


The Violence and the Problem of Ungrievability in Mehdi Yazdanikhorram's *Khoon khordeh*: A Butlerian Study

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Abstract

This study aims to show the reasons behind the capability of grief over the death of each person and how violence is performative in registering someone as livable or unlivable. This study also uses descriptive analysis methods and library research techniques. The main character in this novel *Meftah*, is an Arabic literature student, a religious person who works in the graveyard. This resulted in his recounting the story of the *Sookhteh* brothers whose deaths are not recognized so they are not mourned over properly. Through Butler's idea, the researcher tries to find out how livable and unlivable people are distinguished and what makes people believe that only registered lives are capable of being mourned over, and performative violence makes people differentiate between worthy and unworthy human beings. The appearance of Homo Sacer is discussed in detail, the person who cannot be sacrificed but can easily be killed. It is deduced that people who are deprived of the primary conditions of life be it safety, welfare, or peace, as the main characters of this novel, don't count as livable humans. They are not registered as humans, so they are not recognized and they become unrepresentable. Violence does not only lead to death but it also paves the way for people to ignore the death of some who are not subjectified and are not worthy of being grieved.

Keywords: Grievability, Homo Sacer, Precarity, Violence, *Soaked in Blood*

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1. Introduction

After two great wars, September 11th, and one destructive epidemic, death has become an intriguing issue in all the fields of humanities. This study intends to investigate the genealogy of life and death of war generation in Iran's Imposed War and depicts how Butler's concept of grievability is at work regarding mourning for livable lives in Iran's imposed war, and how the frames of war were illustrated for people and by people in Mehdi Yazdanikhorram's *Soaked in blood* ("Soaked in Blood"). whose lives are worth grieving and who am "I" without you? Or who are we tied to? (Butler, 2004) How this relationality is at work? The captivating narration of Yazdanikhorram, its unforgettable depiction of death and blood, and the inconsolable losses have a long history in Romantic and specifically baroque literature. In this sense, violence is important, the violence which is rooted in language itself. The exposure to violence and people's complicity in it, vulnerability to loss, and the task of mourning that follows. Surprisingly, no one studied Yazdanikhorram meticulously so far. And it is what it takes to know what is going on with his heroes. So, the research questions are as follows:

1. Who is a human being and is living (not just existing) among the characters of *Soaked in blood*?
2. According to Butler's theory, whose lives are grievable among the main characters and how are they recognized?
3. How and why does the death of some people get public recognition during the war, while others don't as it happened in this novel?

These questions and the problem of subjectivity and individuality and after that the issue of existence vs. living all determine the reasons behind presentability and unrepresentability of the characters of Yazdanikhorram's novel. The researcher unravels the ties of the above-mentioned questions through the theories of Judith Butler.

2. Theoretical Framework

As 9/11 inspired Butler to elaborate on the worth of the lives of people, Iran's Imposed War inflamed Yazdanikhorram and to think about the value of life in war generation and how the deaths and casualties turned to be just numbers. One of Butler's main concerns is the idea of gender, its formation, and how the LGBTQs behave, then she proposed the idea of performativity. She gradually started to come to the point that bodies sometimes matter and sometimes they are not of any importance and society does not recognize them. Their deaths are nameless losses and leave no trace at all. Conclusively, to study *Soaked in Blood* by Yazdanikhorram, with two ghosts and several deaths during

the Imposed War, the theoretical framework of Butler suffices, suits, and relates.

The present study draws upon Judith Butler's theory of grievability. Butler started her discussion by elaborating on the concept of face. Levinas writes:

The approach to the face is the most basic mode of responsibility...The face is not in front of me (en face de moi), but above me; it is the other before death, looking through and exposing death. Secondly, the face is the other who asks me not to let him die alone, as if to do so were to become an accomplice in his death. Thus, the face says to me: you shall not kill. In the relation to the face that I am exposed as a usurper of the place of the other" (Butler, 2004, 26).

Then she talks about murder and its banality. She describes this other through the Levinasian concept of face.

