

MINOR LITERATURE IN THE IRANIAN CONTEXT



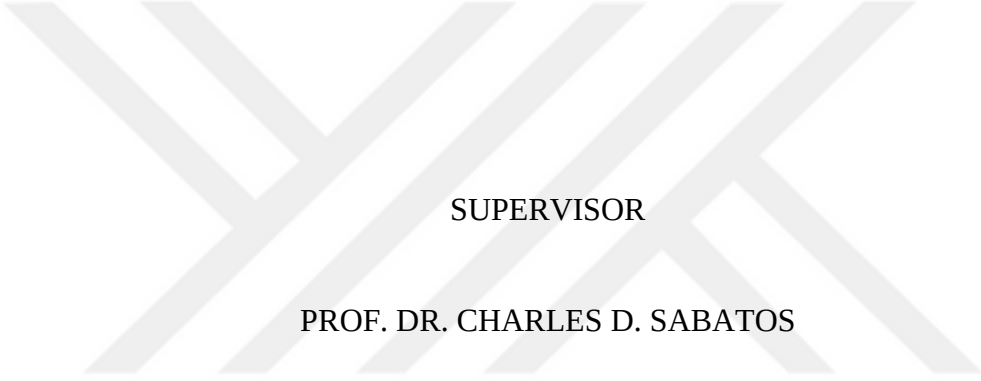
ARASH REZAEI

FEBRUARY, 2021

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BY

ARASH REZAEI



SUPERVISOR

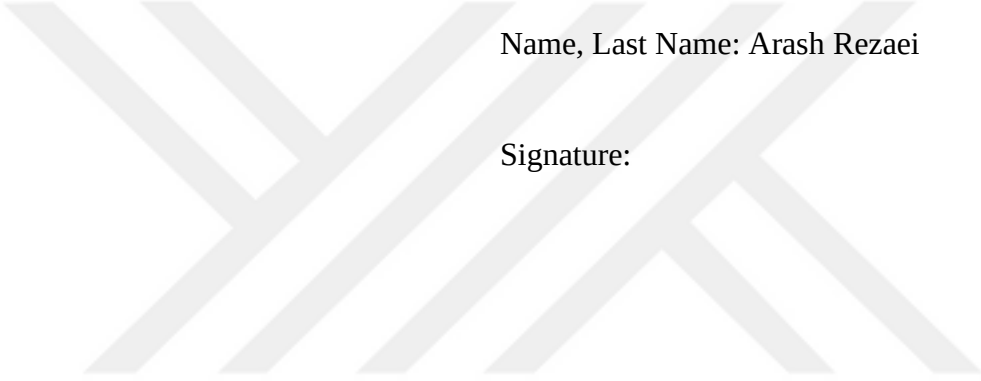
PROF. DR. CHARLES D. SABATOS

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

YEDITEPE UNIVERSITY

FEBRUARY 2021

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.



Name, Last Name: Arash Rezaei

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ABSTRACT

Using Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of minor literature and Pascale Casanova's "world literary map", this thesis studies minor literature in the Iranian context in two different historical episodes in Iran- the Pahlavi era and the Islamic Republic. It focuses on the works of Samad Behrangi, Reza Baraheni and Gholam Hossein Sa'edi, who wrote in the dominant Persian language and were influenced by American and European literature, while reflecting on their minor Azarbaijani identity. As part of a literary space that had already witnessed many movements both in Iran and abroad, these writers have been accepted as canonical in the framework of a "committed literature" that turned into a political force.

Key words: Minor Literature, Iranian Literature, Franz Kafka, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Samad Behrangi, Reza Baraheni, Gholam Hossein Sa'edi

ÖZET

Bu tez Deleuze ve Guattari'nin düşünceleri ve Pascale Casanova'nın “edebi dünya haritası”nın ışığında İran'ın minör edebiyatını ülkedeki iki farklı tarihsel dönem bağlamında inceler; Pehlevî dönemi ve İslam Cumhuriyeti. Çalışma, eserlerinde minör Azeri kimliklerini yansıttıkları halde eserlerini Farsça kaleme almış, aynı zamanda Amerikan ve Avrupa edebiyatından etkilenmiş olan Samed Behrengi, Reza Baraheni ve Gholam Hossein Sa'edi'nin eserlerine odaklanır. Hem İran içinde, hem de dışarıda birçok farklı edebi akımın parçası olmuş olan bahse konu yazarlar siyasi bir güce dönüşen ‘taahhütlü edebiyat’ın tanınmış yazarlarından olarak kabul edilirler.

Anahtar kelimeler: Minör Edebiyat, İran Edebiyatı, Franz Kafka, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Samad Behrangi, Reza Baraheni, Gholam Hossein Sa'edi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Charles D. Sabatos, without whose support and enlightening feedback, accomplishing such a project would not be possible. I am also indebted to Assist. Prof. Dr. Mehran Shadi for his insightful feedback throughout the project. I would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Catherine MacMillan, Assoc. Prof. Adriana Raducanu, Dr. Nina Cemiloğlu, Dr. Fatine Bahar Karlıdağ, and Lecturer Mario Moris Levi for their contribution to my academic life. I also want to thank Assoc. Prof. Hossein Sabouri for being supportive of the current project, and for his fascinating lectures during my BA years at University of Tabriz.

My coursework at Yeditepe university provided me with a chance to meet interesting people like Sezen Aydın, Elnaz Mohammadi and Tüğçe Özdiç- Hi Immortal- who made these years more enjoyable and remained as good friends. I appreciate my dear friends who supported and assisted me in gathering resources. Thank you Navid Razzaghi, for sharing your knowledge of Azarbaijani folklore. Thank you Mahnaz Badri, and Solmaz Vatankhah, for erasing borders and making resources accessible for my study.

Trying to keep a balance between my studies and my job has not been easy but it could be much more difficult without family members and friends who contributed to my peace of mind. I am thankful to my parents who have always been supportive and my brothers Yashar and Aidin Rezaei, for being such great role models throughout my life. And last but not least, thank you Derya Azim Rezaei, for being by my side throughout these difficult years.

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INTRODUCTION

The comparative study of world literature can connect literary works from different times and places but when literary works enter the global “marketplace”, their universal themes are magnified, blurring away the national concerns and messages. In order to reach international readers, writers from dominated spaces need to write in a major language. These writers bring new forms and literary styles into world literature, while their own nations, which in some cases are heir to ancient great cultures, are marginalized. In *The World Republic of Letters*, Pascale Casanova differentiates the political map of the world from an intellectual literary map based on the richness and autonomy of literary spaces. According to Casanova, “great writers have managed, by gradually detaching themselves from historical and literary forces, to invent their literary freedom, which is to say the conditions of the autonomy of their work” (Casanova, 2004, p. xiii). In addition to linguistic minorities, she describes “small literature” which is left unrecognized because of the imbalance in power relations. While writers in the literary centers can directly enter world literature, writers on the periphery face difficulties in gaining global attention and are filtered out because literature of the center excludes national and political categories “from the very definition of literature” (Casanova, 2004, p. 353). In their struggle against the distortion of history these marginalized writers create what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have referred to as a “minor literature”. According to them, “a minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which minority constructs in a major language” (Deleuze, 1986, p.16)

Pascale Casanova’s “small literature” alters the balance of literary powers as a necessity for a “genuine history of literature”. However, literary revolts are not treated equally in different literary spaces. Although the literary capitals of the world today

have gained their inner independence from politics, smaller cultures, especially ones suffering from censorship are dominated by political concerns. Iran has inherited a historically great ancient culture and literature, but it has held a minor position in the literary marketplace of world literature. Cultural subjugation during and after colonial times and lack of literary dialectic in Iran together with language barriers are some of the reasons for this backwardness.

Iranian modernists were greatly influenced by the literary techniques employed in Western literary capitals, which provided them with the tools they needed to challenge the body of literary and aesthetic practices in their homeland. Considering Casanova's concept on small literature one can easily understand how writers on the periphery make use of the literary advancements of the literary space beyond their borders in their individual fights within their national space: "Whereas national writers, fomenters of the first literary revolts, rely on the literary models of national tradition, international writers draw upon this transnational repertoire of literary techniques in order to escape being imprisoned in national tradition" (Casanova, 2004, p.327).

Persian literature has not gained much recognition abroad since most of the surviving literary productions have been poems in a high language that their multilayered messages resist translation. Writers on the periphery have little freedom of speech in case they live in a country that politically limits literary productions via censorship. This situation becomes twofold in case the paper language of a country is different from a writer's mother tongue- as is the case for Iranian minorities like Turks, Kurds, Arabs, etc. who first need to master the Persian language to be recognized as writers in the national literary space.

Usage of these literary techniques by minor writers within their own national literary space results in the “chronological solitude” of the writer who usually gains posthumous fame because the literary value and credit a work gets depends on the laws that are laid in the center, both on a global scale, and a local one. The greatness of a literary work is not fixed, and even a writer such as William Shakespeare was not as universally acclaimed in his own time as he is today.

Arriving in a theatrical culture that was already professionalized and thriving, Shakespeare invented the genre of history plays, which were designed to keep people in line with their history and question the legitimacy of the monarchy. Although his plays carried national concerns and political messages, universal themes like love, hatred, jealousy and revenge veiled them and made his plays popular all around the world. However, his acceptance as a great writer with universal human concerns came from outside England, in a specific political context.

It was during the nationalist movements between 1820 and 1920 that a necessary link between nation and language was established. The rising power of France caused an unequal distribution of power and in order to oppose the dominance of France all over Europe, Germany and Britain united so that each would be able to lend support to the other. By proposing new definitions of language- as the “mirror of people”- and literature and by linking culture and history, Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) “contradicted the dominant aristocratic French conception and, by exploding the notion of literary legitimacy, changed the rules of the international literary game” (Casanova, p. 77, 2004). In his essay on Shakespeare, Herder defends Shakespeare against critics by contrasting ancient and Shakespearean tragedies. Herder attacks French literature for its “never-ending rhetoric, lies, and galimatias!” , highlighting the necessity for a nation “to invent its own drama” (Herder, p. 295,

2002). Reassessment of Shakespeare by the German romantics not only played a central role in modern German intellectual life, but also was used by the English to claim him as the chief repository of their national literary wealth. In Herder's philosophy, the rejection of one's own rooted culture results in a cultural deracination leading to death. Othello, a Moroccan fighting for Venice, would legitimize Herder's philosophy in the sense that his rejection of his rooted culture also ended up in his death.

One of Casanova's chief examples is Franz Kafka, who "lost all of his national and cultural characteristics" upon entering into the international literary world and going through "the process of universalization" (Casanova, 2004, p.353). Milan Kundera claims that Kafka's "total autonomy from all political programs, ideological concepts, and futurological prognoses" allowed him "to say things about our human condition (as it reveals itself in our century) that no social or political thought could ever tell us" (Kundera, 1986). However, over time greater attention has been paid to the national aspect of Kafka's works, such as his description of small literatures in a famous passage of his diary.

According to Kafka, small literature has three main features. First is its "liveliness", that joins in conflicts and competes with others. Second, is that it has "less constraint", freed from dominating principles, where talent rules and revolts and literary revolutions take place. Third is its "popularity", which connects to politics since it is a revolting force from the people against dominance, in which a writer tries to represent the national consciousness:

"A small nation's memory is not smaller than the memory of a large one and so can digest the existing material more thoroughly [...] For the claim that the national consciousness of a small people makes on the individual is such that

everyone must always be prepared to know that part of the literature which has come down to him, to support it, to defend it—to defend it even if he does not know it and support it” (Kafka, Diary entry on December 25, 1911).

Within their dominated literary space, small writers face difficulties establishing new forms and fail to “connect up” with world literature:

“Since people lack a sense of context, their literary activities are out of context too. They depreciate something in order to be able to look down upon it from above, or they praise it to the skies in order to have a place up there beside it. (Wrong.) [...] The narrowness of the field, the concern too for simplicity and uniformity, and, finally, the consideration that the inner independence of the literature makes the external connection with politics harmless, result in the dissemination of literature within a country on the basis of political slogans” (Kafka, Diary entry on December 25, 1911).

According to Sander L. Gilman, Kafka’s “ability to express what he felt about his own complex Jewish identity, in a form that was accessible from every direction, made him into the author who most fully captured the sense of alienation in all of its forms, that haunted the twentieth century” (Gilman, 1995). Kafka revolts against the dominant social orders that have trapped individuals, and this in turn becomes political since it is defined by the state. In the realm of politics, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, differences are not always welcome especially in the context of totalitarian regimes.

“The poet who speaks in the name of a creative power, capable of overturning all orders and representations in order to affirm difference in the state of permanent revolution which characterizes eternal return; and that of the politician, who is above all concerned to deny that which “differs”, so as to

conserve or prolong an established historical order, or to establish a historical order which already calls forth in the world the forms of its representation” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 64).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, minor literature has three characteristics: the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and that everything in it takes on a collective value. The terms deterritorialization and reterritorialization are used to characterize a constant process of transformation. According to Casanova, Kafka resigned himself to German “in order to pose in literary terms a range of literary, political, and social questions that until then had escaped consideration” (Casanova, 2004, pp. 271-272). Deleuze and Guattari have a standpoint similar to Casanova about Kafka’s German; “He will make the German language take flight on a line of escape. He will feed himself on abstinence; he will tear out of Prague German all the qualities of underdevelopment that it has tried to hide” (Deleuze, 1986, p. 26). This deviation from the established order and language gains much importance in their discussion of minor literature: “What can be said in one language cannot be said in another, and the totality of what can and can’t be said varies necessarily with each language and with the connections between these languages” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 24). The dominant language of a country is what the literary capital of that country is based on and writers from other languages that want to enter this literary space have to write in that dominant language. Milan Kundera argues that “Kafka uncannily anticipated man’s spiritual condition in a world that was to emerge after his death –the world of the totalitarian state [...] Totalitarian society, especially in its most extreme versions, tends to abolish the boundary between the public and the private” (Kundera, pg. 110, 1988).

Totalitarianism gains power through marginalization of individuals and their true identities, and such a society can be maintained with the structure of a “disciplinary society”, using surveillance and punishment as the tools of maintaining order, as in the famous example of Kafka’s story *In the Penal Colony*. The control of language becomes one of these tools, leading to an Orwellian social control as described by Mehran Shadi: “The dominant ideology of a given society should be seen as an essentially linguistic phenomenon. That is so because the ideology gains shape and manifests itself only through a semiotic system that is called language, and thus, whoever controls the language, controls the ideology, and consequently the power structures of a given society” (Shadi, 2018).

