

Anxious Gendered Appropriation: A Comparative Study of Chekhov's "Misery" and Daneshvar's "Whom Shall I Greet?"

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Abstract:

This essay examines the appropriation of Anton Chekhov's short story "Misery" (1886) by Simin Daneshvar in her "Be ki salam konam" (Whom Shall I Greet?" 1980). Daneshvar appropriates the Russian short story for her feminist agenda in the new Iranian context. Such a transnational transposition can be studied in light of Harold Bloom's notion of "anxiety of influence". More specifically, the comparison between these two short stories, in addition to throwing into relief the poetics of adaptation and influence, problematizes the supposed gender freeness of Bloom's theory. Having described the many similarities (formal and thematic) between the two short stories, it is argued that Bloom's theory needs a gendered and transnational revision. Daneshvar hybridizes the Russian text. From the perspective of Bloom's theory of anxiety of influence, we can say that in the absence of a feminine tradition (at least in the realm of prose fiction), Daneshvar creates a feminist Chekhov in her misreading of the Russian author. Yet the problem with Bloom's theory is its male-centeredness, that is, the paternal precursor. In a sense, Daneshvar's creative misreading (in the Bloomian sense) replaces the paternal structure with a maternal metaphor. Also, the intercultural dialogue between the Russian and Iranian authors redefines anxiety as transnational. Accordingly, we might call Daneshvar's story a gendered revisionist appropriation.

Keywords: Anton Chekhov, Simin Daneshvar, Anxiety of Influence, Harold Bloom

Introduction

A woman, Virginia Woolf once wrote, "must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (p.7). To some extent Simin Daneshvar (1921-2012) had both, but most of the women in her country and stories had too little of them or rather none. Daneshvar was born in Shiraz, the birthplace of the two classical master poets, Hafez and Sa'di. There, she was sent to an English language missionary school. Later in Tehran, her knowledge of English language –

it is said that she read the Bible in English when she was in the middle school – would give her the opportunity to work as the assistant director of foreign news page in a newspaper called *Iran*. To support herself financially she did some translations for the newspaper and wrote for a radio program called “The Unknown Shirazi”.

As early as this stage in her life – she was in her late twenties by the time – Daneshvar tried her hand at imaginative writing and published her first collection of short stories *Atash-e khamush (The Quenched Fire)* in 1948. It was the first collection of short stories by an Iranian woman writer. Almost all the stories in this collection deal with women’s personal and social problems. “Gozashteh” (“The Past”) for instance, relates the life story of a woman who has to work hard to pay for her daughter’s college expenses and to make the ends meet. “Mard-ha avaz nemishavand” (“Men Never Change”), and “Eshgh-e ostad-e daneshgah” (“The Academic’s Love Tale”) are ironic stories of how men will not change in their abusive behavior toward women. Acknowledging its immaturity and imitative O. Henrian touch, the book, however, was refused by the author to be reprinted after its first publication. One can trace O. Henry’s influence at least on seven out of the sixteen stories in *Atash-e khamush* including “Mard-ha avaz nemishavand”, “Nashenas” (“The Unknown”), and “Atr-e yas” (Scent of Jasmine”) among others. The latter is comparable to O. Henry’s “The Furnished Room”.

Daneshvar’s marriage in 1950 with the distinguished writer and social critic Jalal-e Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969) seemed initially to overshadow her feminine talents in the then male dominated literary scene of Iran and most likely to introduce into her works another literary influence. In fact, her second collection of short stories *Shahri chon behesht (A City like Paradise)*, 1961), came to have the imposing figure of Al-e Ahmad at its background as well as the influence of William Faulkner in “Shahri chon behesht,” Ernest Hemingway in “Zayman” (“Childbirth”), and Anton Chekhov in “Yek zan ba mard-ha” (“A Woman with Men”). With stronger political backdrop, in this collection too the condition of women is of primary importance. “Sargozasht-e kuche” (“The Life of the Lane”), for instance, criticizes women’s illiteracy and lack of education, and “Mardi ke baznagasht” (“The Man Who Didn’t Return”) returns to the theme of financial dependence of women on men.

