discussions or written assignments, as well as suggestions on how to incorporate these into a course which successfully makes use of internet resources in Arabic. This is not a textbook, and it does perform a useful function, but at the same time books of this sort remind us of what is lacking in our Arabic language education: useful, flexible textbooks which teach real Arabic to students who really want to learn it.

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The conceptual shape of a critical inquiry is not always made explicit, and when critics do put shaping concepts into the open often their motive is to make them match the analysis of a particular work or a particular style, thus negating the possibility of a universal approach. Acknowledging this process in literary criticism, in *Modern Reflections of Classical Traditions in Persian Fiction* Khorrami attempts to devise concepts appropriate to the characteristics of Persian literary tradition that can chart general directions to analyze modern Iranian fiction.

There is a challenge in his second chapter, “In Search of Fundamental Components,” a critique of the socio-political discourse that has been the dominant discourse of literary criticism in regard to twentieth-century Iranian fiction. Khorrami identifies a link between this discourse and that of the Orientalist, arguing that one of the major consequences of socio-political analysis has been the lack of understanding and appreciation of many aspects of modern Iranian fiction. This part of the book analyzes one of the major contemporary texts of Persian literary criticism, Hasan Mirabedini’s *Sad Sal Dastan Nevisti-ye Iran* [One Hundred Years of Fiction Writing in Iran], a study characterized by the above-mentioned socio-political discourse (a discourse defined by literary critics and thinkers such Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh, Zeyn-al-Abedin Maraghie, and Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh). Pointing out the shortcomings of these definitions, Khorrami instead employs Roman Jakobson’s discussion of literariness, the experience of Russian Formalism, and Bakhtin’s theories of the novel and novelization to provide the theoretical framework for his subsequent chapters. With some rare exceptions (such as the critical writing of Reza Baraheni) there has been no serious attempt to explore modern Persian fiction within a formalist framework. *Modern Reflections of Classical Traditions in Persian Fiction* is an attempt to explore ways this gap might be filled.

The overall structural device of the third through the sixth chapters is a binary system that Khorrami calls the dualism of God-Satan. It is an insightful choice: on the one hand, it demonstrates the rigidity of the sociopolitical discourse in the field of literary criticism; on the other, by highlighting the characteristics of works which cannot be contained within this bipolar system, it underlines the increasing significance of literary discourse.

In the third chapter, “In Harmony with God, at Peace with Satan: A Reading of *Tuba va Ma a-ye Shab* [*Tuba and the Meaning of the Night*], Khorrami discusses the identity of Tuba, the novel’s central character, in relation to the literary version of the God-Satan dualism. He avoids psychological or sociological discussions about the notion of identity but uses this
concept to underline the literary techniques and devices of Shahrnush Parsipur's novel. A similar approach is employed in the following chapter, "Beyond the God-Satan Dualism: The Re-Emergence of Competing Narratives," which begins with an examination of Ghazaleh Alizadeh's "Dadresi" [Trial]. Here the emphasis is placed on the characterization process in this long short story and how it refuses to correspond to the traditional requirements of the dualist system. This section is reminiscent of Bakhtin's discussion of polyphonic novels and his argument as to how an independent voice is established. I believe it is based on this understanding that Khorrami employs one of the most important and original concepts of his book, "competing narratives," to approach this story. This concept describes the simultaneous presence of multi-layered narratives that defy structural compactness and concision. Khorrami maintains that this is one of the most important concepts of the Persian literary tradition the representation and function of which have frequently been misunderstood, ignored or criticized as useless "digression" by those who have relied on "universalized" concepts of literary criticism. Khorrami argues that the presence of structural components based on this concept in Iranian fiction, especially that of the past two decades, is a conscious presence, a component which makes its "literary reality" visible.

