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Sadeq Hedayat (Figure 1) was the youngest child of Hedā-yatqoli Khan E'teżād-al-Molk, the notable literary historian, the dean of the Military Academy, and a descendant from Reżā-qoli Khan Hedāyat (q.v.). Many of his family members were ranking state and military officials, both in the 19th and 20th centuries (Kamshad, 1966, pp. 138-39).

Hedayat received his elementary education at ʿElmiya School and then attended Dār al-Fonun (q.v.), before an eye infection forced him to drop out. A year later he attended the French missionary school, St. Louis, in Tehran, where he learned French and became familiar with French literature Having obtained a state grant to pursue higher education, he left with nine other students for Europe upon graduation in 1925. He went to Ghent, Belgium, to study civil engineering (*meʿmāri wa rāh-sāzi*) and stayed there for eight months, before he was sent to Paris to study architecture, since his progress at school in Ghent was not satisfactory. (According to Hedayat, the salubriousness of the weather was the main cause; see his letter in Jamšidi, p. 112.) During his stay in Ghent, he wrote the essay "Marg" ("Death"), which was published in the periodical *Irānšahr* (4/11, 1926). He spent a year and a half in Paris (1928-29), two terms in Reims (1929), and a year in Besançon (1929-30). He had been sent abroad to study civil engineering with the obligation of working for the Ministry of Roads and Communications (Wezārat-e ṭoroq wa šawāreʿ); but he did not like the subject and eventually, in April 1929, obtained permission to study French literature in a teacher training context. During his four-year residence in France he was remarkably productive and wrote *Fawāyed-e giāh-ḵʷāri* "The benefits of vegetarianism." (Hedayat had turned vegetarian early in life after witnessing the brutal slaughter of a sacrificial camel, an event which also prompted him to write his first work, "Ensān o ḥaywān" (Men and Animals), a novice composition criticizing cruelty to animals (see ʿAlawi, p. 92), "Madlen," "Zende be-gur" (Buried Alive), "Asir-e Farānsavi" (The French Captive), "Ḥāji Morād," "Afsāna-ye āfarineš" (The Legend of Creation), and the historical drama *Parvin doḵtar-e Sāsān* (Parvin the Sasanian Girl; Kamshad, pp. 137-38, 142-43; Kubichkova, 1968, pp. 410 ff.). He did not, however, finish his studies and, aware that he could not pass the required tests, voluntarily gave up his scholarship and returned home in the summer of 1930 (see his letters in Ārianpur, 1995, pp. 334-35 and in Jamšidi, p. 112).

Back in Tehran, his family tried to persuade him to return to Europe and pursue his studies in a field of his choice, but he refused and was employed as a clerk at Bank Melli (The National Bank of Iran). He detested the job and described it as boring and very laborious. He became the central figure among a group of four young intellectuals, the so-called *Rabʿa* "Foursome," which consisted of Mojtabā Minovi

(scholar), Bozorg ʿAlawi (writer), and Masʿud Farzād (poet). The term *Rabʿa* (even though it does not exist in this sense in Arabic) was adapted at the suggestion of Farzād as a witty distinction from *Sabʿa* (short for *odabā-ye sabʿa* "the seven men of letters"), a term used by a well-known publisher to refer to a group of older, traditional literati of the time. There was also an outer circle of friends, including Moḥammad Moqaddam, Ḏabiḥ Behruz, ʿAbd-al-Ḥosayn Nušin, and Šin (Širāzpur) Partow, as well as a few others, such as Parviz Nātel Ḵānlari and Ḡolām-Ḥosayn Minbāšiān, who joined the group later (Minovi, pp. 357-60; ʿAlawi, pp. 167-68; Ārianpur, 1995, pp. 337-40; Jamšidi, pp. 69-81). Hedayat had a brush with the censors and drifted between clerical jobs at The Department of Commerce (Edāra-ye koll-e tejārat), The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Wezārat-e omur-e ḵāreja), and the government construction firm until 1936, when he went to Bombay at the invitation of his friend Partow, the Persian vice-consul in that city, to review the Persian script of a movie that was being shot there (Hedayat's letter to Minovi, in Katirā'i, pp. 124-29 and in Jamšidi, pp. 293-94; Anjoman-e Giti, pp. 93, 177, n. 2; Ārianpur, pp. 336-37). There he published his major work *Buf-e kur* (q.v.; *The Blind Owl*), produced in fifty handwritten, stenciled copies that he distributed among friends outside Persia. According to Mostafa Farzaneh, citing the author (Farzaneh, 1991, p.1), Hedayat had written *Buf-e kur* during his stay in Europe but had considered it impossible to have it published in Persia at that time. In Bombay Hedayat studied Middle Persian with the Parsi scholar Bahramgor Tahmuras Anklesaria (q.v.). After his return to Persia in 1937, he drifted between clerical jobs once again until his friend Captain Ḡolām-Ḥosayn Minbāšiān chose him to head the secretariat (*raʾis-e daftar*) of the newly instituted Office of Music (Edāra-ye musiqi-e kešvar), which was established under his direction by the order of Reza (Reżā) Shah in 1938 to change Persian music and to lay its foundation on the basis of the keys and guidelines of Western music. He was also a member of the editorial board of its journal, *Majalla-ye musiqi*, and one of its contributors (*Majalla-ye musiqi* 1/1, p. 4; Ḵānlari, 1991, p. 463; Ārianpur, 1995, pp. 339-40).

