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**Title:** Words and laments : a narratological analysis of Esmā'il Fasih's war novel, The Winter of 1983 (Zemestān-e 62)

**Issue Date:** 2016-09-13

## INTRODUCTION

### *Narratives of War: From Classical to Modern Persian Literature*

Writing about war has a long history in Persian literature. One of the very first examples is a short text, *Yādgār-e Zarirān* ('Memorial of Zarir'), which dates to pre-Islamic Iran. The work is composed in mixed form of poetry and prose and depicts the war between the Persians and the Turāniyāns, who were enemies for centuries.<sup>1</sup> *Yādgār-e Zarirān* was one of the central written sources used by Abolqāsem Ferdowsi (d. 1020) when composing his masterpiece, the epic poem *Shāh-nāme* ('The Book of Kings,' completed 1010) which recounts Persian mythology, legends, and history.<sup>2</sup> Much of *Shāh-nāme* is devoted to descriptions of battle scenes, which detail the war on at least two levels of abstraction. Firstly, the epic portrays the conflict between Iran and Turān on the political level as a conflict between rival kingdoms. Secondly, much of the work concerns specific conflicts between individuals on either side, such as that between Rostam and Sohrāb, or between Rostam and Esfandiyār. The large number of battles presented in *Shāh-nāme* has led Mirza Mollā-Ahmad to characterize *Shāh-nāme* as a 'war chronicle' (*jang-nāme*).<sup>3</sup> In relentlessly describing such a wide range of battle scenes, Ferdowsi's work seems to present war as an inevitable factor in human life. He stresses that war has occurred in every era, though of course the reasons and outcomes of these wars differed greatly. Although Ferdowsi positions himself in his work as an individual who, in general, stands against the existence of war and bloodshed, he does advocate warfare which aims to eliminate immorality from the world. Moreover, he exhorts Persians to fight against internal and external enemies in order to defend their homeland.<sup>4</sup>

In medieval Iran, when writers and poets explored themes concerning war, they often focused on the heroism of their protagonists at the battlefield. They wrote either epic poems

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<sup>1</sup> B. Utas, "On the Composition of the Ayyātkār ī Zarērān," in *Manuscripts, Text and Literature: Collected Essays on Middle and New Persian Texts*, eds. C. Jahani and D. Kargar (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2008), 3. The term 'Turāniyān' refers to the non-Persian people, often known as Turks whose homeland is indicated to be beyond Khorasan and the Oxus River. See C.E. Bosworth, "Turān," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, last updated February 11, 2011, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/turan> (accessed March 3, 2015). Also, for a detailed account of *Yādgār-e Zarirān*, see A. Tafazzoli, *Tārikh-e Adabiyāt-e Irān pish az Eslām* (Tehran: Sokhan, 1376/1997), 267-68; M. Boyce, "Ayādgār ī Zarērān," *Elr*.

<sup>2</sup> J. Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Ferdowsi, Abu'l-Qāsem i. Life," *Elr*.

<sup>3</sup> M. Mollā-Ahmad, "Jang va Solh dar Shāh-nāme-ye Ferdowsi," *Nāme-ye Pārsi* 1 (1382/2003): 43-44.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-55.

or prose narratives, called ‘war chronicles,’ ‘victory chronicles’ (*zafar-nāme*), ‘conquest chronicles’ (*fath-nāme*), or a ‘book of struggles’ (*jehādiyye*) in order to describe wars and the individuals fighting in them.<sup>5</sup> In recording war in this way, their goal, as Mohammad Reza Ghanoonparvar indicates, was to “enhance the image of the rulers who were their patrons, to instill pride in the hearts of the subjects, and to historically immortalize certain victories or military expeditions, and at the same time, to present the enemy as the prototype of evil.”<sup>6</sup>

War narratives in classical and medieval Persian literature were chiefly associated with royalty, in that poets and writers composed such works in order to perpetuate their patrons’ power and fame. As such, descriptions of battle from this period tend to contain elaborate portraits of heroic champions overcoming the enemies of their kingdoms, depictions which served to deify the kings and warriors involved. These narratives were chiefly concerned with weapons such as the sword, the bow, the spear, and the arrow. Other major descriptive elements often relate to the hero’s riding equipment, including his harness, reins, stirrups, and saddle.<sup>7</sup> In addition, such war narratives frequently had further national and ethical dimensions. They aimed to describe the eternal battle between good and evil, emphasizing the triumph of the former over the latter. Consequently, Persian war works from these periods tend to follow a fairly narrow template and address similar themes, especially admiration for the power of the benevolent warrior, and of his perseverance and determination in overcoming evil through battle.

The thematic focus of Persian war narratives did not change considerably until the nineteenth century. The globalization of war and the exploitation of weapons of mass destruction (i.e., chemical, nuclear, biological, and radiological weapons) rendered war the most devastating and destructive phenomenon in the modern era. These features of modern warfare, which resulted in casualties of an unprecedented magnitude for those nations engaged in war, introduced novel ideological, ethical, commercial, and logistical elements. Narratives of war were dramatically altered as a consequence of these fundamental changes to the nature of modern warfare. Modern Persian poets and writers were no longer keen to use the theme of war as a vehicle to enhance the reputation of their patrons. Instead, they described the catastrophic impacts of war in order to enhance people’s awareness and

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<sup>5</sup> A. Qāsemnezhād, “Adabiyāt-e Jang,” *Farhang-nāme-ye Adabi-ye Fārsi*, ed. H. Anushe (Tehran: Sāzmān-e Chāp va Enteshārāt, 1376/1997). The most detailed exposition of the victory and conquest chronicles in Persian literature appears in Z.A. Safā, *Hamāse-sorā’i dar Irān* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1333/1954), 354-76.

<sup>6</sup> M.R. Ghanoonparvar, “Modern Warfare in Persian Literature,” (an abstract of a paper presented at the Eighth Biennial Iranian Studies Conference, 2010), <http://iranianstudies.com/node/99> (accessed March 3, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> R. Zipoli, “Poetic Imagery,” in *A History of Persian Literature: General Introduction to Persian Literature*, ed. J.T.P. de Bruijn, Vol. 1 (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 207.

understanding of the vast destructive power now wielded in war on account of the use of modern technologies. In addition, the Persian narrative of war, which had been previously strictly limited to poetic forms, broke its barriers in the modern era and began to appear in prose forms such as novels and short stories. In short, the theme of war moved swiftly from old mythological and poetic forms in the classical age, as in the *Shāh-nāme*, to the novel in the modern era, in the wake of game-changing technological advancements.