"To expose myself to the vulnerability of the face is to put my ontological right to existence into question. In ethics, the other's right to existence has primacy over my own, a primacy epitomized in the ethical edict: you shall not kill, you shall not jeopardize the life of the other... the face is what one cannot kill, or at least it is that whose meaning consists in saying, "thou shalt not kill." (Butler, 2004, 37)

This quote suggests the idea of precarity. At the end of the description what is comprehended is "the face as the extreme precariousness of the other" (Butler, 2004, 134). To get to know the face means to be conscious of precarity in another's life. Butler proposes that there is a face imposed on us through media, news, and photographs that existed before our existence. "It bespeaks an agony, an injurability, at the same time that it bespeaks a divine prohibition against killing. The personhood of individuals is recognizable based on some norms." (Butler, 2004, 135) Their lives have to be intelligible as a life, it has to conform with the specific conception of life. In her *Frames of War* (2009), she elaborates on some power that manipulates the terms of appearance and she clarifies the point why no one can break out of the frame; according to Butler, being framed, a person is accused and judged in advance, without any evidence and any obvious means of redress. (Butler, 2004) These frames let us grieve and mourn over someone's death or pass indifferently. In *Frames of War*, Butler brings Levinas's ideas about this in advanced judgment in language. In an interview, Levinas said that: "face and discourse are tied." An ethical claim is upon us by discourse since before speaking, something is spoken to us. First of all, we are addressed by an Other. The prerequisite of discourse is the existence of an Other. Language does not and cannot survive outside the conditions of addressing and being addressed. First, we are addressed in language which means we are prejudged and framed by another.

These frames denote the precarity of the lives of people. In the present article, the researcher has drawn upon a critical study of the historical hints and clues elaborated by Yazdanikhorram which provides evidence to see how grievability works and how some lives are recognized as livable. Precariousness is the fact that shows one's life depends on others, a dependency on other people we know, or barely know or even not know at all. the unlivable is a life that cannot be described; it cannot be subjective at all. The researcher follows the traces of Butler's approach in the novel to shed light on some new aspects of this book.

3. Literature Review

In *Precarious Life*(2004) Butler investigates the precariousness of life, and the possible responses, in post-9/11 America. She observes that the violent political responses to the vulnerability and precariousness caused by the attacks of 9/11 served not to bring the allies of the American nation back to the ethical dependence across national and international boundaries, but instead served to boost the precariousness of some lives at the expense of others. Some lives are cast as impossible to apprehend as injured or lost, impossible to grieve or mourn because they are not first recognized as living. In *Frames of War* Butler extends this discussion, stating that in asking the question "What is a life?" The point is that the "being" of life is itself made through selective means and the operation of power. Norms, social and political organizations, and other institutions have developed in contexts of power to increase precariousness for some and decrease it for others, which means while all lives are equally defined by precariousness, all lives are not equally precarious.

Judith Butler starts her book with a chapter named "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance." She elaborated on precarity in this chapter. She considers an interactive political terrain that exceeds the assumed sequence; namely, "that first we are vulnerable and then we overcome vulnerability by resisting the oppressive means that characterize our lives" (Butler, 2016). Space and infrastructure are mentioned as access points to concern us. She believes that our assemblies depend on the infrastructural goods for which we are fighting (Butler, 2016), the body is defined by things outside itself. It cannot be mentioned without the condition of its surrounding

Bodies cannot be discussed without knowing what supports that body and what its relation to that support—or lack of support—might be. The body is thought of as less an entity than a relation, and the body cannot be completely dissociated and detached from the infrastructural and environmental conditions of its living.

Butler elaborates on her preceding argument that we cannot understand bodily vulnerability outside of social and material conditions when the body is both performative and relational. The chapter covers the issue of “linguistic vulnerability” in a few directions—wherein performativity demonstrates that we are vulnerable to discourses we may never choose: public media, dependencies, political imprisonment, and imprisonment by other means (Butler, 2016).

Judith Butler’s *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* is discussed through the lenses of psychoanalysis; thoroughgoing attention to the social, sometimes regarded as constructivism; equality; the constitutive ambivalence (violence/nonviolence) of a relational self-subsisting within a relational bond; the ethical work of mourning. Butler has fashioned a wide-ranging—though, perhaps, not wide-ranging enough—vindication of nonviolence.

In brief, Butler argues that nonviolence should be understood as “a social and political practice”, a constant and always unfinished “ongoing struggle” (Butler, 2020). Why and how forms the substance of Butler’s book, largely articulated through a psychoanalytic framework drawing on Melanie Klein, Frantz Fanon, and Sigmund Freud completed by other thinkers like Benjamin and Balibar.

