

Afghanistan's Persian Literature in Transition

Creative Writing and War (2001–2021)

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Introduction

»When the war is over, literature can help us make sense of it all.« This is the title of an article about the Post-Conflict Literature, which »entails a self-conscious examination of literature and the discipline of literary studies, considering the ability of both to interrogate and explore the legacies of political conflict around the world.«¹

Considering this description, Afghanistan's literature in the last forty years of armed conflicts can be categorized into two groups: war literature and post-war literature. Many literary works belong to the war literature, thereby shaping war narratives by supporting or denouncing one side of the conflict. Only few of Afghanistan's literary works can be counted as post-conflict literature since the country's socio-political order dramatically reshuffled every 5–10 years within the last four decades. However, narrow gaps existed between each conflict which could provide opportunities for the creation of post-conflict literature that would investigate the past and redefine social phenomena shattered by the conflict.

Afghanistan's literature that emerged prior to the inception of a new political settlement in Afghanistan in 2001 can be viewed as war literature. All forms of literature before that were dominated by the resistance movement against the USSR's invasion. The predominant Resistance Literature was characterized by works which admired armed resistance, labelled as *jihad* or the Holy War. All works of this genre were created in the 1980s and the early 1990s. At least three main hubs for the Resistance Literature existed where poets and writers could actively write and publish their works: Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.

1 Matt McGuire, Senior lecturer in English literature at the Western Sydney University, in his article »When the War Is Over, Literature Can Help Us Make Sense of It All«, in: *The Conversation* (5. October 2014).

The breakout of the civil war in the mid-1990s pushed Resistance Literature to intense frustration and disappointment. Those elites who were writing against Afghanistan's Communist government and its supporter USSR unprecedentedly encountered brutal realities in Kabul where thousands of civilians were killed in street fights among mujahedin militia following the failure of power sharing. Those who wrote about the Holy War, confused by the new situation, either stopped writing epically structured poems and stories or started blaming their comrades. The famous poet 'Abdol Qahhār 'Āsi, for instance, returned to Kabul – a city in which he had published several books and wished to be 'freed' from the invasion – after a short residence in Iran.² In his last poetry collection *From the Island of Blood*³ and his memoir book *The Inception of an End*, 'Āsi acrimoniously criticized and condemned the mujahedin fighters who had been warmly welcomed by his poem *Welcome* on TV after the conquest of Kabul.⁴ Shortly after his repatriation, 'Āsi was killed by a rocket fired by the mujahedin on September 28, 1994.

The frustration, omnipresent in all fields of literature, was deepened and worsened since 1996 when the Taliban hardliners won the battle and controlled the country for more than five years, bringing poverty and oppression to the people. Those who supported war and jihad preferred to stay silent.

The deep frustration of the *Literature of War* provided enough space for an apolitical generation of creative writers, mostly teenagers and young writers. They focused on all social issues except war and jihad, such as migration, love, and everyday life. The new generation consciously refused idealist approaches toward literature and had a pragmatic view on everyday-life issues. They dramatically crossed popular social norms and addressed more personal, social, and vital topics. For instance, although migration seemed a taboo topic, the new generation of Afghanistan poets in exile began writing about the difficulties of being a refugee in Iran.

Post-Taliban Literature (2001-2009)

The post-Taliban literature did not necessarily lead to the kind of post-war literature that would have offered an insight into the war and an analysis of social destruction by looking back at the times of war, as Matt McGuire describes.⁵ Instead, the post-Taliban literature continued a trait which emerged during the 'frustration era' of the Resistance Literature: neglecting the past and moving forward. It seems that such

2 'Abdol Qahhār 'Āsi, »Az jazira-ye khun (marthiyya-hā-ye barāy-e kābol) (*From the Island of Blood [An Elegy for Kabul]*)«, Kabul 1992, p. 2.

3 Full title: *From the Island of Blood: An Elegy for Kabul*.

4 Mohammad Kāzem Kāzemi, »'Āsi dar irān«, in: *Kabul Nath* (1.10.2014).

5 McGuire, »When the War Is Over, Literature Can Help Us Make Sense of It All«.

behavior was rooted in the legacies of shame and stigma which remained from the civil war and the Taliban's oppression. Moreover, it could be argued that writers and poets enjoyed the new socio-political structure in which they were promised more freedom and a liberal atmosphere regarding creative writing.

The post-Taliban literature continued progressing and very quickly flourished without mentioning the war ruins. The Persian literature in Afghanistan was influenced by various factors within a short period of time:

- repatriation of poets and writers from Iran and Pakistan
- import of books, particularly literature ones
- increase in modern print companies
- increase in papers and weekly publications
- common cultural meetings and circles
- open political atmosphere and social optimism
- popularity of new formats such as modern poetry/new *ghazal*

Repatriation of Poets and Writers

As mentioned above, two main poles of Resistance Literature were situated outside of Afghanistan in Iran and Pakistan. After the collapse of the Taliban, many writers and poets gradually returned to Afghanistan. In Iran, numerous literature circles in the refugee-populated cities of Mashhad, Tehran, Qom, and Isfahan had been established. These circles were considerably active and held weekly meetings where the young generation could learn about modern and classic literature as well as story-writing techniques. In addition, the authors could share their weekly pieces with their fellows.

Peshawar, Pakistan's city populated by many Afghan refugees, was the hub of literature where poets and writers who were geographically close to Afghanistan could be inspired by their homeland issues and write and publish books on the matter. After the collapse of the Taliban in 2001, these groups of writers and poets returned immediately to Afghanistan and mostly settled in Kabul which was a massive ruin with little sparks of hope. The immediate repatriation of writers who shared experiences gained in exile dramatically shaped new literature.

Book Import to Afghanistan

Among trade goods imported mostly from neighboring countries to Afghanistan were also cultural products, particularly literary works. By 2005, at least one bookshop was opened in Kabul which was completely overloaded with Persian books

printed in Iran. 'Erfān Publication'⁶ was the major importer of Iranian books to Afghanistan. Before relocating to Kabul, the press had previously published a series of literature books of young poets who could not release their works in Iran, as Iranian press companies were not encouraged to invest in this field. The series published by 'Erfān, above all, introduced the Persian literature of Afghanistan to the Iranian audience.

The imported books – mostly written by Iranians, some by Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan – opened new opportunities for those who historically had limited access to cultural and creative works of other countries with a shared common language and cultural heritage. These books incorporated new techniques and up-to-date literary discussions of Afghanistan intelligentsia. Afghanistan literature – overshadowed by war and previously suffering from the state's monopole – embraced the trends as well as techniques and genres.