At the end of the nineteenth century, which coincided with the reign of the Qājār monarch Nāser al-Din Shah (r. 1848-1896), Iran came into close contact with the West, which resulted in major transformations in all spheres of Iranian society, from politics to literature. The frequent journeys made by Nāser al-Din Shah to Europe; the establishment of the Dār al-Fonun Polytechnical College in Tehran in 1851, which taught modern subjects, such as military techniques; the increased frequency with which Iranian students were sent abroad to study, and the rise in the number of translations of Western works, both scientific and literary, into Persian, all led to Iranians getting better acquainted with the West and its worldview.<sup>8</sup> These elements directly influenced Persian literature, both verse and prose, and resulted in the introduction of the novel as a new literary genre to Persian prose literature. Since, according to the literary critic Hassan Kamshad, conventional classical poetry lacked the kind of diction that modern and Western ideas (i.e., social justice, human rights, freedom of individuals, and despotism) required, and the restrictive forms of traditional Persian poetry were unable to reflect these ideas, prose thus became the dominant literary vehicle of modern Iran.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout twentieth century Iran, the novel was mainly used to address the country's political, social, and historical issues. Regarding this fact, Kamshad writes that “perhaps in no other country has the development of literature been so closely associated with social and political fluctuations as in Persia during the present [twentieth] century.”<sup>10</sup> Kamshad here refers to the first half of the twentieth century (this quote was first published in 1966). However, his statement is also applicable to the second half of the century, since throughout this period Iran experienced remarkable changes in all domains of society, ranging from politics to economics to literature, which continued to be intimately reflected in the novels of the time. One such socio-political events of this period, which significantly enlarged the corpus of Persian literature, particularly from a thematic standpoint, is the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). This is not to say that prior to this conflict novels exploring the theme of war

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<sup>8</sup> S. Behbahani and Elr, “Fiction, ii (a). Historical Background of Modern Fiction,” *Elr*.

<sup>9</sup> H. Kamshad, *Modern Persian Prose Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), xii.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

were not produced. Persian novels from before this period, however, were not commonly called ‘war novels’ (*romān-e jang*).

As a result of the Second World War (1939-1945), during which Iran was occupied by Great Britain and the Soviet Union, many Iranian poets, such as Mohammad Taqi Bahār (1886-1951) and Abolqāsem Hālat (1919-1992) composed poems which discuss the invasion, its devastating impact on Iranian society and its economy, and the topic of Iran’s neutrality in the war. Unlike the poetry of this period, which is replete with references to the Anglo-Russian invasion of Iran, very few allusions to this subject are to be found in the Persian novels of the period.<sup>11</sup> This is perhaps due to the greater degree of public influence enjoyed by poetry compared with that achieved by novels at this time. This said, during the post-war period, a handful of Iranian writers whose lives had been affected by the invasion, and who directly witnessed its devastating effects on Iran’s economic, social, and political spheres, addressed the invasion in their novels.<sup>12</sup> For instance, Reza Barāheni (b. 1935) wrote two novels, *Mordegān-e Khāne-ye Vaqfi* (‘Dead People of the Donated House,’ written between 1964 and 1965) and *Tabrizi-hā* (‘The People of Tabriz,’ published in 1979) to describe the invasion of his hometown, Tabriz, and the impact it had on his countrymen.<sup>13</sup> Another Persian novel dealing with the Second World War, which describes the actions taken by an Iranian family against British colonialism, is *Suvashun* (‘Mourning for Siyāvash,’ 1969) by Simin Dāneshvar (1921-2012). Although these novels were published many years after the invasion, they are considered among the first attempts to present the subject of the Second World War in Persian novels.

### *Persian War Novels and the Position of The Winter of 1983 in Iranian Literature*

<sup>11</sup> For a comprehensive overview of Persian poetry on the invasion, see A.R. Zāker-Hoseyn, *Adabiyāt-e Siyāsi-ye Irān dar Asr-e Mashrutīyyat: Dowrān-e Tafavvoq va Bartari-ye Jonbesh-hā-ye Melli (1320-1332)*, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Nashr-e Elm, 1377/1998).

<sup>12</sup> Regarding the impact of the Anglo-Russian invasion of Iran, Brian Spooner writes: “The occupying powers subordinated everything to the economic and political objectives of supplying the eastern front and winning the war, with disastrous results for Iran’s small economy. The worst of the results was widespread famine, especially in 1942-1943, triggered by a poor harvest the previous year. Existing extremes of poverty were exacerbated, disease rates increased, and typhus became a chronic problem. Corruption, incompetence and arrogance characterized almost anyone in authority, in national and local government, the army and the police.” B. Spooner, introduction to *Savushun: A Novel about Modern Iran*, translated by M.R. Ghanoonparvar (Washington, D.C.: Mage Publishers, 1990), 11.

<sup>13</sup> Parts of the former novel were published in a book entitled *Jonun-e Neveshtan* which contains selected works of Barāheni, while, the later novel remained unpublished. See R. Barāheni, *Jonun-e Neveshtan: Gozide-ye Āsār-e Reza Barāheni* (Tehran: Rasām, 1371/1992), 156-62.

The Iran-Iraq War was the first serious conflict in which Iran was involved since World War Two. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, thereby initiating war, Iran witnessed a major armed conflict which affected all spheres of society.<sup>14</sup> The direct and substantial impact of the Iran-Iraq War on the development of Iranian literature is hard to deny. The war resulted in the introduction of a new kind of literature, which has numerous appellations, including ‘the war literature’ (*adabiyāt-e jang*), ‘the literature of holy defense’ (*adabiyāt-e defā‘-e moqaddas*), ‘the literature of perseverance’ (*adabiyāt-e pāydāri*), and ‘the literature of resistance’ (*adabiyāt-e moqāvemāt*). These divergent designations all refer to literary works whose central objective is to describe the Iran-Iraq War and explore the issues bestirred by it.<sup>15</sup> Although during the war poetry was the dominant literary genre that dealt with the conflict, often seeking to motivate Iranians to participate in it, novels also served as an important literary vehicle in portraying the war and the psychologies of those who experienced it.