The works of modernists in the West has been echoed by “dispossessed writers”, whose works according to Casanova “are even more improbable than others, that they manage almost miraculously to emerge and to make themselves recognized by subverting the literary laws laid down by the centers, through the invention of novel literary solutions” (Casanova, 2004, p.185). Casanova’s only example from Persian literature is Sadiq Hidayat [Sadegh Hedayat], author of *The Blind Owl*, [Boof-e Koor, 1936] whom she calls “the only modern Iranian writer of international reputation,” who “found himself caught between an inaccessible literary modernity and a national grandeur that had all but disappeared” (Casanova, 2004, p. 239). Hedayat started his literary career with translations of Western writers, including Kafka, and his works reflect the struggle between modernity and tradition. He felt deterritorialization in the sense of identity, and searched for his cultural roots by translating ancient texts, including the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, to highlight the pre-Islamic Iranian culture and the Zoroastrian belief. According to Casanova, Hedayat’s critical edition of *Rubaiyat* was an attempt to “free” the authentic work

“from the confusions, approximations, and errors of the majority of previous commentators who were interested only in uniting it with the European literary tradition [...] Nonetheless he made use of Western categories for two reasons: on the one hand, in order to take issue with the religious tradition of his own country; and, on the other, to dispute the claims of the German philological tradition, among others, which until then had monopolized scholarly commentary on Khayyam’s work, thus dispossessing Iranian literary space of a classic whose prestige would otherwise have been credited to its account in the international literary market” (Casanova, 2004, p.239).

In his works, Hedayat criticizes the religious superstitions of the Islamic people whom he calls “rajale” in *The Blind Owl*, meaning “corrupt and ignorant person”. His detached feeling toward Islam makes him identify with Kafka’s relation to Judaism. Along with translating Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* and other short stories into modern Persian, Hedayat admired Kafka’s innovation and saw parallel lines of thought with himself, . In his essay “Kafka’s Message”, which appeared as an introduction to his translation, Hedayat points out the revolutionary features of Kafka’s writings: “Although Kafka’s protagonists (anti-heroes) are obedient, crushed with a bent head, they provoke a feeling of rebellion in the reader against this world of the crushed and the broken [...] Kafka rejects all social constraints [...] He believes that one must break down this world of lies, full of hypocrisy, and build upon it a better world” (Hedayat, 1958). Hedayat saw Kafka as his counterpart in a different time-space within world literature:

“Can Kafka be considered as a rebel? Revolt is related to denial and affirmation, which was the core of Kafka’s method. In Kafka’s stories there is

a great silence toward God and religious concerns are embodied in allusions, however, his revolt is against the law [...] We know that Kafka's attitude toward upbringing of children, family, Judaism and social traditions is rebellious and does not formally acknowledge the fabricated social establishments" (Hedayat, 1958, p. 66).

Nasrin Rahimieh points to Hedayat's appropriation of Kafka elaborating on how Hedayat internalizes Kafka's works and merges it in his own minor usage. 'Hedayat's "becoming-Kafka" was a crucial step in his "becoming-Hedayat," a revolutionary process that ultimately led to a renaissance in Persian letters' (Rahimieh, 1994). His access to the literary capital of the time (French) helped Hedayat to gain the higher consciousness in his approach to his national literature and against the fabricated established orders dominant in his own national space.

Translations from Western languages in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century provided Iranian writers with the model examples which were previously unknown to them, leading to a profound change in the literary climate of Iran (Abdolahzadeh, Sabouri, 2015). With the dominance of the Islamic culture, the original cultural identity of Iranians became distant and out of reach. For centuries, Iranian literature had belonged to a higher realm than that of the masses, but the liveliness brought by modernity broke the reliance on traditional literature.

Unlike Hedayat, whose sophisticated style was aimed at international readers, other modern Iranian writers represented the subjugation and oppression structure of the system in simple language, making the high language of poetry visible to the mass reader. Unlike the Western literary space that had undergone different historical stages in its progress, the appearance of modernist writers in Iran was a leap to catch

up with the spirit of modernity in literature of the world. As a result, these writers experienced a “chronological loneliness” both politically and socially at home.

At the same time, people with different nationalities and languages and cultures other than Persian became second citizens. They had (and still have) no right of learning their mother tongues at schools and as a result their cultural heritage and literary language weakens over time under the subjugation of oppressing forces. The informal, everyday language was not only not reflected in the media but it was even suppressed. Speakers of other languages than the dominant Persian fell to the status of mimicry trying to mask their original roots to get acceptance into the economic and literary cycle. The Azarbaijani identity in Iran has been suppressed not only within the internal politics of Iran, but because of the modern borders that has kept people with Turkish identities separated from each other. This aspect of minor literature in the Iranian context, focusing on a minority that has been deprived of writing in its mother tongue, will be the topic of the following thesis.

The first chapter is an attempt to shed light on the concept of “minor literature” in Iran, both generally in the Azeri minority and with the specific example of Samad Behrangi as a revolutionary minority writer that reflected a minoritarian point of view within the majoritarian structure of literature and schooling. The second chapter studies Reza Baraheni’s literary and critical works, mainly during the Pahlavi era, as a writer that not only fits into the category of minor literature based on Casanova’s concept of “small literature” within “the world republic of letters”, but also his usage of the dominant Persian language as an Azarbaijani (Turkish) minority in Iran provides the chance to apply the Deleuzian concept of “minor literature”. The third chapter discusses Gholam Hossein Sa’edi’s *Othello in Wonderland*, as an example of a minor literature connecting with great literary works with its intertextual

approach to Shakespeare's *Othello*, and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. This play is as an outstanding depiction of the social structure after the 1979 "revolution" and a new phase of censorship and repression under a dominant "Islamic" culture and ideology that further deepened the "cultural disintegration", to use Baraheni's term, between the mass, minorities, and the state. Thus, the approach to minor literature in the Iranian context is on the one hand Persian literature as a small literature within world literature, and on the other hand the literary productions of the minorities in the dominant Persian language, who may carry their literary activities beyond borders if they master a major language to fit into the global literary space.

CHAPTER I: SAMAD BEHRANGI AS A MINORITY VOICE

1.1.Minor Literature in Iran

Iranian contemporary history is full of movements and unaccomplished revolutions that can be seen as social recessions. Throughout these movements, writers and intellectuals have had a great role in representing the oppression and subjugation, either by local rulers or foreign meddlers. These writers have tried to raise the awareness of the masses in order to gain freedom and end oppression. Samad Behrangi arms the little black fish with a sword against any oppressive force and motivates his readers, especially children- in hope of a better future for them. Reza Baraheni continues the same path, though in a more manipulative way. His *The Infernal Times of Mr.Ayaz* is another attempt to reflect both the conscious and unconscious historical objectivity of the Iranians, sharpening his literary work as yet another sword to end oppression. Gholam-Hossein Sa'edi also makes use of this symbolic sword in the ending of his play, *Othello in Wonderland*, to kill the “minister”, a hated stereotype in Azarbaijani folklore.

The 20th century was a time of great artistic output in Iran, by a new generation of Iranian intellectuals, writers and artists. A modern form of Iranian playwriting appeared, finding inspiration in the works of writers like Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Bertolt Brecht and their contemporaries, although their work also builds on Persian styles. Modern writers chose themes concerning the mass, which in part turned to the formation of a “committed literature” encountering politics. Although Persian literature has a long history of opposition against dynasties and kings, the usage of everyday language in the literary works brought these oppositions to the surface, making it “stick out”. The diversity of cultures and languages in Iran, has always led to the difficulty or impossibility of forming an all-inclusive national

identity for the Iranians. The dominance of the Persian language is not only political but also is a result of the power of the Persian language as appears in the writings of the “masters” and writers from minor languages believed in the role Persian language played uniting the Iranian people and identity. Similarly, although Azeri language is spoken and written in Azerbaijan (Baku), it was also marginalized in Azerbaijan by the major Russian language after the split in 1828 over the Treaty of Turkmenchay.

The Treaty of Turkmenchay was signed between Qajar Iran and the Russian Empire, concluding the Russo-Persian War (1826–28) on 10 February 1828 in Torkamanchay, Iran. The treaty made Persia hand over the control of several areas in the South Caucasus to the Russia Empire. The boundary between the USSR and Persia was set at the Aras River. The territories are now Nakhchivan and Iğdır Province (now part of Turkey), Armenia, and the south of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Aras river became a natural border between the people of the same language and culture and was to become the symbol of this grief for both sides. Ever since, Azarbaijani writers on both sides started literary dialogues in form of poetry in Azarbaijani language, using Persian alphabet. Turkey and Azerbaijan (Baku) stopped using the Persian alphabet and based their language on Latin letters while Iranian Azarbaijanis still use the Persian letters. This in part has led to the marginalization of the Azarbaijani literature and language in Iran both by the dominant Persian language and culture at home and by other Turkish nations neighbouring Iran. Tabriz was in the forefront of the constitutional revolution as a reaction against this discrimination.

The 1906 constitutional revolution had briefly allowed Azari Turkish speakers to gain back their linguistic rights (schools, newspapers, etc.), however, after years of turmoil, civil wars and foreign intervention, Iran became unified under the rule of Reza Khan, who crowned himself as Reza Shah, putting an end to the revolution and

starting a new era Persianizing the Azeri people alongside his ambitious program of cultural, economic, and military modernisation. However, during the World War II, he was forced to be abdicated in favor of his son at the time of the Anglo-Soviet Invasion in 1941.

During the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran, the north-west region of Iran - Azarbaijan- was occupied by the Soviet, while southern parts were occupied by Britain. The purpose of the invasion was to ensure the safety of Allied supply lines to the USSR, secure Iranian oil fields and to limit German influence in Iran (since Reza Shah seemed friendly to Nazi Germany). With the end of World War II and when the invading forces reached an agreement with the new Shah, they left Iranian soil, leaving Tabriz as capital of Pishavari's short-lived provincial government. The government was founded in Tabriz by Ja'far Pishavari, a communist supported by the USSR, which lasted from November 1945 to December 1946. There is no doubt that the democratic government was a Soviet separatist plan, though, Azarbaijanis took it for granted since the newborn government served the masses. Turkish books were published and Turkish language started to be taught at schools. This event provided a breathing space for the minorities that had been suppressed by the dominant Persian culture during Reza Khan's rule. The democratic government surrendered to the Shah's army and was crushed in December 1946 by the new Shah, who restricted the use of minor languages again. Although the Azarbaijan People's Government was over, its effects has continued to overshadow the activities of Turkish minorities. From then on any intellectual that would try to support Azarbaijani language and demand the necessity of teaching it at schools, being the mother tongue of Azari people, was soon labeled as "separist" and thus silenced and punished.

The flourishing of cultural exchange between Iran and Europe during the Pahlavi reign- which had a “modernizing” project at hand- led to Persian translations of plays by Chekhov and Shakespeare. These were the first tastes of a Western theatrical aesthetic for the Iranian public, and Iran's earliest native playwrights were influenced by this style of playwriting. The main themes of the Iranian modern literature were reflections of the ills of the society, Western subjugation, and the corruption of the state- being monarchical. Though during the Qajar dynasty most of the dissident contents were published outside Iran- in Istanbul, or India, during the Pahlavi era there was a boom of literary productions in Iran. The positive outcome of these events on literary space was the freedom from religious limitations that had long suppressed the writings of intellectuals that had issues with the dominating Islamic Shiism.

The political problem at the heart of minor literature (Kafka’s “small literature”) in Iran during the Pahlavi era reached its peak in the literary sittings organized by Goethe Institute on October 10, 1977, which was referred to as “the Ten Nights”. The dominant literary activities of the time, being a form of “native elite”, were out of context and the cultural role that people active in the literary field were playing was superficial, and were called “quasi-artists” by Gholam Hossein Saedi in his lecture on October 13, 1977. The event lasted for ten nights, surrounded by the police forces, and ended up with a closing ceremony of the participants’ demonstration on the streets and their fight with the police that led to the death of a student and many injuries, and imprisonment of hundreds (Zandiyan, 2013).

Iranian literary space during the Pahlavi era was focused much on politics, and were explicit enough to be categorized as dissent by the state. Baraheni’s reports of censorship and torture is an example of such a manipulative approach, setting

dissidence as an ideology for minor writers. Sinfield adds “the role of the writer as writer is likely to stimulate awareness of the importance of ideological production in the sustaining, negotiating, and contesting of power in the state” (Sinfield, 2003). However, the lecturers of the “Ten Nights” took the shape of yet another ideological force against the regime, quasi-artists and censorship, and thus got trapped into the category of dissidence.

The Iranian modernist writers considered themselves as professional writers and the leading intelligentsia in Iran, though, they turned out not to be beneficial to the mass. The Iranian intellectuals were actually righteous in their position and were trying to tune in into the social spirit of the world in the 1970s. The intellectuals’ awareness of social changes in developed countries, stirred them to action on local grounds. The cultural relationships between Iran and America during the Shah’s time had a great impact on the Iranian intelligentsia. Rebellion against authority and personal liberation were key themes of the 1970s, since Americans sought individualism through new outlooks on religion, sexuality, and popular culture. Iranian literary space was in its “liveliest” time. Many young artists and writers emerged on a stage that had no room for the “untalented”. In Iran, however, the gap between intellectuals and state was so wide that an intellectual was somehow automatically considered as opposition (Gheissari, 2010). The gap similarly existed between the intellectual and the collective consciousness of the mass. The ills of the society, lost between the world of traditions and modernity, were yet to be resolved. According to Michael C. Hillmann, “this attitude seems, in part, to account for the involvement of many writers, through 1960 and early 1970s, in speaking out and writing on subjects beyond their primary literary form” (Hillmann, 1976). Commenting on politics, art, effects of westernization, plight of the illiterate and poor people and urban issues,

their activities not only failed to raise the collective consciousness of the people, since the readership was limited, but acted as a deviation from the core of development and progress that actually was in common with Shah's intentions. In an interview, in response to the accusations of oppression, censorship and lack of democracy in Iran from western reporters, Shah replies: "who says that Iranians want democracy?". Hillman believes "the influence of this body of modernist literature may have been negative, falling on deaf or inimical ears precisely because it was modernist, while the potential mass audience was assuredly not" (Hillmann, 1982).

The emergence of the Writers Association in the early 1960s was an exhibition of anti-imperialism and anti-monarchy intellect. Revolutionary intellectuals of the time such as Reza Baraheni and Gholamhossein Saedi started the Writers Association, though never was formally verified. The association failed in its fight against censorship but it paved the ground for the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran. The writers' association had a great concern for the mass that were culturally and economically neglected and ignored. Culturally, because as a part of colonialist's approach that strengthens one of the nationalities in a multinational country to rule over the others, and economically, because wealth still remained in the hands of the elite, feeding only the bootlickers. Life in villages were still untouched and the traditional life was going on in lower levels of the society. This inspired these writers to turn their attention to villages and minorities. Although their literary activities differed from each other in style and tone, being Azarbaijani, the writers discussed in this study shared a critical viewpoint against the dominant system that marginalized other cultures, identities, and languages in Iran. Sa'edi criticises the system not by speaking for his characters, but by letting the characters themselves reflect their true nature in his plays and stories. Unlike Sa'edi, Baraheni speaks more through his

characters. Among them the most devoted to the marginalized Turkish literature is Behrangi who focuses his work on Turkish folklore, being proud of a rich but marginalized Turkish literature in Iran.