After the Allied invasion of Persia and abdication of Reza Shah in 1941, the Office of Music and its journal were closed down; and Hedayat ended up as a translator at the Faculty of Fine Arts (q.v.), an insignificant position with little to do that he held for the rest of his life. He was also a member of the editorial board of *Soḵan*, an influential literary journal of the time published by his friend Parviz Nātel Ḵānlari. It was an unpaid but prestigious position that suited Hedayat's literary and intellectual interests. A number of his works in the 1940s, including translations, essays, and stories, appeared first in this journal. The new freedom and indeed license resulting from the Shah's abdication led to intense political, social, and literary activities, the modernist parts of which were centered around the newly organized leftist, but as yet not communist, Tudeh Party. Hedayat's story, "Ḥāji Āqā," in which an unscrupulous, greedy businessman, Ḥāji Abu Torāb, enriches himself at the expense of the ignorant poor, suited the party's political outlook. Hedayat did not join the party but had many friends among the Tudeh intellectuals, including Bozorg ʿAlawi, ʿAbd-al-Ḥosayn Nušin, Ḵalil Maleki, and Eḥsān Ṭabari, as well as younger men such as Jalāl Āl-e Aḥmad. His sympathies were with the reformist faction (*jebha-ye eṣlāḥṭalab*) of the party, which eventually split from it in 1948. Several times he let them use his residence for their secret meetings, even though he personally resented politics and hardly participated in discussions. He also was active in VOKS, i.e., the Perso-Soviet Society of Cultural Relations (Anjoman-e rawābeṭ-e farhangi-e Irān o Etteḥād-e Jamāhir-e Šurawi) and published a number of his works in its organ *Payām-e now* (ʿAlawi, pp. 262-63, 282; Ḵānlari, 1990, pp. 352-53, 355; Ārianpur, 1995, pp. 342, 344-45; Farzaneh, 1988, II, pp. 174-75; Anjoman-e Giti, pp. 17-24; Maleki, pp. 45, 80, 290, 312, 318, 408-11; Pishdad). According to ʿAlawi (p. 263), Hedayat ignored the repeated requests of ʿAbbās Eskandari, a Tudeh activist and the chief editor of the newspaper *Siāsat*, the first organ of the party for a short time, to be an active contributor to the paper; but he later did make occasional contributions to *Rahbar*, the party's new

organ (Ḵaṭibi, p. 61). Some of his stories, including *Āb-e zendagi* (The Elixir of Life), were published by the newspaper *Mardom*, one of the three main papers published by the Tudeh Party (Kamshad, p. 204, Mir-ʿĀbedini, III, p. 1196).

