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In an Interview with Farah Mendlesoh

Fantasy Literature

An Introduction to Game Studies

LUCRATIVE LUDOLOGY

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Contents

Contents	3
Submission Guideline	5
Editorial	6
Literary Studies	7
<i>A Critique of Anne Carson: Ecstatic Lyre</i> by Joshua Marie Wilkinson (ed.)	8
Fantasy in Persian Mythology & Greek Mythology	18
Creative Writing	34
“The Fourth Season”	35
The Fall of Persepolis	37
Hanahaki.....	50
Dust.....	52
Interview	63
Interview with Farah Mendlesohn	64
Threshelf	76
The Folk of the Air.....	77
The Deep.....	82
The Nightside	87
From Blood and Ash	92
The Thief.....	97
Game Studies	102
Lucrative Ludology: An Introduction to Game Studies.....	105

Translation	128
Translation of Henry James 'the Art of Fiction'	129
A Translation of W.S. Merwin's 'For the Anniversary of My Death'	169
Everywhere; Translation of Two Pieces of Poetry from Emran Salahi	173
Translation of a Poem by Parnian Sharifi.....	179
Cinema.....	183
The (Im)Possibility of Real Democracy in ' <i>The Ugly American</i> '.....	185
<i>The Truman Show</i> , the Culture Industry and Ideology.....	234
TEFL.....	243
The Challenges of ELT in Iran.....	244
Translation Challenge	252
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.....	253
هیج میدانی	258

Submission Guideline

Threshold welcomes contributions of original (not previously published) works of interest in the disciplines of Translation Studies, English Language Teaching, English Literature and Comparative Studies, Game Studies along with related reports, news, profiles of eminent scholars, book reviews, and creative writings. You can write a critique about each essay or article published in Literary Studies and Cinema sections. The contributors are expected to submit their works for the coming issue no later than 30 Dey, 1401. Prospective authors are invited to submit their materials to the journal E-mail address: thresholdsbu@gmail.com. The manuscripts are evaluated by editors of each section and at least two referees from the advisory board.

The name of the author(s) should appear on the first page, with the present affiliation, full address, phone number, and current email address. Microsoft Word is preferred, using Times New Roman font and the size of 11 with single space between the lines for the abstracts and the same font size and line spacing for the body of the paper. Graphics can be in JPEG format. Footnotes should only be used for commentaries and explanations, not for giving references. All papers are required to follow the MLA style for citations and references.

Editorial

‘Threshold’ is a student-led journal aiming to create a space where all students, be it from Iranian universities or international ones, can contribute; through this knowledge-sharing initiative, anyone interested can both finesse their skills by concentrating on their favorite fields of interest, as a creative writer, translator, critical thinker, etc. and have the opportunity to read and experience others’ unique talents, diversity, and perspective.

We want our journal to be geared toward publication of undergraduate and post-graduate research so that we will encourage the spirit of research, critical thinking, and writing in the early periods of students’ education. Every work does count, so we deeply appreciate your submissions and faithful readership. Our team have decided to give thorough feedback for those submissions rejected or those accepted but in need of amendments, so that authors will know the grounds for rejection or areas to be improved. We are open to any recommendations, or recent changes within the relevant research field.

For the later issues, a new editorial board has been assigned to assume responsibility, so we want to take this moment to thank both the upcoming editors or members and the previous ones and those who have entrusted us with their works, discoveries, and their excellent work. We are grateful to the former editorial board, including Dr. Shahriyar Mansouri (Managing director), Ms. Vafa Keshavarz (editor-in-chief), and the other editors, namely, Ms. Ghazal Nessari Poortak, Ms. Niloofer Rezaee, Mr. Mohamad Nickahd, Mr. Nima Moareyi, Mr. Ali Montazerzadeh, Anahit Afjool, and Dr. Musa Nushi, and with deep appreciation for all their efforts, we, the new board is hoping to further progress and ensure the scientific quality of the journal.

Hengameh Kharrazi

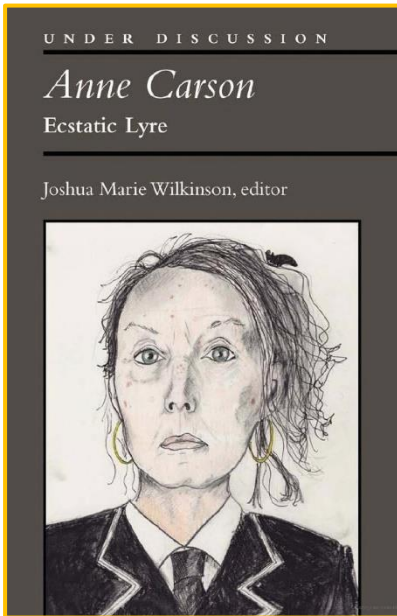
Editor-in-Chief

LITERARY STUDIES

A Critique of Anne Carson: Ecstatic Lyre
by Joshua Marie Wilkinson (ed.)



Mahdieh Farshadjou,
University of Paris City



Ecstatic Lyre is one of the twenty-four volumes of under discussion series, printed since 1983, which collect reviews and essays about individual contemporary American and English poets. Ecstatic Lyre is

the first book of essays dedicated solely to Anne Carson

whose contributors, to the large number of thirty-three, include not only scholars or critics but also writers and poets who unfold their admiring readings of Carson, in a frequently poetic manner that causes the reading to become demanding at times. The key themes that this review will examine include self, love, and fluidity.

The collection discusses central themes in Anne Carson's works one of which is "self". Jessica Fisher for instance addresses the philosophical line of thought on "self" and explores Carson's Lacanian understanding of desire as "human essence" that might "supplant self" (10). In another article, Brian Teare also confirms that Carson's writings, from *Eros* to *Nox*, are "formative of selfhood". He thinks that her protagonist searches for an organized interior and traces

Emily Brontë, a favorite of the poet's protagonist. He claims that *Glass essay* is a *bildungsgedicht*, where a *female* character develops through the narration. Carson points out the "spiritual solitude" of Bronte and the "sexual solitude" of the protagonist and how her soul is "trapped in glass". Virginia Konchan, interested in gendered voices and female speech, trails the history of the "delegitimizing of women as signifiers" and discusses the role of poetry as a medium that, when speaking to self as well as to other, means to say "listen to me" (39). Christine Hume who is comparing a documentary video with *Kinds of Water* says how the two works "employ the conceptual system of fable whose conflict relies on the tensions between self and union" (51). She then studies the visuality and photographic nature of Carson's work as a means to help a character "view anything at all"

and how this same image is always obscured. She decides that both pieces suggest hearing as the most acute sense. Under an interesting title, “The Unbearable Witness of Being”, Maxwell studies *Plain water* as a “study of *with*”. This *with* signifies being *with* others, with one’s self, with the text, with language, and suchlike. Thus, she concludes that *witness* creates not completeness but mobility. She believes that when you decide to write, you are in fact deciding to create *witness*, “an enduring companion”, and this is what Carson does in her writing, holding her reader in her company. From self to “witness”, this is often a feeling links with our relations to others, where lies another key theme, that is love.

Another central theme in Carson’s works, which is too essential to ignore, is love. Andrea Rexilius deconstructs

tango as a dance to explore love in Carson's *Beauty of the Husband, a Fictional Essay in 29 Tangos*. Putting Carson's views in parallel with Barthes's, she discusses love, desire and how Carson believes in triangulation in love where the presence of a third lover is not categorically destructive; it may help the other two to discover themselves and their feelings from a new perspective. When Corless-Smith is to write about *Eros the Bittersweet*, which he describes as a book of "reading, of links between different texts that tries to perpetuate and support a developing theme". (22) He is worried about not reading her sufficiently. To him, Carson explores the edges and boundaries, the space between lovers as well as the space between reader and writer. This particular work, *Eros the Bittersweet*, for Beachy-Quick is seen as a lover's manual on the erotic of the page. He speaks of Eros as

a monster he may call a lover, saying that the monster the poem is creating is hybrid, uttering “I” meaning “we”. He proposes that reading this book as a lover changes your understanding of a lover who departs in pursuit of his desire and takes the reader with him so that the reader also finds in him/herself a “desire for desire”. The hybridity of pronouns is also seen in Carson’s *Wonderwater*. To analyze this creative viewpoint and to discuss love and strife, Martinez starts his commentary with a simile that Anne Carson has used herself over her dreams of Hölderlin. He quotes Hölderlin’s *Death of Empedocles* to narrate how the German poet had dreamt himself of Empedocles, a Greek pre-Socratic philosopher. Thus, combining the ideas, he concludes that Carson “pierces her singular subjectivity [of I] with the necessity to articulate the ‘we’ [...], the ‘we’ Carson speaks is the ‘we’ of

creation itself [...], the minuscule human [...] bound to the primordial coupling/ divorcing of Love and Strife.” (118)

Gender is likewise an issue in love for Carson but not always in a sexual relation. For instance, Richard Greenfield believes that *Men in the Off Hours* among her other works, is more obsessed with death and gender. He examines her notion of time, the limits and destructive agenda of patriarchal time, and how she takes Virginia Woolf as a comparative theme. The discussion ends at the time Carson lost her mother and how she transferred her “sense of abandonment and rapture felt in ordinary time.”

Fluidity, a notion regarding both form and content, could be a concluding key theme for this review. Reading every piece written by Carson for twenty-three years, Jennifer K.

Dick distinguishes the fluidity of the writer in her *Anthropology* and speaks of the reader's uncertain position in the text concluding that the reader must also "let go, flow under, breath in the aquatic literary shifts, the pain of inhaling the impossible, of reaching across it into whatever connections emerge." (64) This fluidity, she adds, comes also from the fluidity of genre, subject gender, and themes. Focusing on *Autobiography of Red*, one of her most fluid works, Bruce Beasley sections his review in three. In the first, he proves that Carson's translation of Stesichoros is little loyal to the original text and thus, he believes Carson invites us to question scholar authority and critical passivity when aiming to do such translations. This is about the new limits Carson as a poet-scholar-classicist-translator has introduced in translating a classical work. In the second, he traces the

truth behind the name of a volcano and pinpoints the fact that Carson is a creative inventor, fashioning new significations for old myths, nouns, and such. In the third part entitled “white gristle”, he justifies the presence of appendices, translations, interview and other extra parts of the novel as a gristle for the red meat of the work, describing its monstrosity in its fluidity, variety of forms, deliberate mistakes, broken boundaries, and so on.

All these chapters, in one way or another, help readers to understand so much about the themes and concerns and the techniques this eminent Canadian poet has applied. This collection of essays is in many ways a true reflection of Carson’s particular style and works, from her lyric essays, enigmatic poems, to novels in verse, translations of Ancient

Greek poetry and drama which demonstrate her outstandingly unique way of looking at literature, since “in terms of content, rarely has an author so rethought gender, marriage, sexuality, family, love, death, religion, and divorce from the fragment through the drama and all the way out to comics, dance, video, performance” (1). So, the book not only holds up the proper perceptions of a reader of Carson but also expands it to a great extent.

Fantasy in Persian Mythology & Greek Mythology



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In this tremendous world occupied by seven billion people, literature is touched directly or indirectly by every individual. Every time someone thinks of their wishes or desires, literature is there, for it is connected with escapism. Among different genres of literature, fantasy is one of the primordial categories. Manifestations of fantasy are found in both new and early works of literature; modern fictional stories and ancient mythology.

Mythology is a widespread genre; it is a part of every civilization from western to eastern countries. To illustrate, Aztec mythology, Germanic mythology, Greek mythology, Roman mythology, Persian mythology, and Hindu mythology all contain great stories of people and impressive natural phenomena. Though the base of the mythology goes back to a nation's culture and thoughts, the main context which dominates the myths is fantasy.

Fantasy and mythology are related, for both use similar elements to create magnificent sets for their stories. Marvelous fictional worlds, complicated love stories and spiritual characters or heroes are a few of these noticeable elements which can be seen in both fantasy stories and myths. As these similarities are commonly used, this essay

emphasizes some resembling motifs in fantasy which are included in two important books related to mythology: *Shahnameh* & *Iliad*.

One of the frequent fantasy motifs is creating new worlds. Almost all fantasy works are based on the authors' imagination of creating an alternative universe for their creatures. Though myths are not set in a fictional but a real region, it must be considered that their authors usually add some fictional factors to the setting of the myths to prepare it for their stories and characters.

Shahnameh begins its first part with a cosmography of the world. After parsing the lord, Ferdowsi explains the origin of life by expressing the beliefs and convictions of his time in relation to the creation of existence and humans. The early

poems of *Shahnameh* are about kings helping people in order to develop society. The ways of living, making clothes, planting, setting a fire, cooking and blacksmithing are explicated in the first section of *Shahnameh* to illustrate the creation of the world.



Similarly, Greek mythology reveals its own version of creating the world. It begins with shaping the world by Gaia, the goddess of the earth. After generations of gods and goddesses, humans come into existence and learn how to

survive on the earth with the help of Prometheus, the god of fire.

Since there is no accurate tale explaining the beginning of the world, the stories in myths can be considered as fantasy stories, not facts. Mythology generally explains the beginning of time, just as the fantasy genre forms a new world. So both of these terms, fantasy and mythology, are affiliated with creating worlds.

Many memorable plots include a complicated love story; the second similar motif in both fantasy and mythology. Romance is a strong element in fantasy, and when combined with other elements, such as magic or adventure, it can make an absorbing account. Though mythology mostly focuses on

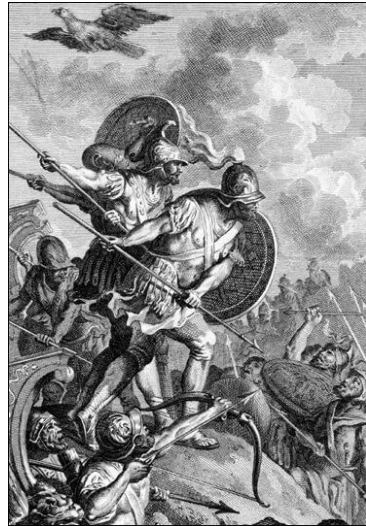
the history of people or natural phenomena, it contains lovers as well.

Of many lovers in *Shahnameh*, Zal and Rudabeh are probably the most famous. Zal, one of the greatest warriors of Iran, is in charge of getting taxes from Mehrab, the ruler of Kabul and Rudabeh's father. When Zal arrives in Kabul, he falls in love with Rudabeh. She has heard praise of Zal as well, so she falls in love with him too. However, the king of Iran, Manuchehr, would not accept their marriage, for Mehrab is a descendant of Zahak, one of the most hated former kings of Iran. Their marriage, however, eventually happens when King Manuchehr asks fortune-tellers about the marriage. The results promise a son of Zal and Rudabeh; a son who will be the conqueror of the world.

Though this story may seem more real than fictional, the details contain many elements related to fantasy, such as the importance of fortune-tellers in the king's palace is one of them. Generally, all of the kings in *Shahnameh* have faith in fortune-tellers. They make their vital decisions based on their prophecy. Hence, the approval of Zal and Rudabeh's marriage was in their hand. Moreover, from the personal aspects, both Zal and Rudabeh have fantastic characteristics. Zal was raised by Simurgh, a mythical Persian bird in *Shahnameh*. Rudabeh is described as a beautiful princess who has long hair and a moon-like face. She offered to let her hair down Rapunzel-like from her tower, so that Zal could climb up and see her. These elements are some imaginary elements which can be found in other fantasy stories as well.

Many compared Zal & Rudabeh's story to Paris & Helen's. Just like *Shahnameh*, *Iliad* narrates numerous love stories. Of these, Paris and Helen's love is the most complicated one, for it is the cause of a massive war between the Trojans and the Greeks. The story begins when Paris, the prince of Troy, gets in charge of judging the beauty of three fair goddesses. Yearning to win the judgment, Aphrodite promises Paris the fairest woman in the world, Helen, the wife of the Sparta's king. Paris gives Aphrodite a golden apple as a sign of being the fairest goddess of all. Later, he steals Helen as his bride, and takes her to Troy. Menelaus, the king of Sparta, calls upon all of Greece to help him; they are determined to burn Troy to ashes.

The love story of Paris is tied to fantasy from the very beginning. Even later on the battlefield, many extraordinary things happen that the explanations of them are beyond human's ability. In fantasy, we often witness events that cannot happen in reality. The existence of three goddesses who go to Paris to judge based on their beauty, the involvement of other gods in the war between the Greeks and Trojans, and the extraordinary characteristics of some heroes of these two



countries are among the things that are mixed with fantasy.

When there is a love story, there are many plot twists as well. In both *Shahnameh* and *Iliad*, fantastical elements are

used in order to make the stories more interesting by creating plot twists. As mentioned, fanciful factors were added to Zal & Rudabeh and Paris & Helen's stories to meet the need for fantasy in mythology. It is said that the most dangerous thing is to love, and in these stories above, when you add fantasy, it becomes even more dangerous.

It should be noted that in both creations of the world and love stories that have been discussed so far, the existence of heroes is vital. *Shahnameh* begins the creation of the world with several kingdoms from the very beginning. During these reigns of different kings, there are always some heroes who care about Iran, and help the people to defeat the enemy. *Iliad* as well, happens to have many heroes from the outset to the end, who seek justice. For instance, *Shahnameh*

introduces Rustam, Sohrab and Esfandiar in addition to Zal and Sam. Similarly, Iliad presents Odysseus, Hector or Achilles. Some of these marvelous characters have figures which give them extra abilities in order to achieve their goals. To provide an example, both Esfandiar and Achilles are described as invulnerable characters.

Esfandiar is an Iranian prince who has issues with his father, Goshtasb the king. Goshtasb repeatedly promises handing over the throne to Esfandiar, but he refuses all the time. Finally, a fortune-teller notifies Goshtasb that Esfandiar will get killed by Rustam, another Iranian hero in Shahnameh. Shrewdly, Goshtasb sends a letter to his son, and orders him to arrest Rustam, who is probably against Goshtasb. Although Esfandiar objects, he finally decides to

obey his father. Their battle lasts for several days. During this time, sometimes Esfandiar is victorious and sometimes Rustam, nonetheless, the ultimate champion is unknown. At last, Rustam gets help from Simurgh, the bird that raised his father. Simurgh says that though Esfandiar is invulnerable, he weakness is the eyes. The next day, Rustam tries to stop Esfandiar from fighting, but when he refuses, Rustam shoots an arrow into Esfandiar's eyes, and it causes his death.

Being invulnerable is mentioned in Iliad too. Achilles is one of the main characters in the Trojan War. His mother held him by one of his heels and baptized him in the river Styx when he was an infant, so he is invulnerable in all of his body except for one heel. When Hector, the champion of Troy kills Achilles' cousin, Achilles demands a battle between

the two, in order to take revenge. Achilles kills Hector, and fastens Hector's body to the chariot and turns around Troy's castle. Paris shoots Achilles an arrow in his heel, so the invulnerable hero dies.

As fantasy is an imaginative fiction which focuses on strange factors, creating fictional characters is another element used in mythology to give the stories a fanciful state. Being invulnerable is one of fantasy motifs which leads to creating remarkable heroes like Esfandiar and Achilles.

In conclusion, mythology is of course the tale of people and their civilization; however, it explains natural phenomena as well. We can consider mythology as a part of every culture which uses both real events and unreal elements to record attractive stories. At the most basic level, myths

comfort by giving a sense of order and meaning to what can sometimes seem like a chaotic world.

Of these great mythologies are Persian and Greek. Undoubtedly, the authors of these myths did an excellent job to maintain the stories. Ferdowsi is an important figure in Persian literature who revives the Persian language with his great poems in *Shahnameh* by telling the mythical and historical past of the Persian Empire. Homer did an excellent job of recounting some of the significant events of Greek culture.

As some examples were mentioned in this article, Greek and Persian mythologies are described in ways that include fantasy genre as well. When it comes to myths, their connection to fictional motifs is noticeable. We can find

some resembles in them such as marvelous fictional worlds, complicated love stories and spiritual characters or heroes. Hence, fantasy dominates mythology, and you may find many other fanciful similarities between different myths next time you read a nation's mythology.

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CREATIVE WRITING

“The Fourth Season”



Marjan Safiyari

She has a BA degree in English Literature at Zand Institute of Higher Education. Her first book titled “Devil Shadows and Golden Lantern With Other Stories” was published in 2017 by Austin Macauley Publishers based in London. And two stories titled “Rabby And Zabrina” besides “Coralline, Her Caring Circle Clock” were published by Cordelia magazine based in Scotland. Two stories titled “Jimmy, A Different Plumber” and “Emanuel & Emma, An Unforgettable Night” besides two artworks were published in issue 4 by meditatingcatzine magazine based in Singapore. Her flash fiction story titled “My Brilliant Belly Button Bubbles” and short story titled “Austin & Bella” besides six photos in her creative way were published in issue 1 by Contemporary Jo magazine. Her other stories, poems and artworks are going to be published soon by the other magazines of different countries.

A lonely frozen chapter

The leafless trees

The snow-covered ground

The silent nature song

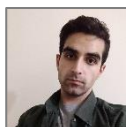
I'm alone, wearing my boots

I step on every heart of the white leaf

Under my hard steps, the frosty leaves are cracked

They become a knitted garment on the body of ground

The Fall of Persepolis



Sina Saedi

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The great winter had passed and Yima, the first immortal to choose a mortal destiny, had led people out of the caves sheltering them from the rage of ice and frost. The land of Persia was thriving once more, and the seeds of Harvisptokhm had scattered all around it, renewing the promise of Haoma's elixir of immortality to all mankind. Appointed by Anahita, the deity of the undefiled waters and fertility, Yima had ruled the realm for a thousand years, renovating the lands and purging them of the demons. Yima's throne, the center of his

government, was in Persepolis, and after passing the sphinxes guarding the gates, one would find himself among thousands of pillars on top of which pairs of white bulls and griffins watched him with their ancient eyes. They didn't fail to fill the wounded soldier with awe before he limped to the hall of the king, leaning on one of the palace's soldiers.

