

### Conflict of culture and religion: Jalal Al-e-Ahmad's "Pink Nail Polish" from a Bakhtin's carnivalistic point of view

Oroskhan, Muhammad Hussein; Anoosheh, Sayyed Mohammad

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version  
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Oroskhan, M. H., & Anoosheh, S. M. (2017). Conflict of culture and religion: Jalal Al-e-Ahmad's "Pink Nail Polish" from a Bakhtin's carnivalistic point of view. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 77, 35-43. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101:1-2019080113391253705003>

#### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY Lizenz (Namensnennung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.de>

#### Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY Licence (Attribution). For more Information see:  
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

## **Conflict of Culture and Religion: Jalal Al-e-Ahmad's "Pink Nail Polish" from a Bakhtin's Carnivalistic Point of View**

Muhammad Hussein Oroskhan<sup>1,a\*</sup>, Sayed Mohammad Anoosheh<sup>2,b</sup>

<sup>\*1</sup>Graduate Student, Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities,  
Vali-e-Asr University, Rafsanjan, Kerman, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities,  
Yazd University, Iran

<sup>a</sup>h.araskhan@yahoo.com, <sup>b</sup>Sanoushe@yazd.ac.ir

**Keywords:** Carnival time, Grotesque realism, Shi'ism, Jalal Al-e-Ahmad.

**Abstract.** By the 1930s, the Iranian society was driven toward modernization. Consisted with the concept of modernization, feminism ushered a whole new era in Iranian history. Besides, the outbreak of World War II and the consequent abdication of Reza Khan afforded women a golden opportunity to fight for their rights and emancipations. This movement was also supported by the famous male writers of the time among whom Jalal Al-e-Ahmad marked a prominent place. He was keen enough to properly explore women's situation in his works and notice the drastic effect of modernization upon women's situation. Hence, in this study, we try to investigate Al-e-Ahmad's short story entitled "Pink Nail Polish" 1948 with respect to Bakhtin's Carnavalesque's theory. Furthermore, it is shown how Bakhtin's new literary mode can create the excellent chance of studying Iranian women's situation properly. Finally, we explain that due to the drastic change of Iranian women's situation towards modernity, they may lead a double life if their rights are not respected. This can lead to a disproportionate relationship between the husband and the wife as the marital infidelity becomes rampant.

### **Introduction**

By the mid-nineteenth, the Iranian society developed certain aspect of modernization including the appearance of women's rights. Nonetheless, the occurrence of the Constitutional Revolution encouraged the Iranian women's first attempt to establish their role in bringing about their social promotion [1]. These attempts during the Constitutional Revolution blossomed into a more successful form four decades later during a global incident. Indeed, "World War II opened another page in the history of the women's movement in Iran" [1]. The ending of the World War II resulted in the abdication of Reza Shah 1876-1944, the pioneer of Pahlavi dynasty from the power and its consequent was the succession of his son Mohammad Reza Shah to the throne. This meant the advent of a new era to reestablish various women organizations which were disbanded during the autocratic reign of Reza Khan. More importantly, at this juncture women's struggle for equality was approved and assisted by a number of prominent Iranian literary male intellectuals such as Mohammad Hejazi, Sadeq Hedayat, Ali Dashti, Mahmood Beh-Azin, Ahmad Sadeq, and Bozorg Alavi [1].

These Intellectuals were among the first to recognize the women's rights and made prodigious attempts to bolster women's situation. Indeed, all these writers lived during and after the Reza Shah period exactly when Iranian's people experienced one of their most turbulent times. As the heated political conflict between Mohammad Reza Shah and his democratically elected prime minister, Mohammad Mosaddegh 1882-1967 never settled down until the king overthrew Mosaddegh through a coup d'état. This incident led to an approximate disregard of Iranian culture which was on the verge of modernization. As such, Iranian writers considered themselves as the "Iranian intelligentsia and a voice of morality for the Iranian future" [2]. To this end, their central issue raised in relation to the beginning of modernization in a religious based society like Iran. Thereupon, the majority of Iranian modernist writers advocated modernism as opposed to the deep-

rooted Shi'ism and developed "a pervasive anti-Shi'i animus in imaginative literary works at the very least of anti-clericalism and the rejection of many folk-Shi'i practices [2]. Drawing further attention to this view, many of Iranian intellectuals deduced that "the Iranian people's multifaceted backwardness, much of it attributed to the influence of Shi'ism in daily life" [2].