Modern Print Technology and Non-governmental Publishers

After the collapse of the Taliban, the lack of modern print technology presented a serious problem while international NGOs rushed to Kabul to run their administration. Moreover, political parties which were in and out of power wanted to have their own tribune in weekly or occasional publications. However, there were only few small, old printing machines with a capacity to only print limited copies. Private companies and non-governmental investors acknowledged the issue and imported modern, digital, high-quality printing machines, which freed Afghanistan's print industry from the long-term dependency on Pakistan and Iran. For instance, German print manufacturer Heidelberg established their office in Kabul in April 2003, one year later the company offered its training courses to local workers there. Heidelberg said: »[T]he company's mission in Afghanistan is to support post-war reconstruction in the country and build sales of printing machinery and consumables as well as training and services. The first order for presses already has been received.«⁷

The import of new print machinery to Afghanistan made the country relatively independent from Pakistan and Iran in print industry. The quality of print increased while the costs decreased, which positively affected the development of a printing industry in Afghanistan.

Prior to such a revolutionary development, the number of publishing houses in Afghanistan was considerably low. *Bayhaqi Publications*, affiliated with the Ministry

6 'Erfān Publication was the only Afghan Publication in Iran which was printing Afghanistan-related books. The company was based in Tehran and managed by Ibrahim Shariati Afghanistani.

7 OpenPR, »Heidelberg eröffnet Ausbildungszentrum in Kabul, Afghanistan«, in: *OpenPR* (1.1.2004).

of Information and Culture, was the only major publisher which was printing governmental documents as well as schoolbooks and similar products. However, since 2001, the number of private publishers in Afghanistan gradually increased. Interviews conducted with cultural actors familiar with book publication and online research on Afghanistan's book market showed that most of the publishing houses were centered in Kabul, and a few were locally active in other big cities like Mazar-e Sharif and Herat (see table 1).

Some non-governmental organizations active in the field of culture and literature also published books which were mainly distributed for free. Among them, PEN Afghanistan and Ārmānshahr (Utopia) Foundation were the most significant ones having published hundreds of literary works.

PEN Afghanistan was a PEN Centre of the PEN International⁸ and has published more than 200 books in different local languages. According to the organization's data, 80 titles were in Persian/Dari, 80 in Pashtu, and 40 in other languages including Uzbeki.⁹ The organization has primarily published books of the generation who grew up in the new socio-political era after the collapse of the Taliban in 2001 and who focused on creative writing. The publication of each book was accompanied by a reading ceremony held in the office of PEN Afghanistan in Kabul. Due to the lack of a comprehensive database, listing the works by gender and age seems impossible.

Another non-profit organization which published dozens of book titles was Ārmānshahr Foundation, a Kabul-based organization which was also active in the western city of Herat. It was a cultural center dedicated to human rights, democracy, rule of law, education, and women advocacy and has published more than 50 books in different formats including translations, interviews, poetry anthology, and first-pen writers.¹⁰ For instance, the foundation published the book *Caravan of One Thousand and One Poem for Afghanistan* in 2003, and ten years later the novel *Cacau* written by Gorge Amado in 2013. Thanks to Afghanistan's linguistic and cultural diversity, Ārmānshahr published the book *My Land*, a Pashtu short poetry anthology alongside the translations into Persian and English.¹¹

From a technical perspective, it would seem that the import of modern print technology fundamentally changed the situation by challenging the stark monopoly on publications, resulting in non-state publishers printing writers' works without interruption and censorship. The list of private publishing houses active in Kabul and other cities indicates how the domain of creative writing publication

8 PEN International, »Find Your Local Centre«, in: *PEN International* (2022).

9 R. Naqshbandi Naqshbandi, »Books Published by PEN Afghanistan«, in: personal communication by N. Nadim (April 2023).

10 Ārmānshahr, »Ārmānshahr Publishing«, in: *Open Asia* (2018).

11 Ārmānshahr, »Ārmānshahr Publishing«.

was diverse and decentralized. This openness can be viewed as a revolutionary phenomenon in the contemporary history of Afghanistan.

Increase in Weeklies and Magazines

New print facilities paved the way for weekly publications and magazines in Afghanistan, also located in the capital Kabul, although a slight number of local ones were also published in other big cities.

In the early 2000s, during the period before the rise of mass media and the internet, weeklies substantially influenced public opinion. People welcomed the weeklies as the symbol of freedom of speech by buying, reading, and discussing the current political issues. In Kabul, some weeklies such as *Haftanāmah-e Kābol*, *Bahār*, *Sadāy-e Mardom*, *Kelid*, *Morsal*, *Zanbel-e Gham*, as well as some monthly or occasional magazines were in demand. In addition to political notes and news, certain pages and columns of each publication were designated to literary content, mostly poetry.

For poets and writers, the weeklies were convenient platforms for sharing their works quickly and without any censorship or limitation. The partnership between the weekly papers and the writers affected Afghanistan's media language long-term. The terminology of journalism was gradually advanced by the writers and poets despite an initial resistance against new terms which could be perceived as Iranian words. Later, some radio and TV outlets recruited writers to improve the news language. *Tolo TV* was one of the pioneer broadcasters that recruited the most famous writer, Rahnaward Zaryāb, for the broadcasting language.

Literature Circles

Following the return of writers and poets and with the new socio-political relief after the Taliban, numerous literature circles emerged in the big cities of Kabul, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat. Demand was high enough to organize formal and informal weekly and daily meetings. For instance, in Mazar-e Sharif, *Halqa-ye Zolf-e Yār* (a literary circle called *Ringlet of the Beloved*¹²) was holding daily meetings in the yard of the Blue Mosque located in the center of the city. Younger writers and poets could share their new creative pieces and receive feedback from the older generation. Young boys aged 14–20 were predominant among the attendants, whereas female writers were absent from the daily meeting (see image 01). Young female writers and poets could participate in joint meetings which took place in official public locations, e. g., the Mawlānā Khasta Public Library (see images 02 and 03). Female poets in Balkh later constituted another association called the Partaw Culture House where some writ-

12 Halqa is an allusion here.

ers and poets such as Farangis Sawgand, Nilufar Langar, Sadā Soltāni, Hadia Ar-maghān, and Farkhonda Rajabi improved their literary skills.

Active literature meetings were also held in Herat where young poets and writers, who were affected by the cultural atmosphere beyond the border in Iran, could practice their creative writings. *Anjoman-e Adabi-ye Herat* was the most popular one where two generations of writers could assemble.

