

ԵՐԵՎԱՆԻ ՊԵՏԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՄԱԼՍԱՐԱՆ
ԱՐԵՎԵԼԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՖԱԿՈՒԼՏԵՏ

ԱՐԵՎԵԼԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՀԱՐՑԵՐ

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**Հրատարակվում է Երևանի պետական համալսարանի
արևելագիտության ֆակուլտետի
գիտական խորհրդի որոշմամբ**

Խմբագրական խորհուրդ՝

Մելքոնյան Ռուբեն բ.գ.թ., պրոֆեսոր (խմբագիր)

Մելիքյան Գուրգեն բ.գ.թ., պրոֆեսոր

Խառատյան Ալբերտ պ.գ.դ., պրոֆեսոր, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ թղթակից-անդամ

Սաֆրաստյան Ռուբեն պ.գ.դ., պրոֆեսոր, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ ակադեմիկոս

Հովհաննիսյան Լավրենտի բ.գ.դ., պրոֆեսոր, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ թղթ.-անդամ

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Սաֆարյան Ալեքսանդր պ.գ.թ., պրոֆեսոր

Ոսկանյան Վարդան բ.գ.թ., դոցենտ

Քոչարյան Հայկ պ.գ.թ., դոցենտ

Սարգսյան Լևոն պ.գ.դ., պրոֆեսոր

Կարապետյան Ռուբեն պ.գ.դ.

Տեր-Սաթևոսյան Վահրամ պ.գ.դ.

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պատմություն, Երևան, 2018, էջ 364.....141-144

**BETWEEN TWO WORLDS:
THE READING OF THE EXILE EXPERIENCE OF IRANIAN
WRITER GOLI TARAGHI**

Keywords: *Iran. exile, fiction, past, migration, culture, pain, experience.*

Exile is not a particular recent phenomenon in Persian literature history. Long before the 1979 revolution many Iranian writers had been forced into or chosen exile (f.e., to name a few, Mirza Malkum Khan, Abdul-Rahim Talibuff and Muhammad Ali Jamalzadeh), but emergence of literature body, which is at once the product and the expression of Iranian exile is unique to the past decade².

After the Islamic Revolution like thousands of other emigrants, a famous writer Goli Taraghi has been expelled from the homeland. "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is inhalable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home. Its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, there are no more efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement"³.

A new home for Goli Taraghi, the first shelter to live in far away from the motherland becomes the Ville d'Avray, a psychiatric clinic near Paris. "I am sick and I don't know the exact name of this sickness"⁴.

It should be noted that Paris has become the last place for alienation and suffering for many Persian writers. Short before his death Sadegh Hedayat wrote to Jamalzadeh in 1947. "I'm very tired and lack of interest

¹ Associate Prof. Dr., Department of Oriental Studies, e-mail: lilit.safrastyan@ysu.am

² Rahimieh N., *The Quince-Orange Tree, or Iranian Writers on Exile.-World Literature Today*, Vol. 66, No.1 (Winter, 1992), p. 39.

³ Said E., *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, London: Granta, 2001, p. 173-174.

⁴ Taraghi G., *The First Day, Author's Note.-Words Without Borders*, August 2008, <http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/the-first-day> (09.03.2019)

of everything ...”⁵. Paris is also the final place of suffering and illness for the famous playwright Gholam-Hossein Saedi.

“When I first arrived in Paris, ... exile was Janus-faced. It was not algia, It was in algia. It was nos “the yearning for home”, pushing its way in to my life. I died in Paris in 1985. I lie in Pere-Lachaise cemetery exactly eleven graves away from Marcel Proust, and six graves away from Sadegh Hedayat, the founder of modern Persian fiction, who killed himself in Paris in 1951. He left his country, to kill himself in another country. No nos, no algia. The end of home, the end of exile”⁶.

The story “The First Day” is dedicated to the problems of migration, extinction, contradictions of human existence, the definition for a place in a foreign world for a young ingenious woman and single mother. In the preface of the the english translation of “The First Day” Taraghi writes:

“I left Iran in 1979, the year of the Islamic Revolution, and settled in Paris with my two small children. I was naïve enough to think that the chaotic upheaval of the beginning eventually would settle into normal life, and I could return. I was finally hospitalized in a psychiatric clinic. Taking the right medication restored my mental stability and helped me to overcome my dreadful anxieties, but what came to my rescue and pulled me out of the dark well of depression was the magical force of literature”⁷.

