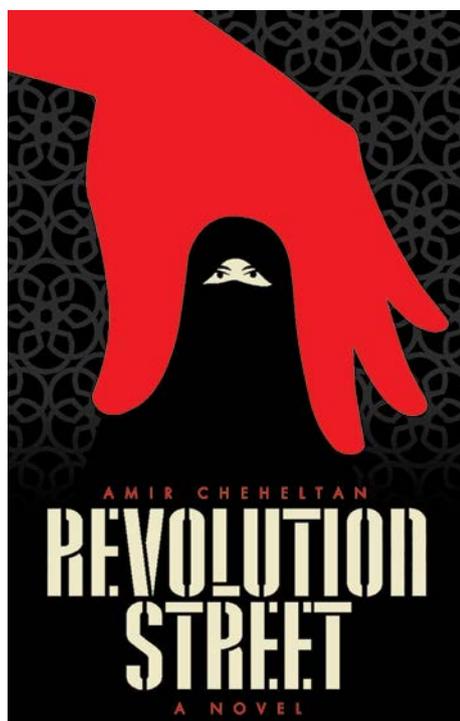




Oneworld Readers' Guide

Revolution Street



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Amir Chehelan

Fattah is middle-aged and unmarried. A former hospital janitor who became rich working as a torturer in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison, he now moonlights as an uncertified backstreet doctor specializing in 'honour surgery' for unmarried young women. Fattah has nothing but contempt for these women; that is until the beautiful Shahrzad lands on his operating table, and soon he is dangerously infatuated.

Undeterred that she is promised to – and in love with – another man, the younger and less affluent Mostafa, Fattah sets out to win Shahrzad by any means. Robbed of his bride, the jilted and furious Mostafa launches a desperate plan to move her beyond his rival's reach by falsely reporting her as an opponent of the regime, a mission that takes him deep into Tehran's underworld of criminals and provocateurs.

In Amir Chehelan's critically acclaimed and searing novel – his first to be translated into English – power and corruption in post-revolutionary Iran are exposed through the actions of two men who work to exploit the chaos and confusion for their own benefit. The result is a provocative tale of a divided society where religious devotion and cruelty often go hand in hand.

Questions for Discussion

1. Evin prison survived the revolution and continues to be a notorious place. Why do you think Chehelan gave the institution such a prominent place in his novel?
2. Fakhri was actively involved in shaping her life, yet Shahrzad is passively submitting to events which will ultimately lead to her death. How can you explain such a difference in agency?
3. Shahrzad lost her virginity before landing on Fattah's operating table but the reader is never told how, or to whom. How does this missing piece of information affect your reading experience?
4. To secure a life with Shahrzad, Mostafa resorts to kidnapping and imprisonment. After her death, he is left aghast. How can we make sense of Mostafa's sense of surprise?
5. The relationships Chehelan paints are devoid of romance. Fattah and Mostafa are merely



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infatuated by Shahrzad, and Fattah's father leaves Fakhri once she is pregnant. How does this affect your understanding of the characters?

6. Fattah and Mostafa are after the same woman. Even though the reader is often under the impression that both will realise this, it never occurs. Why do you think Cheheltan constructed the story in this way?
7. The revolution gave Fakhri a sense of identity and made her a leader, turning her into 'Mother Fakhri'. Yet as events take a more radical turn, she returns to the sidelines. What role do you think Fakhri's life plays in the story?
8. To treat ailments and offer benedictions, Mirza prescribes sugar water, a substance often used as a placebo in medicine. What do you think the significance of this is?
9. Fattah works for the Islamic government and admonishes those who lack devoutness, yet he is Teheran's best hymenoplast and rapes Shahrzad. How does this inconsistency affect your reading of the novel?
10. Cheheltan paints Teheran as a society of submissive women at the mercy of ruthless and power-driven men. How do you feel about this picture? How does it compare to your society?

About the Author

Amir Cheheltan was born in 1956 in Tehran and has published eight novels, five volumes of short stories and a screenplay. Due to censorship, his first novel, *The Mourning of Qassem*, was only published in 2003, twenty years after it was written, and many of his novels have had to undergo revisions. Following harassment and threats after the publication of his work, he and his family moved to Italy for two years. *Revolution Street* was first published in 2009 in German, and in 2013 in Norwegian, and has yet to be published in Iran. Cheheltan also supervises the creative writing workshop at the Karnameh Culture Centre in Tehran, and writes feature articles for international papers such as Frankfurter Allgemeine and Süddeutsche Zeitung.