In Kabul, some cultural organizations were setting weekly meetings for poets and writers. In places such as PEN Afghanistan, Ārmānshahr Foundation, and later Dorr-e Dari creative writers could share their new literary pieces and receive feedback and reviews. Khān-e Adabeyyāt Afghanistan (Afghanistan's Literature House) initiated the *Kabul Nights* literature program in 2008.¹³

Political Openness and Social Optimism

In addition to the technical factors discussed above, social hope and optimism – irrigated by political openness in the frame of democracy, which was initiated and supervised by the West predominantly – influenced the configuration of literature. This characteristic associated with other elements mentioned above, such as print technology and the return of writers, mainly shaped the *Literature of Hope* in the post-Taliban Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's literature, which was historically under the state's direct surveillance, could never escape the political narratives. Literature and creative writing suffered either under censorship or tough ideological and socio-political situations. However, the post-Taliban period can be viewed as one in which writers did not feel compelled to engage in ideological battles.

Social optimism and political freedom resulted in a stronger presence of women in society. Female writers could gradually join literary meetings and share their pieces, a freedom which had mostly dissolved in time of war. Some female writers who were previously active in Iran and Pakistan, returned to Afghanistan and encouraged the young generation of female writers. For instance, Mahbouba Ibrahimī, famous for her classical Ghazal returned to Kabul in 2007 after decades of living in Iran. In the same year, Fariba Haidari, well-known for her modern poetry skills, moved from Tehran to Herat. Similarly, Khalida Forough who had published several poetry collections in Pakistan began teaching literature at the University of Kabul after her repatriation.

In short, social groups that were marginalized in the times of conflict could benefit from the newly developed socio-political freedom by being active members of the society and creating their own narratives. Particularly, the presence of women

13 Farkhar, »Farkhar«, in: *Farkhar Blog* (2013).

and young girls in the field of literature was an unprecedented achievement. Female creative writers were testing their talents in different genres including classical, modern poetry, novel, and similar.

New Techniques and *Amore*

All points discussed above significantly influenced the post-Taliban Persian literature of Afghanistan. The return of poets and writers from exile as well as the emergence of a new generation of creative writers dramatically bridged the armed conflicts era and the promising bright future. The books published in the first decade of the current millennium show how Afghanistan's writers were optimistic about the future of the country. As mentioned in the introduction, the works created within this timeframe cannot be categorized as post-war literature because creative writers were reluctant to review armed conflicts and shape new narratives, but rather preferred to focus on the present and future and creating their own fantasy on the ruins of war. It might not be an exaggeration to assert that all literary works, particularly romantic pieces created by the new generation, were merely a manifesto of a promising utopia.

For more clarification, a brief insight into the works of the new generation of poets is presented in the following. For example, Ibrahim Amini, born in 1987 in the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif, was one of the prominent young poets in the 2000s. He published his first poetry collection in 2007 under the title *Waḡti Hawā-ye Cheshm-e Tu Rā Meh Gerefteh Bud* (*When the Weather in Your Eyes was Misty*), in which he offers an absolutely romantic approach to creative writing. He preferred to use the neo-Ghazal form in his works which were distinguishable from popular classical Ghazal. Although rhyme and rhythm are principal in both forms, the neo-Ghazal has a less sophisticated language and uses slang and daily vocabulary. In addition, contrary to the classical Ghazal, neo-Ghazal structure develops a perspective based on personal and everyday-life experiences. The poet Reza Mohammadi cited Hādi Sa'īd Keyāsari, an Iranian poet: »Ibrahim Amini's poems were reminding Hossein Monzawi's works with the same essence of madness, romance, and bitterness, but normally still unprofessional«. ¹⁴ Hossein Monzawi (1946–2004) was a prominent neo-Ghazal poet in Iran, described as »one of the most innovative and talented contemporary poets, whose poems reflect personal feelings and many principles of Romanticism«. ¹⁵

14 Reza Mohammadi, »Ghazalsarāy-e 'Āsi-ye Balkh« (The Uprising Ghazal Poet from Balkh), in: *Jadid Online* (4.1.2012).

15 Zahra Taleblou, »The Language of Image in Hossein Monzawi's Romantic Ghazals«, in: *Rhetoric and Grammar Studies* 10.18 (April 2020–21), pp. 223–252 (223).

New techniques and romantic motives in Amini's poems could demonstrate the wide gap between the former Resistance literature mainstreams and the new dynamic approach. He mirrored everyday life elements and wrote about terrestrial love. For instance, he wrote to his beloved:

»But you pass this alley like wind
You don't care for me as if I am a piece of stone, clay or a wood stick
but you know, maybe I have come to your home
The dust you sweep from the carpet is me!«¹⁶

One year later, he published the second poetry collection, *Naweshta-am Ke Khat Bezani* (I Wrote so You Could Cross Out) with 42 pieces, very similar to the previous work in terms of theme and template. It is significant to note that the new generation of poets from Balkh was taking first steps in neo-Ghazal and could confidently and progressively develop after Afif Bākhtari (1962–2017), a poet from the older generation, accompanied and encouraged them to try new language forms without fright. He even began writing neo-Ghazal himself, distancing himself furtherly from his peers.¹⁷

In Kabul, another poet from the same generation of creative writers was testing new techniques in Ghazal. Kāwa Jobrān, born in 1984 in Kabul, published his first poetry collection *Aftāb Ta'til* (*Sun Slam*) in 2009. He did not directly review the civil war in his work even though he experienced it in his childhood. Instead, he wrote amorous poems, which, compared to Amini's works, seemed tough, bitter, and sorrowful.

Although his poems are relatively disillusioning, they seem like a dialogue between two lovers with emotional fluctuations and frequencies between sadness and love.

»Without you, life is difficult, but slowly
This too shall pass, and I will get used to your absence, Mariam!
I wished I could have stayed in love with you
but the fate of this man was a different one.«¹⁸

Regarding his poems being thematically bitter and anxious, Jāwid Farhād, critic, noted in a review that Jobrān's works could be the reflection of his real-life expe-

16 For the original Persian script see appendix, poem 1.

17 Afif Bākhtari, »Sang wa setāra (Stone and Star)«, in: *Afif Bakhtari Blog* (2017).

18 Kāwa Jobrān, *Āftāb ta'til*, Kabul: PEN Afghanistan 2009, p. 59. For the original Persian script see appendix, poem 2.

rience in the capital where insurgency and violence was growing.¹⁹ Furthermore, Sayed Asef Hossaini's long modern poems were, alike, characterized by a structure in which tough political issues merged with personal intimacy. Coinciding with the re-emergence of suicide bombings in Kabul in 2007, he noted in one of his rare classical poems:

»You don't need to feel obliged to stay with me, my love,
to put up with my miseries so patiently, my love.
I am prepared to live with hate and fear of blowing up;
But you, a delicate crystal cup – how could you be, my love?
[...].«²⁰

The love and *amore* motive could be traced in the works of female writers as well. Mariam Meetra, born in 1992 in Baghlan province, began her creative writing in the late 2000s. In her first poetry collection, *Zendagi Dar Hāsheya (Living on Margin)*, Meetra courageously wrote about love, traditionally a taboo topic for female writers. In the poem *Wind Is Masculine*, she complained about the restrictive traditions of Afghan society:

»I hide myself
behind seven curtains
from my brother's suspicious gaze
who thinks
wind is masculine and
kisses my hair.«²¹

Apart from the theme and in contrast to her male peers who were engaged with the classical template of Ghazal and later neo-Ghazal, Meetra wrote modern poems with powerful use of words and structures. It appears that modern poetry, which was not restricted to rhyme and rhythm, was more welcomed by female writers who could benefit from the simplicity of language and the structure of such a format to express their thoughts and feelings.

