

Awardee: S. Mahmoud Hosseini Zad

Translator, literary critic and writer, Iran

S. Mahmoud Hosseini Zad is the most significant Persian translator of contemporary German-language literature. It is thanks to his commitment that many works by current authors have been made accessible to the Iranian public. He also is involved as a mediator of the contemporary German-language film and theatre world with his lectures and readings. He levels the way of words with discretion and sensitivity and enables cultural and personal encounters that awaken and intensify mutual understanding between people in Iran and in Germany, according to the conferment commission.

Since 2000, S. Mahmoud Hosseini Zad has mainly translated contemporary German literature. Not least due to his dedication, leading publishers in Iran regularly issue translations of works by authors like Judith Hermann, Ingo Schulze, Uwe Timm, Peter Stamm and Julia Franck. Many of his translations have received prizes and have been published in multiple editions, which is extraordinary on the Iranian book market. His services and his dedication to literature, theatre and film make S. Mahmoud Hosseini Zad a cultural mediator par excellence.

S. Mahmoud Hosseini Zad was born in Firuzkuh, Iran in 1946. At the age of twenty he went to Munich to study political science at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität. When he returned to Iran he first worked as a translator for the foreign service of the state radio station of Iran, IRIB. He then was lecturer for German language and literature at the University of Tehran, at Azad University and at the graduate school Tarbiat Modarres University. During his studies, he translated works by Brecht into Persian as well as novels by Dürrenmatt, including *The Judge and His Hangman* (1991) and *Suspicion* (2006). His translations of contemporary German-language literature such as *In My Brother's Shadow* by Uwe Timm (2009) and *Alice* by Judith Hermann (2010) received multiple awards. In the years of the Islamic Revolution he wrote two plays that also won awards. In 2013, his volume of short stories *Asseman, kippe abr* (The Sky, Full of Clouds) will be published.

Quotes by S. Mahmoud Hosseini Zad

“Take a pen and write on a piece of paper ‘one thousand years.’ It takes up less than two centimetres. But it is one thousand years.” (From *Siahi chasbzad e shab / The Leaden Darkness of Night*, short stories, Tehran 2005)

“All life long you drink, you breathe, you walk as if everything you did were a matter of course, as if everything is as it is and must be so. But there will come a time when you know that this is your last drop of water and this is your last breath and that is your last step.” (from *Siahi tshasbzad e shab / The Leaden Darkness of Night*, short stories, Tehran 2005)

“Literature is the reproduction of processed occurrences, memories and experiences. They can be thought up, imaginary, dreamed, desired.” (from an interview)

“Translation is an art, is a technique, is a skill, but most of all it is a challenging confrontation of two – in my case – entirely different language systems and hence two cultures. Consciously dealing with this task brings people and cultures closer together.” (from an interview)

“I am often asked, ‘Why do you translate contemporary German literature?’ My answer is, ‘I translate exciting literature that is seeking a new language, new subject matter, new protagonists, new worlds and reconciliation. More importantly, my initial presumption proved true: this literature speaks to Iranian readers!’” (from an interview)

Quotes about S. Mahmoud Hosseini Zad

“*In My Brother's Shadow* robs readers of sleep and its translation met with the great interest of literature lovers in Iran [...] When we speak of German literature, we think of two groups of translators. The first group translated the classics and the second group, which actually consists of only one person, Mahmoud Hosseini Zad, has rendered huge services with regard to new German literature ... Hosseini Zad has a habit of seeking out slim books that can be read quickly, yet are exceptional and open up new worlds to readers...” (Kargozaran, August 2008)

“For many years Goethe and Kafka, and then Böll and Grass were German literature per se for us. We had gotten used to our ignorance until a few translators like Mahmoud Hosseini Zad began dealing with new German literature. Hosseini Zad's brilliant translation of *Den Tag verbringen*, which introduced us to four young German writers, was published by Mahi [...] And now *Diesseits der Oder*, a book that goes under one's skin ...” (literature website Jen o Pari on the publication of *In souy e roudkhaneh Oder / Diesseits der Oder*, February 2008)

“... this generation has become known to Iranian readers through the praiseworthy work of Mahmoud Hosseini Zad. In 2005 *Den Tag verbringen* arrived, which presented four talented young writers from Germany to us... this programme is now being continued with *Diesseits der Oder*, short stories by Judith Herman, *Agnes* by Peter Stamm and *In My Brother's Shadow* by Uwe Timm ...” (ISCA News, November 2007)

“As always, Mahmoud Hosseini Zad sought out a writer who was unknown in Iran. After authors such as Judith Hermann, Ingo Schulze, [...] he now presented Uwe Timm to Iranian readers with *In My Brother's Shadow*.” (Etemaad on *In My Brother's Shadow*, 2008)

“Now, thanks to new translations, particularly by Hosseini Zad, German literature is being read as never before...” (Etemaad, the well-known translator and literary critic Assadollah Amraii at the 2008 book fair and publication of the translation of *In My Brother's Shadow* in 2008)