He hailed the king and said, "This soldier has returned from our western borders with Babylon. He is badly wounded and cannot talk aloud; so, I will repeat his message to your Majesty. I'm afraid it is not pleasant to the ears, but alas, it is of utmost importance and should be heard. A great army from Babylon has invaded our lands and the defenses of our borders have been defeated. The army is heading toward Susa and the city is in grave danger."

The king caressed his beard as if to hide his troubled face, “You may go now. Take this soldier to the physician and make sure he is well-tended.”

The soldiers took their leave. A heavy silence had landed in the hall. After moments that passed like hours, Yima called for immediate counsel. His captains and counselors sat on both sides of a long rectangular table, debating the possibilities of the fall of Susa and how they could prevent it. Yima, remaining silent until then, raised his hand and all fell silent.

“If Dahak’s army has defeated our defenses in the west and invaded the western lands, it is too late to send our men to Susa, for they will arrive at a fallen city.” said the king, “However, if we seek Vayu’s aid, we will have the griffins and a favorable wind on our side. We might reach the city sooner

than Dahak, and if the griffins fight for us, we have greater chances of driving the enemy back and making time for our riders.”

“It indeed is a clever plan, but what about the defense of Persepolis?” said one of the captains.

“We shall send three thousand riders from here, and we will send a messenger to Gabai to ask for aid. They can afford to send five thousand men to Susa’s aid,” said Yima.

Most of the participants agreed with the king, and they took another step toward the doom of the country.



The figure of a lean man with rays of light radiating from his head was floating in the darkness and seven figures were hovering behind him. They were five very dissimilar men,

a raven, and a lion, and each one was standing on a different planet. Yima was awestricken before such a sight and could not utter anything but one word, “Mithra!” The deity of truth and order looked directly into his eyes and his heart filled with despair for the present and hope for a distant future. The intensity of these feelings was pulling at his heart and it drew him back into the world of consciousness with a gasp.

“What is it my dear?” said Parichehr, the queen.

“Even though it is but a blur in the eye of my mind, the intensity of my dream grasps at my heart. Mithra came to me and there was a prophecy in his eyes. I cannot fully remember it now, but something grim awaits the country before its deliverance.”

“And who is to say what truth lies in a dream?” said the queen, “Be comforted my king, for dawn is about to bring back light to our world.”

“Probably you are right,” said the king without changing the dark expression on his face. He sat up and looked at the rising sun from the window beside the bed. It had been a week since they had sent a part of their army to Susa’s aid, and no news had been heard since then. He squeezed his eyes and recognized a speck in the sky and sprang from his bed. A shrill voice was heard from afar; it was definitely a griffin. He got ready and went to the watchtower to await its arrival. After a few minutes, an injured griffin landed unsteadily on the balcony and fell after a few stumbling steps. The servants ran to its aid.

“Susa has fallen” grunted the griffin almost in a whisper, “brace yourselves, for a terrible army of demons and men is approaching with a great pace. Dahak’s wizards are using their evil knowledge to conjure all kinds of dark creatures against us. For every fallen Babylonian soldier, a demon of darkness springs into life. We don’t stand a chance against such a great army.”

“Only Ahura Mazda can save us now!”

“We will do all we can to protect our country.” Said Yima. “Send messengers to all our neighboring cities to ask for aid.”



The army of Persepolis prepared for its desperate defense. The first line of the defense consisted of the war bulls,

moving their heads from side to side and exhaling their vapory breaths upon their fellow bulls. Behind them were the most adroit riders and swordsmen of Persia in front of the archers on the walls around the city. The women and children had gathered in Yima's palace, being the safest place in the city because of its central position. Yima, clad in his silver armor, had ascended to the watchtower of his palace to observe the approaching storm. Black clouds had gathered on the northern skies of Persepolis and the soldiers' breath was not enough to keep them warm from their malice. A flash of lightning roared, lighting the dark sky, and a horrific silhouette in the clouds was revealed for a split second. It was a dragon; there was no doubting it. Below the same cloud, more silhouettes were appearing on the horizon, and a few moments later, the enemies were swarming the northern lands. As Dahak's army

reached the proximity of Persepolis, strange shapes were discernable among the soldiers. After a long time, their messenger approached the men of Persia.

“Surrender the throne and we’ll leave you unscathed.”
said the messenger.

Yima’s captains drew their swords and held them high in front of them, and the rest of the soldiers followed suit. The message was clear, sending the messenger back to the opposite army. After a few moments, the sound of drums and horns mingled and the enemy began to move. Driven by the shouts of the commanders, the bulls charged, and the Babylonian soldiers and demons in the frontline were the first to be trampled under their mighty hooves, but the assault came to a halt, for among the army of Babylon were wizards who could

summon creatures of the darkness, and the silhouette that was seen in the clouds became a shadow under the bulls and it devoured everything on the surface as if nothing had been there in the first place. Many arrows flew in their direction but it was in vain, their wizardry diverting them midway. The Persian riders charged in different directions with the infantrymen following them, and the two armies collided. It was a war of earth and fire, and the fire could not be extinguished no matter how much earth landed on it, for every fallen soldier of the enemy was replaced by a hideous creature, wielding his weapon with greater might.



The gates of the city had been broken and Dahak's army was destroying everything in its path. The guards of the palace

alongside some hundred soldiers were the last defense of the city and Yima was among them. He knew that Mithra's prophecy shall come true, so he gave his last speech to his soldiers.

“Men of Persia, the defenders of truth! Our fellow countrymen have sacrificed their lives for us, but alas, the forces of Angru Mayniu have proved stronger. Yet, we have Ahura Mazda on our side, and even if we fall today, our goal shall not die with us, for hope shall arise. If we fall, we will fall defending our people and goodness;” said the king, raising his sword, “for the innocent that will fight destruction after us!”

As Yima was making his speech, the enemy was approaching them, and among them was Dahak himself, guarded by the most fearsome demons. He was a tall man, with a grim face

and a lean body, but his most distinctive feature was the serpents protruding out of each of his shoulders, reaching for all the heads of the Persian men, crushing their skulls, and devouring their brains with an unquenchable hunger. As he progressed toward the Persian throne, he saw Yima striking down one of his wizards and a smirk appeared on his mouth. Left with few guards, Yima wielded his silver sword and fought his way toward the head of the serpent. He fought bravely and killed many of the intruders but by the time he had arrived at his desired location, he was left alone in front of Dahak and his terrible guards. The two kings fought fiercely, and fighting the man and the snakes at the same time, Yima succeeded in wounding Dahak on his side, which turned out to be fatal for the Persian king. As soon as Dahak had received the blow, his demonic guards appeared behind Yima and held both of his

arms. The blow had infuriated Dahak and he didn't hesitate in killing his enemy, tearing him in two with his sword. When he had killed Yima, he let out a horrible laugh that was amplified by each second, turning into the groans of a wild beast. The people who were in the city heard an earsplitting roar and were shocked to see a three-headed dragon rise from the palace grounds. Dahak's last crime had brought out his true form, and he revelled in the pinnacle of his malice as he watched the city of Persepolis from above. His power had been fortified with his transformation, and Persia was now under his rule. From that time, he was called Azhi Dahaka, and he began his reign of terror in Persia for many years before Thraetona, Yima's descendant, would rebel against his tyranny and avenge Yima and all the innocent lives the dragon had taken.

Hanahaki



Amir Ebrahim Parandakh

Master's Student of English Literature at the University of Guilan, and holding a bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Isfahan.

Each word you speak is a flower seed
Which I plant and protect with ghoulish greed
So that one day before they begin to wilt
You'd get to witness the garden that I've built

And my thoughts of you smell like lilac and love
Sweeter than the songs sung by the gods above
And like a fire that turns to petals of rose
They embrace my heart till I decompose.

Yet in death I wither, still unwhole
With your memories rooted within my soul
So when winter arrives with all its ruse
I'd sit by the reaper and praise my muse.

Dust



Atousa Samadifar

*BA English Literature;
Shahid Chamran University;*

In a land full of dust, where the two steps ahead could not be seen, was a man taking long strides to get to his home. To prevent the dust from getting in his eyes, he kept them half open. He pressed his palm on the piece of cloth on his nose and mouth, and with the other hand pressed a wooden box to his chest. The sound of his heavy breathing, the slide of his slippers on the dry ground, and the whirling of the wind broke the conquering silence in that vast space. He could hear some indistinguishable words here and there. They sound like a human murmuring, a desperate person speaking, but they also

appear to be coming from somewhere far away, somewhere he could never reach. Around him were vague shadow people, though he wasn't sure if they were real or hallucinations. Some of them looked very tall with long hands up to the ground and a head as big as a hippo. Some had tiny figures, merely like a dwarf but with no faces. But he didn't seem to care. His only worry was to go home as fast as he could and see his daughter, but the path ahead of him seemed like an endless horizon.

After some time the outline of shapes gradually started to appear. It was the village where his daughter was awaiting him. His heart beat faster as he became more excited. His pupils were dilated, and his clothes were stuck to his back and chest. While he was fixing the box in his moist hands, he tripped and was about to fall. He looked back in horror with a frown on

his face. His right foot was stuck in between an old man's stiff grips. How could this scrawny old man with almost no flesh have this much power, he thought. The old man's face was bony, his skin had shrunk as a result of dehydration, and his lips were split. His half-gray bushy brows were hidden beneath layers of dust. His eyes were dim, but they glowed with the desire to live. He was clinging to the ground like a lizard, trying to drag him down with him. The old man tried to speak, pleading for a drop of water, but he had already used all of his strength when he had grabbed him. But he didn't slightly care about the old man. He freed himself by shaking his feet as hard as he could and continued walking, pressing the wooden box harder against his chest. What a waste of time, he thought to himself.

In this land, eyes are of no use. They can't be trusted. You can only rely on your instincts to find your way, and with that happening, he became distracted and disoriented. "That old man-" he growled. The wind was blowing harder than before. Walking in that condition made the front muscles of his feet sore. Like a salmon that swims against the current to return to its birthplace only to lay eggs and then perish, he was on his way to a predetermined place where he would die. His mouth tasted bitter and muddy but he had to swallow this mixture of salvia and dust. He noticed that his worn-out slippers were now completely torn. It must have happened when he kicked that old man. Walking with them would just waste more time. So he took them off and threw them away. The earth felt soft beneath his feet, and with each step, he left footprints that would vanish in two seconds. His traces would be emitted by

the dust like the waves of a roaring sea washing up the footprints on a shore as if no one has ever been there before.

The sun was still in the sky but its rays couldn't bypass the heavy dust particles in the air, giving the sky and ground the same color. This place wasn't like this before. Everything changed in just two days. The reed field had turned into a barren wasteland. Animals were buried alive under the dust, and those that survived had fled. But the people had all caught a disease and disappeared. At first, a green mold would appear at the fingertips and spread over the entire body, causing it to crumble apart like dirt. On that day he was the only one out of the village to get some medicine, and his daughter, due to her condition, was isolated alone at home. When he came back, the village was dead silent. He went and looked inside all

of the houses. The only animated thing was the dark gray smoke coming out of the burning food in the oven. On the floor, there were clothes with soil and dirt scattered around them, women's earrings and children's toys on a handful of dirt. He rushed to his own house. There she was, lying motionless in her usual spot and lifelessly gazing at him with sunken eyes. At this point, there were only the two of them left. A day after that, mysterious figures started to appear. They would wander around the village aimlessly between the brown clouds of dust. He didn't know where they had come from. He hadn't seen any of them up close but even from a far distance he instinctively understood they were dangerous. But he had nowhere else to go. Even if he had, the poor girl was to be left alone. He figured that there was no other choice but to co-exist with these creatures.

The village was already enveloped in nightly shadows when he arrived. He moved his weary body and limped toward a home that he knew well. As he opened the door, it creaked, and dust began to fall to the ground like snow from a loaded tree. The house was small and had plain walls without windows. It only had one room, a kitchen, and a small ledge that served as a bed for her daughter. After setting the box on the floor, he lit a lantern with a match to illuminate the room. However, the girl wasn't there. But how, she can't even move her hands, or raise her head to eat, he thought. He called her name with a hoarse voice. Talking made his throat hurt. His voice got lost in the space, no answer. But there he felt a heavy gaze on himself. He looked around the room. There was a dark shadow in a corner of the house, breathing heavily. He could hear his own heartbeat, beating faster and faster. With cold

hands, he held the lantern up to his face. A ray of light brightened its hideous figure. It was tall, so tall that his neck hurt when he tried to find its face. Its back hunched, eyes as black as a rook's, and a silver skin that shone in the dark. The room was quiet. Silence ensued.

"Who are you looking for?" it was speaking with a grave voice that froze the man's entire body. With every word that came out of that hideous mouth, he felt all of his internal organs cramping and intertwining with pain.

"M— where is my daughter?" he said, his gaze fixed on those small button-like eyes.

"But you have no daughter."

"What did you do to her, give her back," he said sternly.

No answer

"I told you to give her back!" he shouted. His voice was now louder, his anger had overcome his fear, and his throat no longer hurt.

Still, there was no answer.

Clenching his jaw, he squeezed the copper handle of the lantern in his hand. The veins on his temple pulsed vividly, and the blood rushing through his head made him feel dizzy. I shouldn't have left her alone, he thought to himself. He remembered having a knife that he placed on his belt before leaving home, so he slowly reached it with his right hand. He did it stealthily, quietly, and without making any extra movements. Tiny drops of sweat formed from the pores of his wrinkled forehead, and delicately, like a freshly boiled spring on dry land, washed the brown patches of dust on his face. He

stopped breathing as he secured his hand on the knife. Then in less than a second, he threw the lantern away and aimed the knife at that creature. But he couldn't move. The knife fell behind him and made a faint but sharp sound. He looked at his hand. It was covered in green mud, and the fingers had fallen apart. The mud was spreading faster and faster until it covered his legs and he fell down desperately.

"Stop right now! Stop" He screamed in terror, but his voice was tinged with rage. In that darkness, he could hardly see around him. But he saw when that creature smiled and showed its sharp teeth. The faint light of the lantern that he had thrown earlier, made its tar-colored eyes glow. A frightening thought came into his mind as he saw the devil right before him. Now he understood why his daughter wasn't there. He

began whimpering in disbelief when he saw his daughter's necklace on a pile of dirt in the corner. He moved like a snake on his stomach and crawled toward it. He yearned to clutch it and hold her remains in his hands but he had them no more. He grieved, while he himself added to the pile of dirt on the cold floor. And there stood that grotesque monster, grinning proudly. Stepping on the remains of the man and his daughter, it grabbed the wooden box and left the somber house.

Interview

Interview with Farah Mendlesohn

Sepehr Karimi

*PhD Student, English
Literature, Shahid Beheshti
University*



*Farah Mendlesohn is an academic writer and scholar of fantasy literature. She is mostly known for her published work such as *Children's Fantasy Literature: An Introduction*, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, and *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*.*

Dear Professor Mendlesohn, we at Threshold appreciate you taking the time to have this interview. As the first

question, I'd like to ask you to introduce yourself to our readers.

Hello, I'm Farah Mendlesohn, I'm best known as the author of *Rhetorics of Fantasy* which I published in 2009.

Could you please elaborate on your interest in science fiction and especially fantasy literature? Why have you chosen these genres as your main literary interest?

I've been reading science fiction and fantasy since I was a child. I love the knowledge density of it, and the degree to which both genres are genres of philosophy. The What If/Thought Experiment aspect of science fiction and fantasy has always appealed. I came through an odd route however: my degrees are all in history. My MA is in Peace Studies (Bradford) and my PhD is on Quaker Relief Work in the Spanish Civil

War. Choosing to write about science fiction and fantasy happened because my undergraduate supervisor was also interested (passionate) about it, and I wrote my undergraduate thesis on sf. He and I became first editorial partners, on the journal *Foundation*, then writing partners and we have been a couple since 1994. He is a medieval historian. Becoming known as a literary critic is just a bit strange really. To the degree I am interested in literary criticism, I'm most interested in stylistics and aesthetics and much less in the more thematic or High Theory approaches.

I was working in a history department when I started work on *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (at Middlesex University) but by the time it came out I was teaching in creative writing, which fit very well. But my teaching and research have never been

terribly well aligned so there isn't very much to say there. Only when I taught on the Mas in Creative Writing at Middlesex and Anglia Ruskin did I ever teach fantasy, and I've only taught science fiction on one undergraduate course at Anglia Ruskin.

What are some of your personal favorite fantasy works and writers? Which books would you recommend for those who are not familiar with fantasy literature?

I am very bad at “favourites” because I have so many, but core people I come back to all the time are Diana Wynne Jones, Samuel R. Delany, Terry Pratchett and Joanna Russ. Newer writers who I buy the second they release their books are Ken MacLeod, Jo Walton, Helen Oyeyemi and Frances Hardinge; and the writers I've just discovered who I will be adding to that list are Darcy Little Badger and Naomi Kritzer.

For someone who decides to read about science fiction and fantasy, two of the best books to go to are *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* and *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* which you have edited with Professor Edward James. Could you please introduce these two great books?

Both of these books were (are) intended for undergraduate and popular audiences. The CUP SF was produced at a time when the genre felt very stable; we all knew what the categories were and who the big names were. When we tried to do a second edition we couldn't because none of that is true right now. I'm not even sure that you could do this book in this way again; certainly all the new companions coming out look very different (and here I want to put in a plug for Gerry Canavan,

and Eric Carl Link's *The Cambridge History of Science Fiction*. 2018 and Ida Yoshinga, Sean Guynes, and Gerry Canavan's *Uneven Futures* 2022 which I think both address how much the field has changed.

The CUP Fantasy is a rather different book, more snapshot than chronicle: when we edited this book there really wasn't the kind of conversation about fantasy there is today and it seemed to us that this was because it lacked a framework, so we set out to create a set of framework discussions, with the full awareness that people might well disagree with the framework *and that this would be a good thing*. It has done well, but not as well. I like it, but don't have the same feeling of impact.

Your amazing work on classifying fantasy literature called *Rhetorics of Fantasy* is a phenomenal book for those

who are interested in understanding fantasy. How did you decide on your classification of this great genre? Please take us through your method and endeavors in writing this book.

[Insert laughter]. This entire book was an accident. I'm mostly a science fiction reader. Back in around 2004 I ran a conference on children's literature with a friend. We realized on day 2 (we'd not noticed from the abstracts) that *no-one* was presenting on contemporary fantasy. I went home and pulled all books less than 5 years old off the shelves, and started thinking about how to talk about them. I put them in piles according to "how they become fantasy", then I made some notes and at the plenary session started talking. When I looked up I realized everyone was scribbling like crazy. I wrote it up

and sent it to the Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts. It was accepted the next day. At the IAFA conference the next year it had just come out and everyone wanted to talk to me about it, so I was persuaded to send it as a proposal to Wesleyan, and they accepted it within weeks. I doubt I will ever have that experience ever again (not least because I am terrible at writing articles). It took four years to write the book, with the idea that the article would be the introduction and the chapters would expand on each section with examples. I selected books myself, but I also asked friends for suggestions to try and avoid too strong a personal bias. And I talked to authors a lot to see how they understood the work. It makes me very happy that the book has been liked by so many writers.

Unfortunately, in our country, fantasy literature is seen as an unworthy genre and academic research and writing is not encouraged, although the fantasy readership is quite satisfactory especially among English Literature students. As someone who has been involved with fantasy so much, how do you see the current position of the genre in academia?

When I started the same was true in the UK, and if you look, everyone in the field my age and older is in one of the less well funded universities It's only now that we are seeing fantasy and science fiction welcomed by the better funded institutions. It makes a real difference about what kind of research can be done. Mine has always been in my spare time and that means at home (I have a major archive project that has been on the

back burner for three decades and will have to wait until I fully retire) and for many younger scholars the concept of spare time has disappeared as pressures in our universities have got worse. But on a brighter note, the variety and quality of scholarship is improving all the time: the Once and Future Fantasies conference in Glasgow was a delight with so many fabulous papers from early career scholars about texts I've never read, theories I don't know, and ideas I've never encountered: this is *why* I mostly attend early career papers.

Other than academic and scholarly works, what are your suggestions for us English Literature students to be more involved and interested in reading fantasy literature? Is there any strategy you have used for your students?

I always recommend prize lists: it's a good way to expand your reading and to choose reading lists for study less biased by one's own assumptions. Pay attention to what the Prizes are choosing for, and compare what they select. Look at both the big well established awards like the Hugos, and the smaller activist awards like the Otherwise and the Ignyte.

Can you tell us about your future projects that are related to fantasy literature?

I'm writing 30,000 words on one of my all-time favourite books, *The Female Man* by Joanna Russ. It's much lauded but not really critiqued. I'm trying to get at how it works.

While academia has neglected fantasy to a great extent in our country, we have many avid readers of this genre among

our students. If you have any last words or guidance for them, we would appreciate it.

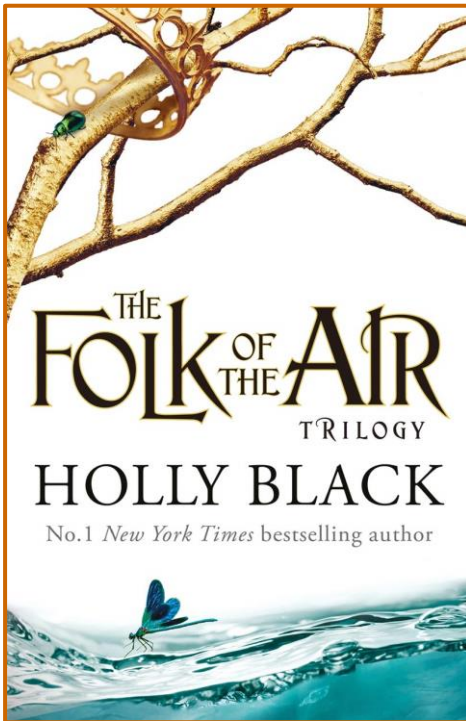
That thing someone tells you not to study because it's marginal, will be cutting edge when you publish on it.