4. Methodology

The concept of normative violence follows from Butler’s analysis of the power of norms that enable and restrict life. If norms impose violence upon those bodies that break the norms, Normative violence specifies what a person can be, excluding the non-conformists. they become nonexistent unless they adapt to the norms. Normative violence is the violence of the norm, i.e., it is not physical violence per se. The norm produces violence by not allowing people to be what they desire to be at the most basic aspects of life; hence, it is violence by restriction. However, resistance to normative violence might cause actual physical. Butler thus argues that it is normative violence that makes physical violence possible, and at the same time invisible. Invisible violence cannot be understood by society because it is normalized. it is tolerated because it is perpetrated in response to social transgressions. By suggesting that norms are reproduced through performative repetition, Butler also suggests that these norms can be resisted and subverted. In that sense, her understanding of normative violence differs from her understanding of structural violence which means that it highlights the power of normalization. Thus, structures of inequality are sustained through the active normalization of the parameters of inequality. The boundaries of being and the way they are imposed through

social practice produce the parameters of personhood, they make persons according to abstract norms that at once condition and exceed the lives they make and break. Butler judges that these boundaries of being make certain lives unlivable because they are not or cannot be recognized by society. If one breaks out of the normative framework that imposes the boundaries of being, physical violence may be the result. The limitation of what one can be, in Butlerian philosophical terms, creates unintelligible life, and thereby, undone lives. In reality, it creates much suffering for those who cannot conform to the norms, who are excluded by recognized society, or whose bodies are violated daily. This is what Butler questions as the livability of life: a valid question, and, despite Butler's sometimes obscure language and her emphasis on theory, one with very practical and political applications. In her work on the post-9/11 world, Butler clearly outlines the political dimension of her work. She uses the same concepts – normative violence, subversion, livable life- to analyze public grief, a line of thought she started in *Undoing Gender*. Her point about the grievability of life is that by examining our ceremonies of public grief, and who is grieved and who is not, we can identify who is seen as included and who is not, who deserves a lived life, implying that those who are not grieved have not lived a life that fits the normative framework. Taking this a step further, Butler asserts that those who are not grieved are subject to the culturally viable notions of the human (Butler, 2004) they do not deserve to be grieved, or the grief is not possible because they are inexistent as full human beings in a specific cultural context. Only full human beings can be grieved and deserve to be grieved. As Moya Lloyd emphasizes, this is an active process of dehumanization, which serves political purposes (2008, 95). In *Undoing Gender*, Butler exemplified the lives of the thousands of killed Iraqis versus the high visibility of public grief over American lives. The second example she uses is AIDS victims in Africa; they are not grieved as full, individual human beings. If anything, they are recognized as a mass of unaccounted-for poor worthless beings who are just used as numbers in statistics. The questions Butler poses in *Precarious Life* are "Whose lives count as lives? Who counts as human? What makes for a grievable life?". Our physical vulnerability is constituted in our being socially constituted bodies which are attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, and at risk of violence by that exposure. Butler argues that personal loss may feel privatizing, that it returns us to a solitary situation and is often seen as depoliticizing, but shows us the complex constitution of the political community, of the web in which we live our lives. Considering this way, public grief is a political act and has an active pattern of inclusion and exclusion, hence public grief and the denial of grief are a political act that produces and reproduces an us and them purposefully. Butler fails to

mention, possibly because it is irrelevant to her argument, that private grief, either at the individual, family, or community level, is still grief and being grieved, and that such private forms of grief have their political meaning in any particular setting. However, for the sake of the argument that grief serves to recognize lived lives in a post 9/11 world, grief is considered and analyzed from the point of view of the powerful: the powerful determine who to grieve and who to deny grief, thereby showing the world who they perceive as important, i.e., US soldiers yes, Iraqi civilians no.

Butler asks us to look at which lives are not grieved. She wants us to consider the dehumanizing effect of othering which makes violence possible, and life ungrievable. Butler seeks to highlight the gross injustice of the violence perpetrated in the name of conceptions of humanity that are not only exclusive, but that seem to legitimize continuous violence upon certain groups of people. This continuation of violence is the result of a perception of bodies that will not die –an endless battle against a perceived other. The ungrievable life is not necessarily dead but is undone, and is made unreal. This means that violence fails to injure, and such lives must be negated over and over.

5. Discussion

The story starts with blood and ends with the tragic death of a child. The presence of blood is not easy to ignore and the death of some characters is irremediable. Butler discussed it starting from *Homo sacer*. After defining two types of lives, the emergence of it happened, a sacred person who can be killed and their death cannot be considered a crime. They also can't be sacrificed either. Whatever happens, is implicitly or explicitly related to death, not life. the story of the death of five brothers and two ghosts at the time of war. The war, death, location, and other factors make it easy for the readers to relate to the story and even be able to distinguish between livable and unlivable lives showing how certain social norms exclude individuals and entire groups from the possibility of social recognition, thereby depriving them of the social means necessary to lead a livable existence. Indeed, according to Butler, those who are excluded from dominant social norms are subject not only to symbolic and moral disqualification but also to various forms of discrimination that expose them to increased forms of social and economic insecurity, and to heightened risks of violence and injury. (Butler2004)

5.1 Subdued by Discourse or the Magic of Denomination

As it is already mentioned, we are held hostage in the language. Being addressed can free us to have our language. It's where it all started. The world of Yazdanikhorrām starts with blood. The opening is "There was blood first."

