Indeterminacy, Discovery and Polyphony in Houshang Golshiri's Short Stories

Sayyed Rahim Moosavinia *
Associate Professor
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz
moosavinia@scu.ac.ir

Arash Azarpanah
Instructor
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz
arashazar@email.com

Manouchehr Joukar
Associate Professor
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz
moosavinia@scu.ac.ir

Abstract

Houshang Golshiri is among the Iranian leading creative and imaginative fiction writers who managed to open up new horizons in Iranian fiction. Hence he could be claimed to be an innovative avant-garde short story writer with unique stylistic characteristics. Although inspired by fiction writers such as Alavi, Sadeqi, Golestan and Sa'edi in the techniques of narration, Golshiri nonetheless stands out among his Iranian peers in creating the sense of indeterminacy, discovery, and the adequate use of polyphonic narration. Thus, he may justifiably be called a well-established paragon of the relevant views and techniques employed by the preceding generations. On the other hand, Golshiri's style in writing short stories (in terms of polyphony), itself based on Bakhtin's dialogical heteroglossia and uncertainty, seems to be worthy of investigating from post-modernist and phenomenological points of view. The present paper uses such a framework to analyze a corpus of eleven short stories written by Golshiri. It is an attempt to show a postmodernist tinge through the presence of narrative indeterminacy and contextual polyphony based on Bakhtin's ideas. Then through indeterminacy and polyphony Golshiri's narratives are shown to reach discovery. This will lead the author and the reader to realize discovery and anagnorisis about the main theme throughout the story.

Keywords: Golshiri, short story, polyphony, indeterminacy, discovery.

Introduction and Background

According to many critics, the 60's in Iran were the most prosperous years in terms of literature. This was an "era most representative of those brilliant times as far as quantity, frequency and diversity of prose are considered" (Sepanlou, 2001:79). During these years, the atmosphere in story writing – after the frustrating recession of the 50's – took the 40's writers out of their isolation and inactivity, and made them write and publish new works. It was the time when the short story was revived and became more prosperous than before.

Story writers of this decade can be categorized into three groups. First, there are those writers who had started writing in the late 50's, but their significant stories or collections were published in the 60's; consequently, they became famous in the 60's. Writers like Bahram Sadeqi and Gholam-Hossein Sae'di fall into this category. The second group, are those writers that basically emerged in the 60's; their works were already well-shaped and solid and became famous in the same decade . Relative opening of social space which happened a decade after the Mordad 28th Coup created such new writers with new concerns as material for the short story. Houshang Golshiri and Mahshid Amirshahi belong to this group. Golshiri's view of new narrative frames and Amirshahi's view of women's life are the new voices in the relative openness of social space in the 60's. The third group of story writers in the 60's, are writers who already had a significant career and fame, but with the writing industry booming in the 60's, they took a new direction in their writings. Ebrahim Golestan and Sadeq Choubak are among this group.

Golestan who published his two books at the end of the 40's and the beginning of 50's, wrote his most important works, *River and Thirsty Wall* and *Flow and Fog* in the second half of the 60's; Choubak who had published *Puppet Show* and *The Ape whose Parrot had Died* in the earlier decade*,* also wrote his most important novel, *The Patient Stone* and his three other books, in the second half of the 60's.

The 60's, therefore, is a dense, crowded and diverse time for the short story. From language-oriented stories like those of Ebrahim Golestan to formalist stories of Bahram Sadeqi, polyphony of Golshiri and the nostalgic stories of Goli Taraqi and Mahshid Amirshahi, they are all signs of the

diversity of the short story in this decade. Writers moved toward "how to write" rather than "what to write", departing from the politics and political symbols of writers of previous decades – years of recess – and almost forgetting concepts like committed story and message of the story. This effort in trying new ways in form, structure and language of the story, led to the emergence of the innovative and technical stories of Golshiri as well as Bahram Sadeqi's formalist works. It was as if the doors of slogan and social commitment and politicization were closing. Instead a new window was opening to artistic horizons, and the structural beauty of the story became an escape and a remedy for a society tired of social and political failures. It is because of this and the outcome of events in the previous decade that Sepanlou refers to this decade as the most productive decade in literature: "The most appropriate and efficient situations were made in 1340-50 (60's-70). On the one hand, essential steps in any literal and artistic movement were taken, two generations" experience in various literal forms, success and failure it has survived in different formats, was now delivering the essence to a new generation. And artistic experiences during the time, both formal and conceptual, were adjusted along the work in the era. On the other hand, the artist could escape from the heavy shadow of dominations and orders of the past [=before codetta] which made artists into repeating parrots of concepts"(81).