Threshold

The Folk of the Air

Sara Ghorbani

English translation



We all have heard stories about Faeries; beautiful creatures who live in jungles, dance, laugh, and have fun. They are magical and kind. They help children and show them how magical life can be.

However, Faeries that live in Holly Black's universe are different. They are still as beautiful as a dream and soft like

clouds. The difference is they can be truly evil, even worse than the devil himself. They are capable of turning from a dream to a nightmare in a matter of seconds.

Holly Black, the American author has written one of the most famous and adored YA (young adult) fantasy series of all time, *The Folk of the Air*. We are lucky that this story happens in the course of three books and is not a standalone book.



*'You really do want me,' I say,
close enough to feel the warmth
of his breath as it hitches. 'And
you hate it.*



Black is famous for her literature work surrounding Faeries, folk creatures and magical beings. You might have read one of

her old works, *The Spiderwick Chronicles*. The said book was her big break and got made into a movie.

Now that we are familiar with who Holly Black is, let us hear what happens in her beloved series, *The Folk of the Air*. The story revolves around Jude Durate. She lives in the realm of faeries, *Elfhome*. However, she is not a faerie; in fact, she is just a normal human being. Just a girl.

When Jude was only seven years old, she got kidnapped with her two sisters and was brought to the *Elfhome* to live the rest of her life there. It was hard to adapt as children yet with the help of time, they get used to living in *Elfhome*. It is notable that it is hard for them to find a place among other creatures specially faeries, since they can compete with humans in everything and win them over. The only strength humans have

over faeries, is the ability to lie. They are blessed with godly beauty, witty minds, and a desire to have fun everywhere and all the time and this fun may include torturing inferior humans for their pleasure. So when Jude realizes that she cannot continue as a weak human girl, she decides to play the dangerous game and be an important pawn in the land. Unfortunately, she learns the hard way that you cannot be among these creatures and play fair. So she uses her only power over them: she lies and lies and lies. She gets her sword and continues to lie. At first, she just wanted to be a part of the world and be a simple guard; however, Elfame is corrupted and puts her on a path that she never thought of. The path of becoming one of the most powerful creatures in the Elfame. A Journey that takes away her beloved ones and their support. A path with Cardan, the youngest prince of the

land. Her biggest bully, someone who loathes her the most. Now it might be the time for Jude to revenge her hard days. Or is it possible that the loathe gets its flame from a place of desire? A place that is hot with envy and lust.

What I adore about Jude is that she is not a heroine, she is not the chosen one and definitely, she does not always put other people before her needs. She is true to who she is and fights for it. As she said herself: “If I cannot be better than them, I will become so much worse.”

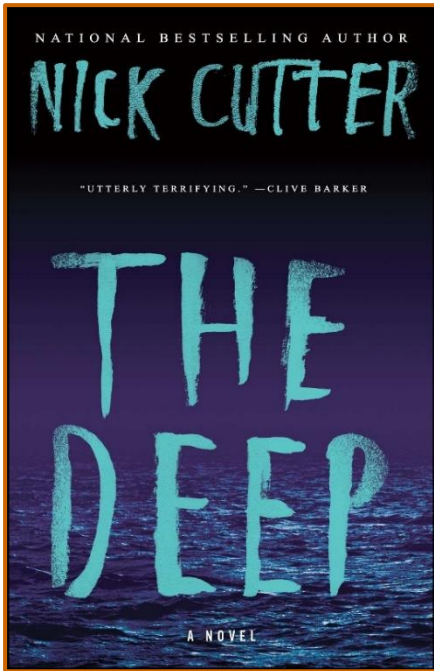
Read this series if you want a book that is atmospheric, passionate and happens in the darkest woods, a place where faeries dance around the fire and drink. A book full of plot twists, backstabbing, yearning, and love.

The Deep



Sara Mirjavadi

*English Language and
Literature (BA), University of
Guilan*



“It wasn’t a story that could be told, only recalled.”

We first meet Yetu when she is rescued by her mother from the sharks. She had wandered away, lost in the memory of her ancestors. Yetu

is burdened with remembering. She is the one who knows the history of her people, the wajinru. When pregnant African

slave women were thrown overboard during the height of the transatlantic slave trade, they gave birth to the wajinru, a water-breathing merfolk who then formed their own society in the dark depth of the ocean.

Yetu is the historian of her race, she is the person that carries all the pain from her ancestors, and she is the one that must sacrifice her life, her individuality for the sake of her people. The gut-wrenching release comes only on Remembrance Day. A day in which Yetu and her people gather inside a mud sphere called the womb, where Yetu fulfills her duty, and helps them recall. And so they do, they remember, painfully how their mothers were deemed disposable. They remember who they once were and where they'd come from. Their ancestors, called

the two-legs or the surface dwellers, once again have come to harm them, this time for their oil.

The Deep was published in 2019, but like its content, it holds a much longer history. A quick online search will reveal how many people have received credit as the writers. The one with the most credit for the novella you'll read, is River Solomon, but the idea of The Deep comes from an eponymous song written by a musical trio called clipping, including Hamilton: An American Musical alumni, Daveed Diggs. However, this is not where the source of inspiration ends. The song itself was produced based on an episode of This American Life titled "We Are in the Future", inspired by Afrofuturism.

The interesting thing about the poetic story that Solomon has breathed life into is that while reading it, you will not only feel the currents of the song it's based on, but that you yourself are under water. You will feel the pressure and you will let yourself be swallowed by the darkness of the deep water, yet miraculously you'll breathe.

More than anything else, *The Deep* is a story about transgenerational trauma, and the conflicting desire to hold on to memory despite the gnawing feeling in your stomach. The story delves into the importance of collective history but doesn't shy away from the agonizing pain that comes with remembering.

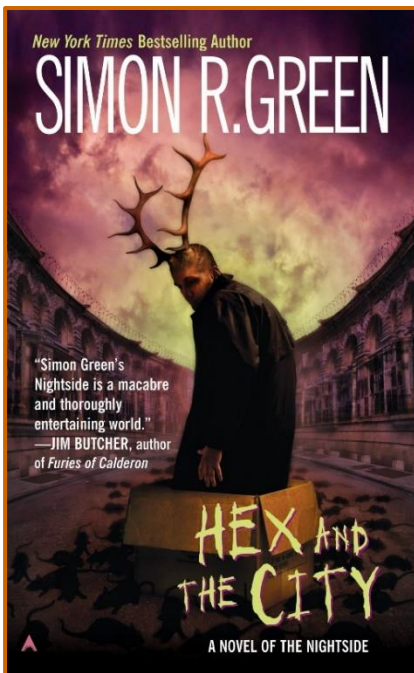
With 192 pages, *The Deep* is a short, enjoyable read that you will be thinking about long after you've finished it. The

wajinru and their history will return to you time and time again, and you'll recall their tale, regardless of the pain.

The Nightside

S. Hannan Sh. M. Amini

*English Literature, Masters;
University of Tehran, Alborz
Campus*



The human mind is one of the most wonderful things in the whole existence, for it can be as free as it wants. Reality can be bent and turned into dust, the truth can be rebuilt, lies can dress themselves as the ultimate beings, and existence

can hide beneath the shadow and let all the creatures fade away.

Mind is a powerful tool, and Simon. R. Green is one of the creatures that were graced with the ability to use his mind and create another reality within the walls of his limited existence.

The Nightside, is a twelve books series dwelling around a city with the same name, Nightside, and a man belonging to it, John Tyler.

Nightside, the city under London that whispers the right names and persuades them to enter, never allowing them to be free of its sweet taste, an existence that was first created to be free of the wills of God and their faithful agents and enemies and bound to their own creator, a place that swallowed the mother who breathed it and offered freedom to others, a world gracing each and every creature entry and accepting even the strangest things, and entity foreign to the

sunrises and lover of the moons. Nightside is where humans lose their souls to become Gods, Gods fall from grace to be demons, demons bend the knee to be free of their forced nature, and even nature gets to decide where its alliance sits, time does not play by the ancient rules, and ancient things do not always stay in the past. It is a house sweeter than any sin, addicting, alluring, blinding, and bounding each pray to its very existence, even its own child.

John was born there, alongside the monsters, heroes, dreams, nightmares, friends and enemies; a human cursed with the gift of an eye that could see and nothing could stay hidden from him, and every time he used his cursed gift he couldn't hide away from them, his worst nightmares that have sworn to make his existence a lost story. Losing his humanity, he

decided to run far away and never look back, he promised to never set foot in the dark with a bullet in his head, but God would never want a lost lamb too far from home, bounded to a promise; Gods, among other things. His journey back home breathes the very start of *Nightside* and his many tales, fighting, killing, loving, destroying, rescuing, hating, betraying, wondering, losing, bending, reaching, finding, praying and living. He encounters old friends and enemies upon his return, warnings swim in the air, some creatures are happy that he's back to take his throne, some are scared of the wars the cursed child is to ignite, some do not care at all, some swing their crosses and pray the lord for forgiveness, some hide in the dark to survive. He stands tall and walks his path, believes what he wants to believe, does what he wants to do and kills what he wants to kill. The road ahead is filled with

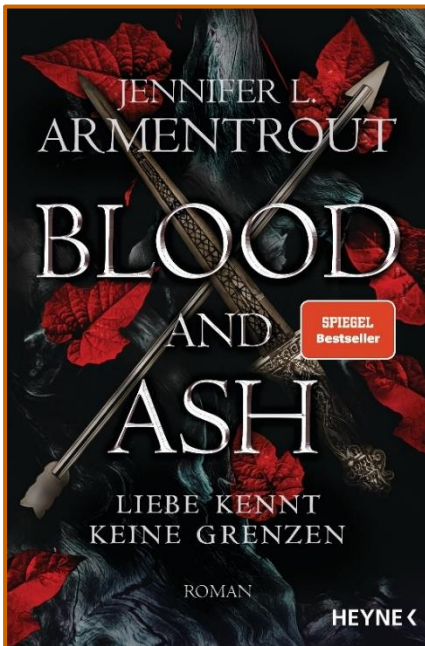
friends and their knives, enemies and their extended hands, legends that turn into the shadows, heroes that stay the same all their lives, Demons making the Gods bend their knee, Gods turning their backs on sanity, sinners being forgiven on their deeds, hearts torn apart and mended all the same, and more, much more.

The Nightside series is about a life filled with wants, needs, desires, fears, smiles, home, magic, and freedom that is yet to see the light of the living.

From Blood and Ash

Parmida Ghandi

*TEFL, Islamic Azad University,
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From Blood and Ash is a fantasy series by Jennifer L. Armentrout which was released during the peak of the pandemic and soon had the online book community very excited. With no previous promotions, this series became the talk of the town. Every book reviewer on BookTok and BookTube just had to give the popular series a try.

The story takes place in a medievaesque, dystopian, cult-like society and follows Poppy or “The Maiden” who is chosen by the Gods and awaits her ascension. Despite bringing her great honor, the title can only protect her so much in the elite society she is a part of. After finding herself drawn to one of the new guards named Hawke, Poppy is afraid of being deemed unworthy by the Gods, and therefore failing to fulfill her duty which is to save her people and the plagued land. But with a falling kingdom on the rise and commoners being haunted by inhuman creatures, she starts to dread and question her position.

In the first book, we see the beauty of the father-daughter relationship Poppy has with her personal guard, Viktor and of course, her friendship with Tawny, a lady-in-wait. These

themes will later be replaced with romance, which is one of the main reasons why this series is so popular. Aside from wonderful world building and flabbergasting cliffhangers, the romance that blooms in the hectic series of events is something to savor as the plot slowly thickens.

In the following books: *A Kingdom of Flesh and Fire* (#2), *The Crown of Gilded Bones* (#3), and *The War of Two Queens* (#4), the gradual development of characters is palpable but this is all that can be said about them. Many readers have found the next three books of the series repetitive and dragging, while the rest pushed through and made it to the twists that make this series worth reading. Nevertheless, if you have enjoyed other fantasy series such as *Twilight*, works of

Sarah J. Maas and *The Folk of the Air* Series by Holly Black, this just might be your next favorite read.

The creator, Jennifer L. Armentrout, is a #1 New York Times and #1 International Bestselling author. After being diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, Jennifer was determined to publish *From Blood and Ash* Series with little experience in the fantasy genre. She currently lives in West Virginia with her husband, her Border Jack Apollo, Border Collie Artemis, six alpacas, two goats, and five fluffy sheep.

Content and Trigger Warnings: death, gore, talk of loss of a child, talk of kidnapping, talk of death of children, mention of loss of a child in past, loss of a loved one, mention of suicide, assault, physical abuse, blood depictions, mention of rape,

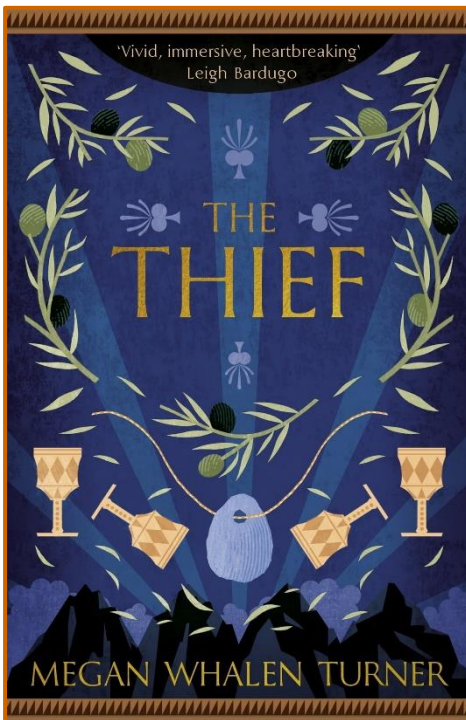
anxiety depictions, self-harm to get blood, and general war themes.

The Thief



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“A thief never makes a noise by accident,” says the protagonist of *The Thief* (1996) to the reader as he narrates his journey to steal a precious stone from a foreign country. This seemingly insignificant

sentence, uttered casually mid-narration, is the key to

understanding what makes *The Queen's Thief*, written by the American writer Megan Whalen Turner, so unique.

At a cursory glance, *The Queen's Thief* series offers the readers nothing they have not seen, or rather read, before. Set in a fictional world reminiscent of ancient Greece, the six novels revolve around Eugenides, the eponymous thief whose misfortune gets him entangled in the political games played by the rulers of three enemy countries. Each country has its own culture, history, and even its own mythology and archetypal legends, which are presented as stories within stories, paralleling the main plot. The fantastical elements are fairly limited; there is the occasional divine intervention by one of the mythological gods, but overall, the series leans more heavily towards politics and intrigue than fantasy.

Describing the series as the young adult version of *Game of Thrones* with a smaller cast of characters and none of the magical creatures certainly does it no favors, but it paints a fairly accurate picture of what avid fantasy readers should expect going in. This description, however technically accurate, does not begin to capture the nuances of the fascinatingly complex plot that unravels throughout the six novels. It is not so much what the plot is all about but *how* the plot unravels that makes the series stand out amongst hundreds of other young adult fantasy novels that are currently popular. *The Queen's Thief* involves three countries whose belligerent relations with each other create a tangled web of political machinations, betrayal, and even war. The novels are written in different points of view, sometimes in first-person and sometimes in third-person, and focus on several different

characters from these three countries. At the heart of the series, however, is the cunning thief Eugenides, who never makes a noise by accident, even if that noise is his words to the reader.

The first novel, *The Thief*, is told entirely from Eugenides's point of view, a first-person account of his attempt at stealing a legendary stone along with his three companions, the magus, Sophos, and Ambiades. However, what seems like a straightforward adventure story turns into a web of lies and half-truths spun by different characters to fit their secret agendas. Not a single detail that Eugenides discloses to the readers throughout the novel is by accident, and every subtle clue contributes to the impressive plot twist towards the end. In fact, every novel in the series follows a similar trend and culminates in a twist that changes the perspective of the reader

on the previous events altogether, warranting a very rewarding second reading to hunt for the clues that were there all along. Seemingly insignificant information from the first novels resurface as major plot points in later ones, and every piece of the cleverly written dialogue adds a new layer to each significant character and their agenda. Turner's clever choice of narrator and point of view for each novel not only allows her to hide her twists and mysteries in plain sight, but also makes each novel refreshingly different from the previous one in terms of narrative mode, genre, and setting.

The first novel in the series, *The Thief*, was named a *Newbery Honor* book in 1997, and the last novel, *Return of the Thief*, was published in late 2020 to critical acclaim. As a series in the making for almost twenty years, it has made its mark on the

young adult fantasy scene by inspiring a number of famous authors. Leigh Bardugo, Lloyd Alexander, Garth Nix, and Holy Black are among the several writers who expressed their admiration for Megan Whalen Turner's epic series.

GAME STUDIES

Technology is changing our world in all manners imaginable and the pace of these changes is accelerating. Nothing is safe from the hand of those codes and algorithms, and literature and art are no exception. One of the best to track such influences in our lives is games studies and digital humanities and for its vast impact, we in Threshold have decided to include this fascinating field in our journal. From now on, we accept submissions on game studies as well as any other related area. For now, enjoy the beautifully written introductory article on the subject. Hopefully, we see more attention toward video games in our academic space in the coming years.

Sepehr Karimi

Lucrative Ludology: An Introduction to Game Studies

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“Instead of focusing on how games work, I suggest that we turn to what they do – how they inform, change, or otherwise participate in human activity.” (Bogost 45).

As a gamer, former literature student and all-time movie enthusiast, I have spent the better half of my life convincing my peers, seniors and juniors about the merits of video games. Most brush it off with a sympathetic “kids these days” or

“games are for kids”, completely depriving themselves of the joy of interactivity within a medium. I wonder about the infinite world of video games, how I tuned my brain to the sound of the amazing soundtracks, caressed my eyes with mighty gameplay, enjoyed great delivery of lines and dialogues that is nothing short of art, and then I wonder when the dogma that being a ‘man of culture’ is synonymous mainly with being a ‘man of letters’ (yes, that’s a Supernatural reference) is going to come to an end. Video games are a great part of our modern culture; aside from cliché advantages such as boosting socialization through in-game chatting features and improving health via the inclusion of physical activity (Halbrook et al, 2019), there are tons of reasons why you must give this medium a chance. In what follows I will be getting into the

importance of studying games and the factors that distinguish video games from their seniors, movies and books.

I Felt That

For all of those who have never played video games themselves, the stereotypes surrounding this entertainment product still stand; gamers are pimply nerds living in their mother's basement and leeching off of society, video games are a waste of money and time, and the industry's main reason for existence is rich parents who are tired of babysitting and thus seat their child in front of a gaming console and relax for hours. That might have been true in some cases forty years ago, when the most advanced game known to mankind was Duck Hunt; you had to buy a special plastic gun, attach it with a wire to your gaming console, and aim at the television to hunt the

ducks that would fly out of a meadow. Of course the gun's trigger broke after not much use, and the aim was way off no matter how accurate you tried to be, but the game was pretty phenomenal in 1984 and it gave a true sense of interactivity to the players as well as bringing the first-person-shooter genre to the light.

As the audience, the level of emotions we feel while playing a video game is not comparable to other forms of media; sure, we all got sad when Jack drowned in Titanic, a lot of us cried when Dumbledore fell from the tower in Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince or when Beth died in Little Women, and Fredo's fate in Godfather II was a real shock to everyone. However, in all these instances we are nothing but the audience; we have no part in the story, we cannot participate,

and all we do is spectate and observe as the storyline unravels and reveals what the creator intended us to see. Now let's move on to the interactive medium that is video games; when you play a game you take control of the main character and witness everything around you as a participant. You can engage in combat, make choices, alter endings, and live as that character to the end. The emotions you feel are much deeper and the variety is greater, and as the player you feel the gravity of the situation a lot more when the choices you make end in a bad conclusion. In God of War 4 when Kratos' young son Atreus is in danger, your heartbeat goes faster as Kratos frantically rushes to him and kills the enemies with bare hands. You truly feel how important your choices are when every wrong step leads to one of the eight playable characters' death in Until Dawn, and you feel the anguish and desperation after losing

your favorite character because of a decision you yourself made. In *The Last of Us Part II*, after spending hours of gameplay watching the middle-aged Joel bond with the teenager Ellie as her father figure during their journey across a post-apocalyptic America in *The Last of Us*, you get to see Joel tortured to death as Ellie is forced to watch. The main gameplay starts here, at the point where the players are hungrier than Ellie for revenge, and Ellie's hateful facial expressions, brutality and rage are all mirrored in the players. No one blames her for being too violent as she rips through dozens of people to get to the culprit; as her, you find shoving that knife in the culprits' throats easily justifiable and leading her in this difficult mission that brings her lots of physical injuries and mental turmoil seems like the natural thing anyone would do (or like to do) in her situation.

Let Us Go Then, You and I

Another element of the video games that is unrivaled in any other medium is its unique feature of exploring new worlds; of course, I do enjoy reading Tolkien's elaborate descriptions of Middle Earth and watching the adventures as the fellowship make their way to Mordor, and I love reading Joyce's detailed account of Stephen's thoughts as he walks upon the beach in *Ulysses*, but I don't get to be there with them. We never get to



see what's behind the closed doors in Rivendell; in other words, we are only allowed into as much of the world as the creator gives access. What's it really like to live in a post-apocalyptic universe fallen to zombies and chaos? What would it be like in 55 years, when everyone has cybernetic augmentations and prosthetics and mortality is a myth? What was it like to be a Ronin in feudal Japan, or an outlaw in the Wild West? These are questions that cannot be answered through literature and big screen's limited depiction abilities. Don't get me wrong, this is simply a battle of interactivity, and media that is made to be watched and read cannot possibly be interactive enough to convey. Video games allow you to explore, especially if they are the open-world type. Go right ahead and make plans to rob a train with your fellow cowboy gang members in Red Dead Redemption 2. Walk around in a sci-fi universe as a sentient

robot and add body modifications to boost your abilities in Cyberpunk 2077. Ride through a meadow, write Haiku, fight the Mongol invasion and become people's hero in Ghost of Tsushima, or become a full-fledged god and explore the nine realms of Scandinavian cosmology in God of War 4. The opportunities are infinite, and the experience is unprecedented. This deep and novel method of storytelling brings worlds of joy to anyone with the slightest hint of a creative soul.

