CHAPTER I

DEVELOPMENT OF SHORT STORY WRITING IN PERSIAN LITERATURE
Jamalzadeh (1895-1997) is usually considered as the first writer of modern short stories in Persian. His stories focus on plot and action rather than on mood or character development and in these respects is reminiscent of the works of Guy de Maupassant and O. Henry. A typical Jamalzadeh short story revolves around some entertaining episode and often has a surprise ending. It has the charm of traditional Persian folk tales (qessa), which are also plot centered. The stories from Yak-I Bud yak-I Nabud, which served as a blueprint for his subsequent works, can be defined as anecdotal fiction. Pleasant, entertaining, and glowing with colorful expressions, though lacking in depth and universal significance, these narratives are in essence witty satires about the disorder prevailing in the Persian society of the period, exposing to mock its backwardness, prejudice, and superstitions, and usually carrying an implied reformist or didactic message. His characters are often simple, illiterate people—the common folk. The prose is full, sometimes to excess, with colloquialism and proverbial expressions, for he was among the first writers to abandon the ornate artificial style of traditional writing and emulate the speech-patterns of ordinary conversations and the language of the folk tale. This style had a deep influence on younger writers of the period, making simple colloquial language the norm in modern Persian literature. However, the light-hearted meaning of his anecdotal fiction and the manner in which he developed his plots found no following among upcoming writers and had little impact on the development of modern Persian short story.

On the contrary, Sadeq Hedayat, the writer who introduced modernism to Persian literature, brought about a fundamental change in Persian fiction. In addition to his longer stories, Buf-e Kur (his masterpiece :) and Haji Aqa (1945), he wrote collections of short stories including Se qatra Khun (Three drops of blood) and Zinda ba Gur (Buried alive). His stories were written in simple and lucid language, but he used a variety of approaches, from realism and naturalism to surrealist fantasy, breaking new ground and pioneered a whole range of
literary models and presenting new possibilities for the further development of the genre. He experimented with disrupted chronology and non-linear or circular plots, using these techniques to both his realistic and surrealistic writings. According to Hedayat he lived at a time of repression. The limiting social climate cast a long shadow over his work. This intensified his pessimism and insecurity. So it is not surprising that almost all of his short stories finish either with the death or the suicide of the main character and few express emotions other than despair, philosophical perplexity, and psychological anxiety. His mode of thinking and techniques of narrating left a lasting impression on other Persian writers.

In the early short stories of Bozorg ‘Alavi (q.v., 1904-97), and especially in his collection Chamadan (Suitcase, 1934), the reader encounters the same melancholic and confused characters as in Hedayat’s fiction. However, ‘Alavi’s arrest and imprisonment due to his leftist activities brought a fundamental change to his work. He started writing from prison and brought a new sense of realism to a thematic sub-genre-prison literature-which in later on found a steady following among Persian authors. His collection of five short stories, Waraq-paraha-ye Zendan (1941) and especially the short stories “Entezar” (The wait) and “Afw-e ‘omumi” (General Amnesty), reveal the plight of political and non-political prisoners in detestable prison conditions, and the unkind treatment handed out by government agents and prison wardens. ‘Alawi’s latter works, such as the short stories “Gila Mard” and “Nameha” in the collection Nameha (Letters, 1951), give vent to an angry, belligerent spirit with a strong sense of moral responsibility. Most of his mature works which where written when he was a member of the Tudeh (communist party), can be categorized as political short stories which assess the subject of social commitment. Unlike Hedayat, who focused on the psychological intricacies and latent vulnerabilities of the individual, ‘Alavi depicts ideologically motivated personages who challenges oppression and social injustice. Characters like these have been rarely portrayed before in Persian fiction. But herein lays ‘Alavi’s main contribution in enhancing the thematic range of the modern Persian short story. This
commitment to social issue is emulated by Fereydun Tonokaboni (b. 1937), Mahmud Daulatabadi (b. 1940), Samad Behrangi (q.v. 1939-68), and other leftist writers of the next generation.