In this respect, exploring women's situation as a common facet of modernism would face a totally new challenge in Iran since women's situations are radically changed without going through a gradual process. This drastic change may produce inevitable results in relationships between husband and wife which then may leave unredeemable effects upon the society. Consisted with this view, Jalal Al-e-Ahmad as a distinguished male literary writer directs his attentions toward Iranian's women's situation. Indeed, of all the Iranian intellectuals, the writer that most seriously assumed the mantle of feminism in his writing was Al-e-Ahmad. Though his political view changed fundamentally but this never alter the fact of supporting women's right in a patriarchal society like Iran. Ergo, in the study at hand, we try to explore one of Al-e Ahmad's early short stories entitled "Pink Nail Polish" 1948 with regard to features discussed above but with a new orientation. As such, we refer to Bakhtin's discussion of Carnivalistic theory proposed in his masterpiece *Rabelais and His World* to arrive at a new perspective not only to study the concept of feminism in "Pink Nail Polish" but also to explore Iranian women's situation on the verge of modernism in Iran.

## Discussion

### 1. Bakhtin's Carnivalistic Theory

In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin develops two main ideas. The first one is the idea of Carnavalesque theory and the second one is the concept of grotesque realism. To this end, Bakhtin explored François Rabelais's novel, *The Life of Gargantua and of Pantagruel*. Bakhtin's consideration of Rabelais is striking in its priority given to him. "Of all great writers of world literature, Rabelais is the least popular, the least understood and appreciated. And yet, of all the great creators of European literature Rabelais occupies one of the first places" [3]. Bakhtin's rational justification for giving such a high priority to Rabelais and his works lay in Rabelais's attempt to revive the thousand year of folk culture. "His [Rabelais] work, correctly understood, casts a retrospective light on this thousand-year-old development of the folk culture of humor, which has found in his works its greatest literary expression" [3].

In this respect, Hélène Iswolsky who has first translated Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* into English asserts that Bakhtin has taken upon himself "to interpret the world for his society" [3]. Nonetheless, Bakhtin never tried to follow the well-trodden path of socialist realism of communist party; he adopted a different perspective upon the world as opposed to the common one because "during 1932 all authors, no matter what their styles or politics, were forced to join the new Union of Writers" [3]. However, Bakhtin was opposed to unification of all styles and aesthetics and proposed a "celebration of linguistic and stylistic variety as counter to tight canonical formulas for the novel (and for other genres and even media, such as films or painting) proposed by official spokesmen for the Soviet government" [3]. Hence, instead of focusing on the formal communication among the people, he deeply probed those aspects of life not yet examined due to their levity. This was probably his cogent reason of citing Rabelais as one of the greatest writer of all times. Thus, his entire attempt is led to the creation of a new literary form named "grotesque realism" to differently view the world.

On this subject, he adds that the folk culture of humor was of cardinal importance to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period, therefore, a strong resistance was offered by the expression of the folk culture to "oppose the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture" [3]. This was exactly what Bakhtin needed to build upon his concept of "grotesque realism". Amazingly, this could be considered as the common point of comparison between Bakhtin and Rabelais. "Each created a special kind of open text that they explored as a means for inscribing themselves into their times. Both Rabelais and Bakhtin knew that they were living in an unusual period, a time when virtually everything taken for granted in less troubled ages lost its certainty,

was plunged into contest and flux” [3]. In another word, both felt the compelling need of selecting a new base for such a period which has lost all its certainty. Because, in such periods of tension and uncertainty, the literary mode of grotesque realism can suit best and “its grotesque imagery, characters, and spaces reflect cultural shocks and shifting traditions, offering new ways of experiencing a world that is no longer quite familiar” [4].

