

## **One Text and Multiple Readers: Reading “the Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isphahan” in the Light of Ricoeurian Hermeneutics**

**Tahereh Miremadi Ahmadi<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

The English narrative of "the adventure of Hajji Baba of Ispahan"[1] seems to be one of the controversial literal texts for the Iranian readership with social criticism interest. This paper intends, not to refute or redeem the validity claims of this historical actualized reading or to offer an alternative, but, to put it into perspective of a spectrum of possibilities and to show how and under what contingencies, the text can actualize some other rival and salient interpretations that reverberate our contemporary horizons of social reality. Using the Ricoeurian theories of literature by applying his theory of "surplus of meaning" on the text we suggest how "The World of Text " has the potential to have different readings and in the next step, by analyzing "The World of Reader" and its dialectical relations with the world of text, we exhibit the important role of "reading" as the act of Self Reflection.

**Keywords:** Text, World of Text, World of Reader, Ipse, Idem, Self-Reflection, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics

---

1. Assistant professor of Iranian Research organization of Science and Technology, E-mail: tmiremadi@hotmail.com

### **Introduction**

The English narrative of "the adventure of Hajji Baba of Ispahan"[2] seems to be one of the controversial literal texts for the Iranian social critics. It has aroused vivid sentiments and intrigued critical thinking from traditional, quasi-modern and post modern vintage points [3]. In fact, since 1924, the year [4] that its Persian translation became publicly available, numerous in-print books and papers [5] and many more unpublished academic studies [6] have revealed its message.

However, despite the dispersal in a time-span of near eighty years and the diversity of its commentators and aspirants, it seems that the overwhelming majority of these accounts could be sorted in only one category, which we may call "anti-colonialist" reading [7]. Given the literary nature of the book, such virtual unanimity could not be the result of scientific objectivism. It might have, rather, stemmed from the predominant discourse of the society which has morally legitimized the politico-cultural values against the Western societies [8]. However, since the anti-western discourse has been loosening its grip for some time, it could be expected that the anti-colonialist reading of the book, too, starts to give way to different kinds of reading [9].

At this juncture, this paper intends, not to refute or redeem the validity claims of this historical actualized reading or to offer an alternative, but, to put it into perspective of a spectrum of possibilities and to show how and under what contingencies, the text can actualize some other rival and salient interpretations that reverberate our contemporary horizons of social reality.

In order to reach this objective and with the aspiration from the hermeneutic phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur [10], the paper develops a project of interpretation in which *The World of the Text* [11] of "the adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan" becomes unfolding. The project goes on to shed lights on its configuration within the semantic and semiotic borders and its structural relations. That finally, culminates into the emergence of four different texts, each convey a valuable message in regard to the social points of view.

### **The World of Text and Its Configuration**

Every text consists of words and phrases. Nevertheless, it has a message as a whole. So is the text of "the Adventurers of Hajji Baba of Ispahan [12], thereafter, referred to as "TAHBI". My ultimate goal in this part is to obtain a view from the text as a coherent entity, able to offer a certain message to the reader. The question arising at the outset is as to what are the borders of text and where it begins and ends.

As mentioned before, almost all the critiques, comments and reviews of the TAHBI especially as to Eghbal(1945), Tavassuli's (1964), Dekhoda Loghat Nameh 's (1958), Minavi (1988), Ammant's (2003), Azarang's (2003) tended mainly to read it from an anti-colonialist viewpoint. This type of readings is a truncated version of hermeneutics entitled "Hermeneutics of Suspicion"[13], poised to uncover, unmask, demystify, and expose the real from the apparent message of the text. Denying any merits for the ostensible meaning of the text, validity claims of their readings are based on the existence of an

absolute truth delivered through analyzing the ill intentions of the writer, James Justian Morier, "the infamous agent of colonialism in Iran". That is why, a good part of their work is normally devoted to the biography of this "so called junior diplomat of British Kingdom", and an analysis of his psycho, economic, political, religious and even bureaucratic agenda to write the book [14]. As if the words engraved the cover of the book, indicating the name of the author, makes the truth of the text so self-evident that the reader may forgo to proceed considering the contents of the text [15].

Contrarily the paper's point of departure is the "suspension" of the writer of the text and its intentions to write the TAHBI, ill or benevolent [16]. This operation, which is called "Distanciation [17]", denotes the freedom of the text to deliver its messages out of its very own configuration. It means a necessary step to liberate the world of text, independent of the historical bondage, to unfold its fixed nature and at the same time, its ability to stretch its territories semantically and semiologically, within the limits of the relations of its words and sentences. At this point, the text and likewise, the project of interpretation commences from the first word of the page one, narrating *...my father, Kerbelai Hassan, was married, when only seventeen years of age, to the daughter...and not a word before* [18].

### 1- Semiotics of the text

Despite what seems to be a disarray of long and tedious incidents [19], the TAHBI could be easily analyzed with regard to its semiotic and semantic

structure. As a closed system which is the subject of semiotics [20], there are clear-cut syntactical units to which the text can comfortably be dissembled, and reassembled into the linguistic structures including emplotment, episodes (...anecdotes, subnarratives,...) and characters, in which all parts have dynamic relationship with each other, cooperating to convey the spectrum of its potential messages.

### A: Emplotment

As a modern fictive biography, the text of Hajji Baba contains different and scattered events holding together by the "emplotment" a form of discordant concordance. Its story line is not a simple straightforward, nor is it required to be so [21]. To clarify better, we use the expressions of the school of Russian formalism and divide story line of the TAHBI into two types of temporality: first, *Fabula* [22] meaning the story of the book, which depicts the chronological order of the events in the life of the character named Hajji Baba from his childhood until his adulthood, and second, *Siuzhet* [23], meaning its textual structure or its plot which not only disobey the chronological rule, but also inserts seemingly unrelated and separate sub-narratives into emplotment, and delays the unfolding main chain of events, and perhaps lose temporarily the focus of the story. Many dismiss these sub-narratives as commotion and nonsensical, yet, as we will see, the horizontal expansion that the textual narrative undergoes, by the stretches of these sub-narratives, has a vital function in conveying the whole message of the book.

### **B: Episodes[24]**

The eighty chapters of the TAHBI could be divided comfortably into 9 distinguishable standard episodes [25]. Every episode has a symmetrical shape of one or two chapters of introductory exposition, one chapter for initial complication, one or some chapters for further complication, one chapter for resolutions and one final chapter for denouement. In this structure, a process of tension builds up between two opposite parties, reaching to the peak or climax and then its reversal trend of relief and serenity. As an example, the first episode of the text, which starts with the chapter one and expands to chapter nine, could be analyzed as follows:

Chapters one and two: *the exposition*: the introductory remarks about the character of protagonist, the "I" of story, his family and his journey with a Turk merchant, Osman Agha, pp.1-16.

Chapter three, *Initial complication, and tension*: the captivation of Hajji Baba, the narrator by the Turcomans, pp.16-21.

Chapter four: *The climax, the peak of tension*, the narrator's ingenuity to put hands on his master's money and keep it for himself, pp.21-26.

Chapter five: *Further complication*, the narrator becomes robber and is permitted to accompany the chief of the tribe in a predatory of his native land, pp. 27-37.

Chapters six and seven, *further complications*: description of prisoners and booty made in invasion by the Turcomans, pp. 38-52.

Chapter 8: *Resolution and denouement*: the narrator is rescued by Iranian royal courtier and

robbed by him. The meaning of falling from the frying pan into fire is illustrated. pp.53-62.

The second episode is from the chapters 9-19. The third is from 20-27, the fourth is from 28-36, the fifth from 36-44, the sixth from 45-53, the seventh from 54-63, the eighth from 64-72 and finally the ninth from 73-80 [26].

### **C: Characters or Actants [27]**

For many critics (Nategh), (Ammanat), (Azarang), the fact that the TAHBI's story line is shaped by nine repetitive cycles of tension and denouement could allude to the text's indebtedness to the "One thousands and one nights". However, this similarity does not seem to exceed beyond the stylistic aspect. When we examine the other aspect of the story, we could find for example some of the characters that have roles in releasing the pressure of traditional repetitive circles and animating a modern dynamics to the story. To explain this point, we need to recognize two sets of characters in this narrative. First, the characters of King, Prince, Royal physician, Court Poet, local clergy etc., whose illustrations are poorly sketched and represent not deeper than the clichés of the so-called Oriental and Patrimonial societies. These characters are the reasons that many critics have labeled the narrative as an anti-Iranian rhetoric [28].

The other type of characters, who almost come as the narrators of sub-narratives, are the real and live persons who has a story to tell and confer the very aspect of narrativity to the text.

Having this dichotomy in mind, the most intriguing personae is, of course, Hajji Baba, the

narrator of the main story line, who seems to be in a constant danger of falling from the height of narrative to the nadir of rhetoric. Incarnated in various guises, an apprentice of the barbershop, a servant to a merchant, a robber accompanying Turcomans raiders, a water-carrier to the pilgrims and a vendor of smoke in Meshed, a dervish, crafty assistant to a malicious royal physician, a callous executioner in the service of the court, a hypocritical mullah in Qom, a "promoter of matrimony" in Isfahan, and finally a secretary to a Persian diplomat abroad, his character's constancy seems to be established ironically, by his inconsistency in the moral issues. His intentionality continually although sometimes with some hesitations, aims to serve his short-sighted personal interests at the expense of the others, which shows another reason for a text with strong rhetoric motif.

Another aspect of his identity compensates overly all the cliché characteristics and humanizes him by granting some reflective ability like a protagonist of modern novel [29]. This sublimation is due to the fact that he, frequently, exhibits a genuine capability for stepping out of cliché and actually narrates the unnarratable. What I mean by unnarratable is the description, in the most honest possible way, of a conscious besieged to the agony of contradiction of relativism of cultural ethics and universalism of moral principles.

Under this circumstance, the satirical overtone of the text turns to a tragic one and, Hajji Baba, this time as a solemn character sets a very different scene for the reader. One of these breakthroughs and perhaps the most appealing one, which is the

peak of the fourth episode in the story line, is "the tragedy of executing Zeenab", the one that the narrator called it the bloody tragedy [30].

At the outset, Hajji Baba gradually prepares the reader for a tormenting story. He recounts the rumor of the illness of Zeenab, a Kurdish slave, his first love who is now one of concubines/maids of the royal harem and his immediate anguish over the chance that their secret and short love affair and her actual illness might be related. But soon he tries to put himself together, as he says: "*I endeavored to rally my spirits by the hope that perhaps she was actually ill, and that it had been impossible for her to appear...Then after all, as if braving my feelings, I repeated to myself the lines of one of our poets who like me, had lost his mistress. Is there but one pair of stag eyes, or one cypress waist,... that I should so mourn over the loss of my cruel one...No let me love where love is cheap, for I am a miser of my feelings* [31]. Underlining the contradiction between a cold-blooded pervert and a sincere lover and the agony that he finds himself stretching in between, he weeps ..." *But still, turn where I would, go where I would, the image of Zeenab, a torn and mangled corps, was ever before my eyes and haunted my imagination at all seasons and at all hours... [32].*" After a while, he finds out his worst fears actually have come true and Zeenab is convicted to be executed by being thrown from the dome. Here, the narrator's tone could not be darker yet more poetic. So that makes the reader see but blood and feels but the pain that he is enduring: "*The night was dark and lowering, and well suited to the horrid scene about to be acted. The sun, unusual in*

*these climates, had set, surrendered by clouds of the color of blood [33]" and "A cold sweat broke out all over my body, my eyes swam, my knees knocked under me..." What said I to myself, "is n't enough that I have been the cause of her death, must I be her executer too? Must I be the grave digger to my own child? Must I be the ill-fated he who is to stretcher cold limbs in the grave, and send my own blood back again to its mother earth? Why am I called to this cruel, oh cruel destiny But no, 'tis plain my fate is ordained, sealed, fixed! And in vein I struggle, I must fulfill the task before me. Oh world, oh world! What art thou, and how much more wouldst thou be known, if each man to lift up the veil that hidden his own actions, and show himself as he really is"[34].*

Such an expulsion of overwhelming fear and emotions, a katharsis *par excellence* as described Aristotle [35], attends to exhibit the real concern of human sufferings, more than exploiting them by political rhetoric. "*Pulling out the handkerchief from my breast and still wet with blood of the unfortunate Zeenab, I contemplated it with feelings of the most bitter anguish; then spreading it before me on her grave, I went through a ceremony to which I had long been unaccustomed, I said my prayers...* [36]"

Although not as dramatic as this, all peaks of the nine episodes of the TAHBI, have a reflective and contemplative moment, which not only save the character of Hajji Baba from being a banal cliché of the Orient by providing a human face for him, but also elevates its discourse. Its "*sach*" as Gadamer puts it, up to a perennial concern for humanity in a multicultural world [37]. Under a

thin coating of contextualized values like: "*Thus I endeavored to make light of the subject, and to show my self a true Mussulman by my contempt for womankind*" [38]. The thrust of narrative highlights the fallible state of human being conflicting with good and evil and cautions the world that the ethical normativity tends to be hollowed up by deliberate manipulations, misinterpretations, as long as it is not purified by universalism of moral justice [39].

## **2- Semantics**

The relation between the text and its reference is another issue that should be discussed separately. Needless to say, many critics have tried hard to challenge the TAHBI as to the referentialibility of its discourse. On analyzing their argument, we present our argument in this regard as following:

### **A: Discourse Analysis, Challenging the Validity of the Identity Claims**

There are numerous assertions (*e.g.* Eghbal, Minavi, Afshar, Amanat, Tavassuli 1964, Afshar and Aazarang) passionately elaborated on the ground that the story has an agenda to disseminate lies about Iranian cultural and normative beliefs and belittle them –what, in turn, stimulated a strong feeling of antipathy and detestation [40]. While perceiving the message of text to be humiliating, dishonoring and degrading the Iranian culture and society appears to be corroborated by the three levels of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary of the speech act theory[41].

In our selected methodology, the relation between the discourse of TAHBI and its referential

should be established with two underlying characteristics of textuality and narrativity, kept in mind. Acknowledging these two features, cautions our project to prevent double confusions often made: first, the confusion between oral discourse and written discourse; second, the confusion between narrativity and historiography.

Textuality, requires differentiating between the event of the act of narrating by James Morier, which happened in 1823, and the meanings of the narrated events in the TAHBI, which keep being read time and time again, As Ricoeur says: "the event is surpassed in the meaning" [42]. In this contingent, the act of discourse because of textuality loses some degree of its capacity to deliver the levels of perlocutionary and illocutionary [43] of its discourse.

This word/world relation of the TAHBI has to go through another redefinition in account of its narrativity, which jeopardizes the level of locutionary of its discourse. What the TAHBI actually represents and credited even by its least charitable critics like Amanat and Azarang [44] is a mimesis of experimental [objective truth] truth. Edward Browne testifies [45] that the (TAHBI)'s share of description of objective world is materialized into a portrayal of the lived world as a mimesis of early Qajar era. That leads to a philosophical point that Ricoeur tries to make when saying: "Poetic language draws its prestige from its capacity for bringing to language certain aspects of what Husserl called *the Lebenswelt* and Heidegger *In-der-Welt-Sein* [46]. What it brings forth with narrating some part of Iranian life, or at least some of its symbols and sign, are beyond the

mere description of cultural mores and costumes. The text depicts the delicate yet strong connections existing between rationalities or convictions and the language games, furthermore, the human dilemma at the global scale between rationality and reasonableness [47]. Truth in this sense is so intangible that can not be contested rationally as falsehood. It could be felt and sensed aesthetically.

Narrativity calls for the distinction between the historical incidents and characters like Mirza Abol Hassan Shirazi, Fath Ali Shah and the UK diplomatic missions, like that of Sir John Malcom to Iran which James Morier seemingly selected as raw material to develop story on the one hand and the fictive personalities and episodes on the other in the narrative. They, though the sources of imaginative creativity, were formless and unstructured as some discordant events, when, thanks to imaginative creativity, find their order with narrative plot and configuration [48].

Conclusively, as far as the discourse analysis is concerned, the text of Hajji Baba as an imaginative world does not convey claims challengeable with rationalized argument in the technical terms. Its discourse is limited to fictive characters in a definitive time and space as many critics tend to do [49]. That is why Morier, the author, himself emphasizes that the TAHBI is all about lies as [the text] of "One thousand and one nights" is a lie [50].

### **B: The Layers of Structural Relations**

"Whence recovery of meaning begins", Ricoeur notes, "it has to be with some structural comprehension [51]" Nevertheless, Ricoeurian structuralism is very different from the literal

structuralism which presume text as a closed system. As mentioned before, the system of the text ultimately is bound to open in front of the reader and seeks its referential meaning. This openness is to transpire in some form of interaction between the world of text and reader's subjectivity or "the world of reader [52]". The early sign of this interface or collision becomes visible, at the level of semantics [53] as following:

To find the structural relations for the TAHBI, we have first, to discover, as Ricoeur puts it "the binary relations conjunction and disjunctions," [54] which already exists in the world of the text and surface as the constant struggles and alliances among the characters. The product will be an outline of a spectrum of potentialities and possibilities for politico-emancipatory readings.

The fact that these structural layers have that potentiality to develop different and rival readings is indebted to the differentiation between senses and references. While a written prose as a meaningful discourse has to have "sense", it has to be completed by the act of reading to have references and because "the readers receive it according to their own and differentiated receptive capacity" [55], multi- processes of "fusion of horizons" occur leading to very different readings. Here, the element of time and temporality plays a significant role because every act of reading has its own temporality, its own horizon of normativity in the extralinguistic world which is brought forth by reading experience.

Trying to recover the message of the whole text by schematization the narrative through the cultural symbols and metaphors, readers can not

miss the significance of the protagonist "Hajji Baba" who echoes all the social struggles into a dialogical discourse with his conscious and confers the narrative an atmosphere of reflection and critique. Hence, the semantics of Hajji Baba or the meanings that is subjectively associated with him as a cultural symbol, could lead to the meaning of the whole TAHBI.

As a character, Hajji Baba of Isphahan, is attributed with some features [56]. He is a male, free resident (versus slave), of Iranian nationality, Persian speaking, urban cultured, and Muslim Shiite, whose social status upgrades from lower middle class (apprentice of a barbershop) to the upper class (secretary to an ambassador). His character has some similarities with some other characters of narratives and consequently, he recognize himself as a member of a collective identity or "idem or sameness [57]" in a fictive society.

On the opposite side, the otherness or outsiders can be figured as non-male, Non-Muslim, non-Shiite, non-Iranian, non-urban and at last non-free citizen. Those too, make some communities of fictive people, the narrative community of otherness which are *outsiders* for Hajji Baba's community. We come to realize that, although not all of them but many of them are the narrators of sub-narratives: The Turk and Sunni merchant, the Christian English Doctor, the Kurd Yezedis slave girl, the rich Sunni Turk widow, the Armenian couple.

If we envisage a spectrum with selfhood and otherness at its two extremes, we find two people at the two extremes: "I" *i.e.*, selfhood embodied by

Hajji Baba, and otherness by Zeenab, who is at the same time female, Kurd, non Shiite, slave and of nomadic culture. And ironically these two become entangled in a forbidden love which, as a result of the selfhood's failure to live up to the moral responsibility and otherness' naivety, ends in tragic fate.

The relations between the fictive characters in the public and even personal sphere [58] are of tension and antagonism, imbued with mistrust and power struggle. The social power structure is depicted as a Foucauldian complex of micro-webs. There is no purity and innocence and no one is spared to be categorically blameless. Everybody appears to some extent responsible for his/her fate since they have some interests and choices. Even Zeenab, who is by far an outsider and has the most deprived identity, has some responsibility for her seemingly unavoidable fatal fate (her attraction for indulgence and luxury of the royal Haram). However, there are degrees of responsibilities which subsume the characters in three columns:

- 1- Protagonist (narrator),
- 2- The insiders who are considered to be "the same" in collective identity and
- 3- The outsiders who are considered to be the other or alien (outsider).

Recalling the systemic development of 8 episodes, in almost every episode, the tension escalates between insiders and outsiders. The peak point is where the "I" of the story, the protagonist as an agent, deliberately chooses to act; *i.e.* to lie, betray or rob one of the low level insiders or outsiders or as a patient or sufferer of the act of a

high level insiders or other's action has to pay the price.

At this juncture, the world of the text offers multi-layers of binary contradiction between protagonist's identity and the others' which can be sorted into at least four layers of social strata; a nexus of societal relationship by the criteria of politics, culture, gender, and ethnicity. That is the reason why the process of interpretation is bound to focus on the symbolism of Hajji Baba as an abridged version of the whole narrative. But what is the cultural significance of Hajji Baba.

### **C: The Metaphor of Hajji Baba and the Question of Identification**

The configuration reveals the implicit expectation for the role of the reader who is supposed to make the text of her own. It depends on the actual readers if and how the configurative structuring of time, action and identity will be realized and create diversity of the readings as a reality [59].

At the outset, even the simple fact that a specific configuration can have synchronically different reading reports the freedom although limited, of reader to impose her understanding to the final message of the text. Since readers are supposed a self-interpretive being that carries a cultural horizon with literary symbols by which she understands herself and the world around her, Hajji Baba and his social and cultural predicate, are identified by cultural codes of social virtues or vices [60].

As to the actualized interpretations, it seems that the anti western and anti modern theory of conspiracy has been nourishing the majority of the

criticism and commentaries of the text. The association of the symbol of Hajji Baba with the "Evil" of the British Empire surpasses the dimension of literary criticism and has been presumed as a socio/politico veracity described in the numerous articles in the most important Iranian encyclopedias and dictionaries: (Loghatnameh-ie Dehkhoda, DaeratolMaaref, Encyclopedia of Iranica and Daneshnameh Jahan-I Eslam). This category of readings, understandably has legitimate ground to disclose a regional truth as long as the discourse of conspiracy in its diverse forms of traditionalism, anti modernism, post modernism and reverse orientalism continues to engage an active part of Iranian readership.

However, it has never been completely without rival. In fact, a different reading, although meager and less apocalyptic emerged and gained its authority from the dominant discourse of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905. In fact, the political discourse of the Revolution prompted the Persian translator to introduce the TAHBI to the Iranian readership. For Mirza Habib Isfahani, the Persian translator of the book, who himself was a political activist against the Gajar dynasty, the symbol of Hajji Baba signifies a hero, a political critic and an activist against the traditional society and patrimonialism [61]. The vice, here, contrary to the anti colonialist reading, includes paternalism, autocracy, etc., that the Iranian traditional society, including the Qajar dynasty, represented. The virtues, on the other hand, are social justice, the rule of law, freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, etc.

Analyzing these two actualized interpretations, we find out that the figurative and literary meanings of Hajji Baba are related to each other by connotation i.e. because of psychological association [62]. In fact the symbolic resemblance between Hajji Baba as a cultural metaphor and the selfhood or otherness underlies both readings. Anti-authoritarian reading transpires while the reader captures the constant struggle between Hajji Baba as an individual and the royal court of a patrimonial society and associates. In an opposite direction, the tension between the protagonist's identity and the court could translate into the assault of British colonialism against the traditional East. In an anti colonialist reading, like that reading of Tavassuli, Hajji Baba is presumed James Morier or colonial otherness while the selfhood is the Iranian traditional society

Considering the other structural relations that shape the configuration of the text, there could be two other potential readings to be actualized out of resemblance. The new discourses on feminism and activism on ethnic discrimination, etc. have their own chances for such a creative semantics. For a potential reader who distinguishes herself as a feminist, the tension between male/female shapes the whole message of reading and Hajji Baba being male surfaces as the otherness, while Zeenab is identified as selfhood. At the same time, in the ethnic autonomist's eye (Kurd, Turk...), Hajji Baba as an ultimate otherness represents double domineering traits of the Persian nativity and the Shiite religiosity. Potential analysis of the text indicated in a table, below:

Readings	Hajji Baba is a symbol for:	In the antimony between	Social discourse
Anti authoritarian	Selfhood	Society versus State	Majority Rule
Anti colonialist	Otherness	East versus West	Traditionalism
Feminist	Otherness	Female versus Male	Gender liberation
Ethnic autonomist	Otherness	Persian Versus Kurd, Turk,	Ethnic Nationalism

That emergence of new reading could go on and on. Every time when a new discourse on social criticism takes shape, a new meaning may add to the reservoir of the meanings of Hajji Baba and his identity takes on new dimensions. as long and far as the horizon of the discourses on social justice and human liberty moves , the spectrum of the regional truth of the text of Hajji Baba can be expounded as its semantical and semiological structures.

Yet, we should not overlook the fact that these quadruple appropriations of the text are just an initial step for the interpretations. The way Ricoeur understands the stage of appropriation, this stage is not just a taking hold of the text by the reader. The text and its project of the world can take hold of the reader as well. "the appropriation implies a moment of dispassion of the egoist and narcissic ego" of the reader [63]. That is why all the aforementioned readers are bound to undergo a process of reflection and revisiting one's identifications, if they want to be consistent with their ethical values. While the reading based on an normative world of anti colonialism is not sensitive about the relation between Hajji Baba and these ethnic religious minorities because they all are considered otherness, it starts falling apart when

the traditional culture including the Qajarian rule which is an important part of the definition of selfhood, is depicted so vividly as an unfair and corrupted system.

The reader finds unavoidably facing with the definition of selfhood encompassing incompatible or rather incommensurable values. Selfhood is not authenticated by vice nor otherness validated with virtues. This situation causes the reader enormous conflictive tensions and makes the re-examination of her sense and intuition of self-recognition unavoidable. And that will, ironically, look a lot like the struggle that Hajji Baba goes through to step out of his cliché-like personality and narrates unnarratable.

The paper does not plan to elaborate on this new level of reading which requires another comprehensive study on the "world of reader". However, it can be speculated at this point that at least four other readings will be actualized when our aforementioned readers go through another reading experience with their evolved sense of identity.

### **Conclusion: From Text to Action**

Stopping deliberately at the end, the paper avoids finalizing the whole project of Ricoeurian

hermeneutics of text, to put all its stress and emphasis on the prospect of the multiplicity (at least eight) of the interpretations for a fixed entity of narrative text" of "The adventures of Hajji Baba of Isphahan". It further indicates that the historically actualized interpretation which gives an anti-colonialist account is not but one among many possibilities in a spectrum of readings that the structural semantics of the THBI is offering. Should readers with different local and social aspirations and preferences examine the text, they will be prone to have different interpretations including the anti authoritarian, feminist and ethnic autonomist readings. Consequently, the literal discourse of the novel of TAHBI as a "text" never exhausts its capacity to be read time and again, offering new message to its new readers.

The mediation between "Time" and "Narrative" and the redemption of the claim of the possibility of the multiplicity of readers for one narrative text could have some important normative implications on the individual and societal level. In retrospect, the thrust of Ricoeur's argument for multiplicity of readings and interpretation is substantiated by the very concept of the freedom of the text from its writer's intentionality and of the reader from the bondage of the text. His paradigm of reading is a manifesto of "individual freedom". The existence of multiple readings in a society is considered a proxy for the existence of validated individuality within the readers' community and conversely the lack of it is implied in the case of the unanimity.

On the other hand, it seems that very idea of multiplicity and plurality of the message could transform the normative relations among different

readers. Consider the two aforementioned readers of the THBI with anti colonialist and of anti authoritarian reading which have oppositional definitions of the selfhood and otherness, the controversy will have to end by the time they admit the limitedness of their standpoint and stop claiming to have the absolute truth of the text. Hence the idea of freedom of the reader from the bondage of the text has to be completed by responsibility, limitedness, life experience and temporality.

As the philosophical traditions of Western social criticism shows the idea of temporality of the reading by transmuting the action of reading into a process of self reflective and self critical understanding has corroborated with more general and indispensable conceptualization about the principles of "reversibility" and "reflexivity" in discourse ethics and deserves several other papers to lay out all its theoretical potentialities.

## References

- [1] James Justinian Morier: *The adventures of Hajji Baba of Isphahan*, London: Bentley, 1823.
- [2] James Justinian Morier: *The adventures of Hajji Baba of Isphahan*, London: Bentley, 1823.
- [3] Which are inspired by pre-modern traditionalism, culture conservatism, or reverse orientalism.
- [4] According to Isma'eel Ra'iiin, there are five Persian translations with limited circulation, before 1924. See Esmaaeel R~aiin, *Mirza Abolhasan Shirazi*, (Tehran Javidan,1358),123-

138. But the edition that was widely disseminated and read was the translation which mistakenly was attributed to Kirmani: see James Morier: *The adventures of Haji Baba of Ispahan*, translated from English into Persian by Haji Shaykh Ahmad-i Kirmani, and edited with notes by D.C. Phillott, (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1924). It has been edited by Seyed Mohammad Ali Jamal Zadeh and published under the title of *Sarguzasht-i H-aj-i B-ab-a-yi Isfah-an-i / nivishtah-i Jimz M-uriah*; [tarjumah-i M-irza Hab-ib Isfah-an-i]; bih tash-ih-i Sayyid Muhammad `Al-i Jam-alz-adah. Tehran: publisher, 1348.
- [5] Among others are: 1- Iraj Afshar, , Motarjem-e-*Hajji Baba Kist*,\_Majjaleh- Jahan-e- No. 3, (1955), 2- Dehkhoda's Loghat Naameh, under the title of "Hajji Baba" (Tehran: Institute of Loghat Nameh, 1959-78-), 26-28, 3-, Yahya Arayan Poor, *Az Saba Ta Nima*, Tahrikh-i-150 sa li adab-I Farsi, (1354: Ketab-I Jibi, Tehran), 4-Abbas Eghbal, *Ketab-e-Hajji Baba va Daastan-e-Nakhostin Mohasselin Iranini dar Farang, Yadegaar*, 1, (1323), 28-50, 5- R-aiin, Esmael: *Mirza Abolhasan Shirazi*, (Tehran: Javidan, 1358), 123-138, 6- Mojtaba Minavi: *Ponzdah Goftaar*,\_Vol. 3, (Tehran, Toos, 1367), 7-Tavassouli, Ghulam Abbas: *La societe irannien et Le monde Oriental Vus a Travers L'oeuvre d'in ecrivain anglais, d'un ecrivain Francaise*, (Paris: Libraire d'Amerique et d'Orient)1966, 8- Homa Nategh, "*Hajji baba va ghesseh este'maar*" in *Keh az Maast keh bar Maast*, (Tehran: Agaah, 1357) 93-143, 9- Nategh Homa, "*Az Maast keh bar Maast*", in *Keh az Maast keh bar Maast*\_Agaah, ibid., 10-: "*Hajji Baba*" in *Daeraatol Ma-a-ref Fa`rsi, Persian Encyclopedia*,ed Gholam Hossein Mosahab, vol.1 (Tehran:1345-74), 11)- Abdol Hussein Azarang, , "*Hajji Baba*", in *Daneshnameh-i-Jahan-i- Islam*, (Teharn: Bonyad-I Ma`ref-I Eslami,1996), 12- Abbas Ammant, "*Hajji Baba*", in *Encyclopedia of Iraniaca*, (New York: Bibliotheca Persia Press, 2003),. 561-568.
- [6] Mohammad Tavalai:, *The orientalist Construction of Persia*, Ph. D dissertation in University of South Wales (Australia) 1998, 2- Pandit Palavi: *Orientalist discourse and its literary representation in the works of four British Traveler*, Pennsylvania State University, 1990, 3- Warren Johnson *Voice, Power and the comic in Selected British and French Narratives of the nineteen Century*, University of Michigan, 1989, 4- Mohammad Taghi Nezam Mafi,: *Persian Recreations: Theatricality in Anglo- Persian Diplomatic History, 1599-1828*, Ph. D. Dissertation, 1999.
- [7] If the free translation of Mirza Habib and the introduction of its editor (Jamalzadeh) were to be counted as their interpretations of the text, we would have actually another category of reading which could be called anti-authoritarian. Nategh and Ammant cited this type of interpretations. I will present our view about it further in the paper.
- [8] which gets momentum by the resistance against the coup against Mossadgh, 1954, and

- culminated in the events of Islamic revolution 1978, the crisis of American hostage, 1980, etc.
- [9] For example see Mahdi Yazdani Khorram, "Shahr-e Terran Dar Cheshmeh Hajji Baba"; The city of Tehran in the eye of Hajji Baba of Isphahn", Persian. in *Hamshahri*, 44, Bahman, 1380, 12.
- [10] Paul Ricoeur is the best known French representative of phenomenological hermeneutics. See a detailed theoretical and methodological work on his philosophical enterprise of Interpretation see Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Forth Worth: the Texas Christian University Press, 1976.
- [11] Ricoeur Paul: *From Text to Action*, Northwestern University Press 1991, 83
- [12] This paper will use the edition which published in 1924 for its reference. The bibliographic information is as following: James Justinian Morier *The adventures of Hajji Baba\_of Isphahn*, 3 Vols, Paris: A & W: Galignani, 1824.
- [13] Hermeneutic of suspicion is technical term representing Ricoeur's attempt to retain both science and art, whilst disallowing either an absolute status. While Ricoeur integrates it into his hermeneutics as an instance, the anti imperialist reading uses it as the ultimate method to deliver the absolute truth, and makes itself vulnerable to the this critique of Ricoeur that "Hermeneutics seems to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience. See Ricoeur *Freud and philosophy*, New Heaven: Yale, 1970, 27.
- [14] It is the case especially for Tavassuli, Ammant, Raiin, Dekhoda.
- [15] In fact, the strong belief in the absolute truth that they are bound to reveal, sometimes, gives the permission to mistranslate the text; like when. Tavassuli misrepresents the character of a concubine/ maid of the Royal harem and replace the daughter of Fath Ali Shah and Royal Princes.
- [16] For an account on Morier's benevolent intentions, see the editor's introduction in the 1348 Persian edition.
- [17] It is an equivalent for the Husserlian phenomenological *Epoche* of meaning." After *Epoche*, consciousness continues seeing, without being absorbed in this seeing "Paul Ricoeur: *Husserl: an analysis of his phenomenology*. Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1967, 147.
- [18] including the numerous introductions and epistles. See for example the edition of 1947 with a long preface and introduction by Sir Walter Scott and Edward G. Browne.
- [19] For example for Abbas Ammant, Tavassuli, Azarang, etc.
- [20] Ricoeur classifies the semiological categories as such: Beyond the three levels of actions, actants and narration, there is nothing else that falls within the scope of the science of semiology. Paul Ricoeur. *From Text To Action Essays in Hermeneutics*, II, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991, 117.

- [21] As Ricoeur points out: "fiction does not require ... nor need a linear time-conception, such as historiography does. Paul Ricoeur *Time and Narrative*. III:128.
- [22] A term belonging to the study of prose, *fabula* designates the raw material which will be processed to become a narrative. The story is the purely chronological series of events, which will be recounted, in the order in which they took place, which is not necessarily the order of the narration. The *fabula* will be organised into *siuzhet* to become a narrative.
- [23] SIUZHET (or "plot"). The *siuzhet* is the narrative counterpart of the *fabulas* or story before it is being told and like *fabula* refers to prose.
- [24] logic of action consists in an interconnected series of action kernels that together constitute the structural continuity of the narrative, Paul Ricoeur, *From Text* .116.
- [25] We mean by standard that every episode leads to a peak, an interpeak, another peak and a post peak. Or as Hetteema calls interlude, conflict between two, the climax, settlement, interlude-, See Theo Hetteema, *Reading for good*, Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996, 171.
- [26] For an extensive remarks on the episodes, their peaks and the dynamics, see, Tahereh Miremadi, "*Hermeneutics of Self And Other than Self*", PhD dissertation. Tarbiat Modares, department of Political Science 2003, 112-117.
- [27] Ricoeur writes "the actant is the one by whom, to whom and with whom. The action is done. The giver, the receiver, the promiser..." in Ricoeur, *From Text...* 117.
- [28] Abbas Amanat (2003) call the characters the "charicatures of the historical personalities. This is the case for Tavassuli (1964), and others.
- [29] See Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* , II:8-10.
- [30] TAHBI. Vol: 203.
- [31] Ibid. p.197.
- [32] Ibid. p.197.
- [33] Ibid. p.203.
- [34] Ibid. p.203.
- [35] Ricoeur differentiates between poetics and rhetoric, saying that rhetoric exploits the passion while poetic transposes human action and suffering into poem. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* I: p.46.
- [36] Ibid. p.208.
- [37] See the current debate between the politics of Recognition (Charles Taylor) and the deliberative democracy and Yurgen Habermas. Charles Taylor, *the politics of recognition*" in *Multiculturalism and the politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). And Jurgen Habermas, "*struggle for recognition in constitutional states*, in *European Journal of Philosophy*. 2. (1993), 128-55.
- [38] TAHBI.1:197.
- [39] This is the point on which many contemporary philosophers including Paul Ricoeur, Yurgen Habermas, John Rawls, and Charles Taylor have had serious debate. See for example Paul Ricoeur: *The Just*, Chicago, Chicago press, 2000, x –xxiv.
- [40] There is another classification which points out the differentiation between the patrimonial

state and the whole Iranian society and attributes the former as the target of Morier's criticism, not the latter. Ammant addresses the Nategh's and Ashraf's readings as such.

[41] See Austin Searl, *Speech act theory and Pragmatics*, Boston: D. Reidel, 1980.

[42] Ricoeur: *From Text to ...* 79.

[43] See *ibid.*

[44] Including Abbas Amanat who asserts: "Despite Morier's biases, one can still read *Hajji Baba* as an informative source for the early Qajar period, by virtue of its Persian expressions and proverbs, portrayals of historical figures (often under a thin fictionalized disguise), and the general sense of everyday life in the Persian environment that it conveys". See Abbas Ammant *Hajji Baba*, 563.

[45] Edward Brown also asserts "very few, if any, of the incidents in Hajji Baba's career could be characterized as improbable, most of them will be easily paralleled by any one who has some knowledge of Persian life and literature" See the Browne's introduction. Morier, James, *The adventures of Hajji Baba*, 1947, xxv .

[46] *ibid.* p.12.

[47] For a philosophical and linguist account of this different, see Winch Peter, "The idea of Social Science" in Dallmayer and MC Carthy, *Understanding and social inquiry*, (Notre Dame press, 1977). Also Jurgen Habermas, "Reasonable versus true or the Morality of Worldviews", in Habermas *The inclusion of Other*, Boston, MIT press, 2002.

[48] Edward G. Browne who is known as an impartial scholar, in his introduction to the

1947 publication addresses this point very carefully: The characters are manifestly drawn from life, but they are characters by Morier, not caricatures of actual personages. He continues to cite from Morier himself that explicitly ask the readers as following: "I beg you to disclaim personality of any kind.....although it may fit in some parts yet does not on the whole.." Morier, 1947.xxv.

[49] For example Abbas Ammant points out Fathá Ali Khan Sáaba, the poet laureate and claims Morier erroneously transcribes him as the poet "Asker," an opportunistic and sycophantic figure. See Amanat, *Hajji Baba*, 565.

[50] Morier, James Justinian, *The adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan, in England*, London : R. Bentley, 1850. p. (VII), (VIII).

[51] Ricoeur, Paul: *Conflict of Interpretations*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974, 57.

[52] Ricoeur, Paul, *Time and narrative* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, I:71.

[53] More exactly, "the structural semantics". Consult the part of Structural Semantics, in Paul Ricoeur, *The conflict of interpretations*, Evaston: Northwestern University Press, 73.

[54] "In this stage, we are no longer dealing with object terms but with relations of conjunction and disjunction, for example maculin-feminin. which constitute it entirely." Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*. 74.

[55] Ricoeur Paul, *Time and Narrative*, I:77.

[56] The impossibility of connecting the groups of relations is overcome (or, more exactly, replaced) by the assertion that oppositions and

their combinations within an inventory of discrete units is what define the notion of structure in linguistics. See Ricoeur, *From Text.*,114.

[57] For further remarks, see Paul Ricoeur: *Oneself as another*, Chicago: Chicago university Press, 1992, 16-18.

[58] Even the relation between the protagonist and his mother does not escape from this curse. See, *TAHBI*, chapter 50.

[59] Ricoeur, Paul: *Time and narrative*, 1:77.

[60] See Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, I:57.

[61] See Homa Nategh. *Keh Az Mas Keh Bar Mast*, 95.

[62] For an extensive remarks see The chapter 6 of this work of Ricoeur; *The rule of metaphor, Multi-disciplinary Studies of the creation of meaning in Language*, Toronto: University of Toronto, 1975, 173-215.

[63] Ricoeur, *From Text.*, 94.

## وحدت متن و تکثر قرائتها

### قرائت متن "ماجراهای حاجی بابای اصفهانی" در پرتو تاویل گرای ریکور

طاهره میرعمادی احمدی<sup>۱</sup>

روایت انگلیسی "ماجراهای حاجی بابای اصفهانی" به لحاظ برانگیختن تمایلات انتقادی-اجتماعی خوانندگان ایرانی یکی از پرمناقشه‌ترین متون ادبی ایران به‌شمار می‌رود. این مقاله بر سر آن نیست که با محک زنی اعتبار گزاره‌های این‌گونه تفاسیر آنها را ابطال و یا اثبات کند و یا تفسیر بدیلی ارائه دهد، بلکه درصدد آن است با جایابی این تفاسیر در یک چشم‌انداز وسیعتر، نشان بدهد که در چه شرایط و چگونه این متن واحد می‌تواند مقدمات ظهور تفاسیر جدیدتر و هماهنگ‌تر با افق معاصر واقعیتهای امروزی را فراهم آورد. روش تحقیق متن، نظریه "معنای اضافی" پل ریکور است و از طریق آن نشان داده شده که "جهان متن" چگونه و تحت چه شرایطی ظرفیت ارائه قرائتهای متعدد را از خود نشان می‌دهد. در مرحله بعد "جهان خواننده" و رابطه دیالکتیکی آن با "جهان متن" کنش خواندن را به مثابه یک فرایند "تامل در خود" تعالی می‌بخشد.

واژگان کلیدی: متن، جهان متن، خود یکتا انگار، خود یکسان انگار، تامل در خود، پدیدارشناسی، هرمنوتیک

---

۱. استادیار، سازمان پژوهشهای علمی صنعتی کشور