

AMY MOTLAGH and LAETTITIA NANQUETTE

Translations between center and periphery: from Iran to the West

This discussion came out of a roundtable organized by Amy Motlagh and Laetitia Nanquette at the 2016 Annual Convention of the Modern Language Association in Austin, Texas. The participants were Michael Beard (University of North Dakota), Nasrin Rahimieh (University of California, Irvine), Kamran Rastegar (Tufts University), Esmail Haddadian-Moghaddam (University of Leuven) and Laetitia Nanquette (University of New South Wales). Amy Motlagh (The American University in Cairo) contributed in writing during the course of 2016.

Amy and Laetitia: *Why has there been, historically and in the contemporary world, so much interest in classical Persian texts and so little in the work of the twentieth century? There are countless translations of Rumi, for example, while some of Iran's most noted modern writers have not yet been fully translated. Is this a legacy of colonial-era translation or are there other politics at work?*

Kamran: It seems to me that there is likely a confluence of factors that produce this bias for classical Persian literature among Anglophone readers. The colonial and Enlightenment legacy does loom reasonably large even today, and this legacy is in part formed by the particular role of the Aryanist school of European thought—the civilizational theory that traces the notion of “Europe” to Iranian antiquity (as opposed to the Hebraist school that sites Europe’s origins in the Biblical Hebraic tradition). This is in part why Enlightenment thinkers from Goethe to Herder to Emerson were so interested in classical Persian literature—even though, of course, the Persian “classical” period was many centuries after the end of antiquity. Arabic, in comparison, despite a bewilderingly rich literary canon, suffers from a lack of interest in the colonial/Enlightenment period other than the abundant interest in *Alf Layla wa Layla* (which has its own origins). There are in fact few to no translations of canonical Arabic works by the major classical authors in that period, be they Abu Nawwas, al-Ma’arri or al-Mutannabi—compare that with the multitude of translations of classical Persian poetry into English in the 19th and early twentieth century. The Aryanist trend (memories of which we today repress because of its role in the development of Nazi ideology) was truly anti-Semitic in not only disavowing the Hebraic origins of “the West” but also displayed a racist disregard of Arabic culture, and to that end used Persian as an Aryan foil against both Jews and Arabs. Raymond Schwab’s *The Oriental Renaissance* documents this exquisitely, and sadly most of this

is today forgotten, not least by Iranians who too often attempt to resurrect the racism of Aryanism as part of nationalist cultural politics. In fact, when viewing our present circumstances against those of the colonial period, there is really not a comparable current interest in classical Persian literature other than the Coleman Barks/Rumi phenomenon, which thrives in part by purporting to offer an accessible route into “Sufi” mysticism—a phenomenon with its own origins and problems. The decline in interest in classical Persian literature tracks well with the West’s disavowal of the Aryanist myth that was of immense popularity up until the Second World War. Interestingly this period—the mid-20th century—is when Arabic literary translation comes into its own, and when a number of mostly British orientalists such as Arberry and Gibb. When thinking of what is presently popular, it’s interesting that Molavi (as Rumi is popularly known in Iran) was not of very significant interest in the West in the 19th century, and yet is the most popular Persian poet in translation today.

So the answer to this question is not a simple one, yet if we were to generalize we would have to accept a continuity between the colonial discourse of the past and the present neoliberal global order, a cultural logic that presumes a value that classical literature is meant to have which is not accorded to works of the modern period. Modern literature is almost only of interest for current ethnographic and geopolitical ends, and this is why during the Bush administration Azar Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran* quickly became the best-selling work in English by a modern Iranian author, and yet now no one seems to read that book anymore.

Amy and Laetitia: *We tend to consider translation a sign of a national literature’s prestige and its absence as a signal that the literature is somehow deficient in the world system. Is there any perspective from which one could view the lack of translation of modern works a “good” thing? Why would it be a problem not to have a lot of translations? Why is there anxiety about a “lack” of translations?*

Nasrin: The concern about the paucity of translations of Persian literature into English resonates deeply in the contemporary Persian literary scene. I have heard it echoed in interviews and discussions with Iranian writers and I am frequently contacted by individuals eager to find translators for works they cannot publish in Iran or wish to have introduced to a broader readership.