In line with Kabul and Balkh, in the western city of Herat that borders with Iran, some male poets also wrote neo-Ghazal. Ruhol'amin Amini, born in 1966, was

19 Jāwid Farhād, »Gapi bā yak tarānasorāy-e terurist (A Conversation with a Terrorist Song-writer)«, in: *Khorasan Zameen* (3.12.2012).

20 Hossaini (2007) as cited in Zuzanna Olszewska, »Ghazal« (ed. by David J. Constantine and Helen Constantine), in: *Transplants* (1.1.2010), p. 159. For the original Persian script see appendix, poem 3.

21 Mariam Meetra, *Zendagi dar hāsheya (Living on Margin)*, Kabul: Khorasanian Association 2013, p. 15. For the original Persian script see appendix, poem 4.

greatly interested in neo-Ghazal but had a slightly different style to that of Amini in Balkh and Jobrān in Kabul. In terms of language style, he was closer to Iranian neo-Ghazal poets like Hossein Monzawi and Mohammad Ali Bahmani. Ibrahim Amini and Jobrān, who did not experience the migration to Iran, were distinguishably using local terms and phrases without keeping the literary language all that sophisticated.

However, as Ruhol'amin Amini describes, »the first decade of the post-Taliban was very important because it was a time to test how to integrate new elements into poetry«. ²² The first decade of the 2000s was also critical for writers and novelists who wanted to advance and investigate new paths in creative writing. Although poetry books numerically dominated the list of literary publications, a series of novels and short stories was also published after the Taliban collapse in 2001. Rahnaward Zaryāb (1944–2020), appreciated as the guru of modern storytelling of Afghanistan, published his novel *Golnār-o Āyina* (*Golnar and the Mirror*) in 2002. It is considered a leading book in terms of structure and nonlinear narration, so that some critics perceive it as a magic realist novel. However, Saburollāh Seyāhsang, in his review of the novel, stated that the work »could be a short story but was condemned to be a novel«, had it not been »overloaded by historical incidents«. ²³

However, many young novelists regarded the book as a pioneer masterpiece of storytelling and followed its style in their writings. The simplicity of language, imaginary scenes, and nonlinear narration inspired the new generation of writers. Although Zaryab wrote several books after *Golnār-o Āyina*, yet it remained a principal masterpiece, a work full of sentimental love dialogues between ordinary people, without complexities or sophisticated language.

Following Zaryab's novel, a dozen of short stories and novels written by young writers were published in Afghanistan and were well received. *Gorg-hā-ye Dawandar* (*The Wolves of Dowundar*) by Seyāmak Herawi, *Bādigārd* (*Bodyguard*) by Habib Sādeqi, *Shekar-e Ahu* (*Deer Hunting*) by Homayrā Qāderi, *Gomnāmi* (*Anonymity*) by Taqi Bakhtyāri, *Luhārān* by Kāwa Jobrān, *Nāshād* (*Unhappy*) by Mohammad Hossain Mohammadi, *Rāh-o Chāh* (*Road and Well*) by Khālid Nawisā, *Gelimbāf* (*The Kelim Weaver*) by Taqi Wāhedī are some of them.

In short, the literature of the first post-Taliban decade was a *Literature of Hope* and optimism that concentrated on social and personal themes rather than ideological ones. The *Literature of Hope* included personal intimacy, social issues, new literary techniques, and optimism, and did not suffer from censorship. Hence, it could considerably distance itself from traditional Islamic moral codes such as the appreciation of Jihad and martyrdom.

22 Ruhol'amin Amini, Television reportage »Tamās-hā«, in: *BBC Persian* (April 2023).

23 Saburollāh Seyāhsang, »Āyina-ye dar barābar-e golnār-o āyina (A Critique on Golnar-o Āyina)«, in: *Zendagi* (4.4.2003).

The *Literature of Hope* encompassed the young generation of women and men who experimented with new techniques and expressed their personal and romantic experiences. That was the manifesto of a promising utopia.

The Literature of War (2009–2021)

The second presidential elections in Afghanistan in 2009 can be considered as a turning point in the society that was going to leave behind the decades-long armed conflicts. The election – accompanied by mass corruption and fraud – led to social disappointment,²⁴ which resulted in the intensification of suicide attacks in big cities. Consequently, the glorious era of the *Literature of Hope* ended, and Afghanistan's *Literature of War* slowly emerged.

As an example, Jobrān's second book of poetry barely indicated how Afghanistan's society and literature were adjusting to a new situation. The book *Tarāna wa Terurist* (*Lyrics and Terrorist*) describes a metaphorical battlefield between art and terror, construction and destruction. The title was a metaphor for the confrontation of writers and terrorists in Kabul's everyday life. In one of the poems, Jobrān wrote to his beloved:

»I will bring a bunch of flowers as souvenirs
If I survive from suicide attacks.«²⁵

In addition to the elements discussed earlier, some major socio-political phenomena which strongly affected and characterized the literature after 2009 are listed below and discussed in the following subsections:

- intensification of war and suicide attacks
- extension of public sphere; café culture and digital platforms
- literature tendencies shifting to politics and power
- feminist literature
- desacralization of text

24 J. Berger/K. Connolly, »Evidence of Fraud as Hamid Karzai Passes Threshold in Afghan Poll«, in: *The Guardian* (8.9.2009).

25 Kāwa Jobrān, *Tarāna wa terurist*, Kabul: Amīrī 2012, p. 38. For the original Persian script see appendix, poem 5.

Intensification of War and Violence

The corrupted election resulted in an increase in violence and insecurity in Afghanistan. The state lost people's trust, and rival political groups challenged the legitimacy of the new government. Hamid Karzai, the winner of the game, was leading the country for five more years and wanted to keep the power or pass it to safe hands after 13 years.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that, above all, the Taliban insurgents benefited from the political disorder and intensified their brutal attacks to gain military achievements on the ground before 2014 when the international military mission was supposed to be terminated. The Taliban saw the deadline as the time of an absolute triumph.