The support of the Tudeh Party for the Soviet-inspired revolt in Azerbaijan in 1945, which led to intense conflicts within the party, and the collapse of the revolt a year later, greatly upset Hedayat. By the time the party critics, led by Ḵalil Maleki, split from it, Hedayat, who had once praised the movement as a progressive one (*nahżat-e pišrow*), became completely alienated from it and its platform (Hedayat, *Haštād o do nāma*, pp. 61-62, 72, 77, 83-85; idem, in *Daftar-ehonar*, pp. 613-15; ʿAlawi, p. 262). He had always been a severe and open critic of established Persian politics and cultural traditions, and his break with the Tudeh intellectuals, resulting in much personal antagonism and vilification from them (Hedayat, *Haštād o do nāma*, p. 105), made him a virtual émigré in his own land. His friends and close, old associates, Farzād and Minovi, had moved to England; he had already fallen out with Minovi; ʿAlawi and Nušin were in prison for their Tudeh affiliation; and another close friend, Reżā Jorjāni, had suddenly died. He apparently was not close to any members of his immediate family, who evidently were embarrassed by his lifestyle, his leftist connections, and the unreserved remarks that he used to make (Farzaneh, 1988, I, pp. 284-87). He had not produced any significant work for some time, which some have taken as a major cause of his increasing aloofness and despondency. His works were being published after having undergone censorship, but the royalties he received were meager. He felt that he was not being taken seriously, and the old literati apparently reciprocated the sneers and rancorous remarks that they had received from him in his satirical work *Vaḡ-vaḡ sāhāb* (Mr. Bow Wow) and in the occasional ridiculing remarks found in his other works (e.g., Ḡani refers to him contemptuously as *ān pesare* "that boy"). He had become disgusted with almost every aspect of contemporary Persian life, including music, cuisine, religious beliefs and customs, people, and political system, calling the country, among other things, a latrine (*ḵalā*), a stinking, abominable, filthy, stifling cemetery (*qabrestān-e gandida-ye nekbatbār-e edbār wa ḵafa konnanda*). He was not making enough money and had a hard time finding a reputable publisher for his books. He had a legal battle with a publisher, since one of his works, "Moḥallel"(The Legalizer), had been bootlegged under a new title ("Dard-e del-e Mirzā Yadollāh"); at the same time, he was being attacked in both papers and elsewhere (Hedayat, *Haštād o donāma*, pp. 53, 124-25, 131, 135-37, 142, 145, 180, 191-92, 194, 197, 228). He hoped that his old friend Šahid-Nurā'i, a senior Persian diplomat in Paris, would be able to help him find a job there. The frustrations that he experienced made no small contribution to his depression in the late 1940s, which made him seek refuge in alcohol and drugs and eventually led to his suicide in 1951 (letters to Šahid-Nurā'i and Jamalzadeh, in *Daftar-e honar*, pp. 613-15, 670, to Faridun Hoveydā, ibid., pp. 632-34; Ṣādeq Čubak, ibid., pp. 680, 684; Katirā'i, ibid., p. 592; Hedayat, *Haštād o do nāma*, pp. 82, 99, 112-13, 119, 154, 157, 170, 193; Ḵānlari, 1990, pp. 353-56; Ḵaṭibi, p. 61; Farzaneh, 1988, I, pp. 272, 376-77, 382-83, II, pp. 57-58, 71-73, 192; see also his letter to Jamalzadeh, in Anjoman-e Giti, p. 73; Jamšidi, pp. 162-63, 169-71, 183 ff., 293-94, 296, 298, 300, 407, 427 ff., 457; Jamalzadeh, in his *Dār-al-majānin*, pp. 115 ff., depicted him as an asylum inmate lost in the imaginary world of his own creation; see also idem, in Jamšidi, p. 198, n. 1).

Eventually Šahid-Nurā'i managed to obtain for him a four-month leave of absence from the Faculty of Fine Arts on medical grounds. Hedayat sold his books and left for Paris at the end of 1950, hoping that he would find a job somewhere in Europe and stay there with the help of Persian friends. His hopes were quickly dashed. It was difficult to obtain a residency permit for France or to obtain a visa for Switzerland, where his friend Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh lived and worked; and the possibility of going to London, where Masʿud Farzād resided, failed to materialize. Šahid-Nurā'i was terminally ill, and the efforts of the noted French scholar Henri Massé to secure a teaching job for him came to naught, apparently because Hedayat did not hold any academic degrees (Jamšidi, pp. 363-64). He even