Iran’s political isolation over the past thirty-seven years is in part responsible for this desire to be translated and read outside Iran. But I also believe this desire is rooted in the history of modern Persian literature and how it came into being. I am thinking particularly of the role translation from European languages played in the transition to modern prose and poetry.

Translation became the catalyst to imagining different modes of linguistic expression and, equally importantly, an audience whose interests and preoccupations differed from the elite. Translation offered pathways to change and became valorized as a catalyst. Translations also enabled comparisons between Persian literature and its European counterparts. For example, in the Preface to his collection of stories *Yeki bud yeki nabud*, Mohammad Ali Jamalzadih bemoans Iran’s lagging behind Europe in literary development. For him this development is synonymous with a literary democracy he advocates through simplification of language and adoption of the genre of the novel. What is particularly striking in Jamalzadih’s essay, as in much of the writing from this pivotal time, is the tacit acceptance of European literatures as the norms for evaluating Persian literature. Leaving

aside the question of Eurocentrism, I would like to foreground the centrality of the trope of translation in Jamalzadih's ruminations about Persian literature. The title story thematizes the untranslatability and inadequacy of the languages of the elite and the need for translating them for those with the knowledge of spoken language.

I have drawn on this example to illustrate how central translation has been to the very conception of modern Persian literature and its place in a European and/or international setting. The anxiety on the part of writers and critics about the absence of translation from Persian into European languages is part and parcel of the need to measure up to and to be taken seriously by literary standard bearers.

But today there is a sufficiently large readership for works written in Persian that there should be little worry about works not being translated into English or other European languages. Translations are not necessarily the means by which Iranian writers acquire fame and recognition. In fact, we have witnessed the emergence of a number of writers whose fame is first and foremost established among Iranian readers. In this sense the literary democracy Jamalzadih longed for has been achieved and the isolation from international markets has not proven terribly detrimental. If literary expression emerges from and responds to particularities of a time and place, then the past decades have provided Iran with rare inward focus.

Today the pressure for translatability and translations comes increasingly from the success of Iranian cinema and the visual arts, neither of which is entirely dependent on language. It is against the capital gains made in these other media that Persian literature feels the squeeze. In relation to Iranian film, installation art, and photography, Persian literature has a smaller field of circulation and international visibility.

Amy and Laetitia: *Are there strategies better than others for translation of modern and contemporary Persian texts? Do some genres translate better than others? Should there be a model?*

Michael: For translators poetry sets the bar particularly high. It may be that 20th century poetry in Persian presents particular difficulties. Often enough thematic issues are in the foreground (political commentary, references to Iranian history, autobiographical narratives), but a translation which presents them alone sounds naïve. So much depends on sound, on allusions and variations of common speech. Where do you start?

The big exception, as I think we all know, is Forugh Farrokhzad. For reasons that would be fun to investigate, a lot of the components which make the brilliance of her poetry so distinctive are available to translation. It would be fun. (We could list how many translations of her poetry are out there, and how many of them are successful.)

I have seen recently some very accomplished translations of difficult 20th-century poetry, a lot of them not yet published. (If I mention one does it insult the others?) The dilemma persists that it's always hard to find a publisher for poetry. There is a conviction that poetry has less appeal in the marketplace. It is probably true.

There is a pleasure in translating poetry which is distinct: you hover between the original poem and the as yet undetermined English equivalent, running through one possibility after another, feeling how many voices you have inside you waiting to be brought to life.

That's how the problems of poetry look to me, from the point of view of the translator. But once we think about publishing, selling the damn thing, you think about different values. What genres are the most accessible? The rule is the less concentrated the better. The patience among readers for poetry is in short supply. Short stories and novels are not easy to translate or to place with a publisher, but they are more accessible, friendlier. Finding publishers is never easy, but sometimes the odds are better. Recent triumphs of potential mainstreaming are by members of this panel: Kamran Rastegar's translation of Dowlatabadi's *Missing Soluch* (Melville House, 2007) and Amy Motlagh's translation of Zoya Pirzad's *The Space between us* (Oneworld, 2016).