Now some of our more traditional readers may consider video games' stories as shallow and superficial and one cannot reach the depth and details that literature offers our brains with video games just as one does not simply walk into Mordor; while I do agree that the human mind is the most creative story

teller and projector out there, I would like to first point out that “Video games have gone from being a derivative medium that took its cues from other media, such as books, films, and music, to being a form of media that other types derive new ideas from.” (Understanding Media and Culture)

Point out the trend of instant-gratification seeking among the youth these days. The younger generation is progressively moving away from reading and close to playing, and the gap between their generation and the ones before them deepens as parents and grandparents fail to notice that video games are possibly the greatest storytelling medium of this era and thus learning about them is as important as going to museums and doing other pre-ordained cultural activities (Alderman, 2015). What are you going to do when your kids don’t share your

passion for reading? When they don't want to read about space but explore it, when they don't want to read thick theoretical books on the multiverse, metamorphosis, non-linear time and parallel universes? Luckily, with the increased attention towards these matters these days, there are video games on all of them and

Some Jargon for the Pros

The video-game industry has come a long way in only a few decades; from annual revenue of 17.9 billion dollars in 1990 to over 200 billion dollars in 2022 (Statista, 2022), and this is only from the financial perspective. In terms of technology, the industry has seen unprecedented improvements in graphics, lip-sync technology, camera angles, control options and many more, not to mention advanced storytelling methods

facilitated by the concept of choice, multiple endings, and complex character development. Let's expand on that with an example: The Japanese survival-horror franchise, *Resident Evil*, is an adequate example for witnessing the improvements of the industry over time; the first installment of the franchise launched in 1996, when the game's characters' bodies looked like an assortment of cubes and blocks. Characters' bodies were united as a whole, so naturally no movement was available for their hair and clothes, lips barely opened and closed to convey a sense of talking, and even limbs and fingers had a hard time moving. The camera is fixed in one corner of the room so naturally engaging the enemies becomes more taxing with lots of blind spots, and the location of the game is limited to the various floors of a mansion and its surrounding area. However, the game was among the best-selling titles in 1996, sold 2.75

million copies, and received praise from critics and players alike.

The franchise has come a long way from the Tetris-like bodies; its latest installation, *Resident Evil VIII*, is a first-person shooter where players take control of the protagonist looking for his wife and daughter. The locations have expanded to cover a lycanthrope-infested village, a castle full of vampires, a factory filled with the undead armed with creepy prosthetics, a house with every nightmare material you could imagine, a whole array of underground caves with unholy creatures and a swamp with a swimming monster. It may sound like overkill, but this is what game developers need to do today to win the attention of the audience amongst their countless rivals. Hair, clothes, leaves and blades of grass all move, with an entire army

of creatures one would wish could never move. The story has developed from a search for the origin of the zombie-making virus to a search for the protagonist's family, with a more personal touch, a major plot twist and a tragic ending which is an unprecedented event in all previous installments.

Aside from voicing, there is another element that makes it easier to add the 'acting' part, and that is called motion capture. This technology revolves around recording the actions of actors/voice actors by attaching special equipment to their bodies, and then using the recorded model of actions to animate the characters inside the game. I know what you're thinking; why would anyone go to such lengths for a game? The answer is that it makes the experience a lot more realistic.

It doesn't matter if you're playing a video game in a completely fictional setting; when you're playing, you want it to feel real.

Up until a few years ago, the cut-scenes of the games were pre-recorded and separate from the main gameplay, which meant that if you changed your character's clothes or appearance in any way, the cut-scenes would still play with the default character settings. Now with the new developments in the industry, this has been taken care of; cut-scenes are part of the story, and you often can't even tell whether or not you're in a cut-scene and thus should move or wait.

Your Lips Move, but I Can't Hear What You're Saying

If you're a fan of animations, you'd know that speech is pretty important in how you feel towards the animation since elements such as facial expressions, eye movement and body

language are quite limited compared to movies. The characters are mostly voiced by people called voice actors, and you wouldn't be surprised to know that the same rule applies to video games. Like every other aspect of this industry, voice acting in video games has come a long way since Disney's arcade game named *Dragon's Lair* launched with human voices for the characters in 1983. For the first time, players heard human voices coming from the game's characters, and this became the pioneering idea that ignited what we see in the industry today.

Voice acting is more than a guy reciting some lines from a piece of paper; poor delivery and cheesy lines are among the main reasons I myself cannot enjoy most of the games from the 1990s, and video game developers certainly noticed this

shortcoming as well. Dialogues that used to be like “It’s a weapon! I can use it to kill that thing!” have now been replaced by thought processes that give players a hint and a nudge in the right direction. In instances like *GTA V*, voice acting and delivery of the lines are among the important factors that make the game “the most profitable entertainment product of all time” (Batchelor, 2018). That’s right, this game has generated more revenue than any movie or book you can think of, and it didn’t get to that point with monotonous, poor delivery of its dialogues. The voice actors were chosen with each character’s specific features and characteristics in mind, and they made sure that Trevor sounds like the chaotic redneck that he is while Franklin conveys the image of the African-American in search of the American dream.

The lip-sync technology in games is another matter; a few decades ago it didn't matter if the character opened and closed their mouth and dialogue came out, but players today have high expectations. Much like phonology experts, they want to make sure that each letter and vowel is pronounced correctly. That's when the lip-sync technology comes forth; the technology that matches the characters' lips' movements with the dialogues. There are various ways to do that, including animating characters' faces to pre-recorded lines and motion capture, the latter being the more effective method here by producing more realistic lip movements. This is all to emphasize the importance of dialogue and voice acting in video games. Imagine Kratos with all those muscles and grumpy facial expressions opens his mouth and a high voice screams

“Atreus!” Would you be able to take that God of War seriously?

Adaptations

Witcher, Halo, Resident Evil, The Last of Us...these are only a few of the video games that have paved the way for their movie or series adaptations. Considering the last one hasn't been released yet and the Resident Evil movie franchise wasn't exactly a sight for sore eyes, I'm going to take the liberty of calling most of these adaptations as 'mostly' successful. Books and movies have established a relationship for a long time now, and it seems that video games have already started to take over this area as well.

With the help of CGI, good actors, and a shortened version of the game's plot, one could possibly expect a decent

adaptation to arise. However, trouble arises when people start comparing the two forms of media together; when Geralt and Henry Cavill start to become one, or when Alice is the main protagonist of the Resident Evil movie franchise but there is no such character in the games. This is where the gap between the two media forms deepens instead of narrowing. However, there are many movie and series fans who are not gamers, and if the adaptations are executed successfully, they can increase the exposure of the game's story to a much bigger audience. Just as every translated work loses a little of its merits each time it's translated, the same thing happens to adaptations as well, yet nobody can deny the fact that watching our favorite video games displayed on the big screen with good actors and in a new light is pretty exciting in its own way.

“I Don’t Do Time Travel, Morty.”

Well guess what, in video games you can! Possibilities in this industry are literally infinite, opportunities are countless, and there is fun and lessons everywhere you look. You can be anything and anyone you want in the world of video games; from elves and bipedal lizards in Skyrim to an assassin in ancient Egypt or a hitman in Dubai, you name it. You can be the God of War, slashing your way through giants and dragons with your Leviathan axe and raise Ragnarok (yes, it’s coming) or you can become a criminal in the city of Los Santos (Los Angeles’ fictional counterpart) in GTA V, fixing up crews and going on heists. Anything is possible in the world of video games, you just have to find the one you like. Video games don’t judge you; they allow you to play as bandits and outlaws

and they put vast areas at your disposal to explore and enjoy. They give you choices and options, they play music for you to enjoy your gameplay more, and some games even give you the option of choosing the music for yourself, like the way you can change music stations in the GTA franchise. They give your worlds to explore, secrets to unravel, and joy or bitterness to take home; all you have to do is pick your poison.

Last but not least, remember: next time someone told you about the minor importance of video games, remind them that in our very own country as well as anywhere else in the world, student pilots undergo hours of training by playing a video game called Flight Simulator. Also, we are always told to seize the day and enjoy the present time; why not enjoy it by going on virtual adventures every day?

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**Send your submissions to:
thresholdsbu@gmail.com**

For those sending their translations, there should be a brief biography of the author or poet they have chosen, the reason for their choice, and their own personal experience while translating.

Translation

Translation of Henry James 'the Art of Fiction'



Navid Jalali Asheghabadi

*English Literature Student at
Shahid Beheshti University*

Henry James

*Born on April 15, 1843, Henry James was an American novelist, critic, and transitional figure between literary realism and modernism. Since his childhood, he was a bibliophile, and later in his 20s, he came to be regarded as one of the most talented English short story writers. During his lifetime he wrote 20 novels, 112 tales, and 12 plays in addition to several volumes of travel writing and criticism. Today, he is best remembered as the author of the novel *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) and the novella *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). He passed away on February 28, 1916, due to his suffering from pneumonia.*

Translator's Remarks:

*In 1884, James wrote *The Art of Fiction* in response to Sir Walter Besant's lecture "Fiction as One of The Fine Arts", which was published in Longman's Magazine. The translator came to know this work while passing a course on advanced prose at Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran. The essay addresses some of the fundamental questions, which every Literature student might encounter. Questions such as: Is fiction writing an art? Is the work of the Novelist as important as that of other artists? And most importantly, what is the fiction writer's duty? The style of the text was so ceremonial, and the tone highly pedagogical, that the translator, although majoring in English, needed to read it several times to fully understand it. Therefore, he decided to translate this piece of work with the primary intention of making it easier for the other literature students to appreciate and enjoy it.*

Scan to Read the Original Text



رساله جالبی که اخیراً با همین نام توسط آقای والتر بزنت چاپ شد باعث شد جسارت کنم و چنین عنوان جامعی را به این چند نکته کوچک اختصاص دهم و درک کامل‌تری را از موضوع طلب کنم که البته کمی ما را از هدف اصلی دور می‌کند. سخنرانی آقای بزنت در مؤسسه سلطنتی (نسخه اصلی رساله شان) ظاهراً نشان می‌دهد که افراد زیادی به هنر داستان علاقه دارند و نسبت به چنین نکاتی بی‌تفاوت نیستند. به همین جهت، من بسیار مشتاقم که فرصت را غنیمت بشمارم و با استفاده از توجهی که آقای بزنت جلب نموده چند نکته را اضافه کنم. این که

طرز فکرشان را راجع به معمای داستان گویی به شکلی منسجم درآورده اند، بسیار نویدبخش است.

این سندی است بر زندگی و کنجکاوی. کنجکاوی از سمت انجمن برادری رمان نویسان، و همچنین از سمت خوانندگانشان. تا چندی پیش، ممکن بود تصور بر این باشد که رمان انگلیسی آن چیزی نیست که فرانسوی‌ها آن را «درخور بحث» می خوانند. چون در پشت آن هیچ نظریه، اعتقاد و خودآگاهی وجود نداشت؛ از ذوقی هنری نشأت نمی گرفت و نتیجه انتخاب و مقایسه نبود. به گونه‌ای که آن را فاقد قدرت تجلی هنر می دانستند. البته لزوماً منظورم این نیست که آن نوع رمان بدترین نوع نوشته ادبی است. چراکه شجاعتی بیش از توان من می طلبد تا مثل دیکنز و تاگری ادعا کنم که رمان فرمی ناقص است. با این وجود، نایبو و خام بود (اگر به خودم اجازه دهم که از واژه فرانسوی دیگری استفاده کنم)، و این طور که پیداست، اگر مقدر است به هر شکلی به خاطر از دست دادن این خامی رنج بکشد،

حداقل اکنون برای اطمینان حاصل کردن از مزایای مربوطه راهی بلد است. در دورانی که به آن اشاره کردم، احساس بانمکی در خارج از کشور وجود داشت که رمان، رمان است؛ همان‌گونه که پودینگ، پودینگ است، و این انتهای ماجراست. اما طی یکی دو سال، به دلایلی، نشانه‌هایی از بازگشت انگیزش نسبت به رمان دیده می‌شود. به نظر می‌رسد که دوران گفتگو تا حدودی آغاز شده است. هنر به گفتمان زنده است، به آزمایش، به کنجکاوی، به تنوع در تلاش، به تبادل نظر و مقایسه دیدگاه. پیش فرضی هست که وقتی کسی حرف خاصی برای گفتن درباره موضوعی به‌خصوص ندارد و همین‌طور دلیلی برای تمرین یا ترجیح آن نمی‌یابد، حتی اگر آن دوران زمان نبوغ باشد، اما زمان پیشرفت نیست و حتی به‌نوعی، دوران کندی و کسالت است. کاربرد موفقیت‌آمیز هر نوع هنری، منظره ایست خوشایند. اما تئوری آن‌هم جالب است و هرچند تئوری‌های بدون کاربرد بسیاری وجود دارند، اما گمان می‌کنم که هرگز موفقیت حقیقی‌ای وجود نداشته که از هسته پنهان اعتقادی برخوردار نباشد. گفتمان، پیشنهاد، فرمول، طرح‌ریزی و

این‌طور چیزها وقتی صریح و صادق باشد، ثمربخش می‌شود. آقای بزنت مثالی عالی برای بیان کردن نظر شخصی خود درباره طریقه نوشتن و چاپ کردن ادبیات داستانی هستند. دیدگاه ایشان درباره «هنر» هم بر آن دلالت دارد. سایر افراد شاغل در این حوزه نیز بدون شک گفتمان را قبول می‌کنند و با به اشتراک گذاشتن تجربیات خود به پیشرفت آن کمک خواهند کرد و نتیجه آن این خواهد بود که علاقه ما را به رمان کمی پیش از آنچه قبلاً شکست‌خورده به نظر می‌آمد، افزایش می‌دهد. علاقه ای جدی، فعال و پرسشگر که به این تحقیق قدرت می‌دهد تا پایش را از محدوده شجاعت خود فراتر بگذارد.

اگر قرار است عموم مردم رمان را جدی بگیرند، ابتدا رمان باید خودش، خودش را جدی بگیرد. خرافات قدیمی که داستان را «فاسد» قلمداد می‌کرد بی‌شک در انگلستان از بین رفته‌اند، اما نفس این خرافات همچنان در غالب نگاهی به داستان که آن را چیزی بیش از یک جوک نمی‌داند باقی مانده است. حتی ظریف‌ترین

رمان هم گاهی بار سنگین ممنوعیتی که پیش‌تر بر این سبک ادبی اعمال می‌شد را حس می‌کند. ظرافت همواره به حرکت به‌سوی جذابیت منتهی نمی‌شود. با این وجود، گرچه مردم احتمالاً از گفتنش ابا دارند، اما هنوز هم از یک محصول که علی‌رغم همه اوصاف چیزی «ساختگی» است (مگر یک «داستان» چه چیز دیگری می‌تواند باشد؟) انتظار می‌رود که لحنی پوزش‌آمیز داشته باشد، یعنی باید دست از تلاش برای نزدیک شدن به زندگی واقعی بردارد. البته بدیهی است که هیچ داستان معقول و هشیاری از این اصل پیروی نمی‌کند، چرا که می‌داند توجهی که در نتیجه این رویکرد که خود را در پوشش سخاوت مخفی کرده، دریافت می‌کند، هدفی جز خفه کردن خود داستان ندارد. حتی خصومت‌های انجیلی قدیمی صریح و محدودکننده با رمان که به آن اعتبار بسیار کمتری نسبت به نمایشنامه می‌داد، در واقع بسیار کمتر توهین‌آمیز بود. تنها دلیل برای وجود یک رمان این است که زندگی واقعی را به تصویر بکشد! هنگامی که یک رمان دست از به تصویر کشیدن دنیای واقعی به‌گونه‌ای که بوم یک نقاش آن را به تصویر می‌کشد

بردارد، به گذرگاهی عجیب خواهد رسید. هیچ کس از یک نقاشی یا تصویر انتظار ندارد که برای دیده شدن، دست به فروتنی بزند و تا آنجایی که من می‌دانم، شباهت کاملی میان هنر یک نقاش و هنر یک رمان‌نویس وجود دارد. منبع الهام هر دو یکسان است، روند هر دو (با در نظر گرفتن تفاوت در وسیله) یکسان است، و موفقیت آن‌ها نیز یکسان است. آن‌ها ممکن است از یکدیگر چیزهایی را یاد بگیرند، و همین‌طور ممکن است کار یکدیگر را توضیح داده و از هم حمایت کنند. هدف هر دو یکسان است و سربلندی هر یک مساوی با سربلندی دیگری است. ویژگی‌های نحوه انجام کار که در هر دو طرف مطابقت دارد، در هر یک از آن‌ها وجود دارد و به پیشرفتشان کمک می‌کند. مسلمان‌ها تصویر را امری نامقدس می‌پندارند، اما مدت زیادی است که هیچ مسیحی‌ای این کار را نکرده است، و بنابراین عجیب است که آثار سوءظن به هنر خواهر، رمان‌نویسی، (هرچند که خشکه مقدس باشد) در ذهن مسیحی تا به امروز باقی مانده باشد. تنها راه پایان دادن به این نوع سوءظن‌ها تأکید بر شباهتی است که همین الآن به آن اشاره

کردم. تأکید بر این حقیقت که همان‌طور که تصویر واقعیت است، رمان نیز تاریخ است. این تنها توصیف کلی است که درخور رمان است و تاریخ نیز مجاز است زندگی حقیقی را به تصویر بکشد، و همان‌طور که گفتم، به‌هیچ‌عنوان بیشتر از هنر نقاشی نیازمند توضیح دادن خود و معذرت‌خواهی نیست. موضوع داستان نیز به همین ترتیب در اسناد و مدارک ذخیره می‌شود، و اگر آن‌طور که در کالیفرنیا می‌گویند، از خود بیخود نشود، باید با اطمینان و با لحن یک مورخ صحبت کند. برخی از رمان‌نویسان ماهر عادت دارند خود را توضیح دهند که اغلب به آزردن افرادی که کارشان را جدی می‌گیرند می‌انجامد. من اخیراً پس از خواندن صفحات بسیاری از نوشته‌های آنتونی ترولوپ، از احتیاط او در این مورد شگفت‌زده شدم. او همواره در یک پی‌نوشت، پرانتز یا کنار نویس، به خواننده اعتراف می‌کند که آثارش «ساختگی» هستند. او اعتراف می‌کند که حوادثی که او روایت می‌کند واقعاً اتفاق نیفتاده‌اند، و او قادر است روایتش را به هر نحوی که خوانندگان دوست دارند تغییر دهد. اعتراف می‌کنم که چنین خیانتی به یک وظیفه مقدس به نظر

من جنایتی وحشتناک است. این همان چیزی است که من از نگرش عذرخواهی می‌گویم، و دیدن این نگرش در آثار ترولوپ من را به همان اندازه که در آثار گیبون یا مک کالی شوکه کرد، تحت تأثیر قرار داد. چنین رویکردی این را می‌رساند که رمان‌نویس کمتر از مورخ مشغول جستجوی حقیقت است و با این کار سطح آزادی او را در یک لحظه بسیار محدود می‌کند. نمایش دادن و به تصویر کشیدن گذشته و اعمال انسان‌ها، هم وظیفه مورخ است و هم رمان‌نویس و تنها تفاوتی که من می‌توانم بینم این است که کار رمان‌نویس در جمع‌آوری شواهد به مراتب سخت‌تر است. به نظر می‌رسد که این واقعیت که رمان‌نویس در آن واحد با فیلسوف و نقاش اشتراکات زیادی دارد باعث شده که من شخصیت بزرگی به او بدهم. این تشبیه دوگانه یک میراث باشکوه است.