tried, unsuccessfully, to have his leave extended by obtaining certificates of medical treatment in Paris. By the time his medical leave ended in April 1951, he had no jobs or permits to enable him to stay in Europe, and the remainder of his money could only sustain him for a short period. Moreover, some of his acquaintances kept ignoring him after the assassination in Tehran of his brother-in-law, the prime minister Ḥāji-ʿAli Razmārā (Farzaneh, 1965, p. 536). He had been contemplating suicide seriously for some time, as his farewell remarks to his friends before leaving for Paris clearly indicate (Qā'emiān, in *Daftar-e honar*, p. 610; Ḵānlari, 1990, p. 358; Ḵaṭibi, p. 62). The illness of his old friend Šahid-Nurā'i and the violent death of his brother-in-law seem to have brought the final blow. Hedayat's dead body was found in his tiny apartment in Paris on 9 April 1951, a couple of days before Šahid-Nurā'i passed away. He had tried once before to kill himself by jumping into a river but had been rescued (accounts by Hedayat's brother and niece in Jamšidi, pp. 49-56, 58, 173, 211, and by Taqi Rażawi, in Katouzian, 1991, pp. 35-38). This time he made sure that his suicide attempt would succeed; he had every ventilation outlet in his apartment carefully closed, having turned on the deadly gas (Farzaneh, 1988, I, pp. 420-21; Ḵānlari, 1990, p. 359; Ārianpur, 1975, p. 347; Anjoman-e Giti, pp. 46, 50, 94; Hoveydā, in *Dafter-e honar*, p. 634; Ṣādeq Čubak, ibid., pp. 681, 684, 686-87). He was buried a week later at Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris.

Hedayat was fairly tall, about 5 feet 10 inches, wore rimmed glasses, dressed rather conservatively, and walked erect. In the 1940s in Tehran, he would normally go in the evenings to a café (usually Café Ferdows or Café Nāderi), where a number of his coterie, which included Hasan Ghāemiān, Ṣādeq Čubak, sometimes Reza Jorjāni and Jamšid Meftāḥ, and occasionally ʿAbbās and Fereydun Hoveydā, if they were in Tehran, and some others would gather around him and spend the evening chatting and gossiping. He was the distinctive figure among them. Hedayat was fond of Western music. With Šahid-Nurā'i, a professor at the Law School of the University of Tehran, and Jorjani, a man of quiet disposition interested in art and practicing photography, they had musical sessions, where they listened to recorded Western classical music. The group was joined by Ehsan Yarshater for a short period in 1947 before he left for England to pursue his studies. Hedayat "never married, and his life was hardly ever settled. An inner sense of futility and a nostalgic melancholy, normally veiled by his flights into flippancy and ribaldry" (E. Yarshater, 1973, II, p. 665), marked his outlook on life. Although sometimes aggressive in his satirical work, he was by nature shy and often avoided serious discussion, particularly about his work, except with very intimate friends. He had a very original vocabulary and set of expressions colored by irony or mockery, which later was imitated by some of his admirers. For example, in response to "How are you?" he would say: "We are (still) in the shackles of life" (*dar qeyd-e hayāt-im*), a literary-mystical idiom used with parodic intent. When he offered a copy of his work to a friend, he would normally dub it as *maʿlumāt* (scholarly data). He would often use in mock seriousness the "pure" Persian *mihan* (homeland) which was substituting, under the Persian Academy's encouragement, for the Arabic *waṭan*. His despondency and the gloomy ambience of many of his stories have their roots, not so much in the prevailing conditions of his time, as in his own rather morbid nature (E. Yarshater, ibid.).