These influences aside, Daneshvar found her own voice in her masterpiece *Savushun* (1969); it was the first novel written by an Iranian woman and from a woman's perspective. The legal and social institutions that waste women’s talents is one important aspect of this best-selling novel (Qok, p. 193). The novel’s success paved the way for her to publish *Be ki salam konam (Whom Shall I Greet?)* in 1980, a relatively successful collection of stories. *Be ki salam konam* includes ten short stories among which “Be ki salam konam,” “Yek sar-o yek balin”

("One Head and One Pillow"), "Cheshm-e khoft" ("The Sleeping Eye"), "Anis" ("Anis"), "Tasadof" ("The Accident"), and "Mar-o mard" ("The Snake and the Man") directly and the other stories indirectly address the women's condition, especially in the politically charged environment of the 1970s. It is the eponymous short story in *Be ki salam konam* ("Whom Shall I Greet?") that is fraught with the anxious influence of Chekhov on Daneshvar.

Daneshvar had an extensive reading of works by foreign authors. She has translated a number of foreign works into Persian including a collection of Chekhov's short stories titled *Doshmanan* (*The Enemies*, pub. 1949) in addition to a recent translation of *The Cherry Orchard* (pub. 2003). These works have been translated from their English editions. Needless to say, translation is the cultural bridge between Chekhov and Daneshvar.

Literary influence can be considered a key concept in comparative literature studies "since it posits the presence of two distinct and therefore comparable entities" (Weisstein, p. 29). Translation can function as a principal medium of exerting influence on an author. It is worth mentioning here that modern fiction in general and short story in particular was introduced into Iranian culture mainly through translation in the early twentieth century. Soon this so-called "imported product" (Persian: *kala-ye varedati*) found its enthusiastic readers, and this in turn, tempted some translators to gradually try their hands at writing short stories themselves. A well-versed reader in the world literature can discern the presence of foreign fictional elements, ranging from title, setting, plot, characterization, point of view, to certain themes and motifs in the short stories of these writers. Among many one can point to the influence of Kafka and Sartre on Sadeq Hedayat (1903-1951), Hemingway on Ebrahim Golestan (1922-), and Chekhov on Daneshvar, who all had translated some of the foreign authors' works into Persian.

It is important to stress, of course, that active literary influence, in contrast to passive imitation, does not diminish the artistic merits of the influenced work. As Shaw notes in "Literary Indebtedness and Comparative Literary Studies," influence shows the influenced author producing work which is essentially [her] own" (Shaw, p.91). According to Bassnett, creative translation is "rebellion of a kind, at its extreme a form of patricide (or matricide)" (p.308). Indeed, Harold Bloom's theory of anxiety of influence can be read along similar lines, i.e. as rebellious matricide/patricide, though, as Mousavi notes in "The Belatedness of Poetry and Mourning *Hamlet*: Harold Bloom's and T. S. Eliot's Antithetical Readings," it is an oversimplification to read Bloom's theory as a literal Oedipal scenario (p.37). In *The Anatomy of Influence: Literature as a Way of Life* (2011), Bloom writes:

Influence anxiety exists between poems and not between persons. Temperament and circumstances determine whether a later poet *feels* anxiety at whatever level of consciousness. All that matters for interpretation is the revisionary relationship between poems, as manifested in tropes, images, diction, syntax, grammar, metric, poetic stance. (p.6)

Taking my cue from this, this essay argues that Daneshvar's appropriation of Chekhov's story is revisionary, revisionary in its feminist politics.

Written in 1886, "Misery: To Whom Shall I Tell My Grief?" portrays the overwhelming grief of Iona Potapov, a Russian sleigh-driver, and his futile attempts to share with strangers the despair in the loss of his son who has died a week ago. Left alone and miserable at the end of the story, Iona narrates the loss to his horse.

"Whom Shall I Greet?" tells the story of a hardworking woman, Kokab Sultan, who after her husband's sudden disappearance, and her only daughter's marriage to a cruel person, is left utterly alone. She remains without anyone she can greet, anyone to whom she can say "salam", the Persian equivalent of "Hello". Similar to Iona, Kokab Sultan needs someone to listen to her life story of loss and abandonment.

Setting, generally defined as the physical, temporal and cultural world of a narrative plays a pivotal role in enhancing the themes of both "Misery" and "Whom Shall I Greet?". Let us begin by comparing the physical setting, the location and the climate, of the two short stories. It seems no coincidence that the urban geography of "Misery" and "Whom Shall I Greet?", in addition to their similar descriptive features, serve much the same functions in creating a cold and unwelcoming atmosphere. In other words, the geography of both stories strongly reinforces their themes. Early in the first paragraph of "Misery", by projecting Iona's character onto his horse, Chekhov juxtaposes the urban with the countryside: "Anyone who has been torn away from the plough, from the familiar gray landscapes, and cast into this slough, full of monstrous lights, of unceasing uproar and hurrying people, is bound to think" (p.97). Indeed, one is to think of the marked difference between the *plough* of the countryside, and the *slough* of Petersburg, where the story takes place, to observe the attitude of the author toward the urban setting.

The same attitude toward the city is remarkably reflected in Daneshvar's short story. "Whom Shall I Greet?" unfolds in Kokab Sultan's bare bleak room, and progresses into the snow covered streets of Tehran, the capital city of Iran. Tehran is described as the "ugly city with those bitterly cold winters and hot and dry summers; no rivers, no trees, no streams, like a

blot of ink dried on the paper, like a crab who has run its limbs all over the world. May you turn into ruins, oh city, city" (p.65). In this hell of a city, there is not even a bottle of milk to buy, as the narrator says. Also, when Kokab Sultan's happy memories of the days when her husband taught her how to pray are summoned, she admits that coming to Tehran instead taught her how to swear and curse. Similar to Chekhov, the negative attitude of Daneshvar toward the city is evident throughout the story, as if Tehran is to blame for the misfortunes of Kokab Sultan. Moreover, there is some similarity between the residences of the two protagonists: the dingy apartment that Kokab Sultan lives in, the littered neighborhood, and the leaking water pipes in "Whom Shall I Greet?" can be compared to the public sleeping house "full of smells and stuffiness," with a dirty stove on the corner in "Misery" (p.100). To sum up, given the fact that both Iona and Kokab Sultan used to live in better places, their current residences in the unpleasant urban setting conveys a sense of loss to them.

By setting the time of the occurrence of the events of the two stories in winter and in a snowy weather the two authors create an association between the condition of the characters, their emotions and actions, and their surroundings. As Chekhov says in one of his letters, they make a comparison between the "natural phenomena and human actions" (Brunello and Lenc̆ek p.30).

The snowy weather in "Misery" intensifies the overall dismal and somber mood of the story. In such a weather, Iona seems like a ghost covered by snowflakes, thus alienated from others. The snow has been falling on "roofs, horses' backs, shoulders, caps," and in short on every nook and cranny of the earth (p.97). It envelops the bodies of the people, as indifference and apathy veils their hearts and souls. The people in "Misery," indifferent as they are to their surroundings, and to the misery of their fellow human beings, appear like the "big flakes of wet snow [whirling] lazily about the street lamps" (p.97). There is an emphasis on the snowiness of the weather. Images like "big flakes of snow," "snow-plastered eyelashes," "cakes of snow flying from the horse's back and shoulders," and a pedestrian shaking "the snow off his sleeve" appear repeatedly in the story.

Similarly, "Whom Shall I Greet?", by constantly reminding the reader of the snowy weather, draws a parallel between the inner world of the characters and their natural setting. The story is set in a cold and snowy weather. The snow has been falling for a long time, and it seems not to stop ever ; "it has covered the roofs, the pine trees, and those icicles hanging from the opposite eaves were there yesterday, the day before yesterday, from the first day of winter I wish the sun rose and there was not that much snow on the roofs. God does shake his torn quilt, and the damn cotton falls all over the earth, and it keeps falling on forever" (p.65). Kokab

Sultan is afraid of the continuous snowfall. For her the snow means loneliness and isolation because she would be imprisoned in her room if it did not stop. Even with the traditional *kursi* – an electric heater put under a low table covered with a thick, quilted blanket – she cannot fight the coldness of the weather off. Images like “what a snow, whirling, swirling, drizzling, never to stop,” “yesterday’s snow has frozen on the streets, and where should the people dump the snow on the roofs? . . . if it didn’t snow, things wouldn’t be this expensive, and there wasn’t this draught,” and “as if she were left alone in an arid land of ice and snow,” abound in the story (p.66). It is so cold that Kokab Sultan has to wrap a newspaper around her feet on top of her wool socks. The whiteness of the snow is also significant in both stories since it is in contrast with the darkness of the streets in “Misery” and with the darkness of Kokab Sultan’s room in “Whom Shall I Greet?”. To conclude this part of the discussion, it is obvious that both Chekhov and Daneshvar make parallels between the inner world of the characters and their outer worlds. Both authors move from the natural setting to the inner emotions of the people, from the cold weather to the coldness that exists between the people.

Earlier we made mention of the juxtaposition of the present with the past in terms of the geography of the stories. This technique of contrast has also been used in terms of the temporal setting in both stories, especially in “Whom Shall I Greet?”. Most of the actions of the two stories transpire in a frosty winter evening. “Misery” begins with this simple phrase: “The twilight of evening” (p.97). Iona and his horse come out of the yard before dinnertime, and return to the sleeping house as time passes into the evening. Iona’s current condition is nothing like his earlier residence in “the familiar gray landscapes” (ibid.). The passage of time has caused his son’s death. It has also been a long time since Iona has met his daughter, Anisya. At another level, the transition of time from the light of the day to the darkness of the evening shows the darkness that exists between the people, or perhaps the darkness of death itself.

The same pattern of the passage of time from a state of relative equilibrium to a moment of loss and crisis is discernible in “Whom Shall I Greet?”. The contrast between the “winter” of the present life of Kokab Sultan with the “summer” of her earlier happy days is dramatic. Thinking of her sweet memories with her husband, one of Kokab Sultan’s interior monologues reads:

What fun we had, alas it fled by fast. In the summer, the school principal would go away to Evin, and Haj Ismael [her husband] would prepare the bath, take me in the bathtub and wash me, tickle me, we chortled with delight, . . . we would sleep naked in the yard . . . we really painted the town red, all those movies . . . all those gramophones . . . (p.70)

But now there is no fun. While in those good old days, she and Haj Ismael would work together in the school, and later Kokab Sultan would have her daughter as a companion, now by contrast, there is no work, no money, and no daughters. The winter of her life has come and summer, it seems, will never repeat itself. She has no choice but to "curse the entire world" (p.71). As seen, the location of the present state of her life differs from that of her past. Now her cold and dingy apartment has replaced the beautiful yard she used to sit in with her husband. In sum, Daneshvar uses the Chekhovian technique of contrast to establish an effective temporal and physical setting in "Whom Shall I Greet?". Now, let us turn to the similarities in terms of the cultural setting.

Cultural setting encompasses a wide range of elements including moral values, family relations, patterns of behavior and beliefs, political systems, race relations and class structure, among other things. The parental relation, however, is one of the main concern of the two authors.

Iona's fatherly love toward his recently deceased son makes him forget his own seriously critical condition. He does not even react to the heavy snowfall: "if a regular snowdrift fell on him it seems as though even then he would not think necessary to shake it off" (p.97). In other words, his whole world loses color in the face of his son's absence. Iona has done his best in saving his son (Kuzma Ionitch) from death, yet he holds himself responsible. He does not care about the amount of fare the passengers pay him, or where he might spend the night; he just wants to think of his son, remember him, and talk about him in all the details: "he wants to describe the funeral, and how he went to the hospital to get his son's clothes" (p.100). The same attitude toward one's own child is evident in Iona's worry about his daughter. In his desperate state, it may seem too much to think of other people, however, Iona remembers his daughter who lives in the country, and "wants to talk about her too" (ibid.). Most interesting is the final scene of "Misery" where to gain his horse's sympathy, Iona appeals to parental affections, as if he finds nothing more powerful than that: "That's how it is, old girl ... Kuzma Ionitch is gone ... He said good-by to me ... He went and died for no reason ... Now, suppose, you had a little colt, and you were own mother to that little colt ... And at once that same little colt went and died ... You'd be sorry, wouldn't you?" (ibid.). Certainly, Kokab Sultan would be sorry, and indeed she is sorry, though like Iona she has done everything possible within her means to protect her child against the evils of the world.

Like Chekhov, Daneshvar allocates a great deal of her short story to depict the parental love and commitment in Kokab Sultan's relation to Robabeh, her daughter. It has been mentioned that Iona cannot take his son's death off his mind. Such an obsessive mourning is also evident in the several monologues that Kokab Sultan has about her daughter. After a period

of apparently not being able to give birth to a child, the supplications and prayers to Imam Hossein works, and “God gives Kokab Sultan a daughter” (p.72). A year later Haj Ismael disappears from the face of the earth. Since then she has to work several jobs, such as working in the school as a janitor, selling plants and flowers she grows, and taking the students’ school report cards to their houses for a tip. All this she does for Robabeh’s sake. She tries to send her to a university; however, economic pressures and poverty make Kokab Sultan let go her daughter in the name of marriage. Then she performs another sacrificial act. Though in need, she sends all her furniture and her own dowry to Robabeh’s house. Yet she feels that she has failed in her duty as a mother. The arrogant and abusive son-in-law buys a new house far away from Kokab Sultan’s apartment, but even this cannot stifle her affections for her child. She walks that long way to visit Robabeh, and when afraid of facing the son-in-law, she asks after her from the neighbors. In another instance, ignoring altogether the cold and snowy weather, she stands in front of one of her grandson’s kindergarten to see Robabeh. Like Iona, Kokab Sultan wishes that she died, if that could make Robabeh’s life a better one. Kokab Sultan’s love extends beyond mother-daughter relation to her grandchildren. She weaves wool clothes for her grandsons, though the son-in-law sends them them.

Most interesting is when Kokab Sultan asks herself a “to be or not to be” question: If my daughter would not accept anything from me, then for whom shall I live? Her son-in-law has banned Kokab Sultan to visit her daughter, but she cannot suppress her motherly affections, and ignoring the irrational ban, she pays her a visit, which costs her a brutal beating by the son-in-law. She fears that her son-in-law would not lift the ban, and she would not be able to see her daughter ever. For Kokab Sultan, there must be an Other for whom she must build her life, for whom she must work, for whom she must send gifts, and that Other is her daughter, Robabeh. To conclude the discussion on the depiction of parental love, commitment, and sacrifice in “Misery” and “Whom Shall I Greet?”, Chekhov and Daneshvar’s approach to this issue is similar in that they highly value the parent-child relation. Similar to Iona’s relation to Kuzma, Kokab Sultan’s relation to Robabeh is self-sacrificial.

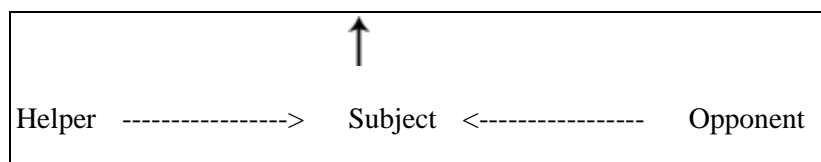
The idea of communication with others as a moral value is highlighted in the cultural setting of the two short stories. “Misery” and “Whom Shall I Greet?” are not stories that promote the Romantic idea of solitariness, isolation, and reclusiveness. Rather, they both advocate the need in every individual to socialize, interact, and communicate with one another. As we see in both stories, the failure of individuals to communicate with one another has had adverse effects on the lives of Iona and Kokab Sultan. Iona needs to communicate with his fellow human beings. Likewise, Kokab Sultan needs to talk with someone.

The similarities in the class structure within the two stories leads us to the discussion on characterization. There are two points of resemblance in terms of characterization: the presence of characters from different social classes, and the technique of characterizing one character in opposition to another.

People from different social classes, a military officer, a coachman, three young men and a house-porter, appear in "Misery". The first passenger is an army officer. He is in a hurry to reach his destination. Iona is old and weary; the officer is young and full of life. Iona is lost in grief; the officer jokes in a light-hearted mood. Iona desperately seeks the officer's attention; the officer sits with his eyes shut and his ears closed "disinclined to listen" (p.98). The second group of passengers on the sledge are a bunch of three revelers, young, cheerful, with no care for the world. They behave as though they are drunk. Neither can empathize with Iona's sadness. Iona is left alone. Daneshvar uses the same technique of characterization in "Whom Shall I Greet?". One character is described in opposition to another. There are people from different social classes, an educated school principal, a doctor, an attorney, a butcher, a grocery man and his wife, some children playing on the streets, and two pedestrians in the story. In order to characterize Kokab Sultan, she is contrasted with the above people.

The analysis of the plot of the two stories which I propose is based on the Greimasian model of narrative actants. The actantial model developed by A. J. Greimas (1917-1992) considers characters and their actions as functions (actants) within the narrative. Greimas holds that though there are many different "apparent level of narration[s]," there is a limited number of "immanent level[s]" (Greimas, 1977, p.23). According to his model, the "story" of a given narrative is transferable from one text or medium to another, while the "plot" may change; thus for example, "Misery" and "Whom Shall I Greet?" have the same story while their plots are different. There are six actants in Greimas' model: Subject (sujet), Object (objet), Sender (destinateur), Receiver (destinataire), Helper (adjuvant) and Opponent (opposant). Subject, the chief actant in a narrative, carries out the action and is the one who strives for a specific object – or wants to get rid of something. Sender is an actant which sends the subject on its quest for the object, in other words, it instigates the action. Receiver is the agent who benefits from the quest, and eventually receives the object sought after by the subject. The agent who assists the subject in the quest is the helper, while the agent who thwarts it is the opponent (Herman and Vervaeck, p.180). The relation between the actants can be formulated as the following:

Sender	-----	Object	----->	Receiver
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Concerning this model, Greimas remarked that “[i]ts simplicity lies in the fact that it is entirely centered on the object of desire aimed at by the subject and situated, as object of communication, between the sender and the receiver – the desire of the subject being, in its part, modulated in projections from the helper and opponent” (1983, p.207). It is important to note that in this model the same actantial role can be held by more than one character, and the same character can perform more than one actantial role; thus one character may play all roles. Also important is the fact that an emotion, a loss, a motivation, or an idea can function as an actant.

Both “Misery” and “Whom Shall I Greet?” narrate the story of a person who, stimulated by a loss, is sent on a quest. Interestingly enough, their object of quest is to find someone to whom they can recount their stories of loss. Thus, the following schema can be developed:

	Misery	Whom Shall I Greet?
Subject	Iona	Kokab Sultan
Object	To find a sympathetic audience, to narrate the loss	To find a sympathetic audience, to narrate the loss
Sender	Loss of a family member, death	Loss of a family member, death, poverty
Receiver	Iona	Kokab Sultan
Helper	Iona’s horse	The young people at the end of the story
Opponent	The weather, unsympathetic people	The weather, unsympathetic people

To understand the concept of appropriation, one needs to highlight where an author takes a different path with regard to the informing text. There is one significant difference between “Whom Shall I Greet?” and “Misery” in that the former’s speaker is a female. Before we focus on that difference, a brief review of Daneshvar’s position in Persian literature, and the context in which the story was produced, would be of some help.

Daneshvar is the first woman fiction writer in the literary history of Persian (Iranian) literature. Almost all her works center on the difficulties of being a woman in the patriarchal society of Iran. What she has most important of all achieved is a different image of woman. The image of woman in Persian literature, as Mirabedini notes in *One Hundred Years of Persian Fiction*, has been torn between the *lakate-asiri* (whore-heavenly) poles (p.391). In other words,

a black-and-white perspective. With Daneshvar's works, however, there comes a gray middle space. There is a realistic representation of ordinary women, often from the middle or oppressed classes, in her works. Daneshvar demands "the verbal space denied to women" and "offers and insight into the lives of less ideologically and sexually stereotyped female characters" (Milani, p.328). As we have seen in "Whom Shall I Greet?", Daneshvar is deeply concerned about the underlying social problems of her time. She neither idealizes nor gives up hope. In the introduction to her translation of some short stories by Chekhov, she describes Chekhov as an artist who "with tears in his eyes, but a smile on his face" wrote about the pains and problems of his society to make it better (Daneshvar, 1972, p. xi). The same can be said about Daneshvar herself.