Furthermore, Bakhtin categorized the folk culture presented in Rabelais's *The Life of Gargantua and of Pantagruel* into three groups as follow: “1. Ritual spectacles: carnival pageants, comic shows of the marketplace. 2. Comic verbal compositions: parodies both oral and written, in Latin and in the vernacular. 3. Various genres of billingsgate: curses, oaths, popular blazons” [3]. In his view, people communicating within this new structure could live in a new world which could “offer a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations” [3]. Therefore, the same force which creates a new web of relationship for the people to communicate through can be applied to the realm of literary aesthetics. Greatly resembling the Carnivalistic features of folk culture, grotesque realism as a new literary mode promotes the cause of a complete breakdown from any rigid socio-cultural structures and conventions. This breakdown from the hierarchical order of religion or politics will lead to a moment of crisis. Bakhtin has called this moment “a festive perception of the world” [3] which then will lead to “the feast of becoming, change, and renewal” [3].

## 2. Al-e-Ahmad's Life and Style

Al-e-Ahmad led a turbulent life. He was born in a religious cleric family. “His father was a local religious leader in Tehran while one brother spent two years ministering to the local Shi'i community in Medina” [5], however, he sharply veered from his Islamic tradition to the direction of Tudeh Communist Party. Nonetheless his oscillation between Islamic tradition and the Communist thoughts continued when twenty years after his first departure from his Islamic roots, he decided to take a contemplative trip to Mecca and ended the dilemma in which he had been caught for years even though he never succeeded thoroughly [6]. By all these accounts, he became “Iran's leading writer during the 1960s” [7]. Along this path which reached the pinnacle of Al-e-Ahmad's career, he published four novels and four collections of short stories.

By drawing close attention to his works, Liora Hendelman-Baavur 2014 deduces one subtle point regarding Al-e-Ahmad's works. She extrapolates that the general thrust and tenor of Al-e-Ahmad's works is “his harsh criticism of a society on the brink of collapse” [8]. Having classified Al-e-Ahmad as a harsh critic of society, she devises a less obvious way in exploring his works by imparting a feministic view to his early works. “His [Al-e-Ahmad] earlier short stories were written and narrated from the perspective of underprivileged women inflicted by their society not just with material poverty, but with cultural and emotional poverty as well” [8]. Then, she adds that Al-e-Ahmad in his later works “directed most of his social criticism against the westernized and more privileged sectors of Iranian society” [8]. Apart from this feature accorded with Al-e-Ahmad's works by Hendelman-Baavur, we draw the attention to another perspective of his works. Al-e-Ahmad has casted a wide-ranging scopes of characters in his works nonetheless he has discussed them from a highly extroverted perspective. Indeed, in his realistic form of writing, he never tried to probe into the character's mind and suffice to provide us with a realistic picture of the world. Hence, Reza Barahani b. 1935, Al-e-Ahmad's friend and literary critic who has considered Al-e-Ahmad better than such great writers as Sadegh Hedayat, has explicated this aspect of his writing as follows:

We have Al-e Ahmad with a prose that is considerably better than Hedayat's and that perhaps is the best contemporary prose, but it is lamentable that this prose is not often put to the service of an examination of the internal workings of characters....Sometimes his characters pass in front of the reader's eyes like lightning without the reader being able to grasp them and give them permanence in his or her own mind. Al-e Ahmad doesn't have the patience to describe mental and psychological situations of individuals or of society, and his distinctive tendency to surface characterization is a result of his never seeing the world from

within, from the domain of hidden causes and effects. Instead of creating characters, he creates caricatures with an emphasis on the physical ridges and depressions. [2]

Perhaps Barahani has illustrated a negative aspect of Al-e Ahmad's writings, however, it can mark the correct way of approaching his works. Al-e Ahmad never shifted his focus onto the character's mind and always recruited the character's external environment into his service of detailed exploration. To this end, he cast his net wide open to encompass a wide range of external elements and impart a particular quality to each and every of these elements. Hence, a discussion of his works in relation to this method of description can provide us with the correct path of approaching his works.