Another distinctive feature of ‘Alawi’s writings, which sets his fiction apart from the works of Hedayat and from the writers of the next generation such as Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-69, q.v.) and Golam-Hosayn Sa’edi (1935-85) is his interest in lyrical and erotic themes. In these ‘Alawi displays an outstanding ability in creating vivid female characters. The women in his stories are neither sanctified nor hated, as often happens in the works of other Persian writers. For example, sentimental and romantic authors like Muhammad Hejazi (1899-77) and ‘Ali Dasti (1896-1981) often present their heroines as a one-dimensional persona as indecisive and unfaithful coquettes. Hedayat and Sadeq Chubak (1916-98), considered as moderns on the other hand, paint erotic scenes in a dreamy or naturalistic manner, often influenced by the tenets of psychoanalysis. ‘Alavi’s work shows the underlying influence of Freud but without appearing forced or rigid. He portrays physical love as natural, desirable, and pleasing through his complex and multi-dimensional female characters. Later generation of writers like Jamal Mir Sadeqi (b. 1933) and Hoshang Gulsheri were influenced by his treatment of gender issues in Derazna-e Shab (Length of the night, 1970), Kristin o Kid respectively.

The abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 resulted in a short spell of relative freedom which opened new horizons for the modern Persian short stories. The first congress of Persian writers in 1946 marks the ascendancy of the left and radical views in general and the influence of the Tudeh party in particular. This event had a powerful and lasting effect on the majority of writers. The grip of censorship on the press loosened as a result of the changing political scenario in the country. Before the Shah’s abdication the government censored not only subversive political ideas, but also functioned as moral guide, banning swear-words or openly erotic scenes. As a result of which writers were forced to resort to oblique hints and stilted dialogues free of obscenities. These strict moral
regulations affected not only the subject matter, but also the language of literature.

Among the authors the first to break the taboo was Sadeq Chubak. His blunt approach emulating William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, Erskine Caldwell, and Ernest Hemingway appears in the early short story collections Khaima Shab-bazi (The puppet show, 1945) and Antar-I ke lut-ash morda bu (1949). His later stories like Zir-e Cheragh-e qirmiz, Pirahan-e zereshti, Chera darya tufani shuda bud describe the naked bestiality and moral degradation of the personages with no hint of squeamishness. His short stories reflect a decaying society, populated by the crushed and the defeated. Chubak picks characters that rarely appear in the fiction of predecessors. He portrays the marginal characters of the society like vagrants, pigeon-racers, and corpse-washer, prostitutes, and opium addicts with vividness and force. His readers come across the grim realities and incidents which they themselves have often witnessed in everyday life but shunned out of their minds through complacency. This encounter is not to everyone’s liking and explains the strong resentment that Chubak sometimes stir up. His dark portrayal of immorality leaves little room for the potentially beautiful or joyous aspects of life. His language is rough and direct, with a plenty of proverbs, slang expressions, and street language. The spelling is mostly colloquialized. Some of his stories use the syntactic structure of southern dialects from the Bushehr region of Iran.

A distinctive feature in all the three stages of development of post-war Persian fiction is the attention devoted to narrative styles and techniques. Two main trends prevail in matters of style: authors, like Chubak and Al-e Ahmad, follow colloquial speech patterns; others, such as Ebrahim Golstain (b. 1922) and Mohammad E’temaadzada “Behadin” (b. 1915), have adopted a more literary and lyrical tone. Although the work of all four writers extends into later periods, some brief remarks about their differing techniques, which delineated future paths, need mentioning at the onset.
Although Golestan experimented with different narrative styles, but he managed to find a style and voice of his own only in his two late collections of stories, Juy o Divar o Teshna (The stream and the wall and the parched, 1967) and Madd o meh (The tide and the mist, 1969). His poetic language draws inspiration both from syntactical forms of classical Persian prose, and the experiment of modernist writers, most notably Gertrude Stein. The influence of modernism is also clearly visible in the structure of Golestan’s short stories, where the customary linear plot-line is discarded in favor of disrupted chronology and free union of ideas. Golestan, contrary to most other modern Persian authors, pays little attention to the condition of the poor and the dispossessed. Instead, his short stories are devoted to the world of Persian intellectuals, their concerns, worries and private obsessions. His short stories please perhaps to the cognoscenti but leave the majority of readers unmoved and in this aspect resemble a well-made decorative objects d‘art. The later generations of writers like Bahman Forši (b. 1933) and Hoshang Golshiri (b. 1937) has been influenced by Golestan’s brand of modernism.