Hedayat's literary output, including novels, short stories, drama, and satire, includes *Parvin doḵtar-e Sāsān* (1930), *Afsāna-ye āfarineš* (The Legend of Creation, 1930, pub. in Paris, 1946), *Zende be-gur* (Buried Alive, a collection of eight stories, Tehran, 1930), *Anirān* (Non-Iran, with ʿAlawi and Partow, a collection of three stories, Tehran, 1931), *Māziār* (with Minovi, Tehran, 1933), *Se qaṭre ḵun* (Three Drops of Blood, a collection of eleven stories, Tehran, 1933), *ʿAlawiya Ḵānom* (Madame ʿAlawiya, Tehran, 1933), *Buf-e kur* (Bombay, 1936), *Sag-e velgard* (Stray Dog, a collection of eight stories, Tehran, 1942, many of which had been written earlier), *Ḥāji Āqā* (first published in *Payām-e novin*, 1945), *Velengāri* (Mucking about, a collection of six stories, Tehran, 1944), "Fardā" (Tomorrow, 1946, republished in Hedayat, *Majmuʿa-ye neveštahā*, pp. 188-206), *Āb-e zendagi* (The

Elixir of Life, first published in 1944 as a feuilleton in the paper *Mardom*), *Tup-e morvāri* (The Pearl Cannon, 1946, anonymous posthumous pub., Tehran, 1979), and *ʿal-Beʿṯa al-eslāmiya elā al-belād al-afranjiya* (Islamic Mission to European Cities, 1930, published posthumously, Paris, 1982).

His literary studies, including folklore, essays, travelogue, translations, and reviews, consist of *Robaʿiyāt-e Ḥakim ʿOmar Ḵayyām* (Ḵayyām's Quatrains, 1924; a new edition of Ḵayyām's quatrains with an introduction), *Ensān o ḥaywān* (Men and Animals, 1924), "Marg" ("Death," published in *Irānšahr* 4/11, 1926, pp. 680-82), *Fawāyed-e giāh-ḵʿāri* (The Benefits of Vegetarianism, Berlin, 1927; refuted vehemently by Mir-panja), *La Magie en Perse* (Paris, 1926), *Eṣfahān neṣf-e jahān* (Isfahan is Half of the World; a travelogue, Tehran, 1932), *Awsāna* (folk tales and popular beliefs, 1933), *Neyrangestān* (popular beliefs, rites, and superstitious practices, 1933), *Gujasta Abālīš* (tr. of the Mid. Pers. text, *Gizistag Abālīš*, Tehran, 1939; see ABĀLĪŠ), *Kār-nāma-ye Ardašir-e Pābakān* (tr. of the Mid. Pers. text, *Kār-nāmag īArdašīr ī Pābagān*, Tehran, 1942–43), *Gozāreš-e gomān-šekan* (tr. of *Škand-gumānig wizār*, a Mid. Pers. polemical text that describes Zoroastrian beliefs and criticizes other religions; Tehran, 1943), *Zand-e Vahuman Yasn* (tr. of *Zand ī Wahman yasn*, a Mid. Pers. apocalyptic text about the end of the world and the coming of the Savior, who will punish the wicked and restore the world to its original perfect state; Tehran, 1944); "Payām-e Kāfkā" (an introduction to Qā'emiān's tr. of Franz Kafka's *Penal Colony* as *Goruh-e maḥkumin*, Tehran, 1948), *Mask*ò (tr. of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, pub. in *Soḵan* 1/1-8, 1943, pp. 59-64, 121-28, 187-92, 281-88, 349-56, 445-60; separate ed., along with his tr. of "Gerākus-e šekārči" and other stories of Kafka tr. by Qā'emiān, Tehran, 1950), and numerous tales, short translations, and reviews posthumously gathered and published by Ḥasan Qā'emiān in *Majmuʿa-ye neveštahā-ye parākanda*. His letters make up a substantial part of his literary corpus, many of which have been published in literary journals and other publications (e.g., *Soḵan*, April-May, 1955; see Katirā'i; Golbon, pp. 42-47; *Daftar-e honar*). A collection of eighty-two letters written to Ḥasan Šahid-Nurā'i was published in Paris in 2000.