It was concerning these novels, written during the Iran-Iraq War, that the term ‘war novel’ was first used in Iran.<sup>16</sup> In general, novels from this period which describe one or more aspects of the Iran-Iraq War were characterized as ‘war novels,’ regardless of the extent to which the war served as a setting. During the eight years of conflict, Iran witnessed the production of a large number of such war novels. Most of them were produced with the following objectives: to exhort people to join the army and help their country defeat Iraq; to strengthen the morale of the Iranian soldiers who were already fighting at the frontlines, and to console those whose lives had already been negatively affected by the war (e.g., war veterans and migrants).<sup>17</sup>

Persian literature has witnessed the creation of an extensive number of war novels not only during the conflict itself, but also during the post-war period and up to the present day. The authors of these novels can be divided into those who started their literary career before the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and those who established themselves as writers after this Revolution.<sup>18</sup> Among the writers of the former group, two figures especially deserving of mention are Ahmad Mahmud (1931-2002) and Esmā‘il Fasih (1935-2009). These authors were among the first Iranian novelists to write about the Iran-Iraq War. Ahmad Mahmud’s *Zamin-e Sukhte* (‘The Scorched Earth’) was published in 1982, during the second year of the

<sup>14</sup> N. Farzad, “Qeysar Aminpur and the Persian Poetry of Sacred Defence,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 3 (2007): 352.

<sup>15</sup> M. Sa‘idi, “Adabiyāt-e Jang va Ta‘ābir-e Digar-e ān dar Irān,” *Ketāb-e Māh-e Adabiyāt* 22 (1387/2008): 76.

<sup>16</sup> A.R. Shohāni, “Seyri dar Romān-e Jang-e Dahe-ye Shast,” *Tārikh-e Adabiyāt* 65 (1389/2010): 155.

<sup>17</sup> H. Ābedīni, *Sad Sāl Dāstān-nevisi-ye Irān*, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Cheshme, 1377/1998), 889; M. Hanif and M. Hanif, *Kand o Kāvi Pirāmun-e Adabiyāt-e Dāstāni-e Jang va Defā‘-e Moqaddas* (Tehran: Sarir, 1388/2009), 180.

<sup>18</sup> H. Yavari, “Fiction ii (b) the Novel,” *EIr*.

conflict, and is considered by many to be the first Persian war novel. Almost three years later, in 1985, Fasih published his war novel, *Zemestān-e 62* ('The Winter of 1983').<sup>19</sup> Despite chronologically following *The Scorched Earth*, Persian critic Ehsan Yarshater considers *The Winter of 1983* to be the first novel on the Iran-Iraq War, owing to its extensive portrayal of both the country's situation as a result of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and its portrayal of the war itself.<sup>20</sup>

The wartime Iranian novels generally depict people's enthusiasm in participating in the war, as well as their heroic acts in defense of their homeland against the enemy's brutality. For instance, in *The Scorched Earth*, the author describes how two members of an Iranian working class family rush to the battlefield to defend their country. The son of this family is killed. An identical plot and theme can be found in another wartime novel, *Nakhl-hā-ye bi Sar* ('The Headless Palm Trees,' 1984), written by Qāsem-Ali Ferāsāt (b. 1959). In this novel, the two sons and one daughter of the family are killed. These and other works published during the Iran-Iraq War show how under wartime conditions writers emphasized the necessity of joining the army and in taking part at the front. The wartime novel, therefore, was mainly used as a tool to persuade Iranians to become soldiers.

*The Winter of 1983*, by contrast, is significant in that it explores numerous other themes and perspectives on the war not explored by the typical war novels of this period. Firstly, it does not directly describe the actions of soldiers fighting on the battlefield. Instead, it is mainly concerned with describing Iran's social and political situation at the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War. Secondly, unlike many war novels of this period, which usually only describe the active role of the working class in defending the country, *The Winter of 1983* chiefly concerns itself with the role of the *middle* class, especially their personal views on the war and its impact. This does not imply that Fasih's novel ignores working class characters entirely, only that his main focus is the manner in which the middle social strata dealt with and viewed the war. As Reza Āmeri has pointed out, this is the first, and perhaps the only, wartime Persian novel addressing the experiences and outlooks of members of the middle class.<sup>21</sup> Finally, *The Winter of 1983* also extensively details the destructive impact of the war on Iranian cities and civilians, themes which are not very prevalent in other war novels of the

<sup>19</sup> "Shab-e Esmā'il Fasih," *Majalle-ye Farhangi-Honari-ye Bokhārā*, last updated Tir 27, 1392/July 8, 2013, <http://bukharamag.com/1392.04.3633.html#more-3633> (accessed August 12, 2014); E. Badi', *Asl-e Āsār-e Fasih: Romān-hā* (Tehran: Alborz, 1379/2000), 4.

<sup>20</sup> E. Yarshater, "Yāddāsht (9): Sharāb-e Khām va Bāde-ye Kohan, Manzari Shāhvār, Montakhabāt," *Irān-shenāsi* 3 (1368/1989): 478.

<sup>21</sup> R. Āmeri, "Darbāre-ye Zemestān-e 62, Sarzamin-e Harz," *Ketāb-dust*, last updated Ābān 17, 1388/November 8, 2009, <http://bookfriend.blogfa.com/post-1814.aspx> (accessed September 9, 2014).

time. For example, Fasih goes to great lengths to describe the impact of the ‘war of the cities’ (*jang-e shahr-hā*), one of the most destructive phases of the conflict (during which Iraq bombed Iranian cities and killed many defenseless civilians), on the lives of ordinary Iranian citizens. Only the subsequent post-war novels, known as ‘black novels’ (*romān-e siyāh*), followed suit in laying bare the devastating impact of the war on the cities of Iran. Fasih’s novel is thus considered one of the first novels to expose the ways in which cities end up in ruins due to the war, characterizing the war as having a pervasive negative impact on the society, its infrastructure, and the everyday lives of its citizens. In order to scrutinize these elements of the novel, which were seldom seen in other Persian novels written during the Iran-Iraq War, and led to *The Winter of 1983*’s becoming a model for Iranian authors of the post-war era, this dissertation will examine the novel through an in-depth analysis of its narrative, themes, characters, narrator, and setting (place and time).

*The Winter of 1983* also addresses religious motifs, in particular the Islamic character of the war within Iranian communities. Such themes are commonplace in many Iranian wartime novels. It is worth noting that after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War in 1980, the Iranian Revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Ruhollāh Khomeini (1902-1989), interpreted the conflict within the Islamic ideological framework, referring to it as one between ‘Islam and blasphemy’ because the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein (1937-2006), sought to destroy Islam and the Iranian Islamic Revolution. In this vein, many Islamic theological teachings, particularly concerning martyrdom, were used during the war in order to motivate Iranians to go and fight. Martyrdom was understood as the sacrifice of one’s life for the cause of Islam and its ideology. During the war, martyrdom, which is presented as the noblest kind of death within Islamic teaching, was thus espoused as a virtuous ideal within Iranian society. It was from this perspective that the war was referred to as ‘God’s blessing’ (*ne‘mat-e elāhi*), and the possibility of religious martyrdom that came with the onset of the war was, for the most part, regarded as a positive byproduct of it.<sup>22</sup>

