

M. A. Jamalzadeh

1892-1997

Sayyid Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh was born in Isfahan to a religious family of Shi'i Muslim clerics. Shortly before the execution of his reformist preacher father in 1908, Jamalzadeh went to Beirut and then to France and Switzerland to complete his education. From 1916 to 1930, he worked for the Iranian Embassy in Berlin.

In Berlin in 1921 Jamalzadeh published *Yeki bud yeki nabud* (Once upon a time), the first collection of Persian short stories ever published. The volume featured a preface which served as a manifesto for modernist Persian prose writing, while its six anecdotal stories treat events of the 1910s in Iran with unprecedented realism and local color. A translation of the stories titled *Once Upon a Time* was published in 1985, while the preface appeared in *The Literary Review* 18, 1974-75.

Jamalzadeh published nothing further in the 1920s and 1930s, in part because of strident, negative reaction in Tehran to his satirical portrayal of Shi'ite clerics in *Once Upon A Time*. From 1931 to 1956 he worked for the International Employment Office in Geneva. Following retirement, he has remained there, with an active schedule of writing and corresponding. A flood of books came from his pen from the early 1940s into the 1970s. Among Jamalzadeh's published fiction from this period are: *Dār al-majānīn* (Insane asylum, 1943), *Sabrā-ye mahshar* (The plain of judgment, 1947), *Kobneh va now* (Old and new, 1961), *Āsmān va rismān* (From the sublime to the ridiculous, 1964), *Talkh va shirin* (Bitter and sweet, 1964), and *Qesseh'hā-ye kutāh barā-ye bacheh'hā-ye rishdār* (Short tales for bearded boys, 1973). Typical of Jamalzadeh's later writing is the autobiographical *Sar-o tah-e yek karbās* (Cut from the same cloth), published in English as *Isfahan is Half the World: Memories of a Persian Boyhood*, 1983.

In recent years, much of Jamalzadeh's fiction and essays have been reissued in Iran, including: *Khāterāt-e Sayyed Mohammad Ali Jamālzādah* (1999), *Qesseh'nevisi* (1999), *Asbnāye bā Hāfez* (2000), *Dāstān'hā-ye Masnavi: bāng-e nāy* (2000), *Qesseh-e mā beh sar resid* (2000), *Qultashan divan* (2000), *Haft keshvar* (2001), *Kobneh va naw* (2001), *Qesseh'hā-ye kutāh barā-ye bacheh'hā-ye rish'dār* (2001).