Two scholars, Nils Weidmann and Michael Callen, have investigated the link between the election fraud and the rise of violence in Afghanistan. They note:

»[D]isaggregated violence and election results data from the 2009 Afghanistan presidential election provide empirical results consistent with the theory [...] that the relationship between violence and fraud follows an inverted U-shape and that loyalty networks of both incumbent and challenger react differently to the security situation on the ground.«²⁶

Therefore, in terms of security and political tension, Afghanistan was experiencing the most critical phase. The presidential palace – having lost its legitimacy in the election – tried to fill in the gap of social mistrust which was created by the companionship of cultural elites who had previously written about a promising utopia. This connection was amplified after 2014 in Ashraf Ghani's administration.

Violence and insecurity were mirrored in the works of writers and poets just as hope and optimism had been in the previous decade. Disappointment, ire, and frustration could be found in all new creative works. In a love piece, Mariam Meetra metaphorically called Kabul the saddest capital in the world.²⁷

»I'm standing on a street in the capital
It's raining
Kabul is the saddest city in the world
when I cry in her arms
I remember you
who left the city years ago.

26 N. B. Weidmann/M. Callen, »Violence and Election Fraud: Evidence from Afghanistan«, in: *British Journal of Political Science* 43.1 (January 2012), pp. 53–75 (p. 53).

27 Mariam Meetra, »Kābol ghamgintarin shahr-e jahān ast« (Kabul Is the Saddest City in the World), in: *Weiter Schreiben.jetzt* (25.4.2023).

I feel as if this city isn't my motherland
 where I was born,
 so that I fear from its streets so much
 so that its trees do not take my loneliness seriously
 Tell me,
 Is the world still round?
 Is the world still the wideness of a street in the capital
 where no one can rest on its pavement?²⁸

Politization of Literature

As mentioned above, due to political failure and legitimacy crisis, the state sought a dynamic fellowship with cultural elites, especially poets and writers, to fill in the gap which was widened between the state and people. Such a cooperation seemed to be very direct and benefit-oriented. For instance, Mostafā Hazāra wrote a poem about General Abdul Raziq Achakzai, the Pashtun-ethnic Chief of Police in Kandahar Province who was killed by the Taliban on October 18, 2018.²⁹ Hazāra claimed that he was paid for the poem by the government. Indeed, writing a poem about a Pashtun general by a Hazāra poet could be viewed as a symbolic act of national solidarity that the state was making attempts to claim.

The interaction between the cultural elites and the power center was growing as security was deteriorating and political legitimacy was being increasingly challenged. For instance, on April 11, 2016, the office of Marshal Abdul Rashid Dostum, at the time Vice President and from the Uzbek ethnic group, organized an International Conference on 'Ali Shir Nawāyi, a Turkic-language poet. It was not merely a literary or cultural meeting but symbolically a platform for practicing power balance between Ashraf Ghani, the Pashtun president, and his deputy. It was the first time that an Uzbek could win the position in the Pashtun-dominated power structure in the contemporary history of Afghanistan. Ghani, who was challenged by other ethno-political groups, wanted to strongly affirm his coalition with the Uzbeks. At the inauguration ceremony, he remarked: »[O]ur commitment is the equality between one Afghan to another Afghan (citizen), and each language to another language.«³⁰ Marshal Dostum, in turn, spoke in a more pragmatic way and rather relevant to Afghanistan's politics: »Remember, you could not cross the streets near the

28 For the original Persian script see appendix, poem 6.

29 Mostafā Hazāra, »Jenrāl! Anduh-e tu boghzi shuda dar sina; sugnāma-ye barāy-e jenrāl raz-zāq (General! The mourning for you has become a lump in throat; an obituary for General Razak)«, in: *Shia News Association* (18.10.2018).

30 BBC, »Bozorgdāsht-e alishir nawāyi az mashāhir-e turktabār dar kākh-e reyāsātjomhuri-ye Afghānestān (Commemoration of Alishir Nawai, One of the Celebrities of Turkish Origin, in the Presidential Palace of Afghanistan)«, in: *BBC* (11.4.2016).

Presidential Palace [then]; we should appreciate this day. Mr. Doctor (Ghani), I assure you that we are honest people who do not accept coercion [and oppression].»³¹

The ethno-lingual conflict was not a new issue in Afghanistan's politics, however, it worsened when the central state, dominated by Pashtu-speaking Pashtuns, on the one hand followed an expansion strategy, and on the other hand had to create coalitions in the framework of a so-called democratic government. In this regard, there were at least three language-oriented fractions: a) Persian-speaking Hazāras and Tajiks, b) Turkic-speaking Uzbeks and Turkmens, and c) Pashtu-speaking Pashtuns. Other minor languages out of 45 local languages³² had to integrate themselves between one of the poles.

However, the politicization of literature was not only confined to the deal between Afghanistan's government and writers and poets, but was also embodied in the Iranian foreign policy. Although many Afghan poets and writers had been living in Iran for decades, Afghanistan's literature was not an object of interest for Iran before the 9/11 events of 2001. After the Western military intervention in Afghanistan, Iran invested in the cultural and political fields to keep its hegemony over the Persian speaking population in Afghanistan.

It can be argued that Iran invested in the Afghanistan cultural elites for two reasons: a) to keep its hegemony and the monopole of Persian Literature and b) to have leverage in Afghanistan politics.

Iran created a platform to penetrate the young elite's circles in Afghanistan through literature meetings. The cultural office of the Embassy of Iran was strongly involved in working with writers and poets. Moreover, they invited Afghan poets to visit Sayed Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the last decade.³³ The only Iranian scholar of literature, Dr. Yaman Hekmat, started working as a lecturer at the university of Payam-e Noor in 2012 and later taught at the Faculty of Dari (Persian) Literature at Kabul University.³⁴

Surely, different reasons existed for the expansion of the socio-cultural segregation, such as the turbulent ethno-lingual clashes. As a result, the Pan-Persian term of ›Cultural Iran‹ was coined in the field of domestic politics, referring to the assumption that the identity of Persian speakers in the region belongs to a large common cultural heritage shared between Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. This led to the polarization of Persian language and parts of the society, and it increased Iran's

31 BBC, »Bozorgdāsh-t-e Alishir Nawāyi«.

32 Nigel J. R. Allan, »Defining Place and People in Afghanistan«, in: *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* 42.8 (December 2001), pp. 545–560.