The theme of martyrdom is found in a range of Persian novels written about the Iran-Iraq War, and Fasih’s *The Winter of 1983* is no exception. Considering Persian war authors’ outlooks on the war, and particularly on the theme of martyrdom, the literary critic, Mohammad Hanif divides the Persian war novels into three categories: novels which

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<sup>22</sup> For an extensive study of Ayatollah Khomeini’s views on the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War as addressed in his poetry, see A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, “Khomeini the Poet Mystic,” *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam* 51 (2011): 438-58; D. Farhosh-Van Loon, “Of Love and Longing: A Study of Ayatollah Khomeini’s Mystical Poetry and its Reception in Iran and Abroad” (not yet defended PhD diss., Leiden University), 68-80.

emphasize the positive effects of the war (*romān-e mosbat-negar*), novels with critical outlooks on the war (*romān-e manfi-negar*), and novels with moderate or neutral outlooks on the war (*romān-e beynābeyn*). Novels that fall within the first category often emphasize Islamic ideology in describing the significance of the war. For example, they frequently refer to the concept of ‘God’s reward,’ which is bestowed only upon those ‘chosen ones’ who willingly sacrifice their lives in battle for Islam. Martyrdom and the deeds of martyrs are highly and elaborately praised in these novels. In contrast, those novels with a critical outlook on the war not only satirize the notion of martyrdom, but often simply refrain from acknowledging the martyrs’ sacrifice at all. Often these novels aim only to describe the devastating impacts of the war on cities and civilians. Those novels with a moderate outlook on the war are appreciative of the deeds of those soldiers who died fighting in defense of their country, whilst also using the destructive and disastrous aspects of the war as a counterpoint.

Mohammad Hanif categorizes *The Winter of 1983* as a novel with a critical outlook on the war, since its perspective on martyrdom is in conflict with Islamic ideas concerning martyrdom and the exalted status of the martyr. He notes that the main protagonist of the novel, who has spent most of his life in the United States and does not have substantial knowledge of either Islam or martyrdom, goes to the frontline not for the sake of Islam, but for the sake of saving the life of his beloved. As a result, Hanif questions how such an individual could be called a martyr, since according to Islamic teaching only those men who die on the battlefield for the sake of God are considered true martyrs.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the Iranian literary critic Barāheni also refuses to call the protagonist’s death martyrdom. He justifies this by stating that since the protagonist’s intention in coming to Ahvaz was to get away from his miserable life in America and to forget about the death of his fiancée, his death is not martyrdom but suicide. He suggests that even if the protagonist had not been killed on the warfront, he would have found an alternative way to attempt suicide.<sup>24</sup>

Despite these and other similar arguments regarding *The Winter of 1983* and its critical viewpoint on the war, this dissertation will consider how the novel might be differently categorized, as a novel with a moderate or neutral outlook on the war, the central reason being that the novel is careful to feature both positive and negative aspects of the war. In particular, it can be argued that the novel treats martyrdom in the same manner as it was typically viewed, as a *positive* aspect of the war. To support this statement, the theme of martyrdom

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<sup>23</sup> Hanif, *Jang az Se Didgāh: Naqd va Barresi-ye Bist Romān va Dāstān-e Boland-e Jang* (Tehran: Sarir, 1386/2007), 25, 28, 90, 94.

<sup>24</sup> Barāheni, *Talā dar Mes*, Vol. 3 (Tehran: Zaryāb, 1380/2001), 1851.

will be studied in detail, with a special emphasis on the use of war rhetoric in the novel. ‘War rhetoric’ refers to the various genres of expression, such as lamentation poetry (*nowhe*), slogans (*sho‘ār*), martyrs’ testaments (*vasiyyat-nāme*), radio and television programs, and visual images (i.e., posters, billboards, and graffiti) that were employed in wartime Iran. This war rhetoric, the purpose of which was to present the war and martyrdom in a positive light, was used to convince Iranians that defending the country and participating in the fighting was the duty of all. These diverse forms of war rhetoric run throughout *The Winter of 1983*. Analyzing the novel’s war rhetoric makes it possible to understand how it was received in Iranian society and adopted into the government’s guidelines in the course of the war.

Regarding the place and value of *The Winter of 1983* within Iranian literary history, Barāheni considers the novel to be one of the best examples of the Persian war novel, saying:

I believe that, excluding Ahmad Mahmud who authored *The Scorched Earth*, and Esmā‘il Fasih who wrote *The Winter of 1983*; [...], the rest of the intellectuals, due to their neglect to the theme of war, have disregarded their duty as writers.<sup>25</sup>

Barāheni goes on to state that most contemporary intellectuals avoid writing about a particular political event, including war, for fear that it will lay bare their political commitments or party affiliation. In particular, for many intellectuals, writing about the Iran-Iraq War is considered a vehicle for communicating views, whether positive or negative, on the Islamic Republic. The critic goes on to say that writing on the theme of the war should not, in fact, be considered to be a vehicle for expressing views about the government in this way, or reserved solely for those authors who write for the government, because the war was a national dilemma affecting all aspects of Iranian society.<sup>26</sup>

### *Perception of the Novel in Iranian Society and Beyond*

Ahmad Mahmud’s *The Scorched Earth* and Fasih’s *The Winter of 1983* are among the most important and best-known Persian novels written about the Iran-Iraq War during the 1980s. Since Ahmad Mahmud and Fasih were already established writers in pre-revolutionary Iran,

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 1845.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 1845-46.

both novels gained a wide readership, and were well-received by readers and critics alike. Though several English studies of Ahmad Mahmud's oeuvre (including *The Scorched Earth*) exist, such as Nastaran Narges Kherad's PhD dissertation, "Re-Examining the Works of Ahmad Mahmud: A Fictional Depiction of the Iranian Nation in the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century," Fasih's works, and especially his *The Winter of 1983*, have yet to be extensively studied in English.<sup>27</sup>

This is despite the fact that *The Winter of 1983* was reprinted six times between its original publication in 1985 and 2013. Considering that the novel was banned in Iran between 1987 and 2003, due to (the claims by the government) its anti-Islamic and anti-government tenors, this number of reprints is especially impressive. During this period, the novel was only made available by *Sinā*, an Iranian publisher based in Cologne, Germany, and by unofficial copies which were circulated in Iran via the black market. Illustrating the Iranian people's demand for and love of the work, the Iranian filmmaker, Bahman Farmānārā (b. 1942), has speculated that if the novel had been reprinted in Iran between 1987 and 2003, it would certainly have reached its 15<sup>th</sup> edition.<sup>28</sup> In 2003, the novel was officially reprinted in Iran by *Peykān* Publishers for the first time since 1985 and has gone on to sell over 5000 copies.