Amy and Laetitia: *Who, ideally, should be translating Persian into European languages—scholars or professional translators? Is part of our responsibility as scholars of Persian literature to create a market, as it were, for translation? How about to undertake translations (especially given the dearth of professional translators working from Persian to English)?*

Laetitia: To me, the perfect translator would be a professional translator with some scholarly background or a scholar with training in translation! Many of us in academia do translations, partly because we enjoy the process, partly because we think certain texts really should be better known. But as academics, we might not have the best view of the market and the audience. For example, if we look at the modern texts translated into English in the last years, we notice that they are often not easy reads, small-circulation texts. Few are popular reads, although this started to change with the publications of Parinoush Saniee's best-seller *The Book of Fate* and the texts of Zoya Pirzad, translated by Amy Motlagh and Franklin Lewis. But a romance best-seller like Fattaneh Haj Seyyed Javadi's *Bamdad-e Khomar* (The Morning After) hasn't been published into English (it has been published in German), whereas there might have been an interesting market for it, as it presents a different image of Iran, even though a conservative one. We can find an extension of this choice of intellectual texts in the way texts are translated. The main category of translators involved in modern Persian literature are scholars, and, as scholars, we value exactitude. This means that when we translate, we often foreignize the text, as Lawrence Venuti calls it: with footnotes within the text for example, which interrupt the flow of the reading and point out the foreign aspect of the text. This method of translating can also be considered as an identity politics phenomenon: insisting on Iranian elements as a way of affirming an identity threatened both by the politics of the Iranian government, and by emigration. Iranians who reside abroad constantly have to redefine Iranianhood along religious, cultural and political lines. So, we might reconsider this way of translating and think carefully about our audience. If we want to use it for undergraduate courses, that is probably fine, but if we want a general reader to enjoy a good Iranian book, we might need to think of other strategies. At the same time, academia does not always take translation seriously. Translations have a mixed status in terms of prestige, they are neither entirely creative writing, neither entirely academic work. If we want translation to be taken more seriously, we also need to think about it in more complicated terms and undergo training in translation.

Amy: Lack of commercial interest in Persian literature means that so much of the literature that we engage as academics is not translated into English, and thus many of us undertake translations out of necessity. These translations become long excerpts in monographs; appear as appendices to dissertations or monographs; or are used informally in our undergraduate courses. I sometimes think that if we could somehow gather and publish these translations as an anthology (or series of anthologies!), we would have enormously enriched the corpus of Persian translations available in English!

I am not sure that it is our “job” to create a market for Persian literature; it has seemed to me that the “market,” such as it is, will never exist for contemporary, literary Persian. There is enduring interest in poets who are understood as “Sufis” (Kamran elaborates some of the history of this interest above) and there is sometimes interest in works that seem (at least on the surface—and by that I literally mean the cover!) to affirm stereotypes about Iran; especially about Iranian women (as Laetitia explains in an article on the bestseller *The Book of Fate*). In some ways, the creation of a “market” for Persian literature would be a mixed blessing, as I feel it would almost certainly only come through a violent engagement with Iran, in the way that there is now a good deal more interest in Iraqi literature than there was before 2003. So perhaps the absence of a market is a mixed blessing, and we who read and casually translate in the US and Europe have all the richness of contemporary literature more or less to ourselves.

I am not sure who the ideal translator is, though I suspect it is someone who is foreign in some way to both languages and also at home in them through long study and immersion; I also think it is preferably someone who writes her/himself. I can think of only one professional Persian-to-English literary translator: Sara Khalili. Her translations have been published primarily by trade presses—so they have reached a larger audience—but I am not sure that they are superior to those undertaken by academics and published by university or other non-commercial presses.