(Yazdanikhorram, 2018) A Biblical opening that opens up the story of a generation of unlivable men in Iran during the war. Then, the story of Mohsen Meftah starts. A religious person and also a dreamer who works in the Tehran graveyard. The very existence of such a job that Mohsen Meftah has, paying a visit to the graveyard and reciting the Quran over the graves of people, and the recurrence of words like "blood", "grave" and "dead bodies" indicate the world in which the reader is. Then, five graves of *Sookhteh* brothers, the first thing which springs to the mind after hearing their family name is being burned or annihilated. It would be naïve to say that they are predestined to be annihilated because of their conditions in language. The Other addresses them with their whole fate. Being addressed as doomed or cursed made them so. *Soaked in blood* is the story of the annihilation of the *Sookhteh* brothers during Iran's imposed war. As it is mentioned: "Here, five brothers are lying." (26)

As was said before, language plays a very important role because it is the prejudgment of the other toward people. The face plays a very delicate role here. It humanizes and dehumanizes people. The place where they dwell in the discourse is determinant for the sons of *Karim Sookhteh*, who make a living through selling fuel and having rental *hijla*. The death of people is a part of their lives. it's a source of income for *Karim Sookhteh* and his family, they accepted the recurrence of deaths and the violence of war as if there are some people to be killed out there and it is not a big deal so they can make money out of these casualties. they don't believe in the precarity of the lives of others per se.

The other groups that are repetitively mentioned are Armenians, several times the Catholic men and the priests, the Armenians in love with the Soviet Union. Somewhere in the story, the colonel explains that "the followers of John the Baptist thought the Iraqi soldiers didn't fight with them and they were busy doing their own business. But, they did. They executed all the men except the old ones, the girls in their hands, the usual law of war for women: rape." (114) So, gender matters as well.

Butler draws a critical distinction between precariousness and precarity. She sees precariousness as a generalized human condition that stems from the fact that all humans are interdependent and therefore all are vulnerable. In her theory, precarity is different precisely because it is unequally distributed. Precarity is experienced by marginalized, poor, and disenfranchised people who are exposed to economic insecurity, injury, violence, and forced migration. This story happens due to war poverty and ambitions. *Sookhteh's* family is exposed to violence because of war and its side effects, they are financially insecure and under the heavy pressure of poverty and insecurity, every son has a dream of detachment and leaving. Further, social value is

ascribed to some lives and bodies, while it is denied to others, and some are protected, while others are not.

She had in *Precarious Life* (Butler, 2004) and in *Frames of War* (Butler, 2010), that in modern societies, some lives are so devalued that mourning their loss is denied. Accepting what Butler calls "precarity" which is our interdependence and our vulnerability before others, illustrates our search for mutually "livable lives", reminding us that our individual good life presumes communal support for, and validation of, a diversity of lives and life choices.

Regarding the notions above, precarity and precariousness don't have any meaning for Karim *Sookhteh*. He lives and works disregarding others' calamities. Even when one of his sons asks him not to earn money out of this situation, he doesn't agree and says if I don't do it, someone else does. (Yazdanikhorram, 2018) He presumes that it is not only him who ignores the attachment to his countrymen and that some other people will take advantage of their deaths. So, the placement of the characters inside the discourse is not as secure and is somehow detached.

5.2 Humanization and Dehumanization through Levinasian Face

Soaked in Blood is the story of unlivable lives during the imposed war years, be it the soldiers or the families or those against war. It is about the dead and the ghosts and unlivable people. The main characters are engaged with the concept of death as Mohsen Meftah "It was two years that every Saturday he recites the Quran for these five brothers and received his money in his bank account. He recited the Quran for some deads for three months but these brothers were his source of income for two years." (Yazdanikhorram, 2008, 12) Those whose deaths just became numbers. Its 60s. war overshadowed everything. Naser, the first brother who was introduced posthumously, craved love and money. He had found love in Maryam, a girl from Isfahan. Afterward, he only needed money. It was the time of assassinations and he was looking for a scholarship to leave Iran. They were offered a job to do and left Iran afterward. As two archeologists, they should have opened a coffin to see what is inside. There is a significant description of skulls in this part, "when he went forward, there were rows of bones and some skulls shoveled in the walls. The skulls, like all the other skulls in the universe, became glamorous with the slightest beam of light. Seemingly, the bones were not very old." (Yazdanikhorram, 2008, 34) Death is everywhere for the characters of Yazdanikhorram. Shockingly, amid Naser's story, Naser and Maryam find the head of John the Baptist.