33 Farsnews, »Hozur-e shā'erān-e Afghānestān dar mahzar-e rahbar-e mo'azzam-e enqelāb« (Afghanistan Poets Visit the Supreme Leader of the Revolution)«, in: *Fars News* (13.7.2014).

34 Isna, »Didār wa goftgu bā yāmān hekmat (Meeting and conversation with Yāmān Hekmat)«, in: *Iranian Students' News Agency* (19.11.2019).

dominance over Afghanistan's Persian literature. Najib Bārwar, for instance, became famous for a poem he wrote about the concept of ›Cultural Iran‹:³⁵

»Wherever they draw a border, make a bridge
And talk about Tehran, Samarkand, and Sar-e Pol
[...]
A handful of soil from Bokhara and clay from Nishapur
Bring together to construct the ruins of Kabul.«³⁶

The language in Bārwar's poems is as combative and argumentative as the Resistance Literature against the Soviet Union's invasion. Bārwar used similar language, rhythm, and format against those who assumedly wanted to distinguish Dari from Persian and politically isolate Persian speakers in Afghanistan.

The socio-political segregation and disaggregation can be viewed as the result of political failure and the government's Pashtun-oriented policies, which were amplified after 2014 by Ashraf Ghani. The rise in insurgents' attacks on civilians and the weakness of the political establishment to cease the fire resulted in increased ethnolinguistic conflicts in Afghanistan. At the same time, Iran was exploring ways to expand its cultural hegemony over Afghanistan. Through dynamic collaboration, Iran constructed tight connections with Afghan literary elites and praised those poets who were writing for the Cultural Iran, regardless of the quality of the works.

Consequently, the tendency of literature elites to political power gradually led to the creation of a large number of low-quality works which could be considered somewhat anxious responses to political fluctuations, and they lacked appropriate literary aesthetic, epistemic capacity, and some social values in terms of social cohesion and solidarity.

Public Sphere: Café Culture and Digital Platforms

In the 2010s, the expansion of the public sphere in Kabul and other big cities dramatically promoted social changes in the country. The young post-Taliban generation began experiencing a new lifestyle, a part of which was the Café Culture. Although an exact number of cafés is unknown, in Kabul, for instance, within a short time, numerous cafés emerged, especially in the western part of the Capital, which hosted young elites including creative writers. For instance, Taj Begom café-restaurant in the Pol-e Sorkh district was a lounge for evening meetings of young politicians, writers, poets, journalist, and activists.

35 Najib Bārwar, *Nām-e dīgar-e kābol (The other Name of Kabul)*, Kabul: Barg Publications 2014, p. 9.

36 For the original Persian script see appendix, poem 7.

Based on Jürgen Habermas, cafés became places where people could talk about everyday life issues without any restrictions. Habermas said:

»By public sphere we mean, first of all, a realm of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed. Access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens. Citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion.«³⁷

Formerly, common places such as mosques and even cultural centers were under control of certain groups. The Café Culture brought about change and pluralized cultural hubs so that readings took place in different cafés rather than exclusively in two or three places.

In line with the expansion of physical public places in Afghanistan, the internet provided a virtual space for social and cultural debates. Digital platforms can be defined as a public sphere where people can communicate and discuss common topics. »*The Transformation of Public Sphere* (Habermas, 1989) traced the history of the phenomenon from the eighteenth-century salons to the contemporary physical or virtual spaces where citizens partake in conversation regarding the common good.«³⁸

The introduction of 3G internet service in 2012 played such a significant role in the country that, until 2018, more than 10 percent of the population was online and partook in social media activities, comparing to 0.1 percent in 2004.³⁹ From the beginning, Facebook was the most popular social media platform in Afghanistan. The number of Afghanistan-based users reached 2,6 million in 2016, out of which 86 percent were male and 14 percent female.⁴⁰

However, the extension of the public sphere in both physical and virtual spaces provided writers with an unprecedented opportunity to share their works and benefit from professional exchanges. Moreover, the internet facilitated more accessibility to new cultural resources beyond the borders so that many digital platforms enabled young writers and poets to have direct access to new literary works written by Iranians and get familiar with up-to-date techniques and language changes.

37 Ari Adut, »A Theory of the Public Sphere«, in: *Sociological Theory* 30.4 (December 2012), pp. 238–262 (p. 239).

38 Adut, »A Theory of the Public Sphere«.

39 Sayed Asef Hossaini, »How Social Media Is Changing Afghan Society«, in: *Heinrich Boell Foundation* (14.2.2018). In January 2023, Afghanistan was home to 3.15 million social media users, and 26.95 million cellular mobile connections were active in Afghanistan in early 2023. Cf. S. Kemp, »Digital 2023: Afghanistan«, in: *datareportal* (13.2.2023).

40 Hossaini, »How Social Media Is Changing Afghan Society«.

Flourishing Feminist Literature: Talking about Womens Issues

It is significant to note that women's literature developed in Afghanistan in the second decade of the 21st century. In the first decade, female writers were reluctant to express their thoughts. Although there might be various socio-political reasons behind the phenomenon, the most important one is arguably the fact that women were still facing traditional restrictions, even though the Taliban regime had collapsed. Women of the cultural elite were particularly in danger if they joined public events. For instance, two young female presenters were killed in Kabul: Shaymā Rezāyi, the presenter of *Tolo TV*, was killed in May 2005, and Shakibā Sānga Āmāj, the presenter of *Shemshad* private TV, was killed in June 2007.

Hence, it can be argued that in the early years after the collapse of the Taliban regime, women were still restricted by harsh moral codes derived from tradition and religion. As a result, they preferred to take only cautious steps in their social life.

However, in the 2010s, female writers gradually secured their presence in public, which was very substantial for the flourishing feminist literature. In addition to the reason noted above, there were at least two more factors that affected the configuration of feminist literature in Afghanistan: a) the return of female writers from other countries, especially from Iran, and b) the emergence of Generation Z in Afghanistan.⁴¹

Despite the increasing insecurity in the country, many Afghan refugees who did not return to Afghanistan in the 2000s out of fear did return in the 2010s, and, as a result, the population of Kabul and other big cities drastically grew. The repatriation of female writers and their presence in literary events challenged the male-dominated society where a lack of serious discussions of women issues was prevalent. By writing for numerous digital and print magazines, female writers participated in the up-to-date feminist debates. In addition, they shared their literary experiences regarding form and technique with their peers in Afghanistan. For instance, Basigol Sharifi began writing critiques of women's works. In her article *Taboo Breach of the Works of Female Poets in Afghanistan* she started a new tradition of ›Women for Women Critique‹. She investigated how female poets challenged traditional taboo terms and concepts in Afghanistan. Moreover, Sharifi discussed how female writers could liberate their poems from restricted classical formats, characteristic of masculinity and patriarchy. She noted:

»Patriarchy in the eastern society (meant Iran and Afghanistan), has principally influenced the form of poetry and made it masculine. The firmness and certainty

41 »Generation Z« refers to the generation born between 1997–2012, following millennials. This generation »has been raised on the internet and social media«, cf. A. Meola, »Generation Z News: Latest Characteristics, Research, and Facts«, in: *Insider Intelligence* (1.1.2023).

in the classical formats like Ghazal and Masnavi are derived from this characteristic. This is a masculine characteristic in poetry that conveys its own specific aesthetic [...].⁴²

Hence, it can be argued that for this reason female creative writers used modern formats which lacked rhythm and rhyme restrictions.