Since its initial publication, many Persian and non-Persian critics, writers and researchers have studied and analyzed *The Winter of 1983* from different perspectives. To the best of my knowledge, notwithstanding the wide range of published articles and book chapters in Persian, there are very few studies of the novel available in the English language. Yarshater is one of the earliest critics to have studied the novel, publishing an article in Persian entitled *Yāddāsht (9): Sharāb-e Khām va Bāde-ye Kohan, Manzari Shāhvār, Montakhabāt* ('Note (9): Raw Wine and Ancient Wine, Splendid Outlook, Anthology') in 1989. Although the title of the article refers to two of Fasih's other novels (*Sharāb-e Khām* and *Bāde-ye Kohan*), a few pages are devoted to *The Winter of 1983*. After summarizing the novel's plot, Yarshater analyzes it in four pages, focusing on the theme, the main characters, and its use of language. The critic concludes that Fasih's fictional works, including *The Winter of 1983*, are outstanding post-revolutionary fictions which conclusively demonstrate the author's exceptional skill in executing the novel form.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> N.N. Kerad, "Re-Examining the Works of Ahmad Mahmud: A Fictional Depiction of the Iranian Nation in the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century" (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> E. Fasih, interviewed by M.R. Ghanoonparvar et al., "Goft o Gu bā Esmā'il Fasih," *Kelk* 55-56 (1373/1994): 227.

<sup>29</sup> Yarshater, "Yāddāsht (9)," 476-81.

One of the most significant Persian studies of Fasih's life and works was written by Emād Badi'. As one of Fasih's students, Badi' compiled and studied his teacher's novels, publishing them in a book called *Asl-e Āsār-e Fasih: Romān-hā* ('The Origin of Fasih's Works: Novels'). The book is divided into two main parts. The first consists in a short biography of Fasih and a list of his published works, which is followed by an in-depth analysis of some of Fasih's novels. In the second part of the book, Badi' enumerates and examines sixteen of Fasih's novels, including *The Winter of 1983*.<sup>30</sup> He mainly follows a singular pattern in this section. After first summarizing the plot of a novel and providing a few primary remarks, the critic quotes some pages of the novel in full in order to accustom the reader with Fasih's writing style. For the most part, then, the book serves merely as a primer to Fasih's works, and thus does not deal with the thematic (especially social and political) issues raised by them.

Over the last two decades, many academic works examining the corpus of Persian literature concerning the Iran-Iraq War have been published in Iran. In many of these books, Fasih's *The Winter of 1983* is treated as one of the best examples of a Persian war novel. For instance, as has already been alluded to, in his book *Jang az Se Didgāh: Naqd va Barresi-ye Bist Romān va Dāstān-e Boland-e Jang* ('War from Three Viewpoints: Study and Analysis of Twenty Novels and Long Stories about the War') Mohammad Hanif categorizes the Persian war novels into three groups: those with positive, negative, and moderate outlooks on the war. As has been said, Hanif interprets *The Winter of 1983* as belonging to the second of these categories. After giving a short plot, Hanif analyzes the novel from sociological and psychological perspectives, concerning himself with Fasih's depiction of Iranian's society under the war—a depiction of a society overcome by stress, mourning, grief, pain, torment, and fearful nights. In addition, the main characters in the novel and their reactions to this changed society are investigated.<sup>31</sup> In chapter two, I will use Hanif's categorization of the Persian war novels in order to examine them from various perspectives.

Following the publication of *The Winter of 1983* in Iran in 2003, the novel has become a common subject of research within Iranian academia. For instance, a number of M.A. theses have been written whose main subject is the analysis of the novel from various perspectives. However, most of these works are comparative, discussing the novel in conjunction with other works having the same subject matter. For instance, Tāhere Ahmadi-Varzane, a Masters student at University of Qom, wrote her thesis about the treatment of the war and its social

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<sup>30</sup> Badi', *Asl-e Āsār*, 153-72.

<sup>31</sup> Hanif, *Jang az Se Didgāh*, 85-94.

impact in four of the Persian war novels, including *The Winter of 1983*.<sup>32</sup> She compares the different ways in which the war is presented in these novels, including two with a negative outlook on the war, and two with a positive outlook on the war. In agreement with Hanif, Ahmadi-Varzane also considers *The Winter of 1983* as a novel with negative attitude to the war.

Among those Iranian critics who have examined *The Winter of 1983*, Ali Ferdowsi is in particular deserve of mention, since he is one of the very few scholars to have written on the novel in English. Ferdowsi has written three articles on the novel: a critical analysis in Persian, and two short encyclopedia entries in English. Ferdowsi's work in Persian, entitled *Āshiyāni dar Tufān: Neveshtāri Pirāmun-e Zemestān-e 62* ('A Nest on the Storm: A Written Piece on *The Winter of 1983*') provides a sociological analysis of the novel, dealing predominantly with the nature of Iranian society under the war and discussing a number of unexpected events which occurred during this time. Ferdowsi concludes that the peculiar sociological nature of Iranian society during the war was built upon two central foundations: destiny and anticipation. He also analyzes the lifestyle and ideas of the main characters in *The Winter of 1983* in order to show how Iranian lives were affected by the war, and especially how they suffered from forced vagrancy following the large-scale collateral damage caused by the war.<sup>33</sup> Ferdowsi's two encyclopedic articles: *Fasih, Esma'il* and *Zemestān-e 62* are in English.<sup>34</sup> The former article deals with Fasih's biography and oeuvre, providing informative facts about the author and his writings. As is evident from the title, the latter article focuses specifically on Fasih's *The Winter of 1983*. It briefly discusses narrative elements such as the plot, the narrator, and the characters. With these two short articles, published in English and readily available online, Ali Ferdowsi should certainly be given credit for taking an initial step towards introducing Fasih to the Western world.

Roxane Haag-Higuchi is another pioneer in presenting *The Winter of 1983* to readers outside of its country of origin. At the Second European Conference of Iranian Studies, which was held in Bamberg (30 September to 4 October 1991), Haag-Higuchi presented her paper

<sup>32</sup> The title of her thesis is "Moqāyese-ye Mowzu'i-ye Jang dar Chāhār Romān (*Zemestān-e 62 Esmā'il Fasih, Shab-e Malakh Javād Mojābi, Safar be Gerā-ye 270 Daraje Ahmad Dehqān, Shatranj bā Mashin-e Qiyāmat Habib Ahmadzade*) va Bāztāb-e ān" (Analogy and Reflection of the Theme of the War in Four Novels: Esmā'il Fasih's *The Winter of 1983*, Javād Mojābi's *The Night of Grasshopper*, Ahmad Dehqān's *Journey to Heading 270 Degrees*, and Habib Ahmadzāde's *Chess with the Doomsday Machine*) (2010).

<sup>33</sup> A. Ferdowsi, "Āshiyāni dar Tufān: Neveshtāri Pirāmun-e Zemestān-e 62," *Kelk* 55-56 (1373/1994): 254-67.

<sup>34</sup> Both are available online at the *Encyclopædia Iranica*'s website ([www.iranicaonline.org](http://www.iranicaonline.org)). A. Ferdowsi, "Fasih, Esma'il," *EIr*, online edition, last updated January 28, 2011, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/fasih-esmail> (accessed September 22, 2011); Idem, "Zemestān-e 62," *EIr*, online edition, last updated May 21, 2012, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zemestan-e-62> (accessed September 22, 2011).

under the title “The Theme of War in Esmā‘īl Fasih’s Novel, *Zemestān-e Šašt-o-Do*,” which was published in 1995.<sup>35</sup> Her paper analyzes the narrative elements of *The Winter of 1983* such as the plot, the theme, the characters, the place, and the time. As one of the first, and probably the only major narratological analyses of Fasih’s novel in English, the work is significant.

In recent years, *The Winter of 1983* has received considerable attention among non-Iranian researchers. Often, they have chosen to focus on unique aspects of the novel which have not previously been investigated by any studies in Western languages. For instance, in her article “Religion in Contemporary Persian Prose,” Isabel Stümpel examines several post-revolutionary Persian novels, including *The Winter of 1983*, in order to explore the implications of religion, particularly Islam, and its introduction following the Islamic Revolution in Iran.<sup>36</sup> She chooses *The Winter of 1983* mainly because it was written during the Iran-Iraq War, a time when Islamic principles were rife in Iranian society. Stümpel reveals the novel’s direct involvement in Islamic ideology through its reference to such subjects as the idea of martyrdom and the Karbala paradigm. On the other hand, Stümpel’s exploration of Islam in this work also suggests that “references to religious expressions are conscious and eclectic, mixing Islamic notions with Western (Christian) culture and thereby relativizing the validity of each.”<sup>37</sup> The critic gives an example of the main protagonist’s trust in God as well as in Saint George, in order to show how Islamic ideas were integrated with Western Culture in the novel. Although Stümpel has briefly explored the Islamic ideas addressed in Fasih’s war novel, these themes require elaboration, since they are by far the most significant factors when it comes to an accurate characterization of Iranian war culture. Since *The Winter of 1983* is generally thought to have, in some sense, disrespected the Islamic principle of the concept of martyrdom, the Islamic nature of the war has been left out in many studies, particularly those written within Iran. This dissertation, therefore, could be considered the first study dealing with this dimension of the war as presented in Fasih’s novel, and will involve an in-depth analysis of its themes, particularly its treatment of war rhetoric and its various forms.

Another English work which engages in analysis of *The Winter of 1983* from a particular perspective is a PhD dissertation written by Jennifer Chandler at the University of Manchester. Her dissertation, entitled “No Man’s Land: Representations of Masculinities in

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<sup>35</sup> R. Haag-Higuchi, “The Theme of War in Esmā‘īl Fasih’s Novel, *Zemestān-e Šašt-o-Do*,” in *Proceedings of the Second European Conference of Iranian Studies*, ed. B.G. Fragner et. al. (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1995), 255-62.

<sup>36</sup> I. Stümpel, “Religion in Contemporary Persian Prose,” in *Religious Perspectives in Modern Muslim and Jewish Literatures*, eds. G. Abramson and H. Kilpatrick (London & New York: Routledge, 2006), 163-78.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

Iran-Iraq War Fiction” explores the concept of masculinity “as a complex phenomenon fraught with ambivalence” as it occurs in eight works of fiction written by Iraqi and Iranian writers about the Iran-Iraq War. Chandler’s dissertation concerns the relationship between masculinity and the literary description of the nation at war. She chooses Iran-Iraq war fiction as it allows for a sustained analysis of male literary representation. After discussing the discourse of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in post-revolutionary Iran, which concerns a specific type of Islamic citizen: pious, good, loyal, brave, and ready to sacrifice themselves for their religion and their homeland, Chandler uses the concept in order to study the representation of masculinities in four Persian war novels, including Fasih’s *The Winter of 1983*. Through analysis of three main male characters, she shows how the novel’s depiction of masculinity differs greatly from the traditional Iranian approach to this topic. She concludes that Fasih’s novel is one of a very small handful of Iranian war novels of the period which rejects the traditional formulations of patriarchy and male sexuality, a view which endows women with power and status through widowhood.<sup>38</sup> Clearly, one of the main reasons that Chandler chooses Fasih’s novel is its unique outlook on the issue of masculinity, one that is hard to find in other Persian novels of the time. Chandler’s work mainly concerns the study of male characters as gendered subjects in *The Winter of 1983*. By contrast, my research focuses on both male and female characters (in chapter six), in order to provide a more general account of how Fasih’s characters view and are affected by the war. The purpose of gender segregation in the current study is thus merely to reveal the differing reactions of characters of each gender to the war.

### *The Contribution of this Dissertation*

Although the English studies mentioned provide Western readers with some valuable information regarding various aspects of *The Winter of 1983*, a comprehensive analysis of the novel, fully exploring its significance within the history of contemporary Persian literature, particularly among the other war novels of the time, is missing. The dissertation first of all offer the detailed analysis of the novel from a narratological perspective, through which some of the essential narrative elements, such as the plot, the theme, the narrator, the characters,

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<sup>38</sup> J. Chandler, “No Man’s Land: Representations of Masculinities in Iran-Iraq War Fiction” (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2012), 83-101.

and the setting are all examined in order to uncover elements and concepts in the novel which have, as yet, remained unstudied. For instance, through analysis of certain elements, I will demonstrate that the novel has a moderate outlook on the war. As has been said, most of the literary critics in Iran categorize *The Winter of 1983* as a novel with critical outlook on war. They refuse to consider the death of the protagonist at the frontline as martyrdom, since his reasons for participating are not religious, but personal. My dissertation, by contrast, will explore the various forms of war rhetoric present in the novel in order to argue that its ideological impact on the main protagonist is such that he chooses death deliberately in order to defend his homeland. Analysis of this war rhetoric not only reveals the author's outlook on the notion of martyrdom, but also reveals unique, as yet undiscussed, aspects of Iranian-Islamic war culture in the novel. More generally, this analysis thus illustrates how this work hitherto thought to have stood against the traditional war narrative, arguably having a positive view of the war and martyrdom.