Amy and Laetitia: *Though it sounds like an unlikely political goal around which to rally, should Iranian-American groups like NIAC (National Iranian American Council) and PALAA (Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans) be involved with “lobbying” for translation, or does this seem ridiculous? Can we tie translation to geopolitical concerns like the nuclear agreement?*

Esmail: The recent history of Iran-US history, for example, shows that translation has always been present: from the daily communication in the Persian Gulf between the military forces to various problems of mis- or bad translation of Persian expressions used by Iranian authorities into proper English, and including the considerable number of books that are translated from English to Persian. Translation and politics are closely tied not only from the moment of selection but throughout the process of translation and production and even distribution. One can often measure the degree of intercultural tolerance by the politics of translation implemented by the Iranian state in the last few decades. Translation therefore becomes a political act and politicized issue without being political at all by nature.

Translation was implicitly at the core of the postwar cultural policies of the winning powers of the WWII, and research has shown how it was used to maintain a balance of power. For instance,

the aim of the Franklin Book Programs in developing countries was to some extent to use books to “win hearts and minds”. That underlying principle still holds (at least in the Middle East, if not elsewhere), though the channels have been multiplied and selections are more democratic, hence it is harder to influence people because they have more ways to corroborate information.

Kamran: Translation is already tied to geopolitical concerns, whether we like it or not. Translations of the *Gulistan* in the 19th century were directly a result of British imperialism in India. The translation of *The Blind Owl* was very significantly motivated by the 1951 Iran Oil Crisis and the 1952 coup. My translation of *Missing Soluch* was only made possible as a result of a political reaction to a change in US policy—the move by the Bush administration to make literary translation subject to the sanctions. Of course Iran is not alone in this regard: most of the recent interest in modern/contemporary Iraqi literature was fueled by the invasion and occupation of Iraq. NIAC or PAIAA or other groups may well seek to promote translation as part of their political activities (which raises interesting questions: what authors they each would seek to promote?), and no doubt they would oppose government policies restricting such cultural activity if they were to arise in the future. But my point here has been to ask whether it is even possible to imagine Persian literary translation occurring in ‘a neutral ground’ where geopolitics were not looming over all aspects of the translation and publication of the work? If not, why are we not more critical in our assessment of the cultural politics of translation, and rather than bemoan the “lack” of translation as our foremost problem, to instead try to articulate a counter-politics wherein translation can contribute to a re-articulation of cultural discourse on Iran and all that is also associated with it in terms of Islamophobia and orientalism and so on.

Amy and Laetitia: *With the recent nuclear agreement, more Westerners will be traveling to Iran. What effect do you think this will have on the traffic in translation—e.g., will it create a larger market/audience for Persian in translation?*

Michael: Allow me to be the skeptic here. It’s my impression that travelers who come back from Iran have stories about the hospitality and the physical plan (the architecture, the landscapes), and above all about their meetings with individuals, but have I heard interest in world literature, rarely – Rumi and Hafez excepted. I suspect, ironically, that it’s not in the moments of rapprochement that we are drawn to another culture. It’s in the times of trouble.

Pardon an anecdotal illustration: one of the best-selling publications from the translation series that Adnan Haydar and I edit for Syracuse University Press has been Shakir Mustafa’s anthology *Stories from Iraq* (2008). I wouldn’t wish for Iran to go through again what it took to make readers interested in Iraqi writers.

Laetitia: I agree with Michael’s skepticism. It’s worth going back to the preceding question about translation and its links to power. The boom of tourism in Iran, which is great to testify to, does not shift the power relations. In Iran, translations represent more than 20% of publications, and when it comes to literary texts, it is up to 40%. These translations are very successful too. Despite the official rhetoric of the Islamic republic against America and against imperialism, including cultural

imperialism (*tabajom-e farhangi*), Iranian market trends follow with English-speaking cultural dominance across the globe. The UNESCO's Index Translationum says that English is the most translated language in Iran, with almost 8,000 translations between 1979 and today, so it is a lot more than French and Arabic, which account for only around 700 translations each. In the same 30-year period, however, there have been only 350 translations from Persian in the US, mainly classical poets or religious authors. Aside from the numbers only, there's a big difference between the market success of translations in Iran and in the US, especially when it comes to modern literature. Many readers, who often don't trust Iranian writers for writing good fiction, privilege translations of modern Western literary fiction. This cultural impact of semi-colonization, which makes foreign productions more desirable, more worthy than indigenous ones, is essential to take into account when we consider traffic in translation.

