

**THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISLOCATION ON
PERSIANATE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY**

by

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I declare that **THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISLOCATION
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISLOCATION ON PERSIANATE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

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This thesis seeks to investigate the various forces that have shaped modern Persianate children's literature - history, revolution, political climate, government, institutions, writers, education, and so on. The historical origins of tales popular in modern times, and of themes recurrent in stories from past times to present are analyzed, along with other factors which have shaped Persianate children's literature.

The thesis begins with a historical and theoretical overview relating to change and continuity in Persianate children's literature. It examines the influence of ancient texts on modern Persianate children's stories. The cultural development reflected in the organizational infrastructure of institutions is also examined, as well as other contemporary influences, both social and political, in order to assess how these have affected modern Persianate children's literature. The contents of children's books are analyzed from different aspects, including their representation of social values. Concerns of children themselves are shown in examples of their own work; in addition, works of illustrators of children's books, and examples from the extended body of Persianate children's literature in Tajikistan are analyzed.

Modern children's literature is the product of a number of influences and while differences can be perceived between historical periods, underlying similarities can also be seen which show a continuity of socio-political purpose, either supporting the status quo or challenging it. The thesis is concerned with this interplay between the recurring uses of children's literature; moralistic, didactic, the political agenda of its authors, criticism of the status quo, etc. and the surface changes which attract attention and which create an appearance of change in its underlying purpose. Fashions and styles may change, but children still read, firstly in order to learn to read, and then for information and amusement. The author contends that, in reality a limited number of changes are possible in the purpose of children's literature, and the age-old arguments likewise continue about what those are: entertainment or preparation for the harsh realities of life, retreat into fantasy and acceptance of one's place or incitement to rebel and change the world.



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KEY TERMS DESCRIBING TOPIC OF THESIS

Title of thesis:

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Key terms:

Children's literature; social change; political upheaval; educational development; Iran; Tajikistan; *Iranzamin*; Middle East; Persianate languages; Farsi; traditional stories

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Chapter 1: General introduction

This thesis examines Persianate children's literature in the time period of the second half of the twentieth century, a period which saw major political changes. Leading up to this, the thesis identifies historical continuities in order to investigate their effect on Persianate children's literature and to demonstrate that continuity exists alongside change in this literature. In this thesis, Persianate children's literature is defined as literature for children in the area of the historical Persian Empire or *Iranzamin*, now written in the modern languages of Farsi, Dari and Tajiki. These related languages are spoken in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, but originate from a former time when the land and language were part of one empire. The main focus of the study will be on works written in Farsi.

While the research develops a broad historical overview relating to modern Persianate children's literature, a specific strand of enquiry runs through the thesis; this relates on the one hand to the changes brought about in society and their effect on modern Persianate children's literature, and on the other hand to the effect that continuity has had on the development of this literature despite social changes. The thesis evaluates and examines children's literature from a social point of view rather than from purely aesthetic or structural considerations. In order to give the necessary historical perspective, a section of the thesis focuses on a number of traditional works, although the main time focus of the research falls on the Persianate children's literature of the second half of the twentieth century. While this period brought great social change in all three countries, the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the fall of Soviet rule in Tajikistan are the two parallel events causing social change which

concern this study. Of these two countries, the study concentrates on Iran as the central driving force behind Persianate culture, and the producer of a greater number of publications for children than elsewhere in the Persianate world.

The present chapter introduces the study by giving the background to the study, the problem statement, the aim of the study, delimitation of the field, research methodology, definition of terms, importance of the study, literature review, and an outline of the chapters.

1.1 Background to the study

Researchers often cite social developments as factors causing fundamental change in literature for children. Politics and political reforms have proved to be major dynamics which have affected children's literature. Two examples of broad social trends affecting society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are population growth and urbanization. One could add the increase in literacy as another significant factor, with the general level of education improving over this time. These social developments had a significant impact on aspects of society such as social structure, institutions and culture. Social developments, while giving rise to many changes, did not completely destroy traditional society and culture, but were based on what had gone before and thus, in addition to introducing changes, gave new life and continuity to these traditions.

Change has often been linked with progress and given a positive value, while continuity has been seen as stagnation and given a negative value. However,

continuity is not simply the absence of change as Christine Preston (2000:1) points out:

Social continuity cannot simply be defined as the absence of social change, that is, things remaining the same, because social change is a continual process in all societies. Nothing "remains the same". However, within societies there are structures which are inherently resistant to change, and in this sense, we can talk about them as being social continuities. Individuals within societies need social continuities to a lesser or greater extent, depending on significant factors like age, gender, education, access to power, wealth, vested interest, etc. Even 'rock-solid' institutions like the family, the law, and religions are subject to change, even though they represent social continuity.

Social continuity can, therefore, have a positive value as it engenders stability within society. Leavis (in Sarland 1999:142) sees institutions of education as factors which preserve continuity in society. Continuity in this case is seen as a positive attribute as it relates to knowledge built on experience. Sardar and Davies (1990:124) hold that newness from within tradition can be an alternative to Western notions of change (see Chapter 2.5:51).

This thesis is not so much concerned with positive or negative aspects of change and continuity per se, but rather in their relationship to social realities and the socialization of people within society as seen in Persianate children's literature. Thus, the questions which this area of research brings to the fore are ones such as; how much of a society remains the same when, for example, the ruling government with its attendant worldview is replaced by one with a widely opposing philosophy? How do changes such as industrialization and an increase in population affect society? What do urban and rural societies have in common? Furthermore, how can this be measured? How do all these factors affect the popularity of different kinds of

literature, and the choice of which literature is kept alive and passed on as entertainment and instruction to the next generation?

As mentioned above, a concern of this research is the relationship of change and continuity with society and the socialization of people within society. Education, and literature, including children's literature, are indicators of social continuity and conversely, of social change. When attitudes change these are reflected in literary output. Literature depends upon a historical base which shapes its terms of reference, its content, moral values, and other aspects, which all relate to the socio-political development of its surrounding environment, as will be seen in Chapters Two and Three.

Thus, literature is an important indicator of the continuous elements of society, as attested by successive governments' attempts to suppress certain types of literature and even burn books in order to quell resistance and break with the preceding hierarchy of power (for example in the USSR under Communist rule and during Hitler's regime in Nazi Germany). Once the old books were burnt, new books were produced to propagate the incoming regime's ideology. These books were not only destined for adults; children's literature also reflected the desired new ideology whether explicitly or implicitly. Children's literature, however, has always been seen as less political, less threatening than adults' literature, and has been able to escape the forces of change to a greater degree. The issues of ideology, politics and society are not usually directly addressed in children's literature as they are in adults' literature and so, children's literature is often left to go on its way with a minor adjustment here and there, new rewritings, new illustrations of old stories, and a few new additions to the publication lists to reflect the criteria demanded by the new

state. This can also work for forces of change, however, as new ideas introduced into children's literature by writers opposing a regime are not so readily or quickly censored. While, on the whole, changes in children's literature may not be as evident as in literature for adults, they still occur in the same way as a reflection of change in society. An example is the change from excessive didacticism in children's literature to the concept of reading for enjoyment. In the past, literature for children was used exclusively for the purpose of education. This didactic aim has been tempered by the presence of elements of entertainment and enjoyment used to encourage children to read. For example, works such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), and its sequel *Through the Looking Glass* (1872) helped to change the emphasis of English language children's literature from instruction to entertainment.

This cannot be seen as a definitive change, however, as researchers, parents, teachers, and critics continue to argue that either entertainment or education constitutes the main purpose and major defining component of children's literature, some arguing that the presence of didactic elements, or conversely entertaining elements, removes the literature from the category of children's literature, as will be discussed below in Section 1.6: Definitions of Terms. The attempt to agree upon a definition of children's literature has been a contentious issue for centuries, with, on the one hand for example, moralistic and religious texts aimed at teaching children how to behave, and on the other hand, entertaining and nonsensical stories appealing to the vivid imagination of children.

Some aspects of children's literature are continuous in nature; education and entertainment vie for ascendancy, while adults argue over what constitutes suitable content. An example of an age old form of storytelling which is still with us today is

oral literature. In oral literature, repetition and song help children to remember stories. Although oral storytelling lost importance after urbanization, the basic element of storytelling, that of passing on stories from parents to children, keeps alive events or tales from the past and is not something which changes as such, but merely relocates to new media such as books, film and TV. Simplicity of language depending on the vocabulary level and age of the child reader is another marker of juvenile literature in books for younger children. This kind of literature, even if intended as entertainment has the didactic aim of improving the child's reading skills. Often the physical form of a book: the typesetting, size of font, amount of text on each page will show that it is a children's book. The amount and style of illustration in a book can signify that it is intended for children, although with the advent of graphic novels and the spread of adult *manga*-style comics of the variety much-loved in Japan, the demarcation line has become more blurred than it was previously. These issues can be cited as basic underlying elements in children's literature which continue in different ways despite political upheavals or social changes.

This study, while giving an overview of children's works and writers of the second half of the twentieth century, in the two areas of Iran and Tajikistan, is concerned with the effect of social and political influences on Persianate literature for children, and the elements of continuity and change within this literature. The two areas were chosen for their common linguistic heritage and cultural past. Both saw major political upheavals during the second part of the twentieth century. Social upheavals such as the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the end of Soviet rule in Tajikistan have been cited elsewhere as reasons for drastic changes in children's

literature (Ansari 1980:38-39; Hejvani 2000:19). This thesis contends that while change did occur, in fact, these changes are not as widespread or as drastic as claimed. A total break with the past did not occur. The research charts the progress of Persianate children's literature over the crucial phases of asserted sweeping change in the second half of the twentieth century, examining elements of continuity from a number of aspects. Affective factors and texts from earlier times are also included to give a wider time perspective which will show the origins of much modern Persianate literature for children and show more clearly the type of changes which have occurred. A comparative element has been introduced with the addition of Tajikistan as a second geographical area within the Persianate language family. The data is far more extensive for Iran than for Tajikistan, however. Although this is not a parallel study consisting of two equal sets of data, the secondary set of Tajiki data is valuable as it enlarges and supports the argument. (More will be said in 1.4 Delimitation of Field about the inclusion of Tajiki material). In addition, the Tajiki research opens links to a vast body of research on Soviet children's literature which is pertinent to Tajiki children's literature written in or translated into Russian during Soviet rule.

The study will examine the commonly held belief amongst intellectuals and writers (e.g. Ansari 1980:38-39; Hejvani 2000:19; Mirhadi 1980:1) that societal change led to fundamental changes in Persianate children's literature, especially over periods of major historical change, the latest of which for Tajikistan was the end of the Soviet era and for Iran, the Islamic Revolution. Few researchers of Persianate children's literature have focused on the existence of continuity and its reasons and causes. Researchers of Russian children's literature, likewise, tend to focus on the

change from pre-revolutionary to Soviet children's literature, rather than the period after the fall of the Soviet Union. This Russian body of research does, however, offer theoretical support for the present thesis. Referring to politics and propaganda, children's literature has often been used as a tool of the state in its attempts to produce its desired model citizens. These attempts have not been entirely successful. Several researchers of Soviet children's literature have remarked upon its continuity, despite the government's attempt to use it for the purpose of political propaganda. For example, Manz (2007:31) notes that early in the 1920s in the USSR, the Department of Agitation and Propaganda (Agitprop) set guidelines for the content of children's literature, but were unable to bring about a systematic change in the realm of children's literature, or to gain exclusive control over its production. Despite coming from a different era, this example expresses parallel issues to those arising in the present research, although the focus of the present research is not censorship as such. Another example taken from the USSR is the attitude of the Communist Party towards nature and its portrayal in works for children. According to this philosophy, man and science would soon conquer nature and bring it under human, i.e. party, control. Husband (2006:300-318) notes that Soviet propaganda was not successful in changing stories about nature written for children. He also questions the originality of Bolshevik children's literature and its ideological consistency, noting that children's literature produced during the first decade of Soviet rule 'replicated a significant array of key pre-revolutionary forms, even as it purported to supersede them' (Husband 2006:302). Regarding portrayals of nature, he further affirms: 'Even as the Stalinist dictatorship greatly increased its ability to silence criticism in the 1930s, a small but symbolically significant number of apolitical characterizations of

nature still reached the young despite the official posture of the state' (Husband 2006:301). Thus, in the case of Soviet era children's literature, elements from earlier literature for children continued to be written and published despite the attempts of the Soviet Party to suppress them and disseminate propaganda supporting party ideology. Research shows (Husband 2006:302; Manz 2007:31) that effective changes in the above areas of children's literature had not been achieved during Soviet rule. This thesis, in giving a historical overview, will investigate such resistance to change, as well as the changes which did occur, in Persianate children's literature. It will also demonstrate that in the case of Tajikistan, when Soviet rule ended, elements from earlier times reasserted themselves.

In Iran, the modernists of the Constitutional era sought to introduce both new methods of teaching and new texts. They rejected the traditional Iranian teaching system and its reliance on folktales. However, they were not entirely successful in eliminating them. Ghaeni (2004:359-365) points to a number of changes which occurred during this period, while including the continuity of oral literature and folklore as a transformational feature:

The turning point occurs in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, when the appearance of new educational concepts, the continuity of oral literature and folklore, the development of a more simple Persian prose, the advent of translations from the West, the start of the printing industry in Iran, establishment of new schools, the study of child psychology, and the rise of pioneering personalities such as early publishers of books for children, transformed Iranian children's literature (Ghaeni 2004:359-365).

Some changes which occurred during political upheavals were later reversed. For example, in Iran after the Islamic Revolution the number of foreign translations

from Western countries dropped sharply and then later the number of translations once again increased, but with more focus on works from different areas of the world such as South America, Africa and Asia instead of previously favored geographical areas such as Europe or the USA. Translation in itself was not considered dangerous by the new government, but rather, the ideology contained within it. Once translations were available which were not ideologically opposed to the regime, their numbers once more rose. This demonstrates that the impact of social developments can result in a reversal or transformation back to previous trends, but with differences from the original. In the previous example, a purposeful decision appeared to lessen the influence of Western writers by supporting the translation of works from the rest of the world.

Even writers who focus on change often refer to continuity. In the field of Iranian children's literature for example, Hejvani (2000:20:19), when describing the events of the Islamic Revolution in Iran admitted, 'Of course even with all these changes or incidents, children's literature still carried on its own natural course'. What constitutes this 'natural course' will form part of the later investigation of this study and will be linked to the question of change and continuity.

This introductory background section has outlined viewpoints held by writers regarding change and continuity in society and literature, and has noted the role played by politics and culture in children's literature in order to set the scope of the study and to put the background in perspective.

1.2 Problem statement

Literature can be viewed as a continuum that reflects the characteristics of the society that produces it. National identity and a sense of a country's history are contained in its literature. These elements of continuity are subject to change over time, but these changes may be merely superficial. One of the challenges of this study centers around the problem of identifying, measuring and delineating real change from surface change in view of how fundamentally and intricately they are linked in Persianate children's literature. In the case of Persianate children's literature, is change attributable to social, economic, or political factors, all three; or is one more prevalent than the others? Furthermore, change or continuity may not be greatly influenced by any of the three factors, but the influence may come from another source. What seems to be innovation, upon closer inspection may be merely a recycling of previous themes, motifs and conventions, often using the same codes. In terms of specific examples there may be stylistic changes that have little bearing on a macro level, just as fashions revolve without changing the basic underlying structure. At the idiosyncratic level, writers and artists can and do go against current fashions, producing seemingly new directions in literature that are often a tissue of intertextuality based largely upon previous works.

With the above as background, the problem investigated in this thesis can be summarized as an attempt to establish whether or not change in society disrupts continuity and inevitably causes radical change in Persianate children's literature, and whether continuity in Persianate children's literature can be proven to exist as the norm along with change, rather than as the exception. The thesis will investigate this problem via an historical background of social, economic and political factors

concerning Persianate children's literature, then it will relate this historical overview to the specific time frame and focus of the study, i.e. the second half of the twentieth century.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of this thesis, while making accessible an overview of the historical development of Persianate children's literature, is to examine a fundamental assumption that has been made in the field of Persianate children's literature, that radical changes in society inevitably result in radical changes in literature produced for children. The study, furthermore, will demonstrate continuity as an important factor in Persianate children's literature by providing empirical evidence previously lacking in this field of research, more usually seen to focus on change. The study will investigate aspects which have remained the same from the time of traditional literature until the modern era and will demonstrate that despite social and political upheavals, tradition and culture have formed a strong element of continuity which still influences this literature today. Thus, while not attempting to deny the existence of change in this body of children's literature, the study will examine political and social aspects of children's literature from the perspective of continuity and change with relation to society and each other, rather than focusing on identifying and measuring changes, as other research has done.

1.4 Delimitation of the field

This thesis studies the development of Persianate children's literature with relation to its background history and society, and to change and continuity. It concerns literature written in Farsi, and Tajiki, related languages of the Persianate language group, and focuses mainly on Farsi. Therefore, it does not include literature from other language groups in the researched areas such as, for example, Azerbaijani, Kurdish or Armenian. The two geographical areas featured in this thesis are limited to Iran and Tajikistan where materials written in the above-mentioned languages can be found.

The main time focus of the study is a period of approximately forty years, from the late 1950s until 2000. This historical period is critical as events occurred during this time represent a major political change in both of the geographical areas under study. In addition, a special reference is made to the historical and traditional roots which inform the Persianate literature of the entire geographical area of *Iranzamin* (the ancient empire of Greater Iran, including Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and parts of Uzbekistan), dating from around a thousand years before. This is an important aspect of the study which establishes a link with the past and a foundation for the ideology, content, themes, etc. of modern Persianate children's literature. For this purpose, four major examples of traditional literature are examined to ascertain if or how they have affected modern works for children. These are *One Thousand and One Nights*, *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, *Mullah Nasrudin* or *Goha*,

and the *Shahnameh*. A separate historical overview of these texts is given, while later sections refer back to them.

In Iran, the main period under study mainly falls into two sections: the two decades before the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the two decades following it. Likewise, in Tajikistan, two historical periods can be identified which represent a major political change as in Iran, although the amount of data available is not so extensive as that found for Iran. In Tajikistan, the two periods consist of the end of the Soviet period, mainly from the mid-twentieth century until 1991, and the independent period up to the present. The effect of Soviet rule on children's literature, followed by its dissolution in 1991, and the 1992-97 Civil War, will be examined by content analysis of a number of works for children. The material featured in this section, having been researched in Tajikistan, does not contain examples from Afghanistan or Uzbekistan. While some examples of Afghan refugee children's work have been included in the present thesis, a further separate study would be necessary to expand this scope to include an examination of works for children in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.

The majority of the information originates from Iran due to its historical position as the dominant cultural power center in the area of Iranzamin. Of necessity, the research area was limited to that which would be most productive and where materials were available for research. Of necessity, the research area was limited to that which would be most productive and where materials were available for research. As Afghanistan has been in a state of war for many years with books, education and schools coming under attack, there is no comparable body of work consisting of children's literature available in Dari. Works in Dari would not

constitute a sufficient body for analysis or study. This resulted in information and works firstly from Iran, and secondly from Tajikistan, being used as the major sources of data for this thesis.

1.5 Research methodology

The research approach followed includes quantitative and qualitative methods, for the most part involving literature study and content analysis, with additional information gathered from interviews. The choice of specific methods varied according to availability of sources. Interviews and quantitative data such as statistics from surveys provided supporting information for the thesis, but did not constitute a structured aspect of the research. Where secondary sources were used these were balanced where possible by comparison with additional information and opinions.

Content analysis, a standard research technique for ‘making replicable and valid inferences from texts...’ (Krippendorff 2004:18), was used in this thesis to examine texts from different aspects. Content analysis can be used for many purposes as listed by Weber (1990:9); it can disclose international differences in communication content; compare media or levels of communication; audit communication content against objectives; code open ended questions in surveys; identify the intentions and other characteristics of the communicator; determine the psychological state of persons or groups; detect the existence of propaganda; describe attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications; reflect cultural

patterns of groups, institutions, or societies; reveal the focus of individual, group, institutional or societal attention and describe trends in communication content.

(Tahmasian, 2007:55) emphasizes that library and information science is also a branch of those disciplines concerned with this research method. Azadeh et. al. (2010) in their investigation of content analysis-based studies of Iranian literature for children and young adults confirm that out of approximately two dozen studies done between 1974 and 2000, library and information sciences and communication sciences studies account for 74% of the total, while Persian literature studies account for 11%. These consist of either journal articles or masters theses, but none are doctoral theses. This would appear to indicate that a more in-depth study of literature requires additional methods of research.

Berelson (1952) describes content analysis as a systematic, objective and quantitative method for studying communication messages. While content analysis can be quantitative, qualitative content analysis also exists, and has been defined as ‘any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings’ (Patton, 2002:453), and as ‘a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns’ (Hsieh & Shannon. 2005:1278). Qualitative content analysis can be seen from these definitions to reflect a more integrated view of texts and their specific contexts, going beyond merely counting words or extracting statistics from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns, as Wildemuth & Zhang (2009) explain; qualitative content analysis does not produce counts and statistical significance; instead, it uncovers patterns, themes, and categories

important to a social reality. Therefore, while quantitative content analysis has been used as a starting point for parts of this study, it has been used in conjunction with qualitative content analysis in order to trace trends and characteristics in Persianate children's literature of different periods.

On the back cover of his book, Krippendorff (2004) notes that content analysis can be used to analyze... data whose physical manifestations are secondary to the meanings that a particular population of people brings to them. He observes (2004:298) that quantitative CATA (computer aided text analysis) approaches are usually limited to single bodies of texts and do not respond to interactions among texts over time, while arguing that 'social realities manifest themselves within vast networks of rearticulations of texts that organize themselves in the process of continuing rearticulations'(2004:299). Cultural evolution and language evolution have been likened to biological evolution, especially since the nineteenth century when Darwin propounded his theory of natural selection (Heylighen & Chielens 2009). The concept of 'meme', an analogy for gene, was introduced by Dawkins (1976) who described a meme as a cultural replicator, a unit for carrying cultural ideas, symbols or practices, such as a traditions, beliefs, ideas, melodies, or fashions, which can be transmitted from one person's mind to another. The theory of meaning that memetic approaches are based upon attempts to relate presently existing texts to the histories of their interpretations.

Vandergrift (1990:35) points out that 'an alternative form of historical study of children's literature is that which examines the history and development of this literature itself. Many historical studies look at the content of literature created at different times to investigate historical periods in children's literature and relate

those periods to general historical events. Extratextual research also takes the form of general surveys.’

The present study comprises historical research, and as such follows an extrinsic approach according to Wellek & Warren (cited in Vandergrift 1990:28) who distinguish between two approaches: extrinsic and intrinsic. According to Vandergrift (1990:28), the Modern Language Association (MLA) divides scholarship in modern languages and literature into five groups: (1) linguistics, (2) textual scholarship, (3) historical scholarship, (4) literary criticism, and (5) literary theory, the first and second of which correspond to Wellek & Warren’s intrinsic approach, while historical scholarship includes all forms of extrinsic approaches, and in literature involves theory, criticism, and various kinds of extrinsic interpretations. Vandergrift (1990:29) categorizes research activities as being innertextual, intratextual, or extratextual; i.e. researching within a particular text, among texts, or beyond texts; studies focusing on the work are innertextual, those concentrating on literary knowledge are intratextual, and all studies of the world, the author, or the audience are extratextual (also called extrinsic or historical). As mentioned above, one method used by this study to obtain information regarding change and continuity is content analysis, and this would seem to focus on the works rather than extratextual elements. The study, however, focuses on the reflection in literary content of the outside circumstances which have affected and formed the literature, as Vandergrift (1990:33) clarifies: ‘Emphases on the relationship of the literary work to the world outside that work are most frequently represented by content analysis studies which focus on contemporary sociological concerns. Although content analysis might appear to be a form of innertextual study or a close examination of

content within a text, its focus is most often on the text's representation of an external reality.' The content of children's literature from different periods can be related to general historical events and can be used to investigate their effects. Vandergrift (1990:29) notes that neither authors and audiences, nor literary works themselves can be separated from their historical contexts. Therefore, in addition to content analysis, sociological and educational surveys input a further quantitative element to support and underpin the thesis. Meigs (cited in Vandergrift 1990:35) describing extratextual research also says that it 'takes the form of general surveys, period studies, regional surveys, surveys of ethnic literature, and investigations of intellectual or social trends such as feminism, Darwinism, conservatism.' The study, therefore, uses various means to determine how social developments have affected Persianate children's literature and by balancing input from these focuses on a number of areas where elements of continuity and change can be demonstrated. The links between earlier literature and twentieth century literature are important as this earlier literature was the foundation for themes, characters, plots, morals and many other aspects of today's Persianate children's literature. Thus, although the focus is on the twentieth century, the examination of a number of earlier texts gives a perspective of historical development, while not following a direct chronological development of the literature over the intervening centuries. With regard to the historical development of Persianate children's literature, the traditional foundation and heritage of the literature is first investigated by analyzing four traditional texts for content, morals, plot, characterization, and other issues, and the focus then moves to the forty year period of pre- and post-revolution in Iran, and the Soviet and post-Soviet eras in Tajikistan. The modern texts are investigated with reference to the

underpinning of the traditional input and common heritage of the literature of these two areas and the recurrence of elements from the early texts. This is very important in a study which seeks to focus on a short time period while investigating aspects of change and continuity.

1.6 Definitions of terms

A brief definition of the key concepts relating to the present research will indicate the approach and scope of this thesis. First, what is meant by political and social aspects? What is ‘society’? What is ‘politics’? Dictionary definitions tell us that:

‘A society is a community, nation, or broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions, and collective activities and interests.’
(*Merriam Webster*...1999, Sv ‘society’)

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2004) gives more details:

1: companionship or association with one’s fellows: friendly or intimate intercourse: company.

2: a voluntary association of individuals for common ends; especially: an organized group working together or periodically meeting because of common interests, beliefs, or profession.

3 a) an enduring and cooperating social group whose members have developed organized patterns of relationships through interaction with one another: b) a community, nation, or broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions, and collective activities and interests.

4 a) a part of a community that is a unit distinguishable by particular aims or standards of living or conduct: a social circle or a group of social circles having a clearly marked identity, move in polite society, literary society: b) a part of the community that sets itself apart as a leisure class and that regards itself as the arbiter of fashion and manners.

5 a) a natural group of plants usually of a single species or habit within an association: b) the progeny of a pair of insects when constituting a social unit (as a hive of bees); broadly: an interdependent system of organisms or biological units.

The dictionary defines politics as follows:

‘Politics is competition between different interest groups or individuals for power and leadership or the total complex of relations between people living in society.’

(*Merriam Webster*... 1999, Sv ‘politics’)

A second definition says that politics is:

‘a) the total complex of relations between people living in society, b) relations or conduct in a particular area of experience especially as seen or dealt with from a political point of view.’

(*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Sv ‘politics’, Standard Edition 2004 CD-ROM, Dictionary)

Adults make decisions for children in society, thus children are subjected to politics on the level of group interaction, as well as on a governmental level. It is an accepted fact that politics affects literature, including literature for children. One of the ways societies reinforce their common culture is by means of literature, and this starts with children’s literature as part of the socializing process.

‘Society’ and ‘politics’ are not usually found as keywords in literary dictionaries. *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* (1987:51) does, however, give ‘culture’ as a headword, and in defining it as ‘the cultivation of values,’ connects it with literature:

Literary criticism has traditionally concerned itself with culture as a body of values, especially those values transmitted from the past to the future through the imaginative works of men. Culture in this sense implies the accumulation of discriminations. It implies a selective social structure, since it distinguishes passive recipients of social perspectives from those who cultivate an awareness of such perspectives. This in turn implies a teaching

and learning process, and generates theories of a distinctive class with a duty to protect and disseminate traditions.

This distinctive class could be said to consist of the adults in society, who make decisions for children in order to socialize them and pass on wisdom to them, while children form the passive, receiving class. Such a dynamic could be seen as a continuous element with regard to children's literature.

The entry for 'change' in *A Dictionary of Sociology* (Marshall & Scott 2009) notes that sociologists are interested in changes that affect norms, values, behaviour, cultural meanings, and social relationships. The entry states that change can be explained as an epiphenomenon of the constant search for equilibrium if society is viewed as a complex and interconnected pattern of functions. Thus, this definition posits change as a result of the search for stability, consistency, permanence, durability, and continuity. Marshall & Scott (2009) assert that the 19th-century equation of change with progress is no longer widely accepted and that change may be regressive, or destructive, or confused by cultural lag.

'Continuity' is not usually found as a keyword in literary or political dictionaries. Cultural continuity, however, is a concept discussed by sociologists and art critics alike. For example, Betty la Duke (1999) attributes the propagation of cultural continuity to women artists in Africa, saying that it can be seen as an attribute of women, in women's roles which possess values that can be passed on by women to children. She states that continuity can include political themes, as well as cultural themes. An investigation of cultural continuity seen from a feminist perspective is beyond the scope of the present study, but it is certainly an aspect which deserves recognition, and elements of continuity found in the work of

children's book illustrators, including women artists, will be examined in Chapter Eight.

In defining social and cultural continuity and change, one finds that the word 'change' is used in relation to continuity, for example in the use of terms such as 'social change', the sociological term relating to culture and social relationships, or 'cultural change', the anthropological term. As society and culture are interdependent, the term 'socio-cultural change' has also become an accepted term. Thus, it can be seen that any discussion of continuity must include elements of change; the two complement each other, rather than stand in opposition. These social continuities can be perceived in literature, especially in works for children, as many of the concerns relating to children are the same now as they have always been. Thus, folktales and fables originating centuries ago have remained popular as source material for children's literature. This brings us to a crucial point in introducing this research, and that is; how do we define children's literature?

The discussion of what constitutes, or does not constitute, children's literature is a concern which arises frequently and as a contentious issue, cannot be avoided. As such, it presents an ongoing debate which involves some of the issues touched upon in the present research and which attracts a number of different viewpoints. While the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2004) defines children's literature as 'the body of written works and accompanying illustrations produced in order to entertain or instruct young people... including acknowledged classics of world literature, picture books and easy-to-read stories written exclusively for children, and fairy tales, lullabies, fables, folk songs, and other primarily orally transmitted materials,' a narrower definition is found in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* which states; 'Children's

literature is a genre employing themes, language, and illustrations geared to the development levels of children....' (Ayman et. al. 1992:417) Karimi-Hakkak (1998:540) summarizes the definition from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* as follows 'all books written especially for children and also many written for adults which have been widely read by children.'

Shekhoian (2004) gives the following definition: 'Didactic literature which tries to tell children how they should be is not real children's literature, or rather it is children's literature on a lower level, whereas literature which looks at the world as children do is real children's literature and of a higher level.' Karimi-Hakkak (1998:540) notes that children read stories from Iranian classics and popular adult stories, and that this latter category was generally considered unsuitable for young people. This includes stories such as Obayd Zakani's *Mush o Gorbah* [The Mouse and the Cat] and Shaikh Baha' al-Din 'Ameli's *Nan o Halva* [Bread and Halva] and *Shir o Shekar* [Milk and Sugar] and popular adult stories such as *Chehel Tuti* [Forty Parrots] and *Hezar o yek Shab* [A Thousand and One Nights]. The fact that these stories have been widely read over a long period up to the present seems to include them in the category of children's literature bringing the popularly accepted definition of children's literature much closer to that of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Marzolph (2001:229-232) also stresses the difficulties of definition and classification of children's literature. Thus, it appears that there is no simple answer with regard to what should or should not be classified as children's literature. Even though many books have been considered by adults to be unsuitable reading material for children this has not diminished their popularity among their young readers. This would imply that as an audience, children are not completely powerless and can

affect the production of materials for their own reading. This applies even more strongly to oral literature, which was more egalitarian than print literature in this regard, more accessible to children, and more suited to their early development.

In this thesis, children's literature will be understood as that literature, written by adults or children, which has attracted a readership of children either separately or in addition to adults, whether or not it was originally written or marketed as children's literature, and whether or not its purpose is didactic. Such a definition, therefore, includes books which were not originally written for children, and educational literature as part of children's literature. Furthermore, the terms 'children's literature' and 'story' are sometimes used as equivalents.

1.7 Importance of the study

This thesis attempts to create a new space for addressing the problem; how much of the literature written for children is built on what has been written before and how much is genuinely fresh and new? The major contention is in a sense paradoxical: how can the works hold continuous elements from the past when economics, history and politics have influenced modern children's literature and its form and content? The study will explore the constraints and peculiar contradictions that are contained within the problem, reading particular and discrete texts of Persianate children's literature from the past and the present in a way that touches on the kinds of important truths depicted in the texts.

This thesis focuses on the second half of the twentieth century and the development of modern Persianate children's literature during this period, and seeks to demonstrate that continuity is an informing factor alongside change. While other views state that children's literature has drastically changed in the second half of the twentieth century due to socio-cultural changes, this thesis will show that continuity also forms the basis of much modern Persianate children's literature.

Although there are numerous books and journals in Iran which examine children's literature, very little has been written about the specific aspects of change and continuity in Persianate children's literature. In addition, there are no significant or comprehensive studies of change and continuity in the field of Persianate children's literature in English. There is a large gap to be bridged between available critical literature on the subject in Persianate languages and the body of knowledge available to academics in the English-speaking world. As very little of the body of literature dealing with Persianate children's literature has been translated into English, the study is important because it will facilitate international access to this body of literature. Therefore the value of this study is that it opens a window into formerly inaccessible material and brings a previously unresearched aspect of the literature to library and information science theory and practice. It furthermore highlights the lack of available material in the subject area and indicates the need for further research in the field.

1.8 Literature review

The following section will present a review of the literature and other sources of information which have informed this thesis. The primary source of information for the study was obtained by translating children's books and stories written in Farsi and Tajiki into English. Information found in the reports, articles and journals of various organizations has shaped much of this research and guided its choice of primary sources. An important indicator of development in the field of children's literature is the activity of organizations involved in it. For example, issues of IBBY's¹ print journal *Bookbird*, spanning forty five years between 1963 and 2008, were consulted. These contained regular articles and reports about children's literature in Iran from the Children's Book Council (CBC), the Iranian branch of IBBY. The secondary source material found in *Bookbird* provides a record of the CBC's activities, prizes, topics, authors, books, and so on, and details changes and elements of continuity through the decades with relation to the organizations working in the field of children's literature. Such secondary source material, and data from articles found in critical journals and periodicals, information from book exhibitions and festivals, interviews with editors, authors and critics, along with information found in the primary sources of children's books and stories, forms the source material for this thesis. There is very little written in other languages about Persianate children's literature, and most of the available material is in the form of articles, dissertations or reports, such as the abovementioned *Bookbird* material.

¹ The International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) is a non-profit organization which represents people from all over the world who are committed to bringing books and children together.

As an example of what may be found in databases; a search of the entire *Infotrac College Edition* database on the subject of *Iran and children and literature* reveals: ‘There are no matching citations.’ When the database is searched for the term *Iran* in the text of the *Horn Book*, a long established children’s literature magazine published in Boston, only eight results are shown, and for *Iranian*, seven. None of these articles contain any in-depth material about Iranian writers or Iranian children’s literature.

Other sources of data are specialized encyclopedias such as *Encyclopaedia Iranica* or the *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature*. However, these sources are not numerous and most research written in English does not usually concern Persianate children’s literature, or indeed, any other tradition, but rather, focuses on English language children’s literature, which posits itself as the worldwide canon. Therefore, most of the source material for this research will be translated from Farsi and Tajiki into English, the majority coming from the Farsi sources.

A major research work in progress is *The History of Children’s Literature in Iran* by The Foundation for Research on the History of Children’s Literature in Iran. The project started in 1997 and after the publication of seven volumes by 2005, reached the modern era, 1920-1960. It is planned that the last volumes will cover the establishment of the first institutions for children’s literature and qualitative and quantitative expansion of children’s books from 1961 to the beginning of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. By 2010, the final part of this research had still not been published due to constraints imposed by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance of Iran.

Thirty four volumes of *Pazhuheshnameh*, (*The Research Quarterly of Children and Youth's Literature*), published in Tehran between 1995 and 2003, were consulted during the course of this research, and while these covered a wide variety of topics connected with children's literature, few addressed the problem of change and continuity directly. The same was found for the monthly children's literature publication *Ketab-e Mah*, of which 30 volumes, published between 1997 and 1999, were consulted.

When looking at the literature available until now, it can be seen that most authors emphasize the changes arising in children's literature as a result of social and political developments (i.e. the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the fall of Soviet rule in Tajikistan), rather than the thread of continuity which runs alongside these changes. In addition, no one to date has investigated the parallels between the effect of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the end of the Soviet era in Tajikistan on children's literature.

One of the Russian language sources for this thesis, the Moscow-based children's literature journal, *Detskaya Literatura*, dedicated an entire issue to Tajiki children's literature in 1981.

Some research on adult literature is relevant to the present research as it can also be applied to or includes children's literature: for example, the 1995 article by Reza Rahgozar (Mohammad Reza Sartor), 'A Review of The State of Fiction in Iran After the Islamic Revolution' in *Adabiat-e-Dastani* and Ulrich Marzolph's 2001 'Persian Popular Literature in the Qajar Period,' in *Asian Folklore Studies*, the latter being one of the few studies that highlights the continuity of themes, topics and even discrete stories in children's literature over the past one and a half centuries.

Much of the literature from the time of the Iranian Revolution highlights the expected radical changes in the content of children's literature brought about by social changes. Most of these deal with the immediate post-revolution period. For example, Zarintaj Taji Tajeran's content analysis (1980) focuses on social and moral values. A number of content surveys have been carried out in Iran to investigate changes in book content, pre- and post-revolution. One of the differences was seen to be a major, but short-lived increase in the ratio of original versus translated works published after the Islamic Revolution, as noted by Hejvani in his report 'A content analysis of Iranian children's story books for the presence of social and moral values' on Iranian children's literature from 1979 to 1999'. This was reflected in other surveys such as those by the Children's Book Council of Iran which also focused on the ratio of books judged to be 'suitable' for publication in these two periods. Kadivar (1996), in his thesis, 'Analysis of the content of story books of the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults in two stages before and after the Islamic Revolution of Iran' suffered from an imbalance of source materials, taking books from a sixteen-year period before the revolution and from a period of only three years post-revolution. Touba (1987:143) analyzed the elementary level Farsi language, social studies, religion and science textbooks in use after the first year of the revolution, from the aspect of changes in gender roles. To sum up this literature, most of the findings which showed changes focused very narrowly on the immediate pre-and post-revolution periods, and others which focused on these two periods expecting to find major changes, did not find proof to support their hypotheses.

There is still disagreement from academics about the type and extent of any changes which have occurred, and these areas still lack conclusive proof. Therefore, the question of change versus continuity has not been sufficiently addressed by researchers in Iran or Tajikistan and requires further investigation.

1.9 Outline of the study: indication of chapters

Chapter One comprises the present chapter which consists of the background to the study, the problem statement, the aim of the study, delimitation of the field, research methodology, definition of terms, importance of the study, literature review, and an outline giving an indication of the chapters.

Chapter Two outlines a number of general theoretical aspects of politics, ideology and culture in children's literature, and establishes a theoretical basis for the research. It refers to American and European theories of literature which can be applied to the present research, and particularly as they relate to continuity and change in children's literature.

Chapter Three first gives an historical overview of the period leading up to that under study, then highlights a number of diverse social issues in order to investigate the way they have affected the production and content of Persianate children's literature. These issues include the effect of the 1979 Islamic Revolution on writers and their work, the 1981-88 Iran-Iraq war, the portrayal of disability, selection

criteria and the contents of children's books, educational literature, and magazines for children. Changes made in educational literature after the Islamic Revolution were reputed to be widespread and encompassing, but the present research will show that they amounted to little more than cosmetic change.

Chapter Four examines examples of ancient writings, fables and epics, leading to instances of their influence on modern children's literature in Iran and beyond, in this and later chapters. The effect and influence of these texts on modern tales and modern writers is investigated. The interplay between oral and literary transmission is also highlighted. Four famous works are used to exemplify the various traditions which modern works have drawn upon: *One Thousand and One Nights*, *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, *Mullah Nasrudin or Goha*, and the *Shahnameh*.

Chapter Five examines the work of the main organizations responsible for children's literature in Iran and tries to ascertain the extent of the influence of these organizations in the promotion of works for children, and whether they are forces which support the status quo and continuity or which encourage change. The work and influence of two major Iranian organizations is examined to try to find answers: The Children's Book Council of Iran (CBC) and the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (*Kanun*); one is an NGO and the other a government organization. The development of these organizations, and their activities and influence on Persianate children's literature, are traced from their beginnings in the late 1950s or early 1960s to the end of the twentieth century.

Chapter Six appraises the life and work of writers producing works for children in the pre- and post-revolutionary periods in Iran. This chapter analyzes the effect of social and political influences on their work in order to identify elements of change and continuity. It also looks at the changes which these authors were subjected to during their lives. The chapter investigates issues seen in works by seven popular representative Iranian children's writers spanning the two periods under research. The second part of the chapter focuses in greater detail on two prominent Iranian children's writers who each represent their respective eras; Samad Behrangi who produced work in the 1960s, and Moradi Kermani whose main body of work was published in the 1980s.

Chapter Seven features the work of children themselves, an area not often examined when discussing children's literature. An examination of works by young authors is intended to provide some insight into the issues which children themselves view as important and to show that these do not change fundamentally over time. The researcher seeks to show that children's writing as well as adults' writing for children is a continuum of the spectrum where social and political influences shape people's worldview, concerns, and mode of expression. The content of magazines and collections featuring children's writing in Iran is compared, and the chapter ends with an example of the work of a young novelist from Iran, who was, at the time of writing, the youngest Iranian writer to publish a novel. The chapter forms an important section of the research, as concerns of children themselves are examined and compared against those of adults in order to discover what differences may be reflected in their writing with regard to the thesis argument.

Chapter Eight explores Iranian children's book illustration, illustration exhibitions and awards, and some works of Iranian illustrators. The visual aspect of illustrated books forms a vital aspect of children's literature especially for younger children and reflects social and cultural values in a visible way, showing traditional, national and international influences. This chapter briefly examines traditional and classical illustration and its continuing influence. It then focuses on issues concerning twentieth century Iranian children's book illustrations, as these issues while sharing common features with those of writing for children, also differ somewhat from them. They include foreign cultural dominance, reflection of societal values, gender differences, governmental influence and educational use, as well as the relevance of Iran's artistic heritage on the illustrations of today.

Chapter Nine investigates material that reflects the heritage shared by Iranian children's literature and the children's literature of Greater Iran or *Iranzamin*. The influence of Soviet rule and its effect on the literature of Tajikistan is studied to discover if continuity has been broken, and if not, to what extent it can be found. The concept of *Iranzamin* as an enduring entity is examined to seek evidence that influences from traditional literature can still be found in Tajiki literature for children today, as in Iranian literature for children.

Chapter Ten forms the general conclusion of the thesis. It summarizes the main points and findings of each chapter, highlights the similarities found in the Persianate children's literature of Tajikistan and Iran, the two major areas under study, and

sums up outstanding disagreements on the nature and purpose of children's literature. Finally it delineates the limitations of the present study and offers suggestions for subsequent research.

1.10 Conclusion

The present chapter introduced the study by giving the background to the study, the aim of the study, the problem statement, delimitation of the field, research methodology, definition of terms, importance of the study, literature review, and an outline of the chapters. It introduced the basic issues relating to change and continuity with regard to politics and culture in children's literature in general. After opening with these broad aspects, it went on to introduce the subject of Persianate literature in Iran and Tajikistan, linking the basic issues with the specific subject area of the study. The following chapter will further lay the foundation of the thesis by giving a theoretical underpinning to the concepts of politics and society, and the aspects of change and continuity in relation to children's literature.

A few points of clarification regarding terminology and references would be in order as a final word. With the resulting need to differentiate between three separate languages, the terms Farsi, Dari and Tajiki are used in relation to Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan respectively, while the term Persian or Persianate is used to describe the wider group of languages, or often, the wider area and concept which

constitutes Greater Iran or *Iranzamin*. Transliteration follows the modernized IJMES standard with some modifications.²

² Based on transliteration editing done by researcher in Andrew J. Newman, ed., *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East, Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*, Leiden: Brill, 2003. The system used in this thesis is as IJMES modernized, i.e. without diacritics, Farsi with additional short *o* and *e*, *e* or *ye* for ezafeh and *o* for long diphthong **o**, *eh* for **o** ending, or *ah* for Arabic, and Tajiki with *o* for long *a*, *a* for **o** ending, *i* or *yi* for ezafeh; except in cases of titles or names which have their own spellings, and words which are found in the English dictionary, (hence, some names contain spelling *oo* and some *u* for **o**).

Chapter 2: Culture, politics and children's literature

2.1 Introduction

Literature is a reflection of society and a distillation of cultural values. It can contain either conservative or revolutionary elements, alternatively supporting or challenging the social and political status quo. While the previous chapter detailed the organization of this study, Chapter Two will outline general theoretical aspects which relate to children's literature, and especially to issues of change and continuity. This chapter will investigate theoretical aspects which are relevant to the thesis and will establish a theoretical basis for the research, while the next chapter, Chapter Three, will examine a number of discrete issues in further detail in order to give greater depth and background to the study.

2.2 Children and children's literature

In order to discuss children, a definition of the state of childhood must first be agreed upon. After this it will be possible to turn to a discussion of the literature intended for children. Therefore the first part of this title is 'Children' rather than 'Children's Literature'.

2.2.1 Concepts of childhood

Some critics consider that it is not possible to define children and children's literature, claiming that they do not exist as definable categories. For example, Zipes (2002:39-40) argues: 'If we take the genitive case literally and seriously... when we say 'children's literature'... then there is no such thing as children's literature, or for that matter, children. As we all know, children cannot easily be lumped together in one amorphous category.'

The concept of childhood has not remained stable throughout history. According to Heather Thomas (2009:1), historians fall into two camps regarding the history of childhood, those advocating continuity in child rearing practices, and those emphasizing change. She notes that it is difficult for historians to reconstruct the life of a child and the experience of being a child as there is little evidence of what childhood was really like in the past. Ariès asserts that in medieval society the concept of childhood did not exist (Ariès 1962:125). However, many critics consider his argument flawed and illogical and based on inadequate evidence (Wilson 1980:133). Other research contradicts his premise. For example, research of Arabic autobiographies depicting childhood which covers a period of one thousand years, shows that the state of childhood is clearly recognized as a separate state from adulthood in these writings (Reynolds 1997:379-392). Clarke (2004:6-7) disagrees with Ariès on this point, and in support he cites researchers such as Shahar and Pollock. Shahar (1992:1) argues that the concept of childhood existed in the Middle Ages, and Pollock (1983) researched English and American diaries, autobiographies and other first-hand accounts for the period 1500-1900. Pollock (1983:269) argues that the strongest impression gained from a reading of this material is one of

continuity, and that there is more similarity between families of the past and those of the present day than Ariès and his colleagues allow. Thus, research appears to support the existence of continuity in the recognition of childhood as a concept, while allowing that this concept has changed in form according to different geographical, social and historical factors.

Turning to the present, the UNICEF Convention of the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, offers a new definition of childhood based on human rights (UNICEF 2005). In this definition, childhood is separate from adulthood. In full, the UNICEF definition reads:

‘Childhood is the time for children to be in school and at play, to grow strong and confident with the love and encouragement of their family and an extended community of caring adults. It is a precious time in which children should live free from fear, safe from violence and protected from abuse and exploitation. As such, childhood means much more than just the space between birth and the attainment of adulthood. It refers to the state and condition of a child’s life, to the quality of those years.’

The UNICEF (2005) definition maintains that ‘despite intellectual debates about the definition of childhood and cultural differences about what to expect of children, there has always been a substantial degree of shared understanding that childhood implies a separated and safe space.’ This is an idealistic depiction and many children, for example those working in carpet-weaving factories in Iran, would be unable to relate it to their lives. Chapters Six and Seven contain stories which depict hardship during childhood as a popular theme for both adult and child writers in Iran.

2.2.2 Purposes of children's literature

When discussing childhood and literature for children, one must either accept the existence of the state of childhood and the existence of literature for children, or dismiss both of these concepts. This thesis accepts that childhood exists as a separate state from adulthood, and has always done so in some way. It also accepts that certain types of literature have always been directed towards children in an attempt to educate and socialize them, although the category 'children's literature' may be subject to different interpretations. For example, in the past, oral literature played a greater part in this education and socialization process, as the majority of people were illiterate. Zipes (2002:45-46) notes:

'Though literature for children was produced on a minor scale during the Middle Ages and Renaissance – we must remember that 95% of children in Europe could not read up to the eighteenth century, and those who could were mainly boys – the institution of children's literature did not come into play in full force until the eighteenth century' (Zipes 2002:45-46)

The twin purposes of instruction and delight have been considered by Western critics as the primary goals of children's literature since the London bookseller, John Newbery, published at least thirty children's books, including *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744), the first significant commercial English language children's book. Literature, and particularly literature for children has frequently served religious, moralistic or nationalist purposes in support of different regimes. It has contained political agendas and supported different ideologies either explicitly or implicitly. As an example of this, Sarland (1999:142) cites Leavis' ideas of continuity of consciousness and the preservation of society's values by its

educational establishments: ‘...the central focus [of the English school] was the study of “the best that has been thought and said in the world,” to quote Arnold (1932), as it was to be found in English literature...’ With regard to English literature and education, Sarland (1999:142) further points out: ‘Central to the practice of English teaching has been the notion of the promotion of values through the use of carefully selected texts, and the development of intelligent and sensitive readings of those texts.’

The use of literature in the promotion of values has a long history. Examples can be traced to 360BC, as seen in Plato’s Book II of *The Republic*:

Shall we allow our children to listen to any stories written by anyone, and to form opinions opposite of those we think they should have when they grow up?!

We certainly shall not!

Then it seems that our first business is to supervise the production of stories, and choose only those we think suitable, and reject the rest.

(Plato 1973:114-15)

Such use, and control, of literature over the ages could be cited as an example of continuity. Chapter Four examines a number of ancient texts which have influenced the Persianate children’s literature of modern times as these texts demonstrate the above and other examples of continuity. This leap back in time establishes the existence of key issues in historical texts which have continued to be relevant into the second half of the twentieth century, the time period under focus in this study.

The promotion of values as well as education in matters of state was an aim of ancient texts such as the *Panchatantra* and *Kalila wa Dimna* whose intended

audience was originally royal (male) children. The *Shahnameh* promoted values of heroism and national pride. Many of its stories were adapted for children in attempts to glorify the pre-islamic history of the Iranian Empire or *Iranzamin*, as will be discussed in Chapter Four. More recently, Soviet tradition identifies two types of instruction. The first entails knowledge, information and instruction, and the second deals with character education: attitudes, morals and upbringing (O'Dell 1978:5). A concept of Socialist Realism is that every work of art should have ideological content. Nevertheless, Soviet theorists maintained that children's books were also supposed to be entertaining in order to hold the children's interest and get their message across (O'Dell 1978:7).

Thus, it would appear that the transmission of values via literature has been a common aim in numerous societies, both ancient and modern and can be cited as evidence of continuity. The socialization of children into their particular society is effected by the use of children's literature. Children are taught how to behave and how to think. Values are passed on from one generation to the next. Childhood is the optimum time for the socialization of the new generation, although the socialization process does not end there. Techniques particular to children's sensibilities and temperament have been used in children's literature all over the world. For example, rhythm and rhyme help children to retain information and to learn in an enjoyable manner. Such techniques represent continuity in the poetics of children's literature across time and cultures. Before looking more closely at elements of change and continuity, however, the next section will turn to other theoretical aspects relating to children's literature.

2.3 Theoretical aspects of children's literature

Theoretical aspects pertaining to adult literature can apply equally to children's literature. The field of children's literature criticism has increased over the years, thus providing more material for research, especially studies conducted in the English language. However, for a study such as the present one, Western concepts may not always be applicable. Therefore, this section will attempt to extract the concepts which are relevant to the thesis, and, rather than give a thorough treatment of all aspects of literary theory, will focus on those aspects which are most relevant to children's literature and the present study.

One can discuss lexical, morphological, stylistic, and rhetorical issues, among others, with relation to children's literature and change and continuity. One can also discuss issues such as stereotyping, didacticism and content. It is not the aim of this section to investigate the entire range of literary theories, but as some issues are more relevant than others to the research they will be examined here. Issues of particular relevance to the study dealt with in the following section include approaches to literature, visual modes versus oral or textual modes, the relationship of adults to children and children's literature, acculturation and socialization through literature, ideology, narrative, selection criteria, and censorship.

2.3.1 Aesthetics in children's literature

Texts for young children very often contain visual material to attract their interest and to facilitate their understanding of the story. Questions of style and

aesthetics are just as important with regard to children's texts, if not more so, than for adult literature, since, as Harper (2001:393) points out, 'children are in the process of developing their sense of style and their notions of aesthetic value, of crafting meaning out of and assigning value to sensory experience.' Harper considers the process to be closely mediated by adult interaction which is logocentric, as the act of 'reading to' children ensures that the spoken word is prioritized over visual messages contained in pictures. This situation changes when children can read for themselves and achieve a higher level of independence of choice. Following on from this, Harper (2001:393) holds that 'transculturation occurs when subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant culture.' Child readers appropriate texts originally intended for adults as will be seen later in Chapter Four. The relationship between the cultures of adulthood and childhood may be likened in political terms to that between colonizer and colonized. In the case of child culture, indigenous cultural transmission refers to the kinds of social interactions that occur independently of direct adult intervention or that are produced alone or as internalized judgments. Harper (2001:393) emphasizes that children are rarely the authors or publishers of their own books, saying that while they live in shared worlds of critically ordered sensory experience, they must age before these worlds become subtle and fine-grained. They undertake communicative excursions within contexts more structuring than structured, ones in which they take on roles as evolving beings. He asserts that:

'Children are primary consumers of literature with a restricted, secondary access to modes of production and the means of exchange. They are encouraged by adults to join in the classification of the things of the world and to make identifications of similarity, association, and type...[but] there is no doubt that even quite young children have the ability to make

individual aesthetic judgments. The nature and extent of these judgments, however, is never fixed.’ (Harper 2001:393)

Children instinctively react to aesthetic stimulus, both visual and oral. Narrative therefore forms a major aesthetic stimulus in the case of children’s literature. Jarrar (2005:1) discusses Stephens’ ideas with relation to ideology and narrative, the main points of which are set out below. These ideas are very relevant to the present study as ideology and subjectivity can constitute important expressions of continuity in children’s literature.

2.3.2 Socialization and children’s literature

Stephens (1992:5) considers all narrative to contain ideological content and in order to locate it, one must pay attention to the ‘elements of narrative theory, critical linguistics, and a concern with ideology and subjectivity.’ Narrative techniques include, among others, point of view, narrative voice, closure and the process of filling gaps. People often reveal their attitudes through language, thus a competence in critical linguistics helps one locate ideology. Subjectivity is a person’s attitude that agrees with or differs from that of characters in a story; subjectivity and intertextuality are thus related to each other. Stephens maintains that, ‘the relationship between a reader and a text is dialectical, a negotiation of meaning between a subject’s multi-faceted sense of self and the many interpretive positions which a text may make possible’ (1992:47). Children are particularly vulnerable to identification with adult subjectivity, often mimicking their parents’ mannerisms, voices, expressions and tone of speech. This vulnerability is evident in identification

of children with characters in texts and narrator subjectivity (see the example of Amuzadeh-Khalili, Chapter 6.2.3:189-190). To an extent, familial or cultural homogeneity may engender continuity over the generations, while the differences between cultures and social groups sets up a changing kaleidoscope of possibilities and exchanges. One could cite these elements as continuously existing in different periods of time, in addition to the above theoretical aspects.

Point of view is another discursual component that constitutes a narrative. As Stephens describes it, point of view refers to ‘the construction of an attitude towards the story events and existents... point of view is the aspect of narration in which implicit authorial control of audience reading strategies is probably most powerful’. The narrator often influences the readers to accept his own attitudes by purposeful ‘effacement’ or ‘focalization’ of narrative (Stephens 1992:26). The narrator shifts the point of view to contribute to the textual subjection of the reader; that is, readers will identify with the focalized character’s intentions and motives.

This identification is, according to Stephens, ideological in the sense that it is part of the socialization process. Children engage in a dialectical relationship with the text’s implicit ideologies as the focalizer creates a subject position for readers to identify with. According to Stephens, the way texts invite a reader’s active participation in the process of producing meaning is called ‘subject position’ (1992:10). The text may create a subject position that is different from or similar to that of the focalizer. In this case readers may either accept or reject the text’s implicit ideology. Stephens maintains that:

If a function of children’s literature is to socialize its readers, identification with focalizers is one of its chief methods, since by this means, at least for the duration of the reading time, the reader’s own selfhood is effaced and

the reader internalizes the perceptions and attitudes of the focalizer and is thus reconstituted as a subject within the text (Stephens 1992:68).

Thus, the point of view as held by the focalizer serves to draw the reader into the writer's constructed world. This constructed world may be fictional or may represent the real world. Development of character can increase identification of the reader with the focalizer. As will be noted later in the study (3.7, 6.2.6), writers on occasion use focalizers in different ways; for example to promote the perceptions and attitudes of their characters, or to portray characters and reality that they disagree with and wish to distance themselves from. Satire and metaphor are further used by authors to make texts understandable on different levels and to protect themselves from political persecution. In the case of child readers, such subtle and sophisticated literary techniques may be beyond the readers' experience and capability, and a different reading of the text is intended for adult readers (Sabri-Tabrizi 1989:242).

Nikolajeva (2008:30) notes the concepts of contamination, intertextuality, and archtextuality as being relevant to children's literature. Intertextuality and archtextuality are concepts which support the notion of continuity in literature, and as such will be further discussed below in the section on continuity. Contamination, an aspect of intertextuality, in its simplest form introduces features from outside the text, such as direct quotations, allusions and references to other texts, which the reader identifies in a process of filling gaps. In a contaminated text, Nikolajeva (2008:30) maintains that elements of many other texts appear throughout, and it is not always possible to determine exactly where they come from, whereas 'the concept of anagram is used for texts in which we can easily identify the intertext by rearranging the constituent elements or merely by connecting each element to a

similar element in another text'. She gives Astrid Lindgren's *Mio, My Son* as an example of identifiable contamination; 'the young protagonist has read *The Arabian Nights* and thus has no problems recognizing a genie, even though it is imprisoned in a beer bottle' (Nikolajeva 2008:30). Thus, children bring their own experience and knowledge to the reading of a new text, and this will be different for readers from different times and cultures. Although contamination supports the notion of continuity, elements of change can be cited as existing in the details which make up the instances and separate examples at different times and in different ways relating to the experiences of the children in their different societies and time periods.

Readers and critics of literature are influenced by the times in which they live, as Vandergrift (1990:7) notes: 'Each era has preconceptions of the world and of literature that both reveal and conceal certain aspects of understanding and experience.' Vandergrift (1990:5) identifies four primary approaches to the meaning of literature. These are those of author (expressive), audience (pragmatic), outside world (mimetic), and literary world (objective, formal). She describes these in more detail as follows: 'Mimetic theories are those that emphasize relationships to the world outside the work; pragmatic theories emphasize the audience; expressive theories emphasize the author; and objective or formal theories emphasize literary knowledge or the structure of the work itself' (Vandergrift1990:6). From a theoretical point of view, continuity in the existence of the various elements defining these approaches has existed throughout history. Thus, in outlining these approaches, Vandergrift supports the notion of continuity in literature on a theoretical level.

With regard to children's literature, mimetic and pragmatic theories would appear to be the most practical and applicable. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle all

agreed that works of art are imitations of reality and this view was dominant until the beginning of the eighteenth century when pragmatic theory took over. According to Vandergrift (1990:8), pragmatic theory was a ‘means-end concept of evaluating works in terms of their usefulness for practical academic or moral instruction.’ Rather than focusing on good literature, critics were more concerned about what it was good for. Children’s literature is inherently didactic in that it represents one generation’s impulse to pass on information, values and ideas to the next, as was discussed in the previous section. Thus, selection of books for children has always been a crucial activity. As Naser Yusefi (1995:48-9) notes, making lists of ‘good’ books is actually a process of negative selection, as it then creates lists of books that are not to be read or recommended. He asks what criteria are used in this selection and what is the boundary between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ books. Books which support the current government of a country and its worldview, including that of its perceived history, are usually considered to be ‘good’ books by the general adult population of that country. Likewise, books which depict desirable behavior in children and encourage young readers to follow advice on how to behave well are usually considered by adults to be ‘good’ books. The *Shahnameh* has been mentioned as an early example of literature which has promoted values of national pride and glorified the history of the Iranian Empire or *Iranzamin* (see Chapter 4.5:138-144 for more detail). It is not an isolated example. Cases may be found in the history of many other countries. Shapiro (1997:111) cites historical narratives used to perpetuate French national identity as an example of the socialization of children:

The essence of Frenchness depended on the teaching of the history of France. In effect, history was a discourse on France, and the teaching of history—“la pédagogie centrale du citoyen”—the means by which children

were constituted as heirs and carriers of a common collective memory that made them not only citizens, but family. (Shapiro 1997:112)

Thus, the questions of selection and selection criteria, censorship and control of what children should read are very relevant and basic theoretical aspects of the field of children's literature, and generate much argument and discussion amongst writers and critics. The thesis will focus on selection in more detail in Chapter Three.

2.4 Aspects of change in children's literature

As seen in the previous section, change and continuity in children's literature are connected at numerous different levels. The present and next section will attempt to separate and highlight features relating to each of these aspects separately. All nations change over time and as this thesis is concerned with Persianate children's literature it will focus in later chapters on changes occurring in Iran, and to a lesser degree in Tajikistan, and their effect on children's literature. Prigmore (1976:vi) posits that: 'Coping with change is the lot of all nations in this era of worldwide social upheaval. For a developing country such as Iran, however, change means more than an adjustment to rapid technological development; it means a transformation of social structures and the very life of the people.' This would suggest that change is simultaneously occurring in all countries as a result of worldwide social upheaval, but at different speeds according to how 'developed' they are. It is an accepted fact that our planet is seeing all manner of changes occurring ever faster as the years pass, due to the interaction of man with his environment and the increase of technological

development, overpopulation and depletion of the world's resources. Literature cannot help but reflect these changes. And children's literature, which has a remit at least partially of helping children to understand the world that they are about to inherit, is at the vanguard of documenting the changes in society and socializing the new generation to deal with them.

Research on Persianate children's literature has focused on change in both quantitative and qualitative ways, and numerous examples will appear later throughout this study. As change is seen as a given it is often easier to research than stability or continuity. It also seems somehow more interesting or exciting. If change does not occur, then there is nothing to report, as there are no developments. Changes are much more evident and noticeable than continuity. When one investigates these ideas more thoroughly, however, it can be seen that change and continuity are inextricably linked. For example, censorship and selection can be seen as elements which can propagate both change and continuity. Seen from the point of view of change, criteria for selection of children's books are constantly modified due to various forces. These changes can be extreme such as when resulting from regime change, but can also be driven by market forces and economic factors. Learning itself is seen as a change as some definitions show:

'Learning is a 'persisting change in human performance or performance potential [brought] about as a result of the learner's interaction with the environment' (Driscoll 1994:8-9).

'Learning occurs when experience causes a relatively permanent change in an individual's knowledge or behavior' (Woolfolk 1998:204).

These definitions stress interaction with the environment and experience rather than reading. As will be seen in Chapter 2.5:56-57 below, when discussing bibliotherapy reading can be considered as experience by proxy, as safe experience without risk. Therefore it may be asserted that change can arise as a result of interaction with literature. Preston (2000:1) gives other examples which may lead to change:

Broad social trends, for example, shifts in population, urbanisation, industrialisation and bureaucratisation, can lead to significant social change. In the past, this has been associated with modernisation, the process whereby a society moves from traditional, less developed modes of production (like small-scale agriculture) to technologically advanced industrial modes of production. Trends like population growth and urbanisation have a significant impact on other aspects of society, like social structure, institutions and culture... Even “rock-solid” institutions like the family, the law, and religions are subject to change, even though they represent social continuity. There has always been “family” and it is still the foundational institution for society and the primary agent of socialisation, however the composition of “family” has changed in recent years, leading to different kinds of families and different socialisation experiences for their members. The same ideas can be applied to law and religion (Preston 2000:1).