As pointed out, among the important writers of the 60's, those like Sadeqi and Golshiri were leaning toward novel narratives. A special view to the form of narrative, artistic structure and language of the work makes a formalist writer like Houshang incorporate one recurrent characteristic feature described as indeterminacy which is also one of the most important characteristics of modern and postmodern texts. Writing such modern stories in the 60'smeans that Golshiri's stories contain novel and important issues which, according to the present research, have not yet been addressed.

It is important and true to say that the modernist movements of the time have come from the Western theoreticians and writers and hardly been considered in Persian narrative tradition and that the postmodernist movements had not been taken seriously in the West at Golshiri's earlier career; still he was introduced to the appearance of European and American modernist movements through translations from these two sources and also

Latin America, such as Hemingway and Burgess mostly translated by Ahmad Miralaei and Abolhassan Najafi who were close associates of Golshiri's circle in *Jonge Isfahan*. Therefore, knowingly or unknowingly he borrowed modernist elements from them. Thus the norms of hermeneutic criticism and the new discourse of literary criticism have made it possible for us to study Golshiri's stories from the perspective of modernist or postmodernist elements while he was not conscious of postmodernist movements in his stories.

Houshang Golshiri brought his polyphonic and uncertain short story to maturity by publishing the collection *My Small Chapel* and by continuing to write after the Iranian revolution of 1979. In this study, the concepts of indeterminacy, discovery and polyphony in the short story are first described. These concepts are then analyzed and looked at in Golshiri's stories – in chronological order. These narrative techniques have also been traced to some degree in the works of writers before Golshiri. Finally, for a concrete view of the techniques under question, a table has been drawn showing the frequency of these techniques used in each of Golshiri's stories.

Thus the ultimate goal of this research is to show the three elements present in modern European narrative and their density in Golshiri's short stories. As the Persian narrative in the 40th geographically was away from the modernist movements, showing this much modernist strategies in Golshiri's works shows new ways for narrative research since the emergence of modernism in the 40's in stories in Iran.

Indeterminacy, Discovery and Polyphony in the Short Story

Each story writer makes use of various techniques in his narration. Golshiri has benefited so much from polyphony, indeterminacy and discovery techniques in the narrative and context structure of his stories that these three elements can be said to be the most important stylistics characteristics of his writing. Hence, it seems necessary to present a definition for each of these characteristics.

"Indeterminacy" is a term first used in the phenomenological criticism of modern and postmodern literature. (Makaryk, 2005, 562) McHale, a postmodern theorist, believes that in the postmodern era "determinacy of the globe has been questioned"(Tadayyoni, 2009, 37). Hence, different

questions arise about the surrounding world, questions which may even have contradictory answers. That is why man's attention has shifted from finding the essence of objects and living to these diversities; so it seems natural for the literature and fiction arising from this idea to be uncertain and replete with doubt. In fact, literary works featuring indeterminacy "avoid transmutation in routines and weaken our view of reality" (90). Sirous Shamisa, impressed by postmodernist criticism, defines indeterminacy as follows: "everything is relative, truth is changing and there is no final meaning in the text" (2003, 326). Based on what was said, it can be concluded that in a text featuring indeterminacy, mimesis and representation of the outside world has the least credibility.

Another term is "discovery". This term was first recognized as a literary technique in Aristotle's *Poetics*. For example, Aristotle knows Oedipus' awakening to the bitter fact of his life as the most excellent example of discovery or anagnorisis (Zarrinkoub,1990:131). Discovery can thus be "a term sometimes used as an English equivalent for anagnorisis, that is, a point in a play or story at which a character recognizes the true state of affairs"(Baldick, 2001:69). In this paper, this process of discovery has been used in a more general and diverse sense, since in the stories examined here this discovery is extended to the reader and the writer himself. Thus, it becomes clear how the reader and the author together with the character in each story become involved in discovering the same indeterminate truth.

The third term to be considered is "polyphony". Polyphony in a literary work is essentially a Bakhtinian term and comes from the heart of his theory about the novel (Makaryk,1993:101).The Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin first used a polyphonic concept in his *Dialogic Imagination*. He finds the story to be a set of various social speeches and individual voices artistically organized (Bakhtin, 1984, 351). With this technique, the reader is faced with a plurality of ideas, different social and individual voices, and the experience of an unlimited freedom of speech in a polyphonic story. In other words, polyphony is a significant feature in a literary work of prose and" because of it, different competing voices take various positions and can take part in conversation free from author's judgment and limitations. With a liberal view, the author stands side by side with characters during the conversation; therefore, freedom of speech makes it impossible for any

voice (even author's) to be superior to other viewpoints" (Makaryk, 1993,101).

The Motif of Doubt and Indeterminacy in *As Always*

Houshang Golshiri published *Prince Ehtejab* in 1968, a work which appealed to the critics because of its novel narrative shape. With this book, "he moves a long way in a surprisingly short time."(Sepanlou, 1983:421). In the same year, Golshiri published a collection of short stories called *As Always* which, like *Prince Ehtejab,* reflects new experiments in finding novel ways for narration in the short story. *As Always* is the first collection by Golshiri. It includes seven stories, some which are analyzed in the present paper.