Moreover, girls from the Generation Z who were born or grew up after the Taliban regime, and experienced a new western-oriented lifestyle greatly influenced the development of feminist literature. Unlike the former generation, they were less cautious in breaching social taboos of creative writing. For example, the works of Tamannā Mehrzād (born 1998), Mazdā Mehrgān (born 1999), and Lima Āfshid (born 1996) express a strong radical feminist approach toward creative writing. For instance, Lima Afshid portrayed in one of her poems a female combatant who was fighting between fear and hope, against »a city which was occupied by criminals«:

»Oh, Mrs. commandant, don't lose the war
even though, chance was not on your side, this time
order your exhausted soldiers
to retreat, oh girl
[...]
Take control of your life
and destroy its coldness
your eyes are so captivating!
and your body is itself a nuclear bomb.«⁴³

The Gen Z female writers enjoyed all benefits including physical and virtual public presence, accessibility to new literature, a conventional education etc., which assisted them in remarkably enhancing the quality of their works.

There were countless stunning feminist pieces in the works of Sadā Soltāni, Fatema Rushan, Mariam Meetra, Karima Shabrang, Tamannā Mehrzād, Mozhgān Farāmanesh, Mahtāb Sāhel, Zahrā Suresrāfīl, Mārāl Tāheri, Mazdā Mehrgān, Shamim Forutan, and many others.

It must be noted that in the 2010s, few novels which could be characterized as feminist works were written. Nāhid Mehrgān's novel *Bogzar Barāyat Benawisam* (*Let Me Write to You*) was the story of two teenage girls who suffered bitter fate caused by forced marriages.

42 Basigol Sharifi, »Negāhi ba tābushekani-ye she'r-e mo'āser-e zanān-e Afghānistān (A Look at the Taboo Breach in Works of Female Poets of Afghanistan)«, in: *Nimrokh* (10.12.2018).

43 Āfshid as cited in 'Ādela Ādhin, »Lima Āfshid. shā'eri ke shahrash dar inhisār-e jāni-hāst (Lima Āfshid. A Poet Whose City Is Exclusively Owned by the Criminals)«, in: *Nimrokh Media* (20.10.2021). For the original Persian script see appendix, poem 8.

Khosraw Māni's novel *Khāb-bidāri-ye Haft Zan* (*The Hypnagogia of Seven Women*) narrates the stories of a group of elite women in a utopian Kabul and their reactions to the lynching of an innocent woman in the capital in daylight. In the article *The Embodiment of Utopia from the Depth of Dystopia; a Review on the Hypnagogia of Seven Women*, Zahra Mousavi, critic, considers the novel a feminist piece of work created by a man, an opinion shared by some other critics as well, even though some believe that the author was not fully convincing to discover psychological characteristics of women and re-create them in his novel's female personages. However, Mousavi notes:

»In his work, Mani is the narrator of women's life in a utopia (peaceful Kabul). He is talking about those women who are ›self-sufficient‹, high-flying, independent and dynamic. The book construes a world which is impossible and inaccessible, and a costly taboo for women who are captive in the circle of superstitions, darkness, and dependency in today's Kabul.«⁴⁴

Desacralization of Text

In the 2010s, Afghanistan's Persian literature was no longer as conservative as it was during the resistance movement against the Soviet invasion in the 1980s or even in the 2000s. The young generation of creative writers that emerged in the second decade radically challenged all conventional moral codes and those traditional and religious concepts which, from their perspective, were responsible for a four-decade long conflict in the country. Young writers and poets not only criticized the Taliban but also those who were responsible for the society's collapse. For instance, Zobair Rezwan boldly named his poetry book *You are Beautiful like Kabul before the Jihad War*, which challenged the holiness of Jihad that glorified the mojahedin who fought against the Soviet Union and were currently in power.

After the presidential elections in 2014 which were accompanied by »wide systemic electoral fraud«,⁴⁵ Afghanistan's people were confronted with unmeasurable brutality of the Taliban fighters on the one hand, and wide-spread corruption in the government of the Islamic Republic on the other. The disappointment and frustration of the cultural elites concerning the situation moved beyond all socio-political establishments. Creative writers' orthodox approach toward devaluation of religious concepts can be viewed as a counter-narrative against the mainstream narrative of bloodshed and violence between the Islamic militant group and the Islamic corrupt state.

44 Zahrā Mousavi, »Tajassod-e yutopeyā; az a'māq-e destupeyā: Makthi bar khābidari-ye haft zan« (*The Embodiment of Utopia, from the Depths of Dystopia: a Pause on the Hypnagogia of Seven Women*)«, in: *Nebesth* (15.9.2018).

45 J. Goldstein, »E. U. Confirms Wide Fraud in Afghan Presidential Runoff Election«, in: *The New York Times* (16.12.2014).

Ramin Mazhar's famous *Masnavi* poem can be considered a manifesto of such a challenging state of affairs. Mazhar wrote the amorous poem after his friend, Samim Faramarz, a 28-year-old journalist, was killed by a Taliban suicide attacker in 2018. Some phrases of his monolog with his beloved are as below:

»Every step, every destination, I love you.
To spite the murderous traditions, I love you.
You are pious, your kisses are your prayer.
You are different, your kisses are your protest.
You are not afraid of love, of hope, of tomorrow.
I kiss you amid the Taliban, you are not afraid!«⁴⁶

»I kiss you in the corner of the mosque, and you don't tremble
In the midst of the wild scent of elder, you don't tremble
[...]
I kiss you amid anger and mourning.
You kiss me in the crowd of suicide attackers.
You kiss me in the mourning gatherings.
I kiss you to spite the killer Fatwas.«⁴⁷

Because of the lack of formal censorship in Afghanistan, a similar desacralization approach to text could be observed in the literary works of some other poets and writers, such as Amān Poyāmak, Mazdā Mehrġān, Hārūn Behyār, Ikrām Basir, Rāmin Arabnezhād, Ahmad Behrād, Mehdi Sarbāz, Bahrām Himā, Zobayr Rezwān, and others.