Secondly, I will argue that the novel encourages a message of patriotism through its central character. Although during the war literary emphasis was on the active role of the working class in defense of the country, *The Winter of 1983* appears to reveal the influential role of the middle strata of society, an oft-neglected demographic in descriptions of the war. Despite showing how the member of this social class leave (or intend to leave) the country during wartime, the author desires his protagonist, who is from the middle class, to return to his homeland and fight, in order to emphasize the significant role played by this social class in the defense of the country during the conflict with Iraq, as well as to emphasize the importance of patriotism and national sentiment. For these reasons, I shall argue that *The Winter of 1983* should be characterized as a novel with a moderate, not a negative, outlook on the war, giving a balanced picture of wartime Iran. Part of this argument will be that the novel in fact encourages people to go to the war, and is appreciative of the deeds of those who sacrificed their lives for the sake of their homeland. On the other hand, the novel also illustrates the destructive nature of the war, which devastated the cities of Iran and took the lives of many innocent lives.

Finally, this research on *The Winter of 1983* will contribute more generally to the study of the war novel genre in Iran. It will provide others with the opportunity to study other war novels from a similar stylistic point of view, giving some direction to those who wish to carry out further investigations into war literature, in particular the Persian war novels.

*The Methodology of this Dissertation*

This dissertation examines Fasih's *The Winter of 1983* by using narratological tools and theories to provide valuable discussion of the novel's content and structure, as well as to conceptualize it as a coherent construction. To this end, the theories of contemporary narratologists, particularly Mieke Bal, Michael J. Toolan, Seymour Chatman, and Jonathan Culler will be used. According to narratologists such as these, all narratives are based upon a model or structure, and the way the text is constructed is important to the way the narrative functions. Their theories posit that narrative components, such as the plot, theme, characters, events, and setting, must be considered technical features of a work, which contribute essentially to the shaping of the story and its meaning. In this dissertation theories of the abovementioned scholars will be used first to define the narrative elements, and second to display the position and function of each element within the novel.

Narratological analysis of a novel is not only about studying narrative elements and how they are designed in a story; it is also useful in understanding relevant cultural, political, social, and historical settings. Narratology, therefore, is a theoretical lens through which culture, history, politics, convention, and other facets of a specific society can be viewed. As such, one might say that narratological analysis encompasses a broad scope which can lead to a textual, cultural, historical, and sociological analysis of a narrative text. For example, Mieke Bal asserts that any kind of narrative text not only deals with one particular story or event, but also with one opinion or idea.<sup>39</sup> This dissertation embraces this interpretation of narratology to analyze elements of *The Winter of 1983* – its theme, characters, events, and settings – to discuss the author's opinion on the Iran-Iraq War. Such an analysis also guides us toward an integrated account of how narrative elements are designed to unveil aspects of Iran's society during wartime, and also to perceive the literary effect of realism in the novel.

More than any other literary form, the novel, as Jonathan Culler asserts, "serves as the model by which society conceives of itself, the discourse in and through which it articulates the world."<sup>40</sup> The novel therefore is referred to as a 'repository of culture' and plays a central role in transmitting cultural memory.<sup>41</sup> Cultural memory, as May Charles claims, serves as a

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<sup>39</sup> M. Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Toronto/Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 8.

<sup>40</sup> J. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 189.

<sup>41</sup> Generally speaking, cultural memory is a "capacity [...] to remember in a present situation 'things' (human experiences, individual or collective attitudes, feelings, and discussions, reflected in any document) that in the past have been 'relevant' to us as far as our cultural identity, our roots and our self-image are concerned and as

model to offer realistic content to the novel, which is based on addressing the problems of ordinary people and dealing with social reality.<sup>42</sup> Relying on realistic content, war novels often refer to various aspects of cultural memory, as they take place in the real world and echo events that have happened in it.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, narrative elements in such novels are designed to refer to the cultural context of a certain society, and to this end the writer uses authentic materials. In this respect, the fictional world is a platform for the author, who is often regarded as a culture bearer, to expose a certain non-fictional culture at a specific time based on his or her perceived truth. Because the narrator often duplicates the author's perspective in the real world, he or she, although fictive, can 'naturalize' the novel and make the fictive world seem real to its audience. Culler stresses that naturalization of fiction, i.e. giving the text a relation to the world and art, is meant to show life as it really is.<sup>44</sup>

Among the narrative elements, theme plays the most significant role in transmitting culture aspects to the reader. Thematic analysis of a novel is a means of revealing a society's cultural condition and memories about that condition. The war plays a central role in making culture; analysis of this culture can in turn be a means of understanding the perspectives of different people within a nation and the ways they think about the war. *The Winter of 1983* is one of the Iranian wartime novels that presents the war's Islamic culture by referring to various forms of war rhetoric. War rhetoric in the novel shows the politics of wartime society, and how ideological discourse was used to inspire masses to go to the front. Analysis of war rhetoric shows how Iranian war culture was interwoven with the concept of martyrdom. In other words, the way war was viewed in Iranian society is apparent through its war rhetoric, which was designed to highlight the righteousness of Iran in the war against Iraq and the power of martyrdom in defense of one's country. Therefore, as evidenced in the case of *The Winter of 1983*, the cultural function of theme is important in the analysis of a novel, since it shows the interaction between society and the individual.<sup>45</sup>

Another important narrative element is character development. Characters transfer the writer's thoughts from a subjective to an objective state.<sup>46</sup> In this regard, the fictional

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far as their memory helps us to 'solve' some problems we are confronted with." H. van Gorp and U. Musarra-Schroeder, "Introduction: Literary Genres and Cultural Memory," in *Genres as Repositories of Cultural Memory*, eds. H. van Gorp and U. Musarra-Schroeder, Vol. 5 (Amsterdam & Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), ii.

<sup>42</sup> M. Charles, "Reassessing Novelistic Realism: The Role of Interpretive Frameworks," in *ibid.*, 78.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>44</sup> Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 200.

<sup>45</sup> B. Keunen, "Cultural Thematics and Cultural Memory: Towards a Socio-Cultural Approach to Literary Themes," in *Methods for the Study of Literature as Cultural Memory*, eds. R. Vervliet and A. Estor, Vol. 6 (Amsterdam & Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 22.

<sup>46</sup> Barāheni, *Qesse-nevisi* (Tehran: Nashr-e Nou, 1362/1983), 256.

characters presented by the narrator are often not persons, but ‘kinds of persons’ who represent different perspectives within the society explored in the novel.<sup>47</sup> In order to highlight the importance of studying character, two key factors should be noted. Firstly, the characters play a major role in conveying the main message of the narrative to the reader. Since the characters are often created in the fictional world to mirror different aspects of the writer’s own cultural, political, and social ideologies and concerns, it is essential for the author to reveal the character’s external and internal attributes. This task is on the narrator’s shoulders. Secondly, if the reader is unable to know key characters inside and out, the novel will lack realism, which is an essential narrative device. The overriding success of all realistic fiction relies on the authenticity and development of the characters.