مشخصاً آقای بزنت نیز به همین دلیل بر حضور هنر داستان در میان هنرهای زیبا و استحقاق آن به برخورداری از تمامی احترام و پاداش‌هایی که تا به الآن به

موسیقی، شعر، نقاشی و معماری تعلق داشتند، تأکید داشته است. پافشاری بیش از حد بر چنین حقیقت مهمی غیرممکن است. جایگاهی که آقای بزنت برای کار رمان نویس طلب می کند، جایگاهی نه تنها هنری که خیلی هنری است. بسیار عالی است که او به این نکته اشاره کرده است، زیرا این نشان می دهد که به گفتن آن نیاز بوده است و اینکه اظهارات او ممکن است برای بسیاری از مردم تازگی داشته باشد. من اما گمان می کنم که امکان تأیید بیشتر آن نیز وجود دارد، و اینکه خیلی هم اشتباه نیست که بگوییم علاوه بر افرادی که هرگز به ذهنشان هم خطور نکرده که یک رمان باید هنری باشد، بسیاری دیگر هستند که اگر این اصل بر آن ها تأکید می شد دچار شک و تردید می شدند. آن ها نمی دانستند چگونه مخالفت خود را در کلام بگنجانند، ولی باین حال این اصل موجب گارد گرفتن شدیدشان می شد. «هنر» در جوامع پروتستان ما که در آن ها بسیاری از تعاریف درهم تنیده شده اند، بر کسانی که آن را مهم می شمارند و اجازه تعادل را به آن می دهند اثری اذیت کننده و مبهم دارد. تصور عام بر این است که هنر به طرز اسرارآمیزی مخالف

اخلاقیات، سرگرمی و آموزش است. وقتی که هنر در کار نقاش مجسم می‌شود (البته حکایت مجسمه‌ساز جداست!) مشخص است که چیست. آنجا در مقابل شما ایستاده است، در صداقت صورتی و سبز و قابی طلایی‌رنگ. آنگاه می‌توانید تنها در یک نگاه بدترین نوع آن را تشخیص دهید و در مقابلش گارد بگیرید. اما همین هنر وقتی وارد ادبیات می‌شود، مودیانه‌تر رفتار می‌کند و این خطر وجود دارد که قبل از اینکه متوجه شوید به شما آسیب برساند. ادبیات باید یا آموزنده باشد یا سرگرم‌کننده، و در بسیاری از اذهان این تصور وجود دارد که این مشغله‌های هنری مانند جست‌وجوی فرم، نه تنها به هیچ‌یک از آن‌ها کمک نمی‌کند بلکه در واقع در هر دو دخالت هم می‌کند. این مشغله‌ها آن قدر پوچ هستند که نمی‌توانند آموزنده باشند، و آن قدر خشک و جدی هستند که نمی‌توانند سرگرم‌کننده باشند و علاوه بر این، ایرادگیر، متناقض و اضافی هستند. در حقیقت این نماینده طرز فکر افرادی است که رمان را درست نمی‌خوانند. البته این افراد استدلال می‌کنند که یک رمان باید «خوب» باشد، اما آن‌ها این اصطلاح را به شیوه‌ای تفسیر می‌کنند که از

منتقدی به منتقد دیگر بسیار متفاوت است. کسی ممکن است خوب بودن را حضور شخصیت‌های نیکوکار و بلندپرواز که در موقعیت‌های مهم قرار می‌گیرند معنا کند. دیگری می‌تواند آن را «پایانی خوش» که در آن جوایز، هدایا، شوهران، همسران، نوزادان، پول زیاد، پاراگراف‌های ضمیمه‌شده و اظهارات شادی‌بخش وجود دارند تعریف کند. فرد دیگری ممکن است خوب بودن را در وجود حوادث و تحرکات بسیار زیادی در داستان ببیند که باعث می‌شوند خواننده همواره بخواهد به آخر داستان ببرد تا بفهمد که آن غریبه اسرارآمیز که بود، و آیا چیزی که دزدیده شده بود هرگز پیدا شد یا نه، و اینکه این لذت به‌هیچ‌عنوان نباید به‌واسطه تحلیل‌های خسته‌کننده و یا «توصیفات زیاد» لطمه ببیند. با همه این اوصاف، همه این افراد بر این موضوع اتفاق نظر دارند که ایده «هنری» بودن داستان، لذت آن را کم می‌کند. یکی توصیفات را مقصر آن می‌داند و دیگری نبود عاطفه را. نه‌تنها خصومت داستان هنری با «پایان خوش» مشخص است، بلکه در برخی موارد، ممکن است یک داستان هنری هیچ پایانی نداشته باشد! «پایان» یک رمان برای بسیاری از

افراد مانند دسر و یخ بعد از یک وعده شام دلپذیر است، و هنرمند داستان‌نویس مانند پزشکی مداخله‌گر است که پس مزه‌های خوش‌طعم را ممنوع می‌کند. فلذا، برداشت آقای بزنت از رمان به‌عنوان فرمی برتر، نه‌تنها با یک بی‌تفاوتی منفی که با یک بی‌تفاوتی مثبت مواجه می‌شود. درست مثل کار یک مکانیک، اهمیت چندانی ندارد که رمان به‌عنوان یک اثر هنری برای ارائه پایان‌های شاد، شخصیت‌های دلسوز و لحنی عینی نگران باشد. اگر هرازگاهی صدایی رسا این نکته را که رمان هم همانند دیگر شاخه‌های ادبی کاری جدی است یادآور نمی‌شد، تداخل ایده‌ها در آن، هرچند نامتجانس، به‌راحتی سر به فلک می‌کشید.

مسئلاً، باوجود تعداد زیاد آثار داستانی که توجه نسل زودباور ما را به خود جلب می‌کند، گاهی اوقات ممکن است درمورد این جدیت تردید وجود داشته باشد، چراکه پیدا کردن محصولی به‌دردبخور در میان انبوه محصولاتی که در مدت محدود و به‌راحتی تولید شده‌اند کار آسانی نیست. باید اعتراف کرد که رمان‌های

خوب تا حدودی قربانی رمان‌های بد می‌شوند و حوزه رمان‌نویسی در کل به واسطهٔ ازدحام بیش‌ازحد آثار در معرض خطر بی‌اعتباری قرار گرفته است. من اما معتقدم که این تنها یک آسیب سطحی است و فراوانی آثار داستانی هیچ‌چیز را به ضرر اصل داستان‌نویسی اثبات نمی‌کند. امروزه، رمان هم مانند همه انواع دیگر ادبیات و همانند هر چیز دیگری دچار ابتذال شده است، و حتی ثابت شده است که رمان بیش از برخی انواع دیگر در معرض ابتذال قرار دارد. اما بین یک رمان خوب و یک رمان بد همیشه به همان اندازه تفاوت وجود دارد: رمان بد، به همراه تمام بوم‌های خط‌خطی و سنگ مرمرهای خراب‌شده، به یک برزخ دیده نشده یا زباله‌دانی بی‌انتهای، زیر پنجره‌های پُشتی دنیا کشیده می‌شود و رمان خوب زنده می‌ماند، نور خود را ساطع می‌کند و موجب تحریک میل ما به کمال می‌گردد. من فقط و فقط یک انتقاد به آقای بزنت دارم: این که لحن او سرشار از عشق به هنر اوست. ممکن است من نیز یک‌بار مرتکب چنین چیزی شده باشم. به نظر من بزنت اشتباه می‌کند که سعی می‌کند از قبل با قطعیت بگوید که رمان خوب چه رمانی است.

درواقع هدف از نوشتن این چند صفحه هم نشان دادن خطر این چنین اظهارنظرها و گوشزد کردن مخاطراتی است که پایبندی به برخی سنت‌ها برای رمان به همراه دارد. اثری هنری که قرار است زندگی واقعی را به تصویر بکشد، باید بسیار آزاد گذاشته شود. هنر با تجربه زنده است و تجربه و آزادی نیز مفاهیمی جدایی ناپذیراند. تنها قیدی که یک رمان باید از قبل به آن پایبند باشد، جذاب بودن آن است که در حقیقت تنها وظیفه کلی همه رمان‌هاست. از نظر من، راه‌هایی که توسط آن‌ها می‌توان به این مهم (جذابیت رمان) دست یافت بی‌شماراند و نام بردن و توضیح همه آن‌ها در حوصله این مقاله نیست. به همان اندازه که خلق و خویهای متفاوت در انسان‌ها وجود دارد، راه‌های مختلف برای جذاب کردن رمان‌ها نیز موجود است و هر کدام به همان نسبت که طرز فکری جالب و متفاوت از دیگران را معرفی می‌کند، موفق است. در کلی‌ترین تعریف، رمان برداشتی شخصی از زندگی است و این برداشت است که در اولین نگاه، ارزش و میزان تأثیرگذاری آن را مشخص می‌کند. ولی اگر آزادی حس و بیان در کار نباشد، ارزش و

تأثیرگذاری‌ای هم در کار نخواهد بود. دنبال کردن خطی که محدوده لحن و فرم رمان را مشخص کند مساوی با سرکوب کردن همان چیزی است که بیش از همه به دنبالش هستیم. به نظر من باید بعد از اتمام ماجرا به فرم رمان پرداخت. هنگامی که انتخاب‌های نویسنده انجام شده و استانداردهای او مشخص گشته است. در این لحظه است که می‌توانیم راجع به لحن هم صحبت کنیم. در یک کلام، اینجا جایی است که می‌توانیم از یکی از جذاب‌ترین لذت‌بریم. می‌توانیم کیفیت اثر را تخمین بزنیم و میزان نزدیکی آن را به انتظاراتی که از یک رمان خوب می‌رود بسنجیم. البته این سنجش تنها به خود نویسنده تعلق دارد و بسیار شخصی است، ما فقط مجازیم میزان موفقیت او در سنجش کار خودش را اندازه بگیریم. مزیت و برتری رمان‌نویس که همچنین مسئولیت سنگین او نیز به شمار می‌آید، این است که هیچ محدودیتی برای تلاش او به‌عنوان مجری در سنجش‌ها، تلاش‌ها، اکتشافات، و موفقیت‌های احتمالی‌اش وجود ندارد.

اینجاست که می‌توان سبک خاص کاری او را، درست مثل برادر نقاشش که هر فرد را به سبک مخصوص خود روی بوم آورده است، مشاهده کرد. سبک کاری رمان‌نویس راز اوست. رازی که لزوماً هم خیلی پیچیده نیست. او نمی‌تواند این راز را فاش کند، چراکه در آن صورت مجبور به آموزش آن به دیگران می‌شود. من این نکته را با تأکید دوباره بر شباهت کاری هنرمند نقاش و هنرمند رمان‌نویس یادآور می‌شوم. یک نقاش قادر است نکات ابتدایی کارش را به دیگران آموزش دهد. همین‌طور می‌توان با مطالعه یک اثر هنری خوب و مستعد، هم‌چطور نقاشی کشیدن را آموخت و هم‌چطور نوشتن را. با همه این اوصاف، بدیهی است که یک هنرمند ادبی باید بیشتر از دیگر هنرمندان جمله: «خب، باید به بهترین نحوی انجامش بدی که می‌تونی» را به شاگردانش بگوید. مسئله هنر ادبیات مسئله سطح ادبی و ظرافت است! همان‌طور که علوم تجربی با قطعیت حرف می‌زنند، هنر هم قطعیت خاص خودش را دارد. تفاوت نقاشی با ادبیات در این مورد این است که دستور زبان بسیار مشخص‌تری دارد. با این‌همه، باید بگویم آنجا که آقای بزنت در

مقاله‌اش گفته: «قوانین داستان‌نویسی باید به همان ظرافت و دقت قوانین هارمونی، زاویه دید و تناسب، معین شده و آموزش داده شوند» کمی مبالغه کرده است. چراکه سخنش را به قوانینی «کلی» نسبت داده، و بیشتر این قوانین را طوری قوی بیان کرده که مخالفت با آن‌ها کمی مایه دلخوری است. این که کار رمان‌نویس باید نتیجه تجربیاتش باشد، این که: «شخصیت‌های داستان باید شبیه به افرادی باشند که در دنیای واقعی پیدا می‌شوند»، این که: «دوشیزه‌ای جوان که در روستایی آرام بزرگ شده باید از توصیف زندگی پادگانی خودداری کند» و «نویسنده‌ای که خودش، تجربه‌هایش و دوستانش همه به طبقه پایین جامعه تعلق دارند نباید شخصیت‌هایش را نماینده‌ای از کل جامعه معرفی کند»، و این که باید در یک کتاب معمولی یادداشتهای شخصی خود را وارد کرد، این که شخصیت‌ها باید طرح مشخصی داشته باشند، و درعین حال مشخص کردن آن‌ها با استفاده از ترفندهای گفتاری روش خوبی نیست، و «توصیف آن‌ها به تفصیل» روشی حتی بدتر است، این که داستان‌های انگلیسی باید یک «هدف اخلاقی آگاهانه» داشته

باشد، این‌که: « تقریباً غیرممکن است که ارزش دقت کار را از نظر سبک تخمین بزنییم.»، این‌که: « داستان از همه‌چیز مهم‌تر است.» و: « طرح داستان همه‌چیز است.» این‌ها همه نکاتی هستند که مخالفت با آن‌ها به‌طور قطع غیرممکن است. در بین این نکات، نکته‌ای که در مورد نویسنده طبقه پایین و دانستن جایگاهش گفته شده بود شاید نسبتاً دل‌خراش باشد. اما در مورد بقیه، مخالفت با هر یک از این توصیه‌ها برایم مشکل است. درعین‌حال، پذیرفتن آن‌ها هم، شاید به‌استثنای توصیه واردکردن یادداشتهای شخصی خود در یک کتاب معمولی، قطعاً برایم آسان نیست. به نظر من این نکات به‌ندرت آن کیفیتی را دارند که آقای بزنت به قواعد رمان‌نویسی نسبت می‌دهد - «ظرافت و دقت»، «قوانین هارمونی، زاویه دید و تناسب». آن‌ها وسوسه‌کننده و حتی الهام‌بخش‌اند ولی به‌هیچ‌وجه دقیق نیستند! گرچه بدون شک دقت این قوانین به نسبت شرایط متفاوت تغییر می‌کند و این دقیقاً همان آزادی در تفسیر است که من بارها در همین مقاله به آن اشاره کرده‌ام. چراکه ارزش این قوانین بسیار زیبا و درعین‌حال بسیار مبهم کاملاً در برداشتی

است که هر شخص از آن‌ها می‌کند. شخصیت‌ها و موقعیت‌هایی که واقعی به نظر می‌رسند، آن‌هایی هستند که بیش از همه خواننده را تحت تأثیر قرار می‌دهند. اما اندازه‌گیری میزان واقعیت یک داستان بسیار دشوار است. واقعی بودن دن کیشوت یا آقای میکابر مثل سایه‌ای بسیار ظریف است و چنان توسط نویسنده رنگ‌آمیزی شده است که هرچند واضح باشد، در معرفی آن به‌عنوان یک الگو تردید وجود دارد و معرفی آن‌ها به‌عنوان یک الگو شما را در معرض سؤالات بسیار خجالت‌آوری از جانب دانش آموزان قرار می‌دهد. بدیهی است که نوشتن یک رمان خوب بدون داشتن حس واقع‌گرایی ممکن نیست. ولی دادن دستور مشخصی که این حس را برای شما به ارمغان بیاورد نیز کار بسیار دشواری است.

جنبه‌های انسانی بی‌شمار است و واقعیت نیز ده‌ها هزار شکل مختلف دارد. ولی چیزی که بیش از همه می‌توان از آن مطمئن بود این است که اگر هنر داستان یک باغ باشد، برخی از گل‌های آن رنگ و بوی واقعیت را دارند و برخی ندارند و

این که از قبل به شما بگوییم که دسته‌گلی که از این باغ می‌چینید باید از چه گل‌هایی تشکیل شود حکایتی متفاوت است. گفتن این که نوشته باید از تجربه سرچشمه بگیرد به همان اندازه که خوب است ناکامل هم هست. چنین اظهارنظری ممکن است حتی طعم تمسخر را به همراه داشته باشد! چه نوع تجربه‌ای مدنظر است؟ حدود تجربه چیست؟ تجربه هیچ‌گاه محدود و یا کامل نیست، بلکه یک ادراک بسیار گسترده است. درست مثل یک تار عنکبوت عظیم‌الجثه، ساخته شده از لطیف‌ترین مواد و معلق در اتاق آگاهی که حتی کوچک‌ترین ذراتی را که باد با خود به همراه می‌آورد به خود جذب می‌کند. تجربه دقیقاً همان فضای ذهن است، و هنگامی که ذهن خلاق باشد (که در افراد نخبه خود را به شدت بیشتر نشان می‌دهد)، حتی به کم‌رنگ‌ترین نکات زندگی هم توجه می‌کند و از هر چیز کوچکی الهام می‌پذیرد. از نظر من اصلاً عادلانه نیست که دوشیزه‌ای جوان که در روستایی آرام بزرگ شده نباید چیزی برای گفتن درباره زندگی پادگانی داشته باشد. حتی معجزاتی بزرگ‌تر از این هم ممکن است. کما این که او می‌تواند به کمک قوه

تخیلش، در مورد تک‌تک مردان جنگی درون پادگان به‌دقت و درستی صحبت کند. من رمان‌نویس زن انگلیسی بسیار مستعدی را می‌شناسم که یک‌بار به من درباره اینکه اثری که در مورد زندگی جوانان پروتستان در فرانسه نوشته بود چگونه مورد توجه و تشویق قرار گرفته است گفت. از او در مورد چگونگی به دست آوردن این اطلاعات سؤال شده بود و به او به خاطر تجربیات خاصش تبریک گفته بودند. تجربه او شامل صحنه‌ای می‌شد که او یک‌بار در پاریس، در خانه یک پیشوای روحانی، از راه‌پله‌ای بالا رفته و وارد اتاقی شده که در آن جوانان پروتستان دور میزی که غذای روی آن تمام شده بوده نشسته بودند. آن نگاه کوتاه که فقط یک لحظه به طول انجامید تصویری را ساخت. اما آن لحظه در حقیقت تجربه شد. او از این لحظه تأثیر پذیرفت، و سبک کاری‌اش را دگرگون کرد. او از قبل می‌دانست که جوان بودن چه حسی دارد و در مورد پروتستانیسم هم اطلاعاتی داشت. او حتی مزیت تجربه زندگی به‌عنوان یک فرانسوی را هم داشت و از مرتب کردن و به هم چسباندن این ایده‌ها توانست یک اثر واقع‌گرایانه را خلق کند. مهم‌تر

از همه، او از مکتبی استفاده کرد که قادر است چیزهای بسیاری را به شما هدیه دهد و برای یک هنرمند بسیار ارزشمندتر از چیزهای دیگر مانند محل زندگی یا جایگاه اجتماعی است. قدرت حدس زدن چیزی که دیده نمی‌شود با توجه کردن به چیزی که دیده می‌شود، فهم معانی عمیق‌تر همه‌چیز، تشخیص کل از روی جزء و فهم حقیقی زندگی به سبکی آن قدر کامل که گوشه گوشه آن را بشناسی. این سلسله هدایا چیزهایی هستند که با تجربه به دست می‌آیند و فرقی هم نمی‌کند که شما در شهر زندگی می‌کنید یا در روستا و در چه سطحی از سواد هستید. اگر بگوییم که تجربه از ادراکات سرچشمه می‌گیرد، پس به همین ترتیب درست است که بگوییم ادراکات نیز ریشه در تجربه دارند، گویی که آن‌ها می‌توانند همان هوایی باشند که ما تنفس می‌کنیم. در نتیجه، اگر قرار باشد به نویسنده‌ای تازه‌کار فقط یک نصیحت بکنم، این است که: « نوشته‌هایت فقط و فقط باید از تجربیات سرچشمه بگیرن.» البته باید مراقب باشم که این می‌تواند یک نصیحت

گمراه‌کننده باشد، پس بلافاصله خواهم گفت: «سعی کن از اون دسته افرادی باشی

که هیچ‌چیز از نگاه تیزشون مخفی نمی‌مونه.»

ناگفته نماند که هدف از این توصیه کوچک شمردن اهمیت دقیق بودن حقایق

و ریزه‌کاری‌ها نیست. هرکس می‌تواند از نظر خودش در این مورد دفاع کند و من

نیز به همین دلیل این خطر را به جان می‌پذیرم که بگویم از نظر من داشتن فضایی

واقع‌گرایانه مهم‌ترین هدف یک رمان است. ارزشی که تمامی ارزش‌های دیگر یک

رمان (از جمله آن هدف اخلاقی آگاهانه‌ای که آقای بزنت از آن صحبت می‌کند)

به‌شدت به وجود آن بستگی دارد. اگر واقع‌گرایی وجود نداشته باشد، دیگر ارزش‌ها

نیز وجود نخواهند داشت. همین‌طور اگر ارزش‌های دیگر در یک اثر به چشم آمد،

بدون شک این را مدیون حضور واقع‌گرایی در آن کار است. به سلیقه من، پرورش

این موفقیت و مطالعه این روند نفیس، آغاز و پایان هنر رمان‌نویس را شکل می‌دهد.

آن‌ها منبع الهام، ناامیدی، پاداش، عذاب و لذت او هستند. در حقیقت، اینجاست که او می‌تواند زندگی واقعی را به تصویر بکشد و با برادر نقاشش در تلاش برای مجسم کردن ظاهر اشیاء رقابت کند. تجسمی که میزان موفقیت آن‌ها را در به دست آوردن رنگ و بوی انسانی نشان می‌دهد. به همین دلیل است که وقتی آقای بزنت از شاگردش می‌خواهد نکته برداری کند، به خوبی الهام می‌گیرد، اما نه می‌تواند بیش از اندازه یادداشت برداری کند، و نه می‌تواند به حد کافی یادداشت بردارد. همه چیز زندگی نظر او را به خود جلب می‌کند و به تصویر کشیدن کوچک‌ترین و ساده‌ترین تصاویر آن نیز کاری بس دشوار است. اگر آقای بزنت توانسته بود به او یاد بدهد که چه چیزهایی ارزش یادداشت برداری دارند، کار او بسیار ساده‌تر و دقیق‌تر می‌بود. اما متأسفانه باید بگوییم که این چیزی نیست که شما با خواندن کتاب‌ها و جزوات یاد بگیرید. این چیزی است که باید در زندگی آموخت. رمان‌نویس تازه کار موظف است نکات بی‌شماری را یادداشت کرده تا شاید بتواند از میان آن‌ها چند نکته به‌دردبخور استخراج کند و تا آنجا که می‌تواند روی

آن نکات کار کند. حتی راهنمایان و فلاسفه‌ای که می‌توانند به او در این راه کمک کنند نیز باید او را تنها بگذارند، همان‌طور که باید یک نقاش را با پالت رنگش تنها گذاشت. اینکه شخصیت‌های داستانش باید آن‌طور که آقای بزنت می‌گوید «طرح مشخصی داشته باشند» کاملاً برای رمان‌نویس قابل‌درک است. چیزی که او نمی‌تواند بفهمد این است که چطور باید به این طرح مشخص رسید و او راهی ندارد مگر اینکه خودش به دنبال جواب این معما برود. مسخره بود اگر می‌شد به‌سادگی به او یاد داد که توصیف شخصیت‌ها «به تفصیل» جواب این سؤال است. یا اینکه برعکس، نبود توصیفات و پرباری دیالوگ، و یا نبود دیالوگ و چندوجهی بودن «حوادث داستان» است که چیزی که می‌خواهد را به او می‌دهد. برای مثال، بسیار محتمل است که او فکر کند که این مقابله عجیب و ادبی توصیفات و دیالوگ، و یا حوادث و توصیفات، معنا و مفهوم بسیار کمی دارد. مردم اغلب طوری در مورد این ارکان صحبت می‌کنند که گویی آن‌ها از هم جدا هستند. ولی در حقیقت آن‌ها کاملاً در هم تنیده شده و بخشی از یک تلاش کلی برای بیان

داستان‌اند. به‌شخصه نمی‌توانم در یک اثر ادبی یا رمان خوب، بخشی توصیفی را متصور شوم که درعین‌حال جزئی از روایت نیست و یا بخشی از یک دیالوگ که هدفش توصیف کردن نباشد. یا اشاره به حقیقتی از هر نوع، بدون استفاده از حوادث و یا حادثه‌ای که ریشه در منبعی جز منبع اصلی تمام رمان‌های خوب که همان واقع‌نگریست، داشته باشد. رمان نیز همانند همه موجودات دیگر یک موجود زنده است. یکتا و پیوسته، و به نظر من هیچ‌یک از اجزاء آن از دیگر اجزاء جدایی‌پذیر نیست. همان‌طور که در طول تاریخ داشته‌ایم، منتقدی که وانمود می‌کند در جزئیات یک اثر کامل شده به دنبال جغرافیای مشخصی از ارکان می‌گردد ممکن است نویسندگان پیشرو را متهم به مصنوعی نویسی کند. همین‌طور تمایزی ازمدافنده میان رمان شخصیت و رمان حادثه وجود دارد که رمانتیک‌نویسی را که برای کارش اشتیاق زیادی دارد به خنده وا می‌دارد. به نظر من، نپرداختن به واقعیت نیز به‌اندازه تمایز مشهور میان رمان و اثر رمانتیک اشتباه است. همان‌طور که تصویر خوب و بد داریم، رمان خوب و بد هم داریم و این تنها

تمایز معناداری است که من در این مورد می‌بینم. در واقع من به همان اندازه کم که می‌توانم صحبت در مورد یک رمان شخصیت را متصور شوم، می‌توانم صحبت راجع به یک تصویر شخصیت را نیز تصور کنم. وقتی کسی از یک تصویر حرف می‌زند، دارد از شخصیت سخن می‌گوید و وقتی از رمان حرف می‌زند، حادثه را مدنظر دارد. این کلمات ممکن است به‌جای یکدیگر به کار بروند. آیا شخصیت چیزی به‌غیر از به تصویر کشیدن حادثه است؟ تصویر یا رمانی که از شخصیت ساخته نشده باشد اصلاً چیست؟ در آن به دنبال چه چیزی می‌گردیم، و چه چیزی در آن می‌یابیم؟ این که یک زن دستش را روی میز بگذارد و بلند شود و با حالتی به‌خصوص به شما نگاه کند یک حادثه است و اگر نخواهیم قبول کنیم که هست، بسیار سخت است که نام دیگری روی آن بگذاریم. در عین حال این تصویری از یک شخصیت است و اگر می‌گویید آن را نمی‌بینید، هنرمندی که دلایل خاص خود را برای دیدن آن دارد، متعهد می‌شود به شما نشان دهد.