5.3 What is the Significance of John the Baptist's Head?

John the Baptist was beheaded and Herodias didn't let the prophet's head be buried with his body. According to Butler, the prohibition of proper burial is a kind of violence in itself. The head of John the Baptist traveled a long way before being properly buried. Its First Finding is commemorated on February 24th. After St. John's death, the head of the Baptist was taken by Joanna and buried on the Mount of Olives where it was hidden for centuries. In the fourth century, a wealthy convert purchased that land, intending to live as a monastic there. He found the head of St. John.

During the reign of Constantine (313-337), two monks going to Jerusalem had a vision to find the head but after that, a potter took it and ran away. He kept it in his home until death, then the head passed first to his sister and finally into the hands of a Greek hieromonk of Emesa named Eustacius. He used the head of St. John to attract followers. Eventually, the head was buried. Years later, the head was found in the Emesa monastery. The Third Finding was in the 9th century. By then Emesa had fallen under Muslim rule, known as Homs. The Islamic world was torn between the Abbasid and Umayyad dynasties by a civil war. Around 820, local Christians sent the head of St. John away to the city of Comana in Cappadocia for safekeeping. Unfortunately, veneration of the relic was not allowed because of the prevalent heresy of Iconoclasm. It had to be kept hidden and was again lost. Patriarch Ignatius of Constantinople was given a vision revealing the exact location of the head. It was brought to Constantinople and installed there with great pomp in the year 850. After this, the head was divided up into various pieces, the largest of which went to the famous Studion monastery in the capital. Other pieces were sent to the Podromos Monastery in Petra, the Athonite monastery Dionysiou, and the Ugro-Wallachian monastery of Kalua, among others. The head was almost lost again at the time of the French Revolution.

After the revolution in 1789 relics were confiscated. The reliquary containing the head of the Holy Forerunner remained in the cathedral until November 1793, when representatives of the Convention demanded it. They stripped from it everything of material value and ordered that the relics be taken to the cemetery. After they left the city, the city's mayor, secretly and under fear of death returned to the reliquary and took the relics to his own home. Thus was the sacred shrine preserved. Several years later, the former mayor gave the relic to Abbot Lejeune. Once the revolutionary persecutions had ended, the head of St. John the Baptist was returned to the cathedral in Amiens in 1816, where it remains to this day. (Massilitin, 2012).

This long story of John the Baptist proves a point which is this denial of a proper burial means something very important. This flow of violence for

numerous reasons throughout history is duplicating the primary violence toward John the Baptist. So, as it is commonly said the chain of violence reproduces itself.

As Butler says "A hierarchy of grief could no doubt be enumerated." The questions she raised are "What is the relation between the violence by which these ungrievable lives were lost and the prohibition on their public grievability? Are the violence and the prohibition on discourse related to the dehumanization of the deaths and the lives? The way the head of John the Baptist is deprived of a proper burial is a version of this prohibition of public grief and as the records showed it remained so. There will be no public act of grieving (said Creon in *Antigone*).

The second brother, Masoud, fought as far as he could in Soudan. He died and no one found the body. They go to save five women who are hidden in the basement of a house on an island. He is the realization of Butler's vulnerability. "We are vulnerable to those we are too young to know and to judge and, hence, vulnerable to violence; but also vulnerable to another range of touch, a range that includes the eradication or our being at the one end, and the physical support for our lives at the other." (Butler, 2004, 75) His friend is Abolhassan who inadvertently trod on the mutilated breasts of some women and after that, he couldn't get back on the track and forget that sense of soft, bloody pieces of body flesh. This is the interdependency that Butler talked about. "The "I" who cannot come into being without a "you" is also fundamentally dependent on a set of norms of recognition that originated neither with the "I" nor with the "you". As Butler puts it "something takes hold of you: where does it come from? What sense does it make? what claims us at such moments? To what are we tied? And by what are we seized? Freud reminded us that when we lose someone, we do not always know what it is in that person that has been lost. So, when one loses, one is also faced with something enigmatic: something is hiding in the loss, something is lost within the recesses of loss." (Butler, 2004)

