

# Jalal Al-e Ahmad

1923—1969

The son of a Shi'i Muslim cleric, Jalal Al-e Ahmad was born and raised in Tehran. He pursued formal education there to the doctoral dissertation stage in Persian literature at Tehran University. Al-e Ahmad's first collection of short stories, *Did-o bāzdid* (Exchange of visits), appeared in 1946. There followed *Az ranji ke mibarim* (Our suffering, 1947), *Seb-tār* (Setar, 1949), and *Zan-e ziyādi* (The unwanted woman, 1952, 1964). Representative Al-e Ahmad stories in translation appear in *Literature East & West* 20 (1980) and *Iranian Society: An Anthology of Writings by Jalal Al-e Ahmad* (1982). In 1950 Al-e Ahmad married writer Simin Daneshvar (b. 1921) and later acknowledged her important role in his emergence as a leading writer in Iran in the 1960s.

From the mid-1950s, Al-e Ahmad turned to the novel, publishing four: *Sargozasht-e kandubā* (Tale of the beehives, 1955), *Modir-e madraseh* (The school principal, 1958), *Nun va'l-qalam* (By the pen, 1961), and *Nefrin-e zamin* (Cursing of the earth, 1968). Translations exist of *The School Principal* (1974 and 1986) and *By the Pen* (1989), while a plot summary of *Nefrin-e Zamin* appears in *Literature East & West* 20 (1980).

Besides short stories and novels, Al-e Ahmad authored some fourteen volumes of prose nonfiction, chief among them being: *Khasi dar miqāt* (Lost in the crowd, 1964, English translation, 1985) based upon his pilgrimage to Mecca, and his most famous work, the polemical essay *Gharbzadegi*, which has been published in multiple translations with the titles *Weststruckness* (1982), *Plagued by the West* (1982), and *Occidentosis* (1984).

A posthumous volume of Al-e Ahmad stories called *Panj dāstān* (Five stories) appeared in 1971. Ten years later his controversial autobiographical narrative on the childlessness of his marriage called *Sangi bar guri* (A stone on a grave), written in 1964, was published in Tehran, only to be banned shortly thereafter. His short stories have been reprinted in Iran in recent years.