این که یک مرد جوان تصمیم به ترک کلیسا می‌گیرد یک حادثه است، گرچه ممکن است آن قدر جذاب نباشد که شما را برای پی بردن به اینکه آیا او در پایان داستان دوباره به مسیحیت روی بر خواهد گرداند یا نه مجبور به پریدن به انتهای داستان کند. من به هیچ وجه نمی‌گویم که این‌ها حوادثی خارق‌العاده یا شگفت‌انگیزند و همین‌طور تظاهر نمی‌کنم که می‌توانم میزان علاقه ناشی از آن‌ها را تخمین بزنم، چراکه این از مهارت‌های نقاش است. گفتن اینکه برخی از حوادث ذاتاً از برخی دیگر مهم‌تر هستند تا حدی بچه‌گانه است. من هم نیازی به نگرانی از به دام افتادن در این مورد نمی‌بینم، چراکه قبلاً هم بیان کردم که تنها تفاوتی که می‌توانم میان انواع رمان قائل شوم، تفاوت میان رمان خوب و رمان بد است.

رمان و اثر رمانتیک، رمان حادثه و رمان شخصیت، از نظر من، همه تقسیم‌بندی‌هایی هستند که منتقدان و یا خوانندگان این آثار برای راحت کردن کار خود و دررفتن از زیر بار مسئولیت درک اثر به وجود آورده‌اند. ولی این

تقسیم‌بندی‌ها به‌هیچ‌عنوان برای نویسنده اصلی کتاب که آرزو می‌کند خواننده‌اش از هنر نوشتن چیزی بداند ذره‌ای واقعی و یا جالب نیستند. مقوله دیگری که ظاهراً آقای بزنت دوست دارد به آن اشاره کند هم همین‌طور است: «رمان انگلیسی مدرن». مگر اینکه او در اینجا به‌طور تصادفی دچار سردرگمی دیدگاه‌های مختلف شده باشد. نمی‌دانم اینکه او می‌گوید رمان انگلیسی مدرن باید تعلیمی یا تاریخی باشد باور قلبی اوست یا خیر. امروزه تصور شخصی که رمان مدرن انگلیسی بنویسد به‌اندازه تصور شخصی که رمان کهن انگلیسی می‌نویسد دشوار است. یکی رمان می‌نویسد، و یکی تصویر را نقاشی می‌کند و هر دو زبان و زمان خود را به تصویر می‌کشند. متأسفم! اینکه چیزی بنویسید و نام آن را رمان مدرن انگلیسی بگذارید کار شما را آسان‌تر نخواهد کرد. شاید در گذشته می‌شد نام اثر رمانتیک را به هر اثری نسبت داده و از زیبایی آن نام سوءاستفاده کرد، کما اینکه هاوثرن از این عنوان برای رمان ماجرای عاشقانه بلیث دال استفاده کرد. ولی متأسفانه، امروزه هم‌چنین چیزی ممکن نیست. حتی خود فرانسوی‌ها هم که خدمات بی‌شماری به

کامل شدن هنر داستان‌نویسی کرده‌اند، تنها یک نام برای رمان دارند و هرگز برای تقسیم آن به انواع کوچک‌تر تلاش نمی‌کنند. به نظر من، «رمانتیک‌نویس» کاملاً با رمان‌نویس برابر است و هر دو باید به یک اندازه از استانداردهای اجرای کار تبعیت کنند. البته که برای ما فقط اجرا مهم است. در واقع این تنها نکته یک رمان است که قابل‌بحث است و تا به امروز بارها موجب سردرگمی و سوء تفاهم شده است. باید هنرمند را با موضوع، ایده و یا همان چیزی که فرانسوی‌ها به آن دونه می‌گویند تنها گذاشت. نقد ما فقط و فقط باید در مورد محصولی باشد که او از این داده به دست آورده. طبیعتاً منظورم این نیست که ما لزوماً باید از آن کار خوشمان بیاید. جواب بسیار ساده است: «اگر از کاری خوشتان نیامد، ره‌ایش کنید!» شاید بگوییم که حتی بهترین رمان‌نویس‌ها هم ممکن است از پس خوب نوشتن درباره یک موضوع خاص برنیایند، کما اینکه نمی‌آیند! ولی خب همان‌طور که قبلاً هم گفته شد، مهم‌ترین چیز برای یک منتقد اجرا است. چراکه در حیطه اجرا است که نقاط ضعف مرگبار یک نویسنده ثبت و ضبط می‌شود. چنانچه این

ادعا را داریم که حتی ذره‌ای برای هنرمند احترام قائلیم، باید دست او را در انتخاب‌هایش باز بگذاریم، حتی اگر بدانیم که انتخاب او، مانند هزاران کار دیگر، بی‌ثمر خواهد بود. توجه کنید که هنر بخش قابل توجهی از داشته‌هایش را از پرواز آزادانه در وادی تصورات به دست می‌آورد و برخی از جالب‌ترین کارهایی که قادر است انجام دهد ریشه در ساده‌ترین چیزها دارد. گوستاو فلوربر داستانی در مورد عشق یک دختر خدمتکار به یک دزد دریایی نوشته است. نکته اینجاست که با اینکه داستان کامل شده است، از آن به‌عنوان یک اثر موفق یاد نشده است. کسی جلوی ما را نگرفته است که آن را اثری کاملاً سطحی بخوانیم، ولی به نظر من داستان جالبی بود و من بسیار خوشحالم که او همچنین داستانی نوشته است. چراکه داستان او کمک شایانی به دانش ما از آنچه می‌توان و آنچه نمی‌توان نوشت کرده است. ایوان تورگنوف داستانی راجع به یک برده خنگ گر و یک سگ دست‌آموز نوشته است که اثری تأثیرگذار، دوست‌داشتنی، و یک شاهکار کوچک

است. او به نکاتی از زندگی توجه کرد که فلور آن‌ها را نادیده گرفت. او در عالم خیال پرواز کرد، و به پیروزی رسید.

البته، هیچ‌چیز جای ایده قدیمی «دوست داشتن» یا «دوست‌نداشتن» یک اثر را نمی‌گیرد. هرچقدر هم حیطة نقد پیشرفت کند، این یک ارزیابی ساده و اولیه هرگز منسوخ نخواهد شد. این را می‌گوییم که بعد متهم به چشم‌پوشی از اهمیت ایده و موضوع یک رمان یا نقاشی نشوم. به نظر من آن‌ها هم بسیار مهم هستند، و اگر بخواهم فقط یک دعا بکنم، این است که امیدوارم یک هنرمند همواره بهترین موضوع و ایده را انتخاب کند. قبلاً هم بر این موضوع تأکید کرده‌ام که برخی از ایده‌ها و موضوعات اساسی‌تر از برخی دیگر هستند. ولی بیاید قبول کنیم که اگر فهم تفاوت میان آن‌ها به این سادگی بود، دنیا خیلی گل‌وبلبل می‌شد. متأسفانه باید بگوییم که این روز میمون تنها زمانی از راه خواهد رسید که منتقدان نیز از بند خطا رها شوند. ما تنها در صورتی می‌توانیم یک هنرمند را به‌صورت عادلانه

قضاوت کنیم که از قبل به او گفته باشیم: « من تو رو در انتخاب نقطه شروع آزاد می‌ذارم. چرا که اگر این کار رو نکنم، تو رو محدود کرده‌ام و خدا نکنه که من خودمو زیر بار چنین مسئولیتی قرار بدم. اگر بهت بگم که چه کاری نباید بکنی، اونوقت تو از من انتظار خواهی داشت که بهت بگم چه کار «باید» بکنی و در هر دو صورت این منم که به شدت گرفتار می‌شم! بعلاوه، تا زمانی که من داده‌های تو رو به رسمیت نشناخته باشم، چطور می‌تونم شروع به ارزیابی تو بکنم؟ من تو رو براساس اون چیزی که ارائه می‌دی می‌سنجم، و اونجا جائیه که تو باید از من بترسی. حتی ممکنه ایده تو اصلاً واسم مهم نباشه، ممکنه به نظرم احمقانه، کهنه و یا حتی کثیف بیاد. در هر صورت، من خودم رو قاطی نمی‌کنم. حتی شاید به این باور برسم که اثر تو به هیچ‌عنوان سرگرم‌کننده نخواهد بود، ولی هرگز اینو به زبان نمی‌آرم و تو همون قدر نسبت به من بی تفاوت خواهی بود که من نسبت به تو. نیاز نیست که بهت یادآوری کنم که سلیقه‌های متفاوتی وجود دارند، کی بهتر از خودت اینو می‌دونه؟ بعضی از مردم، به دلایل فوق‌العاده‌ای، دوست ندارن راجع به

نچارها بخونن. بعضی دیگه، به دلایلی چه بسا فوق العاده تر، خوندن راجع به فاحشه‌ها رو دوست ندارن! خیلی‌ها آمریکایی‌ها رو دوست ندارن. یک‌سری‌ها هم (که به نظرم بیشتر ویراستارها و انتشارات هستند) از ایتالیایی‌ها نفرت دارن. بعضی از خواننده‌ها موضوعات آروم رو دوست ندارن. بعضی‌هاشونم از موضوعات شلوغ پلوغ بدشون می‌آد. بعضی‌ها از یک توهم به تمام معنا خوششون می‌آد، و بعضی‌ها از گول خوردن لذت می‌برن. هرکسی بر اساس سلیقه‌ش رمانش رو انتخاب می‌کنه و اگه ایده نظرش رو جلب نکنه، طبعاً به اندازه سرسوزنی هم به اجراء تو اهمیت نمی‌ده.»

در نتیجه، علیرغم نظر آقای امیل زولا که می‌گوید موضوعاتی هستند که مردم باید از آن‌ها خوششان بیاید و اگر نیاید باید کاری کرد که خوششان بیاید، به همان خانه اول، یا دوست داشتن و نداشتن، بر می‌گردیم. من هرگز نمی‌توانم تصور کنم که مردم لزوماً «باید» از چیزی استقبال کنند یا نکنند. به همان دلیلی که قبل تر

گفته شد، انتخاب مردم به خودشان مربوط می‌شود و از یک انگیزه خاص سرچشمه می‌گیرد. آن انگیزه «تجربه» است. مردم همان‌طور که زندگی را درک می‌کنند، هنر را هم که بسیار نزدیک به زندگی است درک خواهند کرد. این نزدیکی هنر به زندگی چیزی است که هرگز نباید در صحبت‌هایمان در مورد آثار هنری از آن غافل شویم. بسیاری از مردم از آن به‌عنوان یک شکل صوری و ساختگی که محصولی از نبوغ آدمی است صحبت می‌کنند و بر این باوراند که کار آن تغییر و مرتب کردن چیزهایی است که ما را احاطه کرده‌اند، تا آن‌ها را به قالب‌های مرسوم و سنتی ترجمه کنیم. اما این دیدگاه نه‌تنها ما را به جایی نخواهد رساند، بلکه هنر را محکوم به تکرار برخی کلیشه‌های ابدی می‌کند، پیشرفت آن را کوتاه می‌سازد و همه ما را به یک بن‌بست می‌رساند. تنها چیزی که می‌تواند هنر داستان را همچنان استوار نگاه دارد چنگ زدن به کوچک‌ترین نکات زندگی و دنبال کردن ریتم ناموزون و غیرقابل‌پیش‌بینی آن است.

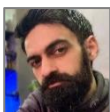
هرچه یک داستان شسته‌رفته تر باشد، این حس را به ما القا می‌کند که داریم یک اثر ساختگی را می‌خوانیم، و هرچه بی‌قاعدگی زندگی را بیشتر به ما نشان دهد، احساس واقعی بودن می‌کنیم. گاهی می‌بینیم که جوری از این موضوع شسته‌رفتگی داستان صحبت می‌شود که گویی این مهم‌ترین رکن داستان است! به نظر من، آقای بزنت هم با صحبت از موضوع «انتخاب» خودش را به شدت در معرض خطر هم‌چین خطایی قرار داده است. هنر لزوماً انتخابی است، اما انتخابی که هدف اصلی آن ساده و کامل بودن است. برای بسیاری از خوانندگان، هنر یعنی پنجره‌های رنگی و چیدن دسته‌ای گل برای خانم گراندی. آن‌ها با چرب‌زبانی کامل طوری به شما القا خواهند کرد که گویی هنر از به تصویر کشیدن هر چیز بدی به دور است. آن‌ها به بدیهیاتی سطحی درباره حد و حدود هنر اشاره می‌کنند، و آن‌قدر می‌گویند که شما را در مورد حد و حدود جهالت به شک می‌اندازند. از دیدگاه من، هیچ اثر هنری خوبی نیست که بدون مقدار زیادی از آزادی به وجود آمده باشد. در نتیجه، در پرتو نوری ماورایی، می‌توان دریافت که قلمرو هنر همه

زندگی، همه احساس، همه مشاهدات، و همه تخیلات است. همان‌طور که آقای بزنت به‌درستی می‌گوید، هنر تماماً تجربه است. این پاسخی مناسب برای همه آن افرادی است که می‌گویند هنر نباید در مورد هیچ‌چیز دردناکی صحبت کند. افرادی که خود را محدود به برخی دستورات عمل‌های ذهنی می‌کنند. مثل همان دستوراتی که در پارک‌های عمومی وجود دارند: «راه رفتن روی چمن‌ها ممنوع! دست زدن به گل‌ها ممنوع! به همراه آوردن سگ ممنوع! حضور در پارک در ساعات شب ممنوع! و یا از سمت راست حرکت کنید!» نویسنده جوان مشتاقی که ما همواره تصور می‌کنیم، بدون دخیل کردن سلیق شخصی کاری از پیش نمی‌برد. چراکه در آن صورت آزادی‌اش نمی‌تواند کمکی به او بکند. درواقع، اولین مزیت استفاده از سلیقه شخصی برای او این خواهد بود که پوچ بودن این قوانین را برایش آشکار می‌سازد. باید اضافه کنیم، چنانچه او سلیقه داشته باشد یعنی نبوغ هم دارد و اظهارنظر غیرمحترمانه‌ای که من قبل‌تر در مورد نبوغ کردم هرگز به این معنا

نیست که در داستان کاربردی ندارد. بلکه یک ابزار کمکی ثانویه است، و کماکان

می‌گوییم که اولین و مهم‌ترین ابزار در داستان نویسی استفاده از واقعیت است.

A Translation of W.S. Merwin's 'For the Anniversary of My Death'



Sepehr Arefmanesh

*Journalist, MA British Studies,
University of Tehran*

About W. S. Merwin

WS Merwin, who has died aged 91, was one of the most honoured and prolific poets in the US. He published some 25 books of poetry, two of which won the Pulitzer Prize, and 18 volumes of translated poetry, as well as stories, plays and essays. Merwin seemed to celebrate life while contesting loss, and was especially concerned with violence and destruction, of both people and planet. He restored a farm in south-west France, and in Hawaii eventually replanted some 3,000 acres devastated by timber harvests and the pineapple industry. It reflected his own poetic work, engaged with both the bleak and beautiful.

Translator's Remark

Merwin's poems are often filled with nostalgia, love, and longing. They also reflect his interest in nature, history, and other cultures. His poetry has been described as being both simple and complex. The simplicity comes from its brevity, yet the complexity comes from the depth of meaning found within each line. I did my best to translate the piece into Persian, while preserving its brevity and conveying its deep meaning.

برای سالگرد مرگم

هرسال بی آن که بدانم از آن روز گذشته ام
وقتی واپسین زبانه های آتش برایم دست تکان دهند
و سکوت

مسافر خستگی ناپذیر را
چون پرتوی ستاره ای کم سو
رهسپار کند.

از آن پس دیگر
خود را در زندگی چون در جامه ای غریب نخواهم دید
شگفت زده از زمین
و عشق یک زن
و بی شرمی بشر

مانند امروز که پس از سه روز باران می نویسم
که می شنوم چکاوک می خواند و باران نمی بارد
و سر فرو می آورم در برابر آنچه نمی دانم

Every year without knowing it I have passed the day
When the last fires will wave to me
And the silence will set out
Tireless traveler
Like the beam of a lightless star

Then I will no longer
Find myself in life as in a strange garment
Surprised at the earth
And the love of one woman
And the shamelessness of men
As today writing after three days of rain
Hearing the wren sing and the falling cease
And bowing not knowing to what

Everywhere;

Translation of Two Pieces of Poetry from Emran Salahi



Amir Salar Sahrarou

BA Student English

Translation, Imam Khomeini

International University of

Qazvin

Emran Salahi (1947–2006) was an Iranian poet and satirist who wrote in Persian and Azeri Turkish languages. Emran is primarily known for his satire and humorous works in various magazines such as Ghol Agha and Bokhara. He also wrote poetry in different forms, including ghazal, blank, and free verse. Emran's poetry is both serious and humorous, and by humor, I don't mean that it can make you laugh out loud; rather, I mean it gives you a positive feeling which makes you smile and be happy that you are alive and breathing; in other words, it makes life beautiful in your eyes. The simplicity of the language combined with humane experiences and feelings such as deep sorrow with a little touch of romanticism and the use of the elements of the natural world makes his poetry stand alone

from his counterparts. Yashar Salahi, Emran's son, once wrote that Emran composed poetry almost every day, and he did it only for the sake of poetry and his own soul. Emran himself once put it, "I write satire for people and poetry for myself."

Translator's Remark

Now by the time I translated these poems, Cheshme Publication hadn't put out Emran's complete poetry in a two-volume book. I have gathered some of his poetry books before. I have this habit that when I read a poetry book if the poem I'm reading talks to my soul; I grab a pencil and start writing its translation next to the poem without any hesitation. I do this in both languages: Persian to English, and vice versa. As I said, these poems talked to my soul, mesmerized me, raised my heartbeat, and compelled me to translate them into English. In these poems, we can see a poet, with keen eyes and a pure heart, who can sense existential crisis, who can see the lonely among the crowd, who can feel people fading away even in their own homes among their loved ones, but above all, we can see a poet who despite every imaginable sadness and sorrow, teaches us that poetry is everywhere, we just have to lean and pick it up.

همه جا

شعر،

همه جا ریخته است

فقط کافی ست خم شوی

و آن را از روی زمین برداری

شعر،

همه جا

به زلالی جاری ست

بنشین

و تشنگی را بنشان

شعر،

همه جا روپیده ست

در چشمانت

وقتی که لب فرو می بندی

و مرا نگاه می کنی

Everywhere

Poetry,
is dispersed everywhere
you just have to lean
and pick it up

Poetry,
limpidly flows
everywhere
just sit
and sate your thirst

Poetry,
has grown everywhere
in your eyes
when you fall soundless
and you are looking at me.

گاهی

گاهی صدای زیبایی

در مرداب فراموشی می‌روید

تنهایی با دستی لرزان صدا را

می‌چیند و می‌بوید

و آن را در گلدانی می‌گذارد

Sometimes

Sometimes,
an exquisite voice
sprouts in the swamps of oblivion.
Loneliness, with trembling hands
plucks and smells it
and plants the voice
in a vase

Translation of a Poem by Parnian Sharifi

(Published in Poems from the Land of Wonders: The Actual Iran, by Fabrizio Frosini)



Maryam Siah Mansouri

MA in English Language and Literature from Al-Zahra University

Translator's Remarks

Translating a text consists of some challenges and this specific text is not an exception. It is a poem and translation of poetry is more complicated than other genres, since you have to find not only the true words but also to connect those words in poetic form so that the reader feels and relates to the literary mode of the newly translated poem. In this translation, to find rhyming Persian words in order to keep the rhyme of the original text was quite challenging. However, I

preferred to chose assonance and consonance words so as to maintain and transfer the content of the poem, which unites the readers to experience the spirit of the poem. In the book in which this poem is published the presentation of human experiences in Iran is conveyed through the language of poetry which is attempted to be less tainted with political insinuations. Therefore, a more unbiased picture of Iran is portrayed which seems to be more identifiable for people around the world. As far as the poet is an Iranian, the readers are likely to have no trouble understanding romantic atmosphere narrated in the text. Nonetheless, translation of the metaphors and other figures of speech were rather challenging and time taking for the translator.

حرف هایت را اشتباه برداشت کردم
 درست همان شبی که در آغوش هم انبوه جمعیت را پشت سر گذاشتیم
 شهر فرنگی از افکار چون نور می درخشیدند
 با خود اندیشیدم پایان چه با ترس و لرز به ما دست تکان می داد!

قلب و ذهنم را جمع کردم و حفره ای خالی برای تو گذاشتم
 با این تصور که زندگی کنی، همچون روحی خرم و مسرور
 بعد تو پیش من آمدی، تمامت را نشانم دادی
 صدایم زدی تا بگویی که چقدر برای تو بی همتایم
 حتی بعد از دلخوری از تو هم نتوانستم به راحتی ترکت کنم!

آن زمان که بازوانت را به دورم حلقه زدی، پرشور
 و ناگهان جوش و خروشی از درونم تمام دردهایت را شست
 زمان امید داشت تا ابد در آغوشت بایستد
 تا جلوی اشک هایت را بگیرد، تا در خوشحالی پنهانشان کند!

به چشمانم زل زدند، آن دو جرقه پر نور
 دوباره سقوط کردم، در اقیانوس نگاه
 سفری به دورن، گام هایی سرشار از لذت
 راه بی پایانی که قلب مرا با تو یکی می کنند

Misunderstood your words that night
As walked out the crowd so tight
Kaleidoscope of thoughts radiating bright
End, thought I, was waving us with fright!

Packed my heart and mind, left you an empty hole
Expecting you'd live, like a merry soul
Then you came to me, showing up your whole
Called me out to say, how to you I'm sole
Even after the fray, I couldn't simply go!

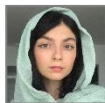
When you wrapped your arms, around me so warm
Instant rush of blood, faded away your harm
Time hoped would freeze, forever in your arm
Held back all your tears, hid them in your charm!

Looked me in the eye, those sparks thrusting lights
Once again I fall, deep in ocean sights
Venture leaked in lungs, at once tread delights
Endless routes where mine, with your heart unites

Cinema

*“Perhaps our eyes are merely a blank film
which is taken from us after our deaths to be
developed elsewhere and screened as our life
story in some infernal cinema or dispatched
as microfilm into the sidereal void” -
Jean Baudrillard*

For years, Cinema and Literature, has brought together notable articles for those of us that read, write, and watch. The articles presented in this issue engage with some of the most prominent research fields such as Cultural Studies and Post-colonialism; both of which have made great contributions to Film Studies. I’m extremely proud of our contributors for this issue whose amazing work represent the values of Threshold and I hope upon reading them, our dear readers, enjoy them as much as I did.



Ghazal Nessari Poortak

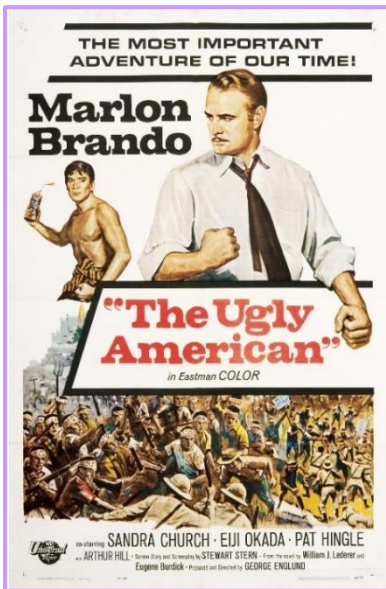
MA, English Literature

The (Im)Possibility of Real Democracy in *'The Ugly American'*



Hengameh Kharrazi

*Phd Student, English Literature,
Shahid Beheshti University*



Colonialism is a definite offshoot of European philosophy of human mind, laid bare in the East which was colonized to behave in conformity to colonizers' expectations. In doing so, Europe is unnoticeably disclosing its very intimate desires for much closer

scrutiny. One can say that the Western Reason is playing a role of a patient under treatment by the therapeutic East

whose share in the process is to let the patient talk, symbolize, and dictate and to observe what the complexities and contradictions are. In a sense, the history seems to have turned upside-down as it has always been a Western urge to cure, fill the absences and acculturate; but now it succumbs to cure and deculturation by the therapist. This does not necessarily mean that the West cannot assume the role of a therapist as they are traditionally deemed to be therapists and reformists of maimed Eastern brute throughout the history, but it shows how each is negotiating their differences and roles in a new light. This swap of roles is a recent experience which has manifested a current dual reality and consequently raised a series of questions like what is real? East? West? Or both? Can we have both of them as real? In this essay, the Lacanian tripartite relationship, the imaginary-real-symbolic,

is placed in the colonial context of the film *The Ugly American*, to examine the pivotal role Lacanian “real” (Stavrakakis 24) can play in the formation of Real Democracy.

The 1963 movie *The Ugly American* is based on a highly influential political novel *The Ugly American*, published in 1958. The story is set in a fictional Southeast Asian country, Sarkhan, amid the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. In fact, in the 1950s the United States had become the world's strongest military power with a booming economy. The Cold War was also a definitive element of the 1950s when American leaders were highly worried about Soviet Union's expansive tendencies. The spread of communism was also seen as a great threat to Capitalism.

Soviet Union politicians resented the US mainly for not recognizing the USSR as a legitimate member of the global community. The post-World War conflict was a key driving force in shaping the United States' domestic and foreign policy during the era. A nationwide concern was on the rise among US citizens about a likely collapse of their country by the communists. The federal government started an initiative in the early 1950s to detect subversives and put an end to un-American activities. As a result, tens of thousands of Americans lost their jobs, as well as their families and friends, in the anti-communist “Red Scare” of the 1950s.

The United States also came up with a new foreign policy framework, containment, to counter the expansion of communism abroad. The Truman Doctrine, also known as the

policy of containment, was President Harry Truman's foreign policy that the US would provide political, military, and economic aid to democratic countries under the threat of communist influences to prevent the expansion of communism. The policy marked a step away from the US's previous isolationist policies, which discouraged the US from becoming involved in foreign affairs. For the US, Asia was a potential breeding ground for communism after the Second World War. Theories surrounding the spread of communism and events after the War fueled the belief that a US policy of containment was necessary. In fact, after WW II, these states were left in a political vacuum and with ruined economies. Countries in this condition were, in US political opinion, vulnerable to communist expansion.

The policy was seen as naïve and arrogant by many. The unworkability of the policy was proven in Vietnam, a country highly similar to the fictional Sarkhan, where the US failed to prevent the dominance of the communist-backed forces, bearing huge losses. The Ugly American tries to simply shed light on the loopholes in the United States' external approach to combating communism, chiefly by neglecting to take the local people's needs, culture, and language into account.

The movie depicts Sarkhan as the battlefield wherein warring political figures, in their attempt to bring about peace to the region, get caught in their own power and theoretical rigour. An American Ambassador, McWhite, has been chosen as the representative of the United States to calm the regional conflict, through a local leader called Deong, who has gained

in popularity among the Sarkhanese, to finish Freedom Road project, and wipe Communist traces off the face of Sarkhan. The night he went to Deong's house for the first time after a 15-year interval, he realized that Deong is not America's friend anymore. Antagonism has replaced their friendship. Deong, instead, trusts Communists to be able to overcome McWhite and Kwen Sai, the Prime Minister of Sarkhan, whose government is obedient to American schemes. Communists, with the help of Deong who had the support of Sarkhan's people, will ultimately manage to overthrow the government and that sealed the failure of McWhite's project in the region. Meanwhile, he was informed by Kwen Sai that communists are to assassinate Deong the instant they come to the throne. After the treasonable intent of Communists has been disclosed, Deong decided to compromise with McWhite to make a

coalition with Kwen Sai, but his right-hand man killed him. the power relation between these political figures will be analyzed, here, by demonstrating the imaginary power in the region as opposed to the Symbolic-America. Deong has become a game-changer in wavering the fantasy of absolute American Democracy represented by McWhite; however, whether the psycho-political conversion has turned out to be a tragic event or otherwise is a point at issue.

‘Real’ in Lacan includes signifiers of all kinds which have not been able to pinpoint a fixed meaning as it is comprised of both imaginary and symbolic. The imaginary and the symbolic are two psychic spheres in Lacan, the first of which is the first stage where we see our image in the mirror as a total whole, but upon the realization that our specular image is not the same as our

own image, we begin looking for that image that represents us as a whole. So human beings' narcissistic search for itself has started; The symbolic, on the other side, is set to accord meaning, language, and value to that lack, "to symbolically institutionalize the real lack" (Stavrakakis 74). If Real is to consist of both, the compound will be a present lack, "a signifier of the missing signified" (Lewis 190), forceful as the force of all lost objects within it, but a substantial volume of lacks. It turns out to be the most colossal Object a. The Ugly American is the exposition of that American full speech, in possession of the truth, advice, and treatment, but it has lost its meaning when exposed to Sarkhanese speech which has its own version of the truth. The American full speech cannot be severed from the Sarkhanese empty speech, and inevitably, the place they both settle in is the real speech. The third speech the

HIS MOST POWERFUL
AND COMPELLING ROLE!

MARLON BRANDO



The UGLY AMERICAN

Eastman COLOR
Co-starring
SANDRA EIJI PAT
CHURCH · OKADA · HINGLE
Screen Story and Script by From the novel by
ARTHUR HILL / STEWART STERN · WILLIAM J. LEDERER
Produced and Directed by
EUGENE BURDICK · GEORGE ENGLUND A UNIVERSAL PICTURE

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movie has presented might be the language of Sarkhanese communists, a divergence from that of the colonized but in a new guise. Deong's death, as a Sarkhanese Nationalist, in the hand of Sarkhanese communists causes the state of real to be indeterminate once more; here they have a common soil that is Sarkhan and this has made us believe in the unified independent real of the Sarkhanese, but Communists are considered an adverse mutation of Nationalists. Real is all and "None" and it is standing on one side of this tripartition, it includes all but it is none

at a time. The notion of Catachresis in Derrida, that is the incompleteness of meaning is used by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to show the dishonesty of names in the postcolonial context; the fact that Deong is called by different names, a nationalist, communist, or neutralist, shows the unreliability of these labels.

Lacan's real is what is composed of none; it is devoid of anything that the symbolic as a signifier imparts. The real, according to Lacan, is the self-belonging entity that is in need of nothing and its presence is reliant on its own. Both characters, McWhite and Deong, are fervently treading the self-same path a thousand times, each time repeating themselves and their movement is just anchored to themselves. It is like a movement from an American "I" to the same

American “I” or on the other side the Sarkhanese to the Sarkhanese: “It is a reflexive loop of self-hood, selfsameness, without referring to the others” (Lewis 157), and their final solution is to be what the other is not. The scene where both are embroiled in the heated argument of who is who, shows that their system of signification has tilted towards one side only and if their friendship should prevail, there should not be any Reformist America or ardent Patriotic Sarkhan.

McWhite’s American Symbolic intrudes upon the Third World, here Sarkhan, and castrates the child _ Sarkhanese people _ and their representative, Deong, from the motherland; if they are not castrated from the mother and have not entered the realm of symbolic, they are believed to malfunction. This is because the child in Lacan should

abandon the mother figure to be able to enter society and take on social roles. In order for Sarkhan to work properly, democratically, and rationally, America should give its culture to refine their needs. In their view, this dysfunctionality is caused by the imaginary relationship of the motherland with its people, which has been stuck at the primitiveness of a call, a call for just meeting its own needs, just like screaming toddlers crying to get what they want and their mothers who indulge their every whim. Sarkhanese self-image is just reshooting its own image; but after a while, Deong understands his self-same nationalistic ambitions are made borderless by Symbolic-America, and this is the moment when his naturally-bound regional needs have found the source of fulfillment not just within himself but outside, somewhere the other resides. He is now looking for his lost need from a foreign

image other than that of his own; but the problem is that these demands will be only met by the desire of the symbolic-other; as the key to Deong's and McWhite's friendship success 15 years ago was Deong's peaceful surrender to the American Symbolic and keeping his imaginary relationship with his motherland in abeyance.

His emphasizing the fact that he had been “wearing two faces” (*The Ugly American*, 0:44:54-0:44:57), one friendly to America, the other hostile to America for the sake of Sarkhanese people's insistence on their demands is suggestive of his embracing both; as Spivak said, “So, because in the spiritual domain the East was superior to the West. What was necessary was to cultivate the material techniques of modern Western civilization while retaining and strengthening the

distinctive spiritual essence of the national culture” (Spivak, Critique 61). That night we saw a different Deong; from a nationalist who used to keep his nation’s spiritual origin alongside the material American, he is now inquiring for his land’s complete spirituality after his search for his lost need in his American friend proves to be a total failure. The fact is that the imaginary demands of his nation have not been fulfilled by the name-of-the-father, America.

As the clash proceeds between the friends, McWhite’s American values have been disputed as he thought insistently the Freedom Road Americans are building harbors the salvation of nations, from their misery. Theirs is the sole Signifier which is signifying itself, so shrouded in its

completeness without exception. The night, Deong was pointing his finger straight in McWhite's face, he realized that what Americans have signified so far was mere incompleteness. Sarkhan has changed, Deong's beliefs stand outside the unique American, and this is the time McWhite understood the economic road-constructing aid, the ambition of capitalist has not been finalized. The American Symbolic does signify incompleteness of Sarkhanese project.

The symbolic has become replete with holes, as McWhite is punctured the instant Deong described America as "aggression, war-mongering, and Wall Street selling tanks" (The Ugly American, 0:50:00-0:50:10); on that instant, he felt "the absence of a complete finite totality of the signifier" (Lewis 166), the dizziness and lack of sobriety he felt. Because of these

exact holes, its completeness does not take place without the real. The real is all those holes in the body of the symbolic; it is “the Real of a trauma whose impact shatters the symbolic coordinates of the subject's horizon of meaning” (Zizek, Introduction 2). If put in a colonial context, the colonizers’ all-encompassing intellect cannot achieve that ultimate freedom because the real is leaking into its freedom. In the movie this leakage is embodied in the scenes where the murder takes place, an American’s neck is snipped, and Sarkhanese people assault the American ambassador and his wife as a token of dissatisfaction. The story has changed upon McWhite’s return to Sarkhan as he said: “When I left here in 1945, everybody was there and smiling faces, and nice people, and I got practically buried alive in flowers and this afternoon I just got

buried alive, something's changed in 15 years, I don't know”
(The Ugly American, 0:43:37-0:43:56).

The infinity of traces left on the Symbolic's self-understanding has made the Americans perceive the Compounds, their place of residence in Sarkhan, seem to be too distant from the people. This has caused them not to be close enough to control riots. They have not noticed that even if they leave farther, Sarkhanese are there, Sarkhan as the real-of-the symbolic is the impossibility of the Americans' sole dominance. But what if the imaginary Sarkhan sets foot in, and threaten Americans' so-called dominance with their rights to the motherland. What if the Americans' claim to symbolic Name of completeness faces the possibility of the Sarkhanese image of completeness? We need here a stitch to make the

coincidence of imaginary desires with the symbolic ones feasible. After the Sarkhanese people flocked to the airport at Deong's call, to make their insistence visible, the ambassador convene a meeting with his fellow American colleagues, and to his surprise, he realized that Americans are not cognizant of what is happening around. He used three terms "confusion, ignorance, and indifference" (The Ugly American, 0:32:00-0:32:04) to describe the state of Americans in Sarkhan and offered them facts instead; he means what they had observed was just the fantasy of an unquestionable authority which is functioning like animal imaginary; every image of their whim coincides with that of the nature and their mental image accords with that object in the world, attributing that image he desires to the real facts of the world. The imaginary is responsible for actualization of these in-depth desires as Spivak

puts forth, ““The unspeculable turned into the specular by normative deviation, the imaginary; it is in the interests of guarding the infinitely repeatable as the same: the absolute symmetry of the Idea; the patronymic; the seamless signifying system of the symbolic.” (Spivak, *Crimes of Identity* 212)

However, this compatibility is believed to be the creation of “distorted imagination” as it represents the likeness of its own species in those objects in the surroundings: McWhite, similarly, is ensnared in the same imaginary specular image of himself in the other: Deong is viewed by McWhite just as a friend, with the same interests and similar American egoic self-image. But, after the argument, McWhite sees him like a neutral object, resistant to Americans’ recording image of the

third world. Deong does not belong to McWhite but he prefers to be ‘His own self’. From that night onwards, American imagination is germane to the other’s. McWhite was just asking for a little reassurance” so that he could see the parts in its identity which have not been exposed yet and never to be seen. He has turned to see Deong as the one who is capable of filling him in, to fill in the gaps he himself has left vacant, to show him the other side of his body which has always evaded the sight. Spivak acknowledged the role “The Asiatic mode of Production” (Spivak, Critique 71) has played in “making visible the fault lines within the account of history as European modes of production” (ibid. 96), and Deong does the same in his relation to McWhite. The end result of such encounters is the fact that subjects cannot be reduced to some essentialist placement in history, and following what Spivak points out,

the Asiatic Mode “can supplement the lacuna within the dominant account in such a way that the self-identity of dominance begins to waver” (ibid. 97). McWhite at the beginning of the movie used to have an essentialist fantasy of synthesis, and democracy as such, but later on he is made to see his lack of essence. From now onwards, to prop up the American Identity back on feet, they have to construct American Freedom Road not to the east but right to the north to Sarkhanese borders, to benefit locals and at the same time to weaken communism: “it would drive a harpoon right into the heart of the Communist Concentration” (The Ugly American, 1:11:32-1:11:40), according to McWhite. America “was not obliged to supplement but to supervene (Spivak, Critique 97)”, the way the American ambassador was plotting the road-building change of direction could be the unexpected

change in his orientation as well, as an act of resistance to survive, not dominate anymore.

But still, the danger of American supervenience poses a threat to Sarkhan. Deong was in turn “asking for a little reassurance” (The Ugly American, 0:51:47-0:51:54) and by that we mean, even his own image of Sarkhanese Totality as a unified body needs to be filled by McWhite, but his need is that of identification, not dominance; Deong’s world is the world of spatial unities, i.e., Sarkhan’s totalized image, as Nationalists perceive; having said that, Deong’s relationship with Kwen Sai, Sarkhan’s prime minister, and Munsung, a communist opposition Sarkhanese leader, resembles that irreducible gap Lacan describes in the mirror stage, where the infant realizes its uncoordinated, fragmentary self. The three

Sarkhanese power figures, though coming from the same origin and wish for Sarkhan, have trifurcated; each was looking for an external peace-administrating Symbolic guide by which they can return to much-needed unity. All three Sarkhanese mentioned above have a specular image of themselves which contains nothing but difference:

“Obviously, this symbolic dimension of power is different from its imaginary dimension. Imaginary power is limited within a destructive game of rivalry between equals. Symbolic power, on the other hand, is based on the recognition of difference, and makes possible the institution of a certain order: the imaginary destruction of the other can be replaced by a co-existence by pact” (Stavrakakis 19)

Communist use of master keywords according to Spivak, is the instance of the theoretical rigor they have adopted as their imaginary power, merely that of Marxism, the fantasy of giving voice to the industrial working class, but in doing so, other underprivileged individuals will be ignored. Here, Spivak is using Gramsci's critique of Marx's monolithic language of the industrial working class which has ignored rural peasantry lacking in any coherent systematic unity as that of the working class. The scene where communists brought their balloons to land right down on peasant's farms and committed manslaughter and shot the father of a peasant family in front of his wife holding their child tightly. Upon realization of this imaginary split, they are alienated from those who used to be friends with and settle in the symbolic, for giving stability to their identity. What Kwen Sai puts Sarkhan's identity on is

that of another symbolic guide, that of America, and what communists have found to mend this scratch in the image of Sarkhan is their retreat into that of Communism. Seeing it through Spivak's lens, "the Marxist model of historical change, which anti-colonial nationalist leaders had originally invoked to try to mobilise the subaltern" (Morton 48), was doomed to fail. Communists in unity with Deong commit betrayal, and although needing Deong for their cause, they decided to kill him. In their attempt not to give in to the Symbolic America, they rested assured in another enigmatic desire Deong had been unaware of. Deong was just looking for the American Other as the sole place wherein he can actualize his desires, and failing to do so he trusted in communism's based on their common interests: to cut the hand of America and its assignees off the land. He was surprised by the desire of other which was

to actualize the fantasy of communism in Sarkhan, not the fantasy of a free nation the one Deong wished for. Deong became the means of filling the communist void, the void created by not having Sarkhanese people's support. the imaginary completeness and unity of Deong and the Communists was just a surface appearance which proved to be sheer Fraud for the sake of filling that lack in communism.

Communists are not that ego-ideal for nationalists like Deong. They are the metonymic substitutes for the same void; they are not able to stand as the full Other, as their image of peace with nation is not encompassing the whole people. Deong is called a communist by some Americans as he had had some night meetings with their leader; but towards the end of the movie, their friendship and common goals bifurcate,

Deong has not found in Munsung the self-same image in the mirror and their object a is placed in different spots; as Lacan said,

The specular image is an error, [...], the origin of the ego and its fundamental misrecognition [...] insofar as the subject is mistaken, he believes that he has his own image in front of him; [. . .] if he knew [. . .] there are only the most deformed relationships in any identifiable fashion between his left-hand side and his right-hand side, he would not dream of identifying himself with the image in the mirror (Lewis 193).

On the other side, the self-same image Deong found in the Prime Minister of Sarkhan is considered a foreign image from the beginning as the government is working in the interest of Americans; Native intellectuals those who had the throne of

Sarkhan had long ago forsaken their subjecthood in favour of Americans and placed Sarkhan's freedom in their hands, to be part of that fantastical suturing, stitching their fantasy of power to that of the Americans. The bourgeois national liberation of Kwen Sai proves to be US Nationalism: the king of Sarkhan accepted to declare the Freedom Road as the Road which brings about Sarkhanese people's prosperity. The king's finding the nation's prosperity and relief in this great highway, Freedom Road is indicative of their displacement of Sarkhanese Nationalism with that of US, "US Nationalism, nationalism masquerading as globalism" (Spivak, Discipline 108). In the case of Kwen Sai, it can be said that "The subject's very guise is the lack itself" (Fink 246), lack of Sarkhanese people themselves; this lack has occupied a space which is known to be empty; at least they have been given a place to be

empty and to be able to fill this vacancy, they have to place their emptiness in the symbolic structure of America.

Deong's nationalism is of another kind, different from that of Sarkhan's government; Deong is the medium by which both Communists and America wanted to articulate their certainties through. Deong was believed to be "as important to Sarkhan as de Gaulle was to France, he may be the single most popular man in his country today" (The Ugly American, 0:14:30-0:14:40), McWhite said and for communists, he is important as well. They say, "Kwen Sai and McWhite has given you the signal to lead your people in a crusade to real independence, the country will never be more united against them than tomorrow" (The Ugly American, 1:23:39-1:23:53); even the first hostile force against Deong, Kwen Sai, to the end of the

movie, accepted his error and said, “Democratic reforms are essential now, I agree” (The Ugly American, 1:45:13-1:45:16), he has finally corrected his error of not letting Deong have a share, as Deong’s not letting in was tantamount to expelling people from his government, which is going to trigger revolutionary aspirations. Kwen Sai continues, “If you can find Deong, please tell him that. Perhaps a coalition between us can solve this situation, without further bloodshed” (The Ugly American, 1:45:17-1:45:25). At first, Kwen Sai equals Democracy to giving a dagger to a savage child; Yes, imaginary thoughts of establishing a self-unified totality can become aggressive as in doing so, for completing Sarkhan’s incompleteness, and giving back the peace robbed of the country, Deong will be looking for this lost piece wherever possible and the ambiguity of where this external place would

be is terrifying for all as he could cause people to revolt against them; Deong's imaginary power is considerably more than the other equals, as all are lacking in something which Deong has; he is the supplement to the lack they have, that is popularity among all Sarkhanese people. Deong, at least, has formed a total self-image with his own people, outnumbering the rest and most importantly, suturing the rift with the fantastical image of all people in total.

Non-American image of democracy would not have been actualized if such split among Sarkhanese different denominations had not existed; in fact, in order for unity and order to prevail, this insurmountable lack and division should be recognized and truly accepted:

The external antagonism between competing political forces, and most importantly, of the internal split marking the identity of all these forces... inscribes deep within our political culture the recognition that none of these forces can sublimate its internal split (Stavrakakis 117).

The lack which is in the film defined as the limit of all political forces is impossible to be eliminated, if so, it would turn into a dystopia and there would be no lack to fill out; the lack all want to fill is a means of obtaining pleasure. This means, beyond the lack, there will be promise of the object of Desire, something you may be striving for, but when the lack is given the pretense of an unreal fantasy of harmony, the search for one's desirable object is brought to halt. You will not be seeking what you really want any longer as the harmonious

order has obviated the need for desiring more, not knowing the desire has been subsumed into the other's Desire and your own dream has been coaxed into dreaming the other's dream. Whenever everything is displayed in total harmony, no one will protest as there is no deficiencies or lack to complain about. So, division at least promises a utopian good, though unattainable it is; there is still hope of putting aside the obstacle, filling out the lack, and reaching the ultimate good. In the case of Sarkhan, the conflict caused by Sarkhanese imaginary is just aiming to sublimate into the utopian Ideal, and their fantasy lures them into believing the Ideal they have been looking for is theirs though in reality, it is merely another Symbolic other's. The image, if symbolized will be the image of that symbol and the story of a forgotten self will start all over. However, what should have been symbolized was their

own lack: Deong is the sole person who has not found fantasy of a free Sarkhan bound to Communist or American symbolic; Deong has become the Impossibility as he has not found meaning in the Symbolic, and in the process of ex-sisting (living outside), that is projecting himself forever outwards to finally bridge that split and reach Sarkhanese Type of Freedom, he lied dead.

We are always caught in a certain vel, that we are always forced to choose between meaning and ex-sistence: the price we have to pay for access to meaning is the exclusion of ex-sistence (Zizek, Awry 106).

The impossibility of overcoming this lack, in the Lacanian sense, is the ‘real’; the real is unable to represent and symbolize; similarly, Deong is unable to represent the imaginary

Sarkhanese Peaceful nation due to its fundamental split and he is not able to symbolize this lack in an American sense. The part McWhite went to Deong's camp to inform him of the news of betrayal against him, Deong insisted that he had gained what he wanted and there was no need to have a coalition with Kwen Sai. McWhite told him, "you haven't gained anything, Deong" (The Ugly American, 1:49:10-1:49:12), and told him "if you don't call on that radio, you will not only be throwing away your own life, but you'll be killing Sarkhan" (The Ugly American, 1:49:51-1:49:59); the real has no choice but to access to the meaning or otherwise he will be a dead image of his desire. Either he was to be defined by the American Symbolic, Kwen Sai's, or that of the communists. Accepting kwen Sai's coalition means that he has to resume that American Symbolic he once had fled from, and

due to communist treason, his retreat into rebellious child of Sarkhan was not probable. He was, then, killed.

McWhite, in his trying to institutionalize lack of harmony, was attempting to replace it with that of America and this is where the problem lies. Assimilation of Sarkhan into its own formation of desire is the same as the Totalisable relation Symbolic has with regard to the other. McWhite wanted to cover the lack of harmony with a utopian Freedom Road and make Sarkhanese people accept the impossibility of order, economic gain and progress; these can be just given to them only by America. McWhite wanted to remove all local aberrations with democratic intents, intents which are just American, though friendly they are, not knowing that the very act of removal is non-democratic and may cause locals' revolt

against his conformist democracy; instead, democracy which McWhite has not been able to see until later in the movie is democracy of disharmony; not until McWhite recognizes in that lack the possibility of mediating between Deong and Kwen Sai (America's Sarkhanese assignee) can he triangulate their relationship in a non-totalitarian sense of unity. "Their recognition and institutionalisation are the only way of coming to terms with the human condition after Auschwitz and the Gulags (Stavrakakis 117)"

Deong has divulged the unreality of American completeness; that they should bend their whims to the other and one-sided signification is not possible as Sarkhanese people may place bombs to ruin their project or place obstacles on their way. In the act of signification, the Symbolic fails to

signify and get at a determinate signified and they realized ‘the other’ evades interpretation. Deong has become ineffable at times for McWhite since Deong is always in search for fullness, in different places not just in the symbolic-America. Their problem is the same predicament, that of abhorring that void each time emerges and collapses the fantasy of compromise with a symbolized whole, which is able to represent them. So, the mask put on McWhite’s face has been lifted, and the Myth of America has been disclosed: the impossibility of once-and-for-all reading of Sarkhan. Deong as the impossibility of meaning, (not lending himself to definition and not being able to define), can be the instigator of Real Democracy which has been formed around nothingness exactly the way a potter robs his hands around nothingness to form the clay. McWhite said “we can’t save those people who have already gone” (The Ugly

American, 1:53:06-1:53:07) as the result of the political enmesh in Sarkhan both are held responsible for, “but we can keep others from dying” (The Ugly American, 1:53:09-1:53:10), with the aid of Real Democracy. This is the understanding on the side of McWhite: to consider the lack _ the same aborted project of a peaceful fantasy _ as a constitutive vacuum around which they can both live. He came to Deong by himself, face-to-face, to tell him we should not cry over bloodshed out of our narcissistic imaginary constructs, but we can save the real: the end of the previous failure and the promise of a new possibility, the suturing of the lack by the sewing needle of Real Democracy. McWhite encountered the impossible real. When McWhite came to the American Embassy and a journalist asked him, “we gonna lose this country, Sir?” (The Ugly American, 1:56:58-1:57:00), what

McWhite said, “well, we never had this country” (The Ugly American, 1:57:00-1:57:02) is the indication that his American Symbolic’s’ fantasmatic reality has been dislocated.

But what has happened to Deong? Perhaps, Deong is Lacan’s barred subject. The barred subject as he is, Deong has become a plaything for the Communists and America as each wants to offer Deong his object a, that is Peace, the way they want to. Lacan’s barred subject in relation to the Other’s Desire is worthy of consideration; the subject’s lost desire is within the Other, as this is the Other who robbed him of his desire; the lost desire Deong is looking for has caused Deong to be moving to the Other, each time to a different other, once to the symbolic America, the other time, to the imaginary Communists, and since this Object has been separated from

him, he has been changed or moulded into what each wants. The problem with Deong is that his own imaginary, the fantasy of a Peaceful Sarkhan, the need of people for a decent free life, has always been used for the other's desire. And this traumatic experience he has gone through is the Trauma of Real, which always carries that mask of expulsion. Deong is the impossibility of Communist and American representations as such, and hence, his nationalistic desire has become unrepresentable. Real is the internal withdrawal of cathexis, as he could not find the object of his desire anywhere, he retreats into the fantastical image of peace he lacks. Real "began, naturally enough, by presenting, in relation to symbolic substitutions and imaginary variations, a function of constancy: 'the real is that which always returns to the same place'. It then became that before which the imaginary faltered,

that over which the symbolic stumbles, that which is refractory, resistant. Hence the formula: ‘the real is the impossible’” (Lacan, *Ecrits* 11). This is a return to the fundamental split he had gone through in the face of the imaginary. Being robbed of his subjectivity, Deong has initiated his non-subjectal search, but failed to fill in the lack outside. In consequence, the object-loss outside caused him to be searching more for himself, but he is the subject-loss as well and become extinguished.



Instead of looking for the ideal, the lack should be searched for again and again so that a symbolic recognition of the irreducibility of the real will be formed. We need to acknowledge the impossibility of representing this fullness, neither in ourselves, within the borders of a country, nor outside. So, the imaginary fantasy stops creating illusory fullness which is hung by a thread to reality. “The withdrawal of cathexis is the withdrawal of significance from the real world

(Spivak, Critique 5)”, this means that, we are not obsessively putting ourselves outside but inside, in that one is placing the object a in himself/herself. Nonetheless, this de-cathexis and internal return is also impossible, as the emplacement of this object within you as the realization of Peace, may be regarded as lack of peace to others and yours can be disturbing to their objective reality (for example, Deong’s Nationalistic Peace has been considered dangerous for Communists). Deong has lost its value and was killed, then.

Desire is embodied in inhumane shapes as a-social variants like extreme Nationalism, Communism (extreme anti-capitalism), Extreme capitalism. Each one of the nations, or parties, relates to Peace, as a thing to relate to through fantasy. They have created the image of Peace they aspire to and the

image can represent itself if given meaning to by a linguistic symbol: still, what they need to cling to is the symbolic other; 'object a' is composed of the image of the desire subsumed in the letter 'a, which is itself a symbol of something; Deong has become the colossal object a, the bearer of a blurry picture of peace, i.e., unpleasant blurring, which is not a picture of anything anymore and accordingly signify nothing; he became the impossible real, that meaningless event whose life was cut short. McWhite had not remained the representative ambassador of American Democracy anymore, they are crossed out of the previous ordering.

McWhite's final speech after Deong's Death was switched off as he was making his final "appeal" to each American; the fantasy of a Totalisable symbolic America was not McWhite's

fantasy anymore and he does not identify with American Ideal but with the objective real which is not a fantasmatically-supported symbolic construct. McWhite's truth is also 'the real' which reveals the Symbolic truth to be not-all; Deong and McWhite were dead wood, not useful anymore, they have become a taint in the mirror, hindering Communists and Americans' construction of their self-representation; Deong and McWhite have become unrepresentable and they offered a bad bokeh (blur) quality image which is capable of showing nothing. In the case of McWhite, who is The Ugly American, his remarks at the end were against what Americans want to hear, "we had the same passion Deong had, and that these other new leaders have, and unless we recognize their fight for independence to be part of our own, and then, we drive them to seek understanding somewhere else" (The Ugly American,

1:58:07-1:58:22), showed that he wanted to recognize their lack, America should be attempting to construct new representations of this real, but the TV was turned off and the representation of the real has just nipped in the bud by kicking both McWhite and Deong out of the scene.

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The Truman Show, the Culture Industry and Ideology

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After having watched *The Truman show*, directed by Peter Weir, I would argue that the award-winning movie can be deemed as a critique on the culture industry and the undeniable control it has over the masses. It is believed that our capitalist society has stepped into a new level of ideological system which Adorno and Horkheimer terms as the culture industry (Wake and Malpas 41). As Wake and Malpas believe,

the culture industry has become “the new opium of the masses” establishing conformism among people which is portrayed in the movie (41).

The Truman Show portrays the life of Truman Burbank, and how he has been controlled and interpolated by ideology since he was a fetus, in a pretend paradise surrounded by water called Seahaven. His life since then has been broadcasted for the whole world to see, and seek entertainment from.

Truman is quite content with his life until he starts to get hints here and there that an individual or a group of individuals are controlling each step he takes, surveilling him in one way or another. That is when he starts to become conscious; therefore, he observes and sees how mechanical the world and the people around him operate. In between his search for who

is actually following him, he concludes that “they look just like regular people” (*The Truman Show* 35:20- 35:30), which can be a testament to the fact that the ideologies that control each aspect of our lives are not some explicitly elaborate evil schemes that lure us in, rather they are so embedded in us, that they become the only natural ways of interpreting reality. In addition, Wake and Malpas are of the opinion that forms of media and art are “at their most ideological” when they seem neutral in their intent (41).

One of these ideologies, illustrated in the movie, is consumerism. The amount of advertisements in *The Truman Show*, creates in its working class audience what Marcuse calls false needs. He expresses that certain social interests superimpose on the individual particular false needs (Marcuse

7). This results in people consuming and buying products that they can very well do without. The Trumans themselves toss a perfectly good functioning lawn mower out in exchange for a new one as a result, and we see the audience having The Truman Show's merchandise around their house that may have no use value for them. This in itself may be a testament to the world that Marcuse paints a picture of in *One Dimensional Man* in which "human life is reduced to a kind of consumerist puppetry" (Wakes and Malpas 44).

Advertising is not the only way in which ideology works in the movie, as it operates in a more chilling way, and that is the culture industry within the culture industry, and the way they control Truman's conscious and unconscious decisions. In other words, the media (Radio, Television, Newspapers)

control him throughout his life. For instance, right at the beginning of the movie, the radio plays a calm music with the host testifying that it will calm Truman down, when he is starting to get frustrated doubting that he is being watched and controlled (*The Truman Show* 29:30-30:40).

From then onwards, we clearly witness how the newspapers' headline changes every day depending on what decision Truman wants to make for his future. This is done in order to keep him in his place and in his made up prison, which is also an evidence on how ideology, in a non-static and dynamic manner, redefines and reshapes itself based on its subjects. Truman decides to go to Fiji which is outside the borders, and the headlines are changed to "Who Needs Europe?" (*The Truman Show* 14:30-14:40). He sees his dad, and finds a few

moments of clarity, and they are changed into “Crackdown on Homeless” (30:40-30:50). When he puts his foot down on his choice to get away from Seahaven, the TV broadcasts a program called “Show Me the Way to Go Home” (38:10-39:00), explaining to him that one needs neither money nor a getaway to find oneself, as having friends around you is just enough; this is shown to him right after his family shows him pictures of his childhood adventures in hopes of distinguishing the fire of desire in him to go after adventures in his adulthood. At last, when he is getting a ticket to leave, we see posters behind him with “Traveler Beware” and “It Could Happen to You” printed on them, with a plane on fire (42:32-42-57).

After Truman becomes conscious of the ideologies crowding him, the creator of his reality show (the ideologies themselves)

does everything in his power to keep him within the borders, and he would not stop even if it is at the cost of killing Truman, his favorite subject. When coming to terms with the power of ideology, Truman has another moment of clarity as he touches the borders of his world, and decides to leave. However, there is nothing beyond this world, only darkness (01:29:45-01:35:16). The only way out is death, the manner of which would be controlled by ideology itself.

The peak of tragedy, in my opinion, is the fact that the audience of *The Truman Show* (*The Reality Show*) is the working class all around the globe. This audience is entertained by watching Truman struggle in the web of ideologies that they themselves are intertwined in. Yet, they do not realize this as *The Truman Show* is merely entertainment for them,

therefore, suspending their critical thinking, so much so that as soon as *The Truman Show* ends, they pick up the remote control and ask each other “What else is on?” (*The Truman Show* 01:35:55-01:35:02), trying to find new ways to distract and entertain themselves, forgetting that what they are willingly seeking is what just caused the downfall of Truman; but it seems like they can not help it. After all, as the show creator expresses himself, “We accept the reality of the world with which we are presented. It’s as simple as that.” (*The Truman Show* 01:06:03-01:06:17)

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TRFEL

The Challenges of ELT in Iran



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As a rather young scientific field, ELT has been thriving in Iran. Many universities in the country offer ELT programs to prospective teachers and researchers, with courses focusing on psycholinguistics, materials design, curriculum development, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and so forth. Also, countless language academies in Iran are nowadays teaching English as a foreign language to many people from varying ages. However, the diversity of university courses and many English classes have not necessarily resulted in much progress

on part of the students or job satisfaction on part of the teachers. Several factors seem to be contributing to this problem, 5 of which will be examined in detail in this article.

Hiring unqualified teachers: Some institutes have very high standards when it comes to hiring prospective teachers, but this is not the case for all of the language academies in Iran; in fact, so many teachers are hired regardless of their theoretical knowledge of ELT, English proficiency, actual skill at teaching the language, and digital literacy. The lack of digital literacy means that these teachers may be unaware of the many possibilities that technology equips them with, and the lack of theoretical knowledge shows that these teachers might not realize what teaching a foreign language actually entails. This, in turn, lets students' passion and talent go to waste and leaves

them with a heap of useless classroom activities that do not help with communicative competence. This is obviously not to say that communicative competence is the sole purpose of Iranian EFL learners for attending English classes, but it can be considered as the most popular reason.

Prioritizing financial needs: It is completely understandable that funding is crucial to keep a business running. But sometimes, language institutes' financial needs can tint their professionalism; for example, it is not unusual for many institutes to allow an unqualified student to pass a semester successfully. This happens because they cannot afford to lose learners (customers, actually) merely due to a poor classroom or exam performance. Therefore, vetoing a teacher's decision to fail a learner and letting them pass is a confidence

boost for the student and a source of income for the organization.

Moreover, a limited budget hinders academies' ability to equip their classrooms with the latest technological tools that can facilitate language learning. To say that technology is developing overwhelmingly fast would not be an overstatement. Add to this the new findings in the field of computer-assisted language learning, and it will be evident that institutes are not exactly capable of keeping up with such fast-paced developments due to their limited budget.

Teachers receiving undeservedly low pay: A common issue that many teachers – rightfully – complain about these days is low pay. Bear in mind that a teacher's responsibility is not to just “teach;” teaching involves carefully producing a

lesson plan, developing materials, coming up with extra worksheets and exercises, correcting exam papers, providing feedback to exams, and other responsibilities. But unfortunately, for many of teachers who work in language institutes, the salary is not a fair and accurate representation of their efforts. Over time, this problem can take a toll on teachers' motivation and their sense of self-worth. Such an unflattering sense of self could potentially be reflected in their workplace performance and job satisfaction.

Not choosing appropriate coursebooks: A lack of attention in choosing appropriate coursebooks is another problem complicating the situation in Iran; the perfect coursebook simply does not exist and teachers (or institutes) must choose their preferred book based on different factors.

Two such factors are context and students' needs; for instance, there are some books which are more suitable for ESL (rather than EFL) contexts. Because ESL students can have different language needs than EFL learners, ESL books may contain too many new words and sometimes try to present new information in a very condensed way, without considering how much new content a student can actually take in during a single semester.

Another important factor is the flexibility of the book in terms of how much a teacher can change the activities to suit students' needs. This is especially important when it comes to teachers who work for language academies rather than being freelance instructors and therefore have less autonomy in

choosing coursebooks. The more a book can be adapted to class needs, the higher are the chances it can serve its purpose.

ELT programs being too theoretical: As mentioned at the beginning, many universities offer ELT programs for those who are interested, but these courses are mostly focused on the theoretical underpinnings of language teaching rather than showing the students how to teach. In other words, these programs can help the students become great researchers in the field of applied linguistics, but not necessarily good teachers. This, however, is not to say that ELT students receive no guidance about the practical side of teaching; the point is that such guidance does not make up much of the programs.

The issues discussed in this article are serious, and affect so many language institutes, learners and teachers on a daily basis.

Coming up with solutions for them will have a substantial impact on the quality of learning and teaching, and pave the way for students to tangibly feel their progress in the course of language learning. This is where the theoretical part of ELT programs in Iran can potentially come into play. By researching and investigating the problems that shape the language teaching dynamic, researchers, teachers, and managers can jointly attempt to find plausible solutions for these challenges.

Translation Challenge

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

Wallace Stevens

I

Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV

A man and a woman

Are one.

A man and a woman and a blackbird

Are one.

V

I do not know which to prefer,

The beauty of inflections

Or the beauty of innuendoes,

The blackbird whistling

Or just after.

VI

Icicles filled the long window

With barbaric glass.

The shadow of the blackbird

Crossed it, to and fro.

The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

VII

O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

VIII

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X

At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII

The river is moving.

The blackbird must be flying.

XIII

It was evening all afternoon.

It was snowing

And it was going to snow.

The blackbird sat

In the cedar-limbs.

هیچ میدانی

محمد رضا شفیعی کدکنی

هیچ می دانی چرا چون موج

در گریز از خویشتن پیوسته می کاهم؟

زان که بر این پرده تاریک

این خاموشی نزدیک

آنچه می خواهم نمی بینم

... آنچه می بینم نمی خواهم

آستانه

شماره ۱۶ نوبت ۱ پاییز و زمستان ۱۴۰۱