Hedayat's prose is plain, easy to read and understand, and devoid of literary embellishments. He uses common, popular and colloquial, idiomatic expressions and proverbs where appropriate and avoids bookish and pedantic words of Arabic origin. Occasionally (and in certain works frequently) Hedayat falters in his grammar and diction. This is evidently more frequent in his psycho-fictions than in other works, and most strikingly in *Buf-e kur*, which gives the impression that, giving vent to his surging emotions, he wrote some of his psycho-fictions in haste. In his use of literary devices, Hedayat displays an effortless skill in the choice of metaphor and imagery, which is at its best in *Buf-e kur*. Hedayat's fiction may be categorized into four analytically distinct groups, with some inevitable crossover: romantic nationalist fiction, critical realist stories, satire, and psycho-fiction. *The romantic nationalist fiction*. The historical dramas, *Parvin doḵtar-e Sāsān* and *Māziār* (each one in three acts) and the short stories "Sāya-ye Moḡol" ("The Shadow of the Mongols," published in the collection *Anirān*, Tehran, 1931, with the collaboration of ʿAlawi and Partow; repr. in *Majmuʿa-yeneveštahā*, pp. pp. 102-18) and "Āḵerin labḵand" ("The Last Smile," publ. in the collection *Sāya-rowšan*, Tehran, 1933) are on the whole simple in sentiment and unsophisticated in technique. They reflect sentiments arising from the nationalist ideology and cult that swept over the Persian modernist elite after World War I. "Āḵerin labḵand" is the most mature work of this group. Hedayat's explicit drama is rather crude, and he quickly abandoned the genre along with nationalist fiction. However, many of his critical realist short stories could easily be adapted for the stage. *The satirical works*. To varying degrees, satire, parody, and irony are used in the stories, though few could be accurately described as satirical fiction. They normally reflect aspects of the lives and traditional beliefs of the contemporary urban lower middle classes with ease and accuracy. But, contrary to views long held, they are neither about the poor and the downtrodden, nor do they display sympathy for their subjects. Indeed,

among the author's works, they contain the least explicit judgement. It is clear that the ways of the characters are alien to the author's own class culture and social and intellectual outlook, but it is also clear that, to the people whose lives are thus fictionally dissected and exposed, life is very much worth living. Wretchedness and superstition is combined with sadness, joy, charitableness, hypocrisy, and, occasionally, criminal behavior. Characters are common, situations realistic, and language authentic. This was in the tradition set by Jamalzadeh, enhanced by Hedayat, and passed on to Ṣādeq Čubak and Jalāl Al-e Aḥmad in their earlier works. Hedayat's satirical works are numerous and mostly excellent pieces, the best examples being short stories such as "ʿAlawiya K̲ānom," a story critical in its purport of some Shiʿite popular practices, filled with popular idiomatic and colorful expressions, "Ṭalab-e āmorzeš"("Seeking Absolution," in the collection *Se qaṭre k̲un*), "Moḥallel"("The Legalizer," also in *Se qaṭre k̲un*), and "Mordak̲orhā"("The Ghouls," in the collection *Zende be-gur*). Hedayat's satirical fiction is rich and often highly effective. It takes the form of short story, novel, short and long anecdotes. A contrasting satirical work is *Vaḡ-vaḡ ṣāḥāb* (with M. Farzād), which consists of a series of spoofs, called *ḡaziya*s, parodying writings about various aspects of life, new theories, publishing practices, etc., in mock poem-like pieces revealing his taste for grimacing humor and travesty; it stands in stark contrast to his serious works of fiction. Almost invariably, all of his satirical fictions make scornful ridicule of the three powerful establishments (with occasional overlapping): the literary, the religious, and less frequently the political. The author uses his knowledge of these establishments and their ways, his negative personal judgement of them, and his remarkable wit and sense of humor in producing fictions that are always funny and at times hilarious. They hit hard at their subjects usually with effective subtlety, though at times the outright denunciation and invective reveal the author's depth of personal involvement in the fiction. The literary establishment is mocked and ridiculed effectively in the pages of *Vaḡ-vaḡ ṣāḥāb*, for example, in the chapter "Ḡażiya-ye e̱ktelāṭ-numča"("The Record of a Chitchat," pp. 136-55), allowing for the inevitable elements of caricature, with reasonable accuracy. In the short story "Mihanparast" ("The Patriot," in the collection *Sag-e velgard*), the names of real-life models of the leading literary and political figures may be deduced both from the story and from their fictional names. Such fiction is paralleled by some of the author's reviews of the literary establishment's works, which are full of merciless jibes such as his review of *Farhang-e Farhangestān* ("The Word-list of Farhangestān," published in the collection *Velengāri*) and of a contemporary edition of Neẓāmi's *K̲amsa* (Quintet) by Ḥasan Waḥid-e-Dastgerdi; Hedayat's review was published under the pseudonym ʿAli-Aṣḡar Soruš (according to K̲ānlari, Hedayat used K̲ānlari's critical notes that K̲ānlari himself had given him for writing the article; K̲ānlari, 1991, pp. 464-65). The damage is at its worst when he lists the editor's silly mistakes in his commentary. The best example of Hedayat's religious mocking satirical fiction is *al-Beṯa eslāmiya ela'l-belād al-afranjiya*, although the subject comes up often enough in his satirical as well as critical realist fiction. It is a comic depiction of cultural underdevelopment of Islamic lands and an indictment of the motives of worldly religious leaders. It is composed of three reports written by the reporter of an Islamic periodical called *al-Manjalāb* (Cesspool), who accompanies four Muslim missionaries sent to Europe by a conference in Sāmerā in order to enlighten Christian Europe. Vicious references are spread throughout the book to a book written by the dean of the Faculty of Engineering, a militant Muslim, on Muslims' purity rituals. All four men eventually end up in Paris, one of them running a bar, another serving at a gambling table in a casino, the third working as a pimp (*dallāl-e moḥabbat*), and the fourth getting employment as the doorman of Folies Bergères, the famous Parisian cabaret (Hedayat, 2001, pp. 56-59; Farzaneh, 1988, I, p. 259).

