

Editorial Note

Though theater in its Western sense is quite young in Iran, the history of dramatic performance goes back to pre-Islamic Persia. Dance and performance rituals which were common in the religion of Iran before Islam are older than three millenniums. These practices became quite dormant for a while in the beginning of the Islamic age, which gradually gave shape to its own dramatic tradition. From processional performances, like the *Muharram* religious rituals which are still alive in the twenty-first century, to folk performances of actors, singers, puppeteers and bards, various acts and characters appeared that have remained in the cultural memory of the Persian people. Of these rather elementary folk performances, a few evolved into higher artistic excellence, like *Ta'ziyeh* (passion play) and *Naqqali* (dramatic story-telling).

It was only in the first decades of the 19th century that Iranian diplomats and aristocrats became interested in Western theater. In the beginning, these men of power attended performances in the theater houses of England, Russia, France and other European countries, and European and Russian actors were invited to Iran to perform. Later, the translation of plays into Persian allowed Iranian actors to enter the world of theater. With the support of the court and the gradual weakening of the resistance of the clergy, western theater revolutionized the face of performance arts in Iran in a short while. From mid-19th century onwards, Persian playwrights emerged in the tradition of Western theater, culminating in the golden age of modern Persian drama in the second half of the 20th century in spite of the cultural ups and downs resulting from the 1975 revolution, the establishment of the Islamic Republic, and the 8-year war, with dramatists such as Bahram Beyzayi, Akbar Radi, Abbas Na'ibandian, Bijan Mofid and others. Women also entered the realm of drama, with notable dramatists such as Pari Saberi, Chista Yasrebi and Naghme Samini. Today in 2019, Persian drama contains various trends, from post-postmodern experimental texts to revivalist texts which look back to the ancient traditions.

This long and tumultuous history of Persian drama is still deeply understudied, with many significant Persian plays in need of various critical readings and re-readings. The present volume is but a tiny step in the road ahead. Hoping to inspire the enthusiasm of scholars from around the world to study this little-

explored field, this issue of *PLSJ* looks at Persian drama from several distinct aspect.

The volume opens with Siavash Rafiee Rad's original article, recounting the researcher's finding of the manuscript of a play by Majd Al-Din Mir Fakhraai in John Rylands Library which was previously unknown in the studies of this well-known poet. The article then offers an introduction and analysis of the new play. Interestingly, two of the researches that were accepted for this volume focus on the use of traditional eastern dramatic forms in contemporary theater productions in Iran. Javidshad and Anushiravani's article focuses on an adaptation of *Hamlet* staged in Tehran which uses the Iranian dramatic genre of *Naqqali*, and seeks to show how successfully it manages to deterritorialize both the source text and the host culture. Hadaegh and Saeed's article, on the other hand, studies the historical works of the significant Iranian director Ali Rafiee to show how the overarching visual aspect of these performances are related to the contemporary atmosphere in which they are produced. The researchers believe that this visual intensity is indebted to eastern performances such as Kabuki and Balinese, and is necessary to shock the audience into a new self-discovery.

The other article deals with a single text of contemporary Persian drama, with its main focus on the plays' treatment of language. The article by Haddadian and Mahmoodi-Bakhtiari is a linguistic analysis of conversational repair in a play by Akbar Radi, one of the greatest names in Persian drama, to show how the language of the play reflects the characteristics of real-life speech.

Our many thanks go to the scholars who helped us in the reviewing and editing of this issue. We can only hope that these studies light a little flame of curiosity in the hearts of the readers, to read more about Persian drama.

Guest Editor

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