Daneshvar became a pioneering voice for Iranian women's rights between Mohammad Reza Shah's reign from 1941 through the Islamic Revolution in 1979 to the current Islamic state. The patriarchal literary context, both in terms of the writers and the readers, had created implicit regulations for writers to observe in their literary creation. Furthermore, in the absence of any preceding models, Daneshvar, like Kokab Sultan in "Whom Shall I Greet?", was alone in voicing the silenced words of women. Thus, she began her literary career by imitating foreign authors like O' Henry in her first collection of stories, *Atash-e Khamush* (1948). To use a category proposed by Elaine Showalter, it was the feminine phase in Daneshvar's career. It was within such a phase that she also translated Chekhov's works into Persian. In Chekhov, of course, she found realism and a sharp eye to see the maladies of the society.

The feminist phase (the second phase in Showalter's category) of Daneshvar's career starts more forcefully with *Savashun* (1969), the first novel by an Iranian woman which has been very popular ever since, and with *Whom Shall I Greet?* in 1980. In "Whom Shall I Greet?" most of the issues concerning the condition of women in Iran are addressed, including, illiteracy and lack of education of women, financial dependence of women on men, marital conflicts, childcare responsibilities and motherhood, the image of women in men's eyes, and the image of women in their own eyes.

Despite a host of similarities between "Misery" and "Whom Shall I Greet?", one distinctive feature of the latter is its focalizer; the eye of the narrative. While in "Misery", the events of the story are seen through the viewpoint of Iona (a man), in "Whom Shall I Greet?" the focalizer is Kokab Sultan (a woman).

The two main female characters in "Whom Shall I Greet?", Kokab Sultan and Robabeh, have a similar life. Both suffer from economic and socio-cultural inequalities. Neither Kokab

Sultan nor Robabeh have any financial autonomy, and are thus dependent on their husbands. These constraints make Kokab Sultan do petty works to earn money when her husband leaves her, and forces Robabeh to forget all about pursuing her education when she gets married. The patriarchal society of the story considers women as economically incompetent. For instance, when Kokab Sultan decides to buy some meat, the butcher's behavior toward her is contemptuous. The reason is that the butcher, aware of the fact that Kokab Sultan's husband has left her, does not consider her capable of supporting herself financially. Kokab Sultan believes that if her husband were alive, the butcher would have treated her differently.

The relationship between Robabeh and her husband is a typical example of the abusive attitude of men toward women in the Iranian context. Robabeh has to take care of her children, do all the exhausting house chores, in addition to taking care of her in-laws. There is no mutual understanding between Robabeh and her husband. Her husband treats her like a servant. He even beats her harshly. He calls Robabeh's mother, Kokab Sultan, "an old witch" (p.79). In fact, the image of "woman" in his eyes reminds the reader of the *lakate* pole mentioned above. However, the significant point is that Robabeh, unlike Kokab Sultan, does not resist that image. Robabeh feels quite satisfied with her life. In other words, she thinks that she deserves such an abusive behavior, which is what we call an image of a woman in her own eyes. This passiveness of her daughter leaves no doubt for Kokab Sultan but to conclude that "to be a woman is to suffer" (p.80). It also shows that the coming generation of the women in Iran are less aware of their individual and social rights.

The literary relation between the stories is an example of how an author can appropriate elements from another text to create a text of her own. Daneshvar hybridizes the Russian text. From the perspective of Bloom's theory of anxiety of influence, we can say that in the absence of a feminine tradition (at least in the realm of prose fiction), Daneshvar creates a feminist Chekhov in her misreading of the Russian author. Yet the problem with Bloom's theory is its male-centeredness, that is, the paternal precursor. In a sense, Daneshvar's creative misreading (in the Bloomian sense) replaces the paternal structure with a maternal metaphor. Also, the intercultural dialogue between the Russian and Iranian authors redefines anxiety as transnational.

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