Even in this very first collection, *Golshiri* is impressed by "city writers": the characters of his stories, like those in the stories of Bozorg Alavi, Bahram Sadeqi and Ebrahim Golestan, are urban characters, usually from the middle-class such as employees or teachers. In fact, it seems that Golshiri is mostly impressed by these three authors in all aspects, including characterization and language.

For instance, Golshiri has been influenced by Golestan, who was the first to pay attention to rhythm and music of words, in terms of complexity of narrative language. In creating doubt which leads to indeterminacy one should mention the collection of short stories *Trench and Empty Canteen* by Bahram Sadeqi. All his characters struggle against a historical and psychological doubt which leads to indeterminacy in his stories. Moreover, Bozorge Alavi, as a pioneer in creating polyphony in Persian narrative, has influenced Golshiri. In his short story "Traitor", Alavi narrates a story from different characters' perspectives which leads to indeterminacy in narrative. Thus it is not possible to overlook the impact of Alavi's polyphonic narrative on Golshiri admitted by several informal interviews by the latter. In addition to these influences, *As Always* introduces a new experience in narrative techniques and language for the short story in Iran.

Golshiri's technical power is manifested in his prose and language. (Sepanlou. 2001:119). In fact, Golshiri consistently builds an equivocal and ambiguous language to create an indeterminate and mysterious situation via his "inquiring-adductive" technique in the short story. In this technique of

the detective story, Sepanlou, points out, the writer reconstructs the events by a reading of the past evidence. (Sepanlou 1983, 56 and 2001, 104, 156) According to Mir Sadeqi, "he is a brave and creative writer who is excited to discover novel ways [in story writing"(Mir Sadeqi, 2004:101). Golshiri considers language as a means to discover concepts or to shape hidden concepts of form. (Golshiri, 2000: 488). By writing "The Night of Doubt" in the collection "As Always", he took the first step toward a new approach to story and narrative language; and by means of a dubious language and paradoxical narrations expressed in an ambiguous language, he creates an indeterminate story in a way that indeterminacy seems to carry the aesthetic aspect of the story. "The Night of Doubt", which was the first in the collection, in fact aims at scrutinizing identities of ordinary urban people. This story and stories of this type are written by indeterminate narrations and representation of various different ideas of characters in a narrative format free from determinacy, and this is how a new story contributes a new reality to the world, instead of simply recreating the same old realities. In Golshiri's stories, "What's being considered is discovering the world. Literature is the means to discover. It's not a means to recreate the world, it's not recreation." (same:729). This approach appears in almost all the stories of Golshiri's *As Always* and later collections.

"The Night of Doubt" is Golshiri's first experience in writing a story which induces in the reader doubt followed by suspense. To create a dubious space – which is followed by suspense –Golshiri uses the structure of a mystery used before him by Bozorg Alavi in a simpler form. "The Night of Doubt" is about a dead man who has apparently committed suicide. Later in a private party, while drinking, his friends exchange ideas about his death; ideas which are sometimes very different from each other. Hence, Golshiri deals with the death of a character and makes a polyphonic story by presenting different ideas of death through other characters, a technique which brings to mind Bozorg Alavi's "inquiry-adductive" technique in his short stories. "Golshiri uses a detective story style, and by offering different opinions and various aspects of reality tries to spread the shadow of indeterminacy over different ideas (and consequently to the whole story). These uncertainties cause panic and shock in the story"(Mirabedini, 2000:674).   Consequently, "The Night of Doubt" takes its suspense

mostly from its polyphonic features, but the difference between Alavi's and Golshiri's stories lies in Golshiri's approach toward dealing with the characters and main concepts of the story. If Alavi has uses mystery-detective themes in addition to the detective technique and style in his "Letters" or "Traitor", Golshiri has used this technique in order to scrutinize middle class members of society and his contemporary people. This approach and insight can be clearly seen in "The Night of Doubt." In an interview, Golshiri stated:"the main issue for me in story writing, since the center of story can be man, is knowing man. Via technique and divergence, the story writer wants to come to this realization."(Golshiri, 2000:696). However, it can be said that Golshiri owes the diversity and indeterminacy in his stories to Bozorg Alavi.