The activities of modernist writers turned into a political force and paved the ground for a revolutionary change empowered by the emotional mass and backed by the world powers who saw Shah and his rapidly growing wealth through oil as a threat. With rise in oil prices, seeing a bright future for Iran with the money that was pouring in from oil, Shah claimed that soon Iran will be amongst the greatest powers of the world. A claim that came too early and did not welcome West. Khomeini's populist messages, that had a postcolonial stand in response to colonialism and subjugation of Muslim people, sent from outside Iran- Lebanon and Egypt-, affected the masses, and the intellectuals saw him as the potential leader for revolution, not foreseeing him as a new ruler. Kapuscinsky points out, "A dictatorship that destroys intelligentsia and culture leaves behind itself an empty, sour field on which the tree of thought won't grow quickly. It is not always the best people who emerge from hiding" (Kapuscinsky, 1992, P.58). Khomeini, having been in exile in France, comes back to Iran to establish an Islamic Republic and end the Pahlavi era and bring freedom and peace. The Pahlavi era that had banned anti-Shah writings was over, and a new era started that made any writing difficult. The awareness that fueled the revolution was not welcome afterwards. Baraheni, and many other Iranian writers were in an individual fight. The "cultural disintegration" during the Pahlavi era, highlighted by Baraheni, was to deepen even further after the Islamic revolution in 1979, and the literary space far narrower under Islamic fundamentalism. The intellectuals that had their part in the awakening of the mass and the revolution were

to be cleared out. Protests against the newly formed Islamic rule were treated brutally, aided by the 8-year-long Iran-Iraq war.

The 1979 revolution affected individuals, let alone minor writers, by narrowing their space even more; into “impossibility of writing”, impossibility of protest. The gap hardly ever permits a lively literary space in Iran that could resemble the one in the 1970s. The “liveliness” of minor literature that can lead to appearance of great works became less colored, only providing space for ideological literature of the state. Under the Islamic Republic of Iran, theatre is governed by the Dramatic Arts Center and its organization, the *Vezeerat-e Farhang va Ershad Islami* (Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance). It has been criticized for its censorship of artists and ideas that are believed to be "Anti-Islamic" or opposing the political loyalties of the Iranian government. Nevertheless, Iranian artists continue to manoeuvre through these regulations, and new works are flourishing, particularly in the capital city of Tehran (Lazgee 1994, Karimi Hakkak, 2003). According to Karimi-Hakkak, the efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran in establishing such an ideological literature as “The literature of the Islamic Revolution” has failed at least in its cultural dimension. And many artists that were active in the field- e.g. Mohsen Makhmalbaf and Gheisar Amin Pour- have left it over time. In such a literary space, literary productions enter into the labyrinth of censorship, filtering out any writing that would challenge the Islamic ideology, and mostly never get published. Minor writers are exiled at home as individuals are. Today’s world blessed by the internet has created a rhizomatic consciousness that has intensified the cultural gap between the mass and the state. Minor writers that master a major world language to pursue their literary career become emigree writers. Even if they publish in Persian language abroad, the

readership they get would not be comparable to that of which would be possible at home.

1.2. The Little Black Fish

“The child armed with the torch of knowledge, awareness and guidance must cross this bridge [into adulthood] and set foot to the intense harshness of the bigger world.”

Samad Behrangi

Samad Behrangi (1939 -1967) was a teacher, folklorist, social critic, translator, and short story writer. He is famous for his children's books, especially *The Little Black Fish*. Behrangi was influenced by predominantly leftist ideologies which were common among the intelligentsia of his era. Behrangi's works typically portrayed the lives of the poor children encouraged the individual to change the circumstances by her/his own initiatives. He criticised school systems and the textbooks and believed that children's literature must act as a bridge to adulthood. He believed children should see the powerlessness of their fathers in the society; fathers are capable of doing nothing and, at most, could only overrule their wives. In his critical articles, Behrangi criticises the educational system that brings up obedient people. He criticised children's poems that only order the children to be clean, kind, eager to please others and respect the elders. “In a family that the father spends all the income for his own pleasures, and has not got any constructive roles in the society, but even barricades the social movements and changes, the child does not have to be quiet and honest and does not have to obey his father. We should teach children how to hate anything and anyone that is unhumane and is a barricade to historical evolution of the

society. This hatred should find its way into the children's literature" (Behrangi, 1966). Behrangi has himself been successful in doing so in his stories.

Apart from children's stories, he wrote many pedagogical essays and collected several samples of oral Azarbaijani literature. His folklore studies have usually been done with the help of his colleague Behrooz Dehghani, who helped publish some of Behrangi's works after his early death. Behrangi also has written a few Azeri translations from Persian poems by Ahmad Shamlou, Forough Farrokhzad, and Mehdi Akhavan-Sales. He also translated Koroglu from Turkish to Persian. Azarbaijani Turkish literature has had its own masters and canons in poetry, though it has been marginalized by Persian literature politically, and Turkish literature – due to difference in the Alphabet employed. Mirza Alakbar Sabir (1862-1911), Ali Agha Vahid (1895-1965), Mohammad-Hosseini Shahriar (1907-1988) and Bulud Qarachorlu (1926-1979) and many others are examples of canonical poets in Azarbaijani literature. Valuing the rich literary background of Azerbaijani poetry, Behrangi tried to reintroduce them to Persian readers and literature. Although Azeri language is spoken and written in Azerbaijan (Baku), it has also been marginalized in Azerbaijan (Baku) by the major Russian language after the split in 1828.

Behrangi wrote against "westoxication" and the superficial life in the capital-Tehran. Although he wrote mostly in Persian, his Persian writings reflect his passion toward Azarbaijani language. Behrangi uses the Persian language to write about Azarbaijan openly and his tone reflects how he deterritorialized Persian by inserting Turkish phrases here and there in his criticisms of the capital. Commenting on Sa'edi's literary works he writes:

“Gowhar-morad is always after discovering and reflecting the corruption of the people who earn their living by shedding others’ blood. Sağ Olsun!” (Behrangi, 1967).

Deterritorialization is described by Deleuze as the “impossibility of not writing.” It relates to the struggle of finding a voice within a language that is both alien and familiar. Kafka’s work shows the ‘impasse’ of this literature; as a minor literature writing in a major language, and not only is essentially deterritorializing the language, but also as a way of relating to a world that they are both part of and alien to. The minor literature becomes a way of mediating the group within a major society and language. Minor literatures for Deleuze and Guattari is the ability to promote a state of community and becoming to escape from majoritarian nationalism. In prioritizing ‘becoming’ over a secure sense of national identity, they create a vision of a collectivity without hierarchy. In writing minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari see the author as writing possible futures and that is what makes them revolutionary.

In the years that children’s literature was not yet developed and were limited to the majoritarian ideology, with poems and stories that tried to bring up obedient and clean children who would always please the elders, Samad Behrangi’s stories breathed a new spirit. He writes for the majority of the mass that are yet poor and marginalized. Behrangi’s fascination with Azari folklore in his writing was considered as dissent by the ruling monarchy that was in constant fear of the Soviet intrusion specifically because of the proximity of the culture and language the Turkish people of Azarbaijan in Iran to that of the Soviet territory of Azarbaijan in the north-west. However, the reason behind Behrangi’s usage of folklore is that the masses of the people create fantastic legends, vast epics and beautiful songs and dances. Great artists have always created their most beautiful art based on the stories, culture of the

masses (folklore), poetry, music, and dance. They have always fed on folklore and will continue to do this forever.

Belonging to the same literary space as Gholam-Hossein Saedi, Behrangi also links psychological disorders to social ills and oppression. Having written a dissertation in 1961 titled as "Societal Causes of Psychoneurosis in Azerbaijan", Sa'edi used to invite people with psychological illnesses into his classroom to point to its causes in society. Likewise, in Behrangi's stories, the attitude of the poor, the homeless, the beggar kid on the streets of the capital are legitimized and portrayed. In *24 Saat dar Khab o Bidari* (24 sleepless hours), Behrangi tells the story of a father and son who travel to the capital city- Tehran- in search of a job. His father becomes a street seller using a cart, which acts as their bed at night, neighboring other carts and sellers in the southern area of Tehran. Everyday the little boy spends time in front of a toy shop, which has a big camel doll standing in front of the shop. This camel becomes his imaginary friend and one day, considering the idea of buying that camel, the little boy asks the price from the shop owner, who, ignores the kid, recognizing him as a beggar kid, says that the camel is not for sale. However, the other day the boy witnesses a rich man entering the shop because of the insistence that his spoiled daughter had in owning the camel. The shopkeeper sells the camel to the rich man and the little boy attacks the man, holds on to the camel saying that: "This is my camel. You can not take it away", running after the car he falls on the street, and looking at the distancing camel, he now wishes that he had the rifle from the toy shop instead.

Unlike many children's stories, Behrangi does not refrain from portraying cruelties and injustices in the society. His protagonists take action against the odds and oppressive forces, which gives his stories a revolutionary spirit. From among his many stories *The Little Black Fish* gained international praise and awards and has

found its way into the realm of world literature. The protagonist of the story is a little black fish that wants to swim all the way down the stream to see where it ends and what is beyond the routine life. Not even her mother can stop the little fish from going. The fish meets different animals on the way who warn the fish about the Pelican who hunts the fish. However, the little black fish is determined to continue the journey and meets a lizard. The fish asks for some information about the Pelican from the lizard finding him knowledgeable. The lizard hands the fish a dagger, so that in case the fish is caught by the Pelican, the little fish could use it to tear the pouch and escape. The dagger becomes the symbolic weapon against oppression and corruption. Behrangi provides a justification for violence against anything and anyone that is unhumane and cruel.

Behrangi's audience is not only the children but also adults throughout the allegories he employs in the story that are lost through "universalization". The little black fish is no ordinary fish. What makes it different from the other fishes is its thoughtfulness, awareness and determination. His journey starts with the thought of going to discover where the stream ends. The little fish's mom, typical of all conservative moms, tries to talk the little fish into forgetting this stupid idea saying "I also used to have such thoughts when I was a kid". Such is the attitude of the older generation toward the younger one. The mother continues: "Oh dear! The stream has neither a beginning nor an end, that's all it is! The stream is always running and gets nowhere". To which the little fish replies: "But mom, isn't it true that everything comes to an end? Night... day... week... month, years...". Their neighbors start appearing hearing their argument and are much surprised hearing what the little fish is saying: "No mom, I am tired of all these... I have noticed that most of the fish complain of having wasted their lives when they get old... I want to know whether life

is just going around in one place aimlessly or are there other ways of living life in the world... I don't want to waste my time like this and be happy for nothing and then suddenly grow up to realize that I have become old like you and am still the same ignorant fish that I had always been".

These courageous words are not favored by the other fishes and just like real people these fishes also create "files" for the "convicts" and threaten them by telling them of causing social disorder, motivating others to revolt against the security and peace of the other fishes and cooperation with the foreigner- a snail that its friendship with fish is known to be odd- : "This little fish is under the influence of that snail... sure he deserved to die... Do you think we would treat you differently?" The mother also believed that the snail had a negative effect on her child. However, the little fish says: "kill me too since I'm saying the very same things." The other fishes try to catch the fish but the fish manages to escape with the help of his friends, calling out for the crying mother: "Mom, don't cry for me, cry for these poor old fishes". What the neighbours say when the little fish leaves is also typical of people who see someone leaving his hometown in search of a better place:

- "If you go now and regret it later, we won't let you come back."

- "Don't be carried away by your childish day dreams."

- "What is wrong with this place?"

- "There is no other world. The world is here. Come back."

The little fish ignores them and moves on. After falling down the waterfall the little fish finds itself in a big pond, with thousands of tadpoles swarming around. The tadpoles are selfish, and proud of themselves, believing they are the most beautiful creatures in the world. And their mother is the frog who is capable of living both in water and outside it. The frog and her children are the petite-bourgeoisie that consider

themselves as intellectuals. The little black fish tells the tadpoles: “If you were not stupid, you would know that in this world there are many creatures whose shapes appear beautiful to their own kind. Your names don’t even belong to you”. The last sentence that has been omitted in most translations intends the position the petite-bourgeoisie occupies as a mocking bird of the bourgeoisie, detaching himself from the mass.

In the original text the gender of the black fish is not defined and this makes the little black fish to be a revolutionary role model to anyone with any gender. This is lost in translation to English. The translators either made the fish masculine, or feminine. Actually, the translation that uses the pronoun “she” for the little black fish, has led to a reading of the story in which the sad ending is alleviated, noting that the black fish is not actually dead and is actually the grandmother that started narrating the story to her many grandchildren. There are more examples of how the text has been changed and domesticated so that it suits the universal audience, which has been clearly noted by Kamran Bassiri. One of the most domesticated translations is that of Azita Rassi, whose goal in the translation was “to have the book as if a native English speaker has originally written it” (Bassiri, 2018). Rassi changed the tone of the story because she believed if she translated “the words to English exactly as they are, it could become the language of disrespect and impudence” (Bassiri, 2018). Bassiri points to the importance of sociopolitical factors in translations and publication of *The Little Black Fish*.

One of the translations that showcases a revolutionary message to prepare and educate the youth for uprising is that of the Confederation, for which Behrangi wrote children’s stories partly to avoid censorship. As the country moved toward the revolution, introductions to the later publications also became more militant, calling

for armed struggle. Bassiri provides an example to this fact, claiming that “the earlier Confederation edition describes Behrangi’s death as ‘an alleged drowning incident’, while the later edition declares that he was ‘killed by the SAVAK agents’ ”(Bassiri, 2018). The earlier edition talks about the “barbaric oppression existing in Iranian society, and a call for action and organized conscious revolt against the established norms” while the later printing goes further, pointing to “starting the armed struggle as the only way toward liberation”. Yet, in a later introduction, the story is interpreted as a call for arms against the Shah’s regime, who has been represented in the story as the seagull (Bassiri, 2018).

The Little Black Fish has been read and studied in a number of different ways- as a literary text, a children’s fable, and a sociopolitical allegory. It has also been discussed as a coming of age journey to foreground the importance of education and freedom, a story about cosmopolitanism and a political parable of a young revolutionary leaving the secure shelter of family to fight oppression.

The path the Little Black Fish takes to see the world is much similar to the path minor literature takes to become universal. Even after the fish reaches the dream land, threats exist. The little black fish, having escaped the Pelican and the Swordfish, is captured by the heron in the end. However translations of it to major languages have magnified its universal values and offer different readings ranging from a children’s story to the status of immigrants, and the growing Iranian diaspora.

“Each retranslation has fostered a different reading of the book as a revolutionary text or political allegory, a literary work or modern fable, a source for learning about Iran and the Persian language, and a coming-of-age tale or a children’s book that speaks to the experience of immigrants. All the

different approaches are the result of the translators' interests as well as the cultural and political ideological discourses of their time" (Bassiri, 2018).

The movement and uprising started by Behrangi as a minority writer was continued by his literary friends like Reza Baraheni, who also believed that the power must be taken from the rulers by force.