On the contrary, in the US, and some other Western countries, although it's a bit different in France for example, it's rare that translated texts enjoy best-seller status.

Amy and Laetitia: *What role does translation play in your own scholarly practices?*

Nasrin: My own work in translation is inseparable from my academic work. My interests in Iranian immigrant and diaspora writers intrigued me about how Taghi Modarressi wrote his novels in Persian and subsequently translated them into English. Initially I was interested only in his apparent focus on literal translations from Persian into English. But the more I immersed in his work the more I felt the need to grapple with theories and practice of translation.

Translation is also inextricably linked to teaching in Comparative Literature, at least at the undergraduate level. For Persian material in my undergraduate courses, I rely on translations. I cannot expect students to be sufficiently conversant with Persian to read the originals. But assigning translated works makes it possible for us to engage with the question of translation and how it affects our experience of literary works.

Michael: These days other people's translations absorb the greater part of my own work. We receive submissions, little hopeful texts looking for a home. From the point of view of an editor, at Syracuse University Press for example, you look first for translations that work in the target language. Another goal: the desire never leaves you to put together a series with as much variety as possible. Oddly, very few submissions from writing in Persian come to us. (I think contributors are more likely to think of University of Texas Press, Mazda or Mage.) Our list includes a few titles from Iran: a selection of poems by Simin Behbahani (*Cup of Sin*, 1999), Nasrin's beautiful translation of Taghi Modarressi's *The Virgin of Solitude* (2008) and Fariba Vafi's *My Bird* (2009). We were the first publishers of Shahrnaz Parsipur's *Women without Men*, but we sold the rights to Feminist Press, with the understanding that they could market it better. They did. (And then, mysteriously, they had it retranslated for a new edition. I may not understand the marketplace for translations as well as I should.)

Amy and Laetitia: *Is the situation for translation from Persian into English markedly different than other literatures in the Global South? Is Iran rightly considered part of the Global South for these purposes?*

Michael: I honestly don't see a difference – what we name the cultural areas or how one translation relates to the other. We may think that there exists a natural process whereby one book has a great success in translation (Mahfouz or Pamuk after the Nobel Prizes) and creates possibilities for others. It's capricious. The market chooses one book or one writer to be the token representative. From the point of view of the market there isn't often space for more than that one.

What has the role of literary (and other) institutions and agents been in the translation exchanges between Iran and the West?

Amy: Historically, both individuals and institutions have been important in facilitating translations between Iran and the West. In some cases, they work in concert, and in others, surpass their original brief. I am thinking here of the Franklin Book Project's presence in Iran (which Esmail explores in his book). Franklin was supported by US soft funding, but the person most associated with what that project accomplished was undoubtedly Homayun Sanati, who undertook the work assigned by Franklin but developed it into new directions with the Pocket Books series, etc.

I suppose that Sanati is mostly known to people interested in the history of translation, however, and that when we think about translation—going in both directions—we tend to think of the translators who facilitated these, and not how they were paid for. (This is true from Goethe to Coleman Barks. Could anyone say offhand who published their translations? Does anyone know if they received grants—governmental or otherwise—to support their work? Probably not.) Similarly, in Iran, we think of people like Simin Daneshvar, who translated at least partially for the income, to Karim Emami, who devoted his life not only to translating works from other languages into Persian, but to thinking through the problems associated with translation in its many incarnations.

Yet translator-authors like Daneshvar spent time in the US through the auspices of the Fulbright program, and there is no question that Cold War-era projects like Franklin Books influenced the type of books that were translated into Persian in the 1960's and '70's. But I think both of these cases point to the way in which circumstances and individuals themselves can undermine the ostensible “purpose” or “goal” of these government programs. Daneshvar later became a staunch opponent of US influence in Iran, and Franklin Books translated many works that would go on to influence intellectuals in Iran for many decades.

Esmail: To answer this right, we need empirical research, which is lacking. What I suggest here is based on general trends backed by few examples.

I think we can divide these roles into at least three categories: the arbiters of work for translation (the opposite scenario also hold true); the patrons of translation in various forms (suggesting a title, buying books for translators/ publishers while traveling abroad, sending books to Iran through families/friends abroad; publishers as the main agents of publishing translations; institutions that commission translations); and finally, the suppressors of translation (state policies, censors, public figures).

Although the role of institutions and agents in the translation exchanges between countries of the world is equally important, in the context of Iran and in the absence of literary agents, it appears

that individuals have been more active and effective in the exchanges than institutions. Individuals (mostly translators) are less restricted by the institutional policies and often follow their own preferences (the case of Karim Emami who did considerable translations of contemporary Iranian poets is a good case in point) whereas institutions (at least a number of them in Iran which have been involved in translation programs) are often biased, bureaucratic and slow by nature, and generally lack professional expertise and international experience. Several of such initiative and institutions include Howze-ye Honari, Sazman-e tablighat-e Eslami, Khaneh-ye tarjomeh, and the like. There is little data about their work, the reception of their productions, and their circulation. But what they share is the fact that almost most of them start with lofty and often ideological ideals but in practice they tend to fail because of the noted problems.

There has been some individual and institutional initiatives in the US to translate Persian literature into English. These include for example the individual efforts of some Iranian academics working at the American universities: the case of Professor Ghanoonparvar at the University of Texas at Austin is a good example, however, these translations and those published as the result of translation classes hardly find their way into the mainstream publishing market, are published by small publishing houses, and often lack professional publishing standards. This example and similar cases confirm the important role of individuals in the translation exchanges as opposed to the institutional role.

Since the Islamic Revolution of 1978, any institutional effort for translation exchanges between Iran and the US has been eclipsed by the bilateral hostility and suspicion, and it is hard to expect any change unless there is some improvement between the two states.

Laetitia: As patronage helps to decide how much to translate, and which texts to translate, it's important to look at the role of institutions in the promoting and financing of translations. The Iranian government sponsors translations of religious texts and of texts that spread the Islamic revolutionary message but there's little governmental support from Iran to encourage publication of literary Persian texts abroad. Only recently, in 2012, a new organization was founded, that might reverse this trend, the Sa'di Foundation. Headed by Gholamali Hadad Adel, it promotes Persian literature and language. It might play an important role in promoting translation exchanges. We should remember though that Iran isn't a signatory of the Berne copyright agreement, so it's not compelled to buy rights from foreign publishers to translate books into Persian and publish them in Iran. This is a serious impediment to Iran entering the global literary scene, although an increasing number of publishers have realized that this benefits neither the Iranian literary field nor their presses, and they do their best to comply with the Berne agreement by buying foreign rights.

Anyway, for now, the entire job of translating relies on individual initiatives of Iranian-Americans mainly. Esmaeil mentioned the great work of the people at University of Texas at Austin. We can also mention the initiatives at San Jose State University. There are general translators' associations like the American Literary Translators Association. There was the Association of Iranian American Writers, but it's not longer alive and it was not devoted to translation solely. Specific bodies devoted to translations are few: there's "The Translation Project" headed by Niloufar Talebi, which focuses more on promoting Persian culture through theatrical and musical

productions, and doesn't rely on a wide network of translators. However, one can be optimistic when one sees the efforts realized in translation in the last five years or so, and especially the shift towards translating more diverse modern Persian texts, like *The Book of Fate* by Parinoush Saniee translated in 2013 by Sara Khalili, or texts with a strong Islamic component like *Da: One woman's war: Da (mother): the memoirs of Seyyedeh Zabra Hoseyni*, translated by Paul Sprachman in 2014.