Another story in the *As Always* collection which requires a closer look is "A cellar for the Otter". The narrative of the story is something between the internal monologue and the stream of consciousness. In the parts where the mind of the teacher, who is the narrator of the story, is filled with neurotic fantasies of killing his wife, it seems that the author is attempting to examine Faulkner's technique of the stream of consciousness in his narration. In these sections, the indeterminacy of what has actually happened or not happened to the narrators clearly seen and understood. But in parts dealing with the teacher's memories, the technique used is mostly interior monologue. The story, "A cellar for the Otter"*,* seems to be influenced by certain stories of Bahram Sadeqi, especially "With Great Regret" in the *Trench and Empty Canteen* collection.The melancholic mind of Golshiri's teacher which paints his strange dreams, approximates his character to those of Sadeqi's characters in "With Great Regret". Golshiri does not deny this influence and points out:"among three formative elements in a story, author, reality and the narrative text, reality and how to find this reality in the text was emphasized. Fiction that I know, emphasizes the author and I owe it to Sadeqi. This means: who writes, where he writes and what language he uses."(Shiri, 2008:134). By admitting to being affected by Sadeqi*,* Golshiri shows the main characteristic of his story to be, not adhering to truth and mimesis, but rather adhering to indeterminacy. Yet in a more extensive look, he is also influenced by Bahram Sadeqi in writing a certain type of mysterious and multi-layered stories – in a way that

conscious writing is obvious in the story – and a story whose indeterminacy is supposed to bring the author and reader to a revelation. However, in his later work, Golshiri takes a wider and deeper look into the story and its interaction with real life than that of Sadeqi. Hence, his next short story – "My Little Chapel" – which deals with an alternative representation of different aspects of life such as religion, myth, history, politics, and individual-social interactions, completely diverges from Sadeqi's ideas and views. Using new techniques in narrative like an expert formalist, Golshiriis constantly de-familiarizing techniques and escaping from typical narration. Hence, although he is influenced by authors such as Bozorg Alavi and Bahram Sadeqi, he never narrates his story exactly as they do; "The most basic dominant element in Golshiri's worldview is doubting beliefs and interpreting existence of phenomena. Despite being suspicious of mentalities and granting extensive doubt in life and general context of the story, *Sadeqi* and *Golshiri*, explore different aspects of any issue with skepticism and critical thinking far from any extremes." (same:143) Hence, in the shock and the space that *Golshiri* depicts in the story, there is a kind of indeterminacy which is the result of the characters' doubt about a phenomenon; as seen in "The Night of Doubt" and how the dead man's friends show doubts about his death. This element of doubt in most of the stories is joined by narrative techniques and artistic language in a consciously ambiguous form.

In "A Good Social Story" also, there are traces of formalism in addition to elements which cause doubt and uncertainty; because in this story, a writer who tries to write a socially committed story, lost in shaping characters, fails to achieve certainty in reconstructing objects and fiction environment in his story. He is unable to pick a fictional situation, and even the actions of the characters are not certain. Sentences like "the old man smokes or doesn't smoke" (Golshiri, 2000, 146) spoken by the narrator represent only a small part of the uncertainty in the life of the characters. In this short story also, *Golshiri* tries to enter different mental voices from the view point of the writer's character's, which leads to indeterminacy in the world of his story. In an interview, *Golshiri* emphasizes doubting and undermining inevitable realities of life in the story: "I want to ignore and disturb this compulsion [compulsion of the life and story that governs casual

relationships]. Instead, give freedom to man by using uncertainties, doubts and deflation of one reality in different minds. Although I accept that every individual in a specific situation has a particular impression of the same event, it becomes relative when the individual is faced with his own doubts and the ideas of others"(Golshiri, 2000, 696). This point is made clearer after the publication of the *My Little Chapel* collection in 1976, and becomes one of the permanent stylistic features in Golshiri's stories. This technique causes doubt and uncertainty in a "single event" with a seemingly inevitable situation by presenting different and sometimes contradictory ideas about that "event", which creates a polyphonic story or, as it is used in Alavi's stories, an "inquiry-adductive" story. Finally, this polyphony in the short story can be seen as a form of democracy or as Golshiri says "giving freedom to man"; so far that he lets his characters state ideas, sometimes contradicting the writer's ideas. The result of this technique is the representation of diverse and sometimes conflicting accounts of an event in the story.

Using "doubt" in reproducing aesthetic functions – as mentioned earlier – creates a particular appeal in Golshiri's stories. He basically creates shock and suspense on the principle of this doubt; doubts and hesitancies which add up to complicate the seemingly simple crisis of the story, and consequently lead to indeterminacy.

Another short story in this collection worth reviewing is called "A Man with a Red Tie". In this story, Golshiri represents his narrative in the form of an administrative report in the mind of the narrator who is a security agent. Chasing a suspect, the narrator is preparing a report in his mind to hand in to his superiors. The latter follows "S. M." to know him better. In order to get close to the suspect, the agent joins the suspect in some of his activities; for example, he buys cigarettes to offer them to the suspect, or goes to a bar with him to hear him drunk. This closeness is at first for the purpose of getting close to the suspect to obtain information from him, but the agent is gradually interested in the suspect's lifestyle and dissolves in his personality and cultural characteristics and after some time becomes the suspect himself.