As M. Hron remarks: “Translating pain considers how writers may create effective intersemiotic translations of their immigrant suffering, given the constraints of language culture, genre and the assumptions of the target audience. ...There is various rhetorical strategies that Taraghi might employ to convey her sufferings of exile. Although the rhetorical strategies .are idiosyncratic and certainly culturally contextual , the rhetoric of body ,

⁵ Katouzian H., Sadegh Hedayat: His Work and His Wondrous World, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 4.

⁶ Baraheni R., Exilic Blindness: The Unwritten Autobiography of a Dramatist in Paris Posthumously Dictated to a Friend.-Modern Drama, Volume 46, Number 1, Spring, 2003, pp. 117- 118.

⁷ Taraghi G., The First Day, Author's Note.-Words Without Borders, August 2008, <http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/the-first-day> (09.03.2019)

the cultural translation of beliefs, values or myths and the role of silence, humour and allusion-are germane to numerous texts”⁸.

F. Milani writes: “The autobiographical narrative about the mental illness, depression is rare in Iranian literature, and Taraghi’s description of her experience is unique. This list of depression, isolation, exile, suicide, death penalty and premature death is painful”⁹. The names of the authors that wrote about their depression and suicide attempts such as Tahereh Qurrat al Ayn, Zan Dhokht Shirazi, P. Etessami, Taj al -Saltanah, F. Sayahi, F. Farrokhzad, Gh. Alizade, P. Eskandari, as well as M. Amirshahi, G. Taraghi, Sh. Parsipur are mentioned.

The author’s memoirs in the unity of happiness, painful and tragic days, remind the real characters, i.e. relatives, who are depicted in the dense colors of love and loss. Memoirs are one of the most recurrent forms to have emerged in the Iranian Diaspora, that J. Darznik calls “return narratives”¹⁰.

“I wanted to write about my father, Shamirran street, our home, my pretty and gentle mother, who loved to dress like the European women, about my old-fashioned aunts who always were wearing the kerchiefs and praying honestly ... These were not sweet memories of the past, but the efforts to recreate the world that had not existed anymore”¹¹.

As rightly T. Bhabha remarks: “The imaginary of spatial distance - to live somehow beyond, the borders of our time - throws into relief, the temporal, social differences that interrupt our collusive sense of cultural contemporaneity”¹².

The collections of short stories, published in post-revolutionary years, “Scattered Memories” (1990), “Another Place”(2001) and “The Two Worlds”(2002) are distinguished with their exceptional thematic and ideological orientation. Here the author portrays the internal pain of a

⁸ Hron M., *Translating Pain: Immigrant Suffering in Literature and Culture*, Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2009, p. xvii.

⁹ Milani F., *Words Not Swords: Iranian Women Writers and Freedom of Movement*, New York: Syracuse, 2011, pp. 183- 184.

¹⁰ Darznik J., *The Perils and Seductions of Home: Return Narratives of the Iranian Diaspora* - MELUS, 33(2), 2008, p. 56.

¹¹ Taraghi G., *Do donya*, Tehran: Nilufar, 2002, p. 11-27.

¹² Bhabha T., K., *The Location of Culture*, London and New York: The Routledge, 1994, pp. 6-7.

Persian woman living away from her homeland, and the difficulties she meets protecting national, religious and cultural identity in the new reality. Taraggi's stories exhibit so many of the characteristic features of the Persian literature of exile and in such dense concentration, that they can be viewed as representative of the whole trend¹³.

Many literary critics, including A. Dehbashi, in the articles devoted to G. Taraggi depict the writer's works as emigration literature¹⁴.

“Goli Taraggi's fiction is singularly reflective of contemporary life in Iran or the lives of Iranians living abroad”¹⁵. According to Iranian literary critics, Iranian emigration literature is an inseparable part of the contemporary Iranian literature. A. Saifi in his article “The Iranian publication abroad” writes: “The history of modern Iran cannot be narrated without this branch of Iranian literature”¹⁶.

In 1998 the outstanding movie master and director D. Mehrjui made the film “Derakhte Golabi” (“The Pear tree”) based on the homonymous story by G. Taraggi. In G. Taraggi's works of the pre-revolutionary period¹⁷, women are absent, and the thematic emphasis is on the Middle Aged Teheran inhabitants' joys and sufferings, which are perhaps universal though presented inside the Iranian circle¹⁸.

¹³ Nanqutte L., Persian Literature of Exile in France: Goli Taraggi's Short Stories.- Familiar and Foreign: Identity in Film and Literature, ed., Manani M., Thomson V., Athabasca University Press, 2015, p. 174.