CHAPTER II: REZA BARAHENI AS A CRITIC OF OPPRESSION

“What the young generation needs
Is a tractor, or maybe a broom”
(Baraheni, 1977)

A writer is not separate from the people and reflects in his works the space of his existence within the social and political context of his time. To understand a minor writer's works better, one needs to understand the socio-political context of his time. The impacts of colonialism, world wars and political changes in modern Iran are reflected in the works of Iranian modern writers. Iranian writers were occupied with postcolonial ideas in the late 20th century and they felt a great need to revive and restore their culture and identity, which they saw jeopardized by the West and the oppression under Pahlavi monarchy. Reza Baraheni's literary and critical works mainly hover about the social problems of Iran in the modern age while he also points out the underlying issues of the collective unconscious as the building blocks of these issues. He fights against historical forgetfulness by bringing into the stage the less told history that has shaped the current structure of the Iranian society, taking away the culture and identity of the people from other minorities. This chapter is an attempt to study Baraheni's critical and literary works to shed light on the path he has undergone as a twofold minor writer- once considering him as a minor writer within world literature, and once his status as a writer in a language other than his mother tongue- to become an internationally recognized poet and writer within the framework of minor literature discussed by Casanova and Deleuze and Guattari.

Reza Baraheni is an Iranian poet, novelist, critic and political activist. He was born in Tabriz, Iran, in 1935, and educated both in his hometown and at the University of Istanbul, Turkey, where he earned a doctorate in English literature. He is the author of more than forty volumes of poetry, fiction, literary criticism and

translation (in Persian), and he has taught and lectured in Iranian as well as American universities. His works have appeared in half a dozen major languages, including English. Former president of PEN Canada, Baraheni lives in exile in Toronto, Canada, where he used to teach at the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto.

Until the appearance of a modern literary stage in Iran, to which Hedayat stands as a landmark, representation of Iranian culture and literature was mainly done by orientalists. And in the modern times the Iranian intellectuals were mainly occupied by introducing western works to their readers. However, minor Iranian writers who had access to the literary capitals of the world through a major language could claim ownership of their lost literary capital and gain the right of commenting and representing them to the literary marketplace.

Early in his career, in his doctoral dissertation, *Hayyam and Fitzgerald within the Framework of the Victorian Era*, Baraheni points to Fitzgerald's appropriation of Khayyam's quatrains, a study that shows the link between Persian poetry, with its flavour of Sufism, and the literary space in England during the Victorian era. The Victorian era, affected by industrial revolution and Darwinism, was an era full of doubts and in search of truth. Repressed sexuality, strict morality, imperialism, and loss of faith are some of the outstanding features of this era. Within this conservative space, English poets turned their attention to the orient and found condolence in Sufism and the Sufi poets of Iran. Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat* was a revolt against general Victorian values; optimism, earnestness, development in science and Puritanism. Fitzgerald's invented Omar was a representation of Omar as a hedonist, and epicurean. These were some of the features of Khayyam that set him apart from other Sufis, though, not enough to get the truest image of Omar Khayyam. "Fitzgerald saw

his own personality, his hope and fears, his despondency and also the essence of his personal thoughts, and those of his time expressed centuries ago by Khayyam. That is why in paraphrasing Khayyam's quatrains, he was interpreting his own soul, as well as part of the soul of his time" (Baraheni, 1960)- similar to what Hedayat did with Kafka. While appreciating Fitzgerald's mastery in poetry and the way he represented Khayyam to the British readers, Baraheni points out other features of the original that the translation lacked. Furthermore, Baraheni compares Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat with Tennyson's poetry to show the contextual relationship between Fitzgerald and Tennyson's poetry within the framework of the Victorian era.

Unlike most of his likes, Baraheni did not climb up onto an ivory tower to maintain order. He went back to reform. His knowledge of the literary capital of world literature was much more up to date in comparison to his readers, including other intellectuals in Iran. His critical works at home were not tolerated by all because of his critical look accompanied with his straightforward harsh language. Knowledge of literary criticism gave him a lens to evaluate the literariness of Iranian literature on the scale of world literature in a literary time that was changing rapidly. His early critical works coincided with great literary changes going on in the West. But he could not reflect them in his critical discussions because of literary poverty and backwardness of concepts in Persian language. It would take time to re-territorialize into Persian his theoretical knowledge gained through English language. However, they found their way into his fiction early on. His fiction is considered as the first example of postmodern literature in Iranian literature- both in poetry and prose.

2.1. The Culture of the Oppressed and the Culture of the Oppressor

After graduating from university, holding a PHD in English Literature, Baraheni started his career as a professor of English literature in Iran. Early in his career Baraheni noticed the backwardness of Persian literature especially in the domain of literary criticism and he found himself responsible not only to write books in this field but also try to reform the education of literature in Iran. He started writing *Writing Fiction* in 1960s, however, the book was not published till 1980s, soon banned afterwards, the book got the permission of publication again in 2008, with Baraheni's preface to the new edition- a book that Baraheni himself refers to as an incomplete study. Today, although 50 years have passed from its emergence, *Writing Fiction*, is still a source of reference for its readers.

Another critical work of Baraheni early in his career is his collection of articles titled *Masculine History*. It "deals with the causes of social and historical disintegration in Iran, the oppression of women, the problem of Iranian nationalities", and it offers ways through which some of the crisis in culture could be solved. One of the articles in this collection is *The Culture of the Oppressor and the Culture of the Oppressed*, which is a useful resource to study his early critical works. The article starts with defining culture through comparing humans with animals to infer that animals unlike humans are trapped in repetition because they lack the ability to distance themselves from their deeds, and cannot use the knowledge in accordance with deeds.

"Culture is the totality of all the knowledge born out of deed, moving along the deeds and immersing a deed in another. If man scrutinizes his acts (deeds) with self awareness, he benefits from his own deed because his knowledge and

his knowledged deeds, together with the knowledge coming from the deed, will immerse him into happiness” (Baraheni, 1984, p.15).

Humans are able to do so but “when they use their hard acquired knowledge not for the sake of their own health and happiness but for the unlimited well being of another person, they actually have created a weapon out of their knowledge- a weapon they have handed the enemy. When the minimum amount of the profit of a majority’s work is gained by the majority, and most of the profit goes to the minimum minority of the society, culture automatically divides into two parts: the dominant culture and the subjugated culture, the exploiter culture and the exploited culture, the slaveholding culture and the slave culture, the culture of master and the culture of proletariat, the culture of the colonialist and the culture of the colonized, the culture of capitalism and the culture of worker. The subjugated culture is a culture that its owners do not gain the overproduction of the society. The formal culture is the culture that its owners gain the overproduction of the society, using which they crush and destroy other cultures. Thus, there is no doubt that in tribal societies the culture of normal people, and, in a slaveholding society - “classic Greek and Rome” - the culture of the slave, in a feudal society the culture of the peasantry, and in a capitalist society the culture of the worker, reaches its minimum.[...] He will not lose this weapon unless it is taken from him by force. In other words, as long as the labour is administered cruelly, the real culture will be at the disposal of the tyrant, not the oppressed. And culture will be the same culture of the dominant class” (Baraheni, 1984, p.17).

Another point he makes in the article is the repression of daily language of the mass and calls for attention to reflect it in literature since “there are no traces of slang in all the other radio talks and TV programs as well as all the newspapers that you

read. The formal culture does not even pay a bit of attention to the informal culture. How can you expect that the efforts of Shamlou and Anjavi reach a point? When the dominant language reaps all the other languages and slang, what can be done to the oppressed language?”, inferring that “culture is a class case and the formal culture of any society is the culture of the dominant class of that society. The Persian ode is born out of the feudal context of Iran, and, when the bourgeoisie system replaced the feudal, it automatically faced downtrend” (Baraheni, 1977). Baraheni’s article focuses on culture, as rooted in the human conscience, inseparable from people. Culture is not something to be imported. And it is the role of the artist to imbue culture to his or her own people. When a country aims to become a “great civilization”, the cultural changes cannot be imposed from above or imported from abroad. Baraheni gives a definition of culture as one being inseparable from people and their deeds and languages. He points out the underlying problems that cause the disintegration of culture, the one coming from above, oppressing the other existing below at the level of the people. Words were created in the “academy” and dictated upon people. Baraheni points out the connection between the object and the language and values creation of the words by individuals, providing the word “qapdi qashdi” from Turkish as an example.

Furthermore, within the whole image of *Masculine History*, Baraheni dealt with “the problem of nationalities”, and Iranians’ “plight as doubly alienated creatures of the twentieth century.” The roots of this “double alienation” as he clarifies in *The Crowned Cannibals*, is once from the take over of the east by Western civilization with its introduction of machine, alien to easterns, and secondly by robbing the natives of their own cultural heritage. Like most anti-west intellectuals of his time, Baraheni was affected by Franz Fanon, and somehow affirms and echoes his words-

“Colonialism is not satisfied with snaring the people in its net or of draining the colonized brain of any form or substance. With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it” (Fanon, 1963, p. 165).

His early critical works were not free from the effect of the literary and intellectual atmosphere of his time. However, to resolve these problems he believed one must first overcome the main resistance towards change and overcoming of the new against the old, of the young against the old, or the people against a dictatorship. The Pahlavi era in Iran was the time of modernization brought in from the west. As western presence was felt more, the mass and the intellectuals hated it more. However, the Pahlavi dynasty’s passion was that Iranians needed help and education and were too ignorant and illiterate. The country was far behind West in its infrastructure and Shah relied on the West and oil money to perform establishments. Many intellectuals and engineers were sent abroad to get better education and serve the country afterwards. But these intellectuals, having seen the social achievements of the west, would turn against the Pahlavi dictatorship, at times unaware of the bigger hands in play. Russian communism had found its way into the Iranian intellect and exhibited itself as the Tudeh Party, a home to many intellectuals and writers. Communism was seen as a Russian plot through the eyes of the monarchy. Communists, including some of the writers, were thus prisoned, killed and tortured by the SAVAK- Shah’s secret police.

Baraheni criticizes the blind application of Western culture to the country at the time of its “Westernization” and on its path to become a “great civilization”. The Pahlavi monarchy saw the path of civilization and modernity through the gates opened by the west and belittled the poor illiterate mass of the country, relying more

on the western civilization and the modernity it brought- warfare and machine. Furthermore, Baraheni discusses that the reason for the cultural disintegration might be that “most of the people dealing with culture are intellectuals who have cut themselves off from working on the real social classes and aim to resolve it in the higher closed chambers of their beguiled minds, setting guidelines for the ones who need culture from a higher position and in a totally abstract way, which does not even slightly relate to the deeds of different social classes.” Baraheni published many political messages in newspapers which lead to his imprisonment, and exile, overshadowing his literary works.

In *Infernal Times of Mr. Ayyaz*, his first novel, Baraheni depicts the age-old oppression alluding to historical figures and oppression machines throughout Iranian history. Carter Harrison Bryant discusses the archetypes of this oppressing machine in his introduction to his translation of the novel- as his doctoral dissertation. A mechanism that goes on living, “the usurper of the patriarch/monarch who succeeds becomes simply another tyrant”. Although the age of the tyrannies has passed, it has been able to survive with its disguise in the Iranian context. In addition, Baraheni points to the maintenance of this oppression as it is reflected throughout the history of Persian literature. “When thinking about the fall of a dictatorship, one should have no illusions that the whole system comes to an end like a bad dream with that fall. The physical existence of the system does indeed cease. But its psychological and social results live on for years, and even survive in the form of subconsciously continued behaviour” (Kapuscinsky, 1992, p.58). In Iranian mythology, it is the father that kills the son. Unlike Oedipus, it is Rostam that kills his son Sohrab by tricking him, without knowing the fact that he is his own son. It is the prevailing masculinity that with its one-way attitude limits the upcoming. Baraheni highlights the collective

unconscious of the people delving into the imposed structures and systems of thought. “The most important pattern in all the genres of Persian literature is the killing of the young for the preservation of the old. The godhead of all myth, legend and history in Iran is the aged male- the traditional devourer of youth” (Baraheni, 1977).

Baraheni categorizes the situation of “minor” writers in Iran into two groups: the ones who are in prison, and the ones who are in a sanctuary- a self imposed prison and exile.

“There was always a hand to drag me out of hidden inner sanctum of refuge, out of the twisting, fragmented, interlaid cells of my mind and bridle me once more to go under the spur of history. Hidden away in my secret place, I would decide to escape from everything that I was, for I truly wished to be saved, to be delivered from what I was, but like someone under the spell of an evil demon, I always wound up returning to the prison of myself. There is a basic difference between the hidden, secret place to which one resorts for refuge and a prison. A secret sanctuary is a personal thing, a private form of exile chosen after much deliberation on the part of the individual. Although a man be prey to a thousand fears in his sanctuary and have no safety or security to speak of, it is a form of exile that he has chosen of his own free will. A prison is not so. A man in prison is trapped in the awareness of his own impotence and realizes that there is less strain involved in beating his fists against his own head than in beating them against a wall. But the man in a prison has his security. Those four walls of the prison permit him to go on living. But a man hidden in a private sanctuary realizes that at any time he might fall into the clutches of his enemies and must always deal with the possibility of the enemy lying in ambush at any and every corner, fully armed and full of deceptions. I spent my

life in a prison of which Taymur Hajeb's exit permit was a symbol; Samad and Mansur and Yusof spent their lives in hidden sanctuaries. Samad had fallen into the enemy's clutches in his secret hiding place, and there was every possibility of Mansur and Yusof being delivered to a similar fate at any moment" (Baraheni, 1971, p. 306).

Baraheni believes the problem of Persian literature, since always has been repressed by masters, is its being trapped into the epic stage. Persian literature lacks the Elizabethan age that parodied and acted as a mirror to the state. Persian literature could not achieve such a literary space to make appearance of Shakespeare-like artists possible. In *Infernal Times of Mr. Ayyaz*, the mass is comprised of slaves with a "master morality", mimicking and repeating actions valued by the master. And since the masters are busy with their personal filthy material needs, we see the symbolic act of sodomization repeated in different levels of the society starting from the king, the master of all, down to the level of the family where a man sodomizes the woman, since it is the persistent morality of the master that it echoes.

The intellectual is left alone in his battle and his fights turn to be an individual fight much similar to what we read in Kundera's *Unbearable Lightness of Being*. After all, similar contexts result in the appearance of thematically similar literary works. For example, following the turmoil caused by the second World War in East-European countries, Czeslaw Milosz (1911-2004), an emigre Polish writer, makes a metaphorical usage of "Ketman", an Iranian term in Persian -meaning concealing or disguise- which was the classical rule of thumb practiced by Sufis and intellectuals to escape being punished for their beliefs throughout history- to describe the situation among Communist writers in Eastern Europe.

“Following the Communist Party’s seizure of power in 1948, nearly a decade of Stalinist rule imposed a Soviet-style economy and ideology on a formerly Western society. Czechoslovak culture, particularly film and literature, briefly flowered again in the few years leading up to the “Prague Spring” of 1968, but this attempt to reform the Communist system was also crushed by occupying troops. The subsequent Soviet occupation halted the political reforms and drove many writers and intellectuals out of the country. By the late 1970s, the ideology of “normalization” had imposed one of the most repressive regimes in the Eastern Bloc and crushed independent thought within the official literary structures of the country” (Sabatos, 2005, p. 11).

“In the Islamic civilization of the Middle East”, acting “not only was the game played in defense of one’s thoughts and feelings well-known there, but indeed it was transformed into a permanent institution and graced with the name of Ketman” (Milosz, 1981, p. 57). Milosz values Ketman for he believes it is the sanctuary of a poet and “the necessities which drive men to Ketman sharpen the intellect” (Milosz, 1981, p. 78). Milosz discusses that “Ketman means self-realisation against something. He who practices Ketman suffers because of the obstacles he meets; but if these obstacles were suddenly to be removed, he would find himself in a void” (Milosz, 1981, p. 80).