Ḥāji Āqā (q.v.) is the longest and most explicit of Hedayat's satires on the traditional businessmen (*bāzāri*s) establishment, describing its decline and moral bankruptcy. Despite superficial appearances, however, and the anti-bazaari

propaganda prevalent at the time among the left-leaning elements, it is much less a satire on the ways of the people of the *bazaar*, the then hated "bourgeoisie," and much more of a merciless attack on leading conservative politicians. In a couple of his other political satires Hedayat uses the technique of allegory, the best example being "Qażiya-ye ḵar-e Dajjāl" (The Case of Antichrist's Donkey, published in the collection *Velen-gāri*), which is a damning satirical allegory on political events in the country between 1921 and 1941. *Tup-e morvāri*, his last satire, brings together all the three strands of political, literary, and religious themes with brilliant intensity, reflecting more than his earlier satires the author's intense anger and alienation.

Psycho-fiction.

Hedayat would have had a lasting and prominent position in the annals of Persian literature on account of what has been so far examined. What has given him his unique place, however, is his psycho-fiction, of which *Buf-e kur* is the best expression. This work and "Se qaṭre ḵun" are modernist in style, using techniques of French symbolism and surrealism in literature, of surrealism in modern European art, and of expressionism in the contemporary European films, including the deliberate confusion of time and space, which had distant precedents in Laurence Stern's *Tristram Shandy* and Rabelais' *Gargantua* and other works. But most of the other stories such as "Zende be-gur" (Buried Alive), "'Arusak-e pošt-eparda" (Mannequin behind the Curtain, pub. in *Sāya-rowšan* (Chiaroscuro), "Bonbast" (Dead End), *Tarik-ḵāna* (Dark Room), and "Sag-e velgard" (Stray Dog) use realistic techniques in presenting psycho-fictional stories.

The term psycho-fiction used here is not in the same sense that is usually conveyed by the well-worn con-cept of the psychological novel. Rather, it reflects the essentially subjective nature of the stories, which brings together the psychological, the ontological, and the meta-physical in an indivisible whole. These stories are macabre, sometimes, as in *Buf-e kur*, reflecting the primeval chaos, and end in destruction: a cat or a dog dies; a man or a woman commits suicide, is killed, or otherwise disappears from existence. But there is much more to them than a simple plot of abject failure. There is a crushing, unbearable sense of fear without any apparent reason; there is a determinism of the hardest, least tractable and most fatal variety; there is sin without absolution, guilt without transgression, and punishment without crime; there is fall with no hope of redemption; there is vehement condemnation of the mighty of the earth and the heavens.