¹⁴ Jafari A. M., Pourjafari F., The Study of Goli Taraggi's Fiction in the Light of Migration Literature Theory - Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal, Vol. 2, Issue VI, November 2013, p. 7.

¹⁵ Faridoun F., Ghanunparavar M. R., "Portraits in Exile in the Fiction of Esmail Fasih and Goli Taraggi".- Iranian Refugees and Exiles since Khomeini, ed. Fathi A., Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1997, p. 293.

¹⁶ Jafari A. M., Pourjafari F., The Study of Goli Taraggi's Fiction in the Light of Migration Literature Theory - Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal, Vol. 2, Issue VI, November 2013, p. 2.

¹⁷ Goli Taraggi began her writing career with a collection of short stories entitled I Am Che Guevara Too in 1969. Her first novel, Winter Sleep, was published in 1973 and has been translated into English and French.

¹⁸ Farrokh F., Introduction - Taraggi G., A Mansion in the Sky, Austin: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Univ., of Texas, 2003, p. 1.

In 2013 in the interview for the «NPR» American radio station while speaking about the English translation of "Anar banu va pesar-hayash" ("The Pomegranate Lady and her sons"), the writer mentions: "Usually, I go to Iran to find a story to write about. Because Iran is so absurd, so contradictory, whenever I go I find something to write about and I have a character... to enter into a new story. Anar Banu is one of them. I met her at the airport and she was asking everybody, "Where is Sweden? Where is Sweden?"¹⁹.

In the works by Taraghi, always two worlds exist that connect the past with the present and the west with the east by their spiritual and physical presence:

"Most of my life I have lived between two worlds. I left Iran in 1979, at the beginning of the Islamic Revolution. And since then my life has become a perpetual journey between Paris and Tehran, from one reality to another. Naturally, this dual existence has marked my literary imagination. As an immigrant living in Paris I have come to know a lot of exiled Iranians who cannot go back home. Their longing and hidden anxieties have become a theme of several of my stories. "Exile" in itself, as a human condition, is a phenomenon that can be questioned from different angles"²⁰.

The only way to avoid the emptiness of emigration and alienation is to inhabit in the sweet embrace of the past where the memories of the childhood become newly comprehended. E. Saidi defines: "For a man who no longer has a homeland, writhing becomes a place to live"²¹.

The exciting story "Shamirran's bus" is about a little girl, who during Tehran endless winter is waiting for the return of migrated birds. Parisian winter reality and Tehranian "lost paradised" thoughts are correlated with one another. Parisian snow outlined the grandmother's portrait with her

¹⁹ «Pomegranate Lady» Depicts the Comedy and Tragedy of Exile - NPR Books, December 07, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/2013/12/07/249237327/pomegranate-lady-depicts-the-comedy-and-tragedy-of-exile> (07.03.2019)

²⁰ Mozzafari N., *Between Two Worlds: An Interview With Goli Taraghi*.- Words Without Borders, November, 2013, <http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/between-two-worlds-an-interview-with-goli-taraghi> (09/03.2019)

²¹ Said W. E., *Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginal - Representations of the Intellectual*, The 1993 Reith Lectures, New York: Vintage Books, 1994, p. 58.

misguided eyes, who used to say that “the angels are the sanctuaries of the house”²².

Although the author avoids the experiment, her stories are full of stylistic freshness and deep emotion. Taraghi’s stories, partly autobiographical, are knotted with controversial phenomena of sorrow and laughter, tradition and modernity, longing and forgetfulness.

The author continues the themes related to the ideological preservation of cultural and national identity in the story “Madame Gorg” (“The Wolf Lady”). It is an episode from Taraghi’s life that depicts a difficult start of a young Persian woman and her two children who live in one of the Parisian districts to adapt to the European customs, mentality and the way of life.

“Life in emigration in Paris is full of troubles, as well as guilt that a foreigner has come from the other side of the world and seized the place of the aborigines ... and the inner mockery that bites and calls for revenge, and the selfishness that has the history of two thousand five hundred years...,” the author meditates²³.

In this story, built on the principle of allegory and grotesque, G.Taraghi especially emphasized the character of the French landlady whom the author ironically calls “Madam Gorg”. For Madam Gorg who differs a lot from the French buckish females the Eastern customs, mentality and warmth were wild. She was not capable to perceive the suffering and insatiable thirst of a young Persian woman for her native home and relatives.