Trends such as population growth and urbanization can affect and change what may be considered as fixed elements of society. Family, law and religion, usually seen as firm features of continuity in a society, are thus seen as subject to change over time. The above aspects have been researched in great detail by previous researchers. Chapter Three investigates their findings, along with the perceived effects of changing societal values as a result of political change and their portrayal in Persianate children’s literature (see Chapter 3.3:66-77, 3.4:79-92, 3.7:109-113). Technological advance is an aspect of change which affects external factors relating to children and literature. Technology relates to book production, information,

dissemination and changing trends in types of delivery and media. An example of this is the shift in popularity from oral to written literature, followed by media such as TV and film, then lastly the advent of the internet age and the use of computers. However, these advances still only benefit the wealthier, more affluent segments of all societies, demonstrating yet again that continuous elements reside within change and vice versa.

2.5 Aspects of continuity in children's literature

Preston (2000:1) sees continuity as a defense against frightening change: 'Social and cultural continuities can be likened to individuals' habits - comfortable patterns of behavior that give individuals a sense of security and personal control - a haven or a respite in a sea of social and cultural change.' Change often causes worry and distress due to fear of the unknown. Children actively seek stability and the comfort of the familiar in order to reduce the stress of the changes they face as they grow. Children will listen many times to the same story without becoming bored and will complain if the narrator changes any details of the story. Nodelman (2006:98-115) states that similarity and repetitiveness are part of children's literature aesthetics, saying that an accusation leveled at children's novels is that they are sometimes so similar that you may wonder whether you are confronted with imitation. While in contemporary mainstream novels for adults, fresh and innovative themes and narrative devices are seen as desirable attributes, children's literature constitutes variations of the same theme and is by definition marked by 'sameness'.

This does not mean that originality is totally lacking, only that there are more factors relating to 'safeness' that may bring about 'sameness' in many children's books. There are original ideas, new, different and special treatments of popular subjects to be found in children's books.

As noted above, Nikolajeva (2008:30) discusses a number of concepts with relation to children's literature. One of these, intertextuality is a concept which supports the notion of continuity in literature, while containing elements of change within it. Intertextuality was originally described by the Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) who used the term 'dialogics'. Nikolajeva (2008:30) explains that in this view, literature and art are created in a continuous conversation or dialogue, between creators, with every new piece of art or literature as a new line in the conversation; the meaning of the text is revealed only against the background of previous texts, in a clash between them and the present text. Nikolajeva holds that 'the concept of intertextuality can help to unveil dimensions of children's texts that traditional comparison cannot. Intertextual analysis does not simply discover that two or more texts are similar, or that one text originates from another, but tries to examine the ways in which a later text develops motifs, patterns or ideas from its predecessors (Nikolajeva 2008:30). Such analysis can trace details of the elements of continuity linking texts to each other across time, and can show the development of texts. Sardar and Wyn Davies (1990) relate this concept to tradition and culture:

There are moral principles within the ancient traditions that are not immovable through time, that can be drawn upon in new ways to respond to contemporary challenges to shape a newness that cannot simply be judged by Western-derived standards. It is the West that has declared that all ancient traditions are static, while the West alone has the 'progressive' tradition (Sardar & Wyn Davies 1990).

Another concept which is often seen in children's literature is archetextuality. Nikolajeva describes archetextuality as 'a particular text's relationship to an archetype, a more or less universal pattern, usually going back to myths' (2008:30). Thus, children's stories based on folktales and myths fall into this category. Plot and characterization often follow simplistic patterns in order to attract children's attention and be easily understandable to them. To some extent, one may say that stereotyping is inevitable in books for younger readers, when standardized elements are utilized as a means of making the texts accessible to young readers. Chapter Four gives detailed examples of this by reproducing a number of classical stories in the shortened and simplified versions intended for children where, standardized elements can be seen to provide a link and an element of continuity between the earlier texts and the modern versions produced for children.

In Sarland (1999:142) Leavis considers educational institutions as forces of continuity in society, as mentioned in Chapter One: 'Schools and colleges are, or should be, society trying to preserve and develop a continuity of consciousness and a mature directing sense of value – a sense of value informed by a traditional wisdom' (Leavis 1943:15). Educational institutions are obvious, physical entities which promote continuity in literature, but at a more theoretical level, evidence for continuity can likewise be found.

Narrative studies also illuminate aspects of continuity in children's literature. Narrative is considered to contain ideology. Carr (1986:117-131) argues for continuity when discussing narrative and the real world which he says are not mutually exclusive. Where individuals tell stories about themselves they are defined

as first-order narratives, while second order narrative is an account of other stories used to present explanations of social and cultural knowledge. Carr holds that:

Life is not a structureless sequence of events; it consists of complex structures of temporal configurations that interlock and receive their meaning from within action itself. It is also not true that life lacks a point of view which transforms events into a story by telling them. The actions of life can be viewed as the process of telling ourselves stories. The retrospective view of the narrator is an extension and refinement of a viewpoint inherent in action itself. Because storytelling is a social activity, the story of one's life is told as much to others as to oneself. Social human time, like individual human time, is constructed into configured sequences. The practical first-order narrative process that constitutes a person or a community can become a second-order narrative whose subject is unchanged but whose interest is primarily cognitive or aesthetic (Carr 1986:117).

Narrative process in this view is held to constitute community. In the change from first-order narrative to second-order narrative, subject is seen as an unchanging element.

Stephens (1992) contributes a number of insights into aspects of continuity in children's literature. For example, with regard to historical fiction for children he says that one of its main premises is that 'Humans behave and feel in ways that remain constant in different periods' (Stephens 1992:205), which enables children to empathize with historical characters. The idea that literature can make people emotionally and physically stronger goes back to Plato. This is a stated aim of bibliotherapy which uses books therapeutically in treating emotionally distressed, deviant or delinquent children by giving them books to read on overcoming difficulties in life or about escaping from dangerous situations without having to actually experience them (see Chapter 3.5:95-101 and 7.4.1:216-218 for examples

from the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88). This viewpoint considers books as being therapeutic through the three stages of identification, catharsis and insight, or as McIntyre (2004:1) explains:

We find ourselves entering the world described in the pages of a good book and becoming involved with the characters therein. We often close the cover having gained new insight and ideas. That is the purpose behind the use of bibliotherapy; to assist a youngster in overcoming the emotional turmoil related to a real-life problem by having him/her read literature on that topic. This story can then serve as a springboard for discussion and possible resolution of that dilemma. Thus, the adult provides guidance in the resolution of personal crisis through the use of directed readings and follow-up activities (McIntyre 2004:1).

The therapeutic process of reading and its three stages identified above can be cited as an example of continuity in the purpose of literature for children. In the resolution of dilemmas or other situations found on the pages of books, children are given role models with which they can identify. The heightened imagination of children helps them to relate to the characters in the book as though they were real people. Chapter Six, which gives examples of stories written by a number of Iranian authors, demonstrates the way these authors create characters that their young readers can identify with. This empathy for characters also relates to the claims of 'universality and timelessness' that critics often make for children's literature. Children are considered to be able to understand each other instinctively without recourse to language. Stephens (1992:8) states that a function of children's literature is to socialize its readers, and as ideology exists only with relation to outside reality, all narratives contain ideology: 'A narrative without an ideology is unthinkable: ideology is formulated in and by language, meanings within language are socially

determined, and narratives are constructed out of language'. Hollindale (1992) further differentiates between three levels of ideology in children's books. The first level is the 'intended surface ideology' which the writer consciously communicates to the reader (Hollindale 1992:28). The second level is 'passive ideology', or the 'the individual writer's unexamined assumptions...which are taken for granted' (Hollindale 1992:30). The third level of ideology is inscribed in the constituent parts of language itself. Ideology on this level 'transcend[s] the idea of individual authorship' (Hollindale 1992:32). If ideology is held to exist within language itself, this aspect can be recognized as another element of continuity in children's literature.

Stephens (1992:10) describes the process of the reader filling information gaps in texts as involving 'the reader's internalization of the text's implicit ideologies'. In more detail he asserts that:

The discourse of narratives must be read simultaneously as a linguistic and a narratological process. This includes reference to important discursal components such as (among others) mode, point of view, narrating voice and order of events. It also includes a compulsion to read narrative discourse both for its story and its significance; ideology operates at both levels. (Stephens 1992:43).

Child readers are not exempt from this internalization of implicit ideology, but they are more liable to accept it without question due to having less information to compare it with than adult readers. The transfer of ideology therefore, along with the existence of social control, can be seen as an inescapable component of children's literature and as such, one of its continuous elements. Storytelling is a social activity and children's literature, above all, is involved in telling stories. Children have always enjoyed listening to stories: in all countries and in all historical

eras. Ideology and socialization start with stories told verbally to children even before they can read. Stories are remembered or written down, then told or read from books to young children. Verbal transfer of ideology in this way is yet another example of a continuous aspect which can be cited in relation to children's literature.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a broad theoretical base to the thesis by outlining some basic theoretical aspects of the field. The relationship of children's literature with children and childhood has been addressed. Theoretical aspects relating to children's literature have been investigated, and the two aspects of change and continuity have been explored. The purpose of children's literature has been seen to be linked with the socialization of children. It has been found that ideology is inescapable in narrative, even when enjoyment is a major feature. Furthermore, it has become apparent that change and continuity cannot easily be separated as each contains elements of the other.

The next chapter will deal with a number of basic, but important areas relevant to this research. It will introduce a number of aspects which will inform and give depth to later chapters such as: historical background, social reforms, political disruptions such as regime change, educational literature, war literature, children's magazines and journals, selection and social values portrayed in children's literature. The chapter will demonstrate the breadth of issues which the study of children's literature involves. It will highlight areas of particular interest to the present study

with relation to the historical development of Persianate children's literature and its elements of continuity and change.

Chapter 3: Social issues of Persianate children's literature

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a general theoretical introduction of ideology, society and politics in literature with relevance to the present study. Following on from this, the present chapter will focus on a number of discrete areas which provide a background to the issues that this study of Persianate children's literature will investigate, such as; the historical events leading up to the time period researched in the study, social and political reforms, revolution and regime change, different types of literature for children, and the selection of its content. A number of important issues pertaining to the field of children's literature in Iran from 1960 to 2000 will be investigated in order to analyze the historical development in 20th century Iranian works for children with relation to change and continuity. These include early 20th century developments in children's literature, educational literature, the impact of the Islamic Revolution and its aftermath, children's experience of war and disability, the content of magazines and journals for children, the criteria of selection of reading material for children, the effect of social change on selection criteria and on social values considered acceptable for children's books. Thus, this chapter brings into focus a number of issues which are crucial to the understanding of the study, and which inform later chapters.

The chapter begins with an overview of historical events occurring immediately prior to the period under study. It will describe some of the main events occurring in the earlier part of the twentieth century of both the areas in question, i.e.

Iran and Tajikistan, in order to establish the historical background leading up to the second half of the twentieth century, the time period focused on by this study. The emphasis and greater detail will fall on Iran with the section on Tajikistan forming a comparative element. The section traces the political reforms of the pre-revolutionary period in Iran, in order to show the background conditions prevailing in Iran at the time. This is intended to give a better understanding of the forces which shaped later children's literature in order to put the texts into historical and social perspective, as well as to illuminate issues which affected both adult and child writers in the years following these events. Examples of these influences on writers are given in Chapter Six, where Samad Behrangi describes life as a village teacher, and in Chapter Seven where the children write about the terrible living conditions they endure. The passing of time shows writers continuing their work through changing situations, for example, a civil servant in the government of the Shah could become an inspector in the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in the Islamic Republic, with different but similar constraints affecting his work as a writer.

Popular reading matter in Iran up to the middle of the twentieth century mainly consisted of writings originating from a century or more before, as noted by Marzolph (2001:215). This includes texts which were accessed by children (e.g. Marzolph 2001:215-236). While this points to continuity in the content of general reading material until the 1950s, the improvement in the provision of education throughout the country from this time onwards contributed to the development of literature more specifically aimed at children. As seen in the definitions of terms, in 1.6, children's literature was defined for the purpose of this study as including educational literature and books which were not originally written for children but

widely read by them, as well as those specifically written for children. Therefore, educational literature will be examined for continuity and change as part of the field of children's literature. Changes in educational literature in Iran since the revolution are investigated to see if they have been as widespread as claimed, or feature little more than cosmetic change, especially with regard to the attitudes towards women which are reflected in them. The changing role of translations in relation to social events and national identity is viewed, along with changes in educational content over the different eras. The Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88 provides an example of a specific political influence on literature, as it is the subject of a number of stories which enabled children to attempt to come to terms with the traumas of war and disability. Another source of data to be examined in this chapter is children's magazines and journals, which reflect trends and preoccupations prevalent over the years, in addition to general developments found in children's literature.

While this chapter covers a number of seemingly disparate topics, it provides important background information for an understanding of the later chapters, and identifies areas which provide data for further research into the theme of change and continuity in Persianate children's literature. As in other parts of this thesis, factors from outside the narrow time frame under study are brought to bear upon the argument. As time is a continuum, some of these factors and concerns from earlier historical periods feed directly into other issues which arise in the narrower time frame of the second half of the twentieth century, which is the focus of this study. Reading the issues in isolation without taking into account their historical precedents would not illustrate the argument fully. Thus, this chapter makes a start on setting the stage for different aspects of the thesis, while later chapters will develop the

argument and focus further on specific examples which demonstrate change and continuity in Persianate children's literature.

3.2 Historical background

This section will give a short summary of the key events which affected Iranian and Tajiki society in the twentieth century in order to place the themes and concerns of the literature to be studied in context. As was seen in the previous chapter, the wide areas of economics, history and politics are influences which can impact on the production of literature and its form and content. Therefore it was felt to be useful to summarize general changes in these areas before looking at more specific effects on children's literature.

The section begins by examining changes in Iran, focusing mainly on the period from the 1950s through the 1978-9 Islamic Revolution then it summarizes the major changes seen in Tajikistan during the prosperous Soviet construction era of the 1960s and 70s, to independence and civil war in the 1990s, and the post-civil war period. A pattern will be shown in each case of a prosperous building period, with government constraints and control, followed by a major upheaval in society and great changes, including a return of religion into the lives of the people, with fresh constraints and control by the new governments. In later chapters, the literature produced for children during the two respective periods will be examined against this background of social change.

3.2.1 Changes in Iran

In Iran, the reforms of Reza Shah and his son Mohammad Reza Shah, which included land reforms, the building of railways, roads, factories, irrigation schemes, and educational reforms were based on secular nationalism. These reforms resulted in an increase in industrialization throughout the country and brought about widespread changes in Iranian society. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was a mass migration of population from the countryside to the cities, resulting in the rise of a well-educated urban middle class increasingly interested in educational reform and the welfare of children (Bashiri 2004:1).

The later reforms, known as the White Revolution, suffered however from lack of planning which hindered their implementation, and failed to take into account the rights and aspirations of this growing middle class. According to Bashiri (2004:1), it was felt that Iran was being reshaped for Western convenience rather than the needs of Iran and its people. The failure of these reforms to meet their goals led to growing discontent with the regime. Foreign intervention in Iranian affairs had been resisted in the 1950s, when Muhammad Musaddeq, in his bid to create self-sufficiency and remove foreign control had nationalized the oil industry, which resulted in the expulsion of both the Shah and the British. After the return of the Shah the secularists and the clergy became even more divided in their vision of how the country should be developed. The secularists wanted a strong military force, modern urban centers, and more dams to generate hydroelectric energy, with Western advice, investment and involvement. The clergy wanted a more equitable sharing of the wealth and power, a better judiciary, a less West-focused society, and

governance by an assembly of Islamic jurists. Throughout the 1960s and 70s, the Shah used repression to control the clergy and to keep the USA, his source of technical aid, happy. He stifled all opposition with SAVAK, a special force originally intended to combat Communist infiltration. This resulted in the Islamic Revolution of February 1979 with its anti-Western rhetoric, increased nationalist and religious feelings, and a flood of publications which had previously been censored and suppressed (Bashiri 2004:1).

3.2.2 Social reforms in Iran

In Iran land reform played a major part in the social changes which occurred in the twenty years before the Islamic Revolution. Between 1950 and 1958, Muhammad Reza distributed among 25,000 families some 500,000 acres of Crown Land, which had been confiscated from peasants by his father. He promoted the transfer of investment by the big landowners from land to industry. His father, Reza Shah, in power from 1925-1944, had also previously implemented reforms inspired by those of Kemal Ataturk in Turkey (*Askasia* 2008:1) and had initiated a revision of the Ministry of Education's teaching methods and courses, with new courses based on European curricula. In 1935, he abolished the wearing of the chador and founded the first university in Iran, the co-educational University of Tehran (Prigmore 1976:19). Women still did not have the right to vote at this time, this coming much later, in 1963 (Prigmore 1976:22 & 30). Although free tuition in primary schools was introduced in 1933, the population in the rural areas was still largely illiterate thirty

years later, the 1966 census recording only 25.6% of rural men and 4.3% of rural women as being literate (Amani 1971:5).

In 1963 the Shah introduced a new reform bill which became known as the White Revolution. There was opposition to this set of reforms and civil disturbances. Ayatollah Khomeini denounced the White Revolution; a protest gathering at the Faizeyeh Theological College was attacked by the Shah's commandos, and large numbers of unarmed people were murdered in the streets and bazaars of Tehran, Qom, and Shiraz, a precursor of the events that led up to the Islamic Revolution (Kurzman 2003: 287-325). Despite opposition, the first set of six reforms was implemented immediately. These reforms listed by Prigmore (1976:25) were:

- 1) Land reform bill.
- 2) Nationalization of forests
- 3) Sale of state-owned factories to finance land reform
- 4) Sharing of workers in industrial profits
- 5) Female suffrage
- 6) Literacy Corps

In spite of previous reforms, one sixth of the country's 60,000 villages were still owned by the big landlords. The rest belonged to religious endowments or to smaller landlords who owned one or part of a village, while only 15 percent of the arable land belonged to independent farmers. Illiteracy was widespread in the villages; there were no medical services or courts. (Bashiri 2004:1). The land reform bill's interference with the endowed religious estates, the *ouqaf*, was a major cause of its denouncement by the religious opposition (Prigmore 1976:25).

Amendment of the electoral laws was another item of reform. Women and farmers, until this time, had both been deprived of education with the result that they had remained ignorant and dependent on the privileged urban male minority. The seats on the supervisory councils allotted to nobles and landlords were abolished by the new electoral law and these seats were given to workers and farmers. Two women senators and five National Assembly deputies were elected as a result of these changes (Bashiri 2004:1).

Prigmore (1976:130-132) states that the most critical social problems in Iran in the late 1950s and 1960s were eight in number: population growth, rural-to-urban migration, illiteracy, inequality of women in social, economic and political spheres, the peasants' lack of experience in decision-making, poor diet and nutrition, poor housing, hygiene and sanitation. A large proportion of the Iranian people were living in terrible conditions, fighting poverty and hardships. Children's literature of the time reflects these hardships (see Chapter 6.2.6:188-193, 7.3.1:211-213). During this period, the Shah bought two squadrons of F-14 fighter-bombers from the USA and used them against the rebellious Qashqai tribes in the south, while SAVAK was accused of intensifying repression throughout the country and even of operating inside the USA. Fourteen artists and writers were incarcerated and tortured by military tribunal. In 1969, the year that Samad Behrangi's children's book *The Little Black Fish* won awards at the Bologna and Bratislava International Children's Literature Festivals, several months after his unexplained death, the Iranian Embassy in Rome was occupied as part of a worldwide Iranian student protest against the Shah (Bashiri 2001:1).

The lavish ceremonies held by the Shah at a cost of more than \$60 million in 1971 to celebrate the 2500th year anniversary of the Persian Empire only highlighted the disparity between the different segments of society (Bashiri 2004:1). At the end of the 1970s, life in the villages had not improved greatly, as testified by children's own writing (see Chapter 7.3.1:211-213).

The Islamic Revolution of February 1979 gave rise to anti-western feelings which affected all aspects of life, including children's literature. Translations of many foreign works were banned in an attempt to counteract anti-revolutionary secular tendencies and foreign cultural influences. Agencies previously involved in translation projects, were either abolished or reorganized. The period immediately after the Islamic Revolution saw a mood of euphoria and the building of a new society, while the 8-year Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88 resulted in the desire for peace and tranquility, order and freedom. In this period, reconstruction was undertaken mainly from an economic, not a cultural point of view. During the 1990s, people began to desire a less rigid cultural atmosphere with more social freedoms and on the 2nd of Khordad (23rd May) 1997, the country's wish for change was shown when twenty of the thirty million Iranians who went to the polling stations voted for Khatami, a moderate who was popular with women and young voters (Hejvani 2000:27)

Despite changes in selection criteria (see Chapter 3.7:114-118) and, since the Islamic Revolution, the attempts of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to make writers conform to official guidelines in harmony with Islamic religious principles, it will be shown in the rest of this study that, apart from initial and superficial changes, the majority of children's books in Iran have not radically changed in content.

3.2.3 Changes in Tajikistan

As in Iran, a period of expansion and development had taken place in Tajikistan and in the rest of the USSR from the 1960s. Development had been achieved by the five year plans of the Soviet Union, echoing the reforms that had been initiated in Iran by the Shah. There was a similar shift away from secular tendencies at the end of Soviet rule in 1991 although not as intense as that seen after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The post-Soviet era in Tajikistan saw a return to pre-communist era values and a resurgence in religious sentiment. However, the religious party was considered to be allied to the Iranian regime and supported by it in its quest for an Islamic Revolution, which led to social upheaval and civil war. The situation differed in Tajikistan from that in Iran, but there are enough similarities to make it a valuable comparative element for examining change and continuity in children's literature and to make this a study of 'Persianate' rather than 'Iranian' or 'Farsi' children's literature, as previously outlined in 1.1.

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev was elected First Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR. His policies of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) had direct results for the future of Tajikistan. In 1991, the Soviet Union broke up and the Republic of Tajikistan declared its independence. The ban was lifted from religious political parties, the two most important Muslim holidays were declared public holidays, and the slaughtering of animals in accord with religious law became legal. At this time there were attempts to reestablish cultural links with Iran,

to revitalize the concept of *Iranzamin*, and to reintroduce the Farsi script, the last of which was largely unsuccessful (Bobokalonova 2003).

Plans were made to privatize small enterprises in retail trade, social catering, repair and construction, and everyday services, with a government fund created to support entrepreneurial activities and to encourage private citizens to start their own businesses. A civil war followed independence and lasted from 1992 to 1997, resulting in economic and civil disturbances throughout the country which impinged upon the implementation of these plans (Bashiri 1999:1). In these conditions, funding for both education and children's literature was severely curtailed, the results of which will be examined in Chapter Nine.

In Tajikistan a period of expansion and development had been followed by economic depression after independence caused by the severance of participation in Russian markets and the Civil War. The major legacy of the political events following the dissolution of Soviet rule was the economic depression which affected both education and the production of literature for children. The question of the continuity of the traditions of Persianate literature in Tajikistan will be examined in more detail in the final chapter, while 3.4.4 below examines educational issues pertaining to Tajikistan. The following section will investigate the results of the events in Iran discussed in 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 above, and their influence on children's literature.

3.3 Political turning points - real or illusory change?

This section will take the Islamic Revolution in Iran as its political turning point and will examine in detail the both the elements of continuity and the changes found in children's books during the pre- and post-revolutionary periods with reference to quantity, content and form.

The Islamic Revolution resulted in radical short-term changes with regard to the production of children's literature. At first a prolific rise in the output of writers occurred, not all of it of a high standard, but over time this output settled into a steady increase, both in quality as well as in volume (Hejvani 2000:25). The revolution, the events connected with the revolution, and the establishment of a new political system changed a number of aspects of children's literature in Iran. Rahgozar (1995:10-21) considers that the newly found freedom after a long period of oppression suffered during the Shah's regime, resulted in the appearance of many subjects that previously had been censored or denied printing and publishing permits such as religious writing, expression of anti-western sentiment, realistic works, topics more relevant to everyday life, and political and social issues which had previously appeared in children's stories in metaphorical disguise. Criticism of the Shah's government was now permissible whereas before it had been banned, while at this point criticism of the new government had not yet had time to form or emerge. Many of the writers had themes already in their minds and published these stories in the years that followed the revolution (Rahgozar 1995:10-21). Ansari (1980:38) remembers that writers and organizations were profoundly affected by events occurring at this time, and many felt that it was a chance for a new beginning. It was

felt that a new era of freedom of expression, of the press and of assembly was starting in Iran at the time of the Islamic Revolution (Ansari 1980:38). A number of changes were observed from the perspectives of quantity, content and form, as the following 1980 Children's Book Council report shows:

1. Quantity. More new books by Iranian authors are being published and distributed than ever before. We feel that Iran is at this time self-sufficient where children's books are concerned and must no longer depend largely on translations of fiction and other reading material from abroad. During the International Year of the Child (1979) previous printings of 3,000 to 5,000 were increased to tens of thousands. More and more young people are becoming eager to read and many new names appear among both writers and publishers. The market is such that the Children's Book Council of Iran is having difficulty in finding and keeping track of all the new publications.

2. Content. The number of books dealing with the Iranian people – both young and old, in towns and villages – is growing. Recent publications reflect what the majority of people see and experience in their daily lives; they describe the sufferings, the work and the aspirations of real human beings. Books have become a part of young people's lives – in school, in the village and in the community.

3. Form. Realistic stories predominate. Authors no longer hide their thoughts and their feelings behind animal or plant characters or behind settings in the past. (Ansari 1980:38-9)

In the flood of varying quality publications occurring immediately after the Revolution, a greater quantity of more relevant and realistic reading material found its way into print. The last item in the CBC report touches on the impact of the revolution on form and the way writers handled topics and characters in their stories. Personalities created by the writers of the revolutionary generation appeared as mirror images of the writers' own ideologies, thoughts, desires, and deeds. They supported the actions and opinions of the heroes and the heroines of their stories, as they were now approved by the new religious regime. The previous generation of

writers, if questioned or criticized about any of their heroes or heroines who could have been perceived as anti-government, had claimed that their responsibility as writers was to picture the features or characters of society, and therefore they could not be held responsible for their characters' good or bad deeds. Critics claim that the previous literature was not particularly realistic (Ansari 1980:38-9); therefore this can be seen as a convenient excuse by writers to distance themselves from any contentious content. The period in which writers enjoyed lack of censorship and freedom to criticize the new government did not last. During the Shah era, writers had used metaphorical language in order to evade the censors and to avoid the risk of imprisonment for opposition to the government. As time passed, a reversal in trends was seen, and children's writers again used metaphorical and allegorical tales as in pre-revolution times to express opposition to the regime in power, now the Islamic regime. Hejvani (2000:25) considers that one reason for the tendency to return to fantasy writing could be the political and social rejection of the writer, with disillusionment leading to a kind of escape from society, especially as young writers felt that the goals of the revolution had not been reached, and that some of the authorities of the country did not act or serve the people in the way they thought they should.

As part of the increase in the number of works published for children and young adults in Iran immediately after the revolution, original writing overtook translations. Many books by Iranian authors with Iranian themes reached the country's children and young adults (Ansari 1980:46-47). While 142 and 218 titles respectively were published in 1977-78 and 1978-79, the 1979-80 total was 382, consisting of 310 books of fiction, 58 of nonfiction and 12 of poetry, with social,

political and religious themes gaining more prominence. The amount of ‘enjoyment’ fiction (as opposed to that primarily containing didactic content) was much reduced, as were translations. In 1979-80, a reversal of the ratio of previous years was seen with only one translation for every five books written by Iranian authors. Moreover, the majority of translated works came from Palestine, South America, Vietnam and the Soviet Union, a change from previously favored geographical areas, such as Europe (Mirhadi 1980:44).

Table 1) Classification of Children’s Books by Type, 1968-81 (Ayman et. al.1992:420).

Years	Total Published	Narrative %	Original %	Translations %	Suitable %
1968-9	301	87	17	83	35
1970-1	329	77	18	82	41
1972-3	367	58	21	78	59
1974-5	317	71	31	69	55
1976-7	247	69	50	50	60
1978-9	600	78	81	19	42
1980-1	790	63	59	41	18
Total	2,952				

Table1) shows that the percentage of translations as well as the books judged as suitable by the CBC fell sharply in 1978-1979, a time when much opportunistic publishing was seen, as Hejvani (2000:25) describes:

Up until some years after the revolution, the topics mainly seen in children’s works were about religion, struggles, liberty and unity. After 1980, at the beginning of the [Iran-Iraq] war, attention towards those topics increased

dramatically. Due to the upheavals of the first years, such topics came to the attention of opportunists. These people, who were not familiar with children's literature, quickly created stories around those topics; stories about fish fighting sharks or seagulls in the sea, stories of rabbits fighting lions or peasants fighting their cruel landowners on the land, and stories about small birds under attack from birds of prey in the sky (Hejvani 2000:25).

During 1979-80, over one hundred and fifty authors were published by eighty publishers. Printings increased from the usual three to five thousand to thirty-five thousand in some cases. The Azeri and Kurdish languages were also represented in collections of works. New books were published so rapidly that the staff of the CBC had difficulty in keeping up with the market due to the numbers of books to be evaluated. It was considered a dynamic year, despite the appearance of 'speedy, slipshod and trifling' publishing (Mirhadi 1980:44). The year 1979-80 also saw the publication of a large number of works by children and young adults, as will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

During 1980-81 publishers faced difficulties with regard to equipment and shortages of paper. Thus, press runs were mainly reduced again to between three and five thousand, and only a few titles were printed in editions of forty to fifty thousand. Most books were relatively low priced, but some were beyond the reach of many children (US\$3 or more). Mirhadi (1982:35) noted that the frantic book market of the previous two years started to give way to more serious efforts in the domain of publishing for children and young adults. During this period, more than one hundred publishers had produced books for young people. Generally, a drop in quantity and a rise in quality began to be seen.

The period 1981-1982 saw a reduction in the total number of titles for children and young adults published in Iran (Mirhadi 1982:35). Apart from this

temporary reduction immediately after the revolution, the number of books published in Iran has continued to rise steadily. According to the Public Relations Department at *Khane Ketab* [Book House], in the first three months of 1381, (starting 21 March 2002), 5,812 titles of books were published in Iran, a 5% increase from the same period of the previous year. Some 17% of the books were for children (Kadivar 2002:1). It can be seen, therefore, that in general the trend for development and expansion in the field of Persianate children's literature continued during the whole period of the second half of the twentieth century, both before and after the Islamic Revolution.

After the Islamic Revolution, topics of fiction included poverty, the revolution, the Iran/Iraq war, and the struggle against oppression. Despite the war, books continued to be published for children. A title typical of this period was *Ai, Ebrahim* (Emami 1981), the story of an old shoemaker who could not go to war but contributed by repairing soldiers' boots. His work emphasized his faith and his devotion to his country (Abu-Nasr 1996:792). Of 332 children's books published by the *Kanun* between 1979 and 1989, at least 80 were on themes related to the revolution, religion, and support of the 1980-88 war with Iraq (Ayman et. al. 1992:417-422). Works of fiction during the 1980s dealt mainly with subjects such as the Iran/Iraq war; the revolution and its continuation; poverty; struggle against oppression; slavery; the Palestinian cause; World War II, and life in different parts of the country.

Mansur Kadivar (1996:76), *Kanun's* Director of International Affairs, identified and compared the treatment of four issues in a number of pre- and post-

revolution texts in a content analysis of books published by the *Kanun* during two different periods, pre- and post-revolution:

- 1) religious, social and political content
- 2) translation
- 3) the use of symbolism
- 4) dimensions and type of cover

The first issue was accorded most detail, with a breakdown of content and titles of stories, as well as a brief description of the topics of these books. Of 161 titles, including translations, published before the revolution, of which 99 (61%) were fiction, only two of those were religious stories and only twelve titles out of the total had a political context. The implication of this was that political pressures and the rigid political atmosphere of the time meant that writers did not dare talk about politics.

Kadivar (1996:76) gives statistics for translations published by the *Kanun* pre-and post revolution for the twenty-year period from 1963 until 1983. In the pre-revolution period 1963-1979, 26% of the books published (42 book titles) were translations and in the period 1979-1983, 21% of the books published (20 book titles) were translations. As the pre-revolutionary period studied was sixteen years and the post-revolutionary one only three years it could be said that this was not a very useful comparison, although it does show the increase in overall publishing figures for the period immediately after the revolution. A number of other sources also confirm that there was a sharp drop in the overall number of translations published in Iran immediately after the revolution. In each time period, fiction accounted for over half

of the titles, followed by science and arts. Kadivar did not give dates for any of the titles.

The third issue was symbolic or metaphorical books; these were divided into two main groups - the first group covered ethical subjects, while the second group dealt with stories which either had been restricted because of being political or did not have enough attraction for children and youth. Kadivar does not make any clearer distinction than this, but considers the difference in the usage of symbolism between the pre- and post-revolution eras to be that symbolism in the former was used to escape the blade of censorship, while in the latter it has been utilized to make a story amusing. This difference in the use of symbolism in the different time periods will be discussed further in Chapter Six describing some works of adult writers in Iran.

The fourth issue, *qat-e va no'-e jeld* [fonts and kinds of covers] dealt with such matters as the dimensions and type of covers, and concluded that before the revolution the *Kanun* used to produce books with expensive covers (61%), but this was reduced to a very low percentage (2%) after the revolution. Only recently, (from the 1990s onwards) has the *Kanun* started to produce good quality books again (Kadivar 1996:76).

If we examine some of the topics dealt with in books from Iran which were nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen Honor List just before and just after the Islamic Revolution it will be seen that there was not a great change in themes and subject matter (*IBBY Honors Lists* 2008:1). Poverty, harsh realities of life, cooperation with others, and other topics listed in Table 2, continued to find a place in the subject matter of children's books. This is not to say, however, that the general atmosphere did not change.

As the study undertaken by Kadivar included fewer books from the post-revolution period as compared to the pre-revolution period, the author undertook a further survey of the contents of over 200 books from two more recent publication lists. In the *Kanun's* first stock catalogue, *Books for Children and Young Adults*, published in 2002, ninety-six books are described. Contrary to expectations, religious and historical topics were relatively low in number and war did not figure as a major topic. Traditional stories and myths also did not account for a major group, although the animal stories, which did, could have been drawn from these sources. Many of these, as well as a large number of the fantasy stories, dealt with moral issues or abstract or philosophical concepts. No books were seen to deal with disabilities directly.

Table 2) Category	no. of books, <i>Kanun</i>	no. of books, Amrai
History	6	1
Mythical/Traditional	9	14
War	1	7
Religious	7	3
Social Relationships and Problems	17	46
Scientific/Natural History/Craft	23	2
Animal Stories	20	9
Fantasy	13	15
Disabilities	-	6
Total:	96	103

The researcher divided the stories into eight categories and found that the contents included animal and fantasy stories, as well as realistic and factual ones. A second catalogue (Amrai & Ebrahimi 2002:28-29) of over a hundred books was examined for comparison, as can be seen in Table 2 above.

In *More than 100 Persian Children's Books* (Amrai & Ebrahimi 2002), which features sixty-nine writers, twelve of whom are women, the Islamic Revolution is mentioned in only two of the stories, and history is an even less represented category than in the *Kanun* list while forty-six books dealt with social relationships and problems. Hence, it can be seen that social problems which children may face in their lives are extensively dealt with in modern children's literature in post-revolution Iran. In portraying such situations and the way that children, and the adults in their lives, deal with them, children's stories implicitly affirm and preserve social values. Works which are in harmony with prevailing moral, political and social viewpoints are more likely to meet selection criteria for both publication and promotion. This is examined in more detail in Section 3.7, which focuses on selection and social values portrayed in children's literature

3.4 Educational literature

In this section, a number of aspects relating to educational literature will be discussed. Although it may be argued that educational material does not constitute true literature, literature has served as educational material for children for centuries, and its writers have at times specifically addressed children. Educational materials

prepared for children often take their source material or inspiration from works of literature. Furthermore, children's literature is often used as a didactic tool in schools to aid children in their acquisition of language and to improve their reading skills. Therefore, such reading material must be taken into account when discussing the types of material presented to children in the course of their education.

3.4.1 Differences between girls' and boys' education in Iran

Historically, education had always taken a different form for boys and girls in Iran; even today differences can be seen. As already established, the present study includes educational literature in children's literature. Within this, the social aspect, of gender differences can exemplify elements of change and continuity. Girls' and boys' education has always differed, reflecting the roles in society that each gender is being prepared for. Therefore, in this section the particular history of girls' education in Iran will be examined in order to relate these differences to the pre-revolution situation and post-revolution events and developments. The control realized by the education of girls reflects male attitudes towards them and towards women in society. For example, it may be possible for girls to become dentists, doctors or hairdressers in the Islamic Republic but they can only treat other women and children. Thus, traditional attitudes continue to make themselves felt even though new opportunities are available for girls that were not available in the past. As girls did not start to attend schools until much more recently than boys, and relied more on oral education, the role and importance of oral education, especially with relation to girls' education will also be examined in this section.

In 1911, an education law was passed in Iran which made education compulsory for all, but its implementation was unsuccessful due to lack of finances; only 3.09% of the government budget at the time was allocated to health and education. In 1921, only 5% of the overall population in Iran was literate (Ghaeni & Mohammadi 2003:72). In 1922, there were only 612 elementary schools in the whole of Iran catering for some 5500 children. In the school year 1926-27, 66.2% of all children attended elementary school, but by 1942, 90.6% of children attended school (Ghaeni & Mohammadi 2003:73-75). Before this period, only privately operated maktabas, the traditional Persian elementary schools for boys, provided education. Milani (1992:56) gives the date for compulsory education in Iran as being 1944, not effectively enforced until 1955.

Girls' education in Iran had to overcome many obstacles and these deserve a special mention, as echoes from the past can be seen in events which occurred during the Islamic Revolution. The first girls' schools in Iran faced many troubles, some of which are described below. The American Girls' School was established in Iran in 1874 by an American Presbyterian missionary group. At first, it was attended by non-Muslims. In 1891, seventeen years after its establishment, two Muslim girls entered the school for the first time. The first Iranian school for girls, *Namus* [Honor], was founded some sixteen years later. Other girls' schools were started throughout Iran by several pioneering women, who all confronted hardship, apathy and antagonism. The problems faced by Mah-Soltan Amir-e Sehhi, the founder of one of the first girls' schools, were encountered by many other early educators in Iran (Milani 1992:56).

Landlords refused to rent their premises for use as a girls' school, as they feared it would be a center of corruption. Even after a school had been established, local people would make the girls' lives a nightmare:

School signboards were removed or had stones thrown at them. Neighbors even used to get loiterers, often psychopaths who then prowled the streets as there were no lunatic asylums, to walk into the school's premises and grin at the terrified girls, while they themselves would gather outside the gateway to enjoy the spectacle and jeer. In reply to complaints from the school's governors, they stated that the best way to avoid further trouble would be to close this "den of iniquity" and let no more girls through its gate. (Milani1992:56).

A reverse relationship between female chastity and education led to defamatory songs in versified slang accusing the girls of unchastity. Even the establishment of children's libraries by the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (*Kanun*) created opposition, as described in 5.4.

Women's education was seen as the outcome of sexual corruption and defilement. The clergy accused these schools of being centers of prostitution and corruption. In many cases, the schools were attacked and looted by angry mobs aroused by religious leaders. The association of women's education with unchastity lingered on, and decades later - after the revolution, Mrs. Farrokhru Parsa, the first woman to serve in the Iranian cabinet as the Minister of Education from 1968 to 1974, was executed in December 1979 on the charge of 'expansion of prostitution, corruption on earth and warring against God.' (Milani 1992:57)

The situation of girls in rural areas was very different from that of those in the cities and towns. Mansur Kadivar (2001:1), in an article on the education of rural women in Iran, comments that cultural mind-sets and social circumstances dominating rural societies have always led to rural girls' deprivation of access to

education and training. Economic needs and the role of rural women and girls in supplying a part and sometimes all of the revenue of the family have exacerbated this deprivation. Although the above statistics, stating that only 5% of the population were literate in 1921, seem to indicate an increase in levels of literacy, especially for females, Prigmore (1976) citing a 1956 survey, says the figure was only 14.9% overall and 6% for the rural population while the rate for women was 7.3% overall and 1% for rural women.

In 2006, the overall adult male (15+) literacy rate of Iran was recorded by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (*Education in Islamic Republic of Iran 2006*) as 89.4% while that of adult females was 78.4%. This would seem to imply that girls still lag behind boys, but the 2006 figures for entry to universities and other tertiary education show that the rate of female enrollment had overtaken that of male enrollment by 28% against 25%. However, the regional average tertiary enrollment is given as only 12% male and 9% female. The definition of regional is not given; one must assume that it includes all areas, both rural and urban, outside of Tehran. Thus a great difference can be seen in the situation for Tehran, for other cities, and for the rural areas. The above figures detail some of the changes in literacy and access to education, with relation to gender, in the second half of the twentieth century. They show improvement, especially in Tehran, while demonstrating that the countryside still lags behind the city in terms of development.

Thus, it can be seen that the history of education for boys and for girls, in the urban areas and in the rural areas, has followed very different patterns in each case and it is only recently that a more egalitarian provision of opportunity for education has started making its effect felt throughout the country with female students

overtaking the 50% enrollment mark in universities countrywide. It must be noted, however, that most universities are situated in urban areas, leaving rural girls still in a disadvantaged situation. In 2006, President Ahmadinejad's government applied a 50 percent quota for male students and 50 percent for female students in the university entrance exam for medicine, dentistry and pharmacy. The plan was supposed to stop the growing presence of female students in the universities ('Ahmadinejad' 2009:1). The situation regarding education for girls especially in Tehran and urban areas, therefore, can be cited as one factor which has shown great change in the second half of the twentieth century.

Although in the past girls did not attend schools in the same way as boys, they were not left without any form of education, and this tended towards an oral, rather than a written form, taught to them at home by their mothers and grandmothers. However, as story-telling has largely been attributed to women, oral tales have always been seen as less serious, carrying less weight than written ones. Milani (1992:178-179) relates that storytelling was considered a non-threatening and unimportant pastime which harmlessly entertained children, and controlled and kept women away from trouble. It was not only an outlet for women's creativity, but also an artistic arena in which they found an expression for their life stories. Their unwritten tales were handed down orally from generation to generation. A woman could attract an audience and achieve merit as a storyteller through the oral tradition of telling tales, but it was difficult for her to write down these stories or to gain recognition beyond the confines of her family and circle of friends. Thus, the telling of stories by women fell into the private realm and only when they were written down (by a man if we take *1001 Nights* as an example), did they achieve public

status. Many women's stories were eventually written down and, because of their close connection with children, it is natural that they should form a major contribution to children's literature (Milani 1992:178-179).

The paradox of change within continuity clearly exists with regard to girls' education, and women's writing and storytelling. Great changes have occurred in Iranian society during the second half of the twentieth century, but the status of women and the possibilities offered to them by that society continue to be controlled and restricted by men. Children's literature can uphold the status quo or challenge it with regard to the status of women, becoming either a force for change, or an element of continuity in society.

3.4.2 Content of Iranian educational literature

The content of educational books for children has changed in many ways over time, but it has continued to attempt to address basic needs. Before 1911, the standard curriculum of *maktabs*, the traditional Persian elementary schools for boys which were privately operated, included the alphabet, the Qor'an, selections from popular Persian poetry and prose, and the traditional sciences (Karimi-Hakkak 1998:540-41). Marzolph (2001:218) refers to a catalogue containing early publications for children which shows the type of material available at the time. This is Abd al-Vahhab Motamed al-Dawle Nasat's three page catalogue of printed books prepared prior to, or available at, the time of publication in 1865. Its final section, *bache-khani* [Reading Matter for Children] contains 13 titles of works in prose and poetry. However, Marzolph says the list is incomplete, and lacks some items of well-

known children's reading such as *Kalilah wa Dimna*, Nasr Allah Monshi, and *Mulla Nasrudin* (2001:229).

Iranian intellectuals attempted to reform the educational system on European lines at the end of the 19th century. One problem perceived was the lack of suitable reading matter for the young. Mirza Mahmud Khan Meftah al-Molk (1876:4-5), for example, complained that materials used for children's reading were either inappropriate or too difficult for them, and then translated twenty-one stories from Arabic translations of French originals into clear and simple Farsi. Attempts to improve reading materials for children were closely connected with educational reform. In the 1920s-30s, new textbooks were prepared for elementary and secondary schools, covering Farsi language, history, geography, literature, morals and good conduct, and the natural sciences. Curricula and criteria used in European countries were often consulted; for example in the choice of poetry, the most important criteria were relevance of theme and clarity of language. Among contemporary poets whose works appeared in these textbooks were Mohammad-Taqi Bahar, Parvin E'tesami, and Iraj Mirza (Ayman et. al.1992:418).

Mirza Jabbar Askarzadeh Baghcheban (1885-1966) established the first kindergarten in Tabriz in 1924, and wrote books for young readers on the basis of his experience with children. His first children's play, *Khanum Khazuk* [Mrs. Khazuk], published in Shiraz in 1928 combined verse and prose. In the following year, he published *Zendagi-ye Kudakan* [Children's Lives], a collection of verse, in Tehran.

In the late 1920s, Ali-Naqi Waziri (1877-1979), a well-known composer and musician and founder of the first music school in Iran, compiled three anthologies under the title *Khandaniha-ye kudakan: Afsaneha* [Readings for Children:

Fairytales]. Most of the stories, along with the illustrations, had been taken from Western readers and adapted to Iranian customs and beliefs. Some phrases were, however, printed in the cursive style of Farsi writing, in order to acquaint young readers with it. A number of short plays and his own songs for children were included in each volume.

A high proportion of non-fiction works used for the education of Iranian children were the result of translations from foreign authors. In addition, translations played an important part in exposing Iranian children to world literature, and many classics were introduced in this way. Antoine de St. Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*, so popular that it reached its 12th printing in 1987, first appeared in Tehran in 1955. A year later Sadeq Chubak, an accomplished writer of adult short stories, translated Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio*, and Eqbal Yaghma'i retranslated Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in 1956 (Ayman et. al. 1992:419). Comparatively few books were written in Farsi for children at this time; about 50 such books are recorded as having been published before 1950 (Abu-Nasr 1996:792). The majority of publishers produced inaccurate translations, mainly arising from untrained and novice translators attempting books for younger age groups. This began to change in the 1960s when a number of organizations were founded to raise the quality of children's literature to a level similar to that of adult literature (see Chapter 5.2:150-156). As a result, a substantial number of writers, poets, translators, artists, and educators were attracted to the genre, and the quality of translations generally improved.

A large number of children's books were imported translations with little relation to the lives and experiences of Iranian children. These imports had some disadvantages as they were not always culturally suitable for Iranian youth. Often

they were of more relevance to the middle class than the working class, and they portrayed a culture totally alien to the majority of Iranians (Ayman et. al. 1992:418). An example of this was the imported American course material for teaching Farsi to village children that showed people sitting at tables, wearing Western clothes and eating hotdogs. This prompted writers such as Samad Behrangi (Chapter 6.2.6:192-197) to design their own textbooks.

3.4.3 Changes in Iranian educational literature

One would imagine school texts to have undergone major revisions after the revolution. Ghaffari and Higgins (1994:36) maintain that although Ministry of Education officials claim that the teaching programs and textbooks at the primary (6-11 yrs), guidance (11-14 yrs) and secondary (14+yrs) levels have been fundamentally revised since 1979, in fact the modifications are somewhat less reaching. They find that the changes have affected religion and literature texts much more than science and mathematics, and that even in those subjects the books were more often revised than rewritten.

Furthermore, comparative content analysis of the elementary Farsi language textbooks showed that 60% of the Islamic Republican era lessons were the same as those of the Pahlavi era or only showed differences in the pictures, names or characters, or an isolated word or two. Overall, only 10% of the texts in use in the Islamic Republic are completely new (Ghaffari & Higgins 1994:36). Unsurprisingly, the depiction of women and their activities in the textbooks is an area of major

concern, as appropriate sex-role behavior on the part of women is seen as an important part of maintaining an Islamic society.

Touba (1987:145) analyzed the elementary level Farsi language, social studies, religion and science textbooks in use after the first year of the revolution, and concluded that only men were portrayed in most economic activities, including some activities traditionally performed by both sexes; mostly women were seen only as agricultural workers and as teachers of girls. On the other hand, some scientific activities which were traditionally male and some recreational, artistic, political, and social activities of males were shown being performed by both men and women. Males were shown performing traditional female tasks such as caring for small children and helping their mother in household activities. Touba (1987:157) found that women were never presented as assertive and that many positive features, traditionally characteristic of women or both sexes were portrayed as characteristic only of males.

In an analysis comparing the later Farsi language textbooks of 1986-7, with those of 1969-70, a change in dress, the portrayal of sex segregation, especially in public settings, and a lowered visibility of women were the most consistent modifications found. However, no significant changes were found in the portrayal of women's occupations, in the prominence given to family life, in the characteristics of the family and sex roles within it, or in certain stereotyped gender-typical behavior (Ghaffari & Higgins 1994:37).

It was found that 46% of characters mentioned in the pre-Islamic Pahlavi texts were of unspecified gender, and that gender neutral characters increased in both number and proportion in the Islamic Republic texts; at 56% constituting over half of

all characters represented. Ghaffari and Higgins (1994:39) consider that the existence of a large number of gender-unspecified characters in the texts may alleviate the impact of the decline in the proportion of lessons in which females are portrayed. They feel that the many references that do not specify gender allow both males and females to identify with these characters. This presumption may be disputed as many words which are technically gender unspecified refer in fact to males. If the word is used without a qualifying hyphenated woman-, e.g.-doctor, it is taken to denote a male subject. 'Youth' in Farsi is supposed to be male or female; in practice it means male. The same is true in other languages; the so-called gender-neutral pronouns at once point to a male subject. Only when further evidence directly reveals a female subject, do we adjust our mental image and if this further evidence is not forthcoming, we continue to hold a male image. An example to illustrate this can be found on p.18, *Noamuz* magazine April-May 1997-98, where the teacher is addressed as *Khanum Mu'alem* (Ms. Teacher) rather than just *Mu'alem* (Teacher). Combined with the higher incidence of male subjects in both text and illustrations globally, this has the effect of fixing the standard as referring to male and non-standard, with further qualification, referring to female.

Ghaffari and Higgins 1994:39 found that the ratio of females included in pictures and/or text was 80% as often as males before 1979, but only 54% as often in Islamic Republic textbooks. Portrayal of women in public settings accounted for the decline, as the incidence of female portrayal in private settings slightly increased. Equal numbers of males and females were portrayed as students in the pre-Islamic Republic era, but only two thirds of this ratio were female in Islamic Republic textbooks. Working women were portrayed in only 23% of pre-Islamic Republic and

17% of Islamic Republic lessons, and in both eras nearly half of these lessons showed women doing housework. In the lessons showing women working outside the home, three quarters were in an agricultural setting and the remainder were shown teaching. These findings appear to reflect fewer female students in the Islamic Republic and fewer women going out to work, when in reality as noted above, the numbers of female university students have overtaken those of male university students, and increasing numbers of women are obliged to go out to work in Iran due to the ever worsening Iranian and worldwide economic situation. Teaching, doing housework and working on the farm seems to have been the intended lot of women in both pre- and immediate post-revolution eras, but since the end of the twentieth century, the situation has changed again to the point where the Islamic Republic textbooks bear little relation to the existing social reality. Clothing is one aspect of change portrayed in the two different eras which does reflect reality, in particular for women: a reality which has been imposed by law.

Western dress was shown in 73% of pre-Islamic Republic lessons, 5% Islamic dress and 36% working class, modest attire (Higgins & Ghaffari 1994:39). In 'Crossing the Road,' a story about a road accident in the 1986-7 Farsi language 4th grade textbook, one woman is shown walking on the street with her son, wearing a kind of fitted dress or shirt and skirt which in following years would be considered entirely unsuitable attire for outside wear, although she is wearing a scarf. Many of the pictures in the Islamic texts were exactly the same as in the old books except for a change of clothes for the female characters, usually involving not much more than adding a scarf. For example, while the story 'Let's keep our Eyes and Ears Open' appears in identical form in both Farsi language 4th grade textbook 1995 and that of

1970, the illustration in the earlier text shows a girl with blonde hair and a sleeveless dress working by a window looking out onto a forest, while in the Islamic Republic text, the view is of a traditional Iranian-style garden complete with pool, and the girl is wearing a scarf and long-sleeved top. These illustrations are shown in Chapter Eight where visual aspects of children's books are examined in more detail.

Boys appear outside in groups and alone in Islamic Republic books, but girls are shown alone or with family members, or in the classroom, or playing sports. The lack of groups of girls occupying free space outside only for the purpose of amusement and companionship reflects the reality of both Iran and a large number of other countries in the world. This is an example of educational literature reflecting and continuing the traditional status quo of society. Boys are trained to the notion that possession and enjoyment of outside space is their right and this continues into adulthood where groups of men spend many hours every day sitting outside in cafes, doing absolutely nothing except smoking, drinking and gossiping. This early training is reinforced by tales of child-kidnappers in the big cities, as well as by stories of the many other terrible things that could befall an unescorted female child on the streets, as related to the present researcher by relatives and neighbors in Tehran. This is an unfortunate instance of continuity in society which does not only apply to Iran. Men can be predators as well as protectors of females. They are the controllers of public space. The difference in the portrayal of girls versus boys in Islamic Republic texts illustrates this notion.

Mixed sex groups of children and children and adults were common in pre-Islamic Republic era lessons, but rare in Islamic Republic texts and then only in an obviously family setting. In fact, lessons portraying family relationships declined

from 50% to 36% in the Islamic Republic texts, contrary to expectations, and in both eras a nuclear family with 1.5 children was mostly featured (Ghaffari & Higgins 1994:40).

The post-revolution texts are more oriented toward the lower and lower-middle classes, presenting a more realistic picture of the social world of the majority of students rather than of an affluent minority, and affirming that it is normal for low-class and rural children, both boys and girls, to attend school, whereas the pre-revolution texts focus more on the professional, urban, middle classes. The children's own life-styles are reflected with a larger proportion of lessons in the post-revolution texts showing working class clothing, families sleeping, eating and socializing on carpet-covered floors instead of on western-style furniture, students' fathers as craftsmen rather than office workers, and some families living in rural environments. As it is considered that learning is enhanced by being able to identify with textbook characters, it could be said that the later texts expand real educational access for rural and lower class children (Ghaffari & Higgins 1994:40). However, taking all the other factors into account, it could also be said that these texts favor boys' use of public space over girls', discourage girls from going to school, discourage women from working in salaried jobs, depict the male as standard despite non-specific pronouns in Farsi, and promote the belief that the male population outnumbers the female population. If it is a case of identification, then boys are given the advantage which should have enhanced their learning, but this has not helped them to maintain higher student numbers in Iran's universities. Thus, it can be concluded that many of the changes in Iranian educational literature, as exemplified by the official Farsi

language textbooks, despite being radical, have been ineffectual, and elements of continuity are present as well as elements of change.

3.4.4 Tajiki educational literature

This section will investigate the background of educational literature in Tajikistan. The history of education in Tajikistan leading up to the Soviet period does not fall within the confines of the present research. Bashiri (1993) touches on this extensive topic, describing, for example, the clandestine group ‘Children’s Education,’ and the new-method schools of Samarqand and Bukhara. Tajikistan has had a number of different educational challenges to face during its recent history. Before the fall of Soviet rule, the majority of school children in Tajikistan were educated in Russian, a language that was not used at home. Their own language, Tajiki, was further weakened by three changes in its alphabet between 1929 and 1941, a period of only twelve years. While the national language and its script did not change in Iran during the twentieth century, the situation was very different in Tajikistan. Farsi, Cyrillic and Latin script were variously used, and during the Soviet era, the official language of the country was Russian. This meant that Russian language educational materials took priority over Tajiki ones and diverted educational resources to that end. Therefore, educational materials have only been made available again in Tajiki since the dissolution of Soviet rule in 1991.

Tajiki only ceased to be written in the Farsi alphabet in 1929, when Latin letters were substituted. Although Latin script was used during a ten-year period from 1929 to 1939, it is very difficult to trace any materials produced for children

from this period. In 1939/1940, the change to Cyrillic was made and by 1941, all publications were in Cyrillic script. Examples of books for children in Cyrillic date from the time of the change until the present, as Tajiki is still written in Cyrillic script. Not everyone agrees with the continuation of its use; some people feel that in order to access the history and literature of their ancestors, the Tajik people need to be able to read the Farsi alphabet. After the fall of the Soviet Union a wave of sentiment resulted in an attempt to reintroduce Farsi script, the writing of the ancestors, which could be named the 'Niagan Movement' (Bobokalonova 2003).

This did not result immediately in the teaching of Farsi to small children, however, as most of the parents themselves could no longer write it. Its introduction, rather, started at university level. The Faculty of Philology of the National State University of Tajikistan promoted the use of Farsi script, and in 1991 produced Javod's *Khudomuz* or 'Teach-yourself Manual,' a text for university level students to use for learning the Farsi alphabet according to its introduction which reads: 'This manual is for the use of National University and Interfaculty Groups.' Another text, *Khudomuzi Zaboni Forsi* (1995), was published by the Institute for Research of Farsi-Tajiki Language, under the auspices of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Dushanbe, and this was also intended for older readers (*Khudomuzi Zaboni Forsi* 1995, introduction). Ali Hadadi, in charge of the Farsi collection in Rudaki Library, situated within Ferdosi State Library, Dushanbe, taught Farsi around 1990-91 for two hours twice a week to classes of 5th to 9th grade in a Tajik *maktab* in the Dushanbe area. He remembers that there were only five books available for a class of twenty-four students and that there was no fixed curriculum for schools with regard to Farsi at the time (Hadadi 2003). In 2000, the teaching of Farsi was introduced into

the school curriculum for Tajiki language schools. From the age of around 10 years; from 3rd to 9th grade, junior and high school students study the Farsi alphabet and culture for 2-3 hours per week. Other *maktabs* (junior and high schools) specializing in Farsi, English or German languages start classes in these from 1st Grade. Although Farsi is taught in schools, there is no single official school text in use. One popular text which has been used in Tajikistan for some years by teachers of Farsi is *Alefba-ye Farsi*, which includes traditional folk stories from Iran. Stories from the *Shahnameh* have also proved popular, as students already know the Tajiki version. Thus, for a period of six years, many Tajik students study stories reflecting the culture of Iran and the history of *Iranzamin* in their original Farsi versions.

Russian is still taught in many schools, and is valued for its economic advantages, as Tajiks continue their migration to Russia looking for work to support their families back home in Tajikistan. While the textbooks used in Tajiki language schools are now written in Tajiki, using Cyrillic script, due to shortages caused by the Civil War, they are cheaply produced, and in short supply. They contain few illustrations, mostly line drawings, whereas the Soviet era texts were printed on better quality paper and contained sepia colored woodcut reproductions. Comparing a Grade 2 Tajiki language textbook in use just after the end of the Soviet era, *Zaboni Tojiki*, (Abdukadirov & Negmotov 1994) and the Grade 2 *Zaboni Modari* (Abdullov & Ikromova 2002), one observes a change of title from ‘Tajiki Language’ to ‘Mother Tongue.’ The 2002 textbook is thicker, printed on lower quality paper and contains fewer illustrations than the 1994 textbook. Whereas the illustrations in the 1994 book show girls wearing short skirts as well as more traditional dress, and Soviet-style architecture and vehicles, the illustrations in the

2002 textbook mainly feature girls in traditional dress and boys wearing traditional caps. With so few illustrations it is not possible to make an in-depth comparison as in the previous section on Iranian educational literature. Chapter Nine will examine Tajiki children's writers and their work in an attempt to discover other similarities or differences during the Soviet and post-Soviet eras in Tajikistan, as well as to compare the children's literature of Tajikistan with that of Iran over a comparable time period.

3.5 Experiences of war

The topic of war is an important indicator of change and continuity and thus a separate section has been dedicated to it. The following section focuses on material from Iran. Although experiences of war are not immediately identifiable as appropriate topics for children's literature, it will be seen that they are issues that have been dealt with by modern children's writers in Iran with sensibility and sympathy for the special plight of children during wartime. The portrayal of disability in children's books, however, cannot be described as extensive. Most of the war stories tend to focus on the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88. The importance of the topic of war and disability can be seen by the fact that the Children's Book Council of Iran (CBC) dedicated a special symposium to it. In March 1981, soon after the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war, during the International Children's Book Day activities, two discussion days were programmed for the two different, but related

subjects: War and Disability. The first day's topic was 'War in Children's Literature' (Ansari 1981:34).

Three papers were presented on the subject of war in children's literature. In the first, 'War in Children's Literature Throughout the World,' the author surveyed the tragedies of war, and the child's desire for peace, as shown in examples from children's literature including translations into Farsi, poetry, and prose quotations from earliest to present-day examples (Ansari 1981:34). The children's similar adverse reactions to war in the works from different time periods were found to constitute a continuous element. The second paper focused on Iranian children's literature. The manner of presenting war in classical literature was discussed and books and magazines for children were quoted, as well as juvenile radio programs to show how war, especially the current one (i.e. the Iran-Iraq war), was being presented to children and young adults. This shows that, however war is presented today, it has been a topic of relevance for both adults and children since classical times and as such merits a specific inclusion in this study. The third paper dealt with the writings of children and young adults themselves under the following headings; definition of war; results of war; the present war; and hopes for the future. After these papers, a summary of articles dealing with the publication of works for children about war in different countries was given, and an exhibition of Farsi books held (Ansari 1981:35). War can be seen as a topic which illustrates continuity in children's literature, as well as one which shows change over time in categories such as technology, incidences, geography, viewpoint, allies and enemies, etc.

Mehdi Mohammadi (1996:68) considers the most enduring remains of war to be those works which are written after the war. He asks a number of questions about

books written on the subject for children: What connection does the story have with war and remembering war? What picture of war does the writer present to children and what is his/her message? Is the story set inside or outside Iran; in a village or a city? What topic of war is the story talking about? What are the characteristics of the story's construction and its quality of language and expression? Which point of view has the writer used in order to express the story?

Mohammadi (1996:68-71) surveyed 121 children's books containing stories relating to war written by 90 writers in Iran in the period 1980 to 1984. The writers comprised 18 women, 70 men and two people using pen names. He examined all the existing stories, a total of 199, not just selected examples. He collected information from various bibliographies; national, general and specialized, and selected published bibliographies from national, private and international associations, from storybooks, and information from them appearing in the selected lists of the *Kanun*, National Library, and CBC.

Of these, two thirds were short stories and one third were long stories (definition of 'short' and 'long' not given). 20% of the writers were women and 77% were men. 20.8% were illustrated, not with ornamental pictures according to Mohammadi (1996:69), but with those intended to give a better and easier understanding of the subject matter. The vast majority, 89% of the books were published and distributed in Tehran. The majority of the stories were set in towns or cities, while the subjects most depicted were martyrdom and the bombing of cities and villages.

When the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88 was described, the most common human characteristics given for the Iraqi forces were: stupid, cowardly, murdering, criminal

and chicken-hearted, while courageous, fearless, faithful, kind, and clever were the most common characteristics used to depict the Iranians. For the most part, the quality of language was good, with 84.9% of the stories written in ‘clear and understandable’ language, and an optimistic and realistic outlook was shown by 93.9% of the writers. As for the point of view of the stories, 48.3% of the writers wrote from an omnipresent point of view and 43.7% from a first-person point of view (Mohammadi 1996:68-71). A few brief story summaries follow. These are given as examples of the topics and subject matter found in such stories, and as such can highlight similarities and differences. For further comparison, examples of war stories written by children themselves can be found in Appendix 7.

Mitra Bayat’s 1997 *Zamzameh* [Whispering] is a collection of four short stories dealing with questions such as ‘death, martyrdom, and the loss of family members (Amrai & Ebrahimi 2002:28-29).