Time and space, which in narratology is often referred to as ‘setting,’ are also crucial elements in investigating cultural aspects of the society contextualized within the novel. In Teresa Bridgeman’s words, setting leads us to grasp the narrative’s broader scope, while reaching far “beyond the specification” of a specific time and place.<sup>48</sup> Setting is firmly associated with the characters and the theme. Often, the fictional character “becomes a component of the setting and the setting an essential part of the character, while the course of time is expressed.”<sup>49</sup> This is apparent in *The Winter of 1983*, as Fasih describes the setting in order to reveal how this element affects the representation of the characters both physically and emotionally.

This dissertation uses narratological tools and theories to offer a comprehensive analysis of Fasih’s war novel, *The Winter of 1983* in order to achieve the following objectives: to address the reasons that caused the novel diverge from other novels of the time written about the Iran-Iraq War; to showcase Iranian wartime culture; to interpret the author’s opinion of the war; to analyze the importance and meaning of several key concepts and ideas that were often used in Iranian society during the war; and to re-categorize the book as a novel with a moderate rather than a negative outlook on the war. This examination of *The Winter of 1983* will convey the contemporary Persian intellectual approach to the war and other relevant issues. The dissertation will thus construct a coherent and novel account of the Persian war novel through literary, narratological, historical, and cultural analysis.

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<sup>47</sup> N. Wolterstorff, “Characters and Their Names,” *Poetics* 8, nos. 1-2 (1979): 113.

<sup>48</sup> T. Bridgeman, “Time and Space,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. D. Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 52.

<sup>49</sup> Seyed-Gohrab, *Laylī and Majnūn: Love, Madness and Mystic Longing in Niẓāmī’s Epic Romance* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 312.

*The Organization of this Dissertation*

This dissertation is divided into three parts, each of which deals with various aspects of the Iran-Iraq War in general and Fasih's *The Winter of 1983* in particular. In the first part, consisting of chapters one and two, the main objective is to scrutinize the war from historical, religious, and literary perspectives to help the reader understand how the war was viewed within Iranian society, and how it is addressed in the novels of the time, especially in *The Winter of 1983*.

Chapter one begins with a short introduction to the historical background, causes, and impacts of the conflict in Iran as viewed by various historians. This chapter will also examine the religious and particularly Islamic nature of the war on the Iranian side. In this regard, the two concepts of 'holy defense' and martyrdom, which played a central role in wartime Iran in order to motivate people to go to war, are studied in detail. The importance of these concepts is evident not only with regards to their function within Iranian society during the war, but also given their prevalence within the Persian war novels. The Islamic nature of the war and the creation of a large number of war novels in Iran with references to martyrdom, have both been viewed as unique phenomena in the world. Therefore, studying these concepts helps the reader to understand the religious significance of the war in Iran as described in the Iranian war novels, as well as to help reveal the implication of war rhetoric and its function, which will be discussed in chapter four.

Chapter two offers a detailed study of Iranian novels written both during and after the Iran-Iraq War, which have not hitherto been thoroughly explored in the English language. In order to address the characteristics of the war novel in Iranian literature, this chapter studies the Persian war novels chronologically, focusing on their salient themes and their respective authors' outlooks on the war. Exploring the novels from these perspectives will help the reader to perceive the development of the war novels throughout Iranian modern history. This chapter is presented as a gateway to the studying of *The Winter of 1983*, revealing its position as a wartime novel in contemporary Persian literature.

The second part of the dissertation, consisting of chapter three, will extensively study the life and works of Esmā'il Fasih. His works are divided into novels, short stories, and translations. In this chapter, Fasih's fictional works are categorized according to whether they were published before or after the Iranian Revolution. This division is made in order to reveal Fasih's ideological and political orientation in two different political periods. This chapter will also consider many aspects of Fasih's writings, ranging from his style to their themes.

Exploring Fasih's novels also reveals to what extent he has used the war genre to address or criticize the political and social issues of Iranian society, particularly during the twentieth century.

The third and the main part of this dissertation, consisting of chapters four to seven, revolves around a narratological analysis of Fasih's novel *The Winter of 1983*. Each of these chapters investigates a particular narrative element of the novel, excepting chapter four, which deals with two narrative elements, the plot and the theme.

Chapter four analyzes the plot and the themes of *The Winter of 1983*, through which the reader will comprehend the story's framework, as well as the writer's major ideas and insights regarding the Iran-Iraq War. This chapter begins with a discussion concerning the organization and layout of the novel, an understanding of which is instrumental in revealing the writer's thoughts, as well as the novel's themes. As far as the plot of the novel is concerned, it is divided into three main sections, which concern the narrator's journey. From a thematic standpoint, the novel addresses several themes, among which the war takes center stage. War in the novel will be studied from historical and religious perspectives. It is through exploring the religious dimension of the war that the idea of martyrdom and war rhetoric in the novel are examined. Apart from this, the novel's presentation of the relationship between love and war, as well as the impact of war on the protagonist's mental state, will be examined. In addition to the theme of love and war, the study will also examine other themes, including anticipation and loneliness, which are presented as inevitable repercussions of the war on Iranian lives in the novel.

Chapter five focuses on the narrator and his position within the novel. Since the narrator is often responsible for the inclusion of real-world issues into the novel, understanding his role is essential for a proper understanding of the novel as a social commentary on the state of Iran during the war. This chapter thus focuses on various functions of the narrator, including his account of the historical events of the Iran-Iraq War during the winter months between December 21, 1983 and March 21, 1984, as well as his key role in presenting the fictional characters' views, attributes, and thoughts (in chapter six).

Chapter six discusses two types of character in the novel: the working class and the middle class, in order to examine their distinct experiences and outlooks on the war. However, special attention is paid to the middle strata of society and how they deal with the war. This chapter shows how a member of the middle class played a pivotal role during the war. Besides the segregation of social classes, this chapter will also consider the different viewpoints of the

## INTRODUCTION

male vs. female characters in the novel. In so doing, the manners in which the war affects their personal and social lives becomes evident.

Chapter seven offers a comprehensive study of the setting of the novel. This element of the novel is designed to demonstrate the impact of the war on the Iranian cities, especially those situated near the front. In particular, I shall discuss the way in which the novel presents the effects of the war on the city of Ahvaz, by focusing on the visual images that were erected in public places. This chapter thus illustrates the ways in which Fasih highlights negative aspects of the war, which tended to be excluded in the novels of the time.