“Finding oneself in the very midst of an historical cyclone, one must behave as prudently as possible, yielding externally to forces capable of destroying all adversaries. This does not prevent one from taking pleasure in one’s observations, since what one beholds is indeed unprecedented” (Milosz, 1981, p. 71).

These obstacles mother the literary innovations that take shape in small literature. Casanova points to these as the “improbable literary solutions” made by minor writers, and Kafka highlights the importance of the connections that can be made with similar literature in the greater realm of world literature. However, small literature reaches the boundry with politics soon instead of connecting with the greater world literature.

Avaz-e Koshtegan (The Song of the Killed), written in 1976 and not published till 2010, is not only an autobiography of Baraheni himself, but also the biography of intellectuals in Iran during the Pahlavi era, and even today. The core of his writings with their reference to the regime of the Shah, made the publication of his works possible today. However, the core is still valid in the current Iranian society. The novel underlines the status of a political prisoner and how he feels outside prison, among common people. In *Avaz-e Koshtegan*, Mahmoud, the protagonist, starts a psychological dialogue with common people representing the tendencies of the mass toward political intellectuals and their fight.

“Even if you are a hero- though we think you are not a hero but a stupid person- you are an ugly hero, we all think you are disgusting. You want to convince us that the situation is bad, that is why you have been imprisoned and others not. One must do something. You want us to do something. We do not want to do anything at all. You say there is no freedom, but oppression, and we have been slaves for thousands of years? Ok. Suppose it true. But the first condition of freedom is that you should not even try to awaken us. It is none of your business. Why do you act like a thorn poking our bodies? Suppose we do not have the courage you and the people like you have and when you talk, as soon as you turn your head away, we blink at our friends,

laugh and mock at you(...) If they had imprisoned you, why did they let you go? Are you a spy? (...)Are you planning to sell us out now? (...)Why didn't you die?" (Baraheni, 2009, p. 32)

The individual fight of the intellectuals ends up in their own isolation into the cells while life goes on for the common people. Baraheni's writings in English generally represent his prison memoirs and the situation of writers and intellectuals in Iran, undergoing coercive practices of the regime to call for the attention of world literary centers- an attempt that was helpful in his release from prison. The lack of literary freedom forces minor writers either to invent ways to wrap their productions in disguises- being a main feature of even Persian classical poetry- or to carry them into exile.

Writers in Iran have been creative in forming disguises, two examples of which are given in Baraheni's *The Crowned Cannibals*: "An article was published in the press praising Reza Khan in very bombastic rhetorical language. At first glance, the article appears to be one of those mercenary pieces paid for with bribes to the press. But the writers had used a rhetorical device called *Movash-shah*, in which only the first words of each line and the whole of the last line contained the essential meaning of the piece. Separated from the rest of the article, which was pure drivel, and arranged in order, these words read: How could the illiterate Reza Khan, who was not even capable of introducing his Cabinet to the Parliament, be worthy of becoming the President of Iran? The security forces do not allow us to write our opinions freely. We publish, therefore, this "Movash-shah" about our opinions, and of these scoundrels we say, let the reactionaries excommunicate us!" (Baraheni, 1977, p.117). Other examples evading censorships that Baraheni refers are the excessive use of allusions and relating their writings to other famous writers. Baraheni shares his own

experience in doing so. “In *Fiction in the Age of Night*, i.e., the age of the Shah, I wrote a whole section on the situation of repression in the country and simply signed it Bertolt Brecht. The piece is still in my book *Writing Fiction*. I even invented a reference for poor Brecht, who would have chuckled at the device” (Baraheni, 1977, p.118). Iranian writers use such tricks to get around the censors. Iranian poetry is replete with double and triple metaphors that give their message while they conceal it from the curious eyes of the censors.

2.2. Oppression of Minor Languages

“I’ll go back to my rare language;
The Mother, my main language
I’ll go back to her womb;
I’ll mate with my own silence”

Baraheni- an extract from “*The Mask of the Poet*”

The dominance of the Persian language over other languages is also a part of this cultural disintegration. Being an Azerbaijani, Reza Baraheni is much concerned with the dying literariness of his mother tongue and other languages of the oppressed nationalities. According to Casanova, “For a language to acquire a high degree of literariness it has to have a long tradition, one that in each generation refines, modifies, and enlarges the gamut of formal and aesthetic possibilities of the language, establishing, guaranteeing, and calling attention to the literary character of what is written in it” (Casanova, 2004, p.18). The Azerbaijani language spoken in Iran, does not reflect its aesthetic literariness compared to the Turkish spoken in Turkey, though, both share the same roots. Furthermore, since language is the most basic means of the formation of identity during childhood, someone that is raised in a Turkish speaking family acquires the Turkish language as a means of communicating his feelings and emotions. What is told in a language cannot be told in another. And not only the common people feel detached from the dominant paper language, but also the task of

a writer from a minority becomes even more difficult since he cannot use his mother tongue in his literary productions.

Being a native speaker of Azari Turkish- one of many dialects that have been suppressed historically in Iran- Reza Baraheni was prohibited from formal schooling in his mother tongue just like other Azarbaijanis. He fought for the rights of minorities in Iran and against the ever-present censorship, which in turn, made him the prisoner of the last two paradoxical regimes of Iran- the Pahlavi monarchy, and the Islamic Republic. Literary productions of minor writers like Baraheni in the dominant Persian language don't show signs of backwardness. On the contrary, they have had their share of enriching it by inventing new words and forms. For these writers Persian language is a tool of expression, open to "minor usages".

Similar to Deleuze and Guattari's discussion on Kafka's language, minor writers in Iran need to adopt Persian language to pursue their writing career. Although previous to the outbreak of modernity in Iranian literature the literary works of non-Persian writers were underestimated and their competency in Persian language was looked down on by the practitioners of the high language of Persian poetry, the modern stage and intake of simple language into literature provided the writers from minorities with a stage to exhibit their writings. These writers brought into the language a consciousness that did not exist in Persian language. Their works reflected the oppressed culture and the untold stories based on a history that was rarely reflected.

An early example of minor's usage of a major language in Iranian poetry is Qatran Tabrizi's (1009-1072) poems in Persian. "Qatran had basically thought in his mother tongue and translated into Persian verse" (Amouzeyneddini, 2000). There are examples of common Turkish proverbs in his poetry self-translated into Persian. Reza

Baraheni also gave birth to new forms of writing to appear in Persian. Baraheni not only used the Persian language masterfully in his poetry but also produced first examples of postmodern Persian poetry. Furthermore, he broke the grammatical standards of Persian language.

In his poetry collection titled as *Khetab be Parvane-ha (Addressing Butterflies)*, Baraheni turned to writing language-centered poetry, commenting that the poem should not have a message to change the society and its goal is “to create an aesthetic effect”, as an arena to think (Baraheni, 1995, p.168). In contrast to the traditional thought and writing that “has a center or subject from which it then expresses its ideas, Deleuzian concept of ‘rhizome’ makes random, proliferating and de-centred connections” (Colebrook, P. 10). In the philosophy of Deleuze, the author “must push language out of the ruts of habit, creating extraordinary words for the most ordinary uses to “make language stutter”. Baraheni's poems show such efforts as to make language stutter. In his poem, *Daf* (Tambourine), the whole musical poem represents the sound of the tambourine. Being in contact with the American literary space in 1970s, Baraheni moves toward being a language poet. Baraheni was influenced by American language poets like Charles Bernstein (1950-), and he tries to escape from grammar and rational meaning into letting the language speak for itself unbound from a controlling core. Baraheni believed even the still-young blank verse was serving meaning and could not go beyond it.

Almost all of Baraheni's fictions represent his passion to project his mother tongue into the fabric of Persian literature. “Harshness has been a part of my identity, and might also have been a part of the life of a generation of writers who are born into a language, but history imposes another onto them”. In *The Crowned Cannibals* he also reflects oppression of languages.

“The Persians and the Persian-oriented government had taken away from me a language, an identity, a culture and a rhythm. There was something of reality, of harshness in that culture and identity. At this point in its evolution, what Persian language and literature lacked was an adequate reflection of that reality and harshness, and I tried to breathe that spirit into them” (Baraheni, 1977, p.111).

Persian writers tended to look down on writers from minorities and did not welcome his critical ideas, highlighting that he is a Turk and full of nonsense. Having mastered the Persian literary language, Baraheni regretted that he could not go back and gain the same mastery in his own mother tongue, however, he is left with one option at hand- “to weave that harsh reality into the fabric of the Persian language and turn that language into the medium of revolt against the upper-class Persian and Persianized rulers. That harsh reality forms the substance of my revolt, and this revolt is the essence of my writing” (Baraheni, 1977, p.112).

The harshness in language is evident in *The Infernal Times of Mr.Ayyaz*. His reports of tortures, and stranglement of writers are also a representation of that harshness though they sound exaggerated. Samad Behrangi died in a mysterious way being drown in Aras River. SAVAK’s secret assassinations also seemed to be behind the deaths of authors like Ali Shariati, Jalal-Al- Ahmad, and many others. However, Behrangi’s death in the Aras, which is the symbol of the separation imposed on the Azerbaijanis, not only reflects the overall repression of authors of the Iranian literary space, but also the repression of Azari people in Iran.

Inserting Turkish folkloric poems and words within his Persian texts and his choice of using Azarbaijani words with sounds that do not exist in Persian phonetics are examples of his efforts to reflect his mother-tongue and to fight against the

suppressing dominance of Persian culture and language over other rich languages and cultures that have been ignored and suppressed in Iran. In *The Infernal Times of Mr.Ayyaz*, although the novel is mainly written in Persian, Baraheni addresses Behrangi in Azerbaijani language. Following is the mentioned extract from the novel transliterated using Azerbaijani Letters, followed by the English translation from Carter Bryant.

“Dur əyağa aş gözlərimi bir də bu dünyiyə bax Səmət! Yuxlama yatma uyan bir de bir bu keçən suya bax Samad! Ay keçir gecə keçir su keçir, bu Allahsız imansız, bu göy göy ulduzlarından keçir Səmət! Aş gözlərimi; mənə öldürsələrdə, sənə o gamətündən, o sözlərindən ayrılanmaram Səmət! Birgün bu yumruqlarımla , dünyanın, bu Allahsız imansız içi boş siki qırış dünyanın ürəğini yırtacağam, sənə o əllərinin intikamını alacağam! Ayıl oğlan dur bir de bir söyle o sözlərimi! Səndən ötür ürəyim, bu ürəyim əsir Səmət;....

İntiqamıvı o goldorlardan alacağam, intikamını Mahmud'un dırnaxlarından eşigə çəkəcəyəm! Aş qulaxlarını eşit Səmət! Mahmud'un ürəğinin başında bir yer var ki mənim qəmimin ucu üçün yaranıb. Mən bir əlli vurmayaçağam bu qəməni, iki əlli, möhkəm, elə ürəğinin başından nallayacağam ki sinəsində ürəgi qırış yere bölünsün Səmət. Otuz ildə bu qəməni itildirəm. Dədəmin, dədəmin dədəsinin, dədə dədələrimin, qərdəşlərimin intiqamını Mahmud'dan alacağam. Min ildə, nə! Səmət! İki min ildə, həttə üç min ildir bu göt verənlər, bu ana bacıların sihdıqlarım, bizim boynumuza miniplər, diyillər hən eşigim bu yana, hən eşigim o yana. Ağızlar bağlıdır, zindanlar doludur. Her ağzın bacasının gabağında, bir goldor, gurumsax qəzzax durup keşik verir. Kaş ölmüyəydin Səmət, görəydin ki mən bu qəməni nə üçün ititmişəm. Baxtısca bu qəmiyə, özüm də goxuram Səmət! Kaş ölmüyəydin Səmət, öz gözlərinə görəydin ki bu qəmə nəcür işə gəlir. Sən onda gərəh bu qəmənin sağlığına şiir

diyeydün Səməd! Sənün şiirün əgər şiir olsaydı gərəh bu qəmənün sağlığına diyilmiş
 olaydı. Üç min ildən sonra, bu yıldırım qələfindən eşiğə çəkirem. Mahmud gözümün
 gabağındadı, Mahmud durup mənə baxır! Aş gözlərimi Səməd gör necə Mahmud
 durup mənə baxır! Görmisən ki gərxurə? Amma gərxə gərxə durup mənə baxır, Bax
 Səmət indi ilan təkin öz döğrəsinə dolanır. Dolan, dolan, dolan, dolan, öz döğrəvə
 dolan, hər yerə dönsən, yürəğivün başı qəməmin ucundadı. Eşid Səmət! Mahmud
 bağırır, bağırır, nənəsin, dədəsin arvatların, uşağların, kənizlərin, qulamların,
 xacələrin, gurumsaxların çağırır. Eşit, aş qulaxlarıvı, eşid bu səsləri, başla o şiiri,
 yıldırımdan, qəmədən, çağırmaxdan, bağırmaxtan, çıxırmaxtan, dağılmaxtan, yaz o
 şiiri. Mən Yusuf'am, aş gözlərimi, başla Səmət! Yaz o şiiri, dünyanı mən dəğişmişəm.
 Bax qəmiyə, bu qanınan yaz o şiiri. Səmət! Səmət! Səmət!" (Baraheni, 1971, P. 308)

"Don't sleep. Arise and open your eyes and look upon this world one more time,
 Samad! Awake and one more time look upon the water flowing past, Samad! The
 moon passes away, and this night and this world without god and without belief and
 this sky of blue with its swarm of stars, Samad! Open your eyes! Even should they put
 me to death they cannot separate me from the greatness of your words, Samad. One
 day I will tear this empty and faithless fucked-up world to tatters and revenge you!
 Wake up, boy, arise and send forth your words once more! I am struck to my very
 heart by this loss of you!"...

"I will revenge your death on those tyrants. I will extract my revenge along with the
 roots of Mahmud's fingernails . Open your ears and listen, Samad! There is a special
 spot in Mahmud's heart reserved for the tip of my dagger. I will not strike that spot
 with one hand but rather with two and so firmly that his heart will be rent into forty
 pieces, Samad! I have been sharpening this dagger of mine for thirty years. I will
 revenge our father and our father's father and our forefathers and our brothers upon

Mahmud. For a thousand years, Samad! The bastards have loaded this shit on our backs saying. This way, little donkey, that way, little donkey. The prisons are full, and some watchman, some tyrant, some pimping bastard stands guard at the entrance to every mouth. If only you hadn't died, Samad, and could have been here to see that for which I've been sharpening my dagger all these years. When I look up on this dagger, I myself am terrified . If you hadn' t died, Samad, you would have seen what it will bring about. You should have composed an ode to this dagger way back then, Samad! Should you want your poem to be a poem of any significance , you should have composed your poem in dedication to this dagger . Finally , after three thousand years I pull this thunderbolt from its sheath; Mahmud stands before me, looking at me. Open your eyes and see how he looks at me. Can't you see that he is in terror of me? And yet he stands there watching me. Samad! See Mahmud coiling himself like a snake getting ready to strike. Coil! Twist! Wind in and out around yourself! You cannot conceal your heart from the point of my dagger. Listen, Samad! Mahmud shrieks in terror, calling upon his father, his mother, his children, his maids, the slaves, the Khajehs, the guards, the generals. Listen, Samad, listen to his voice, open your ears and listen, and once you have heard it, give voice to that poem, that verse, that ode to my thunderbolt , my dagger, to the desperate pleading cries, to the shrieks of Mahmud, to the mutilation and murder of Mahmud! I am Yusof. Open your eyes and arise and start recitin g, Samad! I have changed and will change the world. Look upon this dagger of mine, dripping with fresh blood. Recite your verse, Samad. Samad! Samad! Samad!" ¹ (Bryant, 1984, p. 541)

Yusof's impassioned address in a harsh, vernacular Turkish to Samad reflects Baraheni's personal alienation towards the Persian language and Persian culture, twin oppressors of his native Iranian Azarbaijan province, in his estimation (Bryant, 1984).