### 3. An Exploration of Bakhtin's Carnavalesque's Theory through "Pink Nail Polish"

Al-e Ahmad's "Pink Nail Polish" is published in a collection of short stories entitled "Sitar" in 1948. "Pink Nail Polish" narrates the story of Hajar and his husband, Enayatollah, who are an infertile couple. The story begins when Hajar and Enayatollah decide to take a sacred trip as a religious ritual in Shi'i practices to Emamzadeh Qasem (a holy place in Shi'ism) to pray to God for a child. During this trip, Hajar is introduced as a perfect example of a patriarchal woman since she has so completely "internalized the norms and values of patriarchy" [9]. We can see such reflections when Hajar is returning home. She seriously contemplates on their infertility. Though she is sure that she is absolved of any blame, she cannot even think about laying this fault with her husband. "Hajar was sure that it was not her fault, but she couldn't see it as her husband's fault either. She could never think that her husband was at fault. Even in her heart she wasn't prepared to slander him. Whenever she thought about it, she asked herself: 'Why should I accuse him without any proof? I'm not his God, am I? It's between him and God...'[10]". This part of the story can definitely prove Hajar's status as a patriarchal woman. One can see that the traditional gender roles are deeply embedded in Hajar's personality and she cannot even dare to think about the possibility that her husband might shoulder the blame. Indeed, Hajar is severely undermined to a position that she equates her husband with God. This can clearly determine the extent to which women are made inferior to men in a patriarchal society like Iran.

However, this changes radically when Hajar finds herself in Laleh'zar Street of Tehran. Hence, she plucks up all her courage to take a few steps at Laleh'zar Street. "She took her courage in both hands and set off. She knew Laleh'zar and felt like taking a stroll" [10]. Laleh'zar takes on great significance in this context. As it was mentioned above, in Al-e Ahmad's story the external elements rise up in great importance. Therefore, Laleh'zar plays a fundamental role in disrupting the normal situation. Lale'zar Street is worthy of note as it was "the principal shopping street of the foreigners" [11] in Tehran, furthermore, after a while it expanded from being a solely shopping centers of latest world fashion into "what might have been called a Persian Experimental Theater" [12] nonetheless "No one started a Persian playwrights' theater as one out of every four or five pieces was Persian" [12]. Accordingly, Lale'zar Street can be deemed as a place endowed with Carnivalistic atmosphere in which people would experience a totally new world distinct from their established common rules of the society. To a great extent, "Lale'zar could not reflect the soul of Iran except in its satirical aspects" [12]. Accordingly, this could be concluded that Lale'zar Street can carry the features of Bakhtin's Carnavalesque concept cited in *Rabelais and His World* for Al-e Ahmad. Since "this literary mode parallels the flouting of authority and temporary inversion of social hierarchies that, in many cultures, are permitted during a season of carnival" [13]. Therefore, a full-scale confrontation between the modern and traditional view of the world was provoked as one step on the Lale'zar Street. Because it contains not only the latest fashions and the avant-garde art but also a different and broader perspective on life in contrast with the previous one.

In this regard, Hajar's strolling of Lale'zar Street can clearly show Al-e-Ahmad's purpose of creating a new world in which his woman character is bestowed some new features of which she has been deprived of previously. In this respect, as soon as Hajar is situated in such a place, she starts to think differently and more importantly reacts differently to the world. As she is passing a boy selling nail polish, she suddenly gets to like it enormously and decides to buy it in any case.