Mehri Naami, the university lecturer of French, died accidentally in the explosion of the vice president's office. No one bothered to pay a visit. She is a translator and she died in an accident but her life was so dehumanized that there is no obituary left of her, her life is not worth noting, not worth valuing and preserving, her life does not qualify for recognition. In *Precarious Life* (2006), she says I think we have to ask, again and again, how the obituary functions as the instrument by which grievability is publicly distributed. It is how a life becomes, or fails to become a publicly grievable life... if a life is not grievable, it is not quite a life; it does not qualify as a life and is not worth a note. It is already the unburied, if not the unburiable. (Butler, 2004)

The third brother, Mansour Sookhteh, with a reserved grave, without a dead body, disappeared in Beirut, in 1981, he was so quiet at home as if he didn't exist. He went for a unique occasion photography. The execution of infamous women of "Shahre Now" (whorehouse), *Pari Bolandeh*, *Ashraf Chaharcheshm*, *Soraya Torkeh*. They are among those ungrievable lives whose lives were dehumanized and their lives did not qualify as lives. So, when someone does not live according to the norms, he cannot be killed either. He is alive not living so he can be said to be just undead. That's why there is no obituary for them.

Mansour Sookhteh, the son of *Karim Sookhteh* was dissolved in the soil of Beirut. He was in love with Beirut and he was told that everything he wanted to take great photos of was ongoing there, war, fratricide, Israel, Christianity, Semitism, and destruction. He craved to take photos from Baalbek. Considering the perspective of Yazdanikhorram, the reason why Baalbek is mentioned is Ras- Al- Eyn mosque. This is the place where the head of Imam Hussein was taken or was buried as well according to the literature of Muslims. The situation may be as John the Baptist's head but due to lack of enough documentation, it won't be discussed comprehensively here.

He was caught in Beirut but because he knew *Chamran* he was told that no one knows who is who so don't take whatever happens seriously. People who took him wanted to exchange him with some other hostages but when he was shot, they understood that his life was worth nothing and he was not someone special, consequently, he was killed for nothing and his dead body disappeared for no good reason and no one from his family tried to find his dead body. He was lost and even his death was not confirmed.

Arezoo Kian, who hung herself on a rainy night, and her grave was forgotten.

Mahmoud Sookhteh, 22 years old, a polytechnic student, lame, who went through a love story in a political atmosphere, and whatever happened made him disappear in the graveyard. He wanted to start his life with Tahmineh, his Marxist beloved in Russia. They set a date in a church in Mashhad. But the place was under supervision before their arrival. Their commuting made the officers skeptical and they came in and started shooting and shot Tahmineh and exploded her head Mahmoud saw everything and fled hurriedly and hid in a coffin with a skull inside. He came out after a long time. He lost his love; his attachment and he became lost himself. In the reports, there were three dead persons in the church but they found two in the scene. Mahmoud, the undead person who was trying to move to another land to humanize himself and get rid of the ongoing calamities in Iran, was not lucky enough even to be dead here. He was the only one who survived the shooting, and he went to the Holy

Shrine and he started his job as the person who puts the dead bodies into the graves at the time of burial. What he went through is:

This leads us to what Derrida, following Adorno and Lyotard, calls "worse than death." There are experiences similar to death that are not only unlivable but worse than death. The unlivable is worse than death because even if this life goes on, this person cannot live it as their life but only as death within life. Hence the tragic end-of-life choices and political issues: dilemmas in which one has to choose between death and something worse than death. (Butler, 2006, 15)

He experienced something more than death. No one knew his name, he talked to nobody, he took care of the skull and every time in the grave, he remembered the dim light of that day in that coffin and some vague images as well. Others called him Samad. He, the fourth son of *Karim Sookhteh*, with his unlivable, ungrievable life, disappeared. With no trace.

The last brother, Taher, 6 years old, was the last one who deceased. The whole family was going on a pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Mashhad. On the way, they decided to take a photo beside the Latian dam. It was forbidden to enter but it was cold and they insisted and the guards let the family of 17 enter to take a photo on that windy day. Just one moment and the smallest member of the family, Taher was on the shoulder of his uncle but a heavy wind came and at the time of taking a photo, Taher fell into the water, drowned, and died. Why they were allowed in is clear. Because their lives don't qualify as lives and they are not easily dehumanized.

To shed light on the shocking concept of livability, different criteria should be considered. Nationality is important. The chronology of historical events is very remarkable. Religion matters too. To put them in a nutshell, consider the aforementioned story with the story of *Saving Private Ryan (1998)* where the death news of every soldier is announced to the mother through an official ritual, and when it comes to the last brother, the ritual fails because the nationalistic sense of the army doesn't let the youngest brother die. Because his life is valuable and his role in the family is so significant and the mom has nothing and no one to pin her hope to. They had a life which was lived and now, they are killed. Their death makes sense since they had lived. People are registered as living as far as they materialize standard life and its proper conditions. "Certain lives will be highly protected, and the abrogation of their claims to sanctity will be sufficient to mobilize the force of war. Other lives will not find such fast and furious support and will not even qualify as grievable." (Butler, 2002) After all, if someone is lost, and that person is not someone, then what and where is the loss, and how does mourning take place? the loss

finds its meaning when the issue is over a person who had a life, and who was subjectified as an individual. Such a loss would not leave any mark.

The public will be created on the condition that certain images do not appear in the media, certain names of the dead are not utterable, certain losses are not avowed as losses, and violence is unrealized and diffused.

“Violence against those who are already not quite living, that is, living in a state of suspension between life and death, leaves a mark that is no mark. Loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at the risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by that exposure.” (Butler, 2023, 20)

Every individual is attached to others in society. If he is a socially constituted body, he is vulnerable and he is grievable. If not, there will be no grief over their death, and their death is not even recognized as death for they were not considered living.

5.4 Is the mourning of the *Sookhteh* Family successful?

When a life is recognized as livable, so there comes a death afterward. And that death deserves mourning and grief. When someone's life is constituted of the recognized conditions of living, his death will be announced and followed by an obituary and a funeral in which the dead body is respectfully buried. This death is a loss for the others since they are somehow attached to the deceased one.

“Freud suggested that successful mourning meant being able to exchange one object for another; One mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes, one will be changed forever. Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to transform. In Butler's terms, “one is hit by waves.” There is something lost. The person doesn't know what it is that he lost and to what he was tied.”(Butler, 2004, 15) Their mourning does not seem to be successful for there is no ritual per se. they don't have any dead bodies. They don't undergo any transformation. There is no clue of any obituary or ceremony and the father's job is renting *hijla* to the families who lose their sons so nothing is deep because their lives are unreal and dehumanized. If the story is read meticulously, it's easy to see that they don't even look for their sons or their dead bodies. As the story says, there is a grave for one of them, and another one deprives himself of an ordinary life and lives as an undead in Mashhad, with a new name and with an occupation among graves and dead bodies. According to Butler, when someone does not have a proper life with norms, there never was a human and there never was a life. someone has to be recognizably human. One finds oneself fallen. One is exhausted but does not

know why. Something is larger than one's deliberate plan, one's project, one's knowing and choosing. To what are we tied?

By what are we seized? When we lose someone, we do not always know what it is in that person that has been lost. It is not as if an "I" exists independently over here and then simply loses a "you" over there, especially if the attachment to "you" is what composes who "I" am. If I lose you, under these conditions, then I not only mourn the loss, but I become inscrutable to myself. Who "am" I, without you? When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. (Butler, 2004, 20) it brings a disorientation for those who remain.

5.5 Is detachment possible?

Detachment is a big issue under these circumstances. The subject is defined as an intrapersonal network of relationships. When someone loses a person, he should redefine himself in this chain of meaning-making apparatus.

"When we lose certain people, or when we are dispossessed from a place or a community, we may simply feel that we are undergoing something temporary, that mourning will be over and some restoration of prior order will be achieved. But maybe when we undergo what we do, something about who we are is revealed, something that delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that these ties constitute what we are, ties or bonds that compose us."

There is a moment in the novel that is as follows:

Abolhassan is walking among the palm trees. He steps on something soft. There is a beam of light in the sky. He moves his boot and sees...at first, he cannot understand what is this bloody sticky tissue under his foot. But later when he checks in front of him and sees the corpses of dead women, he understands.

Cut breasts, and Abolhassan Fazel is out of breath. Similar to the day that he was tested for Karate's new belt. Like the day that Sanam was told that she wanted to marry the Tehrani painter. she couldn't imagine the future without him. (Yazdanikhorrām, 2012, 78)

It is not as if an "I" exists independently over here and then simply loses a "you" over there, especially if the attachment to "you" is part of what composes who "I" am. If I lose you, under these conditions, then I not only mourn the loss, but I become inscrutable to myself. Who "am" I, without you? When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. On one level, I think I have lost "you" only to discover that "I" have gone missing as well. At another level, perhaps what I have lost "in" you, that for which I have no ready

vocabulary, is a relationality that is composed neither exclusively of myself nor you, but is to be conceived as the tie by which those terms are differentiated and related." (Butler, 2006, 17)

The body has an undeniable public dimension. To grieve, and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself. The disorientation of grief- who have I become? Or indeed, what is left of me? – what I have lost in the other? Posits the "I" in the mode of unknowingness.