Ayaz, being of a Turkish origin, is so detached from his identity that he does not even know his father, the man in dismemberment of whom he assists. The “three thousand years” refers to the founding of the Persian empire that attacked and conquered the lands of the Medes, who ruled over the northern west of Iran and had an important role in the historical development of Iranian culture, but not much has survived and been reflected in history, beside Herodotus’ writings. Furthermore, it also reflects the power relations that have formed borders to separate the great number of Turkish speaking people in Iran, Turkey, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. However, within the whole structure of the novel he also highlights the uselessness of revenge, alluding to Alp Arslan’s assassination by Yusuf- also known as Harezmli Yusuf. Revenge through assassination of the master, would only lead to the appearance of another master. He represents this Turkish text as a citation in the novel, quoting from the fictional name “Qamali Yusuf” (literally meaning: the Yusuf armed with a dagger) as a footnote. In his another novel, *Azadeh Khanom va Nevisande-ash (Azadeh Khanom and Her Writer)* he includes a reference, with the aim of distracting readers and keeping meaning beyond reach. He provides two reasons for including a reference in his novel. One is the relief he gets by citing those works, feeling it as a responsibility, the other reason is “to misguide critics and theorists, since there is no greater delight for a writer than to watch the misguided” (Baraheni, 2002, P. 625). Mansour, Yusof, and Ayaz, are the persistent symbolic figures all throughout the Iranian history. Mansour, alluding to Mansour Hallaj, is the symbol of the truth seeker and the call for justice and knowledge. Yusof is the symbolic oppressed character that is looking for revenge in a violent way, and Ayaz is the subjugated mass that has been brushed off of its true identity and will to power. The fate of the artist and the minor writer in Iran

within such a structure is the fate of Samad not only as the result of the oppression from the state, but also the echo of that oppression mirrored in the collective unconscious of the mass. Mansour points out that one can only wait for the mass to realize their subjugation and only time can provide a slow change toward a new morality.

1. The following is a Turkish translation of the Azarbaijani text- provided for Turkish readers:

“Kalk ayağa aç gözlerini bir de bu dünyaya bak Samet! Uyuma yatma uyan bir de bir bu geçen suya bak Samet! Ay geçiyor gece geçiyor su geçiyor, Bu Allahsız imansız, bu mavi gökyüzündeki yıldızlarından geçir Samet! Aç gözlerini; beni öldürseler de, senin o heybetinin, o sözlerinden ayrılamam Samet! Birgün bu yumruklarım , dünyanın, bu Allahsız imansız içi boş siki kırık dünyanın yüreğini yırtacağım, senin o ellerinin intikamını alacağım! Ayıl oğlan dur bir de bir söyle o sözlerini! Senden ötürü yüreğim, bu yüreğim esir Samet;(...) İntikamını o zorbalardan alacağım, intikamını Mahmut’un tırnaklarından dışarı çekeceğim! Aç kulaklarını duy Samet! Mahmut’un yüreğinin başında bir yer var ki benim hançerimin ucu için yaratılmış. Ben bir el ile vurmayacağım bu hançeri, iki el ile sert, öyle yüreğinin başından tekmeleyeceğim ki göğsünde yüreği kırk yere bölünsün Samet. Otuz yıldır bu hançeri keskinleştiriyorum. Dedemin, dedemin dedesinin, dedelerimin, kardeşlerimin intikamını Mahmut’tan alacağım. Bin yıldır, yok! Samet! İkibin yıldır, hatta üçbin yıldır bu ibneler, bu ana bacılarını siktiklerim, bizim boynumuza binmekte, diyorlar hin eşeğim bu yana, hin eşeğim o yana. Ağızlar bağlıdır zindanlar doludur. Her ağzın önünde, bir zorba, pezevenk kazak nöbet tutuyor. Keşke ölmeseydin Samet, görseydin ki ben bu hançeri niçin keskinleştirmişim. Baktıkça bu hançere, kendim de korkuyorum Samet! Keşke ölmeseydin Samet, kendi gözlerinle görseydin ki bu hançer nasıl işe yarıyor. Sen o zaman gerek bu hançerin sağlığına şiir okuyaydın Samet! Senin şiirin, bu hançerin sağlığı için söylenmiş olmalıydı. Üç bin yıldan sonra, bu yıldırım kılıfından dışarı çekiyorum. Mahmut gözümün önünde, Mahmut durup bana bakıyor! Aç gözlerini Samet gör Mahmut nasıl durup bana bakıyor! Korkuyor görmüyor musun? Ama korka korka durup bana bakıyor, bak Samet şimdi yılan gibi kendi etrafında dolanıyor. Dolan, dolan, dolan, dolan, kendi etrafına dolan, her yere dönsen, yüreğinin başı hançerimin ucundadır. Duy Samet! Mahmut bağırır, bağırır, nenesini, dedesini, avratlarını, çocuklarını, hizmetçilerini, kölelerini, hadım ağalarını, pezevenklerini çağırır. Duy, aç kulaklarını, duy bu sesleri, başlat o şiiri, yıldırımdan, hançerden, çağırmaktan, bağırmaktan, çığırmaktan, dağılmaktan, yaz o şiiri. Ben Yusuf’um, aç gözlerini, başla Samet! Yaz o şiiri, dünyayı ben değiştirdim. Bak hançere, bu kan ile yaz o şiiri. Samet! Samet! Samet!”

To conclude, Braheni's works reveal his status as a minor writer based on the framework provided by Casanova as "small literature" and falls into the category of the discussion of minor literature in Deleuzian terms with the focus on language as a source of power and dominance. Although writers on the periphery suffer from the backwardness of their literary space at home, through their access to the world literary capitals they can bring in changes to their national literary space. However, the efforts of Iranian modernists -with some exceptions- in bringing in these literary changes and their efforts in raising the collective consciousness of the mass were so loud and political that could not be tolerated by the ruling regime, similar to European nations in 1970s. In his last preface to *Writing Fiction* in 2008, having noticed these issues, Baraheni writes: 'We predict upcoming events through our current deeds, without realizing our role in building the future. A part of me was racing for future changes, and leading it toward the future without my being conscious of it' (Baraheni, 2008). Baraheni's postmodern productions has reached an aesthetic language and technique to go beyond fixed meanings and make his writings gain literary value within the larger scope of world literature and the publication of some of his works possible in Iran. The progress in literature is not achieved by re-travelling the journey taken by the literary capitals of the world but through an understanding of the "literary time" as discussed by Casanova, and the Deleuzian "rhizome" that connects distant times and spaces together and provides the possibility of newness through "lines of flight", freed from any limiting force.

CHAPTER III: GHOLAM HOSSEIN SA'EDI AS A DISSIDENT TO TWO REGIMES

Gholam Hossein Sa'edi, was an Iranian psychiatrist, fiction writer ethnographer, and noted engagé dramatist (under the pen name Gowhar Morad). He was an influential figure in popularizing the theater as an art form in Iran as a medium of social and political expression. Sa'edi was born to a middle-class family in 1936 and was raised in the city of Tabriz. He soon became popular among Iranian intellectuals for his plays, short stories and essays. He also adapted several of his stories for the screen. From early on, Sa'edi was involved with the period's politics of dissent. Much of his work displays the hallmarks of left-leaning liberal thought. In this regard, he was very much in line with the modernist spirit in the literary history of an era in Iranian cultural life that had its beginning in the early years after the Second World War and was in various degrees marked by opposition to what was conceived as the oppressive nature of the Pahlavi regime, a form of nationalism combined with cultural self-analysis, and a fight with Western imperialism. Saedi's critical writings and his passion for social justice, alongside his active role in the intellectual circles like the Iranian Writers Association and the Azarbaijan Democrats led to repeated confrontation with the Shah's secret police-the SAVAK. The climate in which Sa'edi worked and lived was fraught with a distrust of Western influence, both in cultural and political terms, with a desire to understand the West and forge a communion with its intellectual tradition while resisting its political and cultural domination (Yarshater, 1988, pp. 291-318; Hillmann, 1982, pp. 7-29).

Sa'edi created a body of dramatic works from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s, depicting individuals trapped in painfully absurd situations, impotent against a merciless fate (Yarshater, 1988, p. 393). In 1973, at the behest of the management of

Amir Kabir, a major publishing house, Sa'edi accepted the editorship of a newly instituted quarterly called *Alefbā*, which soon became a highly regarded and influential journal, publishing articles of scholarship and works of fiction and poetry by leading authors in Iran and abroad. Sa'edi was very attached to this periodical and on many occasions expressed his pride in being associated with it. However, due to obstacles created by the regime, *Alefbā* ceased operation after publishing six issues within nearly two years.

In the pre-revolution years under the Pahlavi regime, Sa'edi used symbolic, fantastic and dreamlike elements to transcend reality. In comparison to Baraheni's works, Saedi represents the society more contextually in his plays. Unlike Baraheni who was obsessed with representation of brutalities in a manipulative way, Saedi represents the society functioning as a whole unit with all its dynamics in his drama. Both writers stress "Fear" as the main illness of the society. A fearful mass (fear is a persistent theme in Sa'edi's works as a feature of the mass, e.g. *A-ye Ba Kolah A-ye Bi Kolah*), busy winning their bread, would not care about the intellectuals' works and their sufferings, and would not support them against repression. Sa'edi was arrested and sentenced for fifteen years of prison, but, he was released 3 years later in 1975, a year after Baraheni's release. After his release from prison he continued his literary activity, turning his attention more to the society, realizing that the middle and low class, for whom the intellectuals have been struggling, are deaf to their words.

Along with Sadegh Chubak, Jalal-al-e Ahmad, and other writers, Sa'edi, with his sharp criticism of mismanagement of the economy, produced a distinct type of regional literature that was loyal to the "committed literature", being the core commitment of the Iranian Writers' Association, colored by politics and ideology. (Mir'abedini, 1987, p. 508). Like many other politically committed literary figures,

Sa'edi welcomed the regime change in Iran. He was among the group of writers, poets, playwrights, critics, and translators who spoke of censorship, freedom of thought, the responsibilities of intellectuals, and oppression at the German Cultural Institute's nights of lectures and poetry readings, held between 10 and 19 October 1977 and known, later, as *Dah Shab* (Ten Nights). The lectures and poetry readings, as part of the political liberalization turned a literary event into a political one. Sa'edi was among those who spoke on the fourth night of the event. He discussed the issue of "quasi-artists", elaborating that unlike quasi-cholera, which has a lot in common with cholera, "quasi-artists" are detached from art. He sees the appearance of quasi-artists as a result of censorship, and categorizes these artists as ideological vessels of the state. Quasi-artists are also reflected in Baraheni's works as corrupt people backed by the state or a foreign force, suppressing others and holding major positions and ranks. The possibility of organizing such an event itself was a great occasion for Persian literature as well as authors and their readers. Iranian writers were in a literary space that though did not have the previlidges of the dominant literary activities, run by "quasi-artists", they could nonetheless continue their literary activity.

Shortly after the 1979 revolution, Saedi's critical stand towards the regime drew the attention of Guardians of the Islamic state and other fundamentalist, pro-Khomeini groups, and when the Iranian regime unleashed its attack on the opposition in the summer of 1981, Saedi was among the many who could no longer remain in Iran, however, he continued his literary career in Paris, as a refugee. In January of 1981 Sa'edi resumed the publication of the journal *Alefba* in Paris, in which he published some of his exilic works, mostly treatises dealing with his disillusionment with a revolution he had wholeheartedly supported and the debilitating effects of his

life in exile. Sa'edi's exilic narratives suffer from an overindulgence in social and political commentary at the expense of plausibility and aesthetic considerations (Mir'ābedini, 1987, p. 791).

As the center of world literature, based on Casanova's discussions, Paris provided Sa'edi with a literary space to write freely. Sa'edi's exilic sadness and unwillingness to learn French language did not let him assimilate into the bigger context of world literature. According to Casanova, the "literary use of one of the great central languages becomes for dominated writers a guarantee of immediate membership in the literary world" (Casanova, 2004, p. 264). However, Sa'edi remained a Persian writer, writing for Persian readers. Life in Paris provided him with a literary space to write freely and explicitly in Persian language.

Separation from Iran turned out to be more devastating than expected. The condition of exile affected Sa'edi not only intellectually but also emotionally (Hillmann, 1987, p. 84; Karimi Hakkak, p. 523-24). He deliberately refused to learn French. A number of essays and interviews bear witness to the fact that he had difficulty in adjusting to life away from his native land and felt the constant threat of incapacitation as a result of isolation (For Sa'edi's exilic interviews, see Mojabi, pp. 172-221.) Early in the morning of 23 November 1985, Sa'edi suffered a stroke. Hours later he died in a hospital in Paris; he was buried next to Sadeq Hedayat in Père Lachaise cemetery. "Hedayat had fled Iran to commit suicide in Paris in despair of what was happening in his homeland. Sa'edi died of exile. His country forced him to leave, and he could not survive without it" (Hillmann, 1987, p. 84).

3.1. *Othello's* Reception in the Middle East

Othello is the tragedy of a noble hero that was brought down by a fatal flaw in his character. Shakespeare's other great tragedies like *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* deal with issues that impact the well-being of entire nations, whereas *Othello* is a domestic tragedy with timeless themes such as jealousy, love, hate, revenge, trust, suspicion, self-interest, racism, judgment and reason. They depict humanity in all its diversity. In Shakespeare's play, most of the major characters are duplicitous in one way or another, and their duplicity is presented as inextricably tied to the complexities of social self-construction. Iago's famous self-denial "I am not what I am" identifies him early as the play's primary deceiver, a man prepared to misrepresent himself to the world and thus a threat to social cohesion. Then, as Iago's influence over his commander grows, Othello announces his own public deception, claiming "I will be found most cunning in my patience." But even as it tracks the contagious nature and destructive force of Iago's strategy of misrepresentation, the play recognizes that deceit can be a tool for social cohesion. Iago manipulates the characters and sets them out on action while remaining an observer himself.