Men can be no higher than the rabble (*rajjāla*), and the very few who are not fail to rise up to high elevations. Even the man who tries to kill his *nafs* (self), to mortify his flesh or to destroy his ego, ends up killing himself, by annihilating his soul. Women are either *lakkāta* (harlots) or angel-like apparitions who/which wilt and disintegrate upon appearance, as in the case of the ethereal (*aṯiri*) woman in *Buf-e kur* and the statue in "'Arusak-e pošt-e parda." There are hints at incest and/or incestuous desires. There is the alienation of the anti-hero from women, whom he does not know at all and has never loved in any successful contact of the flesh; whom he despises for what he believes they are, and longs to love and cherish for what he thinks they ought to be. Most men and women are treacherous, hypocritical, disloyal, superficial, profit-seeking, slavish, undignified, and ignorant.

Yet the effect is by no means entirely negative. There may not be any hope through the pages of these fascinating, absorbing, and gripping stories, but there is an ideal which reconstructs itself through the very process of destruction. Death may be offered as the answer, but it is offered in a plea for unrealized love, warmth, friendship, faithfulness, honor, authenticity, integrity, decency, knowledge, art, beauty—for whatever man has eagerly and hopefully striven for and never quite realized. The large and seemingly unbridgeable gap between appearance and reality, between the real and the reasonable, between what there is and what there ought to

be, between man and God, wears out the man and leads him to death as the only honest way out. Yet it is precisely that gap which he wishes to close, and that honesty that leaves him no choice.

The plot of *Buf-e kur*, for its psycho-fictional content, is an advanced synthesis of Hedayat's earlier psycho-fictional stories, but especially of "Se qaṭre k̲un," "Zende be-gur," "'Arusak-e pošt-e parda," and "Mard-i ke nafs-aš-rā košt"("The Man Who Mortified His Self"; pub. in *Se qaṭre k̲un*); this synthesis, once again in parts, finds expression in later works such as "Sag-e velgard," "Tārik-k̲āna," "Bonbast," and "Fardā" ("Tomorrow," first published in the monthly journal *Payām-e novin*, 1946).

Buf-e kur is a novel in two parts. Part one is the contemporary story of the narrator and the angel-like apparition, who wilts and dies upon appearance and is cut up by the narrator and buried with the aid of the old hunchback, the narrator's fallen self. This, in part two, turns out to be an idealized summary re-experience of the story of the narrator and the whore—the angel's fallen self—in the "ancient past," which ends up by the narrator, disguised as the wretched old man, killing her by pushing the same kitchen knife "somewhere in her body," either, if the copulation has been complete, in order to destroy the sacred origin that he has thus violated, or else as a phallic instrument to make up for his failure. He returns to the "contemporary" world to find the old hunchback running away with the antique jar from Rey, the symbol of continuity, and feeling the weight of a dead corpse on his chest. The man fails to become perfect; the woman fails to become an angel. There is no perfect love of the flesh; and there is no hope of sublime elevation.

Much speculation has been made on the possible sources and affinities of *Buf-e kur*. Some excellent literature have identifiable sources and precedents, including Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Racine's *Le Cid*, and Goethe's *Faust*. Franz Kafka, Jean Paul Sartre, Gérard de Nerval, Edgar Allan Poe, Rainer Maria Rilke, among others, and even Buddhist traditions have been named as sources for *Buf-e kur* (see bibliography). The Buddhist hypothesis does not stand the test. *Buf-e kur* was written in 1936, two years before Sartre's first work, *La nausée*. Hedayat came to know Kafka and his works long after that. There may be affinities with them, as with Nerval, Poe, and many others, but none of them can be described as a source. *Buf-e kur* is a modernist novel. It is neither uniquely Eastern nor Western. It is a contribution to world literature based on both Persian and European culture and techniques.

As a man born into a cultivated clan, a modern as well as modernist intellectual, with deep roots in the traditional Persian life, a gifted writer steeped in European culture of his time, and with a psyche which demanded high moral and intellectual standards, Hedayat was bound to carry, as he did, an enormous burden which very few individuals could suffer with equanimity, especially as he bore the effects of the clash of the old and the new, the Persian and the European. Hedayat lived an unhappy life and died a tragic death. It was perhaps the inevitable cost of the literature that he bequeathed to humanity.

Bibliography: See v, below.

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