Hajar's attraction to pink nail polish is followed by her bold attempt to ask about its price. "He wasn't old enough for her to feel diffident. She moved toward him a little, adjusting the bag under her arm. She released the chador, which she had been holding with her teeth, and one by one, asked the prices of the polish" [10]. This may seem an ordinary task for anybody nowadays but not surely for a Muslim woman like Hajar. As in Islamic sharia, Muslim women are only obliged to not wear chador before their mahram which includes women's husband, brother, father, or your uncle by blood. Even women are not allowed to go to the bazar without any of their male relatives and they have to speak to salesman in their presence. In this case, Hajar takes this bold action independently and luckily for her, the salesman is not a fully grown man. Therefore, she can easily make a connection with him. In other words, by this action Hajar has entered a new world which is called a "carnival time" [10] by Bakhtin. "Carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part [10]". Thus, we could conclude that carnival is people's second life but with its distinct laws in comparison with people's real life.

Al-Ahmad has described Hajar's bold action with meticulous attention to Hajar's chador. As chador takes on great significance throughout the story, it is noteworthy to examine it more closely. When Hajar was trying to talk to the boy regarding the prices of the various nail polishes, "she released the chador, which she had been holding with her teeth, and one by one, asked the prices of the polish" [10]. Al-Ahmad's reference to Hajar's releasing chador can be best interpreted as Hajar's first attempt to escape the prevailing patriarchal system. In this regard, Bakhtin's theory of mask in the folk culture can be used to interpret the role of chador worn by Hajar. Bakhtin contends that "the mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity" [3]. In addition, it is "related to transition, metamorphoses, and the violation of natural boundaries" [3]. In this respect, Hajar's initiative attempt to release her chador before talking to the boy illustrates the point that Hajar is actually trying to break out of the enforced law of wearing chador in Shi'ism. Indeed, she tries to create a new identity for herself by opposing the imposed and uniformed rules of the society.

As we observed, "Pink Nail Polish" begins by a ritual ceremony in which Hajar and Enayatollah perform a ritual ceremony to pray to God for a child in a holy place. Soon after that, this ritual ceremony turns into a parody. Suddenly, Hajar forgets about the child and his solely wish and aims at buying a pink nail polish. Such a change of view is what Bakhtin mentions regarding the feature of these ceremonies; "a boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone" [3]. Such a tide of change from religious ceremony to the levity of marketplace is well portrayed in the story. The change of setting is also worthy of note as a holy place like Emamzadeh Qasem is replaced with Lale'zar Street. At this juncture, the possible suspension of the previous respected rules is itself the predominant rule. This could explain Hajar's reaction to the boy selling the pink nail polish.

Afterward, Hajar decides to provide enough money to buy the nail polish. Therefore, she decides to sell some of their old jackets and shoes to afford the needed money. Then, she stops a street vendor who has been selling plates to get him to buy her old shoes and jackets. "Brother—are these of any use to you? I don't need any bowls or plates; my husband has recently bought some from the bazaar" [10]. Previously, Hajar was led to a second world which had its own laws and regulation, a new perspective totally distinct from the dominant political, sociological or religious rules. If she was diffident and hesitant in her interaction with the boy, now she is bold enough to call the seller, who is a grown man, 'brother'. This means Hajar is leading her second life which allows her to talk to a stranger in such a relaxed way. As Bakhtin asserts, in such cases "a new type of communication always creates new forms of speech or a new meaning given to the old forms. For instance, when two persons establish friendly relations, the form of their verbal intercourse also changes abruptly; they address each other informally [3]. Thus, Hajar cannot be considered as the previous patriarchal women since she has been part of a new world of communication and attempted to make a friendly relationship with a man.