The mass exodus of Iranians after the 1979 Islamic revolution has produced a diaspora burdened with certain cultural and national ambivalences... In the diaspora, not only they faced with the distance of their roots as well as the legacy of that glorious past, but also they suddenly found themselves and their country misrepresented²⁴. The author describes a young woman who with her little children occur in an exile, longing for

²² Taraghi G., *Khatereh-haye parakandeh*, Tehran: Nilufar, 2004, pp. 2-3.

²³ Taraghi G., *Khatereh-haye parakandeh*, Tehran: Nilufar, 2004, p. 14.

²⁴ Fotouhi S., *Unhomeliness and Transcultural Spaces: The Case of Iranian Writing in English and the Process of Re-Representation - Literature and the Aesthetics*, 20(1) July, 2010, p. 81.

human warmth, and who were seized from the “grandmother, aunt and a whole world of love and grooming and deported into this cold, sad and loveless world”.

In the story “Madam Gorg”, Taraghi focuses on the national pride and self-dignity of the Persian woman, who, in spite of the pain, was humbly trying to bear the ingrained odd customs of the new reality. As the author noted: “Especially me, an Iranian, is accused for unknown reasons and found guilty beforehand, have no right to protest”²⁵.

In Taraghi’s narration, a particular attention is drawn to the theme of maternity, which is one of the manifestations of the author’s exceptionally delicate creation. According to Taraghi: “I have one story which is not included in this collection, but I hope one day also will be included. It’s called, “The Flying Mothers”. A lot of Iranian mothers are the victims, the real victims, of the revolution because children — they had to leave. And they couldn’t take the grandmothers or mothers with them”²⁶.

One of such stories is “A Mansion in the Sky”, published in the collection “The Scattered Memoirs” in 1990. Here the author discusses the spiritual and physical problems of the exile of an old mother who has been expelled due to the selfish search of her children during the Iran-Iraq war nightmarish years. Mahin Banu like many other elderly people became a “wanderer gypsy” during Iran-Iraq war who would never again be destined to see her own dear home.

Like any Iranian mother, Mahin Banu with the maternal desire not to hurt her children and cause any inconvenience to them suffered much from not being able to adapt the foreign reality and from the longing for the native land. The old woman became a captive of her own memories: she often remembered her past, full of sacrifices for the sake of the national culture, the despotic husband and the beloved children.

In this story, Taraghi skillfully creates the character of the old mother, her inner drama, her love, her sacrifice, the inexhaustible miss towards her

²⁵ Taraghi G., *Khatereh-haye parakandeh*, Tehran: Nilufar, 2004, p. 143.

²⁶ «Pomegranate Lady» Depicts the Comedy and Tragedy of Exile - NPR Books, <http://www.npr.org/2013/12/07/249237327/pomegranate-lady-depicts-the-comedy-and-tragedy-of-exile> (09.03.2019)

native land, and the reminiscence of her childhood, that became the companions and comfort of the wandering days for Mahin Banu. After the Islamic Revolution, the homeless woman finally finds a shelter in her son's house in France, then at her daughter's place in London and at last at her brother's home in Canada. Moreover, that long, lifetime flight becomes the last refuge for Mahin Banu. Her seat on board the plane, near the illuminator, has become a real home, so freely, so soft, like white snow, like the snow of her native Damaevend mountain”²⁷.

Forseeing her death, flying on the wings of the memories of childhood, Mahin Banu embraces her only place where she wonders, with the ambitious desire not to leave it at any time. In this big world, where she would never have her own corner, the only dream of Mahin Banu had been the heavenly shelter, where she would find her eternal spiritual tranquility.

Emphasizing the emigration, as well as the painful phenomenon of losing the national and cultural identity, the author criticizes the political situation in Iran. In this story, she calls a woman upon the life “with her complicated and contradictory emotions”. In her modest mentality, the home has a complex infrastructure. The author exposes the intricate web of Iranian cultural norms that transforms a woman into a spiritually and legally incompetent creation to fulfil her own desires and preferences.

The maternal theme becomes especially important in Goli Taraghi's short story “The Pomegranate Lady and her sons”. Here Taraghi reveals all the vivid colors of her original creation. The basis and the axis of this story are the author's memoirs.

In the vast expanse of the story, Taraghi converts the different destinies of two women in post-revolutionary Iranian society. The narrator left Iran in the 1990s and since then has lived with her two children in Paris. After her regular visit to Iran, she is trying to overcome the incomprehensible situation in the airport and the new laws that seemed to be so unbelievable among the Iranians living far away from the country.

²⁷ Taraghi G., Khatereh-haye parakandeh, Tehra: Nilufar, 2004, p. 178.