Moreover, such a development can be similarly traced in a number of story books. For instance, Nāhid Mehrġān uses in her novel sexual descriptions which were forbidden according to social and religious moral codes, such as sexual phrases that describe how women and girls were verbally abused even in their own private sphere in Afghanistan's society:

»Elnaz raised her left hand and showed the scars and in an aggressive tone said: you wanted to see this? after he f*cked me, he punched my wrist to break the bangles. His tone reminds me of your uncle's voice when he threatens me: do you do what I say or I come and f*ck your p*ssy?«⁴⁸

46 M. Mashal/F. Faizi, »A Valentine in Uncertain Times: ›I Kiss You Amid the Taliban«, in: *The New York Times* (14.2.2019).

47 For the original Persian script see appendix, poem 9.

48 Nāhid Mehrġān, *Let Me Write to You*, Hamburg: Nebesht Press 2017, p. 118.

Similarly, Khosraw Māni incorporates taboo phrases and concepts in his novel. For example, he described how a female character masturbated or slept with another woman for the first time.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to briefly investigate the development of Persian literature in Afghanistan from the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001 until the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2021. Afghanistan's literature, which was historically affected by war, focused on new social issues in the 2000s and explored new themes as well as literary forms and techniques, before returning again to the *Literature of War* in the 2010s due to the increase in insecurity and political failure.

This article discussed how young writers and poets, particularly of the Generation Z, were able to breach taboos and move beyond the borders of tradition and religion to construct their own secular and desacralized narratives.

The unprecedented development of literature in these two decades could be seen as revolutionary in the contemporary history of Afghanistan's literature, during which numerous literary books were published without censorship, and some genres like film script writing and satire writing flourished. Moreover, some remarkable works like the philosophical-oriented story of *Watanhā-ye Ādam* (*Human Homelands*), written by Naqib Arwin, challenged the concept of life and death, morality, and violence in time of war.

It must be noted that this research lacked access to organized and up to date information such as the rate of publications, books etc. due to the absence of databases. Hence, this article may be used as a methodological framework and basis for more investigative and comprehensive research.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the ›golden era‹ of Afghanistan's literature was not limited to Persian language. Other local languages like Pashtu and Uzbeki advanced and flourished as well, and their literature requires separate extensive studies.

Appendix

Table 1: The number of publishers by cities.

Kabul	Mazar-e Sharif	Herat
1) Amiri	1) Barg	1) Ān
2) Ārmānshahr Foundation	2) Ofoq-e Fardā	2) Ahrāri
3) 'Āzem	3) Thaqāfat	3) Fāzeli
4) Bayhaqi		4) Javān
5) Bonyād-e Andishah		5) Mo' meni
6) Budā		6) Qods
7) Dāneshgāh		
8) 'Erfān		
9) 'Eqra'		
10) Hamidi		
11) Eqbāl		
12) Kāteb		
13) Khāwar		
14) Khayyām		
15) Maqsudi		
16) Mostaqbal		
17) No' māni		
18) Negār		
19) Nawisā		
20) Parand		
21) PEN Afghanistan		
22) Sa'id		
23) Salāmat		
24) Tāk		
25) Tamaddon-e Sharq		
26) Wāzha		
27) Zaryāb		

Poems in Original Persian Script

Poem 1

اما به سان باد از این کوچه می‌روی
ما را خیال سنگ و گل و چوب می‌کنی
شاید منم که آمده‌ام خانه شما
آن گرد و خاک فرش که جاروب می‌کنی.

Poem 2

بدونت زنده‌گی سخت است می‌دانم، ولی کم‌کم
زمان تغییر خواهد کرد، عادت می‌کنم، مریم!
دل‌م می‌خواست عمری در کنارت عاشقت باشم
و لیکن چیز دیگر بود در تقدیر این آدم.

Poem 3

دیگر لزومی ندارد پیشم بمانی عزیزم
با غصه هایم بسازی با مهر بانی عزیزم
من می‌توانم بمانم با انفجار و تنفر
اما تو جامی، بلوری، کی می‌توانی عزیزم؟!

Poem 4

از نگاه مشکوک برادرم
در لای هفت پرده
پنهان می‌شوم
که فکر می‌کند
باد مذکر است
و گیسوان مرا
می‌بوسد.

Poem 5

یک شاخه گل برایت سوغات خواهم آورد
آن هم اگر نمردم از دست انتحاری.

Poem 6

کنار خیابانی ایستاده‌ام در پایتخت
باران می‌بارد
کابل، غمگین‌ترین شهر جهان است
وقتی در آغوشش می‌گیریم
تو را به خاطر می‌آورم
که سال‌هاست از این‌جا رفته‌یی
انگار این شهر
زادگاه مادری‌ام نیست
که این‌قدر از خیابان‌هایش می‌ترسم
که درخت‌هایش تنهایی‌ام را جدی نمی‌گیرند
به من بگو
جهان هنوز دایره‌یی‌ست؟
جهان مساحت خیابانی‌ست در پایتخت؟
که نمی‌شود روی سنگفرش‌هایش دراز بکشی.

Poem 7

هرکجا مرز کشیدند، شما پل بزنید
حرف تهران و سمرقند و سرپل بزنید
[...]
مشتی از خاک بخارا و گل از نیشابور
با هم آرید و به مخروبه کابل بزنید.

Poem 8

بانو فرمانده، شکست نخور
شانس این بار با تو دشمن بود
جان ته مانده سپاهت را
بده فرمان پسر روی دختر
[...]
بر سر زندگی فرود آی و
منهدم کن وجود سردش را
چشم‌هایت سگان هار استند
بدنت بمب هستوی دختر.

Poem 9

دم به دم و منزل به منزل دوستت دارم
بر ضد سنت‌های قاتل دوستت دارم
تو مومن استی و نمازت بوسه‌هایت است
تو فرق داری، اعتراضت بوسه‌هایت است
از عشق، از امید، از فردا نمی‌ترسی
می‌بوسمت در بین طالب‌ها نمی‌ترسی
می‌بوسمت در گوشه‌ی مسجد نمی‌لرزی
در بین عطر وحشی سنجد... نمی‌لرزی
[...]
می‌بوسمت در بین بغض و سوگواری‌ها
می‌بوسی‌ام در دار و گیر انتحاری‌ها
می‌بوسی‌ام در سوگواری‌ها و محفل‌ها
می‌بوسمت بر ضد فتواهای قاتل‌ها.

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