

A Comparative Study of Sadegh Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* in the Light of the German Theory of Novella

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: March 06, 2018

Accepted: June 22, 2018

Published: August 31, 2018

Volume: 9 Issue: 4

Advance access: July 2018

Conflicts of interest: None

Funding: None

Key words:

Literary Genres,
Theory of The Novella,
Long Story, Dramatic Structure,
Narrative Literature

ABSTRACT

Using the novella as the European literary genre has divided the Iranian literary scholars due mostly to its unknown features. Lack of research in this area has caused many writers either to abandon this literary term or to opt for alternatives such as "novelette", "long story", "long short story" or "short story". This article aims to introduce the theory and characteristics of the novella as a unique literary genre, based on German literature. Despite the Italian root of the novella, it reflects its Germanic roots as it was flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries Germany. In addition, the paper explores the concept of "long story" in Iranian literature as the synonym of the term novella. *The Blind Owl* clearly exhibits these characteristics of the genre, especially the dramatic structure and representing a new aspect of human trait. The analysis of *The Blind Owl* leads to a deeper understanding of one of the most important and well-formed European literary genres and a new look at Sadegh Hedayat's ideology as a professional author in addition to familiarizing scholars with this genre.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching the German Language through literary texts, especially narrative literatures has recently shown a notable increase, marking the novella as a popular form and at once the epicenter of this pedagogical surge. As the form is generally known in Farsi by its variant terms such as the 'long short story', the 'long story' or even the 'short novel', in lieu of its original nomenclature, namely, the *novella*, this paper seeks to provide a relevant categorical definition of the term and its concomitant form. One justification for such generic misconceptions of the term lies in our unfamiliarity with the form with its European roots, hence the existence of a cultural uncertainty in using the accurate term in Persian literature. One can identify Sadegh Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*, as the notable work of art in Persian literature that fits the genre, which is still being categorically misconstrued as the 'novel', the 'short novel', and even sometimes as 'the long story'. While in Persian literature the novella is recognized in terms of the length of the narrative, namely, being 'longer than the short story' or 'shorter than the novel', this article examines the genre in terms of its distinctive internal dynamics, seeking to identify the main stylistic, and structural feature as well as notable elements in the formation of the content in the novella that had made the genre one of the most attractive forms in narrative literature.

The current available literature indicates that in Persian literature the form is generally known as the 'long story', 'the short novel' regardless of the European root of the term, *novella*. In *Fiction Studies* (1997) Jamal Mirsadeghi, only sporadically highlights the similarities between 'long story' and the '*nouvelett*'. He understands the long story as the confluence of the novel and the short story, and after a passing analysis discards the form as an unknown and only a byproduct of various forms. In his reading, Mirsadeghi also considers a few titles only perfunctorily as Persian manifestations of the form such as Behazin's *Peasant Girl*, Ebrahim Golestan's *Narrating a Bygone's Past*, Jalal Ahlahmad's *The Principal*, Bahram Sadeghi's *Paradise*, Reza Berahani's *Chah-be-Chah* (Well to Well), Jafar Modares' *Gav Khooni*. Any reading of this essence is problematic at best since the literary significance of these narratives draws heavily on their qualitative tenor as much as their categorical description. The description of the 'long story', except for that provided by Mirsadeghi, can be found in only a select number of Persian dictionaries and thesauri, and it is done in a very passing fashion. Since in the Persian literature 'the long story' is synonymous with 'novellat' or the 'novella', a contextual examination of the genre especially in its German context proves necessary. Thomas Degering's *A Short Introduction to Novella* (1994) is the most significant study of the genre from a historical aspect. From

a definitional and analytical aspect of the genre, one can refer to Herbert Kramer's *Theory of the Novella* (1976) whereby he only offers definitions provided by various German critics from the 18th century to the 20th century without any relevant examples, making one's perception of the genre even more difficult. In Ulrich Karthaus's *The Novella* (1990) the shortcoming has been addressed to some extent; Karthaus's definition and examples of the genre in its variety of forms has transformed the project into a unique and worthwhile academic endeavor. Winfried Freund's *Novella* (1998) is the other interesting project whereby the author explores, albeit only passingly, the history of German literature from the Baroque era to the contemporary literature; the project, however, lacks any relevant examination of the features of the novella. This study, therefore, draws upon the very imperfections of such generic studies, examining the exact qualitative nature of the genre, and as a result serving further studies on the European literature.

The Novella in Iran

In Iran, one cannot find a singular definition of the 'long story'. Sometimes it is called the 'novelette' and other times it is regarded as the short novel, combining the features of short story and the novel (Mirsadeghi, 254). Mirsadeghi, as one of the most notable scholars in the field of novel studies in Iran understands the genre as a form which is longer than the short story and shorter than the novel, and is completely different from both forms in terms of tenor and the quality of the content (ibid, 253). In this respect, the 'long story' can be seen as a confluence of features of short story and the novel; however, if one considers the 'long story' as synonymous with the novel, its features will transcend both genres. In dictionaries, "novella" (Dad 1999, 346) and "nouvelle" (Mirsadeghi 1998, 319) are used instead of "the long story" and the "short novel", respectively, providing the most accurate definition of the genre. The distinctive element of the genre in Persian literature is only its length, whereas in fiction studies the novella distinguishes itself from other genres in terms of content and tenor. Although in the 'long story' the concept of a longer narrative is concerned, it is logical to use the original terminology in Persian, namely, the novella. What makes the distinction between the novel or the long story from other genres is the depth of the narrative and the ways in which it engages the reader for a long-lasting period of time. In this respect, one can read most of Sadegh Hedayat's literary works as the long story or the novel. Nevertheless, it is not a surprising fact since Hedayat had spent a large proportion of his life in Europe, familiarizing himself with a variety of genres. A brief analysis of the history of story writing and narration in Iran shows the depth and breadth of European genres with which Iranian authors were familiar.

This genre-oriented affinity materialized during the late Qajarite era and the early Persian Constitutional Revolution and with the translation of western literary works such as novel into Persian; the result was the formation of notable literary works in Iran that reached its climax during the rise of translation as a trend in the Qajarite era, allowing for the introduction of various genres in Iran such as the short story

and the novella for the first time (Mohseni and Khachatorian 2011, 795-796). Later, the translation of major literary works into Persian transcended narrative literatures and included dramatics, encouraging the Iranian translators to translate a large number of plays into Persian (ibid 796). A general motive for the translator to indulge in translating western works was a dominant history of poverty and corruption, and chaos imposed by kings, resulting in the formation and emergence of despair and hopelessness especially from 1891 to 1941 that complemented those of WWI. Jamalzadeh and Hedayat become the ones that began to critique the wide sense of corruption in the royal family and the nation's deep despair by taking advantage of new genres and their sharply critical rhetoric such as the short story, historical novel and eventually the social novel. Hence, as Katouzian notes, "the most significant achievement of Persian literature in the 1920s was the formation and the emergence of a fully-fledged modern narrative" (2010, 13).

Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* was written in 1936 at a time of national despair and distress, portraying a reclusive author with a traumatic psyche on the one hand, and socio-cultural and political plights that plague his soul and mind in isolation on the other. It was the very time when Jamalzadeh and Hedayat had experienced the European life and psyche and cherished any European literary genre; it, therefore, can't be a surprise if such authors incorporate the essence of European fiction in theirs, making their works comply with such narratorial structures. As Katouzian claims, then, "Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*" can be considered "as the best example of the effect of surrealism on Hedayat and his oeuvre" (ibid 53). On various occasions, Hedayat reads Persian literature comparatively against other major European literatures such as German, English and French (ibid 109). Hence, Katouzian believes that in much of his writing Hedayat has imitated Rainer Maria Rilke's *Memoir*. Hedayat also translated a number of Kafka's works and then wrote *The Message of Kafka* (1948).

The influence of European literature on the author specially as manifested in *The Blind Owl* is an irrevocable fact. This famous work, as Katouzian notes, "is the result of the influence of European literature, especially a direct copy of Jean Paul Sartre and Franz Kafka, on Persian literature" (ibid 175). *The Message of Kafka*, in other words, can be read as Hedayat's last testament, while *The Blind Owl* is a mirror to *The Message of Kafka* (Baharloo 1994, 29). Kafka's realm too is a world of nihilism and alienation wherein humans are hopeless and suffer from despair and depression. In *The Blind Owl* the world is depicted as though the narrator and the prostitute are its sole inhabitants, living a life of isolation and alienation. Hedayat's astute depiction of the modern world by tapping into the impeccable narratorial structure of the novella proves that he has been very familiar with the genre and its distinct features. The objective and the narratorial structure of *The Blind Owl* shows that the author has been familiar with the work. It appears that Hedayat sought to provide a stark and yet literary portrayal of the corrupt and oppressive world of his time in a genre capable of incorporating all the secrets and temporal novelties. *The Blind Owl* is now regarded as a highly notable work of art in Persian

literature, owing its popularity and success to its novel form and modernist content. Hedayat's *The blind Owl* is a narrative of national regression with no feasible way forward, reaping what they sow. At such chaotic moments the author cannot find a sympathetic reader for his pains, hence only writing for his shadow. This is the actual feature of the novella proper, creating literary attraction.

The History and Theory of the Novella in German Literature

The term 'novella' was first used in the 6th century in legal studies, meaning a 'new law' or a 'new addendum'; and later in Italy the term was used in the form of 'novella', meaning as 'a new piece of information' (Freund 1998, 9). In the 13th century literature, those new, incredible and exceptional stories were called 'novel'. The first novella, *The Decameron* written by the Italian Giovanni Boccaccio, was called the novella due only to its new and novel events the narrative depicted. Therefore, from the 13th century onwards the novella was regarded as a genre of narrative literature in Italy (Degering 1994, 7). The genre also was introduced to Germany with same structure and form in the late 18th century. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote the first German novella in 1795 entitled, *Recreations and the German Emigrants*, imitating Boccaccio's *The Decameron* (ibid 21). The German novella fully flourished in the Romantic period and the first half of the 19th century. In other words, for the Germans the novella possessed an unshakeable position due to its valuable content and stylistic excellence. Although the novella provides a focused portrayal of a certain period or event in the life of mankind compared to a wider, more inclusive spectrum of Roman, this appears as an unbelievable, rare and unique opportunity. These features are regarded as the most basic yet significant aspects of the novella, allowing for the form to be fully distinguished. In this respect, it is the depth of the novella that had attracted the audience. The novella is appealing to its readership for its content and arguments. The essence of this aesthetic attraction lies in the genre's name: novella, meaning new.

A considerable number of authors in Germany have defined the novella as an exciting genre. August Wilhelm Schlegel has had an in-depth examination of the genre, praising the structure and the content of the novella as the epicenter of narrative literature (Kramer 1976, 18). For Schlegel a true novella should be "appealing and exciting on the one hand, attracting its audience; and should be generally acceptable by the public on the other, depicting the experiences that had taken place" (ibid). For Schlegel, therefore, being "unique" and "realistic" in terms of events are two of the most notable aspects of the novella. Ludwig Tieck, a reputable poet in the Romantics movement, also believes the event a novella narrates cannot be a simple event; rather, the novella always "depicts a unique event with a unique twist, distinguishing the novella from other competing genres" (ibid 26). In a conversation with Ackerman in 1827, Goethe provided the shortest yet at once the most exquisite definition of the novella. In a short story Goethe astutely discusses the novella and whichever elements that form the genre in a unique narrative

entitled as 'novel'. He then explicates the reason behind his choice of title for his story, which indirectly is his definition of the genre: "we want to call the work (story) before you as the novel, as the novel is nothing but a unique event that had taken place" (ibid 29). The element, therefore, that had attracted Goethe in the genre is the uniqueness of the event. Old stories have no appeal to anyone, even though they were real. Yet, the event in the novella is of a different essence: of continuous excitement that lasts from the beginning to the end of the story.

Goethe's famous 'novel' can be regarded as a great example of the genre. In the narrative, a wild lion that had threatened the king's wife is suddenly tamed by the sound of a young boy's flute; he plays a peaceful tune and calms the lion down, removing the thorn from the paw of the wild lion and showing kindness to the injured beast. In Goethe's narrative, a unique event takes place by drawing upon the never-ending essence of art, teaching us a lesson whereby peace and kindness can replace fury and rage, and that a world free from war is more beautiful. Goethe's message in this novella is that "an untamable problem can be easily managed should one discard rage and take up kindness instead" (Han qtd in Vaugan Kansht 1963, 172).

Paul Heize understands the 'united event' as the most notable element in the formation of the novella from among a long list of items, highlighting the centrality of all the actions in a story. "The novella", claims Kramer, "needs to be unique, explaining a central action. [...] here the concern is the event and not the conditions in which it is defined" (1976, 39-40). Moreover, the novella must have a main theme to which all other secondary elements of the story are attached so much so that there would be no story should this central theme be removed. This central theme exists in all narratives yet at once differs in variety and form; 'Falke' distinguishes this one story from a number of other stories" (ibid 41). For Heize, the novella without falke is unimaginable, as falke symbolizes the originality of each novella. For instance, the falke in Heinrich von Kleist *Michael Kohlhaas* (1810) is the black horse symbolizing the starkness of legal matters during the middle ages (Freund 1998, 34-35).

Heize has other concerns for the novella: "the novella like other real artistic works of art is required to delineate a humanistic, psychological, spiritual, or moral issue, and by way of extraordinary intervention reveal an unknown aspect of human nature" (Kramer 1976, 41). The significant aspect in this definition is the revelatory aspect of the genre which reveals a new dimension in human existence, previously an unknown aspect of human nature. Heize's engagement with the unknown in human nature is one with an unimaginable cartography; for instance, a specifically sexual relationship between the character of Thiel and his wife as depicted in Gerhart Hauptmann's *Bahnwarter Thiel* (1888).

Theodor Schtrom's definition of the genre as one of the notable realist German critics in 1881 is still regarded as an apt examination of the term. Schtrom is a critic who would combine the novella with structures of dramatic works, as for him there a number of obvious similarities between these two genres. For Schtrom, the novella "is not about a brief description of an exclusive accident with a romantic climax

as it were previously; rather, the genre flirts with one of the most difficult forms of prose, namely, the play" (Kastner 1920, 122).

The point of departure in the narrative literature is similar to 'peripeteia' in the dramatic works, which means a sudden shift in the course of the play. As many critics and novelists confirm, the course and pattern of a work of art suddenly changes in the novella. The novella sympathizes with the play and dramatic works in general in its engagement with a coherent plot, motif, and hero's call to action and his solution, the change in the course of the story as a result of the intervention, climax, the fall, and the denouement or the resolution. Schtrom considers the novella as the sister-structure of play for these mentioned elements and similarities yet narrated through a different vehicle of expression. Most of Kleist's works such as *Michael Kohlhaas*, *Marquese von*, and *Chilean Earthquake* fit Schtrom's categorical definition.

Robert Musil as one of the greatest Austrian authors regards the novella as a form that is more important than the novel. His radical perception of the genre reveals new dimensions:

An accident can make a man commit a murder, another can push a man into five years of isolation, which appear as more important? The difference between the novel and the novella is almost the same. [...] every significant author can write an important novella at every possible moment (and also a play). [...] yet it is also possible for him to only write an important novella. [...] the author indulges in an accident, becomes infatuated by it, and understands the truth of everything at the core of that accident; this is (the notable) effect of event in the novella (Kramer 1976, 61).

In this respect, what draws the line between the novella and other genres in narrative literature is the depth of the effect the form would have on its readers. Such depth in events are rare phenomena, elevating the status of the novella as a unique narrative style. In this respect, Friedrich Theodor Vischer's claim is justifiably right which compares the difference between the novella and the novel as like a ray of light to a projector (qtd in Degering 1994, 8). Josef Kunz believe that the traditional novella had died in the 18th and 19th century in Germany, and that "writing the novella now itself is a phenomenon" (qtd in Degering 1994, 124). Although it is now a fact that authors have opted for either the short story or the novel after the second world war, Kunz's claim is unacceptable from a variety of points. The content has never been diverse and abundant for the genre to digest and re-imagine. It seems, the present time is actually the novella era as the modern man has become a creature of wonders with a complex and contradictory psyche. Why the human has become a wild beast entrapped in unimaginable issues such as suicide, manslaughter, homicide and madness, corruption and a dehumanized humanity? These have become the inevitable and daily issues of our present time and life. The novella can cleverly take advantage of such issues and concepts in a realistic way. Indeed, as we could understand the concepts at the core of the novella are not normal everyday concepts. Although repetitive moments can be bitter and depressive yet they won't indulge us in the

bitterness we require of a novella; they will not push the man into an isolating contemplation for year. There is a link between believability of an event and its relevance to its appropriation in the context of the novella: the more impressive and unknown the event, the closer it is to the foundation of the novella, improving the quality of the narrative.

The Blind Owl as a Novella

Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* is one clear example of the novella or what it is called a long story in Iran. Hence, the introduction of Hedayat's narrative can be considered as the birth of writing novella or even the introduction of the novel in Iran. The dramatic structure and an exhilarating content had made *The Blind Owl* a true example of the genre. The first words of the first line of the story also confirms the status of the narrative as a clear manifestation of the novella, by emphasizing concepts such as undecidability, and complexity of the theme:

There are certain sores in life that, like a canker, gnaw at the soul in solitude and diminish it. Since generally it is the custom to attribute these incredible sufferings to the realm of rare and singular accidents and happenings, it is not possible to speak about them to others. If one does talk or write about them, people pretend to accept them with sarcastic remarks and dubious smiles. In reality, however, they follow prevalent beliefs and their own ideas about them. The reason is that these pains do not have a remedy. The only remedy is forgetfulness induced by wine, or artificial sleep induced by opium and other narcotics. Unfortunately, the effect of these drugs is transitory. After a while, instead of soothing, they add to the pain (Hedayat 1936, 9).

These stark and critical statements will captivate the reader from the early stages of the narrative, enticing them to reader to know more about this vague world of pain and distress until the very last page. The question, however, remains: what can captivate the reader so much? The answer is a deep psychological pain that had plagued the modern man, which had remained as an incurable and rare. The pain has a direct effect on the mind and soul of the man and is so deep and yet relatable that resembles the fears and pains of a mother who mourns for her child. The pain is not meant to be cured; rather, it is the one which should last forever. The narrative of the novella is of this essence and structure. Hedayat too confirms this very structural fact in the beginning of his narrative:

I shall describe one of these incidents that I experienced personally. That incident shocked me so much that I shall never forget it; its ominous scar will poison my entire life from beginning to the end of eternity where no man's understanding can fathom. Did I say poisoned? Well, I meant it scathed me and I will carry its scar for the remainder of my mortal life (ibid 9).

The very first sentences of *The Blind Owl* directs the reader's attention to the narrator's love and feelings for a mysterious and beautiful girl, who met the narrator only accidentally and changed his life so radically that his love for her has devoured his life:

It was the Thirteenth of Norouz. Everyone had flocked outside the city. I had closed the window of my room,

so that I could paint without worries. I was close to a warm closure of my painting project, when the door was opened and my uncle came in. (...) I thought that I had better prepare something for him to eat, turned on the light, and went into the darkness of my room, checking every corner so I could find something for his taste. (...) Suddenly I looked at the top. It came to me to have a look at that spot and to find a bottle of old wine that was inherited to me - apparently on the occasion of my birth - on top of the closet. (...) To reach the top of the closet, I used the fourfold that was there, but when I reached out I suddenly looked through the ventilation hole and I saw in the desert behind my room an old man, under the tree and in front of him there was a young girl, no - a celestial angel was in front of him, bent down, giving him a lilac with her right hand, while the old man was chewing on the fingernail of his left hand. The girl was right in front of me, but she did not seem to notice anything about her. (...) because of her dreadful charming eyes, eyes that, at the same time, were enchanting and reproachful. It was to the shining and dreadful balls of those worried, threatening and inviting eyes that my single beam of life was attracted, and it was to the depth of those same eyes that my life was drawn and in them was annihilated. This attractive mirror, in an unthinkable way to any human being, drew my whole being to itself. (ibid 12-13).

The effect this scene has on the narrator is so deep that it changes his life completely. Hedayat has blended the narrative with so much exhilarating excitement that it would attract almost all types of readers to explore their similar perception of a world constructed on pain and distress. Such excitement is the crux of an original novella crafting by Hedayat as the master artist. Another example of such feverish thrill can be seen when the narrator discusses his emotional trials and tribulations at the sight of the girl:

Wine flask in hand and out of fright, I jumped off the stool. I was shaking involuntarily. It was a shiver in which fright and enjoyment were intermingled. I felt as if I had jumped up from a pleasantly nightmarish dream. [...] From this moment my life's direction changed. One glance was sufficient to bring about all that change. [...] this frightful event which I found very familiar to me at first sight has been the same with lovers; will they not feel that they have met before, and that there has been a strange relationship between them? In this mean life, I either wanted her love or nothing at all (ibid 14-15).

This wild infatuation worsens as the narrator begins an interminable search for his lost love; yet finding no trace of her, as though it was nothing but a dream:

After that day, with a thousand fears and chills, I decided to put some wine back in its place, but as I pulled back the curtain and looked, the dark black wall was ahead of me like the darkness that swept through my life. There was no hole in the opening at all - the quadrangular openings of the wall were completely blocked, as if it had not existed from the beginning - I stretched the lining, and banged crazily on the wall. I watched and listened, and looked at the front of the lamp, the

smallest sign of the hole on the wall, and my banging was not working on thick and wall. I could not ignore everything, but nothing was in my control either; from then on, I was like a tortured ghost, I waited and waited, I searched everywhere but it was of no use. I searched around our house, not one day, not two days, two months and four days, like criminals who return to the crime scene, every day at sunset I would search around like a wild bird that fly around its nest in search of its chicks. I had known all about the rocks and all the dirt around my nest, but I could not find any traces of the cypress tree, or the river or those who I saw that night; yet found nothing - so many nights had I knelt before the moon and asked for help from it, from the trees, or those who had looked at the moon; and from all the creatures I asked for help, but I did not see the slightest traces of her (ibid 16-15).

The love had struck the narrator so much so that he cannot forget it, nor can he live without it. The narrator then roams the unknown lands in search of his lost love, and "like an addict with days without the substance examines his surrounding" (Katouzian 2011, 141). On a rainy night, the narrator returns home with no news of his lost love, "and yet that which should not happens" (Hedayat 1936, 17). He witnesses an accident that sets his whole life on fire. Here the narrative with its thrilling rhythm has psychologically enticed the reader to sympathetically follow not only the narrative but the narrator's psychological plights, anticipating whatever that awaits the narrator. Such emotional intoxication can be regarded as one of the main features of the novella, creating a harmonious terrain of events in its original textual framework. The continuity of the narrator's maddening emotion for a non-existent love object confirms the uniqueness of the genre:

when I arrived home, I saw a black skinny body sitting on the front entrance of my house. (...) This was her black figure. As if one sleeps, and knows he is sleeping and wants to wake up but he can't. I stood dumb and deaf. (...) At this moment, I cannot imagine any creatures who had ever experienced - I felt a pleasant yet unknown pain - no, I had not been tricked. That was the same woman, the same girl who, without even saying a word had entered my room. I always imagined that our first encounter would be this way. This state of affairs was like a deep sleep because I had to go deep into sleep so that I could see such a dream, and this silence gave me the commandment of an eternal life, wherein one could not speak of. For me, she was a woman and at the same time she had an supernatural aura. Her face gave me a confusing sense of forgetfulness, forgetting all the faces of other people - so looking at her would send shiver down my spine. (...) My heart stopped, it took my breath away, I was scared if breathed she would disappear like a cloud or smoke. (...) Her tired eyes, as though they had seen an unnatural phenomenon, something that everyone could not see, as if he had seen death, slowly closed, closing her eyelids, and I, like a life guard who after a fight floats on the water, was trembling with the heat of the fever, and wiped the sweat on my forehead with my sleeve.