In this nightmarish situation, she meets a unique elderly woman who was travelling from Yazdi to visit her sons in Sweden. Anar Banu and the narrator were born in different social and cultural worlds, but they both are the prisoners in the cradle of their fugitive fate. Anar Banu's children are the representatives of different strata of Iran's younger generation who share the same destiny of emigration and alienation.

Helpless Anar Banu Chinari, who could not even write her own name, asked for help from any passenger to help her to get her children. The longing of the mother who has lived far from her sons for twelve years made her go to an unknown place.

Anar Banu, a childish plain, kind and delicate, dreams about her disobedient sons and about that lost icy world, where they had been looking for a decent life for already twelve years.

Frequently in the old woman's imagination, the pomegranate and lush trees that since her childhood replaced the figures of her father and mother were outlined. That is why her relatives renamed her "Anar Banu Chinari". There was an inexhaustible love for the human and the nature in the soul of this cheerful and illiterate elderly woman. Anar Banu reprimanded her children with great sorrow and motherly compassion.

The way leading to her dear sons has become fatal, the only and the last indicator. Being unable to move her legs, the old and sick woman is still staying in the helmless roads, wandering around the world in the waiting halls of the airports.

"She falls silent. She talks to herself, to her sons. I can no longer hear her, and her blurred and dusty image slowly recedes, like a faded picture, into the labyrinthine corridors of sleep"²⁸. In G.Taraghi's story, the airport was an allegorical image of the place, where the fate of thousands of emigrants crossed, where people found and lost each other, where the most important part of the human life began and ended.

Focusing on the long separation between the sons and the mother in "The Pomegranate Lady and her sons", Taraghi emphasizes one of the most important issues of our days - the spiritual, psychological and moral foundations of human alienation.

²⁸ Taraghi G., *Ja-ii digar*, Tehran:Nilufar, 2000, p.53.

Tragedy, satire, dramaticism: here are the three ways in which Goli Taraghi is knitting her own writing-style about the post-revolutionary country, and the Iranian woman's suffering, her own exile experience: "In her short stories, Goli Taraghi deals with the portrayal of the problematics of self-space construction in her character's new and unfamiliar local positions after emigrations"²⁹.

Taraghi's each heroine inside the walls of her "new physical home" builds her heavenly dreamy home on the distant, uncertain, and indifferent helpless roads far from the homeland, where she will live forever embraced with her memories and longings for the native land. As Salman Rushdie points out: "It may be, that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge of reclaim, to look back even at the risk being mutated in to pillars of salt ... our physical alienations from India almost inevitably means, that we will, in short, create fictions not actually in cities or villages but invisibly ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of my mind"³⁰.

The longing for the Homeland is a permanent melody in Goli Taraghi's soul of, she knits her dream with the longing for the native home and on the other real land she lives in that dream.

²⁹ Ghardashkhani G., *Another Space: Identity, Space and Transcultural Significations in Goli Taraghi's Fiction*, Leiden: Brill, 2017. p. 86.

³⁰ Rushdie S., *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*, London: Penguin Books, 1992, p. 10.

**ԵՐԿՈՒ ԱՇԽԱՐՀՆԵՐԻ ՄԻՋԵՎ
ԸՆԹԵՐՑԵԼՈՎ ՊԱՐՄԻԿ ԳՐՈՂ ԳՈՒԻ ԹԱՐԱՂԻԻ
ՎՏԱՐԱՆԳԻՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՓՈՐՁԱՌՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ**

**Լիլիթ Սաֆրաստյան
(Ամփոփում)**

Իրանի իսլամական հեղափոխությունից հետո տասնյակ հազարավոր տարագիր հայրենակիցների նման հայտնվելով օտարության մեջ՝ հայտնի արձակագիր Գ. Թարադին իր հայացքը սևեռեց վտարանդիության ցավալի խնդիրներին: Հետհեղափոխական տարիներին լույս ընծայված «Յրված հուշեր» 1990թ., «Մեկ ուրիշ վայր» 2001թ. և «Երկու աշխարհ» 2002թ. պատմվածքների ժողովածուներում զետեղված հուշագրություններն ու պատմվածքներն առանձնանում են իրենց բացառիկ թեմատիկ-գաղափարական ուղղվածությամբ, որտեղ հեղինակը պատկերում է հայրենի տնից հեռու, օտարության մեջ բնակվող պարսիկ կնոջ ներքին ցավն ու նոր իրականության մեջ ազգային, կրոնական, մշակութային ինքնությունը պահպանելու նրա դժվարությունները: