

*Alireza Abiz. Censorship of Literature in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Politics and Culture Since 1979*

**Behnam Fomeshi**

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**Electronic version**

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/54402>

DOI: 10.4000/abstractairanica.54402

ISSN: 1961-960X

**Publisher:**

CNRS (UMR 7528 Mondes iraniens et indiens), Éditions de l'IFRI

**Electronic reference**

Behnam Fomeshi, "Alireza Abiz. *Censorship of Literature in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Politics and Culture Since 1979*", *Abstracta Iranica* [Online], Volume 42-43 | 2021, document 5, Online since 30 December 2021, connection on 26 January 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/54402> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.54402>

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## REFERENCES

Alireza Abiz. *Censorship of Literature in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Politics and Culture Since 1979*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2020, 224 p.

- 1 A study of censorship in Iranian literature from 1979 through 2016, this volume “investigates the politics of culture in contemporary Iran to show how cultural policies have influenced the trends in literature and affected the creativity of poets and writers during the said period” (9). It consists of an introduction, eight chapters, notes, a bibliography, and an index.
- 2 While acknowledging the legitimacy of “new censorship theories”, the author finds them problematic as they trivialize the lived experience of Iranian writers and elaborates on his approach to censorship, which is “based upon a responsiveness to the experience of those who are subject to censorship” (8). Chapter One provides a concise history of censorship in Iran from the early days of the press in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century up to the 1979 Revolution. The next chapter studies laws and theories of censorship in the Islamic Republic, including speeches by the leader, and how they are translated into regulations, bylaws, projects, and guidelines for cultural authorities. Chapter Three discusses the structure and mechanism of censorship, including prepublication licensing, as well as the variations under different administrations. After providing a rather comprehensive list of topics censors might find objectionable, the author concludes, “there is nearly no area of human culture which is untouched in one way or another” (48).

- 3 Providing censorship information on hundreds of books, Chapter Four offers a taxonomy of reasons for the censorship of literature, including sex, religion, politics, culture, and literary issues. Next chapter covers various forms of rewards, including financial gains, government positions, fame, and recognition, for the writers who support the system as well as the various forms of punishment, including intimidation, imprisonment, defamation, and murder, aimed at nonconformist writers. These two chapters show how “widespread, arbitrary, and strict” the Islamic Republic censorship regime is (133). Writers’ collective and individual acts of defiance against censorship, including unlicensed publication, are studied in Chapter Six. The next chapter analyzes the effects of the state’s censorial actions on the form and content of literary productions, including the rise of sacred defense stories and “apartment fiction”, as well as normalization of self-censorship and readers’ losing “trust in the genuineness of a work” (141). The concluding chapter discusses the conflicting ideas about the benefits and harms of censorship as well as the detrimental effects of censorship on the international reputation of Iranian literature.
  - 4 The author does justice to a subject often mentioned, yet rarely studied. The only book-length study that relies on the documents from the Iranian censor department is the one authored by Ahmad Rajabzadeh in Persian. Abiz makes accessible the findings of all the Persian materials, particularly this one. He succeeds in its purpose, i.e., providing “as genuine a picture as possible of the censorship of literature after the 1979 Revolution” followed by discussing “the effects of this unique censorship regime on the Iranian literature of the time” (9). Drawing from his experience as a censored reader, writer, and publisher, he begins with an illuminating account of his experience as a child and a teenager in (post)revolutionary Iran. In one instance he refers to his experience of attending the ceremony for a state award as “not the most pleasant” (109). In yet another instance, he gives an account of being interrogated in the Intelligence Department where a line of poetry on the wall gave him huge comfort: “in niz begzarad” (this too shall pass).
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## AUTHORS

**BEHNAM FOMESHI**

Monash University, Australia