Behadin does not follow Golestan’s modernist experiments with syntax although his stories show similar indebtedness to classical Persian models. He is an author whose stories express his leftist social beliefs, in a lucid literary style. In some of his later works like the short story collection Mohra-ye mar (The snake charm, 1955), by way of literary allegory, he infuses ancient tales with anew message, a technique which gives him permits him to express his critical views indirectly. In the sub-genre of the allegorical tale Behadin’s predecessors were Hedayat (in Aab-e zindagi, 1931) and Chubak (“Esa’-yeadab” in the collection Khayma-shab-bazi).

The second period was the active period of growth and development of modern Persian short story writing which began with the coup of 28 Mordad 1332/19 August 1953, and ended with the revolution of 1979. The relative freedom experienced in Persia after Reza Shah’s abdication in 1320/1941 had resulted in an atmosphere where more liberal exchange of views in society could
be expressed. Whereas the simultaneous boom in publishing and translation introduced the Persian public to classics of world literature. All these aspects contributed to the development of modern Persian fiction. Notwithstanding the political upheavals, which limited the opportunities for new writers, the established authors like Al-e Ahmad, Golestan, and Behadin went on to write their best works. The so-called “Second Generation” writers also came of age during the period and some of the most creative new talent in Persian fiction emerged. Eventhough, authors like Mahmud Dawlatabadi (b. 1940), Esma’il Fasih (b. 1935), Mahmud Kianush (b. 1934), and Asghar Elahi (b. 1944), created their best known stories in the next period (the period of diversity) but they matured in the cultural and social climate created after the coup.

Many of these younger authors started publishing their stories in the late 1950s, often at the author’s own expense. These were published either in magazines or by small presses which printed their works in few hundred copies. Despite the social and political difficulties this period experienced, some critics describe it as the pinnacle of modern Persian narrative fiction. The short story continued to be the leading narrative genre of modern Persian fiction during this era of growth and development. This was the favourite medium for new authors, with the exception of ‘Ali Mohammad Afghani, whose novel Shawhar-e Ahu Khanum, published in 1961, was his first work. A majority of the stories from this period focus on the predicaments of the little man and the anti-hero. They criticized the oppression by the ruling regime, and created a disturbing picture of the pain, poverty, and ignorance afflicting the common folk.

Jalal Al-e Ahmad is among the proponents of new political and cultural ideas whose influence and impact overlap both the first and the second periods in the history of modern Persian fiction. His writings show an awareness of the works of Franz Fanon and the new generation of third-world writers concerned with the problems of cultural domination by colonial powers. most of the stories of Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Behadin, Tonokaboni, and Behrangí are built around central ideological tenet or “thesis” and illustrate the author’s political views and

10
leanings, hence they all can be described as engage writers. The events of their plot-lines are usually recounted without any ambiguities or stylistic embellishments in the simplest and most accessible terms. Expounding different sets of “theses”, their writings share a strong leftist tendency for relentless social criticism and a preoccupation with the political, social, or ideological message of their stories.

Another distinguished author from this period is Simin Daneshvar (b. 1921), the first woman writer of note in contemporary Persian literature. Her popularity rests largely on her novel Savushun (1969). Simin Daneshvar’s short stories deserve mention because they focus on the plight and social exclusion of women in Persian society and address topical issues from a woman’s point of view.

The repression of liberal thought during this period casts a shadow on the work of some younger writers, whose story mirror a society raked by fear, uncertainty, and loss of innocence. The distinguishing feature of short fiction after the coup are focus on regional issues, peasant life, and the formative years of childhood; frequent resort to allegory, myth and to legendary personages from the national and religious traditions; and emphasis on psychological portrayals. Golam Hosayn Sa’edi (1935-85), Bahram Sadeqi (1936-84), Taqi Modarresi (1932-97), Goli Taraqqi (b. 1939), Hushang Gulshiri (b. 1937), and Asghar Elahi (b. 1944) are all noted for applying psychoanalytical theories in their work.