Oqabhe-ye tapeh-ye shast [The Eagles of Hill 60], written in 1990, received the Book of the Year of the Islamic Republic award for its author, Mohammad Reza Bayrami. The story, intended for a readership of 15 years or older, begins when Ahmad and one of his friends are preparing to go to the warfront (Amrai & Ebrahimi 2002:47-48).

Hossein Fattahi’s 1989 *Atash dar kharman* [The Fire in the Harvest] is for readers of 12 years and over. This is another example of boys being groomed for their eventual participation in the events of war, and reflects the author’s support of the regime’s policies and the necessity for men to fight and defend their homeland.

Naser Irani’s 1995 *Asrar-e jangal-e sabz* [The Secret of the Green Forest] differs from other war stories in that it focuses on recovery from the effects of war

rather than on the war itself. The hero is a boy called Mehdi who loses all his family members when their house is destroyed by bombing during the Iran-Iraq war.

This and other stories about children surviving wars use a number of styles and devices such as realism, fantasy, dream sequence, frame stories, humor, alternating point of view, and so on. Some of these could be considered traditional devices, and markers of continuity, while others could be described as modern and different from what has been previously written. The purpose of many of these stories is to help children come to terms with the horrors that they have suffered by giving them hope, showing that they are not alone, validating their feelings, and setting examples which may encourage and help them, by identifying with the characters, to see that it is possible to recover from their own traumas. As such, these stories can be classified as a form of bibliotherapy.

Other books on the theme of war include Mohammad Reza Kateb's 1989 *Ja-ye Shoma Khali Ast* [Your Place is Empty], which looks at the wildness and inhumanity of war; Fereydoun Rahimi's 1986 *Khabam Por az Kabutar va Shahin ast*, [My Dreams are Full of Pigeons and Falcons] which entwines stark realism with imaginative poetic dreams in the style of Samad Behrangi's 1969 *Bist-o-Chahar Sa'at dar Khab-o-Bidari* [Twenty Four Restless Hours]; and the 1981 *Kuchande-ye Kuchulu* [The Small Migrant] by Reza Rahgozar, a war story told from two points of view and employing the traditional style of framing stories within stories.

War, overcoming difficult conditions, loyalty between friends, and friendship between boys and animals are topics which have recurred so many times in stories over the ages that these can be cited as examples of continuity in the socialization and preparation of boys to fulfill their role in society. It may seem obvious to point

out that if the war between Iraq and Iran had not happened, many of these stories would not have been written, but this is an example of the effect of specific real life events leading to the writing of literature for children. There have always been wars throughout history and boys have always been called to give up their lives or suffer injury fighting for their country.

One of the direct results of the war was the increase in the number of disabled people in society. The second day of the 1981 CBC meetings in celebration of International Children's Book Day, was devoted to 'Reading Materials for the Handicapped Child and Young Adult.' Three representatives from the Office for Exceptional Children spoke on the problems of the blind child, of those of the deaf-mute, and of the mentally retarded. Books written for the disabled, as well as several works by disabled young adults were exhibited (Ansari 1981:34-35).

A small number of children's books deal with the subject of disability (Amrai & Ebrahimi 2002). This could be included as a topic which has received more attention in recent times than in the earlier part of the time period under study. The motivation to include disability in this section on war stems from the fact that many, although not all, disabilities dealt with seem to result from war. In earlier children's stories, the focus was more on war and patriotism, victory, glory, strength, bravery, masculine qualities, and so on. While these kind of stories continue to be written, the appearance of stories about disability as a result of war could be seen as a change in focus and a move towards realism. Examples of books described in this category include a story about a boy who loses one of his legs in an Iraqi air attack (Tahbaz 1999); and a story about the relationship of a son and his father who returns from war after having a leg amputated (Kalhor 1994). Further stories in the category of

disability not connected with war include Naser Irani's 1983 *Sakhtun* [The Invincible One], concerning disability caused by a mountain-climbing accident; Fereshteh Molavi's 1992 *Naranj va toranj* [Bitter Oranges and Citrons], about a little girl living with her blind father and grandmother; and Shaban Nejad's 1997 *Seda-ye senobar* [The Sound of Spruce] about another little girl who comes to terms with the reality of her blindness, and Yusefi's 1996 *Reza*, a story about the cruelty that children with mental disabilities can face (Amrai & Ebrahimi 2002:166).

Such books benefit all children, not only those with disabilities, as they are a way of allowing children to share the experiences of others who are different from themselves, and to become aware of issues that they may not have faced in their own lives. This is a way of socializing, encouraging empathy, and widening children's experience without the need for them to actually suffer the same experiences as the characters they read about, and while these stories may be classified as texts for the purpose of educating children, or as therapy for disturbed children, this does not, in the present researcher's opinion, remove them from the domain of children's literature, nor does it constitute something unheard of in traditional stories. While the events and stories may now be presented in books, films, TV or other media, showing a change in form from previous eras, similar oral tales have performed an educational and therapeutic function for centuries and this is an example of continuity in the purpose of telling such stories to children which still persists.

3.6 Children's magazines and journals

The following section looks at the development of journals for children in the period under study. Details of these publications may help to build up a clearer picture of content, issues addressed, criteria used, control of production, distribution, quantities of publication, reader response, etc. From this, elements of change or continuity may be identified.

A number of magazines intended for children began to appear in Iran in the first part of the twentieth century. *Seh fondog* [Three Hazelnuts], the first Farsi periodical for children, was modeled on European children's magazines, and was founded on the initiative of Mokhber-al-Saltana Mahdiqoli Khan Hedayat in 1928 (Ayman et. al. 1992:418). During World War II, Iran was occupied by the allies after the fall of Reza Shah in 1941 until 1946. The British Council engaged a group of Iranians to publish magazines for young people as part of their program of public relations and technical assistance. Of these, the best known was *Nonahalan* [New Shoots], first published in 1942 by the British Council as a supplement to the adult publication *Sheipur* [Trumpet]. It continued under the direction of Abdallah Faryar for the next four years and featured poems by Abbas Yamini-Sharif and others.

During the decade after World War II, a number of other magazines for young readers sprang into existence. Starting in 1945, Yamini-Sharif and Ebrahim Bani-Ahmad, a teacher at the Tehran Normal School began publication of the pocket-size magazine *Bazi-ye Kudakan* [Children's Games]; Ruhi Arbab, a translator of foreign children's literature, founded the magazine *Kudak* [Child], and Ja'far

Badi'i started *Bazi* [Game]. *Sepideh-ye Farda* [Tomorrow's Dawn] was founded in 1953 by Azar Rahnema and Mohammad-Baqer Hushyar (Ayman et. al. 1992:419). The Ministry of Education established the periodical *Daneshamuz* [Student] in 1948 under the editorship of Mashayek Faridani; he was succeeded two years later by Yamini-Sharif, who held the post until 1953 when Eqbal Yaghma'i took over. During the same period, *Sazman-e Javanan-e Jamiyat-e Shir o Khorshid-e Sorkh-e Iran* (the Youth Organization of the Iranian Red Lion and Sun Society, corresponding to the Red Crescent or Red Cross) published a magazine for its members (Ayman et. al. 1992:418).

The Iranian student organization affiliated with the Tudeh Party also issued a weekly magazine likewise named *Daneshamuz*, which included the work of upper-elementary and secondary school students and offered prizes to encourage young writers. In such a contest, held in 1950, the first and second prizewinners were Mahmud Kianush, who later became a noted children's author, and Gholam Hossein-Sa'edi, who became a renowned playwright. After the fall of Mosaddeq in 1953, leftist organizations were suppressed and the student *Daneshamuz* ceased publication.

Thus, it can be seen that a number of magazines for children have existed in Iran for most of the twentieth century. Although magazines as a medium may be a relatively recent development for Persianate children's literature, presenting new ideas and reflecting changes in society, much that is familiar and traditional also appear in their pages. Magazines for children showcase developments in technical production and quality, pedagogy and educational theory, artistic style, typography, graphics, and so on. The content of these magazines, however, shows recurring

topics which highlight continuity, such as qualities desirable in children: helpfulness, kindness to others; activities which children enjoy, such as games, drawing, and making things with their hands; learning about the world around them, and so on.

Theoretical and critical magazines on the subject of children's literature have a strong connection with educational theory. The founding concepts in modern children's literature in Iran, as in many countries, were formulated and developed by educators (Ansari & Ghezelayagh 1993:13). The earliest references to the field are found in teacher training literature. The first articles in Iran about children's literature topics appeared in the journal *Sepideh Farda*, which was founded in 1951 by the Teacher Training Center (Ansari & Ghezelayagh 1993: 13-14). From this early beginning, a number of critical and theoretical publications dealing with children's literature have appeared in Iran. The *Kanun* published several journals including *Amuzesh* [Learn], *Puyesh* [Search], from 1989 to 1997, which contained both original and translated works, and *Faslnameh* [Quarterly Journal], all dealing with theoretical issues in children's literature. The Literary Creation Center of the *Kanun* also published *Ruyesh* [Growth], 1989 to 1991, and a quarterly magazine, *Ayesh* [Cultivation], 1984 to 1991, for budding poets, writers, illustrators, and young people interested in literature and art. *Ayesh*, with a circulation of 40,000 presented outstanding poems, stories, personal reminiscences, and illustrations by children and young adults, along with reviews, critiques, and technical articles on writing and literature. By introducing past and present Iranian literature, it tried to acquaint young artists with the wealth of their own culture and art (Mirhadi 1990:8-9). The CBC newsletter became one of the most important publications dealing specifically

with children's literature. It featured reports on international trends in the field, as well as focusing on Iran (Ansari & Ghezelayagh 1993:13-14).

Earlier publications gradually started to cater for specific readerships from among the children and youth in general; such as young learners, children, youngsters, Baluch, children of the martyrs, girls etc. This trend started in the 1960s, but became more common after the revolution. In addition to identifying their readers, the topics of the magazines were also made more specific, e.g. *Fonun* (scientific), *Roshd* (educational aids), *Sorush Nojavan* (literary), *Borham* (mathematics), *Baran*, *Payam-e Shadi* and *Nasl-e No* (religion), *Arvatul Voshgah*, *Sepideh Sorkh* and *Nabard Daneshamuz* (political), (Ansari & Ghezelayagh 1993:13-14). This specificity can be cited as one of the most important changes in post-revolution magazines for children in Iran.

The oldest weekly magazine for children, *Keyhan-e Bacheha* [Children's Keyhan], published by *Keyhan*, the largest Iranian newspaper group, began publication in 1956. Translations formed a large part of the contents and during its first twenty-two years of production, nearly 90% of its stories were translations from foreign magazines. These imports had little relation to the needs of Iranian children and helped foster the 'westoxification' (Al-e Ahmad 1962), or westernization, of Iranian society from an early age. After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the content of the magazine was transformed by a group of young writers who joined the editorial board. Only a small number of translations of good quality literary works from other parts of the world were accepted. The new content written by Iranian authors sought to address the perceived reading interests of the majority of Iranian children and young adults through stories about life and problems in rural areas and

small towns (Abu-Nasr 1996:792). During the years of the Iran-Iraq war, the magazine presented many articles and illustrations reflecting the hardship of the war years, and the courage and bravery of ordinary people. A number of poems for children were published for the first time in *Keyhan-e Bacheha*. Despite the change in content, many of the topics and issues addressed remained constant as children's interests continue to relate to their development, but this content later became more focused on the different age groups and their differing abilities, as noted above.

In 1963, the *Markaz-e Entesharat-e Amuzeshi* [Center for Educational Publications] of the Ministry of Education, with the cooperation of Franklin Publications started to publish a series of magazines named *Peik* [Messenger]. These were intended to provide reading materials for newly literate people, and to promote reading interests and habits among children and young people, in particular rural school children. In preparation for publishing the *Peik* series, extensive studies were carried out in other countries to evaluate material which had proved successful in similar publications (Sharif 1998:29-37). The bi-weekly magazines for different grade levels were distributed in all the elementary and high schools throughout the country. A staff of artists who worked closely with the writers for *Peik*, each specialized in illustrations for one kind of writing (Ayman et. al. 1992:417). *Peik* started with three magazines: one for children, one for adults and one for teachers (Sharifi 2003). In 1981 the magazines were separated into six: three for adults (*Mu'alem*, *Amuzesh-e Ebtedai* and *Teknolojia-Amuzeshi*) and three for children (*Kudak*, *Noamuz* and *Nojavanan*) The output for children further increased to five magazines in 1995 with the addition of *Daneshamuz* and *Javanan*.

The success of the magazines resulted in an outstanding increase in circulation. The number of titles in the series was increased to seven over the years, and in response to the needs of growing villages and towns, their area of dissemination was widened. Some titles in the series reached the unparalleled circulation of 700,000 to 1,000,000 copies. *Peik* magazine became known as *Roshd* [Growth or Development] in 1981 after the Islamic Revolution, and continued to expand (Mirhadi 1990:8-9).

The reason for the success of the series was that these magazines were closely geared to the reading interests and abilities of their intended age groups. The Center for Educational Publications laid the foundations, and despite being published by the Ministry of Education, these magazines consistently attracted talented contributors over the years, both writers and illustrators, who supplied interesting, relevant and independent input. In addition, reader participation in the form of letters, stories, drawings, etc. was encouraged, thus drawing in the younger generation of prospective writers. Stories, legends, poems, scientific experiments and concepts, short biographies, and articles on Islamic thought and events, current news, and important days and holidays in present-day Iran comprise the main subject matter of the magazines. In addition, *Roshd-e Noamuz* introduced new plays and hobbies; *Roshd-e Daneshamuz* presented handicrafts; and *Roshd-e Nojavanan* dealt with the problems of young people and developed a relationship with its readers by publishing letters, editorials, etc. It endeavored to guide young readers in scientific methods of thinking and working, and encouraged them to use their initiative in constructing their own materials and tools for experiments (Mirhadi 1990:8). In addition, all three magazines have sections for poems, stories, and drawings sent in

by their readers. Eight issues of each magazine are published during the school year, and schools throughout the country assist in their wide distribution (Mirhadi 1990:9). The magazines are sold at an affordable price which also increases their sales.

Magazines aimed at children continued to proliferate throughout the 1990s. In 1990, eleven magazines were published regularly for Iranian children and young people. Some were published by governmental institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, Radio and Television Organization; the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults; and *Bonyad-e Shahid* [Martyr's Foundation]. Others were published by private institutions. Some of these magazines such as *Fonun* [Techniques], acquainting young readers with technology, and *Keyhan-e Elmi* [Scientific Keyhan], presenting scientific articles exclusively, had only recently appeared at that time. Others such as *Keyhan-e Bacheha* and *Roshd* had already been in existence for over twenty-five years (Mirhadi 1990:8-9).

Another important publication, *Aftabgardan* [Sunflower], celebrated its first year of publication on July 9th, 1995 and its editors were present at the International Bologna book fair (Rai 1995:32). *Aftabgardan*, which is no longer published, was a daily newspaper for Iran's 33 million children under the age of 16, then half the country's population (1995 figures; since then a further increase in the number of young readers has been seen due to the rapid growth of this section of the population of Iran). *Aftabgardan* contained the latest news on science, arts, sport and world events. In this it had much in common with adult newspapers, but it also contained an entire page of short stories, poetry and art for children, a page of puzzles, games and crafts, and another page of children's own stories. There was also an advice

column and many other attractive features. *Aftabgardan* was intended for the 12-16 age range, but the weekend edition included a section for younger children.

In the 1990s, in the light of the considerable growth in the field of children's literature in Iran, a shortage of research and criticism was to be found in existing journals which highlighted the need for a journal devoted to literary criticism for adults working with or interested in children's literature. *Pazhuheshnameh* [The Research Quarterly of Children and Youth Literature], was founded by Mehdi Hejvani in 1995 in order to address this need. Different themes are dealt with in detail over one or more issues; some examples of topics dealt with between 1995 and 2000 are: poetry, criticism of stories, comic strips, meaning and boundaries of children's literature, mystical and philosophical literature, illustration, commercial books, censorship and supervision, religious literature, changes in the last two decades of children's literature, and violence and tolerance. Hejvani is also the editor of one of the most active publications in the field, the children and youth's literature monthly journal *Ketab-e Mah*, started in October 1997. By the year 2000, the number of children's magazines in Iran had increased to such an extent that a separate study would be required to describe all of them. Hejvani, (2003), when asked about popular newspapers and magazines for children and young people published in Iran today, listed over twenty titles.

Thus, it can be seen that in Iran, a steady progression in terms of the quantity and quality of children's magazines and journals has been under way since the beginning of the 1960s. This trend continued after the revolution, and can be seen to be in line with general international trends in children's literature over the same period. In Iran, it could be said that children's magazines have taken the place of oral

literature in many ways, and the increase in literacy and availability has facilitated this.

3.7 Selection and social values portrayed in children's literature

The subject of selection or censorship of children's books is one that raises heated debate (see: Banani 1971, and 'SAVAK Press Guidelines.' 1978:2). The present thesis does not discuss the wider subject of censorship, as this is a very extensive area (For more on this topic see Bosmajian & Pace Nilsen 1996; Sigler 1999:233-238). Rather, a study of one of the issues relating to children's literature, the portrayal of social values as a main deciding factor in selection, will be analyzed here. Selection will be examined with regard to the pressures brought about by society in the designation of what is suitable and appropriate reading material for children, and some statistics will be presented with relation to several specific questions in order to highlight change and continuity in this important area.

In order to decide what is suitable, or what is good or bad, a reference to the values of society must be made. These values change from one era to another; some come from within society and some are enforced upon society from the outside. Social and moral values present in children's books were examined by Tajeran (1980) in an analysis of the children's books most popular immediately after the Islamic Revolution. More specifically, the study examined sociologist-identified Iranian middle-class values in the content of these books, and asked four questions:

To what extent are Iranian middle-class social and moral values present in the content of the selected story books?

To what degree of frequency and level of intensity are the values presented?

What additional values, if any, are not presented in the list of the specific values?

How do the findings of this study compare with those of a previous study of social and moral values in the textbooks used for the elementary level in Iran?

The purpose of this study was to gather data related to the presence of specific values from nineteen of the most popular children's story books of the time, in the 7-11 age group in Iran. The titles, authors and dates of these books were not given. In collecting the data, a form was used for each of the books, consisting of sixteen major Iranian middle-class social and moral values as selected by six Iranian sociologists. The values were: marriage, religion, country, family, authority, education, cleanliness, kindness, work, thrift, honesty, boy as favored sex, justice, charity, friends, and hospitality. The study concluded that the sixteen major values selected were not equally represented in storybooks and they did not include all of the values represented in the books. Three values: honesty, justice, and work received the most attention (42%). Two values: boy as favored sex, and cleanliness received the lowest attention (2%). Five additional values: prudence, cleverness, conservativeness, being grateful, and bravery were identified in the content of the storybooks. When comparing these results with the findings of earlier studies it was found that three values: 'work', 'education', and 'religion' received the greatest representation, while the value 'boy as favored sex' was not observed in either study.

Tajeran (1980) asserts that these findings may help Iranian children's writers to be more aware of the value of content in storybooks, and to create stories appropriate for young readers' moral development. After the revolution in Iran, suitability was ultimately decided by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance,

then by organizations specializing in children's literature such as the CBC and *Kanun*, and finally, by parents, teachers, and librarians. Tajeran considers that the study's findings may help to identify and select books which emphasize specific social and moral values, as well as to assist children's writers in following a consistent pattern in presenting values in story and textbooks. He concludes that other research needs to be done in the following areas: a study similar to his for ages other than 7 to 11; in-depth studies to explore the manner in which social and moral values are internalized by children; and studies to compare findings of this study and those story books translated from other languages into Farsi.

Naser Yusefi (1995:48-49), an award-winning children's writer, member of the CBC Board of Directors, and of the Editorial Board of *Keyhan-e Bacheha*, notes that making lists of 'good' books is a process of negative selection, since de facto or explicitly, it creates a list of books that are not to be read or recommended. This raises questions regarding the boundaries that separate 'good' and 'bad' books. Should books be evaluated and assigned to one extreme or the other? What standards are used in this selection? Why are some books selected by one group and rejected by another? Yusefi comments on the desirability of divergent attitudes in different groups, noting that in Iran at least six centers publish annual lists of books considered fit for children and adolescents, and often, although not always, books approved and awarded prizes by one center are censured by another. He goes on to say that nevertheless organizations supported by the government have considerable power, and take advantage of their position to set strict principles and standards for evaluating children's books. This results in these principles being imposed on non-governmental agencies as well, a process that could pave the way for the growth of

narrow-mindedness; if children are never exposed to conflicting thoughts and opinions, how will they develop the ability to make choices? (Yusefi 1995:48-49)

The present researcher questions this contention as many people from many different walks of life and professions contribute to the production and selection of books for children. In addition much input is received from international sources. It is impossible to separate international influence from domestic influence even in Iran. A great number of adults in different organizations in Iran are involved in dividing children's books into good and bad, recommending some and rejecting others, often as a result of the way they portray social values, and the number continues to increase. With regard to Iranian organizations involved in selection, creation of recommended book lists, and awarding of prizes, the Children's Book Council (CBC) has been one of the foremost authorities on children's literature in Iran since before the revolution (see Chapter 5.3:156-167). The CBC enjoys regular communication and collaboration with IBBY, the international children's literature organization.

Independence of thought must be shown at some level by critics; they do not have direct communication with each other; they are focusing on different aspects of book selection and they cannot possibly have exactly the same opinion on every issue. Some critics may look for moral edification, others for educational content, and others for enjoyment. A parent may look upon a text in a different light from a librarian, who may have different priorities from a teacher. Even before books reach this stage, publishers have made decisions based upon economic factors, which can also act as censoring influences. If publishers do not consider that a book will sell well enough to make a good financial return it will never reach the stage of being

selected or refused as suitable or unsuitable because of moral or other issues. This economic reality, which overrides many other considerations, is not confined to Iran, nor is it confined to children's literature.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the effects of more recent social and political changes on Persianate children's literature, investigating a number of areas in detail. It demonstrated that examples of both change and continuity can be found in this literature, and provided an overview of the scope of issues relevant to this field as a background for later material in the study.

The chapter has shown that many factors have affected the development of modern children's literature in Iran. It has examined a range of key areas in detail in order to assess the existence and extent of change or continuity. The various social and political aspects examined included reforms and social changes occurring in the period leading up to that under study, the impact of the revolution and its aftermath, war and disability, educational literature, children's magazines and journals, suitability and selection criteria. This chapter also looked at the development and increase of magazines written especially for children and some of the issues connected with them. Social values as portrayed in children's books were also discussed with regard to their effect on what is considered suitable content for children's books and on their selection.

It was seen that social factors influenced children's literature in different ways, having an effect both on what was available to read, and what adults

considered to be suitable for children to read. This influence did not apply to all children's literature, however, and studies showed that only a quarter of children's reading materials reflected social changes.

Furthermore, while the Islamic Revolution produced many changes, especially during the early period until 1982-3, in the production and content of children's literature, the details observed from the analysis of the contents of educational materials showed that much of this change was only temporary, or on the surface. The Iran-Iraq war also had an effect on topics dealt with by writers, an example of which was the treatment of disability by some writers, a topic which previously had not received much coverage. Overall, it was found that two strands of literature appear to exist in parallel; one drawing on classical sources for its inspiration and another reflecting the surface changes in society. Whereas before the revolution, changes had mainly been shaped by foreign influences, after the revolution the inspiration for these changes was indigenous, and stories portrayed the realities of life in Iran rather than in other countries.

The following chapter will turn to the classical texts in order to investigate which elements have continued to inform modern Persianate children's literature. For this purpose, four texts have been chosen: *One Thousand and One Nights*, *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, *Mullah Nasrudin or Goha*, and the *Shahnameh*. Although these classical texts are strictly outside the time frame focused upon in this thesis, they are so important that without them the thesis would be missing an important cornerstone of its argument. They are the basis or inspiration for a large number of stories produced for children today. As such they form a body of evidence which supports the concept of continuity, despite change, in Persianate children's literature.

Chapter 4: The influence of classical literature on modern Persianate children's literature

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine some examples of ancient writings, fables and epics, and their influence on modern children's literature. It will investigate which of the various traditions and elements of classical texts modern Persianate children's literature has inherited, and what their impact has been regarding continuity and change. Although the period under study is the second half of the twentieth century, it is important to look further back into history to gain an understanding of the background of modern Persianate children's literature. Themes and topics tend to recur and form an element of continuity which can be noted by examining earlier texts.

The myths and legends of Iran, the Persian myths, reflect the survival of an ancient tradition in the culture as well as the language of a large geographical area extending beyond the political boundaries of modern Iran. Neither nomadic movements, invasions, nor internal political changes and upheavals have succeeded in destroying the ancient sagas; on the contrary, these legends have survived for millennia. Their preservation has kept alive the traditions and social concepts of a distant past and at the same time helped the Persian language and literature to survive and develop (Curtis 1993:77).

It will be shown that a number of historical factors have played their part in the development of modern Iranian children's literature, and that historical epics and traditional stories have had a strong influence, especially in ensuring the continuity of Persianate culture and language. Classical texts which are considered to be aimed

at adult readers frequently become simplified as children's texts over time. Children have repeatedly appropriated and adopted stories which appeal to them, despite disapproval from adults. The chapter notes this question of target audience as a recurring feature in the reading of such texts. It can be seen that some stories seem to find a resonance in the imagination of children, and having gained recognition as 'children's stories,' continue to be popular for hundreds or even thousands of years, as shown by their appearance in publications today. In addition, certain stories have a pedagogical use and have enjoyed popularity with parents and teachers as a result. An examination of the situation will show that such classics have furnished children's literature with many topics and themes over the years.

Traditional stories and folktales have been a source of inspiration for many writers. Fazl-Allah Sobhi Mohtadi (d.1962), who narrated popular stories on the radio every Friday for 20 years from 1940-1960, collected folktales and rewrote them for children (Ayman et. al., 1992:418). Samad Behrangi rewrote the folktales of Azerbaijan and struggled to have them published in their original language. Many more examples can be found of epic stories, folktales and all manner of ancient texts providing a basis for modern Persianate children's literature.

This chapter deals with texts that have been traced back to between the sixth and tenth century AD, with origins dating even earlier. Until a few years ago the experts in the field of children's literature were of the opinion that the history of this type of literature in Iran dated back only to the Qajar period in the nineteenth century, and that the only previous surviving writings in this field were the books of advice belonging to the Islamic period (Abadi 2002:3-4). However, *The History of Children's Literature in Iran* (HCLI 1997), a research project undertaken by the

Foundation for Research on the History of Children's Literature in Iran, has shown that children's literature in Iran has a very long history. Earlier archaeological surveys had shown that in ancient Iran, special attention was paid to children's education and certain recovered tablets indicated that children practiced their lessons on them. Researchers have found that some religious texts and books of advice were addressed to children, and as a result of their investigations, have concluded that the 'Asurik Tree,' which dates back to about three thousand years ago, is the oldest literary text for children so far known (Ghaeni & Mohammadi 2001:23). The famous fable of the 'Asurik Tree' has undergone many changes through the ages, especially with relation to the geographical and cultural conditions of each region. Despite these regional variations, the main theme of the story has been preserved (Abadi 2002:3). This written fable demonstrates the long tradition in Iran of recorded stories for children (Mohammadi in Amrai & Ebrahimi 2002:108).

Other written stories, not all of them originating in Iran, have formed the basis for a substantial amount of the children's literature available to Persian-speaking children today. Popular literature has proved to be as resistant to cultural change as oral tradition, and the two are often entwined. Marzolph (2001:218) records that the adventures of the jeweler Salim, *Salim-e javaheri*, performed orally in the second half of the twentieth century, are found in chap-books sold in the mid-twentieth century in Iran which reproduce a mid-nineteenth century Qajar text; the embedded moral and cultural values of which originate from Safavid times when the story is thought to be compiled. Another example of the continuity of popular literature is seen in the example of an early fifteenth century encyclopedia using sources going back to the first centuries of Islam, the *al-Mustatraf* compiled by al-

Ibsihi, that still enjoyed a wide readership at the end of the twentieth century (Marzolph 2001:218).

Children continue to read stories from Iranian classics such as Obayd Zakani's 14th century *Mush o Gorbeh* [The Mouse and the Cat,] and Shaikh Baha' al-Din 'Ameli's *Nan o Halva* [Bread and Halva] 1547-1621, and *Shir o Shekar* [Milk and Sugar] 1622, as well as popular adult stories such as *Chehel Tuti* [Forty Parrots] and *Hezar o yek Shab*, [A Thousand and One Nights], a category that was generally considered unsuitable for young people (Ayman et. al. 1992:421). The fact that these stories have been widely read by children over a long period up to the present seems to include them in the category of children's literature. Furthermore, although many books have been considered by adults to be unsuitable reading material for children this has not diminished their popularity among their young readers (Karimi-Hakkak 1998:527-542).

Four works, which have been repeatedly used as sources of inspiration by modern Persianate children's writers, will be examined in the following section. These are *One Thousand and One Nights*, *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, *Mulla Nasruddin or Goha*, and the *Shahnameh*, and will include English retellings and translations. The influence of these stories is so great that it is not only confined to Persian speaking areas, as will be shown by evidence of their translation and production in other languages. For this purpose, modern texts originating from classical stories that may have been produced outside the geographical area under study will also be included. These have been written in various languages such as Arabic and English, as well as Farsi.

The four works will be examined from a historical and social perspective, with a focus on different aspects such as the origins, geographical spread and proliferation of the works and their translations; the content of some of the stories contained in the works, and their development as children's stories. The treatment will provide information leading to a global perspective and understanding of the background, history and influence of these works with relation to modern Persianate children's literature, and the continuous elements found within them. Despite being outside the time-frame of the twentieth century, these texts form an important background for anyone studying this children's literature and its origins, especially with reference to change and continuity.

The purposes and intended audiences of these works will be investigated in order to discover the different aspects of this literary legacy and how the stories relate to modern works. The relationship between written stories and oral tales will be examined, and between stories and audiences of different ages. The mystery of how a story became a 'children's' story was just as inexplicable in ancient times as it is in modern times. Thus, it is not always possible to separate children's and adults' works on the basis of their perceived intended audience, rather it is important to learn about the influences that created them, and the elements which make them attractive to children. The following texts are examples of works which have formed a basis and inspiration for modern Persianate children's literature, and which demonstrate the existence of continuity across time.

4.2 One thousand and one nights

The collection of stories known as *The Thousand and One Nights* is possibly the best known in the West of all the ancient classics which originated in the East. *One Thousand Nights and One Night* is the Arabic and Farsi title of this world famous collection of tales, known in English as *The Arabian Nights*. Much has been written about the history of this collection and its various versions. Therefore, the present research does not seek to repeat this body of knowledge on the subject, but rather, to examine some of its background and to look at the heritage provided by this collection in relation to modern children's stories, and to see what they have drawn from it.

After a background section on *One Thousand and One Nights*, two specific examples of stories for children translated from or based on this text will be examined in more detail: a 1950s reprint of an 1893 collection of the tales presented for children, and a 1998 version of the frame story of Shahrazad aimed at 9-12 year olds. The first was produced in the United Kingdom and the other in the USA. While both of them are written in English, the 1950s work was based on a French translation, while the 1998 work was translated into Farsi and distributed in Iran. While a time span of sixty years separates the two texts, the first is reprinted from a work produced sixty years earlier, creating a total time span of over a hundred years. *One Thousand and One Nights*, however, has a much longer history than only a hundred years, as do the other texts in this chapter.

The nucleus of the collection in *One Thousand and One Nights* was translated from Persian into Arabic in the 10th century AD in Baghdad. Most readers will be familiar with this collection, but to recap, the stories are set in Persia, India and

China. They are connected by the fact that they are said to have been related night after night by Shahrazad, who was under sentence of death from her husband, the Sultan Shahriar. Betrayed by his first wife, heart-broken and suspicious of all women as a result, he had since been in the habit of marrying and murdering a new wife every single day until Shahrazad offered herself as his wife. Every night Shahrazad told stories, stopping at such an exciting point at daybreak that Sultan Shahriar's curiosity compelled him to let her live another day in order to hear the end of her tale. This went on for a considerable length of time, portrayed as a thousand nights in the collection, until eventually Shahrazad was pardoned by a Shahriar cured of his grief and paranoia, and her life saved by her own intelligence, knowledge and imagination. This frame story is possibly the most famous part of the whole collection.

Due to translations of the collection by writers such as Galland and Burton which include 'Arabian' in the title, the actual history and Persianate content of *One Thousand and One Nights* has been somewhat obscured or skimmed over outside of *Iranzamin*, and its starting point considered to date only from its translation into Arabic. The first Arabic reference to the existence of a collection of tales carrying this title is given by Abd al-Hasan Ali ibn al-Husayn Mas'udi (d.956AD), whose *Muruj adh-Dhahab* [Meadows of Gold], a history of the world from creation to A.D. 947, is a compilation of his travel observations and studies. Mas'udi tells of a collection of untrue stories which had been translated from Persian, Sanskrit, and Greek, including the book entitled *Hezar Afsaneh* [The Thousand Tales], saying this volume was known to the public under the title *One Thousand and One Nights*; being the story of a king, his vizier, his daughter Shirazad and her slave Dinazad (Pellat

1985:832). Educated people did not consider it to possess any merit as literature. This is corroborated by Ebn al-Nadim in his *Fehrest*, written in 987-88 AD.

When the collection reached Europe, however, it found a new audience, and became a highly valued work. Many of its stories were transformed into acceptable children's literature. A number of research works affirm that the book of tales originated in India and the Persians translated it. Przyluski (1924:101-37) discovered a parallel story-frame in India, while Von Hammer (1827: 253-256), on Mas'udi's evidence, considered the collection to have originated in Persia and perhaps India. Cyril Glass (1989:402) says of its origins that:

Most of the stories originated in India, either in the *Jataka* tales of the Buddhists or in the collection of Hindu moral tales called the *Hitopadesa*. They passed into Persian where they were known as the "Thousand Tales", and it was around the 9th century that they were translated into Arabic, at the height of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, the city with which they became associated.

Despite its Indian and Persian origins, translations and revisions changed the perception of *One Thousand and One Nights* outside these areas into an 'Arabic' collection of stories. The collection was first translated into French some 750 years later in 1704 by Antoine Galland and it was as a result of this translation, that it became widely known in Europe. Galland's version was greeted as a work of literature, and during the 18th century English, German, Italian, Dutch, Danish, Flemish, and even Yiddish translations of it appeared. Expurgated editions were written for children by E.W. Lane in 1839 and 1841 and by Andrew Lang in 1898; the first American edition was published in Philadelphia by Rice in 1794. Bingham (1980:357) also mentions *Scheherezade's 'The Arabian Nights Entertainments'*; *consisting of 1001 stories told by the Sultanness of the Indies*. She is of the opinion

that ‘these Persian, Egyptian, Turkish, Arabian Tales were intended for adults, although stories such as *Aladdin*, *Ali Baba* and *Sindbad the Sailor* were appropriated by children.’ Galland’s translation was the inspiration for ‘a narrative literature of allegorical novels, philosophical or satirical stories, stories for the education or entertainment of children, imitations and parodies; it even inspired musicians.’ (Pellat 1985:834).

This collection is a powerful example of the continuity of literature and its metamorphosis from adults’ literature to children’s literature. The collection also demonstrates the continuous evolution of story. No story can be truly original in that its author is a product of the society s/he lives in and a recipient of the historical influences that have affected it. Recycling and reinventing stories from an original idea is as old as history.

Shadow Spinner, a 1998 version of the famous frame story of *The Thousand and One Nights* written in English and aimed at 9-12 year olds, is an example of the continued popularity of old stories as a result of their being recycled and re-invented. The author of *Shadow Spinner*, Susan Fletcher, credits Richard Burton’s translation (1885-1888) as the basis for her work, while she has given the ancient story a new spin. The 1999 Second International Conference, ‘Children’s Books and the Contemporary World: The World of the Sacred, the World of Children’, in Tehran included a presentation of *Shadow Spinner* in Farsi translation (Bowlan 2000).

In *Shadow Spinner*, the frame story or prologue of *The Thousand and One Nights* is rewritten with the addition of a new 13-year-old heroine, Marjan, who helps Shahrazad to find more stories in order to survive. Marjan escapes the palace, only to return and tell the Sultan an allegory that enables him to realize his love for

Shahrazad, and to spare her life. In this way, Fletcher offers a plausible explanation of the question of how Shahrazad acquired such a vast repertoire of stories, and highlights the role of language and literature as a powerful tool for bringing about miraculous changes. The boxed commentaries, 'Lessons for Life and Storytelling,' that precede each chapter serve as links between plot elements, as well as observations on the potential of language and literature to effect change. As Marjan comments in one of these, 'Besides, I knew from Shahrazad and her stories that words can hold great power' (Fletcher 1998:30). The book is written in a clear and easy to read style and, with its teenage heroine, appears to be intended for young readers. This is in contrast to the intended adult readership of the original stories and is an example of how children have appropriated stories from adult collections and thus, ensured their continued popularity.

The second example to be mentioned here is a 1951 reprint of Dixon's 1893 collection, *Fairy Tales from the Arabian Nights*, and on first inspection, does not look like a children's book. Between the original production and the reprint lies a period of sixty years during which the work remained unchanged. Comparing the reprint with books produced at the end of the twentieth century, however, highlights the great change in the format and production of children's literature during this fifty year period. Indeed, fifty years later it is highly unlikely that any child would be tempted to pick up this book. They would not recognize it as a children's book, even though it contains illustrations and is part of the 'Children's Illustrated Classics Series' (1893), which consists of over fifty titles. The language has not been simplified for youngsters and the typeface consists of a small dense serif font. This range is definitely not meant for older age groups as there is a separate series for

them called 'Illustrated Classics for Older Readers'. An excerpt taken from 'The 4th Voyage of Sinbad the Sailor' (Dixon 1951:22) will demonstrate the unsuitability of the language, by present day standards, for young children.

The pleasures I took after my third voyage had not charms enough to divert me from another. I was again prevailed upon by my passion for traffic and curiosity to see new things. I therefore settled my affairs, and having provided a stock of goods fit for the places where I designed to trade, I set out on my journey.

The language, format and production style is still that of one hundred years before. It is this, rather than the content which strikes one as being dated. Dixon (1951:xi) states that the text of his selection is from 'the Arabian Nights of Galland 1821, slightly abridged and altered.' Thus, it is not clear if the source is one of the many English translations of Galland or a later French edition of Galland's original work.

The *Thousand Nights and One Night* contains two hundred and sixty-four stories of varying lengths. Sixteen stories are presented in Dixon's *Fairy Tales*. With the exception of 'Sinbad' and 'Zobeide' they are not set in Arabic-speaking countries, rather their geographical location for the most part appears to be 'Persia.' The stories include Sinbad the Sailor's voyages, 'Aladdin', 'The King of Persia and the Princess of the Sea'; 'Prince Beder and the Princess Gauhara', 'The Story of Zobeide', 'Prince Camaralzaman and the Princess of China', 'The Enchanted Horse', 'The Speaking Bird', 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves', and 'The Fisherman and the Genie'. The tales found in the full collection can be sorted by principal subject: wonderful tales (such as 'Aladdin and the magic lamp' and 'Ali Baba and the forty

thieves'), romances, love stories, tales of thieves and robberies, seamen, legends, parables, didactic stories, and humorous stories (Elisseef 1949:90-92, 97-98, 130-131, 152). It can be seen that some of these topics are more conducive to being rewritten for young readers than others, and it is these rewritings that have contributed to the continuity of these stories down the ages.

More recent exploitation of the material has included the 1992 Disney movie 'Aladdin' which has found worldwide fame. A huge number of web sites aimed at children also deals with the film and other stories, notably 'Sinbad' and 'Ali Baba and the forty thieves,' and in this way, readers are led to discover other stories from the collection. In Iran, stories from the collection have continued to be popular with children of all ages. Here, their origin is considered to be Iran, with some coming from the East, i.e. China, and some from the West, i.e. Iraq and Egypt. The stories have been produced both separately and in compilations, in series and in rewritings.

Thus, it has been seen that a collection of stories from long ago, not originally written for children, has captured the imagination of children as well as adults in the Persianate language region and, through translation, has had a great impact on the children's literature of the world. In the next section another, less well known, collection of stories will be examined which has had even more influence on children's literature, both Persianate and worldwide.

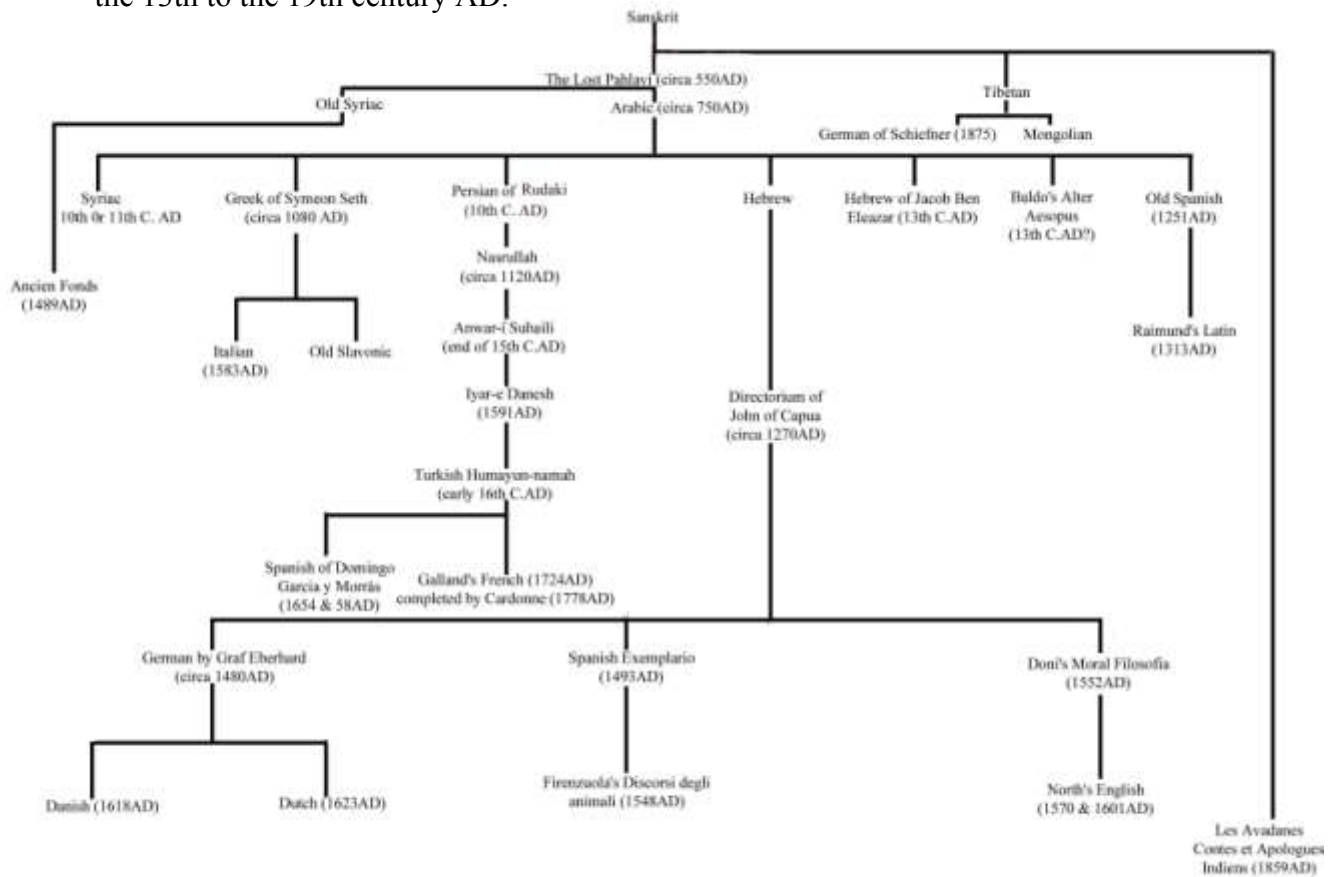
4.3 Kalilah wa Dimnah

Of all the ancient classics originating in the East, perhaps the *Thousand and One Nights*, as we have seen above, is the most famous worldwide. *The Book of Kalilah wa Dimnah* or *The Fables of Pilpay or Bidpai*, however, is another collection of Eastern stories which has had an immense influence on writers of stories all over the world from the 6th century AD until the present day.

This collection of tales originated in India where story telling was a very ancient and widespread art. Talking animals figure in texts going back to the early first millennium BC. An episode in an early *Upanisad*, for example, opens with a man overhearing a pair of geese talking to each other as they fly overhead. (*Chandogya Upanisad*, 4.1.2-5). Indians long ago appreciated the appeal of animal fables to both children and adults and used them in a variety of ways. The *Jatakas*, one of the largest collections of ancient animal fables, contained stories about the previous lives of the Buddha in which he was born as an animal. These stories were not invented by the Buddhists but selected and possibly modified from available fables which would illustrate the virtues observed by the Buddha in each of his lives on the road to enlightenment. Thus, fables were used for a didactic and religious purpose, a practice seen also in the great Indian epic the *Mahabharata*. The collection of stories of most importance in relation to *Kalilah wa Dimnah* is the *Panchatantra*, as this formed the basis of a large part of the material found in the later translations known as *Kalilah wa Dimnah* (Atil 1981:11).

Numerous translations were made from the mid-eighth century translation of Ibn al-Muqaffa. As the Old Syriac version was incomplete and the Pahlavi version was lost, apart from the Sanskrit and other Indian versions, only the Tibetan,

Mongolian and Chinese versions originated from the original Sanskrit. The later versions all derived from Ibn al-Muqaffa's translation of the lost Pahlavi text (Keith-Falconer 1885:xl). Fig.1 shows some of *Kalilah wa Dimnah's* main translations from the 13th to the 19th century AD.



The translation of *Kalilah va Dimnah* from Arabic to ‘New Persian’ is one of the most important contributions to literature of Abu Abdollah Jafar Ebn Mohammad (859-940/941AD) from Tajikistan, popularly known as Rudaki. This translation gave rise to many later retellings of the stories (*Rudaki*, 2008).

Stories from earlier times have been handed down and adapted, forming a base from which children’s stories have been told, sung, translated, written and rewritten. In the case of *One Thousand and One Nights* the stories are generally held to have not been originally designed for children, although several of them have

proved particularly suitable for children and have become famous as children's stories. Likewise, traditional tales, fables, animal stories and the like have been quoted as sources from which Iranian children's literature has drawn heavily. *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, however, which has had a great influence on children's stories, not only in Iran, but throughout the world, is considered to have been written as a book of wisdom and instructions for royal princes (i.e. children).

Milani (1991:178) and Abu-Nasr (1996:792) both stress that Iranian children's stories rely heavily for their source on the traditional fables and epics of old. With regard to *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, a number of sources confirm that it was a work originally written for children and young people, although most note that it was written for a specialized audience and not just for children generally. (Brockelmann 1978:503-6). Mohammadi (2001:140) mentions the intended audience of *Kalilah wa Dimnah* in the following terms: '*Kalilah wa Dimnah* was written for the instruction of young Hindi princes. Therefore, the original audience of this book was children and young people.' This points to the fact that *Kalilah wa Dimnah* was originally designed with a young but very specific audience in mind. This is further supported by Mahjub (1970:17).

As many of these collections were produced in illustrated editions, they would have attracted the attention of children. Ibn al-Muqaffa (The Bodleian Manuscript 1931 534c:6.) says in his introduction that the author composed the book with four objectives in mind: to render it attractive to the young reader by employing birds and animals in the stories; to capture the attention of rulers by the conduct of the animals who are faced with similar dilemmas and circumstances; to provide entertainment to all peoples and to arouse their curiosity, thereby enabling the book

to be preserved through the ages; and to provide the philosophers of the future a forum for discussion and speculation.

The stories of *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, while being entertaining, are also didactic, as seen in the fable of the three fish and the fisherman (*Panchatantra*, Bk.1, 'On Causing Dissension among Allies', Sub-story 8.2:52) which illustrates the detrimental results of procrastination. This story has survived until the present and is catalogued as a modern Persian language children's book in the public library system in Edinburgh. Another story, that of the geese and the tortoise (*Panchatantra* Bk.1:51) teaches the importance of listening to wise counsel, and strongly demonstrates continuity of stories over the centuries. Dimnah told this story to the ox when trying to persuade him that the lion intended to kill him, saying that if the ox didn't listen to advice, his fate would be like that of the tortoise who ignored his friends. The story of the geese and the tortoise has been retold many times for children and has been translated into many languages. As a result it is one of the most well-known stories of *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, making it a perfect example to illustrate the presence of continuity in Persianate children's literature. The story is featured in AZFA, the Farsi language course series used by Tehran University to teach Farsi as a foreign language (1997), and is related below to remind readers of its content.

The tortoise lived in a marsh together with two geese. They were good friends and enjoyed one another's company, but when the marsh began to dry up, the geese decided to seek another lake to build their nest. The tortoise asked them to devise a plan so that he, too, could go with them and not be left behind to die. The geese told him that if he took hold of the middle of a stick with his mouth and they held its ends in their beaks, they could transport him. But, they warned, he would

have to observe absolute silence during the flight. The tortoise promised to keep quiet and took the stick in his mouth. The geese began to fly, carrying the tortoise with them. They passed over a group of villagers who were amazed by this strange sight; they began to laugh and make fun of the tortoise. The tortoise forgot his promise and opened his mouth to answer them. He let go of the stick and fell to his death.

A familiar story, perhaps, but how many of its readers know its origin? Inspiration for Iranian children's literature therefore, often dismissed as being based on 'fables,' has also been found in written texts such as *Kalilah wa Dimnah* with a long and illustrious past, and with a very specific moral and ethical agenda, known as the 'Mirror for Princes' genre of literature (Daneshpazhou 1988:213). Stories from *Kalilah wa Dimnah* have been used as source material for children's books in Iran during the twentieth century. A few examples will demonstrate this. A pioneer author of illustrated works for children in Iran was Mohammad-Ali Tehrani Katuzian, who published *Akhlaq-e asasi* [Basic Manners] in 1912. This included simplified stories from the 12th century Farsi translations of *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, the 13th century *Marzban-nameh* by Varavini, and *Anwar-e Suhaili* by Hosayn Wa'ez Kashefi dated c.a.1504. *Qesseha-ye khub baraye bacheha-ye khub* [Good Stories for Good Children], published in Tehran in 1959, is a collection of simplified tales from *Kalilah wa Dimnah* and *Anwar-e Sohayli* by Azar Yazdi (Ayman et.al. 1992:422). Recent publications of collections or separate stories from *Kalilah wa Dimnah* such as *Seh Mahi* (2000), and a series of *Kalilah wa Dimnah* tales produced in Tehran (2000), among others, show that these stories continue to be produced for a youthful audience.

Stories from *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, as shown in the above examples, have formed part of Persianate children's literature for centuries. The popularity of these tales is further evidence of the existence and influence of continuity in Persianate children's literature. Having looked briefly at the stories of *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, we next turn to a very different but similarly enduring collection, this time featuring a human hero.

4.4 Mulla Nasruddin or Goha?

A famous collection of stories, not necessarily written for children but which have proved popular with children, are the stories of Mulla Nasruddin, a 13th century hero. These humorous short stories or anecdotes feature a human hero in hilarious situations, and have been told and memorized by young and old alike as entertainment and instruction through the ages. A well-known image from these tales is the one of the Mulla riding his donkey while facing backwards. The stories deal with issues which are not limited to any one period of history such as social injustice, class privilege, narrow-mindedness, laziness, incompetence, cowardliness, selfishness, fraud and ignorance.

Despite being set in the marketplaces and teahouses of the 13th century these stories still entertain their reader with their acute observations about human nature. The stories feature all kinds of characters; from beggar to king, politician to clergy, and scholar to merchant. Often the stories highlight an obvious truth which is usually taken for granted, and then show an unexpected angle which ridicules our

assumptions and makes us examine them afresh. Mulla Nasruddin has a tendency of appearing foolish, but in doing so exposes other people's foolishness with his own sharp wit. He is portrayed as either very stupid or miraculously clever, a resistance figure who thumbs his nose in the face of authority and capitalist rulers, or as an example to illustrate Sufi teachings. Thus, these tales can be understood and read at many different levels, from children's jokes to religious meditation to revolutionary rebellion.

Mulla Nasruddin's name varies according to which country he is in. Azerbaijanis and Iranians know him as 'Molla Nasruddin', Kazakhs as 'Koja Nasruddin' and Tajiks as 'Mushfiqi.' Turks and Greeks call him 'Hoja Nasruddin,' In Arabic tales, he is 'Djuha' or 'Goha' or 'Effendi' (Sanders 2009:1) and in China, 'Afandi' or 'Afanti'. His name is less important than his attributes as a trickster and a fool (Brown 1998). His geographic area is a vast one extending from the west of China and East Turkmenistan to the Balkans, Eastern Europe and up to Hungary, from Southern Siberia and the Caucasus to North Africa and Arabia. Mulla Nasruddin is seen as a common denominator between folk groups of these regions no matter what their religion, language or ethnic background ('Molla Nasruddin...' 1996:20). The origin of Mulla Nasruddin is unclear, although Turkey is a strong contender. An Iranian origin is also claimed for the Mulla (Liss 2005:1).

Although the character portrayal of Mulla Nasruddin is that of a simpleton and the Mulla appears to be a down-to-earth person who is always getting entangled in various improbable situations, his stories can actually be seen as parables which delve deeply into the human psyche. They entertain children and adults alike, while containing a serious underlying element. Idries Shah notes that these stories are used

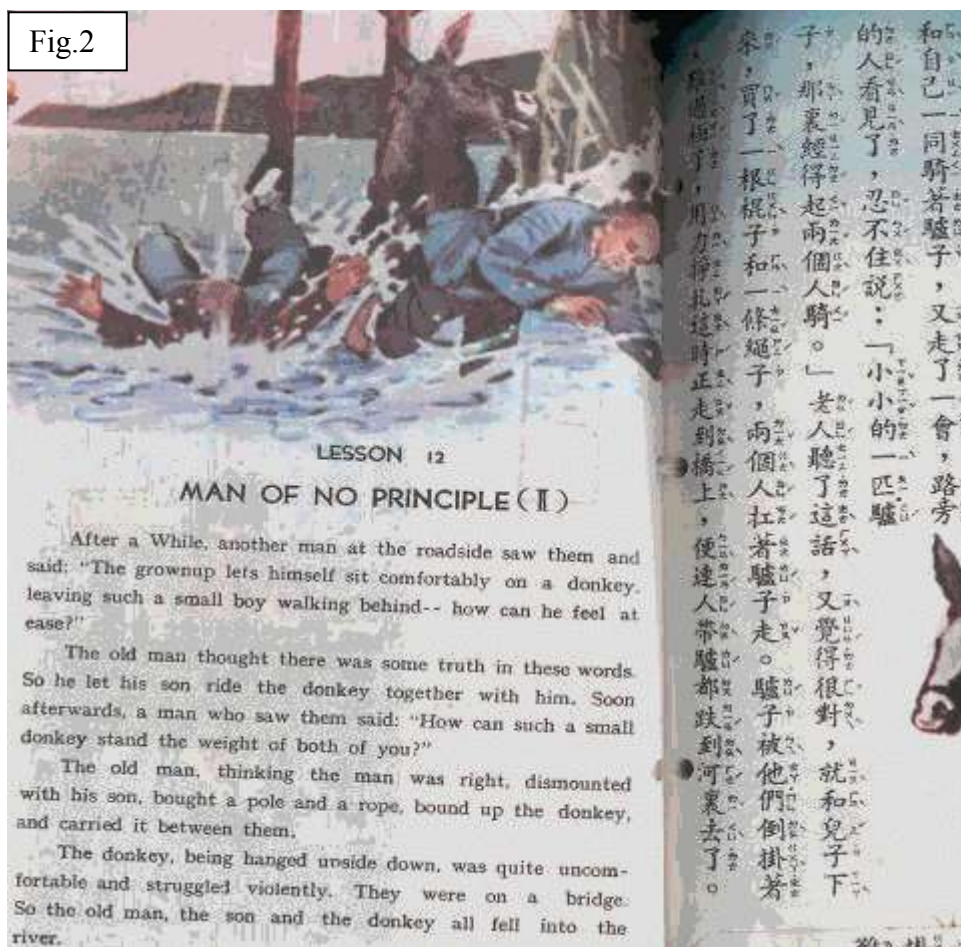
by the Sufis as a kind of exercise, where one chooses a number of one's favorites and meditates upon them as a way of making a breakthrough into higher wisdom. Despite the banning of the dervish orders in Turkey forty years ago, modern Turkey uses the Mulla to sell itself in publications aimed at tourists (Shah 1983:xx), and the annual Nasruddin Festival held in Eskishehir, his reputed birthplace, is also supported as a tourist activity (Marzolph 1996).

There are many variations of the Mulla stories as they have been handed down orally over the generations. Differences have naturally sprung up due to the vast geographical regions where his stories form part of the oral culture. Despite these differences, Mulla Nasruddin is one of the most popular satirical characters to be found in the folk literature of the East, and a favorite with children everywhere. The previous section on *Kalilah wa Dimnah* pointed to an Indian connection in its heritage, while this section will demonstrate that one of the Mulla's connections is with China.

The following widely known Mulla Nasruddin story has been retold numerous times and in numerous ways. Several different versions of the story have been found. In each of these, it can be seen that the story changes in its details and title, while keeping its moral. It is also found as a Goha story, which shows that these two characters have an interchangeable quality. Sanders (2009:1) gives the title as: *To Make The People Stop Talking*. The story is also related under the title of *The Father, Son and the Donkey* with Nasruddin Hodscha as the father (Marzolph 1996). A Lebanese version is called 'Joha, his Son and his Donkey' (Ahla Tara'if wa Nawadar 1992:36). The last example of this story comes from a home reader (Home Reader 1968) for children designed for overseas Chinese children worldwide under

the name *Man of no Principle*, or ‘*People without their own opinions*,’ as translated by Zhou Yan (2002), who confirmed that this was a very old traditional tale which she heard as a child in China, and saw as a cartoon on TV. Shanghai Animation Film Studio produced a 13-episode Nasreddin related animation called ‘The Story of Afanti’ in 1979.

The same story, then, is considered to portray characteristics of several different cultures. The struggle between the powerful and the powerless in society is a timeless element, which is not confined to one country. While the conflict between Confucian philosophers and Taoist philosophers gave shape to Chinese culture, and to the formation of Chinese folktales, aspects shared with Persianate and other folktales gave rise to continuity of themes across wide regions.



To continue examining parallels between *Iranzamin* and China, we read in Roberts (1979:xv) that the Confucians, who were the representatives of the dominant authorities of emperor, father and husband, conceived social relationships as a harmonious balance of obligations. The Taoist philosophers and social critics who represented the powerless segments of the population, however, found expression for their opposition views in popular literature; a genre typically scorned and even banned by Confucian authorities, as it publicized the crimes of the high and mighty and the injustices suffered by the subordinate order, including children, women, and animals. Thus, many folktales arising from popular and oral literature were seen to serve opposition Taoist philosophy (Roberts 1979:xv). It appears that many of the traditional stories and fables found in China reflected quite different views from those of the authorities, and it is here where Mulla Nasruddin plays a role, both in China and in *Iranzamin*, as an opposition figure, a ridiculer of the status quo.

Although only one example has so far been given of the same story existing in different places, and being attributed variously to a Chinese protagonist, to Mulla Nasruddin and to Goha, it is certainly not the only one. Another example found in different regions and attributed both to the Mulla and to Goha is described by Liss (2005) as ‘Djuha Borrows a Pot’ (from Syria).’ This story has been retold by Shah as one of the Mulla’s, called ‘If a pot can multiply’ (Shah 1983:5) and as ‘The Effendi And The Pregnant Pot’ (*Uygur Tales from China*).

Another story that has been assigned to both Goha and the Mulla under different titles is ‘Problems of Loneliness,’ (Shah, 1983:13), or ‘Joha Died’ (*Joha* 1992:23), in which the hero thinks he is dead. Thus, it can be seen that the Mulla of Iran, the Hoja of Turkey, Goha or Joha of the Arabic-speaking countries, and the

‘Man of no principle’ of China all appear in similar tales as the same character, and in all the areas where they appear they are regarded as children’s stories as well as adults’.

As seen in the Chinese context, these stories all have a social agenda and are not merely written for entertainment’s sake without relevance to their supporting societies. While the social agenda represented changes from place to place and from one era to another, it remains a key aspect of this type of literature. The relevance of the agenda can be seen in the continued popularity of the stories, with, for example, heroes robbing from the rich to give to the poor. Furthermore, by placing tales in a historic context they can be retold as children’s stories to comment upon contemporary issues without attracting unwanted attention. Finally though, the sheer absurdity and enjoyment value of the Mulla’s stories are the key to their continued attraction for children.

4.5 Shahnameh

When discussing historical influences and the background of children’s literature in Iran, it is impossible to omit one of the most important sources of material for children’s stories, the *Shahnameh*. One of the world’s classics, it was the result of the dedication and work of thirty years. Its author, Hakim Abu’l Qassem Ferdosi (940-1020 AD) was a wealthy landowner from the province of Khorasan, Iran. He was a well educated, intellectual member of the *dehgan*, a wealthy social class and a poet of the post-Islamic era who, along with his contemporaries, had

learned the art of 'New Persian' poetry. He versified the *Shahnameh* as a pure literary work in the Farsi language to be read and appreciated by educated people (Kianush 196:23). The underlying purpose of the *Shahnameh* has been described as a way to convey the message that the history of Iran was a complete and immutable whole: it started with Gayumarth, the first man, and ended with his fiftieth scion and successor, Yazdegerd III: six thousand years of history. The task of Ferdosi was to prevent this history from losing its connection with future Iranian generations despite the Islamization of Iranian society and the ascendance of the Arabic language for scholarship (Shahbazi 1991:1).

Curtis (1993:8) traces the historical connection of the *Shahnameh* and earlier literature, saying that linguistic evidence from part of the sacred Zoroastrian text, the *Avesta*, suggests a close link with the ancient Indian hymns, the *Rigveda*, of c.1700BC, and that the *Yasht*, part of the *Avesta*, dating from between 1400 and 1200BC, includes some tales of very ancient pre-Zoroastrian origin, many of which reappear in the *Shahnameh*. Many works from the Sassanian period, and the rule of the Abbasid caliphs in the 8th century AD, translated from Pahlavi into Arabic, have been lost.

However, writers such as Firdowsi, who were well acquainted with the earlier literature, ensured its survival. Thus written sources, together with a strong oral tradition, have kept the myths and stories of Persia alive down to the present. Their importance and relevance to modern Persian society lies in the fact that most Iranians, whether literate or not, know something about these stories. The *Shahnameh* in particular plays a crucial role in Persian life and culture, not only because of its considerable literary merit, but also because of its importance in preserving the myths and history of a very distant past in the Persian language (Curtis 1993:8).

Therefore, Ferdosi's work did not appear out of a vacuum. It was founded on oral tradition and previous Pahlavi texts. Many of the Iranian regional governors from the early 9th century AD founded their own regional dynasties, and revived and promoted Iranian culture and traditions in order to back their right to rule and to win the loyalty of the people, despite the fact that they were either appointed by the Arab caliphs, or ruled with their consent. One such governor was Abu Mansour Abd-al-Razzaq of Tus in Khorasan, who ordered his vizier to commission a group of historians and scholars to compile a book of authentic as well as legendary history of Iran from prehistoric times to the fall of the Sassanid dynasty and the coming of Islam. The sources of this group were Pahlavi texts, especially *Khudaynameh* (Book of Kings) as well as oral epic stories and myths. This Book of Kings, which was written in prose, was later used by Ferdosi as the main source for the poetic version of the *Shahnameh*, the Book of Kings (Kianush 1996:23) In addition to material gathered and rewritten from popular oral and written sources, Ferdosi added passages of his own composition to the *Shahnameh*, making it a work unlike any that went before it. The *Khudaynameh*, was compiled or written by historians and *mobads* (Zoroastrian priests) in the time of the Sassanian dynasty (Shahbazi 1991:21). It did not include many of the epic stories, made famous by the *Shahnameh*. These stories, especially the narratives about Rostam and his family, were told and translated from Pahlavi by the Iranian *dehgans*, and later added to the *Shahnameh*. These epic narratives were popular with the ordinary people who listened to the *gosans* (minstrels), and with the *dehgans*, who had been untouched by urban life and the influences of the Sassanian court. After the fall of the Parthians, who were major

promoters of Persian epic literature, the *dehgans* preserved these narratives with faithfulness to the past and its traditions (Shahbazi 1991:21).