In Golshiri's other stories, such as" The Night of Doubt,"h doubting the reality of life is achieved through the use of different narratives and ideas

among characters. But in "A Man With a Red Tie", there is only one character who doubts his past, a past that he used to consider definitive and certain. Finding a new world in the behavior, words and morale of his suspect, the agent doubts his predetermined certainty, and creates a new world in his mind which is the result of reaching some kind of an indeterminacy in the beliefs of the character. In "A Man with a Red Tie", it seems that Golshiri, at least subconsciously, is influenced to some extent by Bozorg Alavi's "Traitor." In this short story, the technique used for presenting the intelligence agent's memories and his report to his superior is close to Golshiri's technique in narration. Golshiri's narrative approaches and techniques in his stories do not simply repeat the present reality and doubt it instead, but also try to create a new reality through creating new relationships which govern fictional reality. This is especially true of *"A Man with a Red Tie"*. In this story, Golshiri ruins the social reality between an intelligence agent and his suspect, and builds a new reality between them. The turning point of this destruction and reconstruction of the relations governing reality is "doubt"; i.e. the intelligence agent, who is the narrator of the story, from the moment he doubts his legitimacy and present determinacy in social rules, starts ruining them. His language also changes from formal to a more "human" and intimate language, therefore building a new reality on the ruins of the old one. Golshiri's de-familiarization in the process of creating his works is based on breaking determinacy's and creating new realities.

Polyphony and Discovery in *My Little Chapel*

Golshiri published his second collection and third book in 1976: *My Little Chapel,* which contains nine short stories. Here, the more significant stories in this collection are: "First Innocent"*,* "Second Innocent", "Wolf", "My China Doll" and "A Picture for my Empty Frame". Golshiri's stories in *My Little Chapel* are impressive because of his indirect narrative. The important point in these stories is that all of them are narrated from a first person point of view. In all the stories, with the patience manifested in the language and text of the story, Golshiri creates a fictional environment to increase the effectiveness of the story. The writer almost does not use any sentence in a direct and straightforward way. Sentences start from the

margins of the adventure and the main complication, and they merely go around it; although the sentences get very close to the core of the main event, they never touch it. Therefore, by developing indeterminacy throughout the story, he leaves the interpretation of the complexities in the hands of the reader. Shock and panic in Golshiri's stories are an appropriate example of achieving an elevated kind of suspense by indirect narration. This task of making the main narrative of the story indirect is also carried out by the "language" of the story. A delicate point is that in defining the theory of polyphony, Bakhtin, sees the writer as having the gift of creating meaning indirectly via language. (Bakhtin, 1982, 390). This indirect language is what Golshiri himself refers to as "distancing" (Golshiri, 2000, 696) and through that he achieves polyphony of the characters and ultimately, indeterminacy in the story.

From the view of the current study, the most mature and suspense-creating story in this collection is "Second Innocent." In "Second Innocent," with an artistic parsimony, Golshiri provides information to the reader drop by drop by the exterior monologue of a rural man. The plot expands within the events Mostafa, the main character, recall sat the shrine increasing the shock and panic every moment. The rural man's language matches his character and his speech looks normal and realistic to the reader. Through Mostafa's helpless cries, the reader finds out that the man whom the shrine was named after, was killed by him – Mostafa – in a Ta'ziye (passion play). The story starts with a humorous tone, but as the rural man retells his bitterness and suffering, the tone also becomes bitter, and eventually horrible. *Mostafa* was used as bait for the conspiracies of village elders, the chief, and those around him. Now he has returned to the shrine to ask the Sayyed for forgiveness. Through Mostafa's confessions at the shrine, the events that led him to kill the Sayyed are revealed: Mostafa and his village people had gone to the upper village for the annual Ta'ziye of *Ashoura*; therefore, in an old competition for honor, they had brought a pure blooded Sayyed (a decedent of the prophet Muhammad) to hold the event. By luring, tempting and inciting his religious sentiments, the villagers turn Mostafa into "*Shemr*" (one of the dark characters in Ta'ziye), and call him "*Mostafa Shemr*" in order for him to play "*Shemr*" in Ta'ziye. But with encouragements from leaders of the village, this role takes on a real aspect

for Mostafa. In the final scene which is also the climax of the story, Mostafa Shemr beheads the Sayyed in a shockingly cruel way. Roles suddenly change, and Mostafa is damned and expelled from the village. The rhythm of the story from humor to bitterness, and then to fear and panic is wonderful, subtle, and deft. Each reading of the story adds a new metaphorical layer to the surface theme, so that each time an interpretable, multi-dimensional, indeterminate story engages the reader more than the previous reading.