Khorrami's discussion of "literary reality" is based on the idea that each work of literature produces its own version of reality and that indeed a critic should take into account the process through which this reality takes shape as well as the final outcome. Acknowledging that this approach is not new in criticism, citing Russian Formalism particularly, Khorrami applies it to examples of contemporary Persian fiction, demonstrating previously unexplored dynamic relationships in familiar stories. In doing so, he challenges the dominant socio-political discourse of Persian literary criticism, the shortcomings of which are especially pronounced in the context of contemporary texts. Taking the concepts of time and space as two major constituents of reality, he devotes a chapter to Hushang Golshiri's Ayenehba-ye Dardar [Folding Mirrors], "Satan, Forerunner of Revolution or Prince of Exile: The Reflection of Identity Transformation in Ayenehba-ye Dardar." Golshiri wrote Ayenehba-ye Dardar, one of the most controversial novels of the post-1979 Revolution, after an extended trip to a number of European countries where he met many exiled Iranians. Indeed, the effects of this experience are so pronounced throughout the book that many classify it, in the context of Iranian fiction, as an example of the literature of exile. The novel's movements through various times and spaces allow the critic to focus on the formation of a "fluid" literary reality. This fluid reality is then developed into a context where issues such as identity and exile might be discussed. The idea of the fluidity of reality in turn dominates the following chapter, "Toward a Literary Laboratory: Architectural Fluidity in Mandanipur's Short Stories."

Shahriyar Mandanipur belongs to a younger generation of writers and is regarded as one of the most technically sophisticated authors of his time. He has published five collections of short stories and one novel. Khorrami deals with many of these texts, notably "Rang-e Atash-e Nimruzi" [The Color of the Midday Fire] and "Ahu-ye Kur" [The Blind Deer]. As in the previous chapters, he offers a combination of explication de texte, intertextual allusions, and conceptualization, seeking to reveal those literary techniques and devices used to produce the literary reality. The main characteristic of this literary reality is that it defines a relatively independent environment that is distinguished from other "forms of reality" defined according to non-literary discourses. This analysis allows him to conclude
emphasizing the gradual emergence of the fluidity of literary reality, suggesting that this fluidity has reached a point where it can be considered a legitimate systematic “architecture,” representing one of the most important trends of contemporary Iranian fiction.

The identification of new concepts that reveal under-explored aspects of modern fiction in Iran is an important contribution of *Modern Reflections of Classical Traditions in Persian Fiction*, but more importantly readers will find here a methodology that allows a new direction in future studies.

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Many more than a thousand and one nights ago, Sheherazade began a story that she wouldn't finish, a story that led to other stories, stories so engaging and powerful they could soften the hardened heart of Sultan Shahriar and save Sheherazade (and countless other young women) from a beheading at dawn. If Sheherazade were alive today, we might find her recast in the form of an out-of-luck, untrained Palestinian “doctor” named Khalil who works in a supply-less, make-shift “hospital” in Galilee, whose only hope for reeling in Yunes, his fallen fatherly hero, from the depths of a coma, is to talk to him incessantly, to revive him with the story of his own life and the stories of his people. His only method of treatment is to breathe life into him through telling stories—to use stories that begin and don’t end, that intertwine and leave one hanging, stories that lead to other stories. Stories so powerful they could save Palestine itself from extinction. Such might be the premise of Elias Khoury’s monumental novel *Gate of the Sun*.

In typical Khoury fashion, the novel begins with a death. Um Hassan, the midwife who everyone calls “mother,” because everyone born in the Shatila camp fell from their mothers’ guts into her hands” (p. 5) has died, and Dr. Khalil begins his narration of her life story from its ending. But the telling of one story leads to other stories that also begin at the end, or in the middle, or are pieced together in tantalizing fragments that create suspense and draw in the reader. And also in typical Khoury fashion, the novel ends without finality, with unanswered questions, with open possibilities that are mimicked linguistically by the translator with the lack of final punctuation.

The two main characters in the novel, “Doctor” Khalil and his comatose father figure and hero Yunes, provide a powerful frame story. Yunes has slipped into a coma and despite Dr. Amjad’s diagnosis that Yunes is brain-dead and his prognosis is hopeless, “Doctor” Khalil is convinced Yunes can hear him. And so he keeps a vigil of story telling in an effort to revive his dear friend. His vigil has also a selfish purpose. Doctor Khalil is using the hospital to hide from vigilantes seeking revenge for the death of Shams, Khalil’s lover, though Khalil claims to be innocent of her murder. Doctor Khalil’s stories are rich. They appeal to the senses, especially smell and taste, filled with descriptions of exotic scents and flavors that conjure memories dear to the heart. His stories are stories of traditions, of pain and loss, of tragedy, of the frailty of humankind, of man’s inhumanity to man, of degradation, of courage and pride, of torture and imprisonment, of man’s connection to the land of his birthplace, of the power of the imagination, of eternal hope and courage, of love and passion and longing.