In this scene, the narrator is so radically immersed in his love that even after the girl's death will not allow for her body to be separate from him (Katouzian 2011, 142). This is the incredible modern man that Heize discussed. *The Blind Owl* is a notable example of the novella not only for its exhilarating structure and the shocking events that informed its narration but also for its troupe of characters with rare personal traits such as the narrator and his prostitute wife. Heize understands the novella as a form that exhibits new and unseen features of mankind. The narrator finds a certain sexual pleasure that transcends any previous textual descriptions. His emotional and at times sensual description moves every reader:

I have been sentenced to loneliness, and to death. I have tried to contact his wicked lovers, nobody would ever believe this (...) and what guilty part they were: the poulterer, the head of the dowry, the merchant (...) she had preferred all of them to me – I have humiliated myself for nothing, no one would believe this (Hedayat, 1936: 46).

In this description, it is clear that the prostitute is taking a sado-masochistic pleasure for hurting her husband; yet, the husband's reaction is unjustifiably strange. In one of these encounters, the narrator meets an old man with "dirty yellowish teeth" (ibid 76), seeing whom is even disgustingly awful. "I wanted the earth to swallow me lest I feel more embarrassed, I covered my face with my hands" (ibid 74). The strange case with the narrator is his emotional attachment to his wife after learning about her unfaithfulness and paid affairs; his maddening attachment that ends in his murdering his love-object is a worthwhile issue. This extended madness, which can be considered as one of the notable aspects of the modern man, also is manifested in Hauptmann's *Bahnwarter Thiel*. "The prostitute also takes pleasure in tormenting the narrator" (ibid 47). Moreover, everyone sympathizes with the prostitutes and pities her life with the narrator. They said, "how can she stand this mad husband? They were right, for they have never been humiliated as much as I have been" (ibid). It is worthwhile to note that the narrator in *The Blind Owl* has been immersed in corruption so much so that even he cannot stand himself and his corrupt feelings, beginning to hate himself. Perhaps, the most accessible path toward freedom is suicide:

I decided to leave, get myself lost, like a bitter dog that knows it must die, like birds that hide when they are to die (.) I ran away from the house, I escaped from the filth that had devoured me. With no known purpose I had to run away through the alleys, I passed through all the men who looked alike with faces that sought money and lust. (.) The world seemed to me to be an empty and sad house, and anxiety was running around in my chest (ibid 52-53).

Extreme hatred of life and people, sets the narrator up in his path toward death, creating a narrator who like the one in *Buried Alive* (1930) seeks ways to destroy himself and rid himself of the filthy life. This tired and exhausted soul who seeks death and self-destruction is another modern phenomenon, which all by itself is novella:

The thought of life again frightened me and made me tired. I still had not gotten used to the world in which I lived (...) I felt that this world was not meant for me, for a bunch of rude people, for bigots, for lowlife. For those who were created for the sake of their world and time, like the dogs who would look humble to the butchers for a piece of gum. They begged and flattered - Thought of life again scared me and made me tired (Ibid., 69-68).

The narrator talks to himself when he is alone to lessen his psychological pains. "perhaps I should talk to my shadow to rid myself of this loneliness. At this moment I saw an incredible thing. The door was opened and that prostitute came in. it seems she had thought of me every once in a while [...] I just wanted to know if she knows that I was dying for her – if she knew, then I would have a peaceful death (ibid 75). *The Blind Owl* can be considered as a novella proper as it is founded on all shocking and thrilling concepts. Even the structure of the narrative is informed by such exhilarating concepts, making it even closer to the genre. As Katouzian notes, "the narrative has no character but the narrator. The rest are ghost-like empty shells, they lack proper names and descriptions; therefore, they are recognized as long as they are named and referred to just like the shapes and carvings on the vase" (2011, 146).