Othello is a Moroccan and has been converted to Christianity, however, he is treated as "The Other" in the Venetian society because of his race. "Othello is transformed from insider to outsider, from Christian hero who plays a vital role in Venetian imperial politics to an Islamic rival" (Britton, 2014). Throughout his evil plan Iago triggers Othello's race and romance to the extent that in the final phase Othello considers himself as unfit for the Venetian society and having killed Desdemona unfairly, blinded by the veil of deceit, kills himself as a "Malignant turbaned Turk who traduced the state". According to Ania Loomba, "Othello moves from being a colonised subject existing on the terms of white Venetian society and

trying to internalise its ideology, toward being marginalised, outcast and alienated from it in everyway, until he occupies his true position as its other” (Loomba, 1989).

Racial issues and postcolonial arguments on *Othello* and Shakespeare himself has affected Shakespeare’s reception in the formerly colonized -or othered- nations. Translations and adaptations of Shakespeare in the Middle East show different approaches in the modern times. One approach has been reproducing Shakespeare in a mimicry fashion, mirroring the context of the original play. Another approach has been appropriation of the play to the culture of the “colonised”. In his translation of *Othello*, Khalil Mutran, the Lebanese-born poet who immigrated to Egypt, all characters kept their names except for *Othello*, which was changed to ‘Utayl, on the grounds that it had been an Arabic name, not a European name, since he was a Moor. Mutran not only appropriates the protagonist of the play, but also naturalizes its author explaining how Shakespeare himself seems to reflect the Arab spirit. Previous to Mutran, Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyag, a Lebanese writer, had tried to find links between Shakespeare and the Arabs, claiming that Shakespeare was an Arab whose real name was Shaykh Zubayr. Safa Khulusi, and the Egyptian scholar Ibrahim Hamadah also argued the Arabness of Shakespeare, the latter of who even wrote a book refuting the Arabness of Shakespeare. According to Ghazoul, “this represents a dominant orientation in a historical era in which the intellectuals of the subjugated Arab nation wanted to demonstrate their cultural standing by asserting that their heritage was no less than the legacy of the colonizers- and what better way to claim cultural equality than to show that the great canonical writer of the English is kin to Arabs” (Ghazoul, 1998). However, later adaptations of *Othello* in the Arab world and other non-colonised, yet marginalised nations have adapted *Othello* to their minor

usage of a major work by putting the spotlight on different aspects and themes of the play erasing its racial aspect.

A well-known and successful Upper Egyptian adaptation of *Othello* took place in the late 1960s and revived in Spring 1991 in the Egyptian provinces. This adaptation by Mahmud Isma'ilJad of Qina is entitled 'Atallah (one of the Arabized forms of *Othello*); instead of using the original subtitle-"The Moor of Venice,"-it is identified as "A Popular Epic"; Desdemona becomes Fatimah (a popular name for women in Arab-Islamic culture; the equivalent of Every Woman), Iago becomes Dahi (literally "immolator"), Cassio becomes Hasan (literally "beautiful/good"), cousin of Fatimah, and Bianca becomes a gypsy named Ma'zuzah (literally "dear woman"). This adaptation drops the racial issue in *Othello* and replaces it by emphasis on the generation gap between the young Fatimah/Desdemona and 'Atallah/ *Othello* on one hand, and class difference of rich/poor on the other. The success of the play has been ascribed to the imaginative transplanting of the drama -through the addition of local color and the modification of the plot- to a new place and habitat.

Postcolonial intellect in the Arab world in the 20th century, under the influence of Fanon, produced adaptations of *Othello* that are quite anti-colonial in their approach. Tayeb Salih, a Sudanese writer, in his novel *Mawsim al- hijrah ila al-shimal*, 1966 (*Season of Migration to the North*), poses an intertextual response to *Othello*. According to Ghazoul, 'Salih wanted to revise Shakespeare and correct *Othello*'s image by presenting a more authentic representation of a "Moor" in "Venice" seen through the prism of a colonized person whose roots are ruptured. He can neither graft himself properly onto the other nor rejoin the source' (Ghazoul, 1998). Marc Maufort criticises the racial bias toward Shakespeare, including Shakespeare within postcolonial categorization of literature. Maufort highlights

Shakespeare's representation of Othello as a “hybrid” character based on the ideas put forth by Homi K. Bhabha. This hybridity is represented in the literary works of the nations that have not been colonized, such as Turkey and Iran.

Halide Edib's *Masks or Souls?* is an example of posing the hybridity in an attempt to correct the orientalist attitude toward the marginalised nations. According to Bernadette Andrea, “Edib advances a model of intersubjectivity that challenges the orientalist gaze fixed on the Turks from the pre-modern era through the twentieth century”(Andrea, 2006). By setting up a dialogue between the east and the west, Edib holds the position for culturally hybrid nations that, though not colonized, have been marginalized mainly because of the difference in religion. In *Masks or Souls?* Edib makes William Shakespeare Nasreddin Hoca's traveling companion. According to Ezer, “Edib revered Shakespeare, as we can infer from her translations of *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, and her essays on Shakespeare. In *Memoirs*, Edib writes of him: There is no Christian feeling in Shakespeare. He is a man, clearly chanting the creative manliness of his barbarian ancestors, toning them down to harmony, indeed bringing into formal beauty the chaotic ideals of their dreams and struggles, and painting them in terms with which every human being in every decade of history may become familiar” (Ezer, 2012).

Nations that came in touch with western culture and were not colonized- putting the disguised colonization aside, took the path of “Westernization”. Edib was part of Ataturk's movement that minimized the religious conflicts and moved toward a modern and postmodern understanding of the events, calling for a universal understanding. Similarly Iran had already taken this path and the conflict between tradition and modernity was the core attention of early modern writers- e.g. Sadegh Hedayat. Although seems a bit naive, Shah's 2500-year celebration party in 1971 was

an act of embracing hybridity as well as demonstrating Iran's ancient civilization and history and showing off contemporary developments in the country. Although Shah's party was criticised by the mass, since the mass were poor and uninvited to such expensive parties, the main problem it caused was how it showcased the status of Shah as a global figure- to whose party diplomats from all over the world attended- that made western powers uneasy. In the early 1970s Shah clamored for higher oil profits to finance his dream of glory, leading to devastating oil prices for the west in 1974. Shah was outdated for foreign advantages. Iran's 1979 revolution was, nonetheless, a plot run by emotional masses, blinded to the truth behind it. The revolution reinforced the religious conflicts and broke the hybrid atmosphere of cultural assimilation in modern Iran, though the individuals remained the same culturally hybrid ones and were to adapt for the worse. In *Othello in Wonderland* we see the clash between these two opposing cultures- a minor's dominance over majority, thus "minorizing" the majority. A mass deluded by Khomeini's populism were now to face the rules of the new game which are not dissimilar to "Queen's Croquet Game" rules.

3.2. *Othello in Wonderland*

Gholam Hossein Sa'edi has an intertextual approach in his adaptation to address the social issues of Iran after the 1979 "revolution" projecting "otherness" onto the now dominant "Islamic" state that not only confronted the cultural hybridity persistent in Iran, but even tried to position Iran in the status of the colonised Arab. In *Othello in Wonderland*, Sa'edi represents a wonderfully lucid image of censorship at work in post revolutionary Iranian society. *Othello in Wonderland*, written in the 1980s when author Gholam-Hossein Sa'edi was living in exile, is a play that readily

demonstrates why the playwright felt he had to leave his native Iran. Because he completed the play in exile, Sa'edi succeeds in presenting an uncensored image of one Iranian writer's perception of the censors of the Islamic Republic. The play thematizes the difficulties of staging a dramatic performance in an Islamic setting. Furthermore, the intertextuality it has with Shakespeare's *Othello*, in representing the characters as key actors within the structure of the society, as well as allusion to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, can be an example of building his literature upon two major works.

Since Cervantes, novelists have utilized the lens of parody and satire to represent a vision of reality. The forms of fantasy, parody, and nonsense are engaged in dissolving the signifying practices of culture, and how it establishes and fixes meaning. Thus, they keep on questioning the basis of a known reality, unsettle fixed positions for the reader and the characters, and put our mastery and control into question. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* reflects the gap between the expected behavior- as learnt at school- and the reality.

According to Linda M. Shires, Lewis Carroll unfixes sense and the real through the forms of fantasy, nonsense, and parody. "What Alice knows is not of much use in Wonderland. Her logic and her language system fail in this most fluid of worlds, where she changes her size regularly and nearly drowns in her own tears" (Shires, 1988). Many strange and unexpected things happen in Wonderland. Alice has difficulty in understanding the characters she meets and they also have difficulty understanding her. Words, slipping into each other, become meaningless. Apart from the inability to communicate, the potential confusion about identity, which a loss of language ability necessarily entails, disturbs Alice. When she produces a self-estranging version of Isaac Watts's song, Alice assumes she must be the less

intelligent Mabel, and not herself. The Caterpillar also poses the question of identity to Alice- “Who are you?”.

Carroll represents a world that is organized by gamelike social structures in which mastery of the game promises mastery of others. The yet unknown rules position Alice in an unprivileged position against the masters. Alice is placed in a world that seems to be rule-governed, although the rules that give meaning to the attitude of the creatures are beyond her understanding and must be discovered by inference. The behaviour that is considered as natural in English setting is inappropriate in Wonderland. In the Queen’s croquet match, Alice is confident that she knows the boundaries of the game of croquet, and she is convinced that she can compete successfully, but finds out that it is a game without rules. She tells the Cheshire Cat, “I don’t think they play at all fairly... and they all quarrel so dreadfully one can’t hear oneself speak- and they don’t seem to have any rules in particular: at least, if there are, nobody attends to them”. “Alice has no vantage from which to judge whether the creatures are following or breaking the rules” (Bivona, 1986). Alice is in an alienated situation, in a world of nonsense over which she has no control. The rules of the game are beyond her reach and understanding, since it is madness and unruly that dominates the space.

Sa’edi places Othello in “wonderland” to show the gap between Iranian individuals' world and understanding, and that of the Islamic state. The rules are, nonetheless, similar to the rules in wonderland -in favor of the queen, who commands “Off with his head” as a part of the game. Furthermore, as it will be discussed in the following paragraphs, Othello and other characters in the play face the question of identity since the identity of the individuals are also to be corrected and Islamicized through the eyes of the state.

In this play-within-a play, a theatrical group, having decided to stage Shakespeare's *Othello*, has submitted the work to the censorship of the Islamic Guidance Ministry (Vizarat-I Irshad-I Islami), one of the state institutions overseeing the dissemination of ideas through literature. The director firmly believes that he can communicate the message of the play within whatever constraints the state ideology might impose on its production and staging. *Othello* undergoes a metamorphosis through the censors and the key points to this metamorphosis is given in the letter of permission with four preconditions: "Usage of vulgar speech must be refrained. The play must be in accordance with the aims of the Islamic revolution. Iago must be represented as an anti-revolutionary while Othello is a revolutionary in line with the Islamic ideology. And finally, half of the revenue from the sales of the tickets must be paid to the organization of Martyrs and Islamic Thought". The director hands black veils to the actresses before the censors emerge on the stage to which Desdemona reacts: "You mean I should turn into a Hezbollahi?". The actresses look at each other and reluctantly put the veiling on, forced into a change in identity. A trio of censors, consisting of the minister and two "academics", arrive at a rehearsal to review the results along with an armed "guardian". By the time the censors are satisfied, the entire play, as well as its playwright, have been integrated into the Islamic culture of the Iranian State. Thus, Othello becomes a Moroccan whose roots go back to Iranian Azerbaijan and whose real name is found to have been At-Oglu. Emilia is renamed in Arabic as Um-Layla, and Shakespeare himself, turns out to have been Shaykh Zubayr, an illustrious Muslim writer whose true identity has been falsified by infidel Westerners as part of a cosmopolitan conspiracy to deny Muslims their true cultural heritage. The changes in names suggest the ideological influence of the state in the literary realm that many artists confronted and would rather choose not to produce

literary works. Predictably, the effort leads nowhere, ending symbolically in an unresolved confrontation between the actor playing the part of Othello and the person of the minister, the ultimate censor in the play's depiction of state authorities (Khalaji, 2001).

Saedi represents the structural mechanics of the revolution through characterization. The Revolutionary Guard takes everything completely literally, unable to differentiate between drama and reality, and so he is ready and eager to deal with everything that happens on stage as if it were real, terrifying the actors. The Minister and the eager-to-please academics- Professor Khroush and Makhmalchi- pretend to be more worldly (Karimi-Hakkak, 1994).

The academics act as middle men to soften the harsh difference between the new ideology and the underlying culture of people, one by propagating new ideology and the other by bending facts and veiling them. Professor Khorush, for example, explains that what needs to be done can't be considered censorship but must be considered more like a medical procedure - like an enema.

“Brown sugar enemas for the purpose of ideological political guidance will help us resist the global oppression of the East and the West. In the case of theater arts, they are necessary, in other words a responsibility.” (Sa’edi, 1996)

Professor Makhmalchi- allusion to a director- is similarly eager to ingratiate himself with the new regime, explaining:

“Of course, in my works I show the deepest respect and admiration for the character of Shakespeare, whose name and works have been distorted and misrepresented by imperialism. Right now, I am in the midst of writing a book in which I prove that Shakespeare was a Moslem Bedouin Arab by the name

of Sheykh Zobeyr, whose name and works have been distorted and continue to be distorted” (Sa’edi, 1996).

Since the actors are identified as their roles, the critical look of the censors over the Shakespearean characters is pointed toward the actors themselves. The guard, taking everything literally, unable to tell the reality from drama, reacts to the actors because of their roles, mirroring the real attitude his likes have in the society. Cassio defends himself:

Cassio- (to the director) I seriously don’t want to act anymore. On one hand I have to be among repentants, and on the other hand they will treat me for having unethical affairs (with Bianca). (Turning to the minister) Sir, I have a wife and children, I have a decent life.

Minister- Why did you have an affair then?” (Saedi, 1996)

Actors who stayed in the country after the revolution had to repent on their past deeds, and were called Tavvabin (repentants), thus affirming their past deeds as wrongdoings and promising to stick to the new ideals.

As it has already been discussed earlier in this chapter, the change in the names of the characters in representations of *Othello* has reflected the intention of the artist. Othello, as the protagonist of the play, reflects the sense of alienation-the sense of a minority-, and “otherness”. In this play, the minister having heard or remembered the name differently provides the audience with the phonetically adapted name of Othello- At-oglu (literally meaning: born from a horse). According to a folklore from Maragheh, At-oglu was a folkloric hero and Sardar from Turkmenistan that wanted to help Azeri Turks who were in war, on one side with the Iranian state, and on the other side with Ottomans in the 16th century. This story is interwoven with, and leads to Kor-Oglu (a well-known Turkish folklore shared and in common among Turkish

nations). Although the story varies in each nation, the story of Koroglu and whatever is reflected in it, is a beautiful symbolic epic of the people's fights against local and foreign foes based on the social and political events of the time. It talks of freedom, fight, friendship, humanity and justice. Kor-oglu is a symbol of a union among Turks. Considering the background of Sa'edi, and his being Azeri, changing Othello's name to At-Oglu highlights the sense of alienation and otherness of minorities. The following extract reflects the adaptation of othello's name as well as the stage in Wonderland where untruth rules over truth.

"The Minister- If I am not wrong, Shakespeare was a believer. Right?