As Shahbazi (1991:21) notes, the *Shahnameh* is comprised of three parts: the mythical, heroic, and historical ages. The section on the mythical age gives an account of the creation of the world and of man as believed by Sassanians, followed by the story of the first man and king, Gayumarth, who accidentally discovered fire and established the Sadeh Feast in its honor. This part, which contains stories of Tahmureth, Jamshid, Zahhak, Kaveh, Fereidun and his three sons: Salm, Tur, and Iraj, and Manuchehr, is relatively short, but has been the inspiration for many modern retellings for children. It has around 2000 verses forming some four percent of the entire book, and swiftly covers the events in a historical manner.

The second section, dealing with the heroic age, accounts for almost two-thirds of the *Shahnameh* and is devoted to the age of heroes, covering the era from Manuchehr's reign until the conquest of Alexander. Stories in this section, which also inspire many modern retellings for both adults and children, include the romance of Zal and Rudabe, the Seven Stages (or Labors) of Rostam, Rostam and Sohrab, Siavash and Sudabe, Rostam and Akvan Div, the romance of Bijan and Manije, the wars with Afrasiab, Daqiqi's account of the story of Goshtasp and Arjasp, and Rostam and Esfandiyar (Shahbazi1991). The story of Rostam and Sohrab first appears in the *Shahnameh*. The final section is the historical age, dealing with the history of Alexander, followed by a brief mention of the Ashkanians (Arsacids), then Ardeshir, and finally the fall of the Sassanians and the Arab conquest.

During a period when Arabic was the main language of literature, Ferdosi used only Farsi in his masterpiece, saying that his work would revive the Farsi

language. It has been claimed that the *Shahnameh* of Ferdosi has been read and treasured more than any other history in Iran, and has influenced its readers where many Iranian military and religious leaders failed (Shahbazi1991:21). Its stories were retold and rewritten, and generations of children were brought up on them. This naturally entailed simplification of the language and, after the age of print, led to many new illustrated versions of the stories being produced especially for children.

At first, the *Shahnameh* was literally a book of kings as only the very rich could afford to own a copy. Thus, its place was in the libraries of rulers and high society. It was impossible for the average person, let alone the average child to own a copy. A description of the lavish sixteenth century manuscript of Shah Tahmasb, gives some idea of its value: ‘No surviving *Shahnameh* is grander in scale than that created in the early sixteenth century for Shah Tahmasb at Tabriz and purchased in the mid-twentieth century by Arthur A. Houghton, Jr. Its 258 unusually large paintings and countless splendid illuminations make it the most sumptuous of all.’ (Mazda Catalogue 2008). A limited edition of the above was published in two volumes in 1981. Only 750 copies were published, 600 of which were made available to the public at the price of \$2500. Less than one tenth of the paintings were reproduced in color, despite the use of cheap modern printing methods (Mazda Catalogue 2008). Thus it can be seen that the modern reprint does not measure up to the 16th century edition, while at \$2500 it is still beyond the budget of most people. This gives some idea of how impossible it would have been for the average person to own such a book hundreds of years ago, even if they had been able to read it, and this points further to the importance of oral literature and memorization.

The situation changed in the twentieth century and affordable storybooks for children began to be made. Many of these had their foundations in the stories of the *Shahnameh*. An early example of this is Abd-al Hosayn Sanatizadeh Kermani's 1932, *Rostam dar qarn-e bistom* [Rostam in the 20th Century], combining legendary and contemporary elements in which Rostam, the legendary hero of the *Shahnameh*, and his horse Rakhsh, race the modern protagonist, Jankas, on his motorcycle. Another early example is *Dastanha-ye Iran bastan* [Ancient Stories of Iran] 1958, by Yarshater, containing eleven stories based on the myths and written records of the Iranian past. A further ten different stories or collections adapted for children from the *Shahnameh* were published between 1965 and 1978 (Ayman et.al 1992:417), and publications of stories from the *Shahnameh* did not stop after the revolution.

Further examples which testify to the continuing popularity and relevance of such stories can be seen in post-revolutionary publications of Hamkelasi Publications Institute, established in 1988 to produce, publish and distribute children's books for ages 4 to 15. Publications of this institute include nine volumes of stories taken from Ferdosi's *Shahnameh* (Hamkelasi Catalogue 2008). Hamkelasi describe these as 'quoting case histories of Persian heroes of this ancient land and their brave deeds in bygone times,' naming Rostam as the most eminent of all heroes (Hamkelasi Catalogue 2008:1). The titles of the stories demonstrate Rostam's popularity:

1. The seven adventures of Rostam
2. Rostam and Sohrab
3. Siavash
4. The death of Siavash
5. The challenge of Rostam and Esfandiar

6. The seven adventures of Esfandiar
7. Rostam and Borzo
8. The challenge of Rostam and Kamoos
9. The challenge of Rostam and Khagan

Another example is Mazda Publishing Company, which describes the following story in its catalogue:

Bastoor is a stirring tale for children inspired by a passage in the ancient epic of Iran (Persia), the *Shahnameh*, or *The Epic of the Kings*, written by the poet Ferdosi in the tenth-century. This is the story of a young boy who takes the place of his fallen father in the battlefield. His bravery results in the saving of Iranian independence from foreign invaders (Mazda Publications 2008).

Mr. Nasser Pol of the Ferdosi Society confirms that many children's books have been written, primarily in Iran, based on the stories of the *Shahnameh*. He gives an example; *Haft Khan* or the *Seven Labors of Rostam* and comments that the many colorful illustrations used in this book make the story more interesting for children (Pol 2002).

Shahbazi (1991:21) considers that 'No history has been so eagerly read, so profoundly believed, and so ardently treasured in Iran, as has the *Shahnameh* of Ferdosi.' The source of much inspiration for children's stories, the *Shahnameh* shows continuity in literature over several thousand years.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined examples of literature which has formed a foundation for modern children's stories in Iran and in a wider context. It was seen that this literature often had a literary origin, contrary to commonly held assumptions that all ancient fables and stories originated from and relied on oral transmission to reach their audience. The dissemination of these stories by various means was further seen to have been on an international scale. A continuing theme in the chapter was the appropriation and adoption of certain stories by children despite disapproval from adults.

Four different major sources of stories for children were examined along with some of the modern texts arising from them. The four classical works were *One Thousand and One Nights*, *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, *Mulla Nasruddin/Goha*, and the *Shahnameh*. In response to the recurring question; who was the original target audience of these popular stories, children or adults? only one of these sources, *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, can be said to have been originally written for a youthful audience, and it is the only one to contain animal stories used to teach morals. The other three sources differ widely, despite having human heroes; the *Shahnameh* is an epic with mythical and historical dimensions, while the *Mulla Nasruddin/Goha* stories have been variously described as jokes, philosophy, religious mysticism etc. Neither of the latter was written specially for children, but certain stories have been adopted over time and have become part of children's own favorite literature. Likewise, *One Thousand and One Nights*, while being a collection of entertaining stories for adults, contained some miraculous stories especially suited to the

imagination of children. These became firm favorites and were rewritten especially for them, and formed the basis of cartoons, movies and musicals.

While adult literature as well as children's literature of earlier times has played a large part in influencing writers of children's stories throughout history until the present day, other factors have also stimulated the imagination of writers of children's books, such as political, didactic and religious issues. The socio-political purposes for writing and transmitting stories were seen to vary according to the author, place and time. While isolated historical events could be seen to have a direct input into popular literature and thence into children's stories, it is the sum of these events and the resulting patterns seen over periods of time which provide the continuous element in children's literature. An example is the theme of the folk hero defending the rights of the common people, which has found an enduring place in popular literature. Treachery and betrayal, the starting point of *One Thousand and One Nights*, is another theme which has reappeared regularly.

Throughout history the concerns of people trying to survive and make their way through life have not fundamentally changed, although the environment and conditions in which they try to do this certainly have. Wars continue to happen; people are betrayed or betray others; tragedy or good luck befalls them; prosperity or poverty is their lot. Life continues and literature reflects its many turns.

Further chapters will build on this global perspective by focusing on examples within a modern time frame, that of the second half of the twentieth century, in the geographical area of *Iranzamin*. The next chapter will examine some of these concerns in the framework of the organizations involved in the production of children's books in Iran in the twentieth century. It will investigate how such

organizations engaged with various aspects of the socio-economic, political and cultural agendas present in the production of these texts and in their promotion of the development of literature for children.

Chapter 5: Development of institutional support for children's literature

5.1 Introduction

The present chapter will focus on the work of different associations and organizations, and the contributions of these organizations to the development of children's literature and reading. It will investigate their influence on children's literature in Iran during the second half of the twentieth century, and consider the reasons and circumstances relating to their foundation. Information will be given about the activities of these organizations in order to track the trends and changes, or conversely the elements of continuity in Iranian children's literature highlighted by these activities.

In the middle of the twentieth century many organizations in the field of children's literature were founded around the world. This trend was connected with post-Second World War reconstruction and revival of economies, as well as developments in society such as improvement in healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. Such improvements, along with immigration to the cities, affected life styles in Iran from the 1950s. With the increase in literacy, teaching methods, and revision of textbooks, the demand for books and magazines for children also increased (as previously described in 3.4).

The formation and activities of the major organizations involved in literature for children and young adults commenced at this time. The activities and concerns of these organizations will be examined to investigate the way they functioned in relation to the wider society and to ascertain if these changed during major upheavals

in society. From this a clearer understanding may be reached of how children's literature reacted to these changes in society; what continuous elements and what changes can be seen in literature for children? An inquiry into the activities of children's literature organizations active throughout the period of change in Iranian society must surely throw some light on the situation.

The two most important organizations to be examined in this regard are the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (*Kanun-e Parvaresh-e Fekri-ye Kudakan o Nojavanan*, hereafter referred to as the *Kanun*), and the Children's Book Council of Iran (*Shura-ye Ketab-e Kudak*, hereafter referred to as the CBC), both founded in the early 1960s. These organizations, while complementing each other, focus on different areas involved in the production of children's literature; the CBC deals with fixing criteria, selecting works and compiling book lists, training critics, international liaison, and awards, whereas the *Kanun* is involved with the publication and distribution of books. Both of them, however, reflect the relationship between society and children's literature, and both provide documentation regarding their activities which is invaluable for this thesis.

After the 1978-79 Islamic Revolution, the resulting new political system gave rise to a period of cultural change. The activities and concerns of the organizations involved in the field of children's literature will be seen to reflect this change and thus provide a framework of investigation for the argument that social change is only one factor in the dynamics of children's literature and does not necessarily destroy its links with the past. These organizations fit in to the bigger picture of continuity by providing a record of the important elementary concerns in the field and showing that

these continue to be emphasized despite surface changes in society over the specific time period under study, that of the second half of the twentieth century.

5.2 The role of organizations in the development of children's literature

The middle of the twentieth century was a turning point where a number of changes occurred in children's literature and this is the period when many organizations in the field were founded, not only in Iran, but internationally. For example, the International Board of Books for Young People, IBBY was founded in Zurich, Switzerland in 1953. In Iran, many people moved to the cities during this period, to meet the increased need for skilled and non-skilled workers caused by the establishment and development of large industrial and trading centers. Educational and employment opportunities multiplied, and social and political activities were started by various groups and life styles changed considerably (Sharifi 1998:29).

During the period leading up to the end of the 1960s, prestigious Iranian publications such as *Negin* and *Sokhan* included discussions about children's literature. Changes in school textbooks and in the methods of teaching children to read and write were factors which helped to increased literacy. The number of literate children in rural areas was also increased by the work of the literacy corps in the villages (described in Chapter 3.2.2:8-10). All these changes resulted in an urgent need for new reading materials for children.

The objectives and activities of the organizations involved in children's literature were intended to achieve development and improvement in the field. This

was effected in three areas: a) by increasing the availability, quality and quantity of books; b) by training and encouraging writers and illustrators; and c) by increasing the literacy and reading skills of children. Some annual events focused on progress made and targets still to achieve, while others of an international nature formed a link for information and ideas to flow in a two-way direction between Iran and other countries. The development of institutional support for children's literature has had a strong impact on the increase of writing for children, and activities focusing on children's books such as book festivals and exhibitions have proliferated. For example, in 1996 two children's book festivals were held simultaneously in Tehran; the first Children and Young Adults' Press and Publications Festival, a professional exhibition, in which more than 2,000 works in 14 different fields, including short stories, revision, translation, photographs, designs, page layout, painting, articles, and criticism were presented, and the fifth Children and Young Adults Book Festival, which featured new programs such as the selection of the best scientific book and acknowledgment of veterans in the field of literature for young people, with the participation of over 180 publishers. A total of 1,400 books on poetry, short stories, science, and painting published in the previous year were submitted, from which 400 books were selected after primary examination; reduced to 100 in the final review (Dadgar 1996:12). This demonstrates a continuing increase in the scope and quantity of children's literature and activities connected with the field compared to fifty years before.

The number of groups and organizations, viewpoints, and specialized forums in Iran has increased even more since the revolution, so that the issue of agendas and issues has become much less clear. Although the *Kanun* and the CBC are the two

major organizations to consider in relation to children's literature in Iran, a number of other organizations have exerted an influence on developments in the field. The first of these, the Institute for the Translation and Publication of Books, or *Bongah-e Tarjomeh va Nashr-e Ketab*, hereafter referred to as the *Bongah*, was founded in 1954, under the directorship of Ehsan Yarshater (later a founding member of the *Kanun*), with the aim of producing high quality, carefully edited and accurately printed, translations of the best foreign works. The first series of translations consisted of five books published in 1955, and were soon followed by others. Yarshater initiated three series of works for different age groups a year later; some translations, and some original writings (Boyce & Windfuhr 1990:ix). Of these, the *Kudakan* series contained both illustrated translations and original works, whereas the *Nojavanan* series consisted solely of translations from French, English, German, and Russian works either originally written specifically for children or simplified from literary classics. Approximately twenty-five volumes had been published in this series by 1979. The *Javanan* series included simplified versions of widely read Western novels. Most of the translators were also well-known writers (Ayman, et. al. 1992:417).

Franklin Publications, an American firm whose main aim was to familiarize the Iranian public with works by American authors, collaborated with the *Bongah*. In addition, Franklin produced a number of children's books and series on topics such as history, science, and literature (Ayman, et. al. 1992:417). All these translations brought foreign ideas and viewpoints to the attention of Iranian children and one change that occurred after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran was the reduction of these kinds of translations. However, in the case of the *Bongah*, many titles

continued to be printed, possibly indicating that commercial interests won out over the new ideological influences.

After the revolution, the *Bongah* was occupied first by the left-wing revolutionary group *Mojahedin-e Khalq* and later by the new Islamic government, which continued to run it under its original name until 1981, publishing some of the books which were in press and adding two new categories; *Ma'aref-e Eslam* [Islamic Knowledge] and a political series. In 1981, the *Bongah* was merged with some other organizations, notably the *Bonyad-e Farhang-e Iran* [Cultural Institute of Iran] under the new name of *Markaz-e Entesharat-e Elmi va Farhangi* [Center for Scientific and Cultural Publications], and from 1986 under the title of *Sherkat-e Entesharat-e Elmi va Farhangi* [Scientific and Cultural Publication Company] (Joseph 1991:355).

As noted above, a considerable number of the *Bongah's* publications were reprinted after 1979: between 7,000 and 20,000 copies for children's books and between 3,000 and 10,000 copies for others (Joseph 1991:354), indicating that despite the mergers and new names, much of the early work of the organization was still found to be acceptable and continued to be published and read even after the changes brought about by the Islamic Revolution. Iran is not a member of the International Copyright convention, which is one possible factor contributing to the continued production of such titles. The main point to note is that this organization was a link between the two periods under study by virtue of its survival after the revolution, and the continuation of its publications, despite the fact that many were translations of foreign works.

A more contemporary translation organization, the *Khaneh-ye Tarjume baraye Kudakan va Nojavanan* [House of Translation for Children and Young Adults], founded in 1995 by Hossein Ebrahimi, states its aims as seeking to introduce the best international children and young adults' fiction and critical literature to Iranian readers, and to introduce Iranian children and young adult's books to the world. It selects literary essays about international children's literature, and recommends books for translation into Farsi (Ebrahimi 2002₂). In practice, this seems to involve larger numbers of foreign works being translated into Farsi than the other way around, as the numbers of works being translated have once more increased, along with an interest in imported books. This organization was founded 16 yrs after the revolution, when the anti-Western atmosphere had resulted in a decrease in numbers of translated books. The number of translations once more increased over time, as reflected by the second Children's Book Fair, held in the City of Books in Tehran in 1997, displaying 2500 titles of books from domestic and international publishers with 1000 titles in the International Section published in UK, USA, Germany, Canada, France, India and Switzerland, and written in English, German and French, as well as being translated into Farsi. Subjects included social sciences, basic sciences, art, language, history, geography, literature and long and short stories (*Kayhan* 1997:2). Thus, it can be seen that the reduction in the numbers of translations occurring immediately after the revolution was only a temporary phenomenon, as the importation of foreign works as well as translations began to increase again.

An important post-revolutionary initiative in the field of children's literature in Iran, which supports the contention of continuity in children's literature by tracing

its history from ancient times (see Chapter 4.1:117-118), is the *Bonyad Tarikh-e Adabyat-e Kudak* [Foundation for Research on the History of Children's Literature in Iran]. This organization has undertaken a major research project entitled 'The History of Children's Literature in Iran (HCLI).' The project, which started in 1997, entails a history in seven volumes. The research has examined issues such as early culture and literature in Iran, the formation of oral literature, children's literature in ancient times, after the advent of Islam, and in the early part of the 20th century up to the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

A number of questions are raised and discussed by HCLI in the light of existing historical documents: when does literature specifically intended for children begin; in which historical period were the first books produced, and so on. Later factors include new educational concepts, continuity of oral literature and folklore (see Chapter 4.1:118-119), development of a more simple Farsi prose, the advent of translation from the West, the start of a printing industry in Iran, the establishment of new schools, the study of child psychology, and the rise of pioneer personalities as early publishers of books for children (Mohammadi & Ghaeni 2001-2002). As a result of its research, the HCLI has established an online database (*Iranak* 2010) and a site for reading promotion (*Ketabak* 2010), the latter in cooperation with the CBC and the House of Librarians for Children /Young Adults & Reading Promotion. These are just two examples of the expanding number of Iranian children's literature resources on the internet.

Following the 1997 election, in which President Khatemi came into power, a number of new organizations were formed, one of which was the *Anjuman Nevisandegan Kudak va Nojavan* [Association of Writers for Children and Youth].

Its first public assembly was held in December 1998 (Hejvani 1999:2). Three other organizations which could be mentioned in this respect are: *Mo'assese-ye Farhangi-ye Ettela' Resani Kudakan va Nojavanan* [The Cultural Institution of Information for Iranian Children and Young Adults], *Anjoman-e Farhangi-ye Nasheran-e Ketab-e Kudak va Nojavan* [The Cultural Association of the Publishers of Books for Children and Young Adults], and the *Mo'asseseh-ye Farhangi Honari-ye Khaneh-ye Gol-e Yar* [Gol-e Yar Cultural and Art Institution] (Shoae 2002:12). These organizations, among others, are contributing in various ways to the development of children's literature in Iran. The number of non-governmental institutes working in the field of children's literature in Iran is increasing, and this is one of the major differences between the pre-revolution and the post-revolution period, especially the post-Khatemi period. As noted in Chapter 5.1:149 however, this thesis will focus on only two organizations, the *Kanun* and the CBC, both of which span the pre- and post-revolution periods under study and whose activities can help identify areas of change and continuity with relation to children's literature in Iran.

5.3 *Shura-ye Ketab-e Kudak*: Children's Book Council of Iran

The first of the two major organizations to be examined in more detail in this chapter is the Children's Book Council, or CBC which was established in 1962. It was officially registered in Iran as an NGO in 1968. Regarding the motivation to establish the Children's Book Council, Massoumeh Mafi recalled that cultural work had been started in 1953, with the objective of creating specific literature for children

and young adults (*Zanan* 1994:27). The CBC, according to Mafi, is a self-reliant organization and relies neither financially nor politically on any league or group and does not have any political tendencies (*Zanan* 1994:31). The major goals of the organization are to encourage original Farsi literature for children and young adults, to help improve, both qualitatively and quantitatively, books for children and young adults and to help make available appropriate books and reading materials to children and young adults (Sharifi 1998:31). The CBC itself lists its goals thus:

- Promote quality reading materials for all children,
- Encourage and contribute to the growth of national literature,
- Improve book promotion and distribution,
- Publish professional materials,
- Keep in touch with international trends. (*CBC Information* 2005)

The evaluation of children's literature published in Iran was one of the occupations begun by the CBC in 1962. Different evaluation groups were established to deal with various categories including fiction by Iranian writers, adaptation of classical texts, translated fiction, poetry, illustration, non-fiction, reference, literary criticism, magazines, works by young people, and manuscripts submitted by adults. This work has continued and expanded over the years (*Zanan* 1994:33). The most important exhibition of the CBC is the Annual Exhibition of Recommended Books, started in 1962. The CBC closely collaborates with a number of Iranian NGOs involved in the cultural development of young people, and also participates in many international activities. It became a member of the International Board of Books for Young People, IBBY, in 1964, and acts as the National Section for Iran. In this

capacity, the CBC introduces Iranian children's literature to the world and provides a link for Iranian writers and illustrators to become involved in international activities.

In the international field, the Hans Christian Andersen Award is the highest international recognition given to an author and an illustrator of children's books (*IBBY Index* 2009:1). A biennial award, it is presented by IBBY to an author and an illustrator, living at the time of the nomination, whose works have made a lasting contribution to children's literature. Awards given to Iranian authors and illustrators by IBBY support the evaluations of the CBC by giving these works international recognition. Nominations and recommendations by the CBC have therefore informed the choice of Iranian works, illustrators, and authors included in the present research. In 1974, for example, Farshid Mesghali of Iran, who is one of the illustrators researched in the present thesis, won the Hans Christian Andersen Award for illustration. A number of books from Iran have been nominated over the years, bringing worldwide recognition to their authors and Iranian participation has continued with recent nominations for the IBBY Honor List.

International Children's Book Day has been celebrated since 1967, on or around Hans Christian Andersen's birthday, 2 April, 'to inspire a love of reading and to call attention to children's books' (*IBBY Child* 2005:1). The CBC participates in the International Children's Book Day, as a result of its connection with IBBY, in addition to many other international activities. The CBC has been described as one of the most serious institutions in the field, and one which addresses the ongoing need for revising and reviewing criteria and standards, not only as a result of social changes after the revolution, but also as a result of the growth in recent years of interest in, and production of, children's literature (*Zanan* 1994:28). The topic of

selection and social values was introduced in Tajeran's study in 3.7, however the CBC's work in this regard provides a record of successful books and their contents during the whole period of the present research, the second half of the twentieth century. The evaluation activities of the CBC have been a major factor in its influence in the selection of books during both the pre- and post-revolution times. From this a pattern can be traced relating to change and continuity of content over the two periods.

Ansari (1980:38) considers that the Islamic Revolution and the new political system, together with all of the events connected with the revolution resulted in a period of cultural change and changed fundamental aspects of children's literature in Iran. It was necessary to reinforce, change, or establish new criteria for all aspects of its work in order to be able to cope with the multitude of new problems facing a people becoming culturally independent. In other words, the criteria had to reflect the new revolutionary reality by drawing upon regional traditions rather than Western ideas. Thus, traditional sources and inspirations once more came to the fore even though this had been enforced by a regime with specific ideological reasons and did not constitute a 'natural' development.

It was at this time that the CBC moved into their new headquarters near Engelab Square, Tehran University's main campus area in central Tehran. Here, new working groups were established for the evaluation of children's books and the criteria for evaluation were revised. An example of the involvement of the CBC in non-fiction evaluation was a seminar on 'The State of the Art of Science Book Publishing' which was held by the CBC on November 13, 1980. Thirty-five people attended including writers, translators, publishers, university professors, educators,

librarians and other interested persons. In an exhibition of science books held at the seminar it was found that of around a hundred works only 5 or 6 were original while the rest were all translations. While not intending to minimize the value of translations, a need for a better balance between original and translated works was felt at the time, especially given the lack of any materials which dealt with the familiar world and surroundings of the students, and a desire was shown by participants to find ways of publishing more science books based on the fauna and flora of Iran, as well as to improve the quality and the accuracy of the translations. These are two examples of changes in the fields of translation and non-fiction arising from the revision of criteria immediately after the revolution.

The CBC further influenced the evaluation of children's books in Iran by serving as a counseling center for all those working with children's literature, and in cooperation with other organizations in the field. An orientation program was started for all the members of the Book Evaluation Committee in 1985. The CBC contributes to the evaluation of children's books with regular annual training workshops. For example, during 1987 the evaluation committees of the CBC exhibited and reported on 195 books written, illustrated or translated for children and young adults in Iran (Rai 1989:25). The CBC's 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th annual workshop series on children's literature between 1988 and 1991 consisted of sessions of lectures, discussions and practical work accompanied by exhibitions of related materials. Other workshops run by the CBC that have attracted many participants, including children and young people, are 'Literary Criticism of Children's Literature', 'Research Methods in Children's Literature', 'Literary Criticism', and 'Adult Fiction in Translation' (Rai 1990:25).

As previously noted, the CBC has played an important part in choosing books for entry to recommended reading lists. Some published works were considered unsuitable, and so did not enter recommended lists for awards, inclusion in libraries, purchase by schools, or bookshops. In the decade before the revolution, the ratio of books considered appropriate and rated suitable for children by the CBC compared to the ones rejected rose from thirty five percent in 1968-9 to sixty percent in the period 1977-8. The percentage of acceptable works dropped sharply around the time of the revolution, falling to forty two percent in 1978-9 and to only eighteen percent in 1980-1. The quality of production and artwork, suitability for the mental and emotional development of children, and new trends in children's literature generally did not change greatly during this period. Therefore, one could deduce that the new (political) trends in Iran must have been responsible for the sharp drop.

In the mid-1960s a CBC survey had found that there was more emphasis on mystery and fantasy than on the realities of life and society, even though its members believed that children find realistic stories easier to grasp from their own experience (*Gozarash-e Shura...*1983:66). The CBC's published lists of suitable children's books carried considerable weight, and so authors and publishers tried to produce more stories with a realistic approach. Works published during the 1960s and early 1970s illustrate this. Samad Behrangi, for instance, wrote stories based on the lives of rural children in Azerbaijan, though still incorporating elements of fantasy. Despite the CBC's criticism of an excess of fantasy, its selection committee still selected many folktales and original works written in the style of folktales.

A number of other works such as *Qesse-ye Bagh-e Maryam* [The Story of Mariam's Garden] (1971) by Morteza Rezvan, contained social and political ideas;

and over thirty stories by Daryush Ebadallahi were published in Tehran between 1969 and 1977. Such stories were able to carry moral, political and social viewpoints which would have been censored in adult literature. Behrangi's collection of stories imitating folktales, *Mahi-ye Siyah-e Kuchulu* [Little Black Fish] (1968) soon came to be taken in Iran as an allegory of the struggle for survival against absolute power and oppression (Ayman et. al. 1992:417-422). During this period, as well as sheltering controversial views, folktales and stories adapted from myths and legends were also to provide a safe haven for many authors; Yar-Shater's, *Bargozideha-ye Dastanha-ye Shahnameh* [A selection of stories from the *Shahnameh*] (1965) consisted of such stories, as did Kianush's *Siahi*, *Shabgir*, and *Aftab* [Blacky, Nocturnal, and Sun] (1975) all stories from the *Shahnameh*, as well as many others. Stories from the *Shahnameh* have continued to be popular and to be published since the revolution, as previously seen in Chapter 4.5:147-148. Their messages and interpretation by adult readers appear to change according to the political situation of the time, while at the level of the child audience these stories enjoy a continuity of popularity. Two parallel strands can be seen to exist in children's literature; one strand is the so-called 'timeless' one which depends on classical sources for its inspiration, while the other, the so-called 'modern' one, is influenced by the politics of its day and reflects changes in society. In the latter in Iran, a shift from foreign influence to indigenous influence was seen after the revolution.

The following section will study selections of the CBC Honors lists, recommended book lists and books of the year, the International Board of Books for Young People (IBBY) Honors lists (also see 5.2), and nominations for the Hans Christian Andersen Award, in greater detail to investigate this change of influence.

As this entails much information, only the period immediately before and after the revolution will be examined. Themes and contents found in these works will be compared to chart changes or similarities during this time.

Starting with the 1976 Honor List of the CBC included for writing was: Ghasinoor, *Arezu* [A Wish] (1973). This story tells of a squirrel who dreams of having the most beautiful tail in the forest. In order to make his wish come true, however, he would have to betray his fellow squirrels. He resists but has nightmares about not being able to resist the temptation. The book presents the conflict between personal wishes and the well-being of fellow members of society and has a strong moral impact on the reader.

In 1978, Shakour Lotfi reached the IBBY list of Hans Christian Andersen Honors Books for writing with *Chamanzar-e Bozorg* [The Vast Meadow] (1977). This story is about the life of plants in a meadow. Their sense of belonging, cooperation and solidarity is an example of what is hoped for human beings in the world. For illustration, Hossein Mahjubi's *Afsaneh-ye Baran dar Iran* [The Myth of Rain in Iran] (1977) was nominated. This ancient myth of rain is several thousand years old and portrays the eternal fight of good against evil. Thus, before the revolution, stories from classical literature, as well as fantasy and idealistic stories featuring cooperation between members of society, were published and entered the recommended lists. For translation, Mohammad Ghazi was commended for *Shahzadeh-ye Kuchulu* [The Little Prince] (1977) and for his efforts to bring the best works of Western literature to Iranian children ('Books of National Interest.' 1978:43).

In the year of the revolution (1978-79), the books selected by the CBC reflected the trend of the rising popularity of original writing, and works by Iranian authors with Iranian themes, as opposed to translations. Topics of CBC selected books included young workers, school children's wall-newspaper and magazine projects, children searching for work, deprivation and poverty, new treatment of famous Iranian epic characters who uproot tyranny, criticism of discrimination, the educational system of the country, and heroic themes from the past demonstrating the virtues of responsibility and cooperation (Ansari 1980:46-47). Four of the selected works include *Fasl-e Nan* (Darvishiyan 1978-9), a book for young adults containing eight realistic short stories about the life of poor youngsters who work to save money during the summer, *Arash* (Beyzaie 1978-9), also for young adults, a new treatment of the Iranian epic, depicting Arash as a simple soldier with faith, a man of the people who could be anyone, *Agar Adamha Hamdigar ra Dust Bedarand* [If people would love each other] about a young boy's experiences in life (Khaksar 1978-9). The fourth selected work is *Ruznameh-ye Divariy-e Madresehy-e Ma* [Our School's Wall-Newspaper] (1978-9) by Ali-Ashraf Darvishiyan. The author describes the efforts of a group of school children in starting a wall-newspaper and a magazine. The story is a realistic representation of the life of children, whereby the author criticizes discrimination and the educational system of the country (Ansari 1980:46-47). Four books published in 1979 were awarded prizes: the CBC Plaque for both *Moradu* (Azadikhah 1979), the story of a village boy who works hard in order to help his family move to town, and *Honar-e Ensanha-ye Nakhostin* (Allamehzadeh 1979), which deals with the close relationship between men's lives and their beliefs; and the CBC Diploma of Merit for *Mordad, Pa-ye Kureha-ye Jenub* (Rihavi 1979),

the story of a 13-year old boy who lives with his grandmother and works at a brick-making furnace, which relates the problems, the hopes, the poverty and the struggles of his social class, and *Ma Hanuz dar Rahim* (Sarabandi 1979), an account of the departure and loss of the land of Baluchistan villagers due to drought (Ansari 1981:46). Thus, books depicting social struggle written in the year of the revolution and in the year before it, were endorsed and encouraged by the CBC.

Immediately after the revolution, at the CBC annual book awards meeting of 1980, 420 works were examined. Of these, 323 were original writings and 66 were translations. The next IBBY Honor List in 1982 saw the inclusion of H. Moradi Kermani for his 1980 *Bacheha-ye Qalebafkhaneh*. [Children of the Carpetweaving Factory]. The book, which contains two stories, is a 'vivid description of the hardships endured by the young children who have to work with their small hands as carpet weavers.' (*IBBY Honor List* 1982:71). The content of books selected by the CBC in 1983 did not appear to show a great difference from those selected before the revolution. They included stories showing how different creatures find shelter from the rain; from butterflies to a homeless war-refugee child and her family (Garlic 1981), a story about a young boy who overcomes his stutter (Pourahmad 1981), and one of a series of stories about the life of Majid and his grandmother (Kermani 1981), showing human relationships and problems with a sense of humor. The latter, while being published after the revolution, describe an earlier time when the author was a young boy, showing that realistic stories were also conceived before the revolution. Some of the stories found their way from the CBC Honors list in Iran onto the international IBBY Honors list, and were nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen Award. Kermani, for example, received the Hans Christian Anderson

Award in 1992 for a distinguished contribution to children's literature, implying that Iranian selection criteria reflect international characteristics and trends.

The books evaluated in 2001/2002 consisted of 320 fiction titles, of which 150 were original works and 170 translations, over 200 non-fiction works, 50 works of poetry, and a lesser number of periodicals and reference works (Mirhadi 2003). Thus, it can be seen that the ratio of translations has once more increased since the sharp reduction immediately after the revolution. The number of poetry works is low compared to the other categories. Some critics consider that poetry is in crisis, with the number of good children's poets in Iran numbering around fifteen. Mirhadi is of this opinion. This is in contrast to the situation in Tajikistan, where poetry continues to be popular according to the biography, *Adiboni Tojikiston*. Hejvani (2000:25) however, claims the opposite, saying, 'Today, 161 people recite poems for children of which 25 consider themselves to be children's poets. Before 1978 we had 37 children's poetry books, but in the first decade of the revolution, there was as many as 200 children's poetry books published in Iran.'

One of the four long-term projects initiated by the CBC upon moving to new premises in 1979 was the preparation of an encyclopedia to specifically address the needs of Iranian children (Ansari 1980:38). Since its foundation, the CBC had felt the need for an encyclopedia for Iranian children, and had discussed the issue with the *Kanun* and publishers with facilities to tackle such a job (*Schoolnet Encyclopedia* 2009). Three factors encouraged the continuation of the children's encyclopedia project: firstly, sources such as Massaheb's Farsi Encyclopaedia as well as Dekhoda's and Moiin's dictionaries, standard reference works in Iran, showed that the results could be worth the effort. The second factor was the Islamic Revolution

which ‘filled every Iranian with the zeal to do whatever they could.’ (Zanan 1994:28) This factor of ideological zeal connected with the revolution continued to have an effect on writers for ten to fifteen years after the revolution. The third factor was the organization of an experienced group familiar with Iranian children and young adults, who could write for children and were aware of the principles and standards of the task.

After more than ten years of work, the first volume of the *Encyclopedia for Young People* (EYP) was published in 1992. Work continued over the next ten years and the eighth volume was published in 2002. The *Encyclopedia for Young People*, a major project of the CBC, spanning more than twenty years during the post-revolutionary period has received various awards, two of which were the Iranian National Book Award in 1998 and the Kish Annual Award for the Promotion of Science in 1999 (Rai 1991:27). The encyclopedia project provides an example of a CBC collaboration which has changed and grown over the years, receiving input from outside Iran in a balanced way, while continuing to hold to the revolutionary ideals of providing educational literature for children inside Iran which relates to their own environment.

The CBC has seen many social changes in its lifetime, yet the nature of the CBC’s activities has not changed significantly over time, but reflects a continuity of concerns by those involved with children’s literature, and demonstrates an endless striving to increase professionalism in the field.

5.4 *Kanun-e Parvaresh-e Fekri-ye Kudakan o Nojavanan*: Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults

The second major organization to be examined in this chapter is the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, or *Kanun*, founded in 1965 with the support of Queen Farah, by a number of people who had been involved with Franklin publishers and *Peik* Magazine (Ayman et. al. 1992:420). The activities of this organization can be divided into three main areas: publishing, libraries, and cinema.

In the autumn of 1965, a number of artists and educational figures held a meeting to plan the establishment of a library for children and the provision of reading materials to stock it. Previously, there had been no library for children in the country and this was the main motive for founding the institute. A large modern building was constructed for the purpose at Laleh Park, Tehran in 1966. It was hoped that through the library most of the goals of the *Kanun* could be achieved. The library was a link connecting the *Kanun* team with their audience, providing ‘a means for intellectual development of children, strengthening their ethical traits and augmenting their knowledge’ (Sharifi 1998:35). A single library, however, could not provide services to all children and young adults throughout Tehran. This resulted in the idea of developing more libraries for children particularly in heavily populated or poor areas of Tehran, and the first of these opened in a school warehouse at Bagh-e Shah Square.

The *Kanun* gained valuable experience from the establishment and commissioning of the libraries and succeeded in overcoming problems such as training skilled librarians and defining how they should render services to their

young clients, as well as gaining acceptance for the libraries from the general public. People labeled the libraries gambling houses because they offered chess games. The children were nervous at first of entering one of the libraries, and most of them only looked at the outside of the building. Some protests were made against boys and girls sitting at the same tables in the libraries. However, these complaints were eventually quelled after the librarians explained the rationale for their activities (Sharifi 1998:35). This attitude echoes the resistance shown towards girls' education as described in 3.4.1, while the development of the libraries and their mixed use by boys and girls can be cited as an indicator of change during the post-revolution period in Iran.

In addition, the *Kanun* established public libraries throughout the rest of the country. Many of these libraries evolved into cultural centers, where young readers were encouraged to write and draw. In 1995, the *Kanun's* aim was to double the existing number of 300 centers, as it was felt that a minimum of 600 libraries specializing in books for children and young adults were necessary, considering the country's population, in order to reach current international standards. The 36 centers in Tehran were mostly located in middle and lower class residential areas, and the remaining centers scattered in 130 cities all over Iran (*Iran* 1995:12). The number of libraries had almost reached the *Kanun's* target, numbering 537 by 2003.

The *Kanun* also established a mobile rural library service. The operational region of each mobile library covered at least 100 small villages. According to a timetable schedule, each set of books sent to a village had to be exchanged for the set of a nearby village after a month (*Iran* 1995:12). Later, the *Kanun* initiated a postal library project to further promote children's reading in rural areas of the country. In

1990, the project was in operation at the experimental stage, serving 3000 members in 60 villages by means of the postal network (Rai 1990:28). Children welcomed the postal library service, as shown by the membership of sixty thousand, receiving service from 42 mailing centers which send an average of two to three books to each member every month. Between 1997 and 2003 there was an increase from 45 to 56 centers. In 1995 there were 19 rural mobile libraries, each serving 30 to 40 villages and visiting each one once a month at least. The libraries showed films as well as lending books. By 2003, there were 41 village mobile libraries and 14 town mobile libraries (*Iran* 1995:12). The library work of the *Kanun* has been considered as possibly the most important aspect of its activities. While this is true from the aspect of making materials accessible, without the publishing activities of the *Kanun* there would have been much less material available.

Unlike the CBC, the *Kanun* enjoyed financial support and high-level official backing, which made it possible to engage experienced writers, translators, and artists to prepare appropriate and attractively designed books for children. Although at first some translations were published, the *Kanun* increasingly emphasized original writing and artwork. The first work issued under its auspices was *Mehmanha-ye nakhandeh* [Uninvited Guests], (Farjam 1966), which contained free adaptations of folktales. By February 1979, 146 children's books had been published by the *Kanun* (Ayman et. al. 1992:420). The major activities of the center include 'training of technical staff, finding proper indigenous patterns for its cultural products, establishment of mobile libraries in rural areas and establishment of close cooperation among great contemporary poets and authors in the field of children and young adults' literature' (Sharifi 1998:33).

From 1951 to 1961, the sole publishing house active in the domain of children's books and literature in Iran was Nur-e Jahan. Although this situation changed later with other publishing houses such as Marefat, Franklin, Book Publishing and Translation Company, Nil, Ibn Sina and Amir Kabir making some efforts on behalf of young readers, the content and quality of their products was not felt by the *Kanun* to sufficiently address the needs of children and young adults, and so it launched widespread efforts to promote literature for children and young adults, especially in the field of publications. The *Kanun*'s Publishing Organization took the first step in 1966 to 'publish books that could be a model from all points of view, books that could not only address the needs of readers but could also encourage other publishers to acquire a deep knowledge about the basic needs of their society' (Sharifi 1998:32).

The *Kanun* is considered by Sharifi to be the most important of three major undertakings in the field of children's literature instigated at the beginning of the 1960s:

In the period from 1961 to 1965, because of changes in social conditions prevailing in Iran, we witnessed the birth and serious activity of three organizations engaged in literature for children and young adults. These activities included the formation of Children's Book Council (1962), publishing of *Peik* [Message] magazines for children (1963) and coming to existence of the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (1965). The center was a stand out among the three organizations for its establishment of a publishing house, a cinematic center and a library (until 1979) (Sharifi 1998:33).

The publishing work of the *Kanun* has helped to make this organization well known in the field of children's literature throughout Iran and internationally. As Rao (1977:21) wrote:

Iran was ahead of most of the developing countries of Asia in so far as printing was concerned, with a special institute: the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, whose standard of production, layout and illustration of books are comparable with anywhere in the world (Rao 1977:21).

The foundation of the *Kanun* was an important stimulus to the development of children's literature in Iran, both in making books available at affordable prices to readers in Iran, and making Iranian works better known in the international arena. Despite great political changes during the lifetime of this organization, it can be seen that the *Kanun*, as well as the CBC, created a framework for the development of children's literature in Iran which continued from the pre-revolutionary period into the post-revolutionary period. The *Kanun's* Publishing Organization encourages the best contemporary authors and poets of Iran to cooperate with it, based on its belief that children should be exposed to the highest quality work; even scientific guide books should have material which is novel and interesting to children. Further factors considered by the Publishing Organization are price, choice of topics, painting technique, page layout, printing, binding, and language. In choosing stories for publication, the *Kanun* aims to:

augment children's knowledge, persuade them to use their mind, dissuade them from choosing simple material, look to the world around them more cautiously and get acquainted with scientific analysis... The *Kanun's* main principle in choosing texts was to break past traditions, avoid conventional norms and reject the idea that children are unaware creatures who should

become familiar with the principles that grown-ups have forged for themselves and who should be forced to accept those principles (Sharifi 1998:36).

If the main principle of the *Kanun* in choosing texts was to break past tradition, it is of note that their first production, *Mehmanha-ye nakhandeh*, consisted of adaptations of folktales, a sign of continuity rather than a break with tradition. Only two titles were published by the *Kanun* in its first year, but the numbers published in the third year rose to 13 titles each with 30,000 to 40,000 copies printed. In 1969, *The Story of Pigeon*, *Away from Home*, and *The Little Black Fish*, all published by the *Kanun* were chosen as best books by the CBC. *The Little Black Fish* and *Flower and Glass of Sun* won prizes at the Bologna exhibition. In that year, the *Kanun* also participated in and won awards at the Bratislava exhibition, as well as having six titles of its books successfully translated and printed in the United States in cooperation with two American publishers. The *Kanun* continued to enjoy similar success and the books published by the center attracted such a large domestic readership that some books were reprinted five or six times. In each edition, not less than 10,000 copies of a book were published, which was unprecedented in the country. Furthermore, for the first time the *Kanun* showed Iranian publishers the importance of layout, illustration, printing and suitable formats for books based on indigenous patterns and this had a great impact on the products of other publishers (Sharifi 1998:37).

In the period 1981 to 1989, ten children's books published by the *Kanun* won awards for their illustrations in international competitions (Ayman et. al. 1992:422). The *Kanun* held its first Children and Young Adults' Book Festival at the beginning of 1990, to display books published both by the *Kanun* and other publishers. Over

9000 books written and translated for children in Iran were surveyed and evaluated from a variety of aspects, and selections by a final jury received awards (Rai 1990:35). The *Kanun* continues to play a major role in present-day publication of materials for children in Iran, while the final aspect of its work, the production of films can be counted as its third most important branch. Although cinema is not strictly included in children's literature, the influence of writers on cinematic production and vice versa, not to mention the work of children's book illustrators in animation, warrants including a brief mention of the *Kanun*'s work in this respect.

The Cinematic Center started functioning as a filmmaking center in 1970, with the aim of making 'valuable educational and entertaining films for children and young adults and to promote this industry in Iran' (Sharifi 1998:33). Iranian filmmakers have since produced a great number of award-winning films, with child heroes or main characters, which have portrayed life from a child's perspective. In 1970, the first year of its activities, the Cinematic Center made five films which were admitted to the Fifth International Film Festival for Children and Young Adults in Tehran. The film *Nan o Kucheh* [Bread and Alley] by Abbas Kiarostami, who was later to become one of the foremost directors of Iranian cinema, received the Golden Statuette of the festival from the jury. Another film produced in the first year was *Amu Sibilu* [Uncle Sibilu] written by Bayza'i. A year later, the film *Liberation-o* by Nasser Taqvaie won the prize for the 10-14 year-old group of children's films.

These successes brought attention to the Cinematic Center and led the *Kanun*'s managers to increase their efforts to attract more filmmakers and artists. The Cinematic Center demonstrated its capabilities by holding domestic and international festivals, and also provided a venue for Iranian artists to get acquainted with the

works of their foreign counterparts, and thus increase their artistic experience and knowledge. The Cinematic Center was also involved in the production of animations, until then a monopoly of the Radio and Television Organization. The center produced works that have become classics, attracting prominent artists such as Nouredin Zarrinkelk, Farshid Mesghali, Arapik Aghdassian, and Morteza Momayyez. As a result, it became a leader in the field of in Iran, providing work for both writers and illustrators (Sharifi 1998:34).

A further link between literature and drama can be seen in earlier works for children in the form of plays, often based on traditional children's literature, nursery rhymes and folk songs. An example of this is the work of the actor and director Bizhan Mufid who wrote the 1969 musical plays *Shahr-e qesse* [Storytown], which incorporated social and satirical elements, and *Mah va palang* [The Moon and the Tiger]. These were both based on nursery rhymes and folk songs. In the same period, the *Kanun* established a children's theatre in Tehran, which generated a demand for children's plays. Later examples of plays for children were the 1977 Tehran production, *Arashi*, about Arash the archer, by Bahram Bayza'i, and the 1978 Tehran production, *Kaveh*, referring to Kaveh the blacksmith, by Mahmud E'temadzadeh Behazin, both stories about heroes of the *Shahnameh* (Ayman, et. al. 1992:417). The *Kanun* is also active in the organizing of book and film exhibitions, fairs, festivals, seminars and conferences. Although it was not until 1990 that the first Children's and Young Adults' Book Festival was held by the *Kanun*, one of the earlier conferences organized by the *Kanun* in cooperation with UNESCO, with the stated aims of seeking to increase international understanding and peaceful cooperation, was held in 1975 at the Central Library for Children at Farah Park, Tehran. Experts

in the field of children's literature, writers, librarians, publishers, and others participated in this meeting. One of the projects considered by the participants was the possibility of publishing some volumes containing international folktales on the subject of peaceful cooperation. Again we see continuity in the role of traditional stories as inspiration for content and themes for children's books in Iran, as well as the often stated aim of children's literature, that of promoting international peace..

After decades of activities, both the CBC and the *Kanun* have left an enduring impact on children's literature and arts in Iran. Due to its position as National Section of IBBY for Iran, the CBC has developed international links and introduced Iranian children's literature and activities to the rest of the world while the *Kanun* has achieved similar fame for Iranian writers and artists through its success in winning awards in international film and book festivals. The establishment of such institutes occurred as a result of social upheavals in Iran in the mid-twentieth century which highlighted the need for organizations in the area of children's literature. The severe lack of literature suitable for children, the increase in the number of literate children and young adults, and the resulting increase in demand for books and other cultural products stimulated the establishment and success of these organizations (Sharifi 1998:37).

Although both organizations have faced many problems in implementing their programs and attaining their goals, they have succeeded in overcoming these problems, and have trained staff, created guidelines suitable for Iranian society, following traditional and indigenous cultural styles and values, and have created an atmosphere in which a generation of young authors and artists of children's literature and arts have created unique and invaluable works. In this way, these organizations

can be cited as factors promoting continuity in children's literature in Iran during the two periods under study. Iranian children's writers and children's literature have benefited greatly from their support and activities, resulting in changes such as a wider audience, better quality books, and the development of the field generally, which has expanded to include a greater amount of literary criticism and analysis, and a higher number of publications.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter it was shown that institutions in Iran, especially the two major ones, the CBC and the *Kanun*, have guided as well as reflected changes in children's literature. The change of regime influenced some aspects of the content of stories for children, but overall the changes were seen to be minimal, while the main concerns of those involved in the field remained the same; these were seen to include social, developmental, moralistic, didactic, pedagogical, educational, artistic, and entertainment concerns. The activities of these organizations have quantified and recorded many elements of continuity in the history and development of children's literature in Iran in the modern period. This chapter, dealing with a specific, limited period, i.e. the second half of the twentieth century, stands in contrast to the previous chapter which showed the links between stories of the modern period and their historical roots. The growth of the two main modern institutions studied has mirrored major developments in children's literature in Iran; both were established in the early 1960s and reflect trends in the periods before and after the revolution. For this reason, an examination of the effects of these institutions on the field and their

reflection of trends gave important insights into issues of change and continuity in children's literature in the period studied in this thesis.

The activities of these organizations have resulted in a wider audience, better quality books, and the development of the field generally, which has expanded to include a greater amount of literary criticism and analysis, and a higher number of publications. After an analysis of the wider historical and political forces at work during the period in question in the research of earlier chapters, the research in this chapter focused on the two major institutions involved in children's literature in Iran in the twentieth century. This gave a means of tracking elements of continuity and change via documentation of the activities of these organizations.

The findings in this chapter supported the view that continuity is a major force informing children's literature, while the changes that were seen tended to relate to technological and production aspects or to the development of the infrastructure, support of the industry, and recognition of the field of children's literature, rather than to the actual content or themes found in reading materials for children. The next chapter will focus further on issues arising in literature for children by looking at the works of a number of Iranian writers who were active in either or both of the pre- and post-revolutionary periods.

Chapter 6: Adults' voices in Persianate children's literature

6.1 Introduction

After an examination of the influences of the wider historical, political and social background, of specific aspects of literature for children, of classical literature and the effect of traditional stories on modern works for children, and of Iranian institutions working directly in the field of children's literature in the previous chapters, this chapter will focus in more detail on selected Iranian authors and texts, using examples of their work undertaken for a young readership during a given time period. In addition to giving an overview of these works, an attempt will be made to perceive the changes arising from various influences and conversely, to examine elements of continuity to be found in writing produced in Iran by adults for children from the 1960s until the end of the twentieth century.

The chapter will examine the work and ideas of seven adult Iranian children's writers active in the period 1960 to 2000, and the social and political forces which influenced them. A large number of writers have been involved in producing literature for children since the revolution, as can be seen from references and bibliographies such as *Iranian Book* (Shoaei 2002) and *More than 100 Persian Children's Books* (Amrai & Ebrahimi 2002). A limited number of representative examples were selected from these references consisting of the work of award-winning writers. The 'best' children's writers in Iran are ratified by the two major Iranian organizations, the CBC and the *Kanun*. Thus, the author was further guided by the recommendations of these two organizations in the selection of representative

writers for closer study. In addition, data relating to Iranian participation in the major international exhibitions and awards in the field was taken into account in order to make the selections more objective. The seven writers, upon the basis of the above information, are considered to be a representative sample of Iranian adult writers producing works for children during the period under study. Examples of works will be compared from two periods: 1960 until the revolution, and 1979 until 2000. Some authors bridge the two periods and an attempt will be made to discern the differences and developments in the content and ideology of their work which highlight continuity or change over this time. The analysis of authors is not arranged in chronological order, rather a group from a similar time frame is first analysed, then the works of two writers representative of the two periods, pre- and post-revolution are compared.

The chapter will show how the writers' work reflects their philosophy and viewpoint on the ability of children to understand serious matters, as well as to escape into the fantasy world of their imagination. We will return to this topic in the final part of the chapter which will discuss Moradi Kermani and the late Samad Behrangi in more detail. A twenty-year gap exists between the two, one working until the end of the 1960s and the other from the 1980s until the present day. These writers were chosen for more detailed attention, as they were both major writers representative of their two respective historical periods, and winners of international awards. Both have greatly influenced other writers, and have produced a distinctive body of work based on their own experiences and ideology.

Three assumptions held by critics and writers in Iran (e.g. Ansari, Hejvani, Mirhadi, Rai,) which support the notion of radical change in children's literature

caused by social and political forces will be evaluated; firstly that pre-revolution writing by adults contains more allegory and fantasy and 'safe' rewritings of traditional stories than post-revolution works, secondly that the amount of religious writing for children greatly increased after the revolution, and thirdly that idealistic writings about the building of a new society likewise increased after the revolution.

Thus, some of the issues already discussed in the previous chapters will be reexamined from the point of view of writers involved in the field of children's literature. Specific examples will be given from their works which advance the argument of the thesis for the existence of continuity as well as change.

6.2 Works by Iranian writers

The field of children's literature in Iran is a vibrant area involving a large number of writers and illustrators. This section will introduce seven writers who have won awards and public acclaim for their books over the years, in order to attempt to identify the influences which have affected them, and the issues which feature in their writing.

The first two writers, Abbas Yamini-Sharif and Mahmud Kianush, are best known for their writing before the revolution, while the most memorable works of the following three writers, Faridun Amuzadeh-Khalili, Mostafa Rahmandust, and Reza Rahgozar, were written in the 1980s or later. The work of the last two writers, Moradi Kermani in the 1980s and the late Samad Behrangi in the 1960s, is given a more detailed examination as they are two of the most popular writers of their times and especially suitable for comparison due to their differing philosophies and the

twenty year gap between their two bodies of work. It is not possible to find a group of writers who stopped writing at the time of the revolution and a new group of writers who started. With the exception of Samad Behrangi, all of the writers under study have been involved in writing for children for many years, their work spanning both of these periods. The earlier generation of writers are likely to be known for their pre-revolution works while the later generation published the bulk of their work after the revolution. A selection of these stories will be examined in order to try to discover if contemporary themes mirror those of earlier times or if they are greatly different.

6.2.1 Abbas Yamini-Sharif

Abbas Yamini-Sharif (1919-89) was a prolific Iranian children's poet. Before his pioneering work, there had been little Farsi poetry written especially for children. In 1943, Yamini-Sharif founded the first Iranian magazine for children, the pocket-sized *Bazi-ye Kudakan* [Children's Games] with the help of Ebrahim Bani-Ahmad, a teacher at the *Madrese-ye Ma'muli-ye Tehran* (Tehran Normal School). Many of his poems, on themes related to the lives and development of children, were later collected and published in book form. Three examples of these are: *Feri be asman miravad*, [Feri goes to the Sky], (1965), *Avaz-e fereshtegan ya as'ar-e kudakan* [The Song of Angels or the Age of Children], (1966), and *Nim qarn dar bagh-e she'r* [Half a Century in the Garden of Poetry], (1987). Poetry flourished in the period 1971 to 1977, with Mahmud Kianush also publishing seven books of poetry for children aged from five to fifteen. Yamini-Sharif and a few others occasionally wrote

poems in syllabic meter and in the colloquial style of nursery rhymes, and lullabies (Ayman et. al. 1992:421).

When Yamini-Sharif was a child, his family and relatives were fond of poetry as well as storytelling. In addition to reading Hafiz's poetry both for *faal*, (when a text is opened at random to see what one's fate will be), and for enjoyment, and reading Saadi and Mowlavi for morals, sayings and folk wisdom, they also read contemporary poetry (Yamini-Sharif 1987:14). They read magazines and newspapers, and memorized and repeated whatever poem or song became popular.

Yamini-Sharif too, under the influence of this environment, and possessing a good memory, read and memorized all these compositions and poems. He was thus exposed to critical and political poetry, as well as news and classical writings of all kinds, at an early age. At the age of ten, he read the works of an opposition writer who had been tortured and imprisoned by the government; yet he has been accused of only writing for rich children and of having a narrow, upper class outlook on life, producing poetry with no message except antiquated moral codes (Behrangi 1969:122).

The poems of Yamini-Sharif follow a tradition of songs, poems and stories which children can relate to because they echo their own experiences, as well as those which enlarge children's sense of wonder and lead to their mental development. Thus, from this aspect, his work can be cited as an example of continuity in children's literature.

6.2.2 Mahmud Kianush

Mahmud Kianush started writing children's poetry more than 30 years ago. When he studied the situation at the time he found that only a few contemporary poets had occasionally written some poems for children. Any other works published for children were chosen from contemporary as well as classical poets, who had not originally intended their work to be for children, but since the subjects and expressions were simple, were thought suitable for that age group. From this, Kianush concluded that in reality Iran did not have any children's poetry. He was referring to published works rather than traditional oral children's literature, as seen in an interview (Kianush 2005:1) where he says that when he thought back to his own childhood, and tried to remember which poems he liked, and what made them memorable, he found that there were only a few nursery rhymes and folk songs that had made an impression on him. With those nursery rhymes as a source of inspiration in words and music, he started to write and publish a number of experimental poems. So his poems were based on childhood memories which created a link between traditional children's literature and his own work. Kianush defines children's poetry in the following terms:

Poems for children are like toys, that are made of words, and these words give wings to their imagination. Children want to sing them, to dance with them, and to play with them. Therefore, the poems have to be musical, colorful and easy for children to use as toys. (Kianush 2005:1)

Kianush explained the principles that he had discovered in his book *She'r-e Bacheha dar Iran* [Children's Poetry in Iran] (1973). Many young poets famous for writing children's poetry have been influenced by his work. Kianush creates a

magical atmosphere for children reflecting the way they perceive the natural world. His poetry also, at times, delivers cutting commentary on situations relating to everyday reality and can be read on different levels (for examples see Appendix 2). In this he can be compared with Yamini-Sharif, and the other writers examined in this section.

6.2.3 Faridun Amuzadeh-Khalili

Faridun Amuzadeh-Khalili, was born in the town of Semnan in 1960 and received primary and secondary education there. He published his first work in 1984. His works for children are thought-provoking mixtures of realism and fantasy which can be understood as wider metaphors. Haddad (1992:341) claims that amongst the many authors of contemporary literature after the revolution, Amuzadeh-Khalili is one of the most methodical and technical, saying that this has been agreed upon by almost all of the other literary figures in their writings and interviews:

His prose is endowed with a great many characteristics. It is at once beautiful, full of sincerity and yet strong and formed according to the rules of storytelling. He has a precise knowledge of various aspects of writing and has the ability to use those aspects in their proper places. His depiction of events and images are clear and he is keen and delicate in his subject matter. Haddad (1992:341).

Gholamreza Kashijavad of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance considers that the dominant trend in stories for children and youth is a conservative and non-critical approach to tradition, with society dictating moral rules and commandments that the child must obey in order to be accepted as a member,

according to the usual social conventions (Kashijavad 1975:12). This is not the case with many of Amuzadeh-Khalili's stories, which challenge social conventions, and from this aspect, his work could be likened to that of Samad Behrangi. Despite the fact that Amuzadeh-Khalili's first work was only published in 1984, criticism of the status quo is a strong feature of his work and, as such, parallels the earlier criticism of Behrangi which dates from the pre-revolutionary years of the 1960s. Thus, challenging the status quo can be cited as a continuous function of some types of Persianate children's literature.

6.2.4 Mostafa Rahmandust

Mostafa Rahmandust, born in 1950 in Hamadan; poet, writer and translator of children and young adults' stories, is one of the most diligent and prominent writers in contemporary children's literature in Iran. He has been working continually for children for the last twenty years, both officially and non-officially. Haddad (1992:27) asserts that 'most of his works are connected with poetry, thus he has single-handedly composed half of the published poetry available today for children.'

It is a point of interest to note that, although Rahmandust was a civil servant in the parliament library of the government of the Shah, he has successfully continued his writing work, received honors from the Islamic Republic, and become one of the most respected writers in the field of children's literature in Iran today. Thus his very career is a testimony to continuity in children's literature provided by writers who dedicate their abilities over many years to this field, while drawing inspiration from works created by writers who have gone before them.

The relevance of this writer in terms of the topic of the present thesis is that he reveals yet another facet of change and continuity working together. He makes classical texts more accessible to young readers and combines a universal aspect such as friendship with the modern problem of environmental pollution. His work is supported by its cultural and historical background, and his career has spanned both eras under study, pre- and post-revolution.

6.2.5 Reza Rahgozar

Mohammad Reza Sarshar has written for children and young adults under the pen names of Reza Rahgozar and Mohammad Didar, and the former is the one by which he is best known. Haddad (1992:178) describes him as one of a small number of committed and hardworking authors who have displayed their talents in a large oeuvre of literary endeavors from stories to educational essays and critiques, works for children and young adults, as well as critical appraisal of children's stories and adult novels, and discourse on theories in the field.

Rahgozar's stories deal with realistic, moral and social issues as well as religious themes.³ He does not favor imaginative fantasy in an escapist or mystical mode, but is strongly affected by real life problems, and his stories reflect these themes. He pays tribute to the heritage of traditional and historic stories, and comments on the legacy and worldwide influence of Iranian literature:

³ For example, *Dar entezar-e didar-e to* [Waiting to See You], Illus. by Bahram Khaef, Tehran: The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, 1982, the story of Abu Dhzar Ghaffari, follower of the Prophet, who is known as the one who sacrifices his life for Islam.

Throughout history this civilization which is one of many civilizations, has created poems, narratives, fairy tales, stories and plays. Children and young adults have a considerable share of this history. Their literature to some extent has had an effect on the present day literature, making it one of the richest and most attractive parts. The literature that has been rewritten, reproduced, recreated and revealed came from the precious treasure of heritage of literature. We have been witness to the fact that such works as *1001 Nights* and the works of Hayyebn Yaghzan⁴ have been used by western writers and animators producing a series of highly effective, attractive and valuable works of their own for the children and young adults in their own countries (Amrai & Ebrahimi 2002:10).

Thus, Rahgozar supports the idea of continuity in literature for children, and furthermore, refers to the fact that traditions from the Middle East and Asia have informed and influenced Western children's literature. Despite being grounded in reality, Rahgozar gives the optimistic message that difficulties can be overcome, even if the world is not perfect. In comparison, Rahmandust also deals with realistic topics, but brings in more abstract imagery and metaphor, while Amuzadeh-Khalili makes full and effective use of both, blending mystical elements with the harsh realities of life. Although his stories are not always optimistic and do not have traditionally happy endings, they offer hope which transcends earthly suffering. The work of these three writers shares many qualities and characteristics despite their diverse outlooks and backgrounds.

6.2.6 Samad Behrangi

This section will focus on Samad Behrangi, a pre-revolution writer who died ten years before the Islamic Revolution. Samad Behrangi gained a lot of attention outside Iran as well as becoming a cult figure inside Iran where his works were

⁴ *Hayyebn Yaqsan* written by Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Tufail al-Qaisi (Born near Granada 1100/1110? died 1185) philosopher, wazir and chief royal physician of Caliph Abu Ya'qub.

banned. He was seen as a dedicated teacher, writer, and a heroic figure of resistance against social injustice. He has been a major influence on and a source of inspiration for the revolutionary generation of children's writers in Iran, despite his criticism of religion. He is the only writer under study who did not live to write in the post-revolutionary period.