Amy and Laetitia: *Can you share your experience of finding a publisher and working with that publisher towards the translation of a modern Persian text?*

Kamran: I have translated various shorter pieces for different venues, but it's probably more interesting for me to speak about my translation of *Missing Soluch*. The translation of this work has its roots in the early 2000s, after certain U.S. sanctions on Iran were tightened and new policies developed to address them. At that time it was widely reported that the Treasury Department was planning to interpret the sanctions as applying to works of literary translation. The argument was that the act of producing literary translations is an economic activity that adds value to commodities—it's fascinating that US treasury officials had apparently decided to take a view of translation as being a form of economic transaction. As a result, the American Association of Publishers decided to challenge this policy by collecting funds to offer subventions for literary translations from Persian. They then brought together a group of reviewers which identified a number of novels from modern Persian literature that they viewed as compelling works for translation. During this process I was asked to send in samples of my translation work and shortly afterwards Melville House Press was put in touch with me to see if we would like to work together on the translation and publication of the novel. In the end, as far as I'm aware—and possibly at least in part affected by actions such as that which taken by the American Association of Publishers—the Treasury Department abandoned their plans to sanction literary translation.

The editor I worked with at Melville House, Valerie Merians, is a seasoned literary editor, and so was very professional and always absolutely clear about her judgments in all matters relating to the translation. Sometimes we disagreed, but I found all of her suggestions immensely helpful and useful, and I eventually found that her intuition about a matter was well worth considering. It was rare that her suggestions did not result in improvements in the translation. Beyond the very professional text editing that was done, she did not interfere very much with the text at a granular level, but was very good at raising broader questions and leading me to make the necessary editorial adjustments rather than herself suggesting rewrites of particular paragraphs and so on. In the end, I would give a great deal of credit for the quality of the translation to the relationship that developed between us, my trust in her professionalism and her apparent trust in my grasp of the literary material with which we were working.

I don't wish to name names, but my experience in reading translations that have come out of some other presses, and in particular, unfortunately, the specialty Iranian-diaspora presses, too often shows a lack of appreciation, or perhaps resources, for this kind of editorial role. So, we still face a situation where not infrequently the published translation reads as a first draft, lacking the editorial polish necessary to lend it a literary coherence or overarching vision. That said, the quality of some

recent literary translations from Persian have been really excellent (I would highlight Amy Motlagh's translations of Zoya Pirzad's *The Space Between Us* as an example). Also it seems possible that we academics as a group are less aware of our own limitations as literary stylists, and may not warm to the influence of a good editor even if one were available. So, given that most literary translations from Persian are produced by academics, I feel it's very important to highlight the very crucial relationship between editor and translator in producing literary translations that will go further than simply replicate the gross form of the original text, but will also come to be an equivalent literary statement in the language of translation.

Michael: My testimony is a generation old and very likely irrelevant. There was a journal, *Short Story International*, which was determined to be inclusive, to aim at variety and cultural representation. It was built into their mission. (I published there.) The only counterparts I know of today are on-line: for example the translations by Laetitia Nanquette and Ali Alizadeh of Mohammad Hossein Abedi <http://www.lyrikline.org/en/poems/3188#.U0TNxVzP2G4>, and <WordsWithoutBorders.com>. One good thing about WWB is that they are interested primarily in poetry and that their readership is considerable. They are determined to be inclusive. My own experience has been in collaboration with others. Usually my collaborators have had more contacts than I have. With Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak our publisher was the Harvard Film Archive (who no longer publishes books). They trusted us completely. Later I also worked with the late Karim Emami, on translations of poetry (also by Kiarostami) for an English-language publisher in Tehran (Sokhan). The whole process was a pleasure, but that was because Karim handled all the difficulties. I've never met Karim except via e-mail, but I feel I knew him well. (He died about the time we were finishing the book, and I felt the loss as if we knew one another, the other way, in person.)