“... the translations of German literature being put on the market by the Mahi Publishing House sell well. *Den Tag verbringen* in the translation by Mahmoud Hosseini Zad has been on

the bestseller list for months.” (Shahr wand, top-selling and popular journal for politics and literature, 2008)

“By translating Uwe Timm, Hartmut Lange, Judith Herrmann, Ingo Schulze, Julia Franck, Sibylle Berg [...], Mahmud Hosseini Zad has made a great contribution to making the new wave of contemporary German literature familiar to Iranian readers...” (Rouzegar, 2011)

Bibliography (selection)

Translations from the German

Berg, Sibylle; Franck, Julia; Hermann, Judith; Schulze, Ingo: short stories from various works by the writers, translation: *Gozaran e rouz (Spending the Day)*, Tehran, 2005

Böll, Heinrich; Handke, Peter; Kafka, Franz; Kant, Hermann; Mann, Thomas; Meckel, Christoph et al, short stories, translation: *Maghbarehdar wa marg (Der Tod und der Gruftwächter)*, Tehran, 2005

Brecht, Bertolt: *Einakter*, translation: *Tak pardehi ha*, Tehran, 1979

Brecht, Bertolt: *Baal*, translation: *Baal*, Tehran, 2001

Brecht, Bertolt: *Im Dickicht der Städte*, translation: *Dar jangal e shahr*, Tehran, 2001

Brecht, Bertolt: *Trommeln in der Nacht*, translation: *Seday e tabl dar shab*, Tehran, 2001

Dürrenmatt, Friedrich: *Das Versprechen*, translation: *Ghool*, Tehran, 2008

Dürrenmatt, Friedrich: *Der Richter und sein Henker*, translation: *Ghazi wa jalladash*, Tehran, 1991, revised edition 2006

Dürrenmatt, Friedrich: *Der Verdacht*, translation: *Sou e zan*, Tehran, 2006

Hermann, Judith, short stories from: *Sommerhaus später* and *Nichts als Gespenster*, translation: *In souy e roudkhaneh Oder (This Side of the Oder)*, Tehran, 2007

Hermann, Judith; Özdamar, Emine Sevgi; Schlink, Bernhard; Schulze, Ingo; Stamm, Peter: short stories from various works, translation: *Assemaneh khis (The Wet Sky)*, Tehran, 2012

Hermann, Judith: *Alice*, translation: *Alice*, Tehran, 2009

Krösinger, Hans Werner: *Coming Home*, translation: *Bazgasht be watan*, Tehran, 2009*

Lange, Hartmut: *Italienische Novellen*, translation: *Hemayat az hitsh*, Tehran, 2005

Ostermaier, Albert: *Erreger*, translation: *Virus*, Tehran, 2005*

Stamm, Peter: *Agnes*, translation: *Agnes*, Tehran, 2009

Timm, Uwe: *Am Beispiel meines Bruders*, translation: *Massalan baradaram*, Tehran, 2008

*Commissioned by the Goethe-Institut

Unpublished – publication permit pending

Fassbinder, Rainer Werner: *Nur für eine Scheibe Brot*

Own works

Nehade sar gharibaneh be divar (Like a Stranger She Leans Her Head on the Wall) – play, Tehran, 1996

Tagarg amad emsal bar saare marg (This Year the Hail Came Like Death) – play, Tehran, 1997

Siahi tshasbnad e shab (The Leaden Darkness of Night) – short stories, Tehran, 2005

In barf key amade... (When Did This Snow Fall ...) – short stories, Tehran, 2011

Asseman, kippe abr (The Sky, Full of Clouds) – short stories, Tehran, appearing in 2013

Unpublished – publication permit pending

Boye chasbindeh be in daste kouchak (The Odour Adhering to This Small Hand) – novel, Tehran

Awards

1974 Jury's prize of the Academy of Dramatic Arts for the play *Mehade sar gharibaneh be divar (Like a Stranger She Leans Her Head on the Wall)*

1977 Certificate of Appreciation from the TUS Festival for *Tagarg amad emsal bar saare marg (This Year the Hail Came Like Death)*, the dramatization of a legend from the Iranian national epic *Shahnameh – The Book of Kings*

2009 The translation of Uwe Timm's *In My Brother's Shadow* is shortlisted for the Rouzi Rouzegari literature award

2010 Rouzi Rouzegari literature award for the translation of Judith Hermann's *Alice*

2010 Haft eghlim literature award for *In barf key amade... (When Did This Snow Fall ...)*

2013 In a survey by the literature and arts magazine *Taajrobeh* among writers, translators and literary critics, the anthology *Assemaneh khis (The Wet Sky)* with short stories by Judith Hermann, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Bernhard Schlink, Ingo Schulze and Peter Stamm is voted best anthology of the year of foreign language literature.