6. Conclusion

Soaked in Blood (2018) is a manifestation of Butler's ideas about life and death grievability, mourning, and violence. Mohsen Meftah is the main character alive, the only person who is practically paid to remember five dead brothers. The mother outsources the act of visiting the graves and praying for them. Their lives are unrealized and dehumanized. They live in a state of unlivable.

The unlivable does not simply mean death, all in all. This is a different type of death. Just as I cannot "live" death, when I cannot live an experience any longer, it is like death, because life continues but "I" cannot live it: the experience of the unlivable has destroyed the subject. (Butler, 2004)

They don't fit the frame. If violence is done against those who are unreal, then, from the perspective of violence, it fails to injure or negate those lives since those lives are already negated... they cannot be mourned because they are always already lost or, rather, never "were", and they must be killed, since they seem to live on, stubbornly, in this state of deadness. Certain lives are not considered lives at all, they cannot be humanized, and they fit no dominant frame for the human, and their dehumanization occurs first. A life worth nothing, a life worth valuing and preserving, a life that qualifies for recognition. How grievability is publicly distributed.

"The great concern is how life becomes or fails to become publicly grievable. If a life is undone, unreal, and grievable, it is not quite a life; it does not qualify as a life and is not worth a note. It is already the unburied, if not the unburiable. Such a death vanishes, not into explicit discourse, but in the ellipses by which public discourse proceeds. The queer lives that vanished on September 11 were not publicly welcomed into the idea of national identity built in the obituary pages. Does the prohibition on discourse relate to the dehumanization of the deaths and the lives?" Through a complex network of events, all partly or fully impressed by war, the reader can see how some lives are lived in a way that they become worth mourning after death. Without grievability, there isn't any life. the lives are framed, especially because of war.

The only person who pays a visit to the graves of the main characters is Meftah who is paid to do so. Even the father of the main characters earns a living through death or better to say martyrdom of others. He rents “Hijla” to the relatives of deceased people. *Soaked in blood* is a flawless illustration of Butler's philosophy on war, precariousness, and mourning. Butler, a third-wave feminist, considered the issue of the body in society and its vulnerability and its dependency on others, and she clarifies comprehensively the reasons behind the ungrievability and unrecognizability of some lives, she points to the impression of photography in this framing. We, as the audience, are shown what we are supposed to see. The invisible violence is too destructive and cannot be understood because it is normalized. About Iran's imposed war, this invisibility is very clear and about what was going on in the front, the soldiers were said to fight not to rape and cut the bodies. And Sookhteh family was deprived of their whole lives, they had undone, unreal lives so they had to be killed because they were not living formerly.

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خشونت و مسئله سوگ ناپذیری در خون خورده مهدی یزدانی خرم بر اساس آرای جودیت باتلر

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چکیده

سوگ پذیری/ سوگ ناپذیری آن بنمایه مفهومی است که در چند دهه اخیر متعاقب بروز جنگ‌های منطقه‌ای و نیز بیماری‌های فراگیر برجسته شد. عمیق‌ترین علت سوگواری مرگ است و مرگ وقتی معنا پیدا می‌کند که پیشتر زندگی در کار بوده باشد. باتلر می‌پرسد: "به چه موجودی نام انسان می‌دهیم؟ کدام زیستن به واقع زندگی است؟ و زندگی سوگ‌پذیر کدام است؟" (باتلر، ۲۰۰۴) این پرسش‌ها افق‌های جدیدی را می‌گشاید که برای درک جهان داستانی مهدی یزدانی خرم بسیار کارآمد است. رمان خون خورده (۱۳۹۷) دلایل ارزش قابل شدن برای مرگ، از پیش پذیرفته شدن این امر و حتی کالاشدگی آن را در طول دوران جنگ تحمیلی می‌آزماید. خون خورده گاه شماری است از نسلی قانون‌شکن که نزیستند و قرار نبود زندگی کنند و حتی اغلب مرگشان آنقدر با اهمیت نبود که جنازه هایشان را برگردانند و طبق آیین و اصول دفن شوند. نسل جنگ ایران، حتی نمی‌بایست رویای خوشبختی را در سر بپروراند. خون خورده، تصویر زندگی‌های انسان‌زدایی شده، غیرقابل شناسایی و سوگ ناپذیر است. آرای باتلر خوانش رمان یزدانی خرم را به آفاق دیگری می‌برد.

واژگان کلیدی: سوگ پذیری/ سوگ ناپذیری، زیست مشروط، زیست‌پذیر، خشونت، خون خورده