominance of the symbolic system embedded in urban elements (such as forbidden places and official and civil rules) which postmodernists denounce as symbols for or representations of a larger, dominant metanarrative. The city, traditionally seen as a symbol of historical, individual, and economic identity, evokes a paradoxical blend of familiarity and alienation in the 1990s poetry. The following excerpts from the poetry of Ahmadī, Sarānī Asl, Qurbān ʿAlī, and Arastūyī engage with urban identity, highlighting the tension between tradition and modernity while critiquing the symbolic

and structural dimensions of city life:

No, large billboards!

Nothing got better—

Except for the hidden brothels of Gisha

Nightly containers and escape terminals of this big curettage

Has tarnished the reputation of the street's new name…[68]

These feet have stretched long

Along the square, a car drives straight—

In the city's large billboard

So that LG can draw its ears larger…[69]

They're sketching your cells

The street has no intention of plucking out Karīm Khān's eyes…[70]

You're no pattern in the cup

And coffee is merely an Armenian afternoon

Lost in Firdawsī's cup

Lost in Firdawsī Square…[71]

Conclusion

The contribution of women poets in the 1990s transformed the poetic movement into a major force in contemporary Iranian

[68]Ahmadī, Kādins, 34.

[69]Sarānī Asl, Aslan biyāyid bā ham bimīrim, 43.

[70]Mihrnūsh Qurbānʿ Alī, Rāh bih hāfizah-yi jahān [Road to the memory of the world] (Tehran: Nigāh-i Sabz, 1380/2001), 31.

[71]Arastūyī, Gumshudah, 85.

poetry, setting the stage for significant revision and reformation in subsequent decades in response to political and social changes. Over time, poets began to distance themselves from the movement's initial principles, embracing individualistic and experimental approaches. While this shift moved them away from the defining characteristics of the 1370s/1990s movement, it simultaneously introduced new linguistic and rhetorical possibilities, making a return to earlier literary traditions unlikely. By the first and the second decades of the 21st century, the radical linguistic experimentation that defined the 1370s/1990s had largely subsided, giving way to a style that might best be described as "inimitable simplicity." Women poets of the past two decades include Lailā Kurdbāchah, Nigīn Farhūd, Nāhīd ʿArjūnī, Āydā ʿAmīdī, Sipīdah Rashnū, Tāliʿah Akbarī, Farnāz Jaʿfarzādahgān, Sipīdah Nīkrū, Munīrah Husaynī, Farnāz Farāzmand, Nargis Dūst, Siryā Dāvūdī, Shūkā Husaynī, Tayyibih Shanbizādah, Mānā Āqāʾī, Lailā Farjāmī, Ānā Shukr Allāhī, Rawya Zarrīn, Sumayyah Amīnī Rād, Farzānah Qavāmī, Farzānah Kārgarzādah, Bītā Malakūtī, Afsānah Murādī, Bahārah Farīs Ābādī, Banafshah Farīs Ābādī, Māriyā Naqībzādah, Katāyūn Rīzkharātī, Saʿīdah Kishāvarzī, Laylā Hikmatniyā, Kiyānā Burūmand, Maryam Fathī, Sumayyah Jalālī, Ilhām Gurdī, Sārā Muhammadī Ardihālī, Lailā Mihrpūyā, and Zahrā Āzādī Kiyā. These poets shifted their focus toward emotional expression and reader engagement, moving away from manifesto-driven approaches. One of the most significant developments of this period was the increasing accessibility of online publication, a phenomenon that merits a separate study.