Othello- He authored many plays, sir.

The Minister- I mean, was he a monotheist or not?

The Director- Yes sir, he was a Christian.

The Minister (frowns)- So, he didn't become a muslim, then?

Khorush- Your highness, Shakespeare had lived and died before the appearance of The Last Prophet.

The Minister- Oh, I see now, I hope he will be blessed by Imams and forgiven by us, Islamic Ulamas, in the afterlife. So now, what was the name of the play, again?

The Director- Othello!

The Minister- I think it is better to have Shakespeare on stage instead.

Cassio- But Shakespeare is not a play.

The Minister- (serious) What is it then?

Othello-He was a playwright.

The Minister- (angry) How would it be different whether the playwright or the play goes on stage? This is against our "the Always-on-Stage Mass" slogan.

Makhmalchi- Sir, I am going to write a drama about this character. But for now, they are playing othello. (Calming the minister)

The Minister- Ok, now. I don't see a problem so far. But, this brother, At-Oglu, seems to be an Azerbaijani, right?

Othello- Azerbaijan, no. Morocco.

The Minister- Morocco? Morocco is an Islamic country and has good relations with our Islamic republic. (Khorush and Makhmalchi nod, confirming).

Taking this into account, before the appearance of the prophet Muhammed - praise and greetings be to God, Muhammad and his descendants- the light of Islam had shone upon his heart and guided Othello as well. May God bless him. (Turns to Khorush) I would like to hear your ideas, such a knowledgeable person you are.

Khorush- Actually, the reason why I supported the play was Othello himself. Othello was a famous Sardar from our brother-country, Morocco, and this brother -Othello- just like our Guardians severely supported war, he was always fighting, he believed that war is a blessing from God, a gift from God, Imams and mass are for war, everything is built for war.

The Minister- So he was amongst the soldiers of God?

Makhmalchi- That is also why I approved staging of the play. Black muslims were always fighting.

The Minister- Yes, and don't forget that Bilal-e Habshi, the prophet's Muezzin, was also a black.

The Director- Sir, that is why we chose this play. Black is very important.

Makhmalchi- It is important, indeed. Let me share a point with you (opens his bag and takes out a book, surfs through pages and finds the material) On page

32, I have included: “Hajar- al- Aswad {The Black Stone}, around which we circumambulate, is black. The color which was the cause of oppression and death of a part of humanity throughout history. Black has been considered as ugly by racists. In our literature it has also been reflected that there is no color higher than blackness....”

The Minister- So, where is this poor, oppressed, black muslim?

The director-(points to Othello) This is him.” (Sa’edi, 1996, p.88)

Othello’s being black impresses the minister and the academics point to Othello’s being a fighter and his passion for fighting as a Muslim. However, when the minister realizes which one of the characters is Othello, he sees that he is not black. He refers to his knowledge of Moroccan people and infers that Moroccans are black but he is not black. The director points out that he could use makeup to color him in blackface, reminding us of “painting the roses red” in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, although the ones who paint are aware that the roses are white. It can be inferred that the director had erased the racial issue in his performance by not representing Othello as a black man, which raises the minister’s dissatisfaction since he sides with the Arabization of Othello, and consequently the Iranian people.

In Shakespeare’s version, although Othello is othered, the state needs his skills in war. In Othello in Wonderland, we get to know that the minister is himself in charge of enrolling troops for the Iran-Iraq war that started immediately after the revolution and went on for eight years. The war not only was frustrating the economy of the country, but also limited opposition, turning Othellos into martyrs. By the end of war, the Islamic Republic had strengthened its position, and though in the advent of the revolution it was to act as a temporary government to be replaced by a later elected one, it moved toward a totalitarian regime.

Sa'edi's satire is certainly amusing, and cleverly uses *Othello* as a play-within-a-play. The representatives -and bootlickers- of the new ideology all are presented rather over the top in their extreme reactions, beliefs, and willingness to bend the facts. For a contemporary Iranian all the characters are derived from real people in the society and one can easily find examples of such people throughout the context of his own personal life. Each character with his unique language and tone of speech, is a stereotyped character for the audience familiar with the social context.

Othello, unlike other characters, expresses his opposing ideas and is the first person to point out the impossibility of their performance. Othello represents the individual whose world the ruling system contradicts. Although the play and the characters are undergoing a metamorphosis, Othello (in Sa'edi's play) does not act conservatively like most of the other characters, and represents the inner feelings of the individuals after the revolution. Othello brings that twist in the end by not killing himself, but by grabbing Iago's sword and symbolically raising the sword up in a stance of attack towards the minister- considering him as the real other, and recites the ending lines of the play, substituting the phrase "turban'd man" for "turban'd Turk":

“And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turban'd man
Who claimed to be prophet and traduced the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him, thus.” (Saedi, 1996)

Gholam Hossein Sa'edi's dissident play, *Othello in Wonderland*, with its relation to the original play by Shakespeare, points out the clash between two different worlds in Iran's Islamic revolution, and makes the emotional spectrum of the individuals stand out. The individual freedom and feelings are dominated by a state

that has a fundamental, totalitarian structure. Othello in Saedi's play is the representation of a people, manipulated emotionally to believe the untruth and act accordingly. Like the othered situation Othello has in the Venetian society, "Othellos" in Iran became the others who needed to wear black skin and conform to the new identity imposed by the rulers. The key players of this stage are a gradient of middlemen in between Othello and the minister. And Othello is one out of many. "Othello invites recognition that this is how people are, how the world goes by" (Sinfield, 2003).

Sa'edi shows the mechanics of the function of the new Islamic ideological machine that took ownership of the revolution, suppressing the real intellect behind it. All the characters had their part in the revolution. In *Othello*, people refuse to believe the truth until it is too late. The intellectuals were also blind to the truth (plot) behind the "revolution". Intellectuals had come to the conclusion that they couldn't succeed without support from the clergy. The clergy not only supported them, but even overtook them. Khomeini was recognized as a kind-hearted leader of the revolution, sending his populist messages from exile- from Iraq, and then, interestingly, Paris. The immediate start of the war between Iran and Iraq that lasted for 8 years covered up all the dissatisfaction.

The 1979 Islamic revolution not only could not improve the situation for Iranians, but made it even worse. Even the revolutionary slogans such as "Westoxication" became tools and labels to interrogate intellectuals, resulting in an even bigger gap between the culture of the people and the oppressors. The Islamic revolution was a revolution "hijacked". Whether muslim, Jewish, socialist, or atheist, all fought side by side to end one tyrannical regime to only find themselves in the clutches of another, even more ruthless and oppressive. Khomeini returned from exile

and was supposed to act as a benevolent leader until a democratic government could be formed. Instead, appealing to the deep religious sensibilities of the masses, he promptly began to execute or banish anyone he considered a threat to the strict Islamic government he was planning to establish. The war with Iraq (1980-1988) only served to solidify his base by bringing the nation together to fight its common enemy. Voices were silenced, religious tolerance completely disappeared, women's rights were reduced to the theocrat's own interpretation of the Quran, non-Islamic music and literature was banned, dance was forbidden, and the freedom of the press was quenched. A dark world darkened even more and the torch bearers -the poets, writers, and artists- were driven deep underground (Wolpé, Sholeh, 2012).

CONCLUSION

As Kafka indicated, minor literary spaces face political boundaries before they rise up and connect up with similar works in world literature. “If instead of seeking ‘the poem’ hidden ‘somewhere behind’ the poet ‘engages’ himself to the service of a truth known from the outset (which comes forward on its own and is ‘out in front’), he has renounced the mission of poetry. And it matters little whether the preconceived truth is called revolution or dissidence” (Kundera, 1986).

During the Pahlavi era literature in Iran was flourishing as never before through its “liveliness”. Novels appeared and brought literature to the level of the mass, using simple vernacular language. Iranian modern writers represented the subjugation and oppression structure of the system in simple modern language. The minor view over the system that had always been encoded within the high language of poetry became vivid to the naked eye of the mass. Women gained their literary voice in poetry and prose, good examples of which can be Tahereh Saffarzadeh (1936-2008) and Forough Farrokhzad (1934-1967), the latter being known as the first most genuine female voice in Iranian modern poetry. However, usage of simple language and appearance of novels surfaced their political connections. Despite Western literary space that had undergone different historical stages in its progress, the appearance of modernist writers in Iran was a leap to catch up with the spirit of modernity in literature of the world. As a result these writers experienced a “chronological loneliness” both politically and socially at home. The Pahlavi era witnessed a distinct and unprecedented liveliness in the Iranian literary space that despite owing much to the modernist establishments of the Shah, were anti-monarchical.

Unlike Sadegh Hedayat, who went to India and published few copies of *The Blind Owl*, knowing that publishing it would be impossible in Iran, Iranian writers in the 1970s took any chance to raise the political awareness of people and took part in political activities. Political activity of a writer overshadows his writing and possibility of being published. At that stage it is not what the writer writes that matters, but who the writer himself is. For example, in Baraheni's representations of interrogations of SAVAK, the interrogator asks the writer to explain what the political message hidden in his book is. The writer needs to prove that all is there and nothing beyond. Sadegh Hedayat did not deliver a speech on his writings and never took part in any political group or faction.

Although the literary capitals of the world today have gained their inner independence from politics, smaller nations, especially ones suffering from censorship and "impossibilities of writing", are politically dominated. Although Iran has inherited a historically great ancient culture and literature, it has held a minor position in the literary marketplace of world literature. Cultural subjugation during and after colonial times and lack of literary dialectic in Iran together with language barriers are some of the reasons for this backwardness. Until the modern times, orientalist were the ones to represent Iranian culture from their point of view. However, Iranian modernist writers tried to regain control of commenting on the Iranian culture and literature with a postcolonial awareness that arose in the East following the World Wars.

By focusing on language, Deleuze and Guattari study Kafka's usage of the German language as a minor writer. Deleuze and Guattari further develop it to show that minor literature is not a literature in a minor language, but a literature that a minor writer creates in the major literature. A minor writer brings his consciousness

from his own oppressed minority into fabric of the literature of the major language in which the writer has to or chooses to write. The Iranian modernist writers discussed in the study, reflect their oppressed and less told and noticed consciousness by entering Azarbaijani words, poems, or even urban spaces into the Persian literature. But apart from content, in his late poems Baraheni treats language not as a strict majoritarian limitation, but as the medium to produce sounds, resulting in creation of new combination of words and grammar-evading innovations.

Although their literary activities differed from each other in style and tone, being Azarbaijani, the writers discussed in the current study shared a critical viewpoint against the dominant system that marginalized other cultures, identities, and languages in Iran. Sa'edi criticises the system not by speaking for his characters, but by letting the characters themselves reflect their true nature in his plays and stories. Unlike Sa'edi, Baraheni speaks more through his characters. Among them the most devoted to the marginalized Turkish literature is Behrangi who focuses his work on Turkish folklore, being proud of a rich but marginalized Turkish literature in Iran. Language, inseparable from culture, was also poured down from above. The informal, everyday language, was not only not reflected in the media but it was even suppressed. Speakers of other languages than the dominant Persian, fell to the status of mimicry trying to mask their original roots to get acceptance into the economic and literary cycle.

The three writers in the current study were among outstanding literary figures of Persian literature despite belonging to the minor Azarbaijani identity. Already becoming masters of the dominant Persian language, the minor writers discussed in the study brought outstanding changes and improvements to it through breaking the

norms; Reza Baraheni in literary criticism and Persian poetry, Gholam Hossein Sa'edi in playwriting and Samad Behrangi in children's literature.

With the rise of a postcolonial awareness, Iranian modern writers had felt the need for claiming back the Persian literary culture and heritage from the clutches of the orientalist and their viewpoints. Fitzgerald had published a version of Khayyam, introducing the great poet from the orient belonging to centuries ago, fixing the image of Khayyam as an epicurean. In modern literature the orientalist is challenged by the orient, who rises to clear out misrepresentations. Hedayat reintroduces Khayyam to the Iranian people in *Tarane Haye Khayyam*, to clear the ambiguities and paradoxes the quatrains have. What Sadegh Hedayat faces in world literature is the “inaccessible literary modernity” in Paris, and a “national grandeur that had all but disappeared” in Iran. Hedayat tried to fill in the gap between the mass and their heritage by doing “internal translations” from ancient Pahlavi language. And his appropriation of Kafka has been discussed as an example of literary connections within the greater picture of world literature. However, in case of Khayyam, Amin Malouf raises his “skillful hand”, to quote Kafka, by bringing Khayyam into the world literary marketplace from the point of view of the orient in his *Samarkand*, which still was published in French- a major literary language.

Reza Baraheni's doctoral thesis in English discusses *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* in the context of the Victorian era, highlighting Fitzgeralds' appropriation of him. However, his literary works later on took the form of prison poems and representation of tortures and oppression in Iran because of a dissident ideology that dominated the literary space during Pahlavi era. When writers measure the national literature by the yardstick of world literature, disagreements grow, adding to the “liveliness” of the literary space. The 1960s and 70s witnessed a boom on the Iranian

literary stage, influenced by Western literature. However, such a literary space requires freedom of speech and thought in the nation. Dissidence and political writings in the world literary capitals are harmless and ignored while in small nations, especially ones under a totalitarian regime, are recognized harmful.

The correlation between theater and politics has been evident throughout history. Playwrights and directors are inspired by the social and political situations, and represent them in their works either explicitly or metaphorically. Gholam Hossein Sa'edi's works shed light on the dynamics of the society and surface the underlying ills of the society. His *Othello in Wonderland*, reflects the Iranian society and state, with the cultural gap between them. He represents censorship, not of literary works, but of individuals, minorities and their status under a totalitarian regime. In his works, Sa'edi sheds light on the whole dynamics of the system and people as its innocent actors on stage. The intertextual approach he had in naming his play, brings in themes and ideas from great canonical literary works to support and enrich the play, taking it beyond what is solely written in it.

It should not be neglected that minor writers, either on a national scale or on a universal one, reflect the situation of the mass from the street level and this has never been welcome by the dominant values that are set and make publication possible. That is why minor writers need to meet the values on the international level to gain this possibility. Detached from his audience, Sa'edi held an unsettled and minor position as a refugee in Paris. He preferred streets of Tabriz to that of Paris. However, Reza Baraheni had a much more privileged situation since he knew a major language- English- and the content he had was of value to the publisher and American policies at the time. The manipulative tone of the writers in their criticism of the state- e.g. Baraheni's *The Culture of the Oppressor and the Culture of the Oppressed*- resulted

in censorship and repression of writers, which coincided Carter's "Human Rights", and subsequently affected Iranian politics globally. Baraheni's representations of the censorship and tortures in *The Crowned Cannibals* actually benefited the great powers that were looking for vulnerabilities in Shah's regime.

While "impossibilities of writing" limits writers at home (and pushes them toward inventions), émigré writers- including the ones in "sanctuaries" at home- need to meet the criteria of universal literature to gain attention. Unlike Kafka's novels that have a "total autonomy", the literary works discussed in the current study show how far the authors have gone in "engaging". The "liveliness" Iranian literature had during the Pahlavi era, was trapped in a "preconceived truth" that dominated the theme of their writings.

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