Golshiri has made a strong duality in his characters, while actions in each scene are designed in a way that the reader is stripped of a determinate judgment; this keeps the suspense in the mind of the reader even after reading the story. Each event in this story has dual or multiple functions which cannot be judged determinately, and the sum of these events eventually leads to a de-familiarizing situation of promised myths. Like a perfect formalist, Golshiri manages to deplete ancient promised and sometimes mythical meanings of determinacy, and to recreate them with a new function, message and meaning which is novel and groundbreaking.

Golshiri achieved the same effects in his "Third Innocent". However, instead of taking advantage of a religious myth, he turns to a versified ancient story and makes use of Nezami's *Khosro and Shirin*. He turns to his special and usual technique, and develops the story through representing different narratives of an event with one character in a polyphonic way and with indeterminacy, a method peculiar to his view of the world of fiction. The main character in this story is a plasterer who, Similar to Nezami's "Farhad the Lover", heads to the mountains in a moonlit night. The story is narrated from the point of view of an employee who is helpless in analyzing the inner complex layers of the plasterer's psychological character. But he puts his view next to that of others, and the story ends in an aesthetic suspense in order to leave an extensive interpretation capacity to the reader. Doubt and uncertainty which prevail on the narrator, contributes a modernist indeterminacy to the story and causes the story to end in a doubtful and indeterminate situation. The writer deliberately avoids judging the plasterer's character and spreads his ambiguous and uncertain view over the story. At the end of the story, he leaves the "main point" to the reader in order to extend polyphony which was achieved by presenting different

narrations of a single event. This way he makes different interpretations possible for the readers' society.

In order to get to an ending of suspense that brings indeterminacy into the story, Golshiri in "The Third Innocence "uses a technique and narrates the margins of the event: Through presenting doubt and uncertainty of the different narratives, he slowly approximates the core of the event, even though he might never actually get to it. If different voices have talked enough about an event, now it is the reader's task to discover an unmentioned situation; just like "story" and "story writing" which are, for Golshiri, means of discovering the world not recreating it. (Golshiri, 2000, 856-860). In other words, with different narrative pieces presented by different points of view, Golshiri's story acts like puzzle pieces. Pieces sit in different places of the story (puzzle), and eventually it is completed by the reader who discovers the right place for the pieces of the puzzle. In an interview about one of his stories which he generalizes for all of his stories, Golshiri said: "The point in this story is creation within creation. Any object approached by the writer turns into narrative. Maybe this story reveals all of my stories. One small tile next to another tile…one inlay next to another… each inlay is simple per se"(Golshiri, 2000, 858). In fact, he analogizes the story to the art of inlay and tessellation, since different narratives of an event sit next to each other like small tiles and finally make the coherent whole of the story like a tiled wall.

Golshiri uses the same technique in "The Wolf" and "The First Innocent". Both of these stories have the same polyphonic technique by presenting different narratives for the same event. In "The Wolf", the narrator, who lives in a cold snowy village, focuses on a new physician in the village and his wife whose entrance disturbs the balance and makes the story. A mysteriously ambiguous relation is formed between the physician's wife and a wolf which sits in front of their window; all of her paintings are different drawings of the wolf. Like other stories by Golshiri, the climax is at the end of the story and the narrator marks the end in a cautious way which arises from his doubt about the nature of the event. Consequently, it leads to doubt and indeterminacy in the reader's interpretation at the end of the story and makes a shocking ending: The physician and his wife are stuck in the snow; as he tells the narrator later, the physician sees the wolf next to

the car in the snow. His wife, who is not afraid of the wolf, gets out of the car and disappears with the wolf without saying a word. The narrator is not sure about what the physician says; however, his wife has told him about the mysterious relationship between her and the wolf. The narrator puts all narratives together and makes the story. He also adds his own narrative, but looks at all of these narratives in a doubtful way, the same way the writer views the fictional world: with doubts and uncertainty. At the end of the story, however, when the narrator finds out that "windshield wipers have no fear"(Golshiri 1976:61), he doubts the truthfulness of what the physician has said, so the story ends in doubt and indeterminacy about the event because of the different narratives and voices of different characters .This time Golshiri's usual technique in creating indeterminacy story leads to a profound story which is similar to Gholam-Hossein Sa'edi's short stories in *Cold and shivering* and *Mourners of Bayal* collections. In stories of the latter collection, unusual events appear in a realistic story: a man transforms into a cow, or a character eats to the extent that the village faces famine. One could say that by adding profound, mysterious, frightful and sometimes strange elements and somewhat unrealistic events in what are otherwise realistic stories, Golshiri is influenced by Gholam-Hossein Sa'edi. The narrator in "The Wolf", like Sa'edi's characters is a simple illiterate person. Golshiri picks him to narrate the story because he needs someone who is unable to judge the events decisively; this way he makes his story both indeterminate and believable at the same time.