Samad Behrangi is known as a writer who used children's stories as a way of expressing his feelings about the wrongs of society during the rule of the last Shah of Iran. Many reviews, criticisms and commentaries have been written about his children's stories. One of the recurring issues examined is the use of his stories to make political points (see Appendix 1:373 for details of his views on the purpose of literature for Children). Many folktales contain revolutionary elements, and many have been applied over the ages to the different social conditions of their time. Therefore, it could be said that Behrangi is following a traditional pattern in his application and rewriting of such elements in his stories. For this reason his work constitutes an example of continuity in children's literature, with new and revolutionary elements co-existing beside traditional ones in the texts.

His most important work, *The Little Black Fish*, won awards after his death at Bologna and Bratislava International Literature Festivals in 1969, which brought honor to Iran (see Appendix 1:369-372 for story summary). In the fall of 1971, the University of Tehran sponsored a special Behrangi festival and a rich and beautifully illustrated edition of *The Little Black Fish* was produced by the *Kanun* under the patronage of the Empress Farah. All of Behrangi's other writings were officially banned by the monarchy's censorship bureau in 1973.⁵ Behrangi's stories were

⁵ No comprehensive account of the Pahlavi censorship apparatus and its anomalies exists, although Amin Banani touches on the issue in 'The Role of the Mass Media' in Ehsan Yar-Shater, ed., *Iran Faces the Seventies*, New York: Praeger, 1971:32.

published and propagated in large numbers during the period of freedom following the revolution in 1979, as he had become an inspirational figure for many during the demonstrations leading up to the revolution.

The Little Black Fish is said to be the most important of Behrangi's works because its philosophy contains all of his essential ideas about society: that one should continually question one's environment, oppose injustices, struggle against tyranny, and work actively to change the ills of society (West 1988:27). The little black fish swims to the sea and freedom, but at the end is caught and eaten by the heron. It is the most famous of all his stories, both within Iran and internationally. It has universal appeal, and has been likened in this respect to stories such as Antoine de St. Exupery's *Le Petit Prince* and Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. In 1969 *The Little Black Fish* won international awards at literature festivals in Bologna and Bratislava which further enhanced its reputation back home in Iran. As a result of this prestige, it was the only story of Behrangi's which managed to escape censorship. Furthermore, translations of the story into English (1976, 1987, & 1992) made it accessible to a wider readership. The story has also been published as a folktale under the name of *Little Ebony* (Dianaty 2008). Mahdian (2010:1) notes that Behrangi's symbolism and use of allegory in *The Little Black Fish* was imitated by a new generation of young authors who wrote under censorship, as it provided them with a device through which they could safely hint at ideological political messages. She considers that his main goal was to make children aware of the injustice of the conditions that they lived in:

The main legacy of Behrangi for the children's literature of Iran, however, was his realism in depicting situations and confrontation of problems. The most obvious goal of this realistic literature was informing children of the

real lives of the poor and their struggles against the hardships of their lives. Thus, most of the stories took place in rural deprived areas or poverty-stricken urban neighborhoods inhabited by low income families. The image of the working child was repeated in many of these stories, a reflection of the real situation of poor families, in which it was natural for a child to be the main bread winner, working during the summer and sometimes other seasons as well (Mahdian 2010:1).

Behrangi effectively highlights the gulf between the rich minority and the poor majority. He also stresses the gulf between theory and practice, moral teachings and actual deeds, differentiating reality and what should happen in a perfect world. This can be seen in the 1966 story of *Oolduz va Kalagh-ha* [Oolduz and the Crows], where the crow tells Oolduz how it steals soup from courtyards or catches fish from pools. This story criticizes social injustice and abstract moral laws. Oolduz asks why the crow steals, disapprovingly adding that it is a sin. The crow accuses her of being childish and asks, 'What is sin? When my children and I are dying of hunger it is a sin not to steal.' He considers not fighting for survival to be a sin and to be unable to satisfy his hunger and that of his children to be a sin, especially when he can see that others have plenty.

Behrangi's stories demonstrate his concern with social class barriers and the ignorance of different groups of people in the society about others, especially the stereotyped city/country divide. He tried to act as a bond between the two groups and encouraged them to learn more about each other. Behrangi's work includes collections of folktales, short stories based on popular folk themes, and original stories which deal with various social aspects of village life and the problems of peasants who have migrated to the cities. Behrangi did not intend his stories to be mere entertainment but a reflection of reality, with good battling against evil, as can be seen from his preface to *The Bald Pigeonkeeper* which begins:

A few words:

Children, the future is in your hands and its good and evil belong to you. Whether you want to or not, you are growing up as time passes. You come after your fathers and elders and will take their places and inherit everything. You will be master of society. Poverty, oppression, power, justice, joy and sorrow, loneliness, punishment, work and idleness, prison and freedom, sickness and hunger and need, and a hundred strengths and weaknesses of society will belong to you. Poverty, oppression, lies, stealing, and war are illnesses seen only in an unhealthy society. (Behrangi 1987:77)

This preface undisputedly addresses children as the audience for the story. Behrangi continues by telling children to always ask themselves why, giving a number of examples: Why does my friend have to work in a carpet-weaving workshop? Why do people steal? Why do countries fight wars? Where did we come from and what will happen to us when we die? What will happen to the world? When will war, poverty and hunger ever end? He says children must ask a thousand other questions in order to understand society and work to improve it in every possible way in order to pass something better on to their own children. Behrangi ends his 'few words' by saying that worthwhile stories can teach perceptive children about people, society and life, and that they need not be only for entertainment.

Behrangi was very explicit in his ideas on the purpose of children's literature, and in his criticism of other children's writers whose ideology he disagreed with. In many of his short stories the class struggle is highlighted and the morals of the stories are clearly shown; that the underprivileged workers must rise up against the tyranny and injustice of those in power, after carefully making plans based on knowledge gained from personal experience. Behrangi was optimistic and believed that society could be improved by individual action. This may reflect a youthful outlook, as he

did not have time in his short life to become disillusioned and resigned to the status quo. His work is an example of children's stories containing metaphors which can be applied to the adult world, of children's stories originating in folklore, and of their application and relevance to a particular political situation. In this, they follow the tradition of story as a tool of resistance for both adults and children. Such tales cannot be described as 'safe' rewritings, and while some of Behrangi's stories contain elements of fantasy, he writes about realistic topics in the same way as the group of post-revolution writers.

6.2.7 Moradi Kermani

Hushang Moradi Kermani's most famous work is his collection of stories, *Qesseha-ye Majid* [Stories of Majid], which bridge the pre- and post-revolution periods. These were first broadcast on radio in 1974, the first volume was published in 1979, the year of the Islamic Revolution, and the stories were later televised. Volume Two (1981) was awarded the CBC monetary prize at the Children's Book Council Awards in 1981 in the category of young adults, and consists of 10 short stories about an adolescent boy, Majid, who lives with his old and wise grandmother, Bibi, in a small town in southeastern Iran (Ansari 1982:49). Moradi received numerous awards between 1980 and 2002. Of these, eighteen are international awards of the highest level, such as the Hans Christian Anderson, UNICEF, and IBBY awards. Highly prominent amongst the award-winning works were the stories of Majid, four of which can be found in Appendix 3.

Abu-Nasr observes that Moradi's stories for children describe the hardships of the poor, and village and rural life in Iran, with a dynamic and colorful style that reflects universal and permanent values (Abu-Nasr 1996:792). Moradi uses his stories to make observations and comments about society indirectly. Criticism of the education system features in *Aks-e Yadavardani* [The Memorable Photograph], one of the Majid stories, when the school office is described as a dangerous place for children, and where physical punishment and the conduct of the system of education is questioned, and also in *Nazem* [The Vice-Principal].⁶ Whether they make the reader want to laugh or cry, Moradi's stories all have the effect of provoking thought about some issue or other. Ebrahimi (2002:11) comments on Moradi's indirect use of characters, giving an example from *The Samovar* where honesty and truthfulness are praised by showing how Majid is sometimes unable to say directly what he means. In this story, he cannot tell his aunt that he did not bring the samovar for her. As a result, he runs into difficulties. A desire to show off and a sense of superiority is seen in the character of Majid. In his own mind, he sees people applauding and cheering in gratitude to him. His insecurities are also shown up in the way he always wants to portray himself in the best light and is afraid to admit his mistakes and shortcomings in case he loses the affections of those close to him (Amrai & Ebrahimi 2002:11). Moradi reflects his own feelings and reactions in these stories as many of them are based on his own childhood experiences. He was a child during the 1950s, and his Majid stories were first presented on radio in 1974 and were published in the 1980s, so neat categorization into 'pre-' or 'post-revolution' is impossible in the case of these stories. However, this shows that stories about events happening before the

⁶ Compare with Jalal Al-e Ahmad, 'The School Principal.'

revolution were still relevant and found an audience after the revolution. Moradi's work exemplifies the continuity of children's literature between the two periods.

The tendency of children to show off, or to appear wiser or more knowledgeable than they really are, is portrayed in many children's stories. In one example, the children's magazine, *No Amuz* (1996-97:32), shows that sometimes actions taken to avoid loss of face can be harmful to others. In *Majeraha-ye Amin va Akram* [The Adventures of Amin and Akram], Bibi Nabat receives a letter from her son and asks Amin to read it for him. Afraid of refusing her request, he agrees. When Akram tries to dissuade him, saying it would be better to give the letter back to Bibi Nabat and let her find someone who can read it, he tells her, 'No, leave it, she doesn't know what's written in this letter; I'll read something for her, because if I tell her I can't read it I'll lose face.' He improvises and upsets Bibi Nabat, giving her the bad news that her son is sick. When Amu Rahim later reads the letter and finds that it says something else, he is very cross with Amin, who then, while blaming it on the handwriting, confesses that he could not bring himself to admit that he was unable to read it. Thus the theme of covering up one's ignorance and being unable to refuse the requests of others occurs in other children's stories and is a theme not only found in Moradi's stories.

Moradi shows the life of the rich in reflection to that of the poor. The problem of the inequality of material wealth in society can be seen in *Hediye-ye Noruz* [The New Year's Gift], where the author uses satire, and the main character's habit of showing off appears as a normal characteristic (Amrai & Ebrahimi 2002:121). While Majid often does want to show off and gain applause for himself,

many of his actions are based on the desire to show up the inequality and unfairness that he confronts in everyday life.

Moradi's childhood had been a struggle for survival and his opinion of children's books was low. In this he had a very different background from that of Yamini-Sharif, Rahmandust and some of the other writers in this chapter:

For my part, I had spent my childhood, like so many Iranian children, under the most difficult conditions, living on the edge of the desert in central Iran, a region oppressed by both nature and man. Every part of my body and soul had been shaped by misfortune. I was reluctant to conjure up glorious past times for the pleasure of those who could afford to buy books and read. And I was also a bit arrogant. Writing for children was not good enough. Just between the two of us: I had no idea how or what to write about 'the lazy bear' or 'the impolite crow'. I still don't know how to do this. For example, I don't know how a crow speaks and whether our crows in Kerman speak differently from the crows in Tehran (Ansari 1989:63).

Moradi's mother died when he was a baby and he was brought up by his grandparents. Although he was unable to afford to buy books as a child, oral literature played an important part in his early life. Moradi told stories in his role of assistant to his grandmother who was a traditional village physician, as he describes:

Sometimes, I had to tell the children my own made-up tales and poems or the ones I'd heard from the village mothers to keep them amused while waiting for the medicine to take effect. Here you see me having grown up to be an employee in the Ministry of Public Health and the author of books for children and adolescents. It all started back then. Ever since then I was fascinated by fairy tales, local poems, villagers' customs and traditions (Moradi Video Interview 2009. Clip 6).

The enduring popularity of Moradi's stories shows that realistic stories are well received by young readers. Although these stories are not merely intended to

entertain and are moralistic and didactic in that they instruct and help their readers to identify and avoid possible pitfalls, there is a strong feeling of sharing and reaching out to children at their own level which transcends such issues. It cannot, however, be denied that by the very fact of their containing social commentary and criticism, a political agenda is present even though it may not be explicitly defined. Samad Behrangi's style may be very different from Moradi Kermani's, but these two authors each in their own way use children's stories to convey their own philosophy.

6.3 Conclusion

The first chapters of this thesis examined the wider historical, political and social influences, including those of institutions working in the field of children's literature, while this chapter dealt with works written for children, and the ideology of their authors, during the second half of the twentieth century.

The chapter examined the works of a number of Iranian writers creating stories and poems both before and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The influences of social and political conditions as forces which informed the work of these writers, and led to the formation of their ideas and views on the purpose of children's literature were also discussed. In this overview of the life and work of the writers, elements demonstrating continuity were observed in their writings.

Behrangi's views, for example, were strongly influenced by the history of his land and the political events surrounding him as a child. Rather than use stories to give rein to children's imagination and protect them from the evil realities of the world he chose to use them to open their eyes and train them in methods of dealing

with such eventualities. Even authors who are not considered to be political such as Mahmud Kianush and Abbas Yamini-Sharif include social commentary in their works, and Rahmandust, Rahgozar and Amuzadeh-Khalili have included numerous instances of criticism of the status quo, while still including elements of fantasy, as in fact, Behrangi himself did.

Moradi was strongly affected by the sad events of his childhood and wrote stories based on his personal experiences as a child. Poverty continues to exist and the inequality of wealth between segments of the population is a continuing theme in his stories, as are other issues such as the morality of telling the truth, which was also one of Samad Behrangi's concerns. Moradi's stories address political and social reality no less than Behrangi's, but in a more subtle and less confrontational way.

Moralistic stories, dealing with how children should behave, feature much less in these stories than in many of the traditional tales, but concerns such as poverty and social injustice continue to feature strongly, as they have done over the ages. Metaphor also continues to be a feature, and as in the past, these stories can be read on different levels depending on the viewpoint of the addressee.

Although the appearance of children's literature has changed since the Islamic Revolution and the purpose of children's literature was redefined to fit the ideals of the revolution, it can be seen that a balance between fantasy and reality is still being sought.

The writers, each with their own different styles, have developed with the times and dealt with the changes of society in their own individual ways. Their progress was followed over the period of time under study, from being civil servants in the government of the Shah before 1979 to becoming senior inspectors of

children's books in the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and directors of such associations as the Pen Association of Iran; from working as computer technicians to becoming magazine editors.

Three assumptions relating to change and continuity were challenged as follows; the first was that pre-revolution writing by adults was not found to contain more allegory, fantasy and rewriting of traditional stories than post-revolution works, secondly the amount of religious writing for children increased only immediately after the revolution and the level of increase was temporary, not long-term, and thirdly idealistic writings about the building of a new society existed before as well as after the revolution, although operating under different criteria.

In the last ten years, a further shift in focus has been seen as the political climate in Iran has changed once more. The arguments and differences of opinion between authors on the fundamental purpose of children's literature continue. Stories are still used to try to influence reality, to support the status quo, to challenge it, or to attempt to create an entirely new vision of reality, as has been seen in the examples given in this chapter.

In the following chapter, factors involved in the area of children's own writing, and influences upon it will be analyzed from examples of their work in magazines, newspapers, novels, and collections. Organizations and projects involved in giving children a voice, and empowering them in society will be examined. An attempt will be made to determine whether the world of children and their view of the world is vastly different from that created for them by adult writers for children.

Chapter 7: Children's voices in Persianate children's literature

7.1 Introduction

Following an examination of historical, political and social influences on literature for children, of institutions working in the field of children's literature, and of works by adult writers for children in the previous chapters, the present chapter will look at examples of literary output by children in Iran, and at some of the projects and organizations involved in giving children a voice and empowering them in society during the period under study, i.e. from the 1960s until the end of the twentieth century. Children's own writing is often not included in the field of children's literature, as it is considered to belong in the educational sector. There are no countries where the amount or quality of published work written by children would equal that of output by adults for children. In the age of the printing press, children's voices were left behind, and remained in the oral sphere, except when adult writers took inspiration from children, or wrote child characters into their stories. Adults mainly dictated what children should read as well as controlling the means of production. It is only relatively recently that children have been included in the process of selection, writing, reviewing and publishing. In this they have been greatly aided by wider access to the internet. The work of children themselves is an important and understudied area which can give many insights into the field, and for this reason this chapter of the present thesis has been devoted to children's writing.

In a collection of writing by rural children published in Iran before the revolution (7.3), it will be seen that in the 1960s and 70s, the Shah's social reforms

did not greatly alleviate conditions faced by children outside the main urban areas with regard to education, housing, sanitation, access to medical treatment, economic improvement and so on. Despite restrictions on voicing discontent with the regime, the children's writings implicitly criticize the status quo in the depiction of their struggle for survival. Although many of the children's essays, stories and poems written during the pre-revolution period are realistic and focus on daily life, the children were also concerned with topics such as philosophy, religion, and fantasy, as will be seen from the collections examined in this chapter (7.3:208-213).

From the aspect of continuity and change works from the two periods, pre- and post-revolution differ for a number of reasons, making it impossible to collect exact data to compare. Firstly, in the 1960s and 1970s the number of publications for children was much less than today and most of the contributions of children themselves consisted of letters, collections, or short articles in magazines and comics. Therefore, no young novelist of the first period could be studied, and a comparison relating to full-length works could not be made. Furthermore, during the earlier period the rate of child literacy was lower than in the second period from 1979 onwards which resulted in the production of a lower quantity of examples available for study. These differences could be included as elements of change seen over the two periods.

In order to investigate elements of continuity present in different children's writings, a selection procedure has been utilized which attempts to encompass the two time periods 1960-79 and 1979-2000, and to widen the geographical area under examination beyond that of urban areas such as Tehran. Fortunately, it was possible to include writings of village children from the area of Kermanshah due to a

publication being made of their writing work which rendered it accessible for study. These contributions comprise a number of different genres including poetry, short stories, magazine articles, and novels, by young writers of different ages. The same sources of recommendation were followed as for adult writers, with the addition of advice from specialized groups within the CBC.

The chapter forms an important section to the research as the concerns of children themselves are examined and compared against those of adults in order to discover what differences may be reflected in their writing. Children's own work is an area of children's literature which is often forgotten or ignored. It is true that very few children have the literary capability to express themselves, or the life experience, literary expertise and other skills necessary to be novelists or great writers. Not many adults have those skills either. However, adults claim to know better than children what is suitable for them to read, and often feel that they have the authority and moral superiority to impose their ideas on children. While adults may argue that they possess superior knowledge on the grounds of their more extensive life experience, many adults have forgotten what interested them as children, and even if they do remember, it does not automatically follow that this will interest the children of today. Furthermore, part of the learning process involves children experimenting, making mistakes for themselves, trying out their own ideas etc. However, when the children's ideas strongly echo and agree with the adults', their resistance to allowing children a voice is often lessened.

Around the time of the Islamic Revolution there was, as noted previously in 3.3, a great increase in publication of works for children. This is also reflected in the amount of children's own writing that made it into print at the time. In a period of

political and social chaos where normal controls were suspended, both children and adults took the opportunity to get their books published. Many succeeded in the brief period when the new government had not yet applied its own control of publications, and numerous works by children and young adults were published during this period (Mafi 1980:44).

Mafi (1980:44-45) lists 306 works (122 fictional stories, 78 works of poetry, 97 essays and 9 articles), in 16 collections and in two periodicals, written by 234 children. Children aged 13-16 were responsible for 150 of the works, written in 15 different provinces of Iran, with 105 originating from Tehran and the Central Province. This content analysis shows children's special interest in the following themes: poverty; lack of health and education facilities; revolution, struggle and martyrdom; adventure and fantasy; the image of the mother; overcoming oppression and class differences (Mafi 1980:45). Many of these concerns were also felt by adults in the revolutionary society, and children's interests will thus be seen to mirror those of the world around them. It is possible that at the time, revolutionary fervor and excitement overrode everyday concerns such as family problems, relationships etc. which may otherwise have featured more prominently. The focus of children's interests and concerns, while naturally being different from 20 years ago, will be seen to show continuity in reflecting the world as children themselves experience it, and the issues that are important to them.

It will be argued that children themselves play an active part in the definition and content of children's literature. Therefore, it may be assumed that children show some choice in the selection of what they themselves will write about, and though

they may suffer tighter constraints than their adult counterparts due to adult control of production, their writings reflect their concerns to a large degree.

7.2 Children's organizations and projects

7.2.1 Organizations and projects in Iran

Some of the activities and groups in Iran concerned with children's own writing have been in existence since long before the revolution. While many organizations and projects have dealt with different aspects of writing for children, relatively few have actually been involved with the work of children themselves. These form the subject of the following section. Events such as International Children's Book Day have provided a link with the activities of IBBY and other groups outside Iran, while the CBC Children's Work Group has examined the work of Iranian children and works in translation by the children of other countries since 1963. Organizations such as the House of Young Journalists have been set up more recently with the express purpose of giving young writers a voice, and in addition, Schoolnet Iran is providing opportunities for Iran's students to participate in countrywide and worldwide projects involving both writing and other study skills.

Every year, as seen in Chapter 5.3:162, International Children's Book Day is celebrated on Hans Christian Andersen's birthday (*IBBY Honor Lists* 2008:1) with specially designed posters. In 1976, Iran was the sponsor of International Children's Book Day. The Iranian entry shows traditional style Persian architecture and a child in working-class clothes absorbed in reading. The art and the writing are

complementary to each other; on one of the walls, a verse-slogan is written in a child's handwriting. Writings of various verses on walls are a familiar sight in Iran, especially since the revolution, making this poster appear to be ahead of its time stylistically.

Generally, the illustrations of children's books in this era closely copied the styles of the West, both with regard to hairstyles and clothing, and in their depiction of styles of living, which often were quite alien to the children of Iran. At a time when only middle class Iranian children had any real access to books and thus, opportunities for reading, the Children's Book Day poster delivered a very strong message. It also showed resistance to the trend in Iran at the time to deify everything Western. Modernity and progress were equated by the Shah's government with Western culture. While portraying Iran as a rich and powerful modern nation in Western terms, however, the Shah simultaneously attempted to glorify and reinvent a great heritage with events such as the 1971 celebration of the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of the first Iranian Empire by Cyrus in 550 B.C. Thus, conflicting messages were propagated by the government itself, and children's writers and illustrators were able to take advantage of this to produce works which opposed Western influence, and which contained content that was more relevant to the children of Iran.

International Children's Book Day (previously discussed in 3.5 & 5.3) has been celebrated every year in Iran since the early 1970s. It is an important day in the calendar as it joins children and writers from different countries and gives them a chance to hear about each other's events and activities. In this way, it forms an element of continuity and an opportunity for children to express themselves and

communicate with other children worldwide. Giving a voice to children has not been without its problems, and one of these is that once children have been given a voice they may not say the things that adults wish to hear. The House of Young Journalists was established in 1995 by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, with the intention of giving children and young people an outlet to express their views and opinions. Its various publications discontinued with the closure of The House of Young Journalists in its third year when one of these, the weekly *Khaneh*, was found guilty of violating press regulations after printing a letter attacking Iran's late spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

The works of children from both inside and outside Iran have been the focus of study and evaluation by *Guruh-e Bararsi-ye Asar va Dastneveshteha-ye Kudakan va Nojavan*, [Research Group of Children and Youth Works and Writing], a group working within the CBC. Mr. H. Nuri, a member since his youth, observes that the group has developed over the years. In the 1980s, children came and read, and discussed issues; later children wrote about the Iran-Iraq war. The weekly evaluation group meetings were started, and five years later, on alternate weeks, groups of children aged up to 12 years and 13-17 years started to participate. In the meetings, children introduce books or other work they have recently read to the group.

The Internet has opened up exciting possibilities for collaborative work by young people and has provided a new outlet for their writing. This is a case where children are not only given a voice, but is an area where they themselves are able to take the initiative. For example, children and young people often know much more about computers than their elders and are able to learn more quickly in this field than the older generation. Children respond positively to new technology, as it does not

represent drudgery and hard work, but rather, play and enjoyment. With this outlook, they actively apply themselves in a wholehearted manner. When the facilities are available, children themselves initiate online projects and show a sustained interest in all kinds of subjects.

Dr. Yahya Tabesh, formerly a faculty member of the Department of Mathematical Sciences, Sharif University, Tehran, and Dr Abbas Edalat, now a professor at Imperial College, London, created a network for high school students from all around Iran to participate in these new developments (*Schoolnet Schools Directory* 2009). They observed that information technology, a vital necessity for modern education, was completely lacking in schools in Iran, and resolved that schools should be provided with computers and internet connections as a first step to rectifying the situation. The first high school to be connected, Pesaran-e Roshd, in the south of Tehran, received 15 computers, and a network was set up from Sharif University (Tabesh 2003). In December 1999, with 30 schools on the network, the Schoolnet website was set up by SAF's School Information Center at Sharif University, and run by a team of student volunteers (*Schoolnet Home Page* 2009). As a result, schools are now able to add their web pages to Schoolnet and to take part in training courses and activities online. Undeniably, the use of new technology in disseminating children's writing is one of the major changes we can cite over the two periods.

While the Schoolnet projects reflect a bias towards scientific, mathematical and information technology subjects, sociological and literary interests are increasingly evident in the students' work. In general, the girls' schools show a tendency towards presenting more topics in the field of Humanities and Social

Sciences than the boys, but the poetry competition, for example, attracted as many male entrants as female (see Appendix 5:390-391 for examples). These projects are devoted to enabling children from all over Iran and around the world to interact, with the aim of promoting peace and understanding, and to give young people the chance to benefit from modern technology and improve their future prospects in life (Tabesh 2003). Technology is seen to be a major factor and agent of change in the way literature reaches its audience; children's voices can now be heard in ways that were not possible before the arrival of the internet, and their writing can reach international audiences.

7.3 Collections of children's work

Three collections of stories, and a single published story by a twelve-year-old author (*Goftoguye Darakhtha*) form the source material in this section. The examples are from Iran, written between 1963 and 1977 and can be found in appendix 6. A translation is given of the story *Goftoguye Darakhtha*. Two collections of stories (*Ba Dastha-ye Kuchekeman 1 & 2*) are summarized for content analysis, and translated excerpts are given from the third, (*Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*) in order to convey similarities in the content and assess the language ability and writing style of the children.

7.3.1 Iran pre-revolution writing

A researcher on the writings of Iranian children of war considers earlier writings by children mostly unimportant, saying, ‘If you look at the back issues of *Keyhan Bacheha*, founded in 1956, you may find short works written by children, but in my opinion there is nothing of great importance because the true work of publishing writing by children was set off by post-revolutionary traumas; that is to say, the revolution itself and the war.’ (Nasim 2005). Possibly from the point of view of a writer whose primary research concern is the effect of war on children, this could be correct. However, from a wider social and historical viewpoint, the earlier children’s writings provide fascinating insights into the life and thoughts of children during these times. Moreover, they help to provide a different geographical perspective.

These pre-revolution works consist of publications of the *Kanun* libraries, which served rural as well as city communities, and other publishers’ productions. All of the publishers were based in Tehran, although the contributions were from various areas.

Ba Dastha-ye Kuchekeman Book 1

Ba Dastha-ye Kuchekeman (1977) Book 1, [By the Hands of our Little Ones] is a collection of seven stories, four narrated in the first person and three in the third person. Two of the writers’ ages are given as third year guidance (lower high school or 14 years old). The language contains colloquial elements which give a dramatic quality to the works when read aloud. Didactic and moralistic stories feature as well as examples of fantasy, fairy story, and realism.

Five out of the seven stories have magical or fantasy elements, while only two of the stories are realistic. The stories told from the point of view of a pencil, a tulip, and a watch respectively, blend strands of realism and fantasy with philosophical aspects focusing on nature and human behavior.

Ba Dastha-ye Kuchekeman Book 2

Ba Dastha-ye Kuchekeman (1977) Book 2 is a collection of six stories, all narrated in the first person. Not all the writers' ages are given, but two of the authors are aged 13 and 15 years old, and the ages of the illustrators range from 5 years old to 14 years old. This collection also contains examples of colloquial language.

The *kucheh*, or alleyway, plays an important part in many of these stories. It is the immediate world of the children, the place where they interact with other children and adults. Other locations include school; the classroom or the playground, the house, the yard, the door of the yard, and Lebanon.

Characters include other children, parents, the father's wife, the mullah, the ice-seller and the teacher. Topics include the passing of the seasons, sympathy for the plight of wounded creatures, death, lack of parental guidance, fickleness of human nature, difficulty of school lessons, memories of school, and surreal frightening early childhood memories.

In contrast to the stories in the first collection, *Ba Dastha-ye Kuchekeman Book 1*, all six of the stories in this collection are realistic stories, with children as the narrators. This demonstrates that not all pre-revolution writing by children in Iran centered on fantasy, and that topics of interest before the revolution also included reflections on the difficulty of life, which mirrored the later realistic writing.

Goftoguye Darakhtha

Fahime-ye Mirhadi, aged 12 yrs old, wrote *Goftoguye Darakhtha* [Conversation of the Trees] published Tehran in 1963, making it one of the earlier examples of publications of children's work to be introduced in this section. It is a book which would appeal to younger children as well as older readers, for the beautiful illustrations of the different tree characters make it visually appealing even to children who cannot yet read. The theme of the story is the uselessness of pride and vanity, while showing at the same time the value and differing benefits of variety. This story could be used to show children that although everyone has something to offer the world, they shouldn't think too highly of themselves, and should remember that there are more important things in life than competing with others.

The uselessness of pride and vanity is an example of an issue which has been taught to children for centuries and as such, supports the thesis of continuity in this research. In addition, the personification of trees is a common technique in children's stories, along with the personification of animals, and is often used to make a moral point in folktales and fairy stories. This twelve-year old writer has written a story which internalizes these rules to produce a work in harmony with previous storytelling traditions, showing continuity in form and content.

Pusht-e Divar-e Barf

As seen in this chapter, children write both imaginatively about fantasy topics as well as about the issues that directly concern them in their lives. The content of the

final collection of stories, *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf* (Mansour 1973) demonstrates this. It consists of children's essays from the village of Pak Rusta, in Western Iran; the nearest big town is Kermanshah. Fifteen contributions by ten different writers from classes 3 and 5 (aged 9-11) are included: three on the topic of sickness in the family; two entitled 'Letter', 'Mother', and 'In the Nest a Handful of Feathers Remained'; and one each entitled 'Your House', 'Day of your life', 'Criticize Yourself', 'Friday', 'Sleep', and 'Irrigation'.

Although one of the essay topics; 'In the nest a handful of feathers remained', results in fictional stories, most of the writing describes the relentless struggle for survival that these children face. The essays describe a world where one family member's falling sick can lead to financial ruin for the whole family. They describe a rural mountain existence with harsh weather conditions and lack of money; with families depending on one or two cows or sheep for their livelihood, and children and women weaving carpets to bring in an extra few rials, while the men and older boys of the family are absent, working for wages in the nearest big town. Cold, illness, despair, and poverty are themes which recur throughout the essays.

These stories were gathered and published by a village teacher in the course of his teaching work in the villages. According to the date given in the epilogue, they were written thirty-two years ago, six years before the Islamic Revolution. In those days, Iran was considered to be a rich oil-producing nation, but this book shows the reality of rural life. The setting of the collection of stories is the remote villages of western Iran. During that time, the epilogue notes, 'the poor hardworking teachers willingly devoted their lives, taking pity on the poor rural children. Life in the remote

villages was a hard and uncomfortable struggle, and even the people who lived there for generations didn't know why they stayed.'

All the classes from class one to class five were taught together. The poor teacher needed to make special arrangements for them, as they could not even speak Farsi fluently. In the remote villages, local dialects were spoken and the students had a lot of difficulty with Farsi conversation. The teacher states that after three months, the students had not only mastered the alphabet but were even able to write beautiful compositions in the class composition lesson. The compilation of these stories by the village students formed the book *Pushte divare barf*.

This presents a negative reflection on those who governed the country in those days. The needs of students and the working conditions of teachers were not given attention. It could be argued that even today the situation is not vastly improved with many children still working instead of going to school.

7.3.2 Poetry collections

Poetry in Iran continues to be popular with young writers and finds various outlets. In the first part of this section, the contents of a pre-revolutionary Iranian work will be analyzed, followed by more recent poetry from collections published in Iran.

Rangin Kaman [Rainbow], poetry and illustration of children of the *Kanun* libraries, is a 1977 collection of nine poems written and illustrated by children aged 8-16 years from various parts of Iran. Characters include family members, dolls, and first person narrators. Topics include the seasons, searching for signs of God,

celebrations, dolls, days off, and loneliness. Locations include the alley, the room, natural phenomena such as raindrops, the coast, birds' nests, trees, and the sky.

Of the topics included in this collection, some fall into the category of 'poetic topics' such as nature, weather or the seasons; others are philosophical or religious in nature, searching for truth or signs of God. One deals with a fantasy dolls' wedding celebration, and one is about real life experience. Thus, the topics dealt with by the young writers of this poetry collection appear to be less realistic than the stories written by children which were examined in the previous section, as well as including religious topics. This shows that fantasy and realism are not the main features of pre- and post-revolutionary children's writing respectively, but examples of each can be found in both eras. Likewise, religious writings can be found in the pre-revolutionary era as well as the post-revolutionary era.

The next section will look at a selection of post-revolutionary poems from Iran written between 1997 and 2002, while poems from Tajikistan are discussed in Chapter 9.4:292-314. Some stories can be found on Schoolnet sites; one example is a story by Mohammad Hassan Ali Esfandiyari of Dr. Hesabi School in Varamin, S. Tehran (Hassan 2005); 'The Wishing Tree', a story set in China. However, the greater number of contributions are those for the online poetry competition held in 2002 by Schoolnet in Iran, which attracted works from high school students (over fifty poems were entered between October 2001 and March 2002 alone). Some of the students submitted three or four separate poems, and the number of entries from boys equaled or even slightly exceeded that of the girls. A wide variety of topics were dealt with in the poems, representing all of those previously mentioned; nature, philosophy/religion, fantasy, and real life.

One of the students, Fatemeh Azari-bani, for example, wrote a poem about the death of her father, entitled 'Deceased', which reflects the incomprehension of anyone, but especially a young person, when someone beloved passes away. Thus we can see that young people have used this opportunity to express their deepest feelings in the form of poetry; joyful and sorrowful, serious and humorous. These works show that both realism and fantasy feature in poems written by young writers in the post-revolutionary era, and rather than showing great changes, reflect the same mixture of topics as that found in children's writing from the pre-revolution era.

7.4 Children's writing in magazines

Children's writing, in Iran, is published in magazines and newspapers with various editorial policies, content and readership. This section analyses a number of children's contributions from children's magazines in the post-revolutionary period. While the vast majority of Iranian children's magazines are Tehran-based and are published in Tehran, their contributors do not necessarily live in Tehran. Thus, an attempt has been made to gather materials written by children from different geographical areas, as well as from different periods, both before the revolution and after.

The numerous magazines and newspapers in Iran publish pieces written by children and young people on a regular basis. These publications vary considerably; with editorial committees made up entirely of young people, contributions entirely by children, input from both adults and children, sections of children's writings contained within professional children's magazines and weeklies, as well as in

publications for adults. For example, the children's magazines *Docharkheh* [Bicycle] and *Secharkheh* [Tricycle] both have special sections of children's writing; newspapers such as *Keyhan-e Bacheha* [Children's Keyhan] have children's competitions and letters sections on their children's pages. Many different topics are covered in these writings, showing the issues which concern children and young people today; from family, friends and school, to the wider area of events and trends in society in Iran and the world. In this study, it is only possible to examine a small representative selection of this vast amount of writing. The work of young writers and details of the editorial policy and contents of three different publications is featured in the following section: *Roshd Daneshamuz* [High School Students' Growth], *Bacheha-ye Ketab* [Children of the Book], and *Arusak-e Sokhangu* [Talking Doll].

7.4.1 Roshd-e daneshamuz

In a 1991 copy of *Roshd-e Daneshamuz* (1991:12-13), a feature appeared entitled *Delavaran-e Kuchek* [Little Courageous Ones], which contained writing submitted by readers. At a time just after the end of the war with Iraq, memories of the horror of war were fresh in the minds of the children and these opportunities to write about the events and share with others their common experiences acted as a catharsis, as well as a reinforcement of nationalist sentiment. A second feature in the same magazine described children's experiences in earthquakes and illustrates how resilient children are in situations of adversity.

As the writers of these stories all survived the attacks, their accounts are of lucky escapes. Shaking houses, destroyed buildings, holes in house walls, and mention of the wounded, however, show that the children came very close to injury or death. Such vivid experiences made strong impressions on the children and provided topics for their writing.

Another section in the same issue of *Roshd Daneshamuz* (1991:28-29) is entitled *Neveshteha va Naqqashiha-ye Shoma* [Your Writing and Drawing]. Included in this section is a story and an illustration on the topic of earthquakes, showing people being rescued from destroyed buildings.

Again we see the real life events surrounding children providing topics for their writing. These excerpts demonstrate that children always seem to have an optimistic viewpoint, and that they can deal with even the most terrible events. Often, incidents which adults will remember in a negative light are looked upon as adventures by children. The outpouring of emotions and memories by children about the Iran-Iraq war in their writings acts as a way to come to terms with the great fear and in many cases, loss that they suffered. Rather than try to shut out these memories, children seek to identify with the experiences of others who lived through the same sufferings, and in this they are not different from adults. During the same period, adult writers for children produced numerous stories dealing with the war and the ensuing social problems (see Chapter 3.5:95-101). Nowadays, children hardly write about the war as it has faded from their consciousnesses. Most of the children of today did not experience the war first-hand as they either were not yet born, or were too young to remember it. What are they concerned with now? It appears that the quest for fun, enjoyment, music, fashionable clothes, money, a good job, and a

comfortable lifestyle feature progressively in the concerns of young Iranians as they grow older. In this, the youth of Iran do not differ greatly from the youth of any other country (Basmenji 1999:5).

7.4.2 *Bacheha-ye ketab*

Although nowadays there are many magazines produced for young people in Iran, few of them are actually produced and controlled by young people. Therefore, the next two sections will investigate two publications in more detail; one of which is completely produced by youngsters, and the other which is co-produced by children and adults, with adults in charge of the editorial policy.

Bacheha-ye Ketab [Children of the Book] is a low-budget quarterly Tehran-based magazine completely produced by young people. Its audience and contributors vary from 6 to 22 years old. A team of eight teenagers produces the magazine. Laleh Hoseini-Nasab, Anahita Irvani, and Amirhosein Mohammadi, three of the present editorial team were involved in its foundation in August-September 2001, under the auspices of the CBC, on whose premises the editorial meetings are held. Mrs. N. Amini of the CBC is advisor to the group. The magazine, produced in small numbers, sells at 4500 rials, more expensive than other magazines which are mass-produced (Mohammadi 2003₁). Their press is a photocopier and the editorial team is involved in production of the magazine up to the final stages as described below:



Fig.3

It is about two years since *Bacheha-ye Ketab* was born. At first it was a newsletter about the activities, meetings and programs of the Children's Book Council (*Shura*), with a small section containing children's writings.

After publishing four numbers we decided to make it a magazine: a magazine that contains things written by children and teenagers; poems, stories, papers, everything related to literature.

Our work starts with collecting writings, then we read all of them and choose the ones we think are best. Then we separate them into three sections:

- 1) *Sorvad* (teenagers' poems)
- 2) *Khatkhatiha* (teenagers' stories)
- 3) *Az in var* (children's writings)

Finally, we discuss our *Gozarash* (Reports and Interviews) section which consists of two parts:

Interview with someone active in children and teenagers' work

Report about a book or person

After gathering all the texts and choosing them, illustrators start working on the magazine's appearance. Then our everlasting problem, publishing, starts and its biggest part is money. After all this if our pockets and publishers help, the magazine comes out (Mohammadi 2003₂:1).

The magazine also contains criticism of peer's work by young people themselves. The interviews feature, among others, writers such as Feridun Amuzadeh-Khalili, and are recorded both on cassette and as handwritten notes. The illustrations are black and white, mainly line drawings.⁷ This magazine is an example of the work of young writers who are empowered to use their own voice and write about the issues that interest them. Such publications are examples of what children can achieve with accessibility of resources. However, comparing the pre- and post-revolutionary periods, a great difference in numbers of magazines created entirely by young people cannot be seen, as they are few in number in both eras.

7.4.3 Arusak-e sokhangu

This is the second magazine to be examined in more detail in this chapter. It is based in Tehran and features children's work, but has an adult editorial team. The magazine shares some features with *Bacheha-ye Ketab*; it is hand-produced in small runs due to budget restrictions, and it contains children's writings and black and white line drawings. However, the main differences are its adult editors and some

⁷ See <http://webpace.webring.com/people/un/netlangs/zimbbo/magazines.htm> for complete online copy of magazine (accessed 25 March 2010).

contributions from adults, its A5 format, and its established status with over 15 years of production. *Arusak-e Sokhangu* [Talking Doll] was started by the family of Ms. Zari Naimi in 1989 as a pastime to keep the children busy during the summer. It was then decided to make a small production of the magazine to sell to other people. It was called *Kalameh* [Word] until issue number one hundred in 2000, when the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance approved its new name, and it became *Arusak-e Sokhangu* for the next fifty or so numbers until the present time (Naimi 2003).

The magazine is produced monthly. Of each xerox run totaling 30-50 copies, 5 copies are colored by hand in colored pencil. Each copy has its own colorist and their name is printed inside, making these unique and collectible works. Unfortunately, the best of the colored copies is placed inside an archive file where no one will see it! The A5 format contains 60-65 pages, the content of which, is aimed at children of all age groups ‘from 3-100 years’ (Naimi 2003). Poetry, jokes, satire,

Fig.4



stories, essays, letters, book reviews, and children's drawings are to be found within. The contributions are selected by members of the editorial board of five or six people, the youngest being twenty years old. The work is contributed by readers, delivered either by hand or by post, and the magazine is distributed among family and school friends, and by teachers who are friends. A copy of this magazine can be accessed online, but other than that, the distribution is very localized.⁸ It is an example of a magazine produced by the effort of adults and children working together, under the overall direction of adults.

7.5 Iran's youngest novelist

A number of talented young writers can be found in Iran. Many of their works consist of short stories or collections, and often feature realistic writing. One example of a published writer is Gohar-e Zandieh, who at the age of sixteen wrote *Eskiss* [Sketch], (Tehran 2000); containing: *Eskiss* [Sketch], *Bazi* [Play], *Sarbaz* [Soldier], and *Ashad Mujazat* [The Hardest Punishment], a collection of four short stories depicting the hardships faced by youngsters in their lives. The following section, rather than examining the work of a number of young writers, will concentrate on just one of these exceptional writers, Morehshin Allahyari, who occupies a special position as Iran's youngest novelist.

Morehshin Allahyari, born in 1985, is the author of *Pa berahnegiha-ye Tabaram*, (2001), an approximate translation of which is 'The State of Poverty of my

⁸ See <http://webpace.webring.com/people/un/netlangs/zimbo/magazines.htm> for complete online copy of colored magazine (accessed 25 March 2010).

Race,' a story based on the life of her Kurdish grandmother. At the early age of 11, Allahyari decided to follow her own intuition and to start writing short stories. She began her novel one year later, at the age of 12, which made her the youngest novelist in Iran at the time. This distinction makes the inclusion of some discussion of her work, and examples from it, indispensable. In 2003, at the age of 18, she was in the process of completing her second novel. Her work will be examined in this section for its style and content, and as an illustration of the type of issues that concern young writers in Iran.

Pa berahnegiha-ye Tabaram (Fig.5) is a story about a girl who gets married when she is nine. The manner in which she faces the problems of life, and fights with the reality of old traditions, makes her the leading character of the story. The book, which shows some of the customs and traditions of Iran's western population, is the biography of Allahyari's own grandmother. Most of the events in the book were those she heard after the death of her grandmother, Kobra, so they were all real (Morehshin 2003).



Fig.5

Her novel, *Pa berahnegiha-ye Tabaram*, is an effort to show the problems of one tribe, the problems which arise from differences and disbelief and whose roots are in the manners and customs and culture of the Kurdish people (Morehshin

2005:1). Allahyari has chosen five excerpts from the novel for translation into English on her website (Morehshin 2005), all depicting highly emotional and dramatic events: the suiting ceremony, going to the husband's house, and the deaths of three of the main characters.

Allahyari says of her grandmother, 'Maybe if we say the world of Kobra is different from that of the women of Kurdistan it would be far from the truth of the book, but there are differences in Kobra that distinguish her dissatisfaction and depict her presence more colorfully in the words of the book, one by one, amidst the pages.' She confirms that this book has a social message, saying that although the bitter events of Kobra's life always show her character as complaining and tired in the book, it is also an allusion to the problems and unsupported position of women, who likewise are habituated to having fewer rights than men, and are brought up and tempered on these old manners and customs (Morehshin 2005).

Thus it can be seen that even at a young age, Allahyari was deeply affected by social issues as exemplified by the lives of her own family members, and in particular the injustices faced by women have been reflected in her writing. This is a post-revolutionary work of realism and social commentary which reflects the reality of a minority group within Iran. Although it is fiction, it is based on the life of a real person, and as such could be considered to form a historical record. In this way, although it is special because it was written by such a young writer, it also forms part of a tradition of historical records contained within fictional accounts.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined the work of children in Iran, and some of the projects and organizations involved in giving children a voice during the period under study, i.e. from the 1960s until the end of the twentieth century. As with the other chapters, it has been seen that two clear periods could be discussed: from the 1960s until 1979, and from 1979 until 2000. The major changes between the two periods were seen to relate to factors such as increase in literacy levels and quality and means of production of literature rather than the actual content of writings by the children, which continued to address similar concerns, namely those directly affecting their lives and those of their families, and their first person experiences and responses to the world. The appearance of novels written by young writers occurred after the revolution, but examples of pre-revolutionary children's writing were found in early magazines and collections. The concerns of children as shown in their writing appeared to continue to reflect the world around them during both of these periods.

This chapter argued that Iranian children have shown interest in portraying similar themes to those addressed by adults in their writing. In this, their work reflects the same forces of change and continuity evident in adults' writing; they have been equally affected by social forces, and government policies have affected their lives to the same extent as those of adults. Children's interests can thus be seen to mirror those of the wider society. The inclusion of this material supports the argument of the thesis by giving further examples of continuity of content to be found in children's writing.

It can be seen that children and young people are active in writing and that as an audience they are interested in the writings of their peers. They tackle subjects head on that many adults would be afraid to broach. Their writing is characterized by clarity and simplicity, especially at younger ages. Hidden agendas are not usually part of their repertoire, but real life examples are often used very cleverly and even forcefully to make a point. Both their writing and art works contain a very personal vision of the surrounding world as it affects them directly.

In Iran, the appearance of novels written by young writers occurred after the revolution, but examples of pre-revolutionary children's writing were found in early magazines and collections. The concerns of children as shown in their writing have reflected the world around them during both periods under study. While periods of oppression by governments are said to produce much allegorical writing in order to escape the censor, this has not always been apparent in the examples examined. For example, very direct writing by children, criticizing the status quo, and thereby implicitly complaining about society and its government, made it into print in Iran before the revolution. Fantasy, allegory, and realism, along with combinations of reality and fantasy have nevertheless appeared in both periods. Allegorical works have not been found to the same extent in children's writing as in adults', and this could be due to their clear-sighted manner of perceiving issues, their lack of understanding of metaphor and allegory, as well as not having developed their writing skills to include advanced techniques .

The work of children themselves is only one aspect of the current research, but one which could form the basis for a great deal of further study. It is hoped that the present research has made a useful start with this examination of young writers'

work towards analyzing the changes and similarities found in children's writing over the years, as well as making comparisons between children's writing from different areas in Iran.

Children's writing is often accompanied by illustrations, and both of the major Iranian children's literature organizations discussed in Chapter Five have promoted and supported children's book illustrators in Iran. The illustration of children's books is a vibrant art form in Iran and many artists are involved in the production of such illustrations in addition to their other work. Illustrations for children vividly demonstrate new artistic developments and trends, as well as showing similarities to traditional works. A study of the dynamics involved in this field will add a visual aspect to the research which supports the other chapters. The next chapter, therefore, will examine the work of a number of Iranian artists who illustrate children's books, and their participation in national and international exhibitions.

Chapter 8: Visual aspects of children's literature

8.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Iran and comprises four sections; issues concerning illustration for children, illustration exhibitions and awards, Iranian children's book illustrators and their work, and children's own work. The representative illustrators have been chosen as a result of their influence in the field, and their high profile in exhibitions, awards, and publications. As the subject of illustration has been referred to upon numerous occasions in this research as an important part of children's literature, especially for children at younger ages, a separate section is included on this major aspect of the subject under study. Illustration can be considered as a visual extension of literature. Images and illustrations reflect most vividly how the changes in society such as fashion, technology, architecture, transport, artistic styles and so on are incorporated into literature for children. The visual aspect of illustrated books conveys a distillation of social and cultural values; acceptance or refusal of tradition, international and national or regional influence, expression of individuality, innovation of technique, and many other concerns which spring from the underlying text. Therefore, illustrations will be used to support the notion that where children's literature is concerned even within change one will find continuity.

The first section briefly examines traditional and classical illustrations and their influence on the development of illustrations in the 20th century. Current issues and special features connected with book illustration for children in Iran are then

examined, such as foreign cultural dominance, reflection of societal values, gender differences, and educational use.

The exhibitions section looks at the role of illustrators' exhibitions and their impact on Iranian artists, and includes exhibitions held both inside and outside Iran. The Tehran Cartoon Exhibition is included as it is a parallel and very important development in the artistic endeavors aimed at children; furthermore, a number of children's book illustrators are also involved in the production of animated and still cartoons.

This section of the study examines the life and work of four Iranian illustrators in order to investigate changes or continuity in the styles, themes and topics represented in their works. Two of the artists are women and two are men. All have influenced a younger generation of artists and illustrators in Iran, have exhibited widely, and won many awards with their works. It is not possible to reproduce many examples of the illustrations in the present thesis, but works can be viewed online at the websites of the artists.

In the final section of the chapter, children's own drawings and illustrations are investigated from the point of view of continuity of themes and topics, rather than style and artistic influence. Children's own work highlights the way they see the world, and the topics that interest them. Their illustrations often accompany written works or stories and are of interest to teachers and parents as an indicator of the child's psychological and educational development. The understanding that children demonstrate in their own work can then be used as a measure by adult writers for children when choosing topics and adjusting their work to the level that will interest

them. In this way children's own writing and drawing can affect the field of children's literature.

8.2 Social and cultural Issues in illustrations for children

Nowadays, one of the key ingredients signifying that a work is for children is the inclusion of illustrations. Pictures have increasingly become a special feature of children's books and an educational aid for the young. This has not always been the case as demonstrated, for example, by the Christian stories found in church windows. These were told entirely in pictures for the benefit of the illiterate masses, not only children but adults alike. The inclusion of illustrations in books for children became a more common feature as the cost of printing fell in the twentieth century, and became a convention that indicated that the work was intended for children. On the other hand, it is true that in some cultures, notably Japan, *mangas* (illustrated cartoon stories), a genre elsewhere associated with children, have a separate and distinct adult aspect. Adult *mangas* constitute as large a part of the Japanese market as those intended for youth (Fusanosuke 2003:1).

In Iran, the old sumptuous *Shahnameh* and *Kalila and Dimna* manuscripts of the past, with their decorative miniatures, were the cherished possessions of princes and other well-to-do members of Iranian society. They were completely inaccessible to the majority of children, who had to rely on the oral methods where stories were passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation. Images that the majority of children may have seen were those carved in stone or wood. When books were

produced for children, it was not always economical to illustrate them. Ramsegar (1973:41) contends that it is only since the beginning of the 20th century that books such as the nursery rhymes of Iraj Mirza, and stories by Ali Naghi Vaziri, began to be written especially for children. But even these works only appeared in very small editions for the few children of rich parents. After World War II the situation slowly began to change. Until 1959, the statistics listed only a hundred children's books in Iran, but by 1973 their number had risen to about 1000. The quality of those picture books which had spread as far as Europe (a good selection is held at the International Youth Library of Munich) had always been 'surprisingly high' (Ramseger 1973:47). Thus, the period of twenty years before the revolution and twenty years after it, focused on in this research, is a suitable time period in which to place a discussion of continuity and change in illustrations in children's books.

The ancient classics continue to exert their influence on the makers of modern picture books for children. Many Iranian artists produce pictures for fairy tales and myths which echo the miniatures of the *Shahnameh*. Illustrated manuscripts from the *Shahnameh* have depicted the heroes and anti-heroes of myth and legend since the fourteenth century. Snake-shouldered Zakhak, Fariydun, Isfandiyar, brave Rostam and his horse Rakhsh, the fabulous Simurgh and the divs are all familiar figures in Persianate paintings (Curtis 1993:77) and likewise continue to feature in modern Persianate works for children.

Although illustrated reading materials for children have existed for hundreds of years, their form has recently undergone great changes which have made them personally accessible in a way that was impossible in earlier eras. The advent of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century was the first stage in this evolution, a stage

which lasted many years due to economic and social factors. Out of this, a separate and modern body of literature started to appear in Iran as in other countries, containing illustrations, and addressing the special needs of children. We are now in the throes of another stage of evolution in the way literature is accessed. Again the form and methods of delivery have changed in the electronic age, but the content still reflects continuity from previous eras.

The educational and commercial value of superior visual material came to be fully appreciated in Iran during the 1950s, when painters and graphic artists with experience in illustration and book design were commissioned specifically to illustrate children's books. Ramseger (1973:47) notes that the publishing house linked with the *Kanun* in Tehran published 50 titles in its first five years of existence, and wherever these new picture books were shown, they created a sensation and were showered with awards. The very first work issued by the *Kanun* in 1966 was *Mehmanha-ye nakhandeh* [Uninvited Guests], containing free adaptations of folktales by Farideh Farjam with illustrations by Judi Farmanfarma'iyan (Ayman et. al. 1992:419).

Illustrations found in school textbooks reacted to changing trends. The visual reflection of society, and its often superficial nature, has been discussed in Chapter 3.4:86-92 with relation to the pictorial content of school textbooks before and after the 1979 revolution. The illustrations in these texts reflect the changes in the values of society as seen in figs. 6 & 7. The illustrations are both from the official Farsi language textbook for high school students in Iran. The illustration on the left is taken from a Shah-era text (1968), while the one on the right is dated 1995. Not only have the girl's clothes changed in the second picture, but even the garden now has a

traditional Iranian layout including a central pond. The title of the story, however, is the same: ‘Have seeing eyes and listening ears’, and the story’s content is exactly the same, word for word.



Figs. 6 & 7

In this case, we can see that only the visual elements have changed, showing a move from Western fashions to more traditional Iranian ones, while the moral of the story and its content remains the same. Thus, in this case the visual element is what shows the change, while the text portrays a continuity of content.

A reflection of the wider society can be seen in illustration for children; in the 1960s and 70s, the style seen in Iran often mirrored that of western countries in its depiction of fashions, hairstyles etc. while the illustrations in children’s textbooks appeared to reflect western values, the stories contained in them continue a tradition which originates from earlier times and which endures until today, despite an attempt to effect a radical change in style after the revolution. So, it can be seen that society does affect children’s literature by informing and inspiring it and giving it special characteristics at certain periods, while at the same time keeping elements of earlier themes and topics. However, as well as receiving inspiration and input from society,

the illustration of children's books has also faced limitations and restraints placed upon it by society. This also constitutes a continuous dynamic.

Censorship of one kind or another has always existed in literature as well as illustration. One aspect that can be cited, in addition to governmental control, is the attempt by men to control and dominate women and their cultural output. Because of this, according to Howard (2002:169), many women in publishing concentrate on children's books, but even that does not guarantee an escape from the attention of the censors, who by her implication are mostly male.

An example of censorship in illustration is the issue of nudity in children's books. At the first Bookfair of Women's Publishers in Tehran in 1998, Roya Farsa'i said, 'I have one book that shows children how to dress themselves and of course, there's a baby wearing nothing. I haven't been able to publish that book yet.' Fasa'i felt that pictures of children (i.e girls) showing hair could now be printed, although long sleeves would still be necessary (Howard 2002:169). This reflects a relaxation of the fervor apparent immediately after the revolution, but it does not lead to condoning the depiction of naked children. This could be attributed to cultural sensitivity as there is no tradition in Islamic art of chubby naked cherubs fluttering around on little wings, as in Christian art, However, a story showing a naked boy baby, realistically drawn and with clear anatomical details, was published in Tehran five years earlier (Holst 1993) and was not censored. Another example of cultural differences in this regard was the 1994 Japanese International Children's Book Day poster which contained naked female children and so could not be used to promote ICBD in Iran (Mafi 1994:29). It appears that the cultural sensitivity applies more to girls than to boys. This reflection of cultural values in the illustration of children's

books represents a continuity of concern about feminine virtue and modesty which has existed for centuries in Iran. Although the dress codes for women changed several times in Iran during the twentieth century, according to which regime was in power, the underlying value of feminine as private continued to apply throughout these changes. The portrayal of women and girls in Iranian educational texts was discussed in more detail in 3.4.3. It could be said that men have always dictated what is acceptable behavior and dress for women, particularly in Iran, as a reflection of family honor and respectability. The visual aspect of children's books, then, is a very important one, as it portrays the values of society in a visible framework, and highlights what is considered acceptable and unacceptable at any given period.

8.3 Exhibitions and awards

Exhibitions of illustrations of children's books worldwide first started as small supplementary sections of book fairs and biennials, gradually emerging as leading attractions at book fairs or as separate events solely featuring illustrators' work. The major Iranian, Asian and European children's book illustration exhibitions will be discussed in this section, as they are all important for Iranian artists working in the field. Furthermore, these exhibitions provide a means of tracing the progress, changes, and elements of continuity to be found in the work of Iranian artists involved in children's book illustration.

Exhibitions of children's book illustration often have stated aims which appear contradictory such as promoting nationalism and cultural identity, while at the

same time promoting global understanding, peace, and friendship. It could be said that these aims have always been present in exchanges of culture from ancient times. Although illustration exhibitions are not traditional forms of cultural exchange, they present a framework to examine continuity and change in topics and themes used in illustrations for children. For this reason, the following sections focus on Iranian illustrators' works in national and international exhibitions.

8.3.1 First exhibition of the works of Iranian illustrators of children's books

Although the 1960s saw a rise in the production of illustrated children's books in Iran, according to a *Bookbird* report (Rai 1989₃:30), it was only in 1989 that a special exhibition was organized for these illustrations as a result of the efforts of its director, Mahmud Reza Bahrampur. The first of its kind in Iran, the fair was a very important and prestigious event. The *Vezerat-e Farhang va Ershad-e Eslami* [Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance], which had been holding annual exhibitions to promote children and young adults' books, sponsored the first biennial illustrators' exhibition named 'Children's Book Illustrators in Iran', from Nov 2-21 1989, at the Contemporary Art Museum in Tehran in co-operation with artists, specialists, publishers and others. The exhibition included works created in the preceding decade and was accompanied by a competition of illustrations of Iranian classical literature and a seminar surveying the various aspects of illustrating children's and young adults' books (Rai 1989₃:30). The main objectives of the exhibition were stated as being 'to lay foundations for qualitative improvement in the field of illustration for children's books as a specialized area of art, to strengthen

national and cultural identity and to provide an opportunity for becoming acquainted with young artists.’ (Rai 1990:26). In the four-day seminar accompanying the exhibition, entitled ‘Shortcomings in Children’s Book Illustration’ sixteen specialists discussed various aspects of children’s book illustration such as importance of portraying Iranian/Islamic identity, basic technical problems, and educational and psychological considerations in illustrating and writing children’s books (Rai 1990:25).

The focal point of the 1989 exhibition was a collection of illustrations for children’s books (fiction and non-fiction) by 89 illustrators (58 males and 31 females). More recently, Golmohammadi (2003) stated that there are more women illustrators in Iran than men, and this appears to be substantiated by the numbers of women illustrators participating in more recent exhibitions. Another part of the exhibition was ‘Illustrated Versions of Iranian Classical Literature,’ for which 33 young artists illustrated the following three stories of Masnavi Molavi: *The Various Perceptions of the Elephant in a Dark Night*, *The Story of the Contentions between the Chinese and the Romans*, and *The Claim of the Jackal to be a Peacock because he fell into a dyeing vat*. The inclusion of this section in the exhibition demonstrates the continuing popularity of classical works and their relevance to children.

8.3.2 First Asian Biennial

The success of the first Exhibition of the Works of Iranian Illustrators of Children’s Books in the fall of 1989 led the Biennial officials of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to prepare for an Asian-wide one. The First Asian

Biennial of the Works of Illustrators of Children's Books was held at the Tehran Contemporary Art Museum from October 26th to November 7th, 1991 with more than a dozen countries participating. (Rai 1992₁:24)

The Biennial director, Mr. Mahmud Reza Bahmanpur reported that 1620 originals from 160 illustrators were exhibited at the museum, as well as work by Dusan Kallay, the winner of the Hans Christian Andersen Medal and the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB) Grand Prix from Czechoslovakia. An international jury of specialists, critics and artists (Morteza Momaez, Dr. Dusan Roll, Dusan Kallay, Takeshi Matsumoto, Manorama Jafa, and S. Mehdi Mojtahed) selected the winners,

Despite an international jury and over a dozen participating countries, a high percentage of the total number of prize-winning artists in this exhibition came from Iran. A major factor could have been that the exhibition was held inside Iran, making it more accessible to Iranian artists. Nevertheless, a high proportion of entrants in the international illustration exhibitions regularly come from Iran. Practical considerations, such as finance and the difficulties of obtaining visas for foreign travel, may have resulted in relative obscurity for many of these artists before international children's illustration exhibitions provided a means of showing their work internationally. Thus these exhibitions, in themselves, can be cited as events which help to bring change. By helping to increase the international exposure of the works of Iranian illustrators the exhibitions increase the influences and sources that they can draw upon, whilst allowing artists from other countries to familiarize themselves with Iranian works, and likewise benefit artistically. They also provide a quantitative measure in that numbers of entrants from each country in different years can be compared. What is striking is the continuous participation by Iranian artists

and their high profile in the lists of prize-winners year after year. On the other hand, the topics and stories illustrated by the entrants show continuity in the popularity of traditional stories and influence from traditional illustrative styles, such as Persian miniatures and cursive calligraphy. These are examples of a rich legacy which continues to inspire modern Iranian illustrators and may give them an edge over their competitors in international exhibitions.

8.3.3 CBC exhibitions of illustrators

The Children's Book Council of Iran has also been active in the organization of exhibitions, and a relevant example is the panel session held by the CBC on May 9, 1990, which was accompanied by two exhibitions. One showed works by the 1990 Andersen Award winners and the second was a display of 80 illustrated versions of the 1990 message for International Children's Book Day, created by 80 male Iranian students, aged 10 to 12 (Rai 1990₃:28). Another example of the CBC's activities in this field from the same period is their exhibition of the works of 20 illustrators from around the world who were nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen awards in 1992 (Rai 1992₂:28). These exhibitions are an example of the way the CBC works to create a bridge between Iranian and international artists and activities in the field of children's literature. Thus, exhibitions have provided a means of communication between the artists of Iran and the outside world; the exhibitions outside Iran providing a window into Iran and those inside Iran informing Iranian artists about the work of their colleagues in other countries.

8.3.4 Tehran International Biennial of Illustrations

As a result of the favorable response received by the first two illustration biennials, with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance it was decided to make the 1993 biennial an international one. The Tehran International Biennial of Illustrations (TIBI) was held in November of that year. As the first Biennial, 'Children's Book Illustrators in Iran' in 1989 had focused on Iran, and the second in 1991, on children's book illustrators from Asia, the Secretariat invited cultural centers, art institutes and publishers from all over the world, with a view to expanding the scope and activities of this third biennial to include not only regional participation but also international. One of the aims of the Tehran International Biennial of Illustrations was to 'pave the way for international understanding and cultural exchange in the field of children's literature' (Rai 1993:17).

After the 1993 Biennial, there was a period of 6 years before the next Illustration Exhibition; the 4th International Biennial was held in 1999 and The 5th Biennial was held in 2002 and was a national, not international event. A difference seen after the four-year delay between the 1995 and 1999 exhibitions was the increase in quantity, but relative lack of change in quality (Hejvani 2000:25). In 1993 only 90 illustrators participated, compared with 400 in 1999, and many of the best works of recent years were created by the illustrators of previous periods such as Nasrin Khosravi, Mohammad Reza Dadgar and Bahram Khaef. A number of new faces appeared at the time of the fourth fair that promise to give enduring input to the field of children's book illustration. These include Ramin Moshrefie, Mohammad Asadi, Vida Lashkari, Hamid Reza Rashidiyan, Ladan Niyazi, Roya Bijani, and Said Razaqi (Hejvani 2000:25). The new generation of illustrators for children, while

bringing fresh ideas to the field, reflect inspiration drawn not only from traditional works and the works of their teachers, the artists who guided and helped them, but also from the written word of the stories that they illustrate. Illustration exhibitions map trends in children's literature illustration over the years and give a concrete visual record of continuity and change in the field of Persianate children's literature.

8.3.5 Cartoon Biennial of Tehran

Another important arts exhibition relevant to illustration for children is the Cartoon Biennial of Tehran. Zarrinkelk discusses the Fourth Biennial, which was held in 2000 in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts (Zarrinkelk 2000₂:16-17). The remit of this biennial has been an international one from the beginning:

One of the main purposes of having an international cartoon biennial in Tehran, from the year 1993, has been to participate in world cultural and artistic events, to encourage constructive competition among cartoonists, both from within and across our geographical borders, to create an atmosphere necessary for young talents to flourish, and to familiarize them with the world's most recent achievements in art, and development of ideas (Zarrinkelk 2000₂:16).

The organizers of this cultural event have been more successful than their other Iranian counterparts (painting, sculpture, designing, etc.) in attaining their goals, as attested by the presence of hundreds of participants from 50 different countries, as well as prominent figures among the jury. At the Fourth Tehran biennial in 2000, foreign entrants comprised one third of the total, and sixty percent of the selected works. Five of the prizewinners were Iranian (Zarrinkelk 2000₂:17).

The Cartoon Biennial of Tehran appears to have been successful because it enjoys financial viability, international credibility, and international participation on a scale large enough to balance the local presence. However, the international exhibitions of illustrators in Europe attended mainly by European artists still seem to be given much more weight and credibility than those of other parts of the world. Iranian illustrators have regularly participated in three of these. The Bratislava and Bologna exhibitions are considered the most famous in the field, while the Noma Concours for Picture Book Illustrations has started to gain increasing status and attention internationally in more recent years. It has been organized biennially since 1978, and caters for all the areas of the world, excluding North America and Europe. The following sections introduce these three international exhibitions in order to investigate their influence and contribution to continuity and change in Persianate children's book illustration.

8.3.6 The Bologna Illustrators Exhibition

The Bologna Illustrators Exhibition displays children's book illustrations of fiction and non-fiction works. It is an integral part of the annual Bologna Children's Book Fair and presents a selection of works from all over the world. In 2003, an international jury of publishers and art school professionals selected 126 artists out of almost 2800 entries from over 60 countries. Many illustrators visit the exhibition to network and show their portfolios to publishers, making Bologna an important source of information about contemporary illustrators (*Bologna Children's Book Fair Libro Illustrations* 2005:1).

Since 1967 the Illustrators Exhibition has offered a unique opportunity to young illustrators and provided an invaluable service to publishers (*Bologna Children's Book Fair Home* 2009). Selected artists have their work published in the prestigious Fiction and Non-fiction Annuals which serve as a reference for publishers after the exhibition. The annuals enjoy extensive circulation, and this ensures that artists receive lasting promotion. As a result of the Fair's association with JBBY, the Japanese section of the International Board on Books for Young People, many Japanese museums stage visiting exhibitions which raise the profile of the illustrations.

The Bologna Ragazzi 2003 Award in the New Horizons category went to *Hekayatnameh* [The Anecdotes] (Moalem 2002) from Iran, with illustrations by Bahram Kaef, and graphic design by Kourosch Parsanejad. It was described as follows:

A book that straddles two cultures. Elements of an ancient tradition visible in the superb layout, choice of paper and pagination are the refined backdrop for this elegant volume. The illustrated plates, on the other hand, belong to more contemporary graphic traditions and allude to several currents of modern stylistic expression. The result is a well-balanced blend of languages and themes. A work that truly opens up new horizons, and will intrigue and captivate its young readers. (*Bologna Children's Book Fair Libro Communications* 2005:1).

Ancient tradition reflected in layout and content is balanced by contemporary graphics, providing a concrete example of change and continuity in this modern work for children. The description reflects the argument of the present thesis that dual influences from traditional and contemporary input in children's works support both change and continuity. In practice, this tends to involve the interaction of

international ‘modern’ styles (usually meaning US or European) and traditional African, Asian or South American styles (usually labeled ‘indigenous’ or ‘ethnic’). With relation to Persianate children’s literature, this interaction is a factor which applies to visual arts more than to the written word, due to the barriers of language. Artists do not need to speak each others’ language to visually appreciate and be influenced by each others’ work. The Bologna Illustrators Exhibition brings together artists from America and Europe, and to a lesser degree, from Africa, Asia and the Far East, creating fusion and innovation. The works nominated for inclusion by Iranian artists can be compared as another indicator of change and continuity in the illustration of children’s literature.

8.3.7 Biennial of Illustration Bratislava

The other important European exhibition of children’s book illustrations is the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB), an international competition started in 1967 with the support of UNESCO and other international non-governmental organizations, the foremost being IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People). The organizers of the Bratislava biennial, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, Slovak Commission for UNESCO, and BIBIANA, and the International House of Art for Children, had several goals from the beginning, not only to create an environment for presenting the best works from countries with a rich culture in the area of illustration for children, but also to give illustrators from other countries a chance to present their works and show them to experts and publishers. During its thirty years of existence, the Bratislava Biennial has presented

40,000 illustrations by 4,487 illustrators from 90 countries worldwide. (*Bibiana Info* 2009:1). It is notable that of these, Iran, Tunisia and Egypt are the only three participating countries which use the Arabic script. The USA and Canada do not participate, and the other entrants are mainly from Europe with a few from Central America, North Africa and Asia. Thus, it would appear that the Bratislava Biennial's goal of providing an international forum for illustrators' work in only partially being met. In theory, all illustrators have the same opportunities to enter international exhibitions. The reality, however, is somewhat different. Political, economic, and geographical factors can all play a part in shaping the spread and interaction of ideas in these visual works for children. The map below shows geographical participation in the Bratislava Biennial (*Bibiana Home* 2008).

Fig. 8



In 1999 a two-day symposium on the illustration of children's books was one of the Biennial's side events, in which Zohreh Ghaeni of the Foundation for Research on the History of Children's Literature in Iran reported on illustration developments in Iran. While 1999 saw only one entrant from Iran, the Special

Publishers' Prizewinner, *The Little Bell Goat*, illustrated by Farshid Shafi'i, the 2003 Bratislava Biennial saw twenty entrants from Iran (the maximum allowed per country). Of these, Hafez Mir Aftabi was awarded a Plaque for his illustrations of *Bayad be Fekre Fereshteh Bood* [We Must Think of Angels] by Mohammad Reza Yusefi and *Elyas* by Mostafa Rahmandust (*Bibiana Uvod* 2005:1).

8.3.8 Noma Awards

The third exhibition to be included, the Noma Concours for Picture Book Illustrations, has been organized biennially since 1978 to discover up-and-coming illustrators, graphic designers and artists in Asia, the Pacific, Africa, Arab States, and Latin America, to provide a venue at which they can present their works, and to offer incentives for their creative activities (*ACCU Noma English Works* 2009:1). Thus, this exhibition falls mainly into the second half of the time period under research. As such, it is an example of the enlargement and development of the field of children's literature illustration worldwide in this period, which is mirrored in the field of Persianate children's literature.

In 1978, when the Concours was first established, approximately 130 works were submitted; in 1998 the number of submissions exceeded 600, and in 2001 over 3,700 works were submitted from more than sixty countries. In 1983, the Noma Concours began official exchanges with the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava, an exhibition that, according to the 2000 Concours report, still focused mainly on works from Western artists. A study of the Noma Concours archives reveals that a high proportion of winning Iranian artists have been women. The 12th Noma Concours

for Picture Book Illustrations, which will be used as our sample, solicited entries in 2000 and was screened in 2001. A number of winners in the 12th Noma Concours, including four female artists, were from Iran as described below.

Nasrin Khosravi's work, *Dokhtar-e Bagh-e Arezuha* [The Girl of the Wish Garden] (see 8.4.3:257-259) was selected as the Grand Prize winner for its 'superior technical quality, and for its 'mysterious allure which draws its viewers into the realm of fantasy' (*ACCU Noma English Works* 2009:1). Some jurists, however, felt that the illusory quality of Khosravi's work would be difficult for children to understand (*ACCU Noma English Works* 2009:1). The other prize-winning works exhibited variety in content and technique, ranging from traditional styles to new and original works. Feeroozeh Golmohammadi (see 8.4.4), was one of the runners-up with *The Search for the Tuba Tree*. Anahita Taymourian was another runner-up with *My Moon, the Village Moon*, a chain story comprised of episodes describing children's fantasies about the moon (*ACCU* 2008:1). Elham Asadi, with *Rustam Fights with Demons* was the first prizewinner in the illustration section of the Iranian Art Students Competition. *Rustam Fights with Demons* tells of the famous episode in Ferdosi's *Shahnameh* when Rustam passes through Turan, an example of the continued inspiration which contemporary Iranian artists derive from Ferdosi's masterpiece. The work of Farshid Shafiei, Encouragement Prize winner with *History of My Country*, again shows the continued popularity of traditional themes and topics:

The illustrations depict important events and people in Iranian history and are accompanied by poems. The first two show the migration of the Arian people in search of a land to call their own and their discovery of a large white stone with the image of a lion in it. This was a sign that they should settle there. The third depicts Naneh Sarma, a famous storyteller, on a

winter's night. The fourth and fifth illustrations show that women are more present in the life of the villagers. They search and farm with men. The sixth is a poem about a shepherd, and the final three portray scenes after the introduction of Islam, including Mohammad, the messenger of God, two Muslim boys crying for their father, and Ali, a central figure in Islamic history (*ACCU Noma English Works* 2009:1).

A second Encouragement Prize was awarded to Saeed Rezaii for *Let War Sleep*. Classical influences have also inspired this poem which warns of the horror of war, and of brother fighting brother: 'My ears hear the sound of a horse's hoof striking the ground. Rustam, the hero, the courageous, prepares for battle' (*ACCU Noma English Works* 2009:1). Ferdosi's *Shahnameh* and particularly the character of Rustam again appear as a continuing influence in this, and other modern Iranian works for children.

There is no escaping the fact that many modern Persianate works for children owe their inspiration to classical sources. However, the globalization of media and art could be having a deleterious effect on this inspiration. Rather than raise standards, it has been a source of limitation and homogeneity. Internationalism versus regionalism is an important issue in illustration, much more so than in written works. The presence of changes in style resulting from a two-way exchange of ideas and artistic influence is a marker of continuity in the illustration of books for children. This is not always an equal exchange as the dominant culture is the one which categorizes and defines styles according to its own frame of reference. The work of Iranian illustrators, for example, may be compared with that of French Impressionist artists, but no European artist is ever compared with Persianate styles. Thus, this artistic division also furthers its own continuity.

Hammo Sugiura, Noma judge for the third time in 2000, comments on the effects of this globalization, saying that the regionality of the works in terms of technique and style has been steadily decreasing, and that a reduction in regional differences, coupled with a simple style could be the death knell of distinctive regional works (*ACCU Noma English Works* 2009:1), while Alain Le Querrec (2002) states:

Graphic design in Iran wants to be modern without following the world of graphic design blindly and losing its identity in the process. This is a very difficult endeavor because if Iranian graphic design of Iran wants to be present in the international scene it should inevitably adopt international codes, standards and vogue.

Le Querrec also observes that the use of uniform techniques, uniform satellite images, and computer technology have undermined the characteristics of regional arts, often unknown to artists in the West, to the extent that they can only understand the works or aspects of the works which correspond to Western codes and standards. He feels, however, that the special characteristics of Iranian culture may protect it against the domination of Western culture (*Graphic Iran Index* 2008:1). If, to succeed, one must conform to the dominant culture, and ‘inevitably’ adopt international standards, then one must look at what is signified by ‘dominant’ and ‘international’. Presently, economic and cultural resources are controlled by Western English-speaking cultures globally and they dictate what is the norm. Elements from other cultures are appropriated and added to this norm, but the original, undistilled elements are diminished by being described as ‘ethnic’ and ‘non-standard’.

In Iran, one can observe a further bias against regionality with regard to Tehran vs. the provinces; regional is seen as backward, e.g. dress, fashions, customs, styles, manner of speech and so on. The implication is that all these differences will die out, much as lesser-spoken languages have died out, leaving only the dominant cultural modes of expression everywhere and a world all the poorer for the change.

Sugiura's comments are mirrored, but in a more optimistic manner, by those of Takeshi Matsumoto, another juror, who says that overall, the level of skill has risen with each Noma Concours and an increasing number of artists are pursuing their own original styles rather than relying solely on traditional techniques. The winning entries range from expressions of traditional folktales to original creations and encompass a broad range of techniques. Matsumoto said that he was especially impressed by the narrowing of the gap in quality among the different nations and regions, although through this process there is a risk of losing some of the traditional techniques unique to each country, at the same time it results in a fusion of external and original national elements that is potentially even better (*ACCU Noma English Works* 2009:1).

Thus, it can be seen that there are many factors influencing the participation and success of artists at different illustration biennials, and not all of them arise from purely technical or artistic considerations. The world's political and economic situation affects the level of participation in exhibitions in different areas; health issues can restrict travel; the ability to get visas to enter countries holding exhibitions is another important factor. Despite such restrictions, the development of children's book illustration exhibitions has been a force which promotes continuity while creating opportunities for change with the interaction of artists from different areas,

and the introduction of new artists, styles, and techniques. Artists from Iran have attended exhibitions throughout the pre- and post-revolution periods, and have overcome restrictions placed upon them during these different times. The artists' ideas reflect those found in the written works that they are illustrating, thus forming part of the complete dynamic in Persianate children's literature.

8.4 Iranian illustrators

After discussing briefly the participation of illustrators from Iran in various relevant exhibitions, the next section will turn to the work of four well-known award-winning Iranian artists, two men and two women, working in the field of illustration for children, and will examine the dynamics of their work from different periods before and after the revolution. The artists are representative of the wide spectrum of styles found in Iran from the modern to the traditional, from before and after the revolution, making this small selection an indicative example of the way that change and continuity in literature is mirrored in illustrations for children in Iran.

8.4.1 Farshid Mesghali

The Hans Christian Andersen Award, given biennially since 1956 by the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) to an author, and an illustrator since 1966, in recognition of his or her body of work, was awarded in 1974 to illustrator Farshid Mesghali of Iran.



Fig.9. This was by no means the first award that Mesghali's work had won; his illustration of Samad Behrangi's *Mahi-ye Siyah-e Kuchulu* [The Little Black Fish] had brought him the graphic prize, and *Uncle New Year*, a story based on an original Iranian folk tale about the first day of spring, had won the first prize at the Sixth International Children's Book Fair in Bologna in 1969.

Farshid Mesghali, painter, filmmaker, and illustrator, was born in Esfahan in 1943. He started to work in the *Kanun* in 1967, illustrating books, and creating animated films for children. His work is an example of pre-revolutionary illustration for children in Iran. Early illustrations by Farshid Mesghali include *Amu No Ruz* [Uncle New Year] 1967; *Shah Jamshid* [King Jamshid] 1968: Best Book of the Year (CBC), the tale of King Jamshid, from the *Shahnameh*, the first ruler of the earth who was forced to make the earth grow in order to hold all his subjects; *Mahi-ye Siyah-e Kuchulu* [The Little Black Fish] 1968, a tale about a little black fish who left home to discover the world; *Qahreman* [The Hero] 1970 tells how the people of a village besiege a giant by joining forces; *Shahr-e Maran* [The City of Snakes] 1970, based on Iranian folklore, is the story of a young girl forced to wear the clothing of white snakes; and *Pesar-e Cheshm-e Abi* [The Blue-Eyed Boy] 1973, is a poetic story about a little boy who sees everything blue (*Hans Christian...* 1974:12). From the titles it can be seen that many of the stories were inspired by traditional literature.

Mesghali also produced award-winning posters: in 1969, *Modern Publicity*, a British graphic magazine, selected one of his posters among the best of the year; his film posters won a prize at the 1973 Cannes Film Festival; he was awarded the Special Prize at the Cannes Film Poster Exhibition in 1974; his work was published

in *Novon* and *Graphis*, two international graphic magazines; and two of his later illustration awards include the BIB Golden Apple for *Arash, the Bowman*, a famous story from the *Shahnameh*, in 1978, and a Noma Award for *My Hedgehog, My Doll and I*, in 1985.

Mesghali feels that children should be presented with the best in literature and illustration, albeit according to their ages, but in any case, children should become familiar with latest styles and techniques in the arts. He appreciates the limitations of the imagination set by a particular culture. Comparing his tasks as an illustrator for grown-ups and for children, Mesghali finds the latter far more difficult, due to the fact that a children's artist finds no well-trodden paths to follow; he is hardly ever sure about the child's appreciation (Dowlatabadi 1978:59).

The traditional illustrations of *Shahnameh* stories such as the story of 'Hamzeh the Hero' depict heroic knights in magnificent coats of mail and precious turbans brandishing their scimitars on ambling or galloping horses. Ramseger (1973:48) contrasts this style with Mesghali's 'modern' 1970s interpretation of the myth of Jamshid, where text and pictures strike a delicate balance, saying:

It is true that the purple coat of the king predominates in the illustrations. But their real graphic charm is due to the capricious technique with its deliberate contrast between areas of intensive color and a large area of pure white which is only contoured by a colored or black line. Nothing the like would be found in old Persian paintings (Ramseger 1973:48).

Ramseger (1973:47) fails to add that Mesghali's work, in fact, often draws heavily on traditional styles and conventions, even though it interprets these in a new and fresh way. An example is his use of calligraphy as an integral part of his

illustrations in works done at the same time as Ramseger's article, such as the illustration in Fig.10 taken from *Muarefi-ye Kanun* (1973), an informational book about the *Kanun*'s activities:⁹



Fig.10

Mesghali created new decorative ways of writing the Persian alphabet (*Hans Christian Andersen Award 1973 1974:11-12*). Calligraphy has always been a high form of art in Iran, even before the introduction of the Arabic script.¹⁰ This is also true for neighboring and more distant countries such as China, Korea, and Japan, where calligraphy, a revered and traditional art form, has entered modern art works in different forms. Fusanosuke touches on this subject:

East Asian cultures have had a relatively close picture-to-language relationship. In cultures with Kanji (Chinese characters), it seems easier to develop a mode of expression in which letters are combined with illustrations and are treated as a picture whereas modern Western art seems to hold that illustrations and words should be separated (Fusanosuke 2003:1).

⁹ The calligraphy reads: *Entesharat* [Publications].

¹⁰ *Ta'liq* (hanging script) and its derivative *nasta'liq* emerged after Timur's 14th century invasion of Iran, though *ta'liq* had been in existence for several centuries prior to this and was in fact claimed to be derived from the old script of pre-Islamic Sassanian Iran. 'Cursive Scripts', <http://www.art-arena.com/cur.htm> (accessed 2 March 2009).

In the Arabic speaking countries, written script has formed part of works of art, sculptures, carvings and buildings for centuries. When the Arabic script joined Persianate art, this continuity of relationship between image and text further developed into the Persianate tradition of miniatures with their distinctive style of calligraphy.

Ramseger (1973:49) considers that Mesghali's wide artistic scope is attested by the story of *Mahi-ye Siyah-e Kuchulu* [The Little Black Fish] by Samad Behrangi, with its skillfully interwoven typographic and graphic art, and that some critics consider that it shows a 'European' technique and style, while others say the international nature of modern art is an undeniable fact. *The Hero*, well received by the student opposition because of its anti-heroic character and its lesson of solidarity, was written by the novelist, Taqi Kiarostami and illustrated by Mesghali. It used bright colors and reflected the influence of comics. But throughout all the changes, he remained faithful to his typical style, the contrast between color and white (Ramseger 1973:49). From this aspect, it can be noted that the work of Feeroozeh Golmohammadi and Nouredin Zarrinkelk show a similar use of color and white space, possibly as a result of following an international trend which affected many artists of their generation, and which was adopted by Iranian artists. This could be cited as an example of a change in style due to external influences. At the same time, despite the artists' different styles, the influence of traditional art and ideas can be seen throughout their work.

8.4.2 Nouredin Zarrinkelk

Zarrinkelk was born in 1937 in Mashhad. He has worked in many areas; as animator, background artist, concept artist, consultant, critic, editor, graphic designer, illustrator, layout artist, photographer, scriptwriter, sculptor, special effects artist, stop-motion animator, and storyboard artist (*Qoqnoos* 2009:1). He has influenced many other artists in Iran.

Despite being involved with film, cartoon and animation, Zarrinkelk has continued to produce illustrations for children: the International Children's Book Day 1993 poster and the Encyclopedia for Young People promotion poster 2000, for example, were produced by Zarrinkelk (*Schoolnet Publications* 2009:1).

Zarrinkelk attended Miniature and Traditional Painting School in Tehran during the 1950s and went to Belgium in 1969 to study [European] classical animation at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts (*Qoqnoos* 2009:1). The importance of Zarrinkelk in the field of animation in Iran is shown by his nickname 'the father of Persian animation.' The *Kanun* played a crucial part in establishing the field in supporting Zarrinkelk and other artists:

The Institute for the Development of Children and Young Adults, [*Kanun*]... in 1966 founded the Children's Film Festival in Tehran. At that time, Iranian graphic artists and illustrators were invited to learn the art of animation, and artists like Nouredin Zarrinkelk were invited to study animation in Belgium. Iranian animators went on to win countless international awards for their craft. (*HIFF Archive* 2005:1)

This was considered to be the beginning of a constructive current which led to a new wave of cultural renaissance in the Iranian cinema as a whole. Zarrinkelk became the director of the Kanun's animation school, and the founder of the Postgraduate School of Animation of Farabi University, Tehran, where he taught from 1977 to 1996. During the 1990s he also taught Illustration at Tehran University. His influence as a teacher may have been responsible for the inclusion of techniques and styles originally from Europe by several generations of Iranian illustrators and cartoonists. However, his work also reflects the continued presence of traditional stories.

Fig.11

The Mad, Mad, Mad World; Animated film; 1975



Publications of his illustrations include such titles as *Mulla Nasruddin*; *The Elephant And The Ant*; *Hero Amir-Hamzeh*; *The Myth Of The Phoenix*; *Cyrus The King*; *Albino And The Princess*; and *Folk Tales From Asia* (Qoqnoos 2009:1) which demonstrate continuity with tradition in the content of his work, while an examination of his interpretation of this content shows his own particular style. The leading Iranian cartoon website, *Irancartoon.com*, lists Zarrinkelk among the foremost Iranian cartoonists. As a leading figure in the field of cartoon and animation, Zarrinkelk's work has influenced many of the new generation of artists. This is another aspect of continuity; where creative artists and writers feed into the

pool of works which influence the later generations, and in their own way keep alive, as well as continuously re-interpret, tradition.

8.4.3 Nasrin Khosravi

Nasrin Khosravi was born in 1950. She has illustrated many children's books, and exhibited in numerous exhibitions, and also illustrated *Buf-e Kur* [Blind Owl] by the famous Iranian author Sadegh Hedayat (*Ricochet Prizes* 2008:1). She was Runner-up in the 9th Noma Concours, Grand-Prizewinner at Noma 2000, Hans Christian Andersen Award nominee in 2002, and winner of various awards in national and international illustration contests. Hammo Sugiura, chairman of Noma international jury in his congratulatory message to Khosravi at Noma 2000 noted the high level of participation by Iranian artists and their impressive artistic skills:

This Grand Prize-winning work is an excellent manifestation of your extreme devotion to your craft... The Noma Concours jury members frequently discussed the fact that your nation has produced so many talented picture book illustrators. This time, six Iranians, including you, received awards, arousing even my curiosity, despite the fact that I place more importance on the individual artist rather than on their country of origin (*ACCU* 2008:1).

The prize-winning book which, among others, attracted all this praise was *Dokhtar-e Bagh-e Arezuha* [The Girl of the Wish Garden] (Fig.12). The story tells of a thumb-sized girl named Parisa who was kidnapped by a frog, then taken by a black beetle and given to her baby. Next, she was carried away by a mouse. Finally, a

swallow found her and carried her to the wish garden, where she married the prince of the garden (*ACCU Noma English Works* 2009:1).

The illustrations from the competition were exhibited in Tokyo in August 2001, and subsequently at the Biennale of Illustrations, Bratislava (BIB) in September and October 2001, where BIB gave special attention to the Noma Concours, exhibiting 2000 winning works. Former Vice President of IBBY, Patricia Aldana said, ‘Not only were the works themselves excellent, they came from such a wide group of countries, many of whose illustrators are unknown in the West ... It was a treasure trove for me’ (*ABD* 2001:21).

Fig.12



‘Unknown in the West’ is a telling phrase. International exhibitions showcase representative illustrators, those who have been chosen as the best of their group, not only in their country of origin, but also internationally to audiences who are unfamiliar with their work. Khosravi is only one of the many successful female artists to have been involved in illustration for children in Iran. In the following

section the work of Feeroozeh Golmohammadi, one of the most well-known Iranian women artists and illustrators, will be examined.

8.4.4 Feeroozeh Golmohammadi

Feeroozeh Golmohammadi was born in 1951 in Tehran. She began her art education in high school, obtained a diploma in the field, and continued her studies at university in Iran. She developed her own unique style, which was acclaimed as a modernization of the Persian miniature, through research, experimentation and innovation. Golmohammadi's miniature work has been described as follows:

Art critics usually refer to her style as the Renaissance of the Persian Miniature and her contribution to this genre is to present the traditional essence of miniature principles in an exciting new language. Her attempt is to explore the realm of universal ideals and to create subjective and symbolic art that strives to convey not just aesthetic value but also spiritual beauty (*Art Today* 2005:1).

Besides painting, Golmohammadi illustrates children's books, and has a keen interest in photography. From 1984 to 1988, she directed the Iranian Cultural Center in Pakistan. For three years, she was the chief-editor of *Zan-e-Emruz* [Today's Woman] magazine, and has been the head of the Art Division of the Cultural Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pakistan, and Executive Secretary of TIBI (Tehran International Biennial of Illustrators). She lived in India for a number of years, 'using the opportunity to study and imbibe the immense richness of Indian arts and culture' (*Art Today* 2005:1).

One of the first Iranian women to win international recognition in the field of fine arts, Golmohammadi has exhibited widely and holds numerous prestigious national and international awards. These include Noma, UNICEF, UNESCO, and Hans Christian Andersen Awards. Her art and photographic works are exhibited in Iran, the Middle and Far East, Europe, India and the U.S.A. Several of her art works based on the Holy Quran and the Masnavi of Jalaluddin Rumi are enlarged onto gigantic murals, overlooking major city-squares in Tehran. Another example of her wall art can be seen overlooking the statue of a mother and child in *Meidan-e Madar* [Mother's Square] in Tehran. As well as exhibiting, she has also served as a jury member in various national and international competitions. In 1997, Golmohammadi was commissioned by UNESCO to organize a workshop in Tehran for women artists from Asia (*Golmohammadi... 2005:1*).

Golmohammadi has been greatly inspired and guided by the works of the great mystic poets Rumi, and Attar, and by Ferdosi, the epic poet. Her tribute to these great spiritual masters is to internationally popularize their messages through the medium of art. In the Noma Concours 2000, Golmohammadi was awarded a Runner-up prize for her illustration of *The Search for the Tuba Tree*. Her paintings were inspired by 'The Search for the Tree of Life', a famous poem by Jalaluddin Rumi, which tells the story of the futile search for the tree whose fruit prevents old age and death, and the discovery that it is the tree of knowledge of self, and its fruit is belief in the ultimate reality of God (*ACCU Noma English Works 2009:1*).

Her Noma Second Prize winning entry, *The Elephant in a Dark Room*, fig. 13, is taken from Jalaluddin Rumi, *The Masnavi I Ma'navi*.

Janine Despinette praises Golmohammadi's works from Ferdosi's *Shahnameh*, from fables of Rumi and from poems of Sefehri, saying they present

Fig.13



stories from Iran's great literary tradition with an atmosphere both ethereal and timeless, and at the same time, subtle and modern. She describes Golmohammadi's style in the following terms:

The application of strict principles of miniature painting is relevant through her designs conducted to the tips of her finest silver feathers and the resonance of modern principles emanates from her personal and original manner of capturing the effects of luminosity in daylight or nightlight with the variety of color she uses in her images. Firuzeh's interpretation of symbolic images of myths in Persian classic texts conveys a profound and total adhesion to the expressive language of Islamic Art. This happens through exuberant floral decorations, zoomorphic designs, the application of gold and silver for illumination and the reflection of poetic beauties that all exist in miniature tradition. It is with this icono-textual replacement that a professionalism of unique expression occurs (Despinette 2005:1).

As an artist and illustrator for children, Golmohammadi is one of the best examples available to demonstrate the continuity of classical influences in Iran today. The miniature is a famous tradition in classical Iranian art. Golmohammadi's work has found popularity precisely because of its connection with traditional works and stories, yet at the same time it is fresh and original, showing once more that change flourishes in the midst of continuity. As her illustrations reflect the stories in the books she illustrates for children, this popularity also applies to the written stories contained in these works, and is further evidence of continuity in Persianate children's literature.

8.5 Children's drawing and writing

As with the sections on writing, children's own works, as well as those of adults in the field of illustration, will be evaluated for elements of change and continuity. While children do not have the opportunity to illustrate books in a professional manner or attend exhibitions in the same way as adults, children's illustrations provide important information about how they interpret the world around them, and the effect of social influences. Along with the stories written by children, these illustrations can give adults valuable information about how Iran is seen from a child's viewpoint, and can inform works written by adults for children. In this way, these drawings can be directly related to children's literature, and can be seen to have an influence on children's books written by adults. On the whole, however, adults still tend to use children's work as a psychological tool, rather than

appreciating their work as art. The first part of this section will look at different evaluations of children's work from this aspect and the second at works entered in a young artists' competition.

Two different collections will be examined for this purpose; the first a collection of children's drawings and writings from before and during the revolution which contains psychological analysis and interpretation of the children's works (Dadashzadeh 1994) and the second a publication arising from the first international competition for young artists: *The Selected Artworks of Children at the 1st International Children and Young Adults' Competition and Exhibition*, held in Tehran in 2000, with an evaluation of young artists' work by Abolfazl Hemmati Ahui, painter and graphic artist, and Art Director at the *Kanun*.

8.5.1 Kaveh Dadashzadeh

As has been observed, adults tend to look at children's work from a psychological viewpoint, whether it be writing or drawing. In the case of adults, this only tends to be the case if the artist has an illness, either mental or physical, in which case the work is analyzed for signs of the effects of their illness. Thus, it may be said that children's work is often treated in the same way as sick adults' work (Lamb 2003). Kaveh Dadashzadeh is a teacher who gathered the works of schoolchildren in Iran between 1966 and 1994. He has compiled several books on this topic: *Drawings and the World of Children* 1966, *Drawings and the World of Children* 1976, *The Revolution and Children* 1979, ('Prize of the Children's Book

Council of Iran' 1980:47) and *Children's Drawing and Writing* (1994), the findings of which will be examined here.

Dadashzadeh considers that relatively little attention has been given to children's drawings in recent years, and the results of any studies on the subject have not been significant. He considers that proper investigation and analysis has not been carried out on the importance and value of children's first writings, or of the connection of these with their environment. In his collection, stress is placed upon showing the viewpoint and capacity, character and personality of the children, as well as the psychology of their drawings and writings. With this aim, Dadashzadeh gathered drawings and writings which included the experiences of children themselves.

Thus, the collection presents examples from the real life and everyday impressions that the children of Iran perceive from their environment, and at the same time acts as an indicator of their psychological growth and upbringing. The drawings, writings and stories are illustrations that children of all districts have drawn with their own spirituality, culture, family and social relations. The book is intended to help parents and teachers to understand children better, and to motivate them towards their correct upbringing. Many of the drawings are pre-revolutionary, and leanings and sentiments not in keeping with present thinking are presented in these pictures, showing that children are reflections of their society, and draw from the cultural environment of their times (Dadashzadeh 1994:6). Dadashzadeh reads the characters of children from details found in their pictures.

Fatime Hejati, aged four and a half, says 'My dad became angry. He wants to punch my brother.' In this picture, the child has depicted the aggression of her father

and the powerlessness and helplessness of her brother to coincide well with the story she wants to tell (Dadashzadeh 1994:12). Bizhan Kamali, five years old, wrote this text to accompany his drawing: ‘Mum went to buy some food from Sepah Supermarket. My sister woke up crying. She wanted my mum. My dad gave her a ride on his back till she stopped crying.’ Bizhan took great care in drawing the condition of his sister who was crying, showing her facing us so that her tears can be seen, but their father is drawn in profile. In this picture, the sad expression of the toys also shows their sympathy with Bizhan’s sister. In his drawings, this child reflects what is in his heart and feelings (Dadashzadeh 1994:18). These examples show continuity in that children share similar concerns and characteristics on a certain level wherever they are from, and differences arise from such environmental factors as geography, culture and language.

Dadashzadeh discusses children and logic, saying that in the domain of their lives, children have their own special rules and logic; the mind of a child is like a mirror; it reflects truthfully everything it comes into contact with. Children talk with complete confidence and without pretense about everything concerning them; life, surroundings, playmates, school life, anger, falling out and reconciliation (Dadashzadeh 1994:51). Two examples of drawings depicting children’s surroundings are those of two thirteen year olds, a girl and a boy. Noushin Nurullahi’s work is entitled ‘Welcome to Tehran’ (Dadashzadeh 1994:53). Her drawing, obviously from first-hand observation, depicts the pollution and overcrowding of Tehran in an ironic manner.

Fig.14



A second drawing portraying the environment, which relies both on observation and received information, is that of Daryush Samandari aged thirteen (Dadashzadeh 1994:63). It bears the caption, ‘Tehran is one of the most accident-prone cities in the world.’

Fig.15



Other topics which feature in the children’s drawings are views of authority figures, hamburgers in USA, war, war between Iran and Iraq, bus queue, pregnancy, hejab, divorce, fights between parents, and fear of exams. It will be noted that all of the above are realistic subjects and do not contain monsters or dragons, witches or supermen, space adventures, or any of the other genres popular with children elsewhere. This could be due to the choices of Dadashzadeh in presenting a selection which would illustrate the sociological points he wanted to make, but such an extensive collection of work over a period of thirty years must have included examples of the most popular subjects presented by the children. This may lead us to infer that the child’s immediate world is what furnishes the topics to be explored in writing and drawing during their early years, which points to continuity in the subject matter and content that interests children. Such works inform educational literature for children, and help writers for children understand their developmental level and interests, and in this way are relevant to children’s literature.

8.5.2 Kanun exhibition of children's illustrations

The best children's works of art from the 1st International Children and Young Adults' Illustration Competition and Exhibition, Tehran, have been compiled and presented in book form by the *Kanun (The Selected Artworks...2000)*. This competition for children, held in 1999, was dedicated to promoting global understanding and friendship.

In contrast to the work featured in the previous collection by Dadashzadeh, these competition art works tend to be more complete in form, and the subjects tend to be less controversial and more nationalistic. In addition to the book, a series of cards were produced showing entries from the different countries. The paintings tend to take their subjects from surroundings and social events familiar to the children, although some, unlike those in Dadashzadeh's collections, have a fantastic theme.

It is interesting to note the differences and similarities in style and subject matter from different countries. When we compare the work of Iranian children with that of other children we see that they portray many similar concerns. Zahra Tavakoli, aged 11, from Iran, has drawn a colorful country scene of a bride being led away on a horse, with women and children waving goodbye to her. In another entry, Monireh Ziaee, also from Iran, aged 13, depicts traditional outdoor scenes seen on commemoration days at the shrines of Imams, with predominantly female subjects and children. An entry from the Emirates by 13 year old Eman Abd Al Ghani, on the other hand, shows only men, sitting in a traditional tent with a camel tied beside them and a coffee pot on the one fire and meat barbequing over the other. A Bangladeshi

entry by Rejwana Islam Kaji, aged 11, shows a mosque in a busy street with many children leaving, and men greeting each other. The street and sidewalk are drawn realistically with a sense of perspective, but the mosque occupies a space apart.

Looking at the collection of work, an outstanding feature is that many of the Chinese entries include script. As noted in 8.4.1 above, the integral use of script in an artwork, and as artwork, mirrors traditional styles found in many countries, and especially in Iran. From this exhibition it can be seen that this connection of illustration, decorative script, and writing is made in children's works from a young age. Subject matter then, seems to vary from decorative script and imaginative scenes, to reflections of the children's actual surroundings, whatever the children's country. Among the entries, 511 Iranian works were selected, and some 3700 artworks came from nearly forty [other] countries, of which two thousand were selected by the jury for the competition (*The Selected Artworks...2000:iv*). The interest shown in this exhibition suggests that children's artwork is valued as such and not merely as a psychological indicator, despite Hemmati Ahui's comments below.

Abolfazl Hemmati Ahui, a painter and graphic artist, has worked at the *Kanun* for 26 years. He has done illustrations for poetry and for stories, using watercolor, acrylic and line drawings. Hemmati Ahui is of the opinion that children have no skill and do not have enough experience to produce work which is developed, as they did not go to academy or art school. He says that while some children do have special ability, it is not possible to say that all of them have this ability. He considers that children do not like other children's work, and that

children's art is not important enough to be discussed except in relation to psychology (Hemmati Ahui 2003).

Hemmati Ahui considers children's art to be useful for illustrators because 'it helps illustrators to see the world through children's eyes and to produce illustrations suitable for children's feelings.'¹¹ He says that unsuccessful attempts were made to use children's paintings as illustrations, and this led him to believe that children's painting is not suitable or useful for the illustration of children's books. However, he says the paintings entered in the First International Children's Art Competition and Exhibition are an exception (Hemmati Ahui 2003). Hemmati Ahui is not the only artist to hold such opinions of children's artwork. Mohammad Reza Dadgar, graphic designer, illustrator, painter, and Art Director of *Kanun* for 13 years said the following on this subject:

In my opinion children's work has no artistic value. All the children in the world draw the same until the age of twelve, as a game or pastime, and after this age only those who want to continue may become artists in the future. Children's drawing is a kind of play and has no intellectual or artistic merit (Dadgar 2003).

It is difficult to agree with many of these points, especially that children do not like each other's work. This does not seem to be the case in the researcher's experience; children are interested in other children's writing and drawing, and if adult works incorporate or use these as a basis or as a measure of the children's level of understanding, then children will be attracted to works containing them. As many writers for children are also parents, teachers and librarians working every day with

¹¹ Willow, aged 5 ¾ concedes that adult artists may be able to take children's drawings and 'make them neater and tidier.'

children, their understanding of children's tastes and interests are enriched by their exposure to the works of children themselves, and this understanding will feed back into the works they produce for children. Illustrations produced by children, in the same way as works written by children, help to inform adult writers and illustrators about the worldview and concerns of children. Many elements will be continuous, e.g. reaction to the child's immediate surroundings and family, fear of the dark, monsters, etc., and others will be particular to the society that the child is brought up in and events that happen during this period.

8.6 Conclusion

Illustration has a long history in Iran, with miniatures forming an important part of manuscript illustration, and calligraphy forming an integral part of many of these. Ancient texts continue to give inspiration to the illustrators of children's books today. Tradition has enriched modern artistic works. Children's own art has informed adult illustrators and writers of literature for children. Illustrators have shown continuity in their work while incorporating innovations and new ideas that show progression and development from the work of their predecessors. At the same time, Iran has not escaped the worldwide historical trends of a movement from oral literature to written, and then to printed literature, radio, TV, and computer media, while over the twentieth century texts became more accessible and affordable for the average person and children. Along with this trend, it became financially viable to include illustrations which opened a more specialized illustration field for children.

In Tajikistan, the financial situation is still too restricted to enable many illustrators to work in the field of children's literature; hence the focus of this chapter has been on Iran.

When looking at modern-day illustration of children's books in Iran it is noticeable that women are more visible in the field of illustration than in the writing of books for children. The increase in numbers of women artists involved in book illustration, then, could be cited as a change from previous times, while the continued prevalence of male writers could be cited as a continuous factor in the field. Illustrators, both men and women, have found inspiration in fantasy, traditional and spiritual subjects, as well as topical ones, and these have all been included in works for children. Iranian artists have shown themselves to be the equal of other artists in international book illustration competitions, and their level of participation continues to increase.

The question of 'internationalism' versus 'regionalism,' one of the issues arising in this chapter, was seen to concern illustrators for children, as well as artists generally. This subject appears repeatedly with regard to illustration in the twentieth century, especially when discussing any artwork other than that of North America or Europe. It is not something new however, as even the most Persian form of art, the 'traditional' miniature, was influenced by Chinese painting, and in turn influenced illustration in both Turkey and India. Therefore, this issue is particularly relevant to the argument of the study with regard to illustration, that even within change, one finds continuity. Artists and critics of different periods contend that cross-fertilization of ideas has the positive effect of leading to better artworks, while others

cite its negative aspect of erasing differences from different regions and creating homogeneity.

When Mesghali talks of the imagination of artists being subject to cultural and geographical limits, one could add that this very regionality is what has created the unique styles of different countries and regions, especially in the case of Iran. Matsumoto felt that a fusion of external and original national elements gave a potential for improvement in artists' work (*ACCU Noma English Works* 2009:1). The regionality of the works in terms of technique and style seen in international exhibitions has been steadily decreasing, prompting Sugiura to comment that the decrease in regionality was not necessarily good, and to ask why it should decrease.

It appears that there are conflicting opinions about regionality among artists and critics alike. These conflicting opinions apply to illustrations for both adults and children internationally, and disagreements on the issue have been continuing for many years. Thus, the debate on the effect of external influences on Persianate children's literature, which brings change to both writing and illustration, could be cited as an element of continuity.

With regard to children's literature, one could ask what it is about Iranian illustrators' work in particular that makes it so special. Perhaps the 'limitations of the imagination' referred to by Mesghali are in fact, expanded and enhanced by certain aspects of Iran's cultural heritage. Tradition and continuity can be seen as limitations while change can be seen as empowerment. Whatever one's opinion, the children's literature of Iran, and its illustration too, has been greatly enriched by its historical heritage. At the same time it reflects the influence of particular social conditions resulting from events in the modern era. These events are, obviously, different for

different countries and as this study has focused mainly on Iran, information from a second geographical area may support the thesis of the existence of continuity in children's literature despite social change. Therefore, the effect of social conditions on children's literature in Tajikistan will be investigated in the next chapter. Tajikistan, whose literature shares a common heritage with that of Iran, displays variations today as a result of differing conditions in its recent history while showing a continuity that stretches back to the common ancient heritage of the two regions.

Chapter 9: Children's literature in Tajikistan: a greater Iran?

9.1 Introduction

After focusing on Iran during the previous chapters, the final chapter will concentrate on Tajikistan in order to introduce a comparative element to the research and to establish that this thesis applies not only to Iran but also to the other Persianate children's literature of Greater Iran or *Iranzamin*. In addition, the chapter investigates the continued existence of a pan-Iranian children's literature based upon the common shared literary legacy of the ancient empire of *Iranzamin* (Garthwaite 2005:2, 86, 97, 114, 117). In this overview, material from Tajikistan will be examined which substantiates the notion of a common heritage shared by Iranian children's literature and the children's literature of Greater Iran, comprising today's Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and which examines the aspects of change and continuity. The three members of the Persian language group, Farsi, Dari and Tajiki, have numerous linguistic and cultural characteristics in common due to their mutual historical background. The material featured in this section, having been researched in Tajikistan, does not contain examples originating from Afghanistan or Uzbekistan, but includes the writing of Afghani refugees and writers of Uzbeki origin living in Tajikistan. In addition, the time scale of the political change in Tajikistan is slightly later, with the key political event of the fall of the Soviet Union occurring in 1991, as compared to Iran where the key political event there, the Islamic Revolution, occurred in 1979.

Tajiki children's literature has not been given a great amount of attention until now, except in Tajikistan itself. In the days of the USSR it briefly had its hour of fame in 1981 when the Russian literary journal *Detskaya Literatura*¹² dedicated a whole issue to Tajik children's writers in honor of the USSR's 60th Anniversary. It will be seen that in the time of the USSR, translation and distribution in Russian often muted any emphasis on the work's language and country of origin, but at the same time ensured a wide readership. After the end of Soviet rule in 1991, desire to reestablish continuity with the past can be seen in examples such as the attempt to reintroduce Farsi script, considered to be the writing of the ancestors, as previously described in Chapter 3.4.4:92-94. In addition to this, pre-Soviet customs, traditions, style of dress and religion all saw a revival and this was reflected in reading materials for children. Ahmad Karimi Hakkak stresses the lack of attention given to Tajiki children's literature in his comments on the entry for children's literature in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. He refers to literature published since Tajikistan became a part of the Soviet empire in 1924 as an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, and in October 1929, as a full Union Republic of the former Soviet Union, until its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991:

Since this entry deals only with the evolution of children's literature in Iran, it would have been advisable to mention this limitation in the title. This is particularly significant since we know that in Soviet Tajikistan a lively tradition of imaginative readings created exclusively for children existed for almost 70 years. Certainly this body of children's literature in the Persian-speaking world deserves to be included in some form (Karimi Hakkak 1998:540).

¹² This journal was published from 1932-1941 as a bimonthly and again from 1966 until 1996 as a monthly. It contains articles about children's literature and art for children, as well as prose and poetry for children.

In Tajikistan, as in Iran, two historical periods can be identified which represent a major political change. These consist of the Soviet period mainly from the mid-twentieth century until 1991, and the independent period from then up to the present. The effect of Soviet rule on children's literature, followed by its dissolution in 1991, and the subsequent 1992-97 civil war, will be examined by content analysis of a number of works for children. The focus will be on the immediate pre- and post-Soviet period as works from this time can give evidence of the existence of continuity in the content of children's literature, despite the political changes which occurred during the twentieth century. The effect of different social, political and economic forces upon the development and form of children's literature in Tajikistan will be discussed within this framework.

Key issues relating to children's education and literacy will be referred to only briefly in this chapter; as issues concerning education in Tajikistan have already been examined in Chapter 3.4.4:92-95. Likewise, developments and events leading up to the establishment of Soviet rule, and the important figures and heroes of the revolution will not be examined in detail, even though these may have been involved with children's education.¹³ The chapter, rather, will present the case of Tajikistan as further confirmation that continuity exists in children's literature despite changes in society.

The children's literature of the Soviet era did not represent a break from previous traditions, despite the regime's claims. Even during Soviet rule, the influence of Iran could still be seen in Tajikistan. As in Iran, the same ancient texts

¹³ An example is Sadriddin Aini, (1878-1954) from a village north of Bukhara, saved by the Red Army in 1917 from imprisonment and torture, who became the first president of the Academy of Sciences of the SSR of Tajikistan in 1950. He published his *Reminiscences* in the 1940s, a major part of which deals with the Bukhara of Emirs Abdalhad (1885-1910) and Alim Khan (1910-1920). He is known as the father of Tajik and Uzbek literatures.

continued to influence writers for children in Tajikistan. Here we can see continuity in the content of children's reading materials from much earlier times. For example, in 1982 a five-volume anthology of children's literature (*Anthology of Children's Literature* 1982) was published in Dushanbe containing a selection of classics for children from ancient to modern times. This publication includes selections from the great early classical writers and poets who wrote in the Farsi language between the ninth and twelfth centuries AD, such as Ferdosi, Rumi, Saadi, Hafez, Khayyam, Rudaki, as well as later writers. It is a reminder that, until the 1920s, the literary heritage of Iran and Tajikistan had been one and the same. This chapter will examine the notion of *Iranzamin* by means of such and other examples to ascertain whether it is still a viable concept and whether it has contributed to continuity in the children's literature of Tajikistan during the second half of the twentieth century.

9.2 Historical influences

Despite suffering the disruption caused by three changes of alphabet within a decade, and the resulting drift into the Soviet sphere due to Tajikistan's alignment with the USSR, Russian language, and Cyrillic script, it will be seen that the common heritage of Greater Iranian literature survived to influence writers in Tajikistan throughout the Soviet era until the present day. The following section will briefly discuss some of the background events and influences, historical and modern, which underpin children's literature in Tajikistan today.

9.2.1 Effects of classical literature on modern Tajiki children's literature

It was seen in Chapter Four that historical epics and traditional stories have had a strong influence in ensuring the continuity of Persianate culture and language. The Tajiki children's writer and researcher, Jonon Bobokalonova (2003), who considers youth literature to be directed at children and readers from the cradle to the age of eighteen, affirms that many stories existed for children in ancient times, naming the classics *Asurik Tree* and *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, as notable among them. Javad Rasuli, who researched his thesis at the Rudaki Institute of Language and Literature, Academy of Sciences, in Dushanbe (2003), observes that works such as *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, Saadi's *Golestan*, and *Marzbannameh*, among others, have been affected by the folklore of Greater Iran, and in turn, appear in children's tales. This gives a parallel example in Tajikistan of continued influence from earlier eras such as that seen in Iran (Chapter 4:120-150). Rasuli (2003) identifies three different aspects, as follows:

- 1) Parents
- 2) Educational literature and school course materials
- 3) Cartoon Animation and Puppet Theatre

Rasuli states that parents tell classical stories to give their children moral and spiritual courage, that narration of classical works affects Tajiki children's folk literature and dramatic works such as cartoon animation and puppet theatre, with the tales of *Golestan*, poets of Iran such as Saadi, Hafez, Ferdosi, Khayyam, the stories of *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, and others, having been narrated, rewritten, or retold in modern, simplified language.

Rasuli (2003) argues that continuity exists in the way stories are used by parents in relation to their children, in the narration and rewriting of folktales and classical texts for children, and in their use in puppet theatre and children's paintings, while TV animation shows a change in the way these stories are delivered to children. The *Shahnameh* has always been popular in Tajikistan and continues to exert a great influence on literature and writers. It has continued to exist in both Cyrillic and Farsi versions. Classical texts such as the *Shahnameh* are recycled and find their way into modern idiom in surprising ways. An example of this is the way the *Shahnameh* has been used as a vocabulary source to compose new words and expressions for a computer glossary in Tajiki (Tolibrozi 1995). This enables computer teachers to avoid using foreign English imports, as other countries all over the world are doing. However, according to Tolibrozi (2003), the majority of the present generation of youth does not know the *Shahnameh* stories as well as their parents did, and some youngsters may only know the names of the heroes, without being aware of their deeds. Thus, it may be said that in some ways the influence of the classical texts may be less than in previous centuries, whereas in other ways it is reaffirming itself.

9.2.2 The Soviet era and beyond

As mentioned in 9.1, the existence of the Soviet Union provided both a wide means of dissemination and source of materials for children's books throughout the regions under its control. This section will provide more detail on Soviet literary input in Tajikistan during this time.

Maorif and Irfon were the main publishers involved with producing works for children in Tajikistan during the Soviet era. They produced many children's books in Tajiki, and their translation departments produced translated works for children from all over the world, as well as the USSR. Later, Afsana and Istiqbol became the first publishing houses in Tajikistan to deal especially with children's literature. In the Soviet era, series were popular. Russian materials were translated into Tajiki. At first, in the 1920s, these consisted mainly of poetry, then more stories, such as Russian classics, were translated.

A Russian publisher for children and youth, *Molodaya Gvardia* [*Gordi Javonon/Youth Guard*], translated and published many books from Tajikistan during the Soviet era. These were distributed throughout all of the republics of the USSR, giving a wide readership for their Tajik authors. Thus, one of the major benefits to Tajik writers in Soviet times was that they gained a wider audience by being translated into Russian and having books produced in Moscow. There was two-way traffic in this information transfer, with knowledge streaming into Moscow in the 100 different languages that existed in the different countries of the USSR. It did not consist only of central directives being handed down to the regions from Moscow. The State provided a high level of support for both writers and illustrators, helping and encouraging them to publish their works. Books in Farsi, Uzbeki, English, Russian and Tajiki were all published during this time (Bobokalonova 2003).

Subjects featured in these books were secular, as religion during this period was seen as a private matter. Books were obtainable for religious teaching, but these were not widely available in the bookstores. Despite the atheistic philosophy of communism, the twenty five laws of communism were easily accepted by the people

as they were very close to the laws of the Qur'an; rules of guidance such as 'do not lie, kill or steal, practice brotherly behavior, work for the common good' and so on were all familiar and acceptable to people (Bobokalonova 2003). When discussing the issue of Soviet censorship with people in Tajikistan today, one seems to be faced with a somehow selective amnesia. While it is readily accepted that there was censorship in the Soviet era, the details appear to have faded, and it seems to have become a lesser evil, compared to more recent events. Religion seems to be the main subject mentioned in relation to the subject of censorship and as one of the major changes in society since the fall of the Soviet Union. The revival of religious practice and teaching, and religious texts for children creates continuity with the pre-Soviet era as well as showing that Communism did not stamp out religious sentiment. During the 1980s the situation regarding religion had, however, already become more relaxed and there was not so much fear associated with its practice and teaching (*Soviet Union...* 2009:1).

It was not so in the early days; the Soviet Central Censorship Office, known for short as Glavlit, had been established in 1922, its aim being 'to purge the Soviet society of all expressions regarded as destructive to the new order and contagious to the minds of people.' (*Beacon...* 2009:1). It had absolute authority to censor all publications, and to suppress political dissidence by shutting down 'hostile' newspapers, not only in the USSR, but also all Soviet occupied countries. The banned publications were held in the central collection office of the Department of Special Storage and access was restricted. By 1988 when *perestroika* began, and the Department of Special Storage was closed down, the collections contained approximately 27,000 Russian books, 250,000 foreign books, 572,000 issues of

foreign magazines, around 8,500 annual sets of foreign newspapers and 8,000 publications (*Beacon...* 2009:1). The task of cataloguing and interpreting data from these collections is immense, making it difficult to assess, as yet, exactly how many, and what kind of publications were affected in Tajikistan during this period (*Beacon...* 2009:1). The social engineering enacted by this restriction of ideas and their importation from other countries, contained a paradox in relation to change and continuity. In suppressing the ideas of the previous regime this control of literature was intended to make a break with the past as well as to defend the new social order from the change and contamination inherent in foreign ideas. After the fall of Soviet rule, the past was re-examined and literature and traditions from earlier eras was revived and thrived again as if there had never been any discontinuity.

Yusufjon Ahmadzoda, Chief Editor of *Shubei Adabiyoti Kudakon va Javononi Intishorati Adib* [The Children and Youth's Literature Department of Adib Publishing House], of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan, a translator, children's poet and writer of songs, ghazals, and stories [Golnazar 2003:104], describes the changes in publishing since Soviet times (Ahmadzoda 2003). He says that the Children's Department of Adib Publishing House now comprises only three members of staff, whereas during the Soviet era, it was staffed by ten to twenty people and had a larger budget, producing more books with larger print runs: 25,000 per book compared with the present-day figure of 1000. In the last decade of the twentieth century, this department produced around ten books, both prose and poetry, mostly illustrated in black and white. Ahmadzoda says that only three or four illustrators worked in the field of children's books during this period (Ahmadzoda 2003).

One of the major changes that can be noted for this period is a major reduction in the quantity of books published for children. It is not only in the case of Adib Publishing House. This is in contrast to the situation in Iran, where the numbers of books produced for children rose steadily during the second half of the twentieth century. Ahmadzoda remembers that in the Soviet era, thirty to forty books were produced every year. In addition, three or four translations per year were produced, including translations from Jack London, Hans Christian Andersen, Mikhalkov, Chekhov, and other famous writers. A separate Department of Translation also existed which did translations for schoolbooks. The illustrations produced at this time were professional, of good quality and in color, but were not able to reflect Tajik culture, and style of dress. Russian propaganda from the Communist Party also had the effect of ‘Russianizing’ book content, and *Gloulit* checked books before publication for political correctness (Ahmadzoda 2003). Thus, illustrations visibly record that the children’s books of Soviet Tajikistan and Shah-era Iran shared the same characteristics of being affected by foreign cultural values.

Regarding the content of books produced in Tajikistan during the Soviet era, Bobokalonova (2003) considers that there were more realistic stories for children in those times, and that present-day writers tend towards formalism rather than realism. She gives the example of Ravshani Ravshanior, who wrote philosophical stories for children. She considers communism as being close in ideology to that found in the Quran. Soviet literature reflected idealism, but, she asks, what kind of idealism do present day conditions encourage? The stories of those times reflected Soviet ideology; communist ideas were accepted by writers and propagated by them as being idealistic and close to the teachings of the Qur’an. Bobokalonova says that

while there was fear about showing one's religion openly, on the other hand religious instruction books were available, such as *Tartil-al Qur'an*, produced in 1920, on how to pray (Bobokalonova 2003).

The history and mythology of Tajikistan was taught during the Soviet era, and traditional stories were encouraged. Animal and fairy stories were always popular. Translations from all over the Soviet Union and other countries were available in Russian translation, and some in Tajiki. The history of Tajikistan and Soviet countries was taught in Tajiki, while subjects such as economics and politics were taught in Russian. Russian language was also taught as a main curricular subject, and every child had to speak and read Russian. Folk tales, traditional stories, and history were seen as suitable subjects for Tajiki language, and so, the teaching of these subjects in Tajiki helped to ensure their continuity.

The Russian language continues to hold an important place in Tajikistan. All the adults in Tajikistan today and many of the children still speak Russian, and consider it a sign of status as well as an essential link with the outside world. Many schools are Russian-language schools, rather than Tajiki. The Russian government delivered 30,000 textbooks for Tajikistan's Russian-language schools and plans to send another 70,000 (Muhtarov 2008:1), which shows that Moscow is still actively encouraging the use of Russian in its former territories. Of the two TV channels available on terrestrial TV in Tajikistan, one is a Russian language station. The National Tajik channel also carries news and some films and other programming in Russian, as well as Uzbeki news bulletins. Many people leave Tajikistan to work in Russia or other neighboring countries; of the 6.4 million total population of

Tajikistan, around 1.2 million were working outside the country in 2003, of which 85% were men and 15% women (Saidov 2003:2).

Thus, it can be seen that a cultural and linguistic connection still exists between Tajikistan and Russia. Economic reality, however, has been a major informing factor in the quality and quantity of children's materials in Tajikistan, with both diminishing during the 1990s due to financial constraints. From the end of the Soviet era, research on subjects such as folklore virtually stopped and books for children were not published due to lack of funds. The civil war made the situation worse and many periodicals closed down, while other publishing was suspended. In 1994, the civil war ended and life resumed, but lack of finances meant that progress was slow. Books were imported from Iran to fill the gap, and a lively tradition of oral literature was revived, with writers visiting villages to give readings of their work to children, and children telling each other stories and writing their own.

A notable feature of Tajiki children's literature is that unlike in Iran, colloquial language is not used in modern children's stories or poetry, only the literary form of the language, which is very close to Farsi. Colloquial language can be found, but mainly in folklore and lullabies. Bobokalonova (2003) feels that the voice of children is more colloquial but is drowned by adults, war, education, chaos and other factors.

Oral methods are still very much alive, and are used for teaching other subjects as well as literature. Two reasons for the continuity of oral teaching methods are the high cost and scarcity of good quality children's books, and the lack of electricity, especially in the villages and rural areas. In schools, resources are limited. Without electricity, children are unable to do written homework at night, and their

families are too poor to spend money on buying books for them. All these reasons contribute to the continuation of oral literature. Poetry in Tajikistan continues to be popular, and has found a partner in such an unlikely subject as mathematics. Jura Hoshimi's *Az Yak Yak to Lak Lak* (2000) is a good example of poetry being used to teach numbers. Following in this tradition, a mathematics teacher, Abdurazzoqi Razzoq, has produced memorable poetry on the subject of numbers (see Chapter 9.4.6:310).

9.3 Organizations and projects

A number of projects and organizations in Tajikistan relate to children and literature; some are international, some governmental and some are private enterprises or charitable institutions. In Soviet times, education was seen as a priority and the majority of Tajik children and adults received at least a basic education. In post-Soviet Tajikistan, the Civil War and its destruction of the economy impacted on the quality of education.

The *Etefaq-i Nevisandegan* (Union of Writers of the Republic of Tajikistan), which was founded in 1934 as part of Ministry of Culture, had a section devoted to children's literature and the production of the children's magazines *Chashma*, *Oftobak* and *Rodnik*.

Governmental organizations pertaining to literature in Tajikistan also include libraries. In Dushanbe there are a number of libraries of long standing. These have continued to function despite the change of regime and the economic downturn. The

library of the Academy of Sciences is an extensive academic research library, with various special collections. There is the Ferdosi State Library, which opened in 1933, and Lahoti City Library, which opened in the same year, both of which contain children's books in their various departments, but which do not have special children's sections. In addition, there is also a National Children's Library. The Ferdosi State Library is mostly used by readers over 14 or 15 years old. In the Rudaki Library, a reading room within the Ferdosi Library, a number of children's books and magazines, as well as books on many other subjects, are available in Farsi (Hadadi 2003). Collections of books within libraries may be considered as factors which contribute to the possibility of continuity in literature for children by providing access to texts for generations of readers.

9.3.1 Cultural Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran has an active cultural program in Tajikistan, including a library at the *Raizani Farhangiye (Nemayandeye Farhangiye)* [Cultural Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran] in Dushanbe. Staff from this library keep in touch with events by attending such major book fairs as the International Book Fair in Tehran which is attended by twenty-two countries including all the countries of Central Asia, with the exception of Uzbekistan and Russia (Rasulian 2003). In this way, the Cultural Center brings up-to-date developments from the region to Tajik readers and helps to relocate Tajikistan culturally within the sphere of *Iranzamin*.

The Iranian Cultural Center produces a Farsi page for the Ministry of Culture and Writer's Union cultural and literary weekly, *Adabiyot va San'at*, introducing the

Iranian literary scene and topical events, and a page in Cyrillic for the weekly of the Ministry of Education, *Omuzgar* (for teachers, administrators, academics, and university students, 8-13 pages weekly) and for *Charkhi Gardun* newspaper. A Farsi page has been produced for *Anbaz* weekly since 2003 using articles from Iranian children's publications such as *Keyhan-e Bache-ha* and *Golaqa-ye Bache-ha*, both of which are subscribed to in the Cultural Center library. *Keyhan* (in production for 46 years) and *Etala'at* newspapers have both produced children's sections since before the revolution (Rasulian 2003). Thus, the library provides a link between Tajik teachers, scholars and young readers, and their counterparts in Iran, informing them of new literary developments, exhibitions and books for children, as well as once more strengthening the cultural links from the past.

Lessons are held at the Center for children who want to study Farsi, and Farsi children's books are available in the lending library and at Al-Hoda Bookshop in Dushanbe. Children's books from Iran are also transcribed into Cyrillic. Rasulian observed that in 1996 there had been a plan to change Cyrillic script to Farsi script, but this never came into force; some people wanted to change to Latin script as Uzbekistan had done, and others wanted to keep Cyrillic to facilitate business with Russia, but he felt that most people preferred Farsi (Rasulian 2003). This cultural program shows the continuing support and inspiration of Farsi literature and language and underlines the shared heritage of the two countries.

9.3.2 *Istiqbol*

Istiqbol [Welcome], which became an NGO after the civil war, aims to promote and represent the interests of talented children aged 5-16. It also publishes a magazine of the same name. Latofat Kinjaeva, (born in Gonchi District 8th June 1950), director and chief editor of *Istiqbol* started writing poems when she was 15 years old and published them in newspapers. She graduated with honors in 1972 from the Department of Journalism of the National University of Tajikistan, and then spent 10 years working for the Committee for Radio and Television where she was editor of radio programs for Radio Tajik and department chairman (Golnazar 2003:263).

Latofat has been involved with the monthly magazine *Istiqbol* since it was known as *Mash'al* [Torch]. In 1981, she started to work in the Department of Literature and Culture, and then became editor of *Mash'al* (Golnazar 2003:263). Latofat was involved in children's literature in Tajikistan during the Soviet era, as well as after the fall of the Soviet regime. She is, therefore, in a position to comment on the reduction in quality and quantity which has occurred in Tajikistan since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. She says that the volume of production of children's books in Tajikistan in recent years cannot be compared with that in Iran. The situation is totally different; children in Tajikistan have nowhere near the same chances of obtaining reading matter, and the few materials that they do have cannot compare in quality to those of Iran (Latofat 2003). This is a major difference between

the two areas, but it does not affect the content of Tajiki children's literature, or the links between the children's literature of Tajikistan and Iran.

9.3.3 Oshioni Boland

If books are difficult to obtain and few in number, this may lead one to assume that Tajik children have no access to computers. While this may be true in the majority of schools, and even universities, there are some projects which are concerned with training students in IT skills. One of these was started in 2000 by Mas'ud Turson Zoda (president), Dr. Tolibrozi, and Babilon-T Corporation of the NGO *Bonyadi Kudakoni Oshioni Boland* in order to teach computer basics, programming and web-design skills.

Tolibrozi, who is in charge of the course, did his doctorate in Moscow in 1979-86 in Atom Station Technology. Upon his return to Tajikistan, he taught computer courses in the Technical University of Tajikistan, Dushanbe until 1992. In 1995, he produced a computer glossary in English, Russian and Tajiki, which uses new expressions and combinations with original words taken from the *Shahnameh*. Some 30 or 40 terms used in the glossary have their origin in the *Shahnameh* and each section is prefaced with quotes taken from it. An example is the word *vir* which is used to mean 'memory' and appears in the English term 'virtual.' Tolibrozi has more recently been involved in teaching computer courses to high school students and in the foundation of the School of Information Technology (*School of Information Technology* 2005:1).

The president of *Oshioni Boland*, Mas'ud Turson Zoda, talked about his work and the founding of the NGO (Turson Zoda 2003). He has worked in a special school for young offenders, aged 11-15, for 35 years (1967-2003), the last 17 years as director of the school. In 1998, he founded *Bonyadi Kudakoni Oshioni Boland* in memory of his father, the poet Mirza Turson Zoda, with the aim of helping children to increase their knowledge, and through education and the encouragement of their talents, to help them have a better life. He is also the director of the internet and mobile phone department of Babilon-T, which is involved in setting up communication networks all over Tajikistan and in Afghanistan. *Oshioni Boland*, a forward looking initiative, can be cited as one of the elements of change in Tajikistan with regard to embracing new technology, which will in turn affect children and how they access knowledge in the future. At the same time it gives a striking example of how ancient texts such as the *Shahnameh* continue to inform and shape the vocabulary of new technology. In Tajikistan we see mathematics and poetry combined, and the literature of *Iranzamin* providing technical vocabulary for a computer glossary.

9.3.4 Young Writer's Center

One factor which promotes continuity in children's literature is to be found in the groups of dedicated people who work in the field continuously over their lifetimes. These people are crucial to the continuity of children's literature from one political era to the next. The key figure in the Young Writer's Center is Kirom Ostonzoda (born 15th January, 1935 in Sarchashmaye village, Shahrissabzi district,

Qashqadaryo region of the Republic of Uzbekistan). In 1988, he defended his thesis *Nizami Aruzi Tojiki va Tahavvuli-on* [Tajik Nizami Aruz Rythm and its Evolution] at the Rudaki Institute of Language and Literature, Academy of Sciences, Dushanbe, and became a candidate of Science of Philology [Ostonzoda 2003]. Ostonzoda has received numerous awards and has published more than fifty scientific articles on metric rhythm in newspapers, magazines and dictionaries, and numerous poetry collections (Golnazar 2003:396).

From 1961 until the present time, Ostonzoda has been active in the field of teaching language and literature in Dushanbe. He teaches high school diploma courses in Tajiki language and literature and basic courses in literature and poetry which lead students to produce their own work (Ostonzoda 2003). He has helped young people publish their writing in the production of the series *Ghonchahoyi Umed*, [Blossoms of Hope: New Writers] published in Dushanbe as discussed below (see Chapter 9.5:311-312) and has given encouragement and inspiration to a whole generation of young writers (Golnazar 2003:396).

9.4 Children's writers and their work

A number of writers specialized in children's literature during the Soviet era, and many writers in Tajikistan today are similarly engaged. This section will introduce a number of these writers, giving details of their lives and work in order to identify the influences which have affected them, and the issues which feature in their writing. The details given in this overview allow the study to attempt to

pinpoint elements of continuity and change as seen in the ideals and philosophy of writers, and in the styles, themes, and content of their work.

Firstly, a number of articles from the Russian children's literature journal *Detskaya Literatura* of March 1981 will be examined. These are devoted to Tajik literature and art for children in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the formation of the USSR, and provide an important insight into the work and lives of Soviet era children's writers. A summary of the articles is given below which provides answers to a number of questions about the writers of the time: what topics did they consider suitable for children; what view of the world and their country did they hold, and wish to pass on to children; what type of writing did they produce; and so on. This brief overview does not aim to study the entire body of work of these writers, but rather, aims to discover the range of topics that they were writing about during the Soviet era. This range of topics is relevant to the study because it gives clear examples of what exactly was being written about at the time and how this compares to the literature written for children after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Therefore a brief description of these works follows

Mahmadullo Kholov, 'A crown of happiness'

In this article, Kholov writes about the wealth and the achievements of the Republic of Tajikistan. He says Tajikistan is rich with its cotton, 'white gold', precious stones, oil and coal, marble and others, but 'the main wealth of our republic and the most dear are our children'. Someone said 'The children of Tajikistan seem to wear a royal crown on their heads.' 'But it is not quite true,' writes Kholov, 'The children of the Republic of Tajikistan do not wear a royal crown, they are crowned with happiness

and love. They are the happy ones with a bright future and they are not afraid of it because their future belongs to them.’ (*Detskaya Literatura* 1981:7)

Rajab Amonov, ‘Poetry for children: before and now’

Amonov discusses famous Tajik writers and their work, saying their poems contribute to the spiritual development of children (*Detskaya Literatura* 1981:11).

Jonon Bobokalonova, ‘Towards new horizons’

Bobokalonova’s subject is the famous Tajik poet, Mirsaid Mirshakar. Most of his works are dedicated to children. His tales teach children to love their motherland and to be honest, kind and brave (*Detskaya Literatura* 1981:23).

Zakiya Mullojanova, ‘I don’t begrudge you anything’

Mullojanova writes about a famous woman writer, Golchehra and about her father, Payrav Sulaimoni, who was a famous Tajik poet. They both dedicate their work to children. She says that if you begin to read them you will remember your childhood and feel enjoyment, finding kindness, national spirit, smiles and humor in their poems (*Detskaya Literatura* 1981:24).

Golchehra Sulaimanova, ‘Poet’s garden in blossom’

This article is about another Tajik poet, Ubaid Rajab. His poems deal with friendship and fraternity; they teach people to love their motherland, and to respect and care for the earth. (*Detskaya Literatura* 1981:30).

Nariman Bakozoda, ‘Recovered treasure’

Bakozoda discusses the work of Rozik Nugman. He came to Tajik literature as an experienced teacher. He was born in a poor village with an unusual name ‘Simurganj’ which means ‘Treasure’. The people of this village were looking for

treasure but instead of treasure, the children found only edible mushrooms. His great treasure was his grand poetry (*Detskaya Literatura* 1981:31).

Masud Mullajanov, 'Along the star roads'

This article is about the writer Adash Istad. His first books were fantasy. He entered Tajik literature as a person with no experience in writing fantasy, so he made a lot of mistakes. Then he began to write funny tales for children which became popular (*Detskaya Literatura* 1981:31).

Adi Ognetsvet, 'The warmth of her soul'

Ognetsvet writes about one of the most wonderful Tajik poets, Gulchehra Suleimanova, saying almost all of her poems are dedicated to children; she encloses the warmth of her soul in her songs and that is why children are so fond of them (*Detskaya Literatura* 1981:34).

Mirsaid Mirshakar, 'Getting to know the children's world'

This is an autobiographical article. Mirshakar says that it was not difficult to discover that his vocation was writing poems for children. Every Tajik person knows by heart his poem 'We come from Pamir', or 'The Golden Village'. He writes about people who inspired him such as V.I. Lenin, K. Chukovsky, and others (*Detskaya Literatura* 1981:34).

Abdumalik Bahori (Abdumalik Rahmanov) 'Reality and fantasy'

'I started with poetry and then I came to prose and playwriting. I have published almost thirty of my works in the Tajiki language. Then I became interested in fantasy. My first tale was *Sanbula*. In this tale I try to show the real problems that people face and I try to connect fantasy with reality,' writes Bahori about himself.

This story is about a time machine and a person who comes from the future (*Detskaya Literatura* 1981:36).

This optimistic collection of Soviet-era writing gives a very different impression from the situation in post-Soviet era Tajikistan at the beginning of the 21st century, with crime, high food prices and lack of work endemic, where qualified teachers earned only US\$9 per month and the state of some high school toilets so bad that those who were afraid of rats, including teachers, would not visit the toilets alone. The respect for poetry and art, and the love of learning is still there, but all the high hopes for the future of the nation's children seem to have been reduced to the level of hopes for their survival. The idealistic 'man conquering nature' theme inherent in Soviet philosophy had disappeared and this could be cited as a major change reflected in children's literature between the two periods.

A number of illustrations feature throughout the journal, including pictures by children. It can be seen from the articles in this journal that poetry for children was very popular. It was felt to be easy to read, play with, understand and remember. Furthermore, an extensive body of works had been handed down from early times in the form of poetry. A large proportion of this consisted of oral poetry derived from folklore, but substantial amounts of the original stories had been written down. From the early twentieth century, Tajik scholars had collected parts of the rich oral tradition of Tajikistan, which represents an important aspect of Tajik cultural identity. The Tajik Folklore Archive [Fond-i Folklor-i Tojik] of the Rudaki Institute of Language and Literature in Dushanbe became the centre of these activities, and housed a large collection of recordings and handwritten transcripts. The first

collection of poetry for children in Tajiki was Zehni's 1927 collection, *Taronahoyi Kudakon* [Songs of Children], written in the Farsi alphabet.

A contemporary biography of Tajik writers, *Adiboni Tojikiston* (Golnazar ed. 2003), demonstrates that poetry was still popular in Tajikistan at the end of the twentieth century. It also shows that in Tajikistan, male writers for children still far outnumber female writers, as they did in Soviet times. If we examine this biography, we see that overall, only thirty two writers are female out of the total of 360 writers listed. This represents just under one in ten, or less than ten percent of writers in Tajikistan. The total number of writers involved in children's literature in the biography is twenty nine, of which six are female, or over twenty per cent of the total. Thus, it can be seen that while still in the minority, female writers are more prominent in the field of children's writing than in other fields. In a random selection of eleven titles produced for children of various ages from 1990 to 2003, only two female authors/editors are seen, in comparison with nine males. Likewise, the ratio of poetry far outweighs that of prose; in the same selection, only three books were prose.

In Tajikistan, unlike in Iran, there is not enough work for many illustrators to be involved in producing illustrations for children, nor is the quality of their work, or the material available to them, comparable. Nor are there any illustrators' exhibitions in Tajikistan. Therefore, only two illustrators are briefly introduced here.

Zarina Akramdukht, who was born in 1967, in Dushanbe, received a four year Art College Diploma in 1986, followed by a 5year degree from the Department of Tajiki Philology of the University of Dushanbe. She studied pen drawing, oils, and color cartoons. She worked as illustrator for the newspaper *Uzra Anbuz* from 1990 to

1992. Between 1992 and 1997, she was busy raising her three children, and from 1997 until the time of interview in 2003, she worked for *Chashma*. In addition, she worked at Gulgul in 2001 for a year. Akramdukht also writes children's stories and some of her work has appeared in *Zangula* (2003). She says that in the Soviet era, exhibitions were organized by *Etefaqi Rossamon Tojikiston* [Illustrators' Union of Tajikistan], but after the dissolution of the Soviet Union there had been no exhibitions showing the work of children's illustrators in Tajikistan (Akramdukht 2003). Abdurashid Khalil, her husband, is also an illustrator. He does oil portraits, and contributes illustrations to *Chashma*. There is not enough work for both artists in the field of children's literature illustration (Akramdukht 2003). From this brief observation of opportunities for illustrators in Tajikistan, it can be seen that the situation is not comparable with Iran due to the economic downturn arising in Tajikistan after independence. The small amount of work done for children in this period, both writing and illustrating, is one of the factors which limits detailed comparisons between the two areas.

Nevertheless, a number of writers who were involved in researching and writing for children continued to work in the field of children's literature after the end of Soviet rule. The topics and themes found in their work can help to pinpoint any changes or similarities that occurred between the two periods. An overview of some of these Tajik writers and their work forms the next section of the research. Details about their work are given which seek to inform and illustrate the presence of continuity while highlighting changes and developments between the Soviet and post-Soviet eras.

9.4.1 Jonon Karim Bobokalonova

One of the great teachers, writers and researchers in the field of Tajiki children's literature, Jonon Karim Bobokalonova was born on 13th September 1929 in the village of Pulodoni, Konibodom District. She is a prolific and influential writer, and a pioneer in the field of children's literature in Tajikistan.

In 1958, she successfully defended her thesis at higher doctorate level 'The Works of Mirsaid Mirshakar for Children' in the Faculty of Eastern Studies of the Arts Academy of St. Petersburg. She wrote the first *Khrestomatiya-kitob oid ba Adabiyoti Bachagonoyi Sovetiyi Tojiki* [Anthology of Soviet Children's Literature] in 1971, followed by *Materialho oid ba Adabiyoti Bachagonoyi Tojik* [Materials on Tajiki Children's Literature], Dushanbe 1975, and *Masalahayi Adabiyati Bachagonoyi Tojik* [Problems of Tajiki Children's Literature], Dushanbe 1975, a research work about writers, their work, children's literature history, and other such topics. In 1976, Bobokalonova published a work entitled *Mirshakar: Shoiri Bachagon* [Mirshakar: A Children's Poet] and in 1982, *Tadzhikskaya Detskaya Literatura* [Tajiki Children's Literature] (Golnazar 2003:218).

Between 1979-84, she participated in the editing and compilation of *Tazkirayi Adabiyoti Bachagon* [Collection of Children's Literature], consisting of five volumes. She collaborated with Bahrom Firuz in the second volume and compiled independent articles for this work. Another of her articles appears in the Russian 8-volume Encyclopedia, *Encyclopedi Sovieti-Tajik*. (Golnazar 2003:219).

Bobokalonova is involved in the compilation of the textbook *Adabiyoti Bachagon* [Children's Literature] and *Torikhi Adabiyoti Atfol* [History of Children's Literature] 2 volumes, which includes Jami, Ferdosi and all the great classical

writers, as, she says, in Tajikistan the classics are considered to have contained works for children. Bobokalonova feels that advice from writers such as Nezami is especially relevant for teenagers. Some of her writing reaches a wider audience than only Tajikistan by publication in Russian. *Bargozariyi Qahramon va Gonagon Rangi Shakl va Zhonrhoyi Adabi dar Adabiyoti Atfol* [Report on Heroes and Villains of all kinds and Genres of Children's literature], her second thesis, was published in the Russian Journal *Geroye Evreyemie* in 1991 (Bobokalonova 2003). It can be seen from the above that much reference material on Tajiki children's literature has been single-handedly written by one dedicated author. Bobokalonova's works form a link between the two eras in Tajikistan and show that many of the same materials and themes continue to be popular in Tajiki literature for children. This pattern has been noted in the chapter on Iranian authors, (6.2) where themes and topics dealt with in their work survived a regime change and continued to be relevant even after the revolution.

Bobokalonova also writes her own poems and stories for children. She has taught literature courses in a number of universities, not only children's literature, but also classical, modern, and critical literature. Thus, she has been an invaluable oral source for this study. She says that in Tajikistan, modern writers seem to avoid the subject of the Civil War; very few deal with it, and furthermore they disagree about whether politics and war are subjects to be included in children's books (Bobokalonova 2003). However, as 20,000 young people were killed in the Civil War, there is no escaping the reality that children's lives are affected by these forces. This situation shows a contrast with the treatment of war in children's works in Iran, where numerous examples can be found of children's literature written on this topic

both by adults and children (see Chapter 3.5:95-101). These inspired nationalistic feelings and support for a ‘righteous’ war against an outside enemy, whereas in Tajikistan such reminders stirred up uneasy feelings about a war where neighbors fought against each other.

9.4.2 Jura Hoshimi

Jura Hoshimi was born on 9th Jan 1948 in the village of Quroq, Pulodon Soviet Village, Konibodom Region. He began his career as proofreader in the Irfon State Publishing House (1965-1968), then worked as editor of musical programs on the Radio and Television Committee of the republic of Tajikistan (1968-1970), as professional correspondent, chairman of the Literature and Art section of *Pionari Tajikistan* newspaper (1970-1976), and as executive editor of *Chashma* magazine (1986-1981). From 1972-1973, he did military service in the Baltic fleet, and from 1991, he was president of the Children’s Literature Council and the Union of Writers of Tajikistan (Golnazar 2003:639).

Hoshimi’s poems have been published nationally since 1965. Examples of his work are included in various collections, educational materials for kindergarten and many other anthologies. He says that he thinks the themes and topics contained in his own works for children did not radically change during the period from 1965 to 2000 (Hoshimi 2003). His works have also been translated and published in the publishing houses of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and many of the former Republics of the Soviet Union. He has translated poems of famous children’s poets included in the

first volume of the *Anthology of Children's Soviet Literature* from Russian into Tajiki.

In addition to his published words, Hoshimi has written many poems which until now have not been published. One of Hoshimi's proposed projects in collaboration with the Embassy of Iran is to translate 'Iranian Fairy Tales' into Tajiki and simplify them for younger ages (Hoshimi 2003). This choice of traditional stories as material for the project points to the uninterrupted popularity of classical texts as a means to propagate and restore cultural continuity.

9.4.3 Azizi Aziz

Azizi Aziz was born in 1960 in the village of Kajrovut in the district of Gonchi. In 1981, he graduated from the Faculty of Literature of the Teacher Training University of Khojand. He has worked as a teacher, (elementary school; 1982-86, and Grades 1-3: 1989-92), as a local radio presenter, as an employee of *Abrishinchiyi Peshqadam* (Khojand) newspaper, as production editor of the monthly children's magazine *Chashma*, and as an employee of the newspaper *Istiqlol*.

From 1981 until the present, he has been producing his own work for children. He is the compiler of stories, sayings and jokes collections. During the Soviet era, a number of his stories were translated into Russian, Uzbeki, Czech and Georgian. He was the prizewinner of the 1995 Tajikistan Youth Organization award, and has been a member of the Writers' Union of Tajikistan since 1995. He is the layout designer of the children's magazine *Gulgul* (Golnazar 2003:54).

Aziz (2003) divides children's literature into two groups: books for children and books about children originally written for adults, which have attracted the attention of children, and become famous as children's books as a result of having child heroes. He feels that this is possible because children are open and receptive; they are interested in anything which catches their attention. Aziz does not have a good opinion of fantasy in general and feels that children's literature should be nearer to reality, but he does not appear to include the classics in this assessment (Aziz 2003).

He complains (as did Talbrozi see Chapter 9.2.1:279) that the children of today only know the names of the heroes from the stories of the *Shahnameh*, *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, *Masnavi*, of Nezami Ganjavi and the other great writers (Aziz 2003). They no longer know the stories in detail, unlike the generation of their parents, or even their present-day Iranian counterparts. The publication of selected *Shahnameh* stories for children in two volumes by Irfan, twenty years ago, helped children of the time to become reacquainted with these stories. The stories were rewritten from poetry into prose by Satim Ulughzada. In addition, some thin paperbacks were produced containing excerpts of *Kalilah wa Dimnah* stories. Thus, even in the Soviet era, classical stories were not eradicated and the *Shahnameh*, especially, continued to inspire new rewritings. With relation to the present study, this shows paradoxically that even during the adverse conditions of the Soviet era, continuity could be seen in children's literature, while on the other hand the Civil War and ensuing economic disaster contributed to a lowering of standards of education, and knowledge of traditional stories.

Aziz (2003) counts twenty four writers in Tajikistan as being involved in children's writing and says that the majority of them write poetry. He thinks the reason for poetry being more popular than prose, apart from the influence of oral traditions, is possibly due to the level of education and research of writers being low. There is a big gap between children's and adults' levels of work. This gap has become larger since the end of the Soviet era. Writers do not understand the language of children, or their thoughts or concerns. Adults in general have lost touch with the thoughts of children; in Tajikistan, they receive orders from all the members of the family, and receive information from their elders which they are not encouraged to question, he says. The difficult social and economic conditions arising after independence could have been factors in this generational dislocation.

A severe lack of finances available for the publishing of books results in many writers building up volumes of unpublished work. Aziz, for example, had written ten books which had not been published. Writers, as a result, still use oral methods to get their stories to their audience. Local TV is a media which is accessible to writers, musicians and artists, and their work can be heard regularly in TV broadcasts by those with electricity. However, a large part of the countryside does not have access to an electricity supply. Aziz gives readings of stories for children in the villages. An example is an 8-day reading tour of South Tajikistan that he has undertaken, visiting small villages and giving readings at junior and high schools (Aziz 2003). Thus, due to the economic crisis in the country, a revival in oral literature has occurred in response to the lack of published works for children. This revival could lead to the invigoration of oral works for children, as well as strengthening the links with the oral past, which may make up for deficiencies in

other areas such as access to printed books and magazines. This could help to strengthen the continuity of children's literature by redeveloping a neglected oral delivery mode which had previously been used for so many centuries in Tajikistan.

9.4.4 Ravshan Yormohammad

Ravshan Yormohammad was born on 27 Jan 1942 in the village of Gharmov in Obigarm District of the republic of Tajikistan. He has worked in the State Committee of Radio and TV of Tajikistan, *Haqiqati Kalkhozobod* and *Tojikistoni Soveti* newspapers, the State Publishing Committee, and *Ababiyot o Sana'ot Weekly* [Literature and Art]. He was appointed chief editor of the monthly *Tojikiston* in 1991, then as the deputy chief editor of the same magazine (Golnazar 2003:185). At the same time, he was vice-chairman of the Union of Writers of Tajikistan, and chief editor of the children's publishing house Afsona. He made many official business trips to Afghanistan between 1975 and 1986. His first short stories were published in the early 1960s. (Golnazar 2003:185).

Samples of his short stories and sketches are published in anthologies. He has contributed to the production of collections of stories (Golnazar 2003:186). Yormohammad has also published a number of critical and literary articles dedicated to the subject of the development of prose and poetry in Tajiki literature, the strong and weak points of Tajik writers, classical literature and literary translations. He has translated novels by the Russian writer A. Aleksin, and by S. Sakharnov (Yormohammad 2003:187). His 2000 collection, *Qissahoya Bud-o Nabud* [Tales of Once upon a Time] contains 11 stories, including some of his earlier stories, and an

autobiographical piece in the form of a letter to his mother, telling about his experiences when doing military service. He said that he wrote this so that young people will know what military service is all about and that, as new recruits, they will have an idea of what to expect. He also stressed the importance of learning how to sew, cook, make beds, and do other tasks which are normally left for mothers or sisters or wives (Yormohammad 2003).

Many of his works are about nature (e.g. *Chashma*, Appendix 4); they are philosophical with a moralistic message. *Pakana*, the last story in the book, is the story of a tree shoot trying to grow in the shadow of a big tree. His work is considered to be like that of Krillov, a Russian writer who produces philosophical and natural poetry; he also wrote a story about a tree with a similar theme. Talking of *Zulmot yo Khud Sargozashti Ajoibi Gharoibi Qalamak* [Darkness, or the Adventures of the Interesting Little Pencil], he said that this appears to be a children's story, but is moralistic, teaching about good and evil using an epic-like story. He uses allegory and symbolism; for example, in another story a dog is used in place of a human character. Although *Shahri Bejon yo Khud Sargozashti Dukhtari Bofanda* [The Heartless City or the Adventure of the Weaver's Daughter], is told in the form of a fairy story in an undetermined time, it really refers to the present era. The city was plagued by cannibals in the story but finally became free. This story refers to the time of the Civil War when Dushanbe became a heartless city; brother killed brother, and armed robberies and kidnappings were rife (Yormohammad 2003). It is notable as one of the few stories to be found which deal with the Civil War in Tajikistan. In addition, it is an allegorical fairy story, which was a popular device used by writers such as Samad Behrangi during the pre-revolutionary era in Iran (see Chapter

6.2.6:189-190). Thus there is a continuity of style to be found between the two areas and eras, which implies that writers in post-Soviet Tajikistan were afraid to write openly about the political situation in the same way as pre-revolutionary writers in Iran.

9.4.5 Habib Imodi

Habib Imodi was born on 5th October 1937 in the village of Barziki, Chusti district, Namangoni Province in the Republic of Uzbekistan in a kolkhozchi (collective farming) family. Imodi's first collection, *Yah Dasta Sadbarg* [A Handful of a Hundred Leaves], was published in 1974 by Irfon. He has also translated works from Russia and the West. He has been a member of the Union of Journalists since 1975 and of the Union of Writers of Tajikistan since 1997 (Golnazar 2003:206). Newspapers and magazines, along with oral methods have proved useful in Tajikistan for overcoming financial limitations. Imodi has published his work as serializations in newspapers and magazines, and in this way has continued to reach his readers. The content of a number of these works is given in detail below, showing that stories about children's own experiences are popular in Tajikistan, as in Iran. In an interview with the researcher on June 7th 2003, Imodi described five of his stories:

The four-part story *Mushtaki Didari Pedar* [Longing to Meet Father] was published in the weekly independent newspaper *Muhabbat va Oila* [Love and Family], in July and August 2001. It is the story of Madina Madmarova (pen-name), a 16-year-old girl born in 1985, and her search for her lost father. He had gone to Russia to work when her mother was six months pregnant and had never returned.

She writes to him, but she can never send the letters because she does not have his address. Although she has never met her father, she keeps his photo under her pillow. Her mother remarried and she was brought up by her grandmother. She always wonders about her father and wants to find him, and has always felt different from the other children in school who live with their mothers and fathers. (Imodi 2003).

Dunya bo Umed [A World with Hope] is a story about true events during the Civil War in 1992, although it doesn't deal with the Civil War as its main topic. It was published in the magazine *Adabiyot va San'at* [Literature and Years] (2002:7). This is the only story the researcher found which related directly to life and the difficulties that people faced during the Civil War. It is about two brothers: Jamoliddin is the elder, and Shahobiddin, the younger of the two. During the war, in the noise and chaos of bombs and shooting, there is no food in the house and they have to venture out in search of daily sustenance. They live in a village in the mountains and in the spring, they go in search of wild rhubarb. Shahobiddin goes to Russia to work and comes back with money which enables him to go into business selling flour (Imodi 2003).

Sobhi Shadi [Happy Morning] appeared in *Jumhuriyat Newspaper* in 1997.¹⁴ It is a story about two boys: Khorshid, aged 5 and his brother Sadeq, aged 12. Their father disappeared during the war. Sadeq works in the bazaar, pulling a cart he has made himself, in order to earn a living for himself and his mother and brother. One day, their father, now wearing a long beard, returns home. At first Khorshid does not know who it is, as he has never seen his father with a beard. Then Khorshid's father

¹⁴ *Jumhuriyat Newspaper*, 4th October 1997 (Started in 1925 as *Bidori Tajiki*, a daily produced 5 days a week; at the time of the article, it appeared every two or three days).

promises that he will shave off his beard so that he will recognize him again (Imodi 2003).

Siyohak appeared in the children's newspaper, *Anbaz* in 1997, the only edition of the year. *Siyohak* is the name of a small dog. The story is written in the first person, with the author in the character of a friend of the boy Morad, who buys the dog in the market. *Siyohak* is a very intelligent dog and all the boys in the neighborhood play with him. Then one day, a naughty boy from another neighborhood throws a stone at *Siyohak* and hits him on the nose, causing it to bleed. Morad and his friend take the dog to the doctor where it is bandaged. The boys have to feed him *atolat* (a mixture of water and flour) as he can't eat. After this, *Siyohak* becomes sad and no longer plays with children (Imodi 2003).

Bachayi Badnafs [The Badly-behaved Child] appeared in *Anbaz Weekly* (1999:6). It is about a boy called Hassan who goes to the market to find food and eats so much that he gets stomachache. His friend, Sameh, warns him not to do this, but he does not listen. Sameh takes him home to his mother. She is angry with him and punishes him for eating food outside the house (Imodi 2003).

Imodi is a writer whose stories interest both children and adults alike, and who has overcome the restrictions in opportunities for publishing books by making use of other means of publication such as newspapers and periodicals to reach his audience. Both Imodi and Aziz are writers who have tried to reach their audience without using books, but rather by using oral methods, newspapers, or magazines as a means of disseminating their work.

The topics of Imodi's stories are similar to the ones found in works for children in Iran. The stories describe the hardships that children face in their lives:

hunger, their struggle for survival, events resulting from the Civil War, lost relatives, family solidarity, kindness to animals, and obedience to parents. The similarities of topics and themes between the two geographical areas of Tajikistan and Iran in the post-revolution and post-civil war period lead one to conclude that in this way these stories show continuity in both the regions during the second half of the time period under study.

9.4.6 Abdurazzoqi Razzoq

The last writer in this section, poet and mathematician Abdurazzoqi Razzoq was born on 26th March, 1972 in Yori Village in Panjakent. As a teacher and mathematician, creator and journalist he has printed and broadcast over 150 articles and items of correspondence on different subjects and is the author and compiler of numerous scientific and literary works

In his children's poetry collection *Bayozi Riozi* [Mathematical Anthology] Razzoq evokes the memory of a shared literary heritage when he writes in the fourth verse of his 'Rhyming Quatrains': 'After all, you are the grandchild of Khayyam' (Razzoq 2002:37). In the writing of poetry for numbers, the hidden poetry of numerical figures emerges in a way that is designed to engage the interest of young students, and this connection of mathematics and poetry is a feature of modern Tajiki writing that emphasizes the continuity of the use of poetry and oral methods for teaching diverse subjects.

9.5 Children's own writing

Children's writing, in Tajikistan as in Iran, is widely published in magazines and newspapers with various editorial policies, content and readership. Contributions from both adults and children are featured in some of these; many are professional children's magazines and weeklies which contain small sections of children's writings; while others are publications for adults with children's sections. While the section on children's own writing in Iran included young novelists and children who published books, the economic situation in Tajikistan has made it difficult for adult writers, let alone children, to have their books or novels published. However, some children do succeed in having their work published in newspapers such as *Zangula* and magazines such as *Chashma* and *Istiqbol*. Many of the readers are from the villages and have no electricity. Magazines are delivered to them in the villages and their articles are collected. Children are writing for themselves; they do not rely on books. They write and teach each other poetry. Oral tradition has been kept alive or even revived as result of the lack of resources for publishing (Zefar 2003). Tajikistan's children do not have many publications to choose from, as do the children of Iran, and as has been noted, the market in Tajikistan is quite different from that in Iran, as production is severely hampered by financial constraints.

While it has not been possible to include Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in the present research, writings by children from these areas can be found in Tajikistan. Their work appears in poetry collections as well as in contributions to weekly and monthly publications. Such collections include [Blossoms of Hope] (1999) and *Nakhati Mehr* [Breeze of Love] (2001). The collections of poems were written by young Persian-speaking writers, boys and girls in equal numbers, from Iran,

Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan (Ostonzoda 2003). The writing produced by these young writers reflects the direct impact that their surroundings and environment has had upon them. One of the poems from *Ghonchahoyi Umed* is 'Blood of Henna', written by Sitora Anvari. Sitora, a refugee from Afghanistan wrote this poem about the events at the wedding of a neighbor which she attended before fleeing her country. Sitora was present when the Taliban burst into the wedding proceedings and cut off both of the bride's arms before killing the bride and groom in front of their families, wedding guests and children (Ostonzoda 2003). A poem from *Nakhati Mehr* is 'Fleeing Birds', written by Runa Orzu, also from Afghanistan. This poem cries for peace, the banning of war, and a return home, describing her people as 'fleeing birds without motherland and home, living in the country of the kind Tajik people'. Again, as in Iran, we see that children write realistically about the world as it affects them.

9.6 Conclusion

This final chapter examined a number of issues, including the effects of classical Iranian literature and Soviet ideology on the children's literature of Tajikistan; Soviet era children's writers, their work, and the issues which concerned them; the post-Soviet influence of Iran, and the work of a number of organizations; of contemporary children's writers, and finally the writing of children themselves. The issue of change and continuity was examined in this section against a backdrop of Soviet-era propaganda and independence-era civil war, by examining such aspects

as the role of Tajiki children's literature, contemporary key personalities, style, substance, government policy and economic issues affecting its production.

The time scale involved in this chapter was slightly later than the chapters on Iran, as the main political change affecting Tajikistan in recent years was the fall of Soviet rule in 1991. Therefore the periods of comparison were pre- and post-Soviet rule, before and after 1991. Both Iran and Tajikistan were involved in a war immediately after a major political change, but in the case of Tajikistan it was civil war (1992-1997) rather than war against a neighboring country as it had been in Iran, and the resulting effect on Tajik society was seen to be quite different from that of the Iran-Iraq war on Iranian society. One aspect which illustrates this difference is the respective literary treatment of the wars fought by the two countries. The civil war in Tajikistan seems to have almost been swept under the carpet by Tajik writers, but the war of Iran against Iraq stirred nationalistic and revolutionary fervor in Iran which was reflected in literary output for adults and children alike.

While it is possible to make comparisons with the situation of children's literature in Tajikistan and Iran, the conditions in the two countries were seen to be widely different, with much less data being available in Tajikistan than in Iran. Therefore, this section relied more heavily upon oral interviews with writers, editors, journalists and critics in the field than the sections which focused on Iran. Nevertheless, a rich and varied tradition of children's literature was found to exist in Tajikistan, not only in terms of subjects, but also in languages and scripts, political and religious systems, and in the reflection of social changes taking place in the country during different periods of its history. Children here as well as in Iran, when given the opportunity, produced their own writing about subjects which affected their

lives. Despite seventy years of Soviet rule, elements of continuity have endured, as seen by the resurgence of religious sentiment, the renewed value accorded to Farsi script and language, and the survival of interest in the traditional literature of Greater Iran.

Differences between the two areas can be summarized as follows: a higher ratio of poetry in Tajikistan compared to Iran, more male writers for children than female in Tajikistan, less funds available for publishing, weaker distribution infrastructure, lack of access to newer media (TV, internet) due to no provision of electricity, more reliance on oral methods due to these factors, and the continuing economic influence of Russia in the case of Tajikistan.

Despite the differences in the social conditions of Tajikistan and Iran, the most noticeable features are the similarities arising from the common cultural heritage of the two areas. These stand out strongly when looking at the two bodies of literature which have been separated and sent down different roads by the forces of history. Even in such a brief study, many aspects of continuity can be seen in the children's literature of Tajikistan despite all the particular changes that occurred in the area during the second half of the twentieth century. It is to be hoped that more detailed studies of Tajiki children's literature will be undertaken, and that Tajikistan will see the continuation of a literary tradition which has already survived so many major political, cultural, and ideological changes.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

This thesis has presented a study of issues relating to the question of change and continuity in children's literature in Iran and Tajikistan, showing that elements of continuity have survived despite the changes brought about by major social and political dislocations in both areas. In order to do this, the study examined the connection between this literature and the society which produced it. The thesis has given a broad historical overview of relevant factors pertaining to children's literature in order to locate and identify historical continuities, then has focused on the specific time period of the second half of the twentieth century, a period encompassing major political changes, to investigate the effect of such changes on children's literature.

10.1 Organization of thesis content

The background of the study was described citing key factors that have traditionally been held to affect children's literature such as social developments and progress; political reforms, increased literacy, population growth and urbanization, and so on. Positive and negative values were seen to have been allocated to change and continuity at various times, but the study was concerned more with the relationship of these factors to social realities and the way they have affected literature for children. This strand of enquiry argued that while changes in society affected modern Persianate children's literature superficially, continuity influenced

its development at a deeper and more fundamental level. The problem statement identified the challenge of measuring the relationship of societal change and the development of children's literature, contending that while change in society can disrupt continuity and cause change in children's literature, continuity in Persianate children's literature exists as a norm, rather than as an exception. The aim of the study, therefore, was to demonstrate continuity as a basic element in the development of Persianate children's literature.

The delimitation of the field consisted of three elements: geographic, linguistic, and historical. The geographical areas featured in the study were Iran and Tajikistan. Of the three related languages of the Persianate language group, the study focused on Farsi and Tajiki. Historically, while drawing on traditional texts dating back several hundred years, the main time focus of the study was the second half of the twentieth century.

The methodology used in the research was both quantitative and qualitative, and included literature study, content analysis, sociological and educational surveys. The research drew upon historical scholarship involving various kinds of interpretations, mainly innertextual and extratextual.

In the section on definition of terms, the ongoing disagreement over the very definition of children's literature itself was seen to constitute an element of continuity, with the two opposing aims of education and entertainment respectively being held as crucial defining elements by the opposing parties. This ongoing change of position by critics and writers affects literary content and thus relates to change and continuity in Persianate children's literature. The present research included both types of literature as valid examples of children's literature.

The study addressed the paucity of materials dealing with Persianate children's literature in English as well as the specific aspects of change and continuity in Persianate children's literature. While numerous publications examine children's literature in Iran, little can be found that focuses on the social aspects of children's literature with relation to change and continuity, and as for such research in the English language, it is virtually non-existent. Therefore the study is important because it makes available a previously unresearched aspect of the literature to readers internationally.

10.2 Theoretical basis

This section of the research identified important underlying theoretical, historical and psychological factors relating to change and continuity in children's literature, and highlighted the influence of society and social demands on children's literature. The theoretical research explored relevant approaches to literature, visual modes versus oral or textual modes, the relationship of adults to children and children's literature, acculturation and socialization through literature, ideology, narrative, selection criteria, and censorship. The theory linked to the body of the study by pinpointing ideas, methods and approaches that could be used to identify change and continuity in children's literature as it passed through historical, political and social dislocations.

For example, in the same way that a consensus on the definition of children's literature is still being sought, so the very state of childhood itself is also considered by some critics to be an indefinable category. The theoretical investigation began

from this starting point and proceeded to work on the assumption that the state of childhood as a concept exists along with a category of literature that can be described as ‘children’s literature’. This literature, which up to the twentieth century included and even consisted largely of oral literature, aimed to produce model members of society by serving religious, nationalistic and moralistic purposes. This molding of society started with the acculturation of children by storytelling and later, in the process of their education, by printed literature. The use of literature to promote the desired values of society was seen to have a long history dating back to ancient texts, providing a prime example of continuity in children’s literature.

From a theoretical point of view, four primary approaches to literature were identified: mimetic theories (re. relationships to the world outside a literary work); pragmatic theories (re. audience); expressive theories (re. author); and objective or formal theories (re. literary knowledge or the structure of the work itself). The existence throughout history of the various elements defining these approaches was found to support the notion of continuity in literature on a theoretical level. For example, it was seen that both adult and child authors wrote about the difficulties and hardships of life, referring to and incorporating into their writing the real social conditions that they experienced.

When trying to separate theoretical aspects of change and continuity in order to study and quantify or qualify them, it was found that they were linked in many ways. Learning itself was defined as change. Children’s literature was seen to be at the vanguard of documenting the changes in society and socializing the new generation to deal with them. Continuity was likened to comfortable patterns of behavior and security and was seen as a defense against frightening change, which

was considered to be the cause of worry and distress. Safeness and ‘sameness’ were identified as desirable aspects in children’s books. The example of censorship and selection was given as an element that propagates both change and continuity. Intertextuality, while supporting the notion of continuity in literature, also allows for the existence of elements of change within it. Aesthetics and style, subjectivity, ideology and narrative are all identified as expressions of continuity in children’s literature, but these also demonstrate change. Ostensibly new ideas and themes in literature and art, upon closer examination, were often found to be based upon previous works, as shown in the examples from classical literature. In Iran, works from before the revolution mirrored those written after the revolution, and in Tajikistan classical themes and stories survived through the Soviet era and again resurfaced after independence. While great social changes were seen in Iran and Tajikistan during the second half of the twentieth century, both children and adults continued to tell stories and to write about the same topics: their environment, their neighborhood or village, life’s struggles, work, school, and family relationships, and so on.

10.3 Historical background

As most of the present scholarship on Persianate children’s literature is written in Farsi and directed at a specialized audience of people dedicated to the field, the broad overview of key background points given in this study intended to inform and make the subject of Persianate children’s literature accessible to a wider

audience, while laying a foundation for the specific aspects to be examined, i.e. change and continuity.. This overview of social and political history, along with reference to traditional texts, and the work of organizations, included many diverse issues in order to give a fuller understanding of the social realities affecting children's literature in both Iran and Tajikistan. This study was particularly concerned with detecting elements of continuity and change and relating them to surrounding events and influences, past and present.

In the sections discussing the history of Iran and Tajikistan, not only obvious factors relating to literature such as educational reforms, literacy programs, book selection and production, and so on, were analyzed, but also social and political developments, such as industrialization, urbanization, the civil war in Tajikistan, and in Iran, the Islamic Revolution and the Iran/Iraq war. These developments were also important factors which informed the content and themes of children's literature, highlighting the cultural background against which continuity or change could be seen. Several trends in children's literature were identified which continued through different periods of time, such as the use of the *Shahnameh* as inspiration for stories in both geographic regions, and the return to traditional and religious inspiration after governmental influence leaning towards other cultures, such as communism in Tajikistan and Western capitalism in Iran.

The historical background drew together diverse strands comprising a number of issues necessary for understanding the dynamics of children's literature in the area of *Iranzamin*. The study presented a brief chronological overview of the major events occurring within Iran and Tajikistan leading up to and during the period under study. Development plans, industrialization, educational reforms, and changing

demographics were underlying factors which contributed to the development of children's literature in both areas during the 1960s and 70s. Further similarities which impacted on literature were seen in the second half of the period studied. For example, influences and ideology from foreign countries were discouraged after 1979 in post-revolution Iran, and after 1991 in post-independence Tajikistan. In place of this foreign influence, cultural links with the past were regenerated which led to an upsurge in traditional and nationalistic values. In addition, the secular tendencies of both were replaced by more tolerance for religious sentiment, and in the case of Iran by a religious government.

The dual effects of classical literature and Soviet ideology on the development of children's literature in Tajikistan were examined. Soviet era and post-Soviet era children's writers were studied; their work, and the issues which concerned them, the post-Soviet influence of Iran, and the work of a number of organizations, contemporary children's writers, and the writing of children themselves were all investigated for evidence of change or continuity. A smaller amount of data was available for Tajikistan compared to Iran, as the level of activity and economic resources allocated to the area of children's writing and illustrating in Tajikistan was much less than that of Iran due to the Civil War and resulting chaotic conditions. A strong Russian cultural influence remains in Tajikistan, the parallel of which does not exist in Iran, and conversely there is a lack of indigenous Tajiki materials with religious themes, whereas in Iran these have continued to exist for centuries. Although Tajiki writers were affected by surrounding events which were reflected in their writing, the body of work they produced showed elements of continuity both in its purpose and as a reflection of the personal interests or

experiences of its authors. Soviet rule had the apparent effect of destroying culture, religion, language and identity, but it was seen that with independence in Tajikistan and the ensuing civil war these elements re-emerged, showing that they had in fact survived. As in Iran during the rule of the Shah when Western values were adopted, Tajikistan children's literature also passed through a period of isolation from its cultural roots during Soviet rule when Soviet values were enforced. This was followed by separation from the imposed Soviet cultural influences after independence, and a return to traditional values.

The study investigated changing social and political conditions found in the twentieth century specifically in relation to their effect on reading materials produced for children. Evidence of the effects of social issues was found in a quarter of children's reading materials, while content analysis of educational materials showed that changes arising from social issues tended to be superficial or of a temporary nature. In the second half of the period studied, i.e. after the revolution, a major change was seen in that the issues and inspiration were informed by indigenous rather than foreign influence. Of the ancient writings, fables and epics which have influenced modern children's literature in both Iran and Tajikistan, four works used as sources of inspiration by modern writers were examined: *One Thousand and One Nights*, *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, *Mulla Nasruddin or Goha*, and the *Shahnameh*. Elements of folktales and their effect on modern tales and modern writers were studied. It was found that the folktale formed the basis for many modern children's stories in both Iran and Tajikistan, and continues to play a major role in children's literature. Many themes were seen to have been adapted from folktales, classical texts and traditional stories. Certain popular story plots continuously recur; two

examples are those which feature heroes or engender nationalist sentiment. In addition to plot and content, morals and values from much earlier periods have been repeated in later texts and continue to provide a source of inspiration for writers. Continuity therefore was shown to exist in popular themes which writers use as a basis for children's stories such as that of the people's hero who liberates the underdogs from the oppression of their rulers or overlords.

Children's literature was examined from the aspect of organizations involved with its development, in particular the CBC and the *Kanun*, two of the main organizations involved with children's literature in Iran. The content of works for children was greatly influenced by these organizations during the second half of the twentieth century. The study traced the development and activities of these organizations from their beginnings in the late 1950s or early 1960s to the end of the twentieth century. Information obtained from archives and interviews of staff and officials helped to pinpoint aspects of continuity which previously had been considered as aspects of change. For example, while many critics considered that the Islamic Revolution caused fundamental changes in children's literature in Iran, records from these organizations showed that this was not necessarily the case. The CBC and the *Kanun* contributed to the increase seen in quality and quantity of both works for children and literary criticism in Iran, while their work documented trends in the production and content of works for children. This documentation is a valuable source of information for researchers in the field of children's literature in Iran. While organizations concerned with children's literature exist in Tajikistan, such as *Istiqbol* and the children's literature branch of *Etefaq-i Nevisandegan*, their contribution has been limited to due to a lack of financial and technical resources. In

Iran the effect of the CBC and the *Kanun* on the field of children's literature was twofold; first creating contact with the outside world through activities such as supporting international exhibitions and prizes, and acting as conduits for international influence and input; and second supporting continuity in the field through the work of longstanding members who taught and influenced the next generation in the field. This chapter was important as it provided a logistical, documented aspect to the research by using statistics from organizations that have been working in Iran in the field of children's literature since the middle of the twentieth century.

10.4 Twentieth century works

In order to understand the background of the problem; can continuity be proven to exist in Persianate children's literature as the norm, co-existing with change, rather than being the exception, diverse issues outside the time period of the second half of the twentieth century were examined in order to highlight the cultural background against which continuity or change could be seen before proceeding to the works of authors in the second half of the twentieth century. These included a background of political and social changes, an analysis of educational developments, and four examples of classical story collections. Against this background, a number of children's writers was analyzed, firstly adult writers and secondly child writers in both Iran and Tajikistan. These two sections reinforced each other, as children's concerns were seen to mirror those of the adult writers. This demonstrated that the

adult writers were in tune with their audience and had identified issues in their work relevant to their young readers. The work of several of the adult writers spans both the pre- and post-revolutionary periods, and thus has been affected by diverse social and political influences. Despite changes in government, many of the same key writers continued to work with dedication in the field of children's literature. Their ideas and work provide an element of continuity and a source of inspiration for later writers. A number of their works written in the 1960s and the 1980s were analyzed for similarities or differences in choice and treatment of content and it was found that allegory and fantasy, idealistic writing, traditional stories, and religious writing all existed in a similar ratio in both periods under study. This contradicts the claims to the contrary of critics in the field that the Islamic Revolution and the fall of the Soviet Union were events which led to radical changes in children's literature.

The work of children themselves, as has been noted, is an area not often examined or accorded any importance by scholars in the field of children's literature. In an attempt to redress this situation, the study examined the contents of a number of examples of children's own writing in Iran from before and after the revolution, and found that they also supported the argument for continuity in children's literature. One of the assumptions addressed was that pre-revolution writing by adults for children contains more allegory and fantasy and 'safe' rewritings of traditional stories than post-revolution works. The themes and topics prevalent in the writing of children were similarly investigated for the ratios of fantasy and reality depicted in the two time periods, but the children's own writing examined in this thesis does not show a change in ratio from one to the other. The topics which appeared in their stories in both periods include many realistic reflections of

society's problems as they affect children, such as slavery, oppression, inequality, poverty, and so on.

While it is accepted that social and political influences shape adults' worldview, concerns, and modes of expression, the same was found to be true for child writers. The excerpts of children's writing from magazines, poetry collections and prose collections which were examined, as well as the work of a young Iranian novelist, reflected this tendency. Writers, whether children or adults, are equally affected by social and economic influences, and write from their own experience about issues which they view as important. This in itself is an element of continuity in literature generally. As all adults have at one time been children, when writing for children they draw upon their own memories of the experience of childhood, bridging the gap between the writing of adults and the writing of children.

Illustration of children's books in Iran was included in this study because it constitutes a vital aspect of children's literature. The visual aspect of illustrated books reflects social and cultural values in a visible way, showing traditional, national and international influences. One of the issues affecting Iranian artists was regional versus international influence both before and after the revolution. While a study of illustration exhibitions highlighted the question of the hegemony of European and American culture internationally, a strong tradition of Persian miniatures from over five hundred years ago, itself influenced by Chinese art, has fortified Iranian illustrative traditions until the present day, and in turn has influenced Indian and Turkish art.

Thus, when examined over a longer time-period, export and hegemony of culture are seen to be continuous factors in the development of art. While Iranian

writers, writing in Farsi, can only hope to reach Persian audiences unless they find a way of publishing translations of their works overseas, Iranian illustrators do not have this barrier to the reception of their work outside Iran. However, other factors were seen to affect illustrators of children's work trying to find a wider audience, such as economic and political barriers. These factors have contributed to the existence of continuity in the works of Iranian illustrators as they created a somewhat isolated environment especially after the Revolution.

10.5 Recommendations

Overall, several differing points of view have been discovered during this research which impact upon the question of change and continuity in Persianate children's literature. With regard to definition of terms, it was found that arguments on the nature of children's literature do not seem to have been resolved satisfactorily until today; should it be instructive or merely entertaining? Educational material shows the attitudes, morals and body of knowledge deemed important for the members of society in its corresponding era. It records changes in the content of reading materials that schoolchildren are exposed to, and it includes literature as a part of its content. Therefore, the study included educational literature and recommends its inclusion in future children's literature research.

Oral literature is rarely included in definitions of literature found in modern reference books, the emphasis being on reading and writing, but continuity is a major factor in oral literature with songs and stories spanning the centuries. In addition,

written literature is often based on oral stories, and with the spread of visual media such as TV, videos, DVDs, and online visual content, this written literature has returned to a popular oral and visual form, creating a further continuous element. The researcher considers that both oral literature and literature originally meant for adults but adopted by children also belongs in the category of children's literature and as such, has been used as source material in this study. Archives of older traditional and folkloric materials as well as modern media represent oral sources of materials used for children which link with each other. These could be exploited more fully in future research and their relationship with each other investigated for evidence of continuity. In addition, adult works such as *1001 Nights* could be more thoroughly investigated in future from the aspect of change and continuity to discover how and why they became popular with young readers, and how this related to society. Therefore a further recommendation is that these two types of literature should be included and enlarged upon in Persianate children's literature research.

This study focused on continuity and change over two time periods and two geographical areas: pre- and post-revolution in Iran and pre- and post-independence from Soviet rule in Tajikistan. Despite a lack of parallel data from the two periods as well as from the two areas under study, due to a lack of exactly matching source materials, it was possible to find sufficient data to support the study's argument for the existence of continuity in children's literature despite social change. A recommendation would be to explore children's literature from this geographical area more thoroughly when previously inaccessible materials become available. For example the thousands of books and magazines in the collections of the Department of Special Storage of *Glavlit* (Soviet Central Censorship Office) have still to be

indexed and analyzed. In order to study the aspects of change and continuity in twentieth century Tajiki children's literature more thoroughly, a comparison of published Soviet works and those kept in storage by *Glavlit* must be undertaken, and then the two bodies of work need to be compared with materials published after the end of Soviet rule.

As very little background material on Persianate children's literature is available in English, much of the data was obtained by translating material mainly from Farsi or Tajiki. As a result, it is not possible in many cases to refer the reader to further sources in English for additional information. Thus, statistics and general information about the field have, of necessity, formed an important part of this study. The recommendation here is that more research needs to be done in this field and made accessible to English language speakers, not only from the point of view of change and continuity but from other aspects as well. More Persianate children's works need to be translated into English in an attempt to redress the present imbalance and to ensure a two-way flow of ideas and culture.

This study identified elements of continuity and change in Persianate children's literature and endeavored to detect trends and relate them to surrounding events and influences, past and present. Especially, this study has focused more on the existence of continuity despite change, whereas other research has mainly focused on the more visible aspects of change itself. It is hoped that the present work will be a starting point for further study in this aspect of the field. Subsequent research will seek to continue the exploration of these topics and to further establish the important position of Persianate children's literature in influencing and maintaining a society's cultural norms by providing the essential thread of

continuity. The dual aspects of continuity and change form a recurring theme and, as both contribute to children's literature, these aspects deserve on-going investigation in future research.

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Appendix 1) Four stories of Samad Behrangi

Twenty-four restless hours (Bist-o-chahar sa'at dar khab va bidari)

The story *24 Restless Hours* is told by a fictitious country boy living temporarily in Tehran with his father. This is his account of their last 24 hours in Tehran before they return to their hometown. The story falls between two genres: hard social realism conflicts with the fantastic dream world of the narrator who spends his days competing fiercely in the dog-eat-dog world of the streets, and his nights on magic journeys with a toy camel that he covets in a shop window. But the camel is eventually sold and the boy's dream stolen. Behrangi writes as an introduction to this story:

‘Dear Readers,

I didn't write the story *24 Restless Hours* to set an example for you. My purpose is rather that you become better acquainted with your fellow children and think about a solution to their problems.’

Latif, a young, illiterate boy, is the main character in the story. He has come to Tehran with his father to try and earn some money for their family back home in the provinces. Latif's Father has been out of work for several months, so he decides to go to Tehran, hoping to meet up with others from their hometown who are working in the capital as vendors of ice, oranges, clothing and other goods.

He buys a handcart and sells vegetables, sleeping on the cart in the street at night. Latif helps his father and sometimes sells small items on his own, such as charms and chewing gum, returning to their handcart at night to sleep. He passes the

days with his friends Qasem, Ahmad Husayn and Zivar's son, other poor street children, sometimes gambling and getting chased by the police; but he doesn't beg, as his pride will not let him. He smashes a shop window because the shop-owner upsets him by intimating that he is a beggar.

A car driver knocks him down in the street and then shouts abuse at him. Dodging the park guards, the boys wash in the water gutter at City Park gate, but still 'don't smell clean like the rich children'. Latif sees that only because of his poverty and not for any other reason he is treated unjustly. He feels very strongly the unfairness of this. His stress and frustrated energy surfaces as a wish to fight and show how tough he is, using new Tehrani slang recently picked up on the streets.

Despite his tough exterior, he feels lonely and misses his mother very much and spins dreams around a huge toy camel he sees in a toyshop window in Naderi St. He fantasizes that the camel is his and they go on trips at night, playing music, flying to the villas of North Tehran where the rich people live and where he finds all the toy animals from the toyshop waiting for him to join the feast. He dreams that he eats but never gets satisfied. He wakes up to hard reality when the street sweeper sweeps dust into his face.

The camel is his fantasy friend, voice of resistance against social injustice, teacher, leader of the masses and the only thing in Latif's life which gives him any joy or hope of escape. At the end of the 24 hours he goes to see it one last time before leaving Tehran but his hopes and dreams are crushed when his camel is sold and is given to a little rich girl who drives away with it in front of his eyes, an event which tips him over the edge of reason. He chases the car and jumps on it but is

pushed off and left bleeding in the street, wishing he could get his hands on a machine gun.

The bald pigeonkeeper (Kachal koftarbaz)

Kachal, the hero of the story is a poor, but wise boy who lives with his mother, a goat and some pigeons in a small hut beside the king's palace. Kachal collects firewood and dry bushes to feed the goat. His mother spins wool on her spinning wheel. Between them they manage to make a living. From her balcony the princess is able to watch Kachal's pigeons fly and little by little they fall in love. Kachal can never show his feelings, as he knows he can never marry the daughter of the king.

The princess becomes ill from lovesickness and no one can cure her. The king, however, learns her secret and becomes furious, threatening to banish her from the kingdom. He decides to take matters into his own hands and sends soldiers to kill all Kachal's pigeons. They carry out his order and also beat Kachal and break the leg of his mother's spinning wheel. A few days later Kachal is recovering under the mulberry bush in their yard when he hears two pigeons whispering to each other and talking about how he can bring his pigeons back to life. He jumps up and follows their instructions and all his pigeons wake up and fly away to return after a while with a magic hat that makes the wearer invisible. Kachal's mother begs him not to use it to touch forbidden property, and he promises not to touch things that are forbidden to him. He puts on the hat and goes to the district where the rich factory owners live.

He asks himself how one factory owner by the name of Haji Quli has gained his wealth and money and deduces that as it comes from the work of the workers it should rightfully belong to them and not to Haji Quli. With this in mind, he enters his house and sees him in the garden taking afternoon tea with his wives. His hunger gets the better of him when he sees the honey, cream, toast and tea in front of Haji Quli, and he starts to eat and drink some of it. Everyone is terrified and they start screaming and praying and running away. Kachal then goes into the house, takes all the money from the safe as well as other valuable items and then goes and distributes everything among the workers, telling them that it belongs to them. A little money is left over and he uses this to buy food.

Haji Quli and the other rich landowners go to the king to ask him to protect their property from Kachal. This gives the king the excuse he needs to launch an all-out attack and he sends his entire army to deal with Kachal. In the battle, Kachal's pigeons defend him by dropping goat droppings on the soldiers' heads. Their commander-in-chief is wounded, many of the soldiers' heads are broken open and they are plunged into a state of shock and confusion, until finally they are forced to retreat.

Kachal then visits the princess in the palace while wearing the hat. It is knocked off and he is captured, but manages by a ruse to get it back. He is locked in the palace by the king who orders all the doors to be closed but the princess saves him by running to his mother's house for help. The pigeons come and bombard the palace for hours until the king finally admits defeat and has the doors opened. The king sends servants to throw his daughter out of the house, but they find that she has

already left. The princess has run away to join Kachal. His mother teaches her how to spin wool and they live happily ever after.

The little sugarbeet vendor (Pesarak labu forush)

This story is told from the point of view of the new teacher in a village school and concerns events which have already happened. The subject of the story is Tarvardi, the sugar beet seller, a young boy who arrives at the school to sell his sugar beets one day. The teacher invites him inside the classroom to warm himself and treats him kindly. The children also seem to be very sympathetic towards him and to respect him. The teacher learns Tarvardi's story little by little from the other students and from Tarvardi himself on his subsequent visits to the school. Tarvardi's mother is paralyzed and cannot walk. Tarvardi's father, Asgar Aqa the Smuggler, has been killed by gendarmes.

When he was alive the family owned a house and lived comfortably, but after his death they have become penniless. Tarvardi and his elder sister, Sulmaz, are forced to go and work in the carpet workshop of Hajji Qoli Farshbaf. They have been working there for several years when their mother falls ill. Hajji Qoli starts to pay too much attention to Sulmaz, staring at her, sometimes putting his hand on her head and laughing. One week on payday, Hajji Qoli gives Sulmaz ten rials extra, telling her that it is for their sick mother. When they go home to their mother she tells them not accept any more money from him.

The next payday they go to collect their pay after everyone else as Hajji Qoli has told them to come when he is alone. He gives Tarvardi an extra fifteen rials,

saying that the next day he will come to their house to talk to their mother. Tarvardi throws the money back at him and tells him that they do not need extra money. Hajji Qoli tries to push the money into Sulmaz's hand but she runs out in fear. Tarvardi flies into a rage and, picking up a weaver's knife from the table, throws it, cutting Hajji Qoli on the face. When Tarvardi goes home he finds Sulmaz crouching beside her mother crying.

That night the village headman is sent by Hajji Qoli to ask for Sulmaz's hand in marriage. Tarvardi's mother says that Hajji Qoli has a wife and children in town and concubines in four other villages and that he is not interested in having family connections with the villagers, only in acquiring another concubine. In her opinion he is like a huge pig; fat and squat and ugly. She says that even if she had a hundred daughters she wouldn't give one of them to that hyena. The headman is sympathetic but warns her that the consequences of refusing Hajji Qoli are likely to be grim, as he will turn Tarvardi over to the gendarmes, among other things.

Sulmaz is terrified and refuses to go back to work, so the next day Tarvardi goes there alone. Hajji Qoli is standing by the door of the workshop fingering his worry beads. Tarvardi is afraid to pass but Hajji Qoli tricks him, saying that he is not going to hurt him and then as Tarvardi is about to go through the door Hajji Qoli grabs him and starts beating him. Tarvardi runs to get his hands on the weaver's knife to kill him, but luckily for Hajji Qoli the workers restrain Tarvardi and carry him home by force.

The family survive by selling their goat, Sulmaz goes to work for the baker, whose son is her fiancé and Tarvardi does whatever work he can find. Several years later the teacher returns to the same village and finds Tarvardi tending forty or fifty

goats and sheep on the mountainside. He asks his news and Tarvardi tells him that his sister has gotten married and that he himself is now saving up for his own marriage.

The little black fish (Mahi-ye siyahe kuchulu)

This is the most famous of all Behrangi's stories, both within Iran and internationally. It is a story with universal appeal and has been likened in this respect to stories such as Antoine de St. Exupery's *Le Petit Prince* and Richard Bach's *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. In 1969 *The Little Black Fish* won international awards at literature festivals in Bologna and Bratislava which further enhanced its reputation back home. As a result of this prestige it was the only story of Behrangi's which managed to escape censorship. There have been first and second English editions of stories containing *The Little Black Fish* published by Three Continents Press (1976 & 1987) and a 1992 English translation by Hooshang Amuzegar and illustrated by Allison Remick.

The Little Black Fish is a tale within a tale, told at bedtime by grandmother fish to her grandchildren at the bottom of the sea. It is the story of a little black fish whose home is a stream. Grandmother tells that the fish is an only child, the only survivor from 10,000 eggs laid by its mother. This little fish starts to question the confines of its world and to ask where the stream goes and where it ends. In trying to talk these matters over with its mother, the little fish involves all the neighbors in the discussion. Everyone tells the little fish to forget about this idea of finding the end of

the stream and searching for another way to live, but finally the little black fish leaves them all and sets out on a journey to seek knowledge of the world.

At the bottom of the waterfall the little black fish finds a pond full of tadpoles who are very proud and think they are the noblest and prettiest creatures in existence. The little black fish asks to meet their mother and when the mother frog appears she complains about her children being led astray by the little black fish's talk and attacks it, saying that the world is this pond and nothing more.

The little black fish darts away and carries on down the stream. The little fish meets a crab and then a lizard, who tells it about the dangers of the pelican, the swordfish and the heron and gives the little fish a dagger to use to escape in case it is ever caught in the pelican's pouch. The lizard also tells about the band of fish who fight back when the fisherman tries to catch them in their nets by pulling the nets to the bottom of the sea.

Later in its journey the little fish meets a deer who has been shot by a hunter, in another place comes upon turtles napping, and so on until it meets a school of fish in the wide part of the valley where there was a lot of water. Many tiny fish come to talk with the little black fish and when they learn that it wants to go down the river to find the end they warn it about the pelican. They wish the fish well but are too afraid to accompany it.

The little fish continues and that night falls asleep under a rock. It is woken in the middle of the night by the moonlight shining into the water. The little black fish has always wanted to speak to the moon but its mother has never allowed it to do so. Now it is able to greet the moon and the moon replies, telling it many interesting things and asking the little fish if it has heard that humans were planning to fly up

and land on the moon. In the morning the little black fish wakes up to find that a group of the tiny fish has followed after all and are waiting overhead.

They are just about to set off when the water around rises up, everything goes dark and they realize that they have been caught in the pelican's pouch. The tiny fish immediately begin crying and blaming the little black fish for their misfortune. They plead with the pelican to spare them, claiming that they are innocent and that the little black fish has led them astray. The pelican says he will pardon them if they strangle the little black fish. They are quite ready to do this to save themselves but the little black fish tells them not to trust the pelican's tricks and that to test the pelican it will just pretend to be dead. As the little black fish has the dagger to defend itself with the tiny fish are forced to agree and they shout to the pelican that they have strangled the little black fish. Immediately the pelican swallows them all, but the little black fish escapes by splitting open the wall of the pelican's pouch with the dagger and swimming away to where the pelican cannot reach it.

The little black fish swims on to where the river flows through a level plain. Several other rivers have joined it and the water has become so immense that the little fish cannot see the bottom. Suddenly it is attacked by a creature with a double-edged sword in front of its mouth. The little black fish escapes and swims to the surface, but after a while, goes below again in search of the bottom of the sea.

It meets a huge school of fish; thousands of them and is told 'Welcome to the Sea' and is invited to join the school of fish. The little black fish is very happy and agrees to join them after exploring the sea a little. The fish warn it to take care near the surface as the heron is there and each day catches at least four or five fish. The little black fish swims off and later comes to the surface where the sun is shining and

it basks in the sun while thinking that if it should die now it will not matter, but that what will matter is the influence that its life will have on the lives of others.

At this moment a heron swoops down, catches the little black fish in its beak and flies off with it to feed to its young. The little black fish tries to save itself by talking to the heron and saying that if it dies its body will become full of poison and it would be better to swallow it alive. The little fish goes limp and the heron, alarmed, calls out to it. The little fish leaps from its beak and falls to the water, but at the same moment the heron catches it again and swallows it immediately.

It is wet and dark inside the heron's stomach and there is no way out. The little black fish hears the sound of crying and sees a tiny fish crouched in a corner. It tells the tiny fish to calm down as it is going to kill the heron by ripping open its stomach with the dagger and it will free the tiny fish first so as not to spoil the plan. In order to achieve this the little black fish jumps about to tickle the heron and then when it opens its mouth to laugh the tiny fish leaps out into the water. The tiny fish waits to see the little black fish but there is no sign of it. Then the heron falls down and cries out and beats its wings. It splashes into the water, beats its wings again and then stops moving. There is no sign of the little black fish and it is never seen again.

The story ends with the death of the little black fish when it is swallowed by the heron, but its last heroic act is to save another little fish who has been swallowed before killing the heron and dying itself in the process.

Extract translated from Samad Behrangi, 'Literature for Children,' June 1968

in *Majmu'ah-e Maqalah-ha* (A Collection of Essays), 1348/1969, pp.120-121:

'That time is past when we limited children's literature to propaganda and indoctrination; dogmatic advice on things such as personal hygiene, obedience to parents, listening to adults, not making noise in front of guests, being an early riser, in order to be successful; smile and the world smiles with you: helping the poor in the style of Charity Institutions, and many other examples like these, the total sum of which contributes to keeping children ignorant of the major issues and crucial problems of life and their living environment. Why should we smother the child in an unfounded cocoon of hope and happiness and joy while his elder brother is craving for one free breath, one breath of fresh air? The child should be disillusioned with baseless and unrealistic expectations but rather be given another type of hope based on knowledge of the realities of life and society and so replace the false hopes with a struggle to achieve these expectations.

Is there nothing else necessary for children to learn other than cleanliness and obedience to elders and listening to teachers (which teachers?) and politeness and ethics (which ethics?); that the powerful, rich and opulent support and propagate?

Should we not tell our children that there are children in this country who have not seen the color of meat or even cheese from one month to the next or even from one year to the next? Because there are a few people who always desire to have "goose cooked in wine" on their dinner table!...Should we not tell our children that more than half of the world's population is hungry; and why they are kept hungry; and what ways we can fight to alleviate their hunger? Should we not teach our children a scientific and correct concept of the history, development and evolution of human societies? Why must we bring up children to be prim and proper, obedient and silent? Do we intend to put children behind the shop windows of luxury haberdashers stores at the top end of town and turn them into elegant dummies?'

Appendix 2) Original children's poems of Mahmud Kianush

<http://www.art-arena.com/parrot.htm>

1) Fig.16. He runs like a deer

او مثل آهو می دود

تا می رود، یاد است، باد،
تا می نشیند، آه، هیچ!
از رفتنش شاد است، شاد،
وقتی که ماند از راه، هیچ!

او مثل آهو می دود،
مثل پرستو می پرد،
این سو و آن سو می دود،
این سو و آن سو می برد.

بر خاک چارو می زند،
بر آب دامن می کشد،
در باغها هو می زند،
بر خانه ها تن می کشد.

سنگین و سنگین می رود،
دولا و دولا می جهد،
از کوه پایین می رود،
تا ابر بالا می جهد.



2) Fig.17. Moon above, moon below

ماه بالا، ماه پایین

این ماه پایین
غمگین و خسته:
بشقاب نقره،
اما شکسته.

یک ماه بالا،
در گنبد شب:
پرنور صد چشم،
پرخنده صد لب.

یک ماه پایین
افزاده بر آب:
این می زند موج،
آن می خورد تاب.

آن ماه بالا
شاد و شکفته،
پرتو فشانند
بر شهر خفته.



3) Fig.18. The little butterfly

پروانه کوچولو

پروانه کوچولو
با بالهای خسته،
تو باغچه، زیر آفتاب،
روی گلی نشسته.

پاهای نازکش را
رو گل دراز کرده؛
مثل کتاب رنگی
بالها را باز کرده.

صد نقش و رنگ دارد
بالهای زیبای او؛
اوبه تماشای گل،
من به تماشای او.



4) Light

چراغ

تا که به دل چشم گفت:
«تار شدم، نور نیست!»
چشم به او گفت: «نور
از من و تو دور نیست.

«اگر چه باز آفتاب
به چاه مغرب گریخت
اگر چه شب از دهان
بر آسمان قیر ریخت

«هست به دامان سقف
بچه ای از آفتاب
تیرگی از نور او
دور شود با شتاب.»

تیرگی شامگاه
به روشنی چیره شد
آینه آسمان
از نفسش تیره شد

غول شب آمد به خشم
تاختن آغاز کرد
تا بخورد هر چه هست
غار دهان باز کرد

از همه چیزها
رنگ رفت، نور رفت
جنیش و آواز رفت
حال رفت، شور رفت

Appendix 3) Four stories of Moradi Kermani

The drum

Majid's greatest dream is to own a drum like his neighbor Mahmood Agha's. Day and night, he thinks of the drum. It appears in his dreams; he even sees himself on the roof of his house beating it, and hears its wonderful sound. He drums unconsciously in his sleep as a result, scattering feathers from his pillow all over the bed.

Drums are beaten on the nights of the fasting-month, to wake people up to eat and to say their morning prayers. From the roof, Majid watches Mahmood Agha beating the drum in the dim light of the stars just before dawn and sometimes in the moonlight to wake the people up. On mourning days in the month of Moharram, too, the drums are beaten in front of the crowds of mourners, who strike their chests in time with the rhythmic sounds.

Majid plucks up his courage and goes to the roof of his neighbor's house and asks him if he can beat his drum, explaining that it is his greatest desire. But Mahmood Agha is outraged and tells Majid that it is impossible as drumming is not a child's business.

Majid then goes to a shop which sells drums and other musical instruments, but the price of a drum is quite beyond his pocket. He asks his grandmother for money to buy one, but she only scolds him and tells him to get on with his studies.

Majid takes to drawing big pictures of drums and making his own set of wooden drumsticks. Finally, one day, when Mahmood Agha is out of the house, he

decides to take the greatest risk he has ever taken, without caring about being punished or beaten. He takes the drumsticks, tiptoes into Mahmood Agha's house, past Khadijeh Khanom, Mahmood Agha's wife, who is in the kitchen, round the flower bed, past the cackling hens and roosters under the pomegranate tree, and into the closet where the drum is kept, the doors of which are standing open.

The drum is leaning against the wall, a beam of light from the doors falling on its skin. Majid's heart is beating quickly and he rubs his hand on the drum's soft, smooth surface. First, he taps on the drum with his fingers just to hear how it sounds. But then he finds the courage to hit the drum with his sticks. When Khadijeh Khanom, Mahmood Agha's wife, comes to see what's making the loud noise, she thinks it's a chicken that has hit the drum; she chases the bird away and closes and latches the closet doors. Majid is trapped in the closet, imprisoned with the beloved drum. He drifts off to sleep, awakening at sunset to hear his grandmother Bibi crying to Khadijeh Khanom that he has been lost for hours. Bibi's sobs stir Majid into giving himself up, but he decides to first beat the drum so that at least he won't be getting into trouble for nothing. He drums until he is tired and then when the sound of the drum dies down he hears screaming and shouting outside. When he peeps through the doors he sees a crowd of people pointing to the closet and Bibi, who has fainted. Khadijeh Khanom thinks the house is haunted. As he watches, three thick-necked, strongly built men, each carrying a big club, head toward the doors, all the while whispering the name of God. Majid is afraid they will kill him and shouts out that it is Majid. When the men hear his voice, they drop their clubs and run away. The crowd, too, run out of the house wailing with fear. Majid persists until two or three people - still in some fear of genies - come trembling toward the doors and

open them. When he comes out the crowd stare at him silently, making him feel ashamed of what he has done. He goes to look for Bibi, who has just opened her eyes and is taking some syrup. He confesses to her that he was the one who was beating the drum. Bibi, is at first sympathetic towards Majid because of her relief in seeing him, and for his ordeal in the dark, but when she recovers and realizes the chaos Majid has caused by sneaking into their neighbor's house for the drum, she gets mad and looks for a big stick to punish him. Mahmood Agha and his wife Khadijeh Khanom both beg Bibi to forgive him. Little by little other wishes take the place of Majid's wish for the drum, and each of these new wishes help him to grow up until he becomes a man and is able to stand on his own two feet.¹⁵

The samovar (Samovar)

The story of the Samovar starts when Majid's grandmother Bibi and some of her neighbors pool their money to buy a joint wedding present for Mrs. Tahereh's daughter. As Bibi is greatly respected among her neighbors for her good taste and excellent manners, she is chosen to go to the bride's house to see what sort of present might be useful for the bride. After paying Mrs. Tahereh's daughter a visit, Bibi decides that a new samovar is exactly what she needs. Bibi collects some money from her neighbors and sets off for the market, together with her sister-in-law Kokab, Akram, and Majid. They search high and low, but none of the samovars in the market satisfy Bibi. In the end, they come to a shop at the end of the market, where

¹⁵ Hooshang Moradi Kermani, *Qesehaye Majid* [The Stories of Majid] published in 5 volumes between 1979 and 1987, and Tehran: Ketabe Sahab, 1991, 'The Drum', reprinted in *Crickets*, English translation by Teimoor Roohi, illustrated by Russ Walks, June & July 1995.

they find a golden, potbellied samovar of the highest quality. Even Majid admires the gleaming yellow samovar and enjoys looking at his reflection in it. This samovar is much more expensive than all the others, and the money that has been collected is not enough. The more they bargain, the less the shopkeeper is willing to reduce his price. Bibi is determined to buy this samovar and no other and offers to pay the rest of the money herself in order to buy something special for the young couple.

Majid is entrusted with getting the samovar home, which he does with great difficulty as it is very heavy. Everyone is very happy with the samovar when they see it and Kokab collects more money from them to make up for the extra that Bibi has paid. She then decides that Majid, who has done a good job carrying the samovar home from the market, should take the samovar to the bride's house in the afternoon.

Majid tries to avoid the chore by using an upcoming exam as an excuse, but Bibi says he can study when he comes back. Kokab jokes that she has been thinking of marrying her daughter to Majid but she doesn't want a lazy son-in-law. Her daughter starts crying because she doesn't want to marry Majid, and Bibi takes this as an insult against her grandson. In order to keep the peace Majid agrees to do the job as long as he can borrow a bicycle to carry the samovar on. Kokab agrees to lend Majid her husband's bicycle and by two o'clock in the afternoon everything is ready. The samovar is wrapped and tightly tied to the bicycle and Majid is instructed to walk with the bicycle so the samovar will be safe. After he passes a couple of alleys he becomes impatient and decides to ride the bicycle to speed up his task. He clatters down the bumpy road and arrives at the bride's house well before Bibi and her friends. Then he is too shy to go in by himself and decides to go to his Aunt Soghra's house, which is nearby. His aunt is sick and his unexpected appearance cheers her

up. Majid notices that two cats are playing behind the bicycle and, fearing that they may knock it over and damage the samovar, he unties it and takes it inside with him, putting it in the corner. When his aunt sees the samovar, she thinks Majid has brought it as a present for her and starts to kiss him and to thank him. As she excitedly unwraps it, Majid is unable to say a word. She insists that they make tea and Majid thinks he will be able to tell her while they are drinking tea. As the water boils he starts thinking about Bibi and the others, who must have reached the bride's house by now. His aunt prepares the tea and tells Majid she will be back in a minute. Majid manages to babble something about Mrs. Tahereh's daughter getting married but his aunt is not paying attention and goes to call her neighbors in for tea. Two ladies come and join them and Aunt Soghra praises Majid, making it impossible for him to say any more. He continues to worry about Bibi and jumps up to leave. He makes a last attempt to retrieve the samovar by telling his aunt that it is not a good samovar and he will take it and bring another one, but his aunt laughs at him and says she's very pleased with it. He takes the cloth that the samovar was wrapped in and leaves. He cycles back home, takes an old samovar from the back room, wraps it up, and takes it to the bride's house. When he enters Bibi asks him to put the bundle in front of the bride and announces that this is their joint present to the bride. Majid goes outside in fright. Bib starts to unwrap the bundle, to the cheers of the assembled guests, but as the old samovar emerges, the applause dies down. Bibi is in shock, as the bride's mother manages to thank her for the gift, but manages to go outside to ask Majid what has happened to the new samovar. He explains the whole story to her and begs her not to say anything about it to Aunt Soghra. Kokab comes out and is also told what has happened. She informs the guests of the fate of the samovar originally

intended as a gift and once they hear the story they start to laugh. Majid has to return to the market to buy another samovar the next day, as well as take home the old samovar, under the watchful eye of Bibi and her neighbors.¹⁶

Poor dumb animals

One day Majid comes home to find his grandmother packing. She is getting ready to spend a week with her brother, who is having an emergency and needs her help. Bibi tells Majid that he should stay with his sister, but come home two or three times a day in order to water the flowers, feed the poultry (four hens, two roosters and a turkey), and take care of the lamb. Majid sees Bibi off at the bus terminal and then returns home to check the house before going to his sister's house. On the way, he checks the money Bibi has given him to buy animal food. He counts it and is tempted to spend some of it on himself. He thinks about all the food the animals eat and remembers his grandmother's words: 'The stomach is a bottomless pit. The more you put in it, the less it is satisfied. You could put the whole world in it, and it still wouldn't be enough. So, as you can see, it's not good to be the slave of one's stomach.' Majid decides to ask the animals to eat less so that he can have some of the money. With these thoughts he enters the confectioner's and spends one-sixth of the money on sweets. Then he passes a bookshop and spends four-sixths of the money on a copy of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, finally arriving at his sister's with only one-sixth of the money remaining. He spends the evening reading his new book

¹⁶ Hooshang Moradi Kermani, *Qesehaye Majid* [The Stories of Majid] published in 5 volumes between 1979 and 1987, and Tehran: Ketabe Sahab, 1991, 'The Samovar', reprinted in *Crickets*, English translation by Teimoor Roohi, illustrated by Sara Iravani, August & September 1998.

instead of studying his schoolbooks and refuses dinner, as he is full up with sweets. The next day Majid's sister wakes him up at dawn so he can feed the animals before going to school. When he gets home all the animals are crying for food and he feeds them with what is remaining. At school, Majid is unable to pay attention to his lessons; all he can think about is how to feed the animals for six more days on the little he has left. He imagines the animals dying from hunger and the result when his grandmother returns. At noon he buys millet and oats and goes home to feed the animals. He gives a little alfalfa to the lamb who gobbles it down and asks for more. Majid gives the lamb another few mouthfuls while delivering a lecture about how much luckier this lamb is than the ones who have to forage for cardboard and rubbish on the city streets, and how spoiled it is, and how it is not in the countryside now. The lamb gobbles all the food up and eyes the remaining pile of alfalfa. The poultry start making noises to show that they are still hungry too, so Majid gives them more millet and oats. Then he notices that the lamb is straining on its rope to reach the alfalfa. He tells the lamb off, and announces to all the animals that he has no more food for them due to financial embarrassment and however much noise they make it will not change the situation. He then goes to his sister's house to sleep.

Majid gets through the third day by alternatively lecturing and threatening the animals to eat less, but by the fourth day, the animals are so hungry that he has to spend his pocket money on more food for them. Despite this, he can hear their racket a kilometer away from the house as he returns from school. As he enters, the animals see him and clamor even more. Majid shouts at them to stop making noise and disgracing him and reminds them of how kind he has been to them. This has no effect and the din continues, causing his neighbor to look over the wall and ask what

is going on and why the animals have been disturbing the whole neighborhood. Another neighbor asks why no one is looking after the poor animals. Majid raids his grandmother's emergency wheat store and feeds it to the poultry. He remembers that the lamb cannot eat grain as it will get stomachache, and picks vine leaves for it. These are not enough to satisfy its hunger and it soon starts baaing again. Majid confesses to the animals that he has spent their food money on sweets and a book because he thought that he could deceive them. The animals eat everything he has given them and start making a racket again, driving Majid out of the house in search of more food for them. He runs to the corn merchant to ask for some alfalfa on credit, succeeds in getting enough for one meal, and runs back home with it. He feeds the animals and then goes to his sister's house to sleep. On the fifth day, Majid plays truant in the afternoon and goes outside the city in search of grass for the lamb. When he returns it is almost sunset and he hears the noise of the animals from far away. Even the grocer, who lives nowhere near Majid's house, has heard the noise and knows that the animals are being starved. All the neighbors and shopkeepers, even the baker, are crowding round Majid's door when he gets home and begin to scold him when they see the small pile of grass he has brought. They ask him did Bibi not give him any money to buy food, why has he not been feeding the animals, and they threaten to tell her what a cruel, naughty boy he has been when she returns. One neighbor accuses him of being so busy playing that he has forgotten all about the poor animals. Majid, unable to defend himself, keeps his head down and finally enters the house, closing the door in their faces. The lamb starts to gobble up the grass Majid has brought while the poultry follow him around angrily. The turkey keeps darting at him as if to peck him with its sharp beak. Majid is forced to go and

raid the precious emergency wheat store again to save face in front of the neighbors, even though Bibi never gives any of it to the poultry. As they gobble it up, the lamb finishes the grass and starts baaing at the top of its voice again. Majid tries to calm it down by telling it that tomorrow he will get food even if he has to sell his clothes and anyway it is better for it not to eat too much as the more it eats, the fatter it will get, and the sooner it will be eaten. The lamb pays no attention and in desperation, Majid lights a lantern, takes the lamb by its rope, and leaves the house with the intention of letting it graze outside the city. It continues baaing as they leave, causing the neighbors to open their doors to see where it is going. Majid gives some excuses and goes on his way. As he reaches a street leading out of the city, some big dogs start barking. Majid, thinking the dogs are going to eat both him and the lamb, turns on his heels and, dragging the baaing lamb along, runs for his life. He remembers that his sister has a lamb at her house and decides to take his lamb for a visit. That night the lamb has as much to eat as it wants and keeps quiet. On the sixth day, Majid takes *Les Misérables* back to the bookseller and begs him to return his money. He receives three quarters of what he paid for it and buys enough alfalfa, millet and barley to feed the animals until Bibi returns home. To Majid's great relief, Bibi comes home on the eighth day.¹⁷

¹⁷ Hooshang Moradi Kermani, *Qesehaye Majid* [The Stories of Majid] published in 5 volumes between 1979 and 1987, and Tehran: Ketabe Sahab, 1991, 'Poor Dumb Animals', reprinted in *Cricket*, English translation by Teimoor Roohi, illustrated by Sara Kahn, October & November 2002.

The milk (Shir)

Majid remembers when he was learning to walk. Abdolrasool's wife, Mah-bibi, watched his attempts fondly saying that he began to walk early, like her own children, because of her rich and nourishing milk. If only his mother were alive to see him! Then Akbar's, mother came and Majid played with Akbar, who suddenly kicked him. It really hurt, so Majid bit his arm and made him cry. When Akbar's mother looked at his arm, she saw the marks Majid's sharp teeth had left, and got annoyed, saying that it was her nourishing milk that made Majid's teeth grow so strong and sharp. She wished she hadn't fed him and threatened to pull his teeth out one by one. Majid started crying and she calmed down and asked him how he could bite his own brother who drank the same milk.

Majid grows older, playing in the alleys and climbing over walls. Everywhere there are women who remember how they have breastfed Majid. He has mothers in every alley. As the women scrub dishes and clothes at the stream, each of them shares her memories of raising Majid. One remembers how her own daughter used to drink only a little milk before falling asleep, and then Majid would drink all the rest. Another laments that his mother died so young, at only 17-18, and left him motherless in the world. His father, Fazlol'lah, would wander around the village with the baby Majid in his arms, stopping every woman who had a baby to ask her to breastfeed his motherless son. Some women would run and hide when they saw them as they didn't have enough milk to feed their own child, let alone someone else's. Another woman disagrees, remembering that the women in the village took turns feeding him. The next says that he would never suck on a pacifier or drink cow or goat's milk. Only human milk was good enough for him. Yet another woman

attributes it to his good taste and appetite, while another remembers her husband complaining that their own child would go without.

Majid has a hard time trying to keep all his mothers happy and sometimes avoids the streets where some of them live. When they spot him they send him shopping and give him money for sweets, or send him to gather firewood to bake bread, and bake a small bun for him. Others reminisce about how they used to leave their work in the fields to feed him; another asks him to sing for her, saying that her milk has given him his wonderful voice.

On the other hand, some mothers never acknowledge feeding Majid, in order not to upset him; although he learns about it from their children or others. Some children accuse Majid of drinking all their mother's milk, leaving nothing for them. All Majid's schoolmates at the village school are his brothers and sisters.

One says to Majid that her mother has told her they are brother and sister. Another says that it does not matter if Majid has drunk his share of milk as long as Majid gives him an eraser. When Majid refuses he threatens to tell his mother to curse the milk that she fed Majid on. When a fight breaks out, several of Majid's brothers come to his defense and deal with the other boy so that he does not go around boasting of how his mother has fed Majid.

Majid's teacher has two paper hats, one orange with 'Loser' written on it, and one blue with 'Bravo' on it. These hats are for children who have done well or poorly in school. Instead of beating the children or congratulating them, the teacher simply makes them wear a hat on their head while returning home through the village so everyone can tell if the student wearing the hat has done well or not.

Majid has done badly several times in a row. He hasn't done his homework; he fails a math test; and on top of that, he slaps Mustafa, for boasting about his mother's milk. So the teacher makes him wear the 'Loser' hat and sends him home with two older boys to make sure he does not remove the hat. As the boys return through the village, Majid's mothers stare at him over their garden walls and through their windows, muttering in disgust as they see the orange 'Loser' hat. Majid's brothers and sisters glare at him and no one sympathizes with him or claims to be his mother, brother or sister any more. All of Majid's mothers, brothers and sisters turn against him.

One of his mothers says she fed him once or twice at the most; she had no milk to feed him. Another says that when his father brought him to her, her milk had all dried up; He would not be such an embarrassment had he drunk her milk. The third admits feeding him, but many others, for instance, Rokhsareh also fed him; Her older son turned out to be a lazy student and her other son failed in school for the third year in a row. One of the children complains that he just snuggles up to her claiming to be her half-brother and she doesn't need such a brother.

Majid realizes that his failure has cost him his relatives, so he decides to work hard at his studies in order to earn the 'Bravo' hat. He works day and night. At school, he greets everyone politely. By the second term, he distinguishes himself by becoming fourth in the class. The teacher, seeing his progress, gives him the 'Bravo' hat, and this time sends him home alone. Majid finds a rusty scrap of tin by the roadside and tying it around his neck, begins beating it with a stick so everyone will come and see him. Mothers come to their windows and doors. They look over the mud walls. Brothers and sisters admire him. Mothers pour dry figs, nuts, and raisins

into Majid's pockets. Behind him, brothers and sisters fall in step, asking to carry his school bag so he can beat more freely on the rusty piece of tin. Now Majid has really become somebody. From a rooftop, one of his mothers calls out: 'Bless my milk!'¹⁸

¹⁸ Hooshang Moradi Kermani, *Qesehaye Majid* [The Stories of Majid] published in 5 volumes between 1979 and 1987, and Tehran: Ketabe Sahab, 1991, 'The Milk' reprinted in *Stories from Across the Globe*, English translation by Teimoor Roohi, illustration by Behzad Gharibpour, Haryana: Scholastic India for IBBY, 2002.

Appendix 4) Ravshan Yormohammad, *Chashma*

Translation of Ravshan Yormohammad, *Chashma*, Doshanbe, 1995, from Tajiki.

Once upon a time there was a spring. It lived on the peak of a mountain, in the open air, in the embrace of the white, white snow. Once, when the sun was going down, the weather became warm. Then, on the same day, Spring set off on a journey. After three days and three nights, it left the mountain peak and reached the crossroad. In the middle of the crossroad was written: if you go to the left you won't come back, if you go straight you will turn to ice, if you go to the right you will reach a beautiful valley. Spring thought and thought and then took the right turn. The way was long and winding and dark and passed between the rocks. Spring went forward and didn't look back until there was no strength in its feet and no movement left in its body. At this moment, it reached the edge of an abyss. There it stopped to get back its breath. Then it stood up and looked into the abyss and saw that it was bottomless.

A voice came out of the abyss: 'Who is there?'

'Me', said Spring.

'Are you human or spirit?'

'I'm neither; I'm a spring.'

'Oh, Spring, come here! I've been waiting for you for ages! I've dried up from thirst; my body and spirit have become weak.'

'Who are you?' asked Spring, 'And who has thrown you into this abyss?'

'I'm a valley,' said the abyss, to trick Spring, 'And I've been waiting for you for a long time.'

'Oh, but I've been told that a valley is wide and has a blue sky, but you are dark and narrow. Don't try to trick me and lead me astray!'

'How simple of you! From the top, looking down, here seems narrow. First come down and look; it's so wide and the sky is very very blue. I'm not telling a lie. There's nobody in the world more truthful than me. Come on, if you don't like it here you can go back.'

'How?'

‘How stupid you are! Put signs along the way and then when you go back you’ll see the same signs.’

Spring agreed and jumped down to the bottom. In the abyss it was dark and stuffy. A star palely sparkled in the sky.

Spring gave a cry, ‘Here is so narrow and like night. My eyes see nothing!’

The abyss laughed. The air was cold and Spring shivered. It was so cold that it almost turned Spring to ice.

‘No, I’m not going to stay here. I’m leaving!’ said Spring.

The abyss gave another laugh. Spring struggled to leave but couldn’t.

The abyss said, laughing, ‘Until now, no-one has ever made it back outside, so don’t waste your time trying!’

‘Oh, you liar!’ cried Spring, hitting the sides of the abyss. This attack was nothing to the abyss. Spring hit the sides of the abyss again with all its might, but the abyss only said happily, ‘Oh, how lovely your water is. I have been waiting for ages. Now my body is happy and my spirit has come back to life.’

Spring cried from sadness and misery for three nights and three days, and was stricken with weakness.

The abyss said to Spring, ‘Crying won’t help. Surrender to me and live quietly in the night.’

‘No,’ said Spring, ‘I’ll never surrender to you!’

The abyss said, ‘It’s your choice. If you don’t surrender, I will press your body until it suffers with pain.’

The abyss attacked Spring with pressure from four sides.

‘Do you surrender?’

‘No!’

‘Do you surrender?’

‘Never!’

Many years passed from that time and the battle between the abyss and Spring continued. Everyone who crossed the abyss heard their arguments.

‘Do you surrender?’

‘Never!’

One day there was a great earthquake. The abyss could not stand the earthquake and it collapsed. Spring came up and saw the sun again, and the white white snow, and the high mountain peaks.

Spring thought and thought, and then took the same route as in the beginning. It went on and on, and after seven nights and days it reached the valley. There the grass and flowers were dry and wilting from lack of water. Spring immediately watered them and the grass stood up straight and the flowers bloomed.

And so, in this way, after several years, Spring and Valley achieved their aim and we hope that you will all achieve your aims too!¹⁹

This translation matches the original manuscript, but the published story in Russian and Tajiki does not have the detail of the earthquake at the end, rather the abyss fills up with water after a long period of time and overflows; then the spring goes on its way again and finally reaches the valley.

¹⁹ Original translation by Karimova Zarofat, edited by researcher.

Appendix 5) Schoolnet poems

Some of the titles include

'The Cry of the Captive Chicken' (ناله مرغ اسیر *nale-ye morg asir*),

'Dew' (شبنم *shabnam*),

'Point' (نقطه *nuqte*),

'Love' (عشق *eshq*),

'Love' (محبت *muhabat*),

'Wallflower' (گل شب بو *gol-e shab-bu*),

'Mother' (مادر *madar*),

Oath (سوگند *sogand*),

Come Look at Me [I am a sky full of stars....] (*bia be man negah kon* بیا به من نگاه کن),

'Fire of the Heart' (آتش دل *atash-e del*),

'Our Imam' (امام ما *emam-e ma*),

'Candle' (شمع *sham*),

'The Waves of the Sea' (موجهای دریا *mojha-ye darya*),

'Look at the Stars' (به ستاره ها نگاه کن *be setareha negah kon!*).

Original Farsi versions of Schoolnet poems, Chapter 5:

Point

شاعر: فرشته نقاش زاده یزدي

مدرسه: جواد الائمه

تاریخ: 2002-04-15

شعر: نقطه

چرا هر حرف ما یک نقطه می‌خواهد؟

چرا هر سطر دفتر آخري دارد؟

چرا در آخر هر جمله یک صفر است؟

-صغري فاقد ارزش!

مگر هر جمله اي بي ارزش و پوچ است؟

مگر این حرفها -هر حرف خفته در دل بيدار ما -پوچ است و بي معنا؟

و من از نقطه بيزارم! و من از صفر بيزارم!

و من حرف دلم را هر کجا خواهم نوشتن

بي شک و تردید بايد ياد من باشد

که هر حرفم گلي خوشبوست

و من در آخر حرفم به جاي صفر بي ارزش

گلي خوشبوي خواهم کاشت.

Dew

شاعر: محمد جواد کاظمی

مدرسه: ہدایت

تاریخ: 2002-02-22

شعر: شبنم

شبنم از گل پرسید
تو چرا راہ نمیری
گفت: من منتظرم منتظر یار خودم
تو چرا بالاها
شاد و خرم نمایی
گفت: من آمدہ ام
بہر آب دادن گل
چند روز اینجام بعد خواہم رفت

Love

شاعر: فاطمہ آذری بنی

مدرسه: ہنرستان گل یاس

تاریخ: 2002-02-24

شعر: عشق...

عشق
عشق را در لفظ لولا دیدہ ام عشق را در رمز و معنا دیدہ ام
عشق را در ساحل شط فرات عشق را در زخم لب ہا دیدہ ام
عشق یعنی آسمان رنگ چمن عشق یعنی دادن آتش بہ آب
عشق یعنی مشک آب دیدگان عشق یعنی تشنہ لب در جوی آب
عشق یعنی من کہ ہستم در کجام یعنی دل بہ پیش دلبرم
عشق یعنی ساقیا دستم بگیر عشق یعنی من بہ دنبال دلم
عشق یعنی از صدای نالہ ای عشق یعنی من شکستم یا علی
عشق یعنی درد پهلوی و ندا و زجہ ای عشق یعنی بار گیتی را ببستم یا علی
عشق یعنی گفتن یا العطش عشق یعنی تشنہ ہای روز عاشورا کجا
عشق یعنی ہرچہ من کردم بہ خود عشق یعنی او کجا و من کجا
عشق یعنی دیدن تیغ دو سر عشق یعنی چشمہ ای جوشان ز خون
عشق یعنی سر بہ بالای علم عشق یعنی زندگی بابوی خون
عشق یعنی یک سکوت پر سخن عشق یعنی گفتن ، یا مدد آل عبا
عشق یعنی خوردن سیلی ز نامردان دون عشق یعنی گفتن یا مرتضی

Appendix 6)

Iran pre-revolution children's writing

Ba Dastha-ye Kuchekeman Book 1 [By the Hands of our Little Ones] (Collection of Children's Writing), Tehran: Kanun, 1977.

- 1) 'A Lesson that isn't in any Book'²⁰ by Manizheh Tehrani, 3rd year guidance (14 years old), member of Quchan Library, is the story of a lesson in observation given to a class by the headmistress, who offered a prize to any student who knew how many steps there were between the first and second floors of the school.
- 2) 'The Black Pencil'²¹ by Azadeh Abdullah-zadeh, member of Baneh Library. This is the longest story of the collection at five pages long. It is a fantasy story told in the first person from the point of view of a pencil, but contains sharp, realistic observations of the behavior of both adults and children.
- 3) 'Moving'²² by Farhang Zarinkelk, a member of Tehran Library. This story is about a family who are about to move house. The father tries to sell their furniture to second-hand dealers, but is offered such a small amount that he decides to carry everything with them.
- 4) 'A Book-reading Fish'²³ by Minu Karimzadeh, member of Library No. 5, Tehran, is a story told in the third person about a fish who pretended to be

²⁰ *Darsi ke dar hich ketabi nist*

²¹ *Medad Siyaaheh*

²² *Asbab Keshi*

²³ *Mahi Ketabkhan*

able to read books and became so self-important that it chased all the other fish into a small stream. After asking the fish a number of questions, the other fish discovered that not only was the fish unable to read, but that it was more ignorant than everyone else. They chased the fish into the stream where it was caught by a crow and fed to its chicks.

- 5) 'The only Tulip of the Mountainside'²⁴ by Ziba Sabr-niya, aged 14 years, member of Library No. 8, Tehran, is a story told in the third person about a sad tulip living all alone on the edge of the mountainside away from the other tulips. The rain, a butterfly, and a breeze bring happiness to the flower by working together to plant other tulips around it.
- 6) 'Passing of Time'²⁵ by Riuniz Golsorkhi, member of Ahvaz library; a story told about the passing of time from the point of view of a watch/clock.

Ba Dastha-ye Kuchekeman Book 2 [By the Hands of our Little Ones] (Collection of Children's Writing), Tehran: Kanun, 1977.

- 1) 'The Sparrow'²⁶ by Jalal Muzaheri, member of Library No. 2, Abadan: This is the story of a boy sitting in class who thinks he sees a trapped sparrow through the window, but when he goes out to investigate at break-time, finds that he imagined it and it was just a piece of plastic.
- 2) 'The Return'²⁷ by Mohammad Esfandiar, member of Library No. 10, Tehran: This is the story of a boy who moves with his family from the south to the

²⁴ *Luleh-i tanha-ye kuhestan*

²⁵ *Gozasht zaman*

²⁶ *Gonjeshk*

²⁷ *Bazgasht*

north of Tehran. They have been given a large expensive house to look after for a year. At the end of the year, the boy is happy to return to his old friends and dear neighborhood, after a miserable lonely time when he was snubbed by the rich kids because he was poor and didn't have new clothes like them.

- 3) 'Only One Season'²⁸ by Mehran Qal'e-i, 13 years old: He talks about the first hot summer that he remembers, and compares the passing of the seasons to a mullah counting the beads of his *tasbeih*²⁹. The colors change in his story; first the green of their alley, then the yellow as the sun burns everything, then the blue and white of autumn and winter.
- 4) 'Rahman Ghuleh' by Parviz Sufi, 15 years old: Rahman's neighbor, a boy, tells how Rahman, now 16 or 17 years old, is stoned and plagued by the neighborhood children. Rahman became crazy with grief after he lost his mother and only sister in an accident when he was 11 years old. His father remarried within a year of their death and Rahman was ill treated by his stepmother. His young neighbor asks why stepmothers should always make the children of their husbands suffer and asks why they can't be kind to them. He asks why all the children and parents of the alley, who were sad and sympathized at first, soon forgot their sadness about the death of Rahman's mother and sister, and he blames the parents as well as the children, because the parents do nothing to stop their children from tormenting Rahman.
- 5) 'Strangers' Dinner'³⁰ by Faruzandeh Davarpanah, member of Yusefabad Library: impressions of Ashura as seen by a small child.

²⁸ *Tanha yek fasl*

²⁹ prayer beads

³⁰ *Sham-e Ghariban*

- 6) ‘In Memory of the Lebanon which was in our Lesson Book’³¹ by Faruzandeh Davarpanah, member of Yusefabad Library: In 2nd year Guidance (age 13) geography and history are the most difficult subjects, but the kind teacher brought them to life. In the lesson on Lebanon, she talked about the blue of the Mediterranean and the delicious fruits and beautiful hotels and swimming pools. This impression stayed in the memory of the narrator, who wonders if teachers still give this image of Lebanon when teaching its geography, or if it has been replaced by one of blood and war.

Rangin Kaman [Rainbow] (Poetry and Illustration of Children of the Kanun Libraries) Tehran: Kanun, 1977.

- 1) ‘Fall’³² by Ebrahim Darakhshi, age not given: a poem of 14 lines in 3 parts, written in the first person. This poem presents a pensive outlook on the season and the autumn wind which blows the leaves from the trees and makes the alley look bare.
- 2) ‘Winter is the Season of Sorrow’³³ by Fakhrudin Paigozar, aged 16: a poem of 10 lines featuring the sadness of winter with empty alleys, snow on the rooftops, and silence except for the cawing of an old crow.
- 3) In Search of his Name?³⁴ by Majid Banitaraf, age not given: an allegorical poem of 14 short lines, every one except the last beginning with ‘in’ and referring to nature and natural phenomena and the search for the signs of God.

³¹ *Be yad-e lubnani keh dar ketab-e darsi-ye ma bud*

³² *Pa’iz*

³³ *Zamestan, fasl-e anduh ast*

³⁴ *Jostan-e Namesh*

- 4) ‘The Long Sleep’³⁵ by Soheila Vajdani, aged 14, member of Library No. 15: a poem of 35 lines written in the first person, portraying an atmosphere of calamity, and impending disaster, and featuring family members.
- 5) ‘The Truth’³⁶ by Manizheh Garzani, aged 15, member of Library No. 20: a poem of 14 lines written in the first person, in which the narrator is afraid to look at the sky in case there are no stars left.
- 6) ‘Spring Rain’³⁷ by Fatemeh Rezai-Manzeh, age not given, member of Hamdan Library: a poem of 12 lines which talks about a spring sky full of clouds and rain, and the warmth of the birds’ nests. The narrator wishes that the evil of mankind could also be washed away by the spring rains in the same way that they clean and rejuvenate the trees and blossoms.
- 7) ‘The Wedding of the Dolls’³⁸ by Zahra Shahmahmudi, aged 15, is a fantasy poem of 22 lines written in colloquial Farsi about a dolls’ wedding celebration in a glass castle where the dolls are made of glass and their hearts are full of love and kindness.
- 8) ‘Friday’³⁹ by Mahmud Esfandiari, aged 15, a poem of 21 lines, told in first person about a certain Friday when the narrator wants to enjoy his day off and go to the cinema.
- 9) ‘Together’⁴⁰ by Mustafa Karimi, aged 15, a poem of 8 lines in two parts, told in the first person of a cry to the cold dark sky lost in the heart of the night, but heard by God.

³⁵ *Khab-e Tulani*

³⁶ *Haqiqat*

³⁷ *Baran Bahari*

³⁸ *Arusi-ye Arusak-ha*

³⁹ *Jum’eh*

⁴⁰ *Baham*

It was spring. The trees and the flowers too, like the people, were celebrating No Ruz. Everyone was wearing green clothes and had colorful hats on their heads. They looked at each other for a while under the golden light of the sun. Suddenly they all let out a cry, saying: 'It's good if we choose from among us the best and most beautiful tree!'

First of all the apricot spoke up and said, 'My blossom opens earlier than any other, my fruit is sweet, its skin is golden, and has a rosy hue. You have to choose me!'

Black cherry said, 'What are you saying? Me too, I blossom at the same time as you, and I give fruit earlier than you as well. My fruit is red-colored and they make fruit cordial and jam and pilau rice from it.'

Red cherry laughed and said, 'I'm bigger and sweeter than you. Everybody eats me with great pleasure, and my various colors take the hearts of people.'

Plum said, 'Although I ripen after you, the children like me much more and become happy when they see me. They like me so much that they even eat my unripe fruit. Those who don't like my sour taste cook me with sugar and make compote.'

Pear said, 'I wait until the sun makes me sweet and full of juice. I am bigger than you and my fruitful time is longer than yours. I'm both delicious and good for you. Haven't you heard that they call me the king of fruit?'

Apple said, 'That's enough! Don't be so proud of yourselves! Haven't you seen what a pleasant color my flowers have? No one ever becomes tired of me. I come out in a different form every season. Sometimes I'm small and white, and sometimes red colored and juicy. Many times I have heard it said, 'If you eat an apple every day, the doctor will never come to your house.'

Mulberry said, 'None of you have my sweetness. I am like sweet honey. I am exquisite and people love me. My leaf-laden branches give a cool shade and my leaves are the best food for silkworms.'

Walnut said, 'Talking of giving shade, I am better than everyone. I am tall and my bushy branches give a lot of shade. They eat my fruit fresh and dried. They use the wood of my tree for making chairs and tables.'

Pomegranate laughed and said, 'I am better than everyone. I come out when the time of all of you is passed. Thousands of sweet red seeds are hidden inside me.'

Orange said, 'Why are you vainly bragging? I also come out in winter. My fruit is delicious and juicy and good for you. Everyone adorns the head of the bride with my sweet smelling flower.'

At this time a little shy violet lifted its head from among the leaves and said, 'Why are you all quarrelling with each other for no reason? I am surprised that you, who are bigger than me and who, from that height can see all of the world, haven't realized that something other yourself is beautiful?'

Yaquti, Mansur, ed., *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, Collection of Children's Essays of Pak Rusta, Tehran: Shabgir, 1973.

Ismail Amjadian , Class 3: 'Letter'.⁴¹

With the help of my friend the wild olive tree which is in front of the 'blind spring: Good and beautiful tree, wild olive of coffee colored skin, now you are by the side of the 'blind spring' and snow is covering your branches and your roots have become dry. I haven't visited you for three or four months now and I'm really unhappy for you. I know that some of the children come and break your branches.

My good tree - do you drink water? Don't you get thirsty? There is water there that you can drink to quench your thirst. Don't say you have forgotten me, I am always thinking of you and saying to myself what is my friend doing now?

My dear friend, I am waiting for spring to come and for you to be covered with green leaves and full of blossoms, and I'll come and give you water and rest for a while in your shade. In the summers, your red wild olives become so beautiful and

⁴¹ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.5.

I'll come and sit for a while on your big branches and eat a few wild olives and sing for a minute. Then I'll throw a few wild olives in my pocket and return home.

Abdullah Amjadian, Class 5: 'Describe your own house'.⁴²

First I will write about the yard of our house, then later I will come to the other things:

One side of our yard is covered with the wood and bark of plane trees. It has three tall wooden columns and we have put one tall tree above it and we made the top with wood and flowers. We refer to it as the 'under-hallway'. The door of the yard is made of tin and the walls of the yard look like they could be destroyed with one kick.

Now we reach my room. In the winters, our room has nothing in it, only in the summers we have a coarse carpet which we spread in the middle of it. The rooms of the wall are black and once a year we plaster them with straw. Six wooden poles are fixed on the walls of the room that we hang clothes on with nails. The nails are used in place of wooden clothes pegs. An old icebox, which has been in the family for 40 years, takes up the corner of the room. The room also has four shelves, on one of which there is a lamp and on one of the others an earthen grain pot, two bowls, and three spoons, and a two rial mirror broken in the middle, fixed to the wall. We also have a stove that we light at night so we don't get cold we put firewood and cow dung inside it. We also have a 'nishtamam' (room for baking bread which is also a guest room) which has been turned as black as charcoal. There are also two beehives

⁴² *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.7.

in there, one of which is full of flour, the other empty. We have a hayloft which has nothing in it and mice run around this way and that inside it. We have two stables, one of which has two donkeys in it and two pens, and in the other stable there is only one heifer. Several days earlier we had a cow that father sold because it was ill. At the side of the stable is a calf-pen where calves are kept when we have any. At the moment, our calf-pen is empty. We have three chickens as well and yesterday one of them fell ill and died.

Abdullah Amjadian: 'Winter'.⁴³

One winter's day my father was ill and he didn't have money to go to the doctor in Kermanshah to get two injections to make him better. We had one heifer and two cows who both had calves. My father told me to sell the cows and to take the money myself to the doctor in Kermanshah. My father was really ill. He sold one cow for 550 tuman and went to Kermanshah. Several days passed and my father had not returned, and we became sadder and sadder. From morning till night, my mother and sister and I kept our eyes on the road our father had taken. We kept going down it to look and see if a car was coming. One Friday I wasn't in the house, but out with our one remaining cow. When sunset came and I brought the cow back to the house, I saw my friend Ismaili going into his garden. He said, 'Abdullah, your father has come back from Kermanshah.' I didn't believe him and said, 'You're lying!' He said, 'No, by God, he's come.' Along with the cow, I quickly reached home. Every person I saw told me that my father was back from Kermanshah. When I got back to the house I sent the cow into the stable and went into the room and said, 'Welcome,

⁴³ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.9.

father!' He said, 'Health to you!' Then he put his hand in his pocket and gave me two or three sweets and said, 'Abdullah, go and throw some hay into the cow-pen and then come to the house.' For two or three days, my father's condition was better, but in the days that followed he became ill again. He went to Kermanshah again three or four times and he sold the remaining cow too, but he still didn't get better. The day that he sold the last cow, I was sitting on the roof of the house and saw him give the cow to a man from Poshte Darband village. It was like the mountain tops had been destroyed around my head. I cried very hard. In remembrance of you dear cow, in remembrance of your horns like a plumb-line, of that mouth which used to eat hay, of those big and beautiful eyes, now that they have sold you, we will drink the yogurt and buttermilk of which cow? When I went back into the house in the afternoon, I took one mouthful of the yogurt that my mother had borrowed and burst into tears. I remember the day that the man from Poshte Darband came and took you away and how much I cried that he shouldn't take away our cow. No one listened to me. We sold you and father paid for his treatment and medicine with the money he got from selling you and he still hasn't got better. His chest is hurting and he has a constant cough. People say my father's liver has become black and he's in a very bad state. But my father says that if spring comes and the weather becomes good, me too I will go to the land and work and my condition will get better. (meaning himself not the son)

Yesterday was Friday. My mother said, 'Hosseinali, as today is Friday and you don't go to school, go to the village of Alyasan, go and get that 50 tuman from your cousin if he has it. None of you have shirt or shoes. I ate a mouthful of yogurt and bread, and I set off for Alyasan. My cousin wasn't home. His mother invited me in, saying, 'Come inside and warm yourself'. I said, 'I have a job to do, I can't come in.' She said, 'By God, until you get warm I'm not going to let you leave!' p.13. I went and warmed myself, then said goodbye and went home empty-handed. I was on the way, walking along with my head down when suddenly I saw two creatures flash by in the corner of my eye. A hound had fallen chasing a rabbit; the rabbit was tired. They reached the top of a hill. The hound caught the foot of the rabbit in its teeth. The rabbit gave a cry and escaped from the grasp of the hound. The hound set off after him. I don't know where they went after that. I reached home. As I reached the yard, I heard someone cry out. When I went in I saw that my mother had lit the oven and no one was near her and she was crying. I said, 'Mother why are you crying? Why are you sad?' My mother said, 'My son, why should I not cry? What do I have to be happy about? In two or three more days the hay will all be finished and the cows and sheep will stay hungry. How long can these poor dumb creatures cry in the stable with empty stomachs? Not a single one of the children has shoes or a shirt or a coat. How long must they shiver in this cold! Every day the landlord comes and harasses us for his rent. What answer can I give him? I said, ' Mother, let's sell our cow and sheep.' Mother said, 'Sell them? We only have one milk cow and two or three sheep. They are thin and pathetic too. Nobody will buy them. Even if they buy

⁴⁴ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.12.

them they will only give a little money.’ I said, ‘Mother, don’t cry. Father will be back from Bandar Abbas in a month; he may even be back tomorrow. He will bring money with him and we will pay off our debts.’

Hosseinali Hassani: ‘Write about a day of your life’.⁴⁵

One day my mother woke me up early. She was very sick. She said, ‘Hassani, wake up and go and clean the stable. I’m really sick. I’m sure I’m going to die. Come out of the stable a bit earlier and go to the shop and buy me two pills.’ I set off and went to the stable. We had a calf that had put its head over the pen and was dying. Whatever I did, I couldn’t get it to stand up. I went outside and said to my mother that the calf was dying. I don’t know if the cow or the ass had hit him. My unhappy and sad mother said, ‘Oh, what can I do? You can see that I can’t get up from bed. I said to myself, ‘Oh God, what sin have I committed? My mother is sick. Oh, why is the calf dying?’ That day there was a heavy snowstorm. No one could leave their house to go outside. From sadness and sorrow, I didn’t take any more notice of the calf. The shop didn’t have any medicine. I fell silent from sadness; there was nothing I could do. I became like a sheep that hits itself on the head with a stick and can’t go anywhere. I was so unhappy that I sat down and cried and said to myself, ‘Oh God, the calf is dying, my mother is sick, my father is away working in Bandar Abbas, from where can I learn my lessons? When I go to school they will ask me to recite my memorized lessons, what answer will I give them? How ashamed I will be among the other children.

⁴⁵ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.15.

Several days were left till our school opened and the children of the village went to class to learn their lessons. Every one of the children became happy when the school was mentioned and ran around this way and that. It was a summer's day. I woke up and said to my mother, 'Come and milk the cow and the sheep so I can take them out to the desert and put them to pasture and go round and about.' My mother took a bowl and came to milk the cow and sheep so I could take them out. I was just coming to the bottom of the village when I spied Hassanali with two cows and one sheep. I shouted to him and said, 'Hassanali, we should go together.' Hassanali stopped and we arrived both together at the place where they were harvesting. Hassanali said, 'Oh Jahanbakhsh, let's go and steal some of that!' I asked, 'Who's there in the garden?' He said, 'Babar Ali'. I said, 'All right, but let's make sure no one sees us.' Hassanali said, 'Don't let these cows go anywhere until I go and bring a few quinces.' I said, 'OK, you go, then I'll go'. Hassanali set off. It only took him a couple of minutes to disappear among the plane trees and half an hour passed before he came back. I saw that he had gone pale and he was breathing quickly and he had seven or eight quinces in his shirt. I asked, 'Hassanali, why have you gone pale?' He said, 'Don't ask! Don't you know, there was a guard dog among the plane trees and when I'd picked the quinces and wanted to come back to you, it followed me.' We ate the quinces and this time I went and brought back ten quinces. As I was coming back my heart was beating in fear. I said to myself, 'If I do this ever again, may God kill me!' When I reached the side of Hassanali he was laughing at me. I started

⁴⁶ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.17.

laughing too. Each of us took five of the quinces. It's some time since Hassanali went to work in town. To the memory of Hassanali! To his memory!

Jahanbakhsh Amjadian: 'A Letter'.⁴⁷

I hope you are well. How I wish I could see your kind face, my good friend. I send these few words as greeting. Let me write something to you about my bitter life which is full of suffering. Early in the morning when I wake up I rub my eyes then I put on my dirty shirt and I go to the yard to eat a piece of bread with a cup of tea. I take a walking stick in my calloused hands, black from being scorched by the sun. Half asleep, I go to the wilderness, and I sweat under the burning sun, and I run this way and that after the cows and sheep. Like an animal dying from the heat, I throw myself under this bush and that, and then again I stand up. Until sunset I struggle with this work of mine. At sunset when I am driving the cows and sheep home I say to myself with great weariness, 'Oh God, when will I reach home?' When I reach home, I have more work to do; I have to go on the carpet-weaving frame and sit and weave carpets. My eyes hurt, my back hurts. I'm close to dying from the terrible pain. In the evenings when I am bringing the cows and sheep back to the house, and I pass in front of the school, I look into the classroom and I remember you. I don't have any more to say. Give my greetings to your friends.

⁴⁷ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.19.

I spent the whole of this Friday clearing away snow and if I hadn't cleared the snow off the roof, the house roof would have been ruined and there was no one who could build us a new house; my father had gone to Tehran in search of work.

This Friday when I woke up, I ate my breakfast and went to get some hay to throw to the sheep so they wouldn't stay hungry and would get full. Now that there is no pasture for them to graze on, I don't take them to the heath. Well, the sheep won't stay without hay and get hungry. We're hungry ourselves, why should they be hungry too? Now that the snow has hemmed us in all round, no one can go from this village to another village. My mother said, 'Mohammad Reza, go, the snow has buried our house. There are deep snowdrifts all around us. Go and clean the snow off the roof so that water doesn't get inside the hayloft. You know we only have a little hay and if the snow melts inside the barn and the hayloft gets ruined, no one is going to give us hay and our sheep will die of hunger and we will have to throw them for the wolves to eat.

My mother said, 'You know that a lot of snow has fallen and we're snowed in. People say oh God, when will the wind of spring come and clean away all of this snow?'

⁴⁸ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.21.

Last year my brother Adel became very sick. This happened in winter. He didn't eat anything. He had completely lost his appetite and he had a fever and he was vomiting. His whole body became hot like fire. His color turned yellow and he was dizzy. My mother cried over his head and tears streamed from her eyes and poured over her old torn jacket and she couldn't calm down. My elder sister, who was 14 years old, cried over my brother's head and tears poured down from her little eyes. She cleaned her tears with an old handkerchief, which was made from other old ones. At this time my mother said, 'Nader, you had better go and call your aunt and uncle, maybe they p.24. know what to do for him. I ran in the direction of my uncle's house and told my uncle that Adel was ill. My uncle was very upset and immediately got up. He put on his torn shoes and ran to our house. Then I went to my aunt's house and told her that Adel was ill. My aunt and her sons and daughters were all unhappy and set off in the direction of our house. When they saw our dirty and ruined walls, they climbed the stairs and entered the house. They saw that my mother was crying and my uncle was trying to console her. They became even more upset and rushed to Adel's side without even removing their shoes. Adel was sleeping on a rough carpet. My uncle said, 'He's caught a cold, we'd better blow opium smoke into his mouth.' But my aunt said, 'You must take him to the doctors.' My aunt and mother lifted up Adel and dressed him in many clothes and set off. During this time, heavy snow was falling and the cold wrapped itself like a snake around their necks and feet. Sometimes they fell over in all the heavy snow and Adel was in a really bad way. In short, they reached town with great difficulty and got

⁴⁹ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.23.

Adel to the doctor. My mother said, ‘Doctor, please for the sake of God make our son well. In exchange I will give you all the money I have.’ The doctor gave several pills to my mother and gave Adel an injection. My mother and uncle gave the doctor ten tuman and returned to the house. Adel slowly got better and came outside again and started playing. My mother was over the moon with happiness.

Nader Safareh: ‘In the nest a handful of feathers remained’.⁵⁰

A quail lived in the wilderness with his chickens. A big eagle who had a nest nearby, was the enemy of the poor quail, but he didn’t know where her nest was. The chickens of the quail were so small that they couldn’t find food for themselves. The quail found food for them all alone, and in the evenings she put them under her own wings because the weather was quite cold and they fell asleep. In the morning when they woke up they didn’t see their mother and they knew that she had gone to get food for them to fill their little stomachs. One day the quail pulled the clover this way and that until she found the small and soft leaves of the clover to bring them for her chicks because they were so small that they couldn’t eat wheat. As soon as the eagle saw her, he flew quickly towards her. The quail, who knew the eagle was coming from the sound of his wings, changed her position and hid under a bush in order to save her life. The eagle, who had lost the quail, returned and looked at the ground from the air and reached above the quail’s nest. The quail’s chicks thought it was their mother bringing them food and made cheeping noises. The eagle came down happily and ate up all of them and was full, and from there flew off and left. When

⁵⁰ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.25.

the quail came back only a handful of feathers remained in the nest. She knew that the eagle had eaten them. She started crying and from then on life was hard for her.

Nader Safare: 'Sleep'.⁵¹

When I was asleep I had a dream that I was sitting next to a river with clear rippling water and small and big fish were playing in the water. A long snake which was stretching its stomach on the grass beside the water was making attacks on the fish and bothering them. If he caught the fish, he ate them. The fish were hiding in fright from the black snake. The snake was looking at them with its little eyes and blood was running from its eyes. He flashed his fangs at everything he saw around him. No fish dared to cross in front of him. As soon as the snake saw it couldn't do anything, it went in a corner and fell asleep. A stork came flying up and searched in the waters, but could find nothing to eat. He was very hungry. At this time, he saw the black snake which was asleep. On his long legs, he slowly approached the snake. The snake raised his head and looked at the stork. He caught the snake with his long red beak. The snake wrapped itself around his beak. The stork carried the snake off into the air, and suddenly dropped it from a height. The black snake fell to the ground and died. The stork ate the snake. Now the fish were free of the evil black snake and swam around freely in the river and nothing harmed them any more.

I got up from there and came in the direction of the house where I suddenly woke up.

⁵¹ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.27.

It was winter of last year when my younger brother became ill. For two or three days no-one knew he was ill. After three or four days when people heard of his illness, they came to our house in the village of Kazam Abad. Our house was in a terrible state and we had no money to take our brother to town to see the doctor. People came in scores to pay visits to my brother. My mother brought fire from the clay oven outside so the people wouldn't get cold. Her eyes were bloodshot and full of dust. Najmieh was an elderly lady, she was hunchbacked, and her cheeks were pockmarked. She came and sat by my brother's head in her old ripped shirt and took his pulse and said in a sorrowful voice, 'What a fever he has!' As she spoke these words she started coughing, an hour later when her cough had stopped she said, 'Go and buy 2 tuman's worth of cinnamon and bring it and boil it and give it him to drink so that he sweats and the cold leaves his body. Later Aunt Turan came and said, 'Sorry to be late, give him rose to make his chest soft. The wife of Darvish came and said, 'With all that befalls us poor and poverty-stricken people, I don't know why those whose hands don't reach their mouths rarely become ill.' We had two or three sacks which we threw around the bed. People were sitting on top of the sacks and saying how cold the sacks were. We had only one cow and the walls and roof of the house and the beams of the house were black from smoke and the house was very dark. Ain Ali came and said, 'People say that the time comes for you to die, say prayers, you will go to hell.' Hell is even worse than this world. My wife and children have eaten so much dry bread they've become nightblind. This is not life that we are living.

⁵² *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.29.

It was almost sunset, people were saying go to Char Gah village to say a prayer for him. I went with my friend Haji to Char Gah to the house of Mullah Mohammadi to say a prayer for him. He said someone had put the bad eye on this boy, give this prayer with green leaves and fix it on his left shoulder and put two or three seeds of rice and the point of a needle with the poison of the white thistle in the prayer. We came back to the house and fixed the prayer on his left shoulder, but his condition didn't get any better. My mother was forced to sell our only milking cow and take our brother to the doctor in the hope that his condition would get better.

Haji Hossein Sharifi, Class 5: 'Irrigation'.⁵³

When it is his turn to get water, Khalu Qasem doesn't sleep till morning and goes for water in bare feet. He has a heavy shovel and he can't see very well with his right eye. His face is freckled. He does the irrigation at night. One night it was very cold, he went home at sunset and brought a mattress and a quilt and a pillow, and put water next to him and went to sleep. He slept a bit and then woke up. He put his shovel on his shoulder and took one or two steps and got a thorn in his foot. He became angry and said, 'a dog must shit in this life that we have, till morning we don't sleep and suffer desperation which doesn't benefit us at all'.

One time a rabbit with a huge stomach and long ears escaped from in front of his feet. At first he thought it was a wolf, and raised his shovel to hit it, by the time he had raised his shovel, the rabbit was one farsang⁵⁴ away from him, and he said to himself angrily, 'Rabbit and wily fox have ruined all my clover'.

⁵³ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.31.

⁵⁴ Measurement of distance varying between 6 and 10km according to Dr. Kourosh of Azad University, Tehran.

He carried the water to the cart down below, then after putting it on another cart, sat down on the ground and lit up a cigarette. He stayed until the moon went down and the sky became dark. He said to himself, 'Let me go to the house and bring a light.' He unrolled his trouser legs and set off.

Khalu Qasem is a superstitious person. He came forward and came forward until his foot hit a stone and he said to himself, 'Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim', and he set off running from that same place until he reached his house, looking behind him in fright.

Ahmad Ali Amini, Class 5: 'The Life of a Sick Person'.⁵⁵

I was sick, and was in a bad state for a long time. My father said that I would get better. Our house was not in a good state. I was studying in class 2. One day our teacher asked me from in front of the class, 'Ahmad Ali, why has your face become pale?' I said, 'I'm sick.' He said, 'Go home and ask your father to take you to town to see the doctor.' I picked up my books and went in the direction of the house. When my mother saw me she asked, 'Why have you come home?' I told her the teacher told me, 'Go home, you are sick.' My mother was really unhappy and said, 'In this cold you will go out of the house?' In the morning the car came and my father took me to town. We went to the hospital and the doctor examined me with a magnifying glass and asked my father, 'How many days has this child been ill?' My father said, 'Three or four days.' The doctor prescribed four injections for me which he injected into my leg muscle, and gave me a lot of pills which I had to take: 4 at lunchtime, 2 at dinnertime and 2 in the morning. Then the doctor said, 'You must

⁵⁵ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.32.

take this child to Kermanshah for treatment.’ My uncle got 400 tuman from Zahara and took me to Kermanshah. I felt weak in the bones. We were in Kermanshah for four or five nights. Every morning we went to the hospital and they gave me six injections and gave me a lot of pills to swallow. One Friday my mother and father came to see me. There was no hair left on my head. They were really unhappy. They sold the four remaining goats so I could get completely better. When I got better, and we returned to town, we had 5 tuman and the doctor said that every morning I had to eat fillet and liver. When we got to town, we didn’t even have a rial to buy a piece of bread to eat. My uncle said to his fellow travelers, ‘He’s wiped his poor father out.’

Ahmad Ali Amini: ‘In the Nest a Handful of Feathers Remained’.⁵⁶

One group of birds lived inside a nest. Every morning they went off in search of food and searched the fields for seeds until sunset. When it became dark they went back to their nest and stayed awake until it was almost morning and talked to each other. When it became morning they went off in search of their daily sustenance to fill themselves and their children. Slowly all of them fell into a deep sleep. A fox was sitting there and heard their talking. The fox didn’t say a word, until all of them fell asleep. The fox got up from behind the bush where he had been sitting and went and caught one of the birds around the neck with his sharp teeth. The bird let out such a cheeping sound when the sharp teeth of the fox bit its neck, and with the second cry of the bird, all its friends got up and started pecking at the fox. The fox attacked them and injured them, one of them which was more intelligent pecked the eye of the fox.

⁵⁶ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.35.

The fox let out a great cry and fell to the ground. The birds jumped on his head and killed him and revenged their friend.

Adel Safareh, Class 3: 'Mother and her Hopes'.⁵⁷

My mother doesn't have a good life. It's several months since a carpet in the house of the foreman of the landlord, Naser Aqa, was ripped. Every day they come in search of her from Naser's house and tell her come and weave a carpet for them. She has to get up in the morning at 5am in order to finish the work in our own house, and at 7am go to the house of the foreman and work till sunset. Then she comes back and gives hay to the goats and sheep. Now you will hear about her hopes:

We have every sadness in our hearts. Her first wish is that the people of our village do not migrate to the city and leave us all alone and she thinks this thought every day.

Her second wish is that they would not come from Naser's house looking for her, and she could work in her own house. She hopes that her children will be intelligent and that they will have a good life. She also hopes that the house does not get ruined.

⁵⁷ *Pusht-e Divar-e Barf*, p.37.