As mentioned above childhood memories, also play a considerable role in the short stories from this period. There had of course been stories written earlier from a child’s point of view, but for the writers who came of creative age during the period of growth and development, the return to childhood and adolescence became a recurrent theme, enabling them to depict the life around them from a child’s refreshingly unalloyed stance. Jamal Mirsadeqi, Mahmud
Kianush, Goli Taraqqi, and Mahshid Amirshahi have used this technique in some of their works.

Golam-Hosayn Saedi’s (1935-85) short stories, which he called qessa, often transcend the boundaries of realism and attain a symbolic significance. His allegorical stories, which at times resemble folkloric tales and fables, are inhabited by displaced persons, trapped in dead ends. They emphasize the anxieties and the psychological perturbations of his deeply troubled personages. Plagued cities and abandoned villages appear as a recurrent motif, as if they are two sides of the same coin. The plots develop around themes of mental or psychological illness or sudden misfortune: a calamity descends on a village, a group, or an individual, making their bleak predicaments even bleaker. Sa’edi’s noticeably dark and disturbed world, in spite of its implied rejection of realistic techniques, has a strong inner logic of its own which translates well from the medium of the short story to that of a film script. “Aramesh dar hozur-e digaran” (Composure in the presence of others, 1967), represents Sa’edi’s best work. In story the tormented mind of an army officer resembles the bombastic hollowness of the military edifice in Persia and prefigures its rapid disintegration. It was also made into a successful film, directed by Nasir Taqwa’I (1973). It was published in a collection entitled Wahemaha-ye bi-nam o neshan (as Nameless and Elusive Apprehensions). This also included the story adapted as the screenplay for the film Gav (The cow) by Darius Mehrju’I in 1973. Two of Sa’edi’s later works, Gariba dar shahr (Stranger in the city, 1980), and Tatar-e Khandan (The grinning Tatar, 1984) were highly critical of the Pahlavi regime hence could see the light of the day only after revolution. He left for Paris after the revolution, where he died in 1985. Saedi’s along with Chubak, Mahmud, Behrangi, Al-e Ahmad, Daneshvar, Dowlatabadi, and Fasih, are pioneers of distinct type of regional literature. His vivid portrayal of the south of Persia as a hot and humid region, wronged by both nature and modern technology, stands testimony to his ability as a regional literature writer.
Bahram Sadeqi (1936-84) was yet another author who focused on the anxieties and secret mental agonies of his personages. The coup of 1953 and its aftermath gave a blow to his optimism. He became convinced of the futility of social activism and political resistance. His work, as in his novella Malakut, is marked by chronic hopelessness, and dissatisfaction with the emptiness of existence; fear of death is the recurrent theme of his short stories. Supernatural elements and somber ruminations are also distinctive features of his writings. Although his characters are drawn from all walks of life, and include students, civil servants, and teachers, they are all driven by similar fears, anxieties and morbid fantasies. In contrast, the simple and sensual pleasures of life appear stale and trite in his stories. This paradoxical mixture of inertia and cynical black humor also permeate the fiction of Goli Taraqqi. She is also strongly influenced by Jungian ideas. The characters in her long and short stories are all confused and ineffective in different ways and they are unable to come to a decision and find a way out of their unsatisfactory dilemma.

Hushang Golshiri (b. 1937) and Asghar Elahi (b. 1944) both created memorable psychological portraits through interior monologue and stream of consciousness thinking. Golshiri, the author of the long story Shahzada Ehtejab (Prince Ehtejab, 1968), is particularly noted for his successful experiments with extended interior monologues. Golshiri was a bold, innovative writer eager to explore modern methods and styles. He uses stream of consciousness narrative to reassess familiar theories and events.

Asghar Elahi (b.1944) started out writing angry political pamphlets, but gradually turned towards stream of consciousness technique. The short stories from his collection, Digar Siavashi-namanda (The likes of Siavash are no more, 1990) often rely on the free association of ideas. The interior monologue of his characters draws on their previous experiences to create an imaginary world, built on the sediments of the past. Jamal Mirsadeqi, Mahmud Kianus and Mahshid Amirshahi have written psychological short stories but with far less success.
Other well known writer from this period is Mahmud Kianus (b. 1934). Taqi Modarresi also wrote some experiences, having an engaging simplicity, his first novel Yakolya wa tanha-i-e-u brought him instant fame. Gossaha wa qesseha (Sorrows and sagas), a collection of seven connected stories, is among his best known works. It narrates the events which befall a small boy and his family, from the point of view of the boy.

Most of Mahshid Amirshahi (b. 1940) works are literary sketches rather than true short stories. She prefers experimental writing to conventional plots, though some, like the title story of the collection B’ad az ruz-e akhir (After the last day, 1969), do have well-defined plot-lines. The particular short story is a first-person narrative, recounted by a woman who finds new meaning in life after an attempted suicide. Amirshahi’s stories and sketches are written in an informal conversational style. Her prose is clear-cut and unadorned, delivered in laconic sentences and evocative languages.

Although, Ahmad Mahmud (Ahmad Ata; b. 1930) and Mahmud Dawlatabadi (b. 1940) have written a number of short stories, but their fame rests largely on their panoramic novels. They are considered among the most prominent writers on rural and regional themes in modern Persian literature. Their stories are faithful portrayals of Khorasan, the north-eastern region of Persia, and of Ahwaz in the south-west, respectively, recounting the customs and reveal the traditions of the local inhabitants. Their short stories reveal the tragic lives of the poor who are ready to sell their own flesh and blood in order to survive, when they are gripped by dire need. They portray sharecroppers who are crushed by the tyranny of landlords and brow beaten by village law-enforcers, or peasants forced off their land by drought and famine, ultimately flocking to the cities to swell the ranks of the jobless. Pictures of poverty and despair are juxtaposed with the trivial pursuits of wanton landlords, greedy village elders and police agents, against a backdrop of cheerless village life.
Towards the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, the wave of protests against social oppression and dictatorial rule swelled with the rise of popular dissatisfaction. Censorship intensified and the confiscation of adverse published materials became routine. Some authors were imprisoned. To avoid censorship, many short-story writers turned to allegorical fiction, establishing a new sub-genre of symbolical short stories in Modern Persian literature. Hushang Gulshiri’s short story M’asum in the collection Namaz-khana-ye kuchak-e man (My little prayer-room, 1975) relies on allegorical techniques to express obliquely the oppressive social and political conditions in the country. Jamal Mirsadeqi resorts to a similar stratagem in his short story Dovalpa (1971). The characters in his stories merely lose their individuality and essential humanity when put under enormous political, social, and psychological pressure but finally manages to regain their true selves. Samad Behrangi, wrote stories for children and young adults. His best-known tale is “Mahi-e Siah-e Kuchulu” (The Little Black Fish). Behrangi’s uses the suggestive power of legend and the folk take to highlight the need for political activism and social commitment.

Shahrnush Parsipur (b. 1947) and Ghazala Alizada (1948-96) are the two other writers from the same generation, but their works fall outside the present classification. Parsipur is better known for novels. She has only two collections of shorter fiction: Aavizaha-ye Bolur (The crystal ear-rings, 1977), which contains fantastic and surrealist sketches and stories, and Zanan Bedun-e-Mardan (Women without men, 1990), a book of connected stories about the issues which arise when, several women with very different characters and sensibilities decide to live together. Alizada was also primarily a novelist. She wrote only one collection of short stories, Safar-e-Nagozashtani (journey without end, 1977), containing three surrealist stories of magical quests. The poetic language of her prose is in harmony with the arcane subject-matter.

The third period in the development of modern Persian fiction was a period of diversity which brought forth disparate literary movements. The Revolution of 1978-79 with its political purges and dramatic social upheavals,
and the war between Iraq and Persia with its heavy loss in human life, have presented authors with new themes and topics. At first the most established Persian writers continued pursuing their original concerns- the struggle against the injustice of the former regime, the drive for freedom of thought and speech, and of the press. These aspirations coincided with the initial goals of the revolutionary movement, and in the first few years after the revolution the modern Persian short story made considerable progress. Some of the well-known writers of the previous period developed their short stories in new directions. The new authors created works worthy of notice. The number of short-story writers increased, with many women among them. Despite this sudden growth, it soon became apparent that new regime favoured traditionalist writers and had little regard for modernity. Traditionalism became the official policy in all spheres of life. Writers were encouraged to turn to traditional models and to reviving trends which had all but expired. The traditional stories (qessa) were suddenly spruced up again. This was promoted as a new sub-genre: the Islamic tale, Islamic policy makers were convinced that modern writers were incapable of attaining to the higher reality of divine revelation. They believed this was because these writers were bewitched by a paradoxical mixture of a narrow and limiting concept of human reason on the one hand, and by their obsession with carnal instincts on the other. Traditional story-telling was seen as a suitable medium for the popularization of religious thought and theological ideas. Thus, in an attempt to create new Islamic fiction, many Islamic writers abandoned the literary standards and creative criteria of the short-story genre.

The new Islamic stories were subsidized and promoted by the establishment. They were expected to demonstrate two basic qualities: piety and suitable choice of themes and subject matter. The author who followed the government’s direction focused on religious myths and legends and on the political and social problems of the day. The new tradition had no occasion to mature or to attain artistic distinction. Most of the Islamic tales were built around well-worn themes and contrived characters. They were hastily patched up together, full of clichés, and poorly crafted- very much like the literary output
of Soviet socialist realism under Zhdanov, which had to serve the ideological directives of the state. The Islamic tale was in evidence for a few years but failed to gain popularity. They did not even meet the expectations of its promoters among the Islamic policy-makers.

Now, two decades after the revolution, Islamic writers have gradually abandoned the folk tale genre. They are returning to more conventional forms of contemporary short-story writing. On the other hand some modernist authors have followed modernism and post modernism to an excessive degree. In the process severing all ties with their immediate social environment, and succumbing to nihilistic moods and individualistic fantasies. Such works are often crude and unreadable imitations of world-famous masterpieces. However, the majorities of Persian writers are following in the footsteps of their notable predecessors. The are drawing on the new achievements of world literature and continue to develop and expand modern Persian fiction. Many have published novels and short stories worthy of notice. Still, it is too early for an objective assessment of the post-revolutionary period in Persian fiction. In due course of time the chaotic diversity of literary movements and fads will settle into a discernible pattern. Only then will it be fully possible to distinguish the writers whose works have endured and to assess their artistic merit.

The phase of Post-revolutionary short story is marked by its formal sophistication and has carved out a distinct and experimental space of its own in fiction. The proximity of the genre was exploited in recording the experiences of the revolution and war as they unfolded. This brought the short story added significance. The post-revolutionary short stories are more diversified than their predecessors in theme, language, aesthetic structure, and diagnosis of social and political malaise. A comprehensive list of it is beyond the scope of the present survey, and only the major trends will be referred to. It is important, for example, to single out the resonance of the female voice in the literary production of the post-revolutionary period. In addition to collection by women writers of the previous generation, such as Be ki salam konam? (Whom shall I
greet?, 1980) and Az parandaha-ye mohajer bepors (Ask the birds of passage, 1997) by Simin Daneshvar and Zanan Bedun-e mardan (Women without men, 1987), a collection of interconnected stories, by Shahrmush Parsipur, a host of younger writers have appeared on the scene, eager to experiment and create a style of their own. Special mention should be made of Kanizu (1989) and Siria Siria (1993) by Moniru Ravanipur; the immediately successful Raz-e kuchak (The little secret, 1993) by Farkhonda Aqayi (b. 1956); the terse and well-wrought stories of Tahera ‘Alawi (b. 1959), in her collection, Zan dar Baad (Woman in the wind, 1998), and the fable-like writings of Fereshta Mawlavi (b. 1943) such as Naranj o Toranj (The bitter orange and the bergamot, 1992), which transforms traditional folk tales through the use of magical realism. Showing a remarkable talent Zoya Pirzad (b. 1953), depicts sketches of urban alienation and its effect on marital relationships in a factual manner, tinged with understated humor. Her two collections of short stories, Methl-e hama-ye asrha (Like all other afternoons, 1991) and Ta’m-e gas-e khormalu (The astringent taste of persimmon, 1991) falls under this category.