"The First Innocent" was also written with the same multi-narrative technique, but in the form of a letter. The writer of this letter, who is also the narrator of the story, is a teacher who has come to live in a village. Now, in a letter to his brother, the teacher expresses his doubts and uncertainty about the strange events in the village, and the unbelievable stories the villagers tell him about a scare crow. While criticizing superstitious beliefs, the narrator slowly doubts the truth and as the story develops through the narrative of the letter, the line between the real and the unreal is blurred. Hence, it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish between reality and fantasy, and the story ends in doubt and suspense caused by the different narratives or voices regarding the same event. At the heart of the events, which is also the central theme of the letter, is a scarecrow sanctified

by the villagers. At the same time, the villagers are also terrified of the scarecrow, recounting paranormal and extraordinary stories about it. The narrator, who at the beginning of the letter looks at different narratives in disbelief, adds up the narratives together, and enters the process of discovery with the reader. This is where the narrator is shown to be believing the events, even though he was skeptical at the beginning. The doubt and uncertainty Golshiri creates in the letter, in addition to polyphony, add an allegorical, philosophical and ontological value to the story.

Another story in this collection, "A Picture for My Empty Frame", has a simple plot, but is narrated like a disordered puzzle in terms of time. Hence, in order to make sense of the events, the reader has to put the different pieces of the narrative together. One can consider this narrative a political story with a detective narrative technique which seems to have been influenced by Bozorg Alavi's "Traitor." The narrator retells the story of his imprisonment, but also offers different ideas which are sometimes contradictory, in order to find a traitor among the prisoners. However, this traitor is never identified clearly, and the reader needs to put the pieces of reality together in his mind in order to share the narrator's doubts about reality. In this story also, "by doubting what seems to be undoubted, the writer opens a gap into his readers knowledge so that they can see the world from a new perspective"(Mirabedini, 2000, 686).

Finally, in the story "Both Sides of a Coin" in the discussed collection, there are traces of the motif of doubt. In this story, an old man meets a young man with different thoughts in a prison. The story contains conversations between these two. At the end of the story, the old man, whose view toward the present reality has changed by the narrator's ideological foundation, ends his life in a pathetic way. Therefore, through the old man's skepticism and doubts, Golshiri presents doubt and uncertainty in the present reality and the effort to discover a new aspect of reality. But in this story, he makes this stylistic feature of his appear in the perspective of one other than the narrator.

Golshiri looks carefully at the life and world of the characters and tries to discover it again. In order to do so, first he doubts the existential reality or its nature, then, he tries to find a novel way to get to a new reality. He admits that "looking at the world is one of the most important components

of story writing…I have already said that the writer is not a full view mirror of reality, yet he pays the most attention to it"(Golshiri, 2000, 895). Therefore, the writer of *My small Chapel* collection is not a mirror of perfect reality; he sees reality with an absolute attention, but he discovers it from a new angle according to the changes he wants – or likes – to bring about in that reality, in order to rebuild it on a new foundation. Hence, he doubts the existential reality of national and religious methodology, common beliefs, and current social realities; he takes the staircase of uncertainty to a new interpretation of reality. This method of presenting different polyphonic narratives in order to create doubt and suspense does not occur in the other three stories of the collection; therefore, they fall outside the circle of this study.

Table 1.
Frequency Table for Three Features in Golshiri's Collections

Collection title	Story title	Polyphony	Discovery	Indeterminacy
As Always (1349) (1968)	Night of Doubt	*	*	*
	As Always			
	Behind Thin Stems of the Tajir			
	A cellar for the Otter			*
	The Visit			
	A Good Social Story	*		*
	A Man with a Red Tie		*	*

Table 2.

Collection title	Story title	Polyphony	Discovery	Indeterminacy
	My Little Chapel			
	A Picture for my Empty Frame	*	*	*
	Both Sides of a			*

Collection title	Story title	Polyphony	Discovery	Indeterminacy
My little chapel (1976)	Coin			
	My China Doll			*
	The Wolf	*		*
	The First Innocent	*	*	*
	The Second Innocent		*	*
	The Third Innocent	*	*	*
	The Fourth Innocent			

Analysis of the Frequency Tables

Table 1 shows that only three out of seven stories are not relevant to this study. Golshiri's approach in the employment of relevant features becomes more obvious in the second collection (see table 2), where six out of nine stories contain the mentioned features. It should be pointed out that in *My Little Chapel*; three out of six stories incorporate all three features, namely polyphony, discovery, and indeterminacy. Thus only stories with frequent use of the mentioned features were examined in the tables.

Conclusion

To present a brief yet comprehensive conclusion of the dominant techniques in the short stories of Golshiri's collections, *As Always*, *My little chapel*, one could say that in most of these stories the writer wants to create his own new, indeterminate, and doubtful world to add it to the real world. He does so by presenting different views and narratives around a focal event or situation. In fact, by creating a polyphonic story and presenting different ideas and contradictory understandings by the characters, Golshiri wishes to achieve a rediscovery of his surrounding world. This is the theory Mikhail Bakhtin calls "polyphony" in his *Dialogic Imagination* which is prerequisite for a conversational logic. In addition to creating polyphony, Golshiri takes his reader along a discovery journey in the surrounding world in all the stories of *My Little Chapel.* Therefore, instead of recreating a promised reality or an old memory in a determinate form, the reader discovers Golshiri's surrounding world with new principles, relationships and an

obvious indeterminacy, or recreates it with novel and de-familiarized relations. In stories such as the "Innocents – which are good examples of his style and his famous short stories –Golshiri first shows doubt, and starts with this doubt in order to create his new world or discover new relations in the real world. With the uncertainty of the writer and different narrators in his story, the central event is shrouded and the writer or the narrator expresses marginal issues of that event. Like the narrator of "*The First Innocent*", "*The Third Innocent*" and "*The Wolf*", in his polyphonic story, Golshiri first doubts the usual realities and shows this uncertainty by presenting different ideas and voices or contradictory narratives in a democratic approach. Then, by shaking the foundation of present reality – or old reality –he tries to discover his new world or reshape his world like the narrative of "*The Second Innocent.*" Along with the first person narrator and his reader, the writer experiences this process in most of his stories, even if these three are stuck in suspense and indeterminacy; this is how the stories "The First Innocent", "The Third Innocent", "The Wolf" and "A Picture for my Empty Frame" end. This is the point that makes interpretation and hermeneutic criticism or the so called "free understanding" possible for the reader. Therefore, the story is not consumed after a first reading, and does not lose its initial function in spreading a novel thought the writer wants to diffuse. This might be the ideal goal for every short story writer that Golshiri achieves in his stories .In order to achieve polyphony and indeterminacy in the story and to create an indirect narrative, Golshiri uses a special language of maturity and patience. In Golshiri's stories, no word or event is narrated directly; anything said is shrouded in allusion or is expressed figuratively, yet very natural and proportional to the personality of its narrator. The writer does not resolve ambiguities, but asks novel questions in his stories to let the reader experience a newer world through a different view.

Finally, it could be pointed out that in employing all the above mentioned techniques, Golshiri has observed ideas of Western critics and writers in all his stories or at least has unconsciously used European narrative traditions such as polyphony and indeterminacy. He has been familiar with such conventions through his reading of their works in translation. Thus he created a new voice in the 60's in Iranian narrative.

References

Alavi, Bozorg. (1357/1978). *Letters*. Tehran: Amir Kabir.

Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich. (1982). *The Dialogic Imagination. Four essays* (ed. Michael Holquist; transl. Caryl Emerson). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Baldick, Chris. (2001).*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms.* New York: Oxford.

Golshiri, Houshang. (1374/1996). *The Dark Hand, The Bright Hand*. First Edition. Tehran: Niloofar.

Golshiri, Houshang. (1349/1970). *As Always*. Second Edition. Tehran: Zaman.

Golshiri, Houshang. (1354/1976). *My little chapel*. First Edition. Tehran: Zaman.

Golshiri, Houshang, (1380/2000). *The Dark Half of the Moon*. First Edition. Tehran: Niloofar.

Golshiri, Houshang. (1380/2000). *Garden within Garden*. Second Edition. Tehran: Niloofar.

Makaryk, Irene Rima. (1993). *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Mirabedini, Hassan. (1380/2000). *Hundred Years of Story Writing in Iran.* First Edition. Tehran: Cheshmeh.

MirSadeqi, Jamal. (1382/2004)."Short Story," *Adabiatedastani (Fiction Literature)*. Tehran: Elmi Publications.

Sadeqi, Bahram. (1356/1978). *Sangar o Qomqomahā-ye ḵhāli (The Trench and the Empty Canteens)*.Fourth Edition. Tehran: Zaman.

Sepanlou, Mohammad Ali. (1381/2001). *Pioneer Writers of Iran*. Sixth edition. Tehran: Negah .

Sepanlou, Mohammad Ali. (1368/1983). *Recreating Reality*. Tehran: Negah.

Shamisa, Sirous. (1383/2003). *Literary Criticism*. Tehran: Ferdows Publication. Fourth Edition.

Shiri, Ghahreman. (1387/2008). *Iranian Contemporary schools of story writing*. First Edition. Tehran: Cheshmeh.

Sa'edi,Gholam-Hossein *Azādārān-e Bayal (The Mourners of Bayal)*. (1349/1970). Third Edition. Tehran: Nil Publications.

Tadayyoni, Mansoureh. (1388/2009).*PasamodernizmdarAdabiyatDastani-e Iran (Postmodernism in Fiction of Iran*).Tehran: Alam.

Zarrinkoob, Abdolhossein. (1369/1990). *Arastoova va Fane Sha'r (Aristotle and Poetry)*. Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications.