

# About the poetry of Ali Abdolrezaei

By Mansor Pooyan

Ali Abdolrezaei is one of the most acclaimed poets of post Revolutionary Iran. His poems exert great influence on many younger poets. He managed to get published seven volumes of his work inside Iran. His last volume of poems, published on the internet, makes a poetic as well as a literary watershed. With an additional volume of poetry awaiting publication, he is the most controversial Iranian literary figure both inside and outside the country. Ali's poetry breaks away with the traditional Persian poetic language alongside the traditional concepts of the heavy-weight Persian poets.

Certainly poetry is essentially a private art form. Ali's description of human hardship and suffering are not those of a man who can look at misery from a distance. The poets of his generation have an altogether sharper and more painful view of the suffering caused by a totalitarian regime seizing power in the wake of the 1979 Revolution. Among the poets of this time, there exists a sense of hopelessness in the face of world/ national events which they feel powerless to change or influence.

Ali represents a group of poets who turned away from the legacy of Modern Persian poetry. They have relinquished the idea that the aim of poetry should be to express high emotion and the deepest feelings and forces of nature. Their subjects tend to be smaller and their language more colloquial with a sense that reality is also interwoven into the text.

Ali Abdolrezaei's voice as a poet is clear and unmistakable; his style and subjects are completely his own. Ironically enough, his strongest poems are often those which describe personal experiences rather than world events. He sees changes in the forms and subjects of literature as a way of helping political and social change. This aspiration to change is reflected in the language of his poetry as well as the events it describes.

Early on in his career as a poet, Ali embarked upon a journey to find a language which could form the structure of his work. His language has great life and energy; it does not look back to the archaically traditions of poetry/ writing. He gives the feeling that language has been forced into new forms to communicate new experiences.

Further more, Ali does not use traditional forms of rhyme and rhythm. His style depends on the counting of syllables and the sound-patters of the words, in a way which reflects the patterns of Old Persian poetry. Ali avoids adhering to great themes and grand language. His lengthy poems, in particular, are highly complex and often bring together a group of characters different in kind and time.

A guide is required to travel into his novel terrain which has all the semblance of the old, and yet is new. It is precisely this novelty clothed in the familiar that puzzles but also reinforces the reader's desire to explore further into the twilight zone. There are buried layer upon layer of literary metaphors in his poetry. Ali's protagonists are engaged with daily life and plainer language is used. Many of his poems have as their central subject the problematic relationship between the two sexes in that gender divisions are the result of culture rather than biology. They reflect the power relationships of society in such a way as to reject the notion of "human nature ".

Ali Abdolrezaei's latest themes become more universal and philosophical; his main subject is the problematic nature of language, knowledge and subjectivity. This is a language that speaks in itself and not through something outside of itself; image and language are inseparably made into oneness. He draws on a stylistic fusion of the two discourses that had for many years been deemed separate.

Ali's poetic language also reflects a series of philosophical preoccupations. That is to say; the language of referentiality; the relation between sign and thing is denied. No singular construction of meaning is actually created through his poetic linguistic behaviour.

What is characteristic of Ali's poetry is the intelligibility of the unknown whose existence is tightly implicated into the known. Knowledge and subjectivity co-exist in the reality of language where knowing is coupled with not-knowing and being with not-being. It is in this sense that his poetry demonstrates the simultaneous occurrence of linguistic flow and ambiguous meaning-making activities. Ali's is a language that speaks the impossibility of expression and, in so doing, exists in the space of its own negativity.

Ali Abdolrezaei's poetry revolves around a wide range of subjects. In his war poems, the misery of war and natural disasters take centre stage. These poems of fine qualities are against the futility of war and against the senior officers who avoid realising the death and destruction that their orders will cause to the men they command. Death and sorrow are intertwined into wider social problems.

In poems written in exile, the poet finds a basis of faith in memories of childhood, before the business of the world has surpassed the magic realm of being. Here he remembers the themes and stories of his early life. Nothing can be heard besides the voice of the protagonist whose floating thoughts are searching for a new semiotic system of meanings. Whilst playing with verse, Ali recognises that he was attracted by their appearance and not by what they claim to be their true substance.

Here such poems communicate a strong sense of vainness and loneliness. They do not suggest that life is a bitter tragedy. Quite the contrary, they show great drive in intervention on the one hand and acceptance, i.e. going with the flow, on the other hand. Much of his anger in these poems is directed against the pointlessness of adherence to an ideal type.

They illustrate the urge to engage with the ambiguity as part of the creativity nature of poetry. The circular movement of life is reflected in his exilic poetry. There exists an expression of the idea that, as well as going to a life without end, we come from another life. Hotel as a metaphor is used to depict life in exile. The setting as an enclosed space circumscribes the narrative at an undefined location and undefined time. The hotel is the quintessential example of the exilic experience: solitary and mysterious.

Ali's latest poetry contains tricks of style and unusual images to depict the melancholia. Temporality appears to take centre stage in these. The greatness of the work is not in the thought or story it conveys, but in the music of the verse and the magical atmosphere it creates. All this is described in ordinary words which produce a strange and magical picture. He demonstrates the full swing away from the formal classical style of verse writing. Ali's difficult style is the result of his unusual knowledge of words and bold ways of building sentences.

August 2007