Interestingly, her conversation even takes the form of curses and popular blazon. This happens when Hajar sees another man approaching them. She seems to have met him before. Therefore, she reacts against that man in this way; “Yes, he's the one, the wretch--oh go to hell! The day before yesterday I gave him pounds of breadcrumbs and he gave me next to nothing back. The wretch can't tell me that I wouldn't have got at least some pepper or turmeric back from the local grocer in return...damn you--you beggar!” [10]. Bakhtin mentioned the various forms of billingsgate as the possible form of communication in the carnival and market place. The most common forms of billingsgate are oaths and curses both of which are used by Hajar in his communication with these two men. Regarding the barefoot man, who seems to have outwitted Hajar in the previous day; Hajar impatiently utters several curses like “the wretch--oh go to hell” or “damn you--you beggar” [10]. However, she asks the other man to take an oath of being honest in his dealing with her. “It's between you and your God. I have no idea. Deal with me as if with the Holy Abbas” [10]. In this regard, Bakhtin mentioned that “profanities and oaths were excluded from the sphere of official speech because they broke its norms; they were therefore transferred to the familiar sphere of the marketplace”. As such, we could see to what extent Hajar has deviated from the common norms of the society which were highly based upon the Shi'i's practices.

During her interaction with the man, Hajar's rebellious streak is provoked. Once being so submissive to belittle herself to a position of not even thinking that her husband may have the fault even though his fault is evident, now she vehemently condemns her situation and those who have caused it to happen. “Whatever I am, I am only a house-bound woman. God damn our parents who have left us so helpless. Neither literate, nor learned, nor nothing [10]”. At this moment, Hajar is targeting the central tenet of the patriarchy system which has greatly restricted the women. This is Hajar's bitter point of complaint. She refers to the sources that have blocked women's path of learning and have made them obey the rules and be content with any situation. It seems that a new woman with so many new perspectives is born who tries to fight for her purpose while facing with so many insuperable obstacles.

Finally, Hajar succeeds in providing the required money and buying the pink nail polish. Now she is thinking about the consequences of her action because she knows she is still living in patriarchal society. “Hajar went to light the lamp. She took off her shoes and entered the room. She struck a match and as she was about to lift the chimney, her pink nail polish gleamed in the light reflecting there. It made her think. 'What shall I say if Enayat asks me? What if he doesn't approve of it?' The match went out, burning her fingertips and interrupting her thoughts” [10]. She is thinking about Enayatollah's possible feedback. In this part, Al-Ahmad aptly describes Hajar's situation by using an external factor. Al-Ahmad depicts Hajar's lighting a lamp by striking a match which indeed is figuratively used to describe Hajar's bold attempt to pave a new path for women in the dark patriarchal society of Iran even though it may not end happily as it burns Hajar's finger. Probably, Al-Ahmad is foregrounding the result of Hajar's bold attempt. Nevertheless, Hajar calms herself by saying “Oh dear--Ah well, after all, he is a man” [10]. Such a thought can best express Hajar's mature attitude because she is now in a level to not only recognize the women's dire strait but also men's physical and psychological need. However her self-confidence weakens when her husband arrives home from his work, she reacts in this way; “Hajar wrapped her hands in her chador and went to meet her husband at the door” [10]. Hajar's reaction expresses her deep fear about what might happen as a consequence of her action. Accordingly, she resorts to chador as a symbol of patriarchal society and hides her nail polish to overcome her fear.

During these three days, Hajar has changed considerably. She cannot be seen as a woman who had never allowed herself to question her husband. Therefore, as soon as she sees her husband and greets her, she proposes the subject of nail polish indirectly, “By the way, Enayatollah --why don't you have nail polish among your wares?” [10]. The question is coldly answered by Enayatollah, “In the name of God! What else do you want? Instead of coming and brushing the dust of the roads off me, and asking how I got on these last few days in Niyavaran Street, you think of your own wishes!” [10]. But this time Hajar instead of being dormant and submissive, tries to react strongly and proves herself right “Have I been wrong to ask you for a favor? Are you going to go on now

about this— and make fun of it forever? I'm only human, after all. I want things...Either make me blind, or..." [10]. Afterward, Enayatollah, who is a little shocked by Hajar's feedback, tells her about the high price of nail polish but then is encountered by Hajar's angry response, "Oh, oh, listen to him! Nail polish isn't so expensive that you have to give me a lecture about it" [10]. And then Hajar shows her hand to Enayatollah. Being infuriated, he curses her loudly for nail polishing. "Shame on you--you bastard. Balls to your prayers. Do you want to make me unhappy?" [10]. Based upon Enayatollah's response, one can see to what extent the patriarchal system is imposed upon people's thoughts as Enayatollah's cogent reason for blaming Hajar's action is that nail polishing makes him unhappy.

The story reaches its significant turning point when Hajar's rebellious side becomes evident before Enayatollah. "Hajer showed the other side of her character. She threw aside her chador, and, white with anger, she screamed: What is it to you! [10]." Hajar's reaction to throw her chador away can be interpreted as her ultimate attempt to get rid of the oppressive patriarchal system. At this moment, Enayatollah, being frustrated, begins to beat her severely, however, he ceases to beat her when Mr. Rajabali, their neighbor, interferes and mediates between them. Shockingly, Enayatollah justifies his reason of beating her to Mr. Rajabali in this way; "I would have smashed her head in. The shrew was answering me back...." [10]. Then Mr. Rajabali tries to calm down each side separately. He explains to Hajar the reason why her husband has beaten her so hard. "It's not your husband's fault. What can he do? He's sick of his dog's life. If he doesn't take it out on you, who can he take it out on? [10]". Tyson mentioned that "Failure to provide adequate economic support for one's family is considered the most humiliating failure a man can experience because it means that he has failed at what is considered his biological role as provider. It is not surprising, in this context, that anger and other violent emotions are the only emotions permitted, even encouraged, in men, for anger is a very effective means of blocking out fear and pain, which are not permitted, and anger usually produces the kind of aggressive behaviors associated with patriarchal manhood" [9]. Obviously, as it is mentioned by Mr. Rajabali, Enayatollah finds it his right to beat Hajar because he has failed to provide adequate economic sources for his house and this view is supported by Mr. Rajabali as a perfect symbol of patriarchal society like Iran.

Then, Mr. Rajabali asks Hajar to receive her confirmation regarding a religious argument and Hajar replies, "How should I know, mister? I'm only a simple woman, aren't I?" [10]. This means that Hajar is forcefully suppressed and pushed back to her status of patriarchal women. And finally the story ends as follows, "the next morning Hajar scratched off her nail polish with the tip of her old tweezers, and emptied the bottle into the cesspit. She removed the label, and poured some scorpion ointment into it that had come from she didn't know where. She put it on the shelf" [10]. This might be a sad ending to a woman who tried to break out of the patriarchal prison but without any success. However, the saddest part of it might happen to the society where a huge gap is created between the husband and the wife which might end in marital infidelity. Likewise, in this story, Al-Ahmad indirectly touches on this issue. Beside the main plot of the story, Al-Ahmad refers to the story of Hajar's neighbor of whom Hajar is very jealous. And it is implied that she is seeing somebody when her husband is absent. "Abbas, the truck driver, had gone to Shiraz for a week; and his wife Mohtaram had disappeared again. She had previously said that she was going to her mother for a few days. But who believed her? [10]". Probably, Al-Ahmad's main purpose of referring to this story is to mention a sad ending for the society in which marital infidelity would become rampant. As he probably refers to the story of Mohtaram as a woman who may have tried to fight with the patriarchal society but without any success, therefore, she is leading a double life now. While her husband is away, she enjoys her life as a free woman and spends her time with her lover and when her husband arrives she becomes the expected dormant and submissive patriarchal woman again.



## Conclusion

Bakhtin built his theoretical work upon Rabelais's revolutionary perspective toward the world. He asserted that "Rabelais' basic goal was to destroy the official picture of events. He strove to take a new look at them, to interpret the tragedy or comedy they represented from the point of view of the laughing chorus of the marketplace. He summoned all the resources of sober popular imagery in order to break up official lies and the narrow seriousness dictated by the ruling classes. Rabelais did not implicitly believe in what his time 'said and imagined about itself'; he strove to disclose its true meaning for the people, the people who grow and are immortal" [3]. Likewise, Bakhtin aimed to achieve the same result in Russia which was so soaked up in the concept of Socialist realism. In the same respect, Al-Ahmad tried to produce the same effect by his writing. He knew that he was living in a period in which nothing seemed to be real and there was just a superficial representation of the ideas. Shi'ism was the people's established religion but how it could be properly practiced in a society on the verge of modernism.

On his consideration of these opposing poles, Al-Ahmad exclusively scrutinized the status of women. With his critical eyes, he showed how the status of women underwent a radical change in Iran. To best examine this aspect of Al-Ahmad's writing, we used Bakhtin's theory. Bakhtin's valuable contribution focuses on the Carnavalesque features and makes a new literary mode by causing a complete breakdown of all the socio-cultural norms and conventions of the society. In fact, two totally different forms of truth are constructed, the one constructed by the conventions of the society and the other one built out of the censored parts of the first one. With regard to women, they achieve a new status which was totally neglected by the previous system of thought. Indeed, Al-Ahmad effectively exercised the functions of Carnival time "to consecrate inventive freedom to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted" [3]. Therefore, Al-Ahmad nakedly explores the appalling position of women in Iran and urges the society to take immediate and decisive action against its degeneration, otherwise, it would confront horrible and tragic outcome which is the rampant act of marital infidelity. Thus, it is no exaggeration to call "Jalal Al-Ahmad alongside Forough Farrokhzad 1935-1967 as the early pioneers of feminism in Iran" [14].

## References

- [1] A.A. Mahdi, The Iranian women's movement: A century long struggle, *The Muslim World*. 94(4) (2014) 427-448.
- [2] M.C. Hillmann, Al-e Ahmad's fictional legacy, *Iranian Studies*. 9(4) (1976) 248-265.
- [3] M.M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, Translated by Helene Iswolsky, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984.
- [4] M. Gniadek, The Art of Becoming: Sherwood Anderson, Frank Sargeson and the Grotesque Aesthetic, *Journal of New Zealand Literature*. 23(2) (2005) 21-35.
- [5] B. Hanson, The 'Westoxication' of Iran: Depictions and Reactions of Behrangi, al-e Ahmad, and Shariati, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 15(1) (1983) 1-23.
- [6] Jr. Hanaway, L. William, A Review of Jalal Al-e Ahmad's *Lost in the Crowd*, *World Literature Today*. 60(3) (1986) 515-516.
- [7] M. C. Hillmann, The modernist trend in Persian literature and its social impact, *Iranian Studies* 15(1-4) (1982) 7-29.
- [8] L. Hendelman-Baavur, Grotesque Corporeality and Literary Aesthetics in Sadeq Chubak's *The Patient Stone*, *Iranian Studies*. 47(4) (2014) 569-593.
- [9] L. Tyson, *Critical theory today: A user friendly guide*, Routledge, New York, 2003.

- 
- [10] J. Al-e Ahmad, A.R. Navabpour, W. Robert, Pink nail polish: A story, *Iranian Studies*. 15(1-4) (1982) 81-95.
- [11] F.G. Clapp, Tehran and the Elburz, *Geographical Review*. 20(1) (1930) 69-85.
- [12] N.C. Cook, The theater and ballet arts of Iran, *Middle East Journal*. 3(4) (1949) 406-420.
- [13] M.H. Abrams, G. Harpham, *Glossary of literary terms*, Ninth ed., Earl McPee, United States , 2004.
- [14] M.R. Kamali, S. Shohouli, Traces of Feminism in Jalal Al-e-Ahmad's Works, *J. Hafez*. 13(1) (2005) 56-62.