Model techniques is evident in collections like Digar Siavash-I namanda (The likes of the Siavash are no more, 1990) by Asghar Elahi (b. 1944), Jaama be Khunab (The blood-drenched robe, 1989) and Talar-e tarabkhana (The hall of merriment, 1992) by Raza Jula’I (b. 1950). In most of his stories Jula’I returns to the turbulent final years of the Qajar era. Ah! Estanbol (Oh! Istanbul, 1990) by Reza Farrokh-fal (b. 1953), is a compassionate depiction of intellectual life in third world countries, consumed by anxiety, horror and alienation (Jula’i). Amir Hasan Cheheltan’s (b. 1956) two collections of short stories Digar kas-I seday-am nazad (Nobody called me anymore, Teheran, 1992) and Chizi ba farda namanda ast (Tomorrow is right around the corner, 1998) are distinguished by their skillful depiction of the inner thoughts of the characters with considerable economy and often by implication rather than direct description.

A collection of well structured inter connected stories Siasunbu (1989), by Mohammad Reza Safdari (b. 1954) is worth mentioning in this case. The
short stories by Asghar ‘Abd-Allahi (b. 1955), singled out for the way their diction is enriched by the use of allegorical imagery. Also deserving mention are the two collections of the fable-like stories, Hichkak o Agabaji (Hitchkok and Agabaji, 1955) by Behnam Dayyani (b.1945) and Yuzpalangan-I ke ba man davida-and (The cheetahs which have run with me, 1994), a collection of interconnected stories by Bizan Najdi (1942-1997). Dayyani resorts to a simple narrative style in most of the stories in this collection. His works display the contrast between tradition and modernity by playing the consciousness of an old woman against that of a young man, who narrates the story and also happens to be a cinema aficionado. Najdi’s only work of fiction Yuzpalangan-I ke ba man davida-and enjoyed a warm reception by literary critics for its fresh perspective on issues and its poetical language. The above mentioned experiments in narration should not imply a demise of social realism as a major influence on literary production.

The term used to describe the literature written by younger writers who have come of age in the post-revolutionary period is farhang or adabyat-e-jang or jabha i.e., literature of war or the warfront. This literature tells their experiences at the front in the war with Iraq. Many writers, Husang Ashurzada (b.1944) and Mohammad ‘Ali’ (b.1950), have published important collections of social realist short stories, concerned with the themes of war, displacement, and life in the refugee camps. Mohammad ‘Ali already enjoyed some recognition because of his previous works, including two novels, Ra’d o barq-e bi baran (Dry thunder, 1991) and Naqsh-e panhan (Hidden design, 1991). His latest collection of short stories, Chashm-e sevvom (The third eye), was published in 1994.

Mohammad Bahman-Beygi’s two collections of mainly autobiographical stories (b. 1920), Bukhara-ye man, il-e man (My Shangrila, my tribe, 1989) and AgarQaraqj nabud (Had there been no Qaraqj, 1995) evokes the tribal life of the Qasbai and the beauty of their region. His stories are narrated eloquently and with recourse to traditional modes of story telling (Behmand).
The short stories of Hushang Moradi Kermani (b. 1944), usually intended for an adolescent audience, have earned the author international recognition and prestigious literary awards. Qessaha-ye majid (Majid's stories, 1979), successfully serialized on Persian television in the 1980s, is couched in a seemingly effortless diction with stark but evocative imagery. Komra (The jar, 1989) was the screen play for a film with the same title directed by Ebrahim Foruzesh, which was well-received in international film festival. His Bachche-ha-ye qalibaf (Carpet-weaving children, 1980), stands in sharp contrast with his sunny and buoyant stories about the boy Majid. It depicts his first-hand experience of misery, hunger, and tragic abused life of rug-weaving children in a Kerman village. It and Mosht bar pust (punch on the skin, 1992) have been translated into different languages and praised by the critics for their aesthetic qualities.

Post-revolutionary fiction, including the short story, is marked by dynamic experimentation with techniques of narration, choice of plot, imagery, and structure. In line with recent tendencies in most modern literatures, modern Persian fiction expresses doubts, uncertainty, anxiety, tension, paradox, and dilemmas; it talks of beginnings and not of ends. Modern Persian fiction being almost a century old, has remained receptive to external influences and follows trends and styles as they appear elsewhere, stream of consciousness techniques and magical realism being cases in point. From a fictionalized remembrance of the nations' idealized past, to a portrayal of imbalances and injustices, and to the depiction of hardships of war and revolution, Persian fiction has remained a vehicle for change as well as testament to its painful process.