A number of scholars have looked at the pains and plights of the author through a political lens; they understood such starkness as a result of socio-political injustice that had plagued Iranians, pushing the individual to indulge in their dreams. It seems the individual lives alone in the world, and as Hedayat's narrator notes, "I can talk freely only with myself" (1936, 21). This, as Baharloo notes, is "an allusion to a repressive environment in which the narrator confined himself to a worn-out dark house, and also a symbol of the writer's own position, especially if we consider that Hedayat crafted *The Blind Owl* With a hand-printed machine in fifty copies in Bombay, India, and with the following note on its front page: sales is banned in Iran" (1994, 21).

The pain during Hedayat's time is an excessive pandemic hopelessness that had painted the world unimaginably dark and dismal. Hedayat and other likeminded critics have talked with their shadows as it was the case with *The Blind Owl*, as there was no one who would listen to their concerns. Psychological pressures had exceeded the people's threshold, making them exasperated with such an inclusive prison called nation. Such misunderstandings drove a number of people like Hedayat mad. The way these pains are externalized can be considered as a mirror to social pains, and how the outburst of emotions would create a mad-house of every community and society.

Surprise and astonishing narration are inseparable features of the novella such as that of Bahram Sadeghi's *Paradise* or Golshiri's *Princess Ehtejab*, which narrate a hopeless generation being stuck in failure; the nation, as narrated by Golshiri, is so stuck in hopelessness and failure that a character such as Ehtejab can guide them onwards. Golshiri astutely depicts Iran during the Qajarite and Pahlavi era. He unconsciously questions as to why a nation can get stuck in such a web of corruption and failure? The reader in return is too stuck in a larger web of questions. The novella, in this re-

spect, should be regarded as the genre of asking unanswered questions, questions that require a careful study of a nation's history for form a relevant answer. Hence, the issues at the heart of the novella require a historical analysis and understanding as they are rooted in history.

CONCLUSION

By analyzing the Persian novella from the qualitative aspect, we conclude that there are many similarities between this genre in Persian literature and those in European literature, especially the novella in Germany in the 18th and 19th centuries. What distinguishes the novella from other literary types such as the novel, short stories, myths, tales, allegories is a collection of impeccable features such as a highly dramatic and exciting structure. The unique feature of the novella as explore by known German writers such as Martin Villand, Goethe, Wilhelm Schlegel, Ludwig Tieck, Heiz, Austerlitz, Kliet, Musil, and other writers is that they have taken note of it at various angles. Some Novolists, such as Ludick Teck and Schlegel, have regarded the original content of the novella as the turning point of this genre. Goethe considered the novella as a new, unbelievable but real event. Theodore Storm finds the charm of the form in its dramatic structure, and the original nature of the novella relies on the uniqueness of the theme of the story, whereas Heize identifies the incredible features of the genre in its roots in narrating un-experienced aspects of human nature. Robert Musil has regarded the deep influence of the genre on the reader as the main significance of the genre, which pushes the reader to contemplate for years in isolation. The collection of these features distinguishes the novella from other literary types.

The genre in its European context is evaluated based on its narrative merits such as the content and a qualitative tenor, whereas in Iran the novella is synonymous with the long story, basing the genre on its length and number of pages. Although Sadegh Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* is regarded as the long story or a short novel in Iran, evaluating the narrative based on its length, this paper argued that the European and especially German writers in the 18th and 19th centuries had a qualitative criterion for the evaluation of the genre at large. Since referring to works of art such as Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* will only limit their exposure and evaluation to the number of pages and length, the author of this paper suggests that the original term, namely, the novella should be used whenever addressing a work of this stature and quality. Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* can be considered as one true ex-

ample of the novella after careful consideration of relevant aspect and criteria of the genre. Although there still exists a division among German author regarding the qualities that shape a novella proper, the novella is regarded as new by Goethe, as climactic by Schlegel and Tieck, and as a complete dramatic work by Heize, and with a falke by Musil, which engages the mind and soul of the reader. The fact that *The Blind Owl* appears as a novella if studied from all the aforementioned aspects is one of its special dimensions in both Iranian and European literary corpus, introducing the title as an international literary achievement.

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