

The Parallel Quest for Identity in Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* and Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*

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ABSTRACT

The present paper, informed by the principles of comparative cultural studies, is an attempt to trace the parallel wistful search for identity within the cases of Hedayat's *The Blind Owl* (1937) and Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). We argue that the products of these two authors are comparably the outcome of their similar understanding of transformed and stained cultural and socio-historical conditions coloured by an evocative reminiscence of the past that is used as a tool for critiquing the present. Their creations are platforms on which the protagonists interweave the real and unreal, and devotion and revulsion in an apparently futile attempt to nostalgically re-create a lost identity marked by America's Great Depression and Iran's inefficient dynasties whose loss and effects (symbolised by the disgraced female characters) have made them confused and imbalanced. Published around 1930s, both stories are portrayals of stained values of the time because of which both main characters feel confused and lost in a world marked by degeneration, degradation, disillusionment and madness. Hence, by juxtaposing these two stories, this article discusses how subtly and similarly Hedayat and Faulkner interposed their deep-seated concern over their countries' cultural and socio-historical upheavals into their famous literary masterpieces, amidst two critical eras of their countries' annals.

Keywords: Culture, identity, *The Blind Owl*, *The Sound and the Fury*, values

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INTRODUCTION

Upon reading *The Blind Owl* (1937) and *The Sound and The Fury* (1929) for the first time, one may think that there is only a touch of similarity and little ground of homogeneity

and comparability between Hedayat and Faulkner's works. However, a deft critique of judgment would offer concepts and canons that seem to be the result of similar processes of artistic creation and analogous understanding of the texts' contemporary socio-historical stimuli. These points of similarity provide a fertile ground for a comparative review of the stylistically parallel connotations and denotations hovering in both cases. Both stories picture protagonists who have already started a process to shape their identities in a desired way; a process which is accompanied by their zealous desire to actualise their loved ones' decency and perfection. However, their inability in achieving this makes them evince chaotic waves of nostalgia mingled with paranoia in their manners and thoughts, which in turn ends in their inability to shape the desired infallible identity.

The American novelist's text, *The Sound and the Fury*, gives the sketch of a devastated American family and how their heterogeneous perspectives, coming chiefly from their ostensibly unified but indeed fragmented kinship, has disorientated this Southern family from irrevocable disorders and a poignant fate and future. The other text by an Iranian avant-garde writer pictures the pathetic life of a cognisant, yet alienated person who lives in a culturally unbalanced society in a politically dark period of time and who is falling "deeper and deeper into the abyss of uncertainty and madness" while "searching for an 'unsullied' Persian cultural identity" (Coulter, 2000, p. 2-8).

The basis of the similarity between these two novels is that both portray characters who are endeavouring to shield and preserve their loved ones and values that they have traditionally inherited from past generations. The protagonists in these works are entangled in difficult situations because they find themselves lost in a world which seems neither familiar nor promising. The world that they live in sounds like a very threatening puzzle without any possibility of the pieces being put together to solve the puzzle. It is to escape from the limits of such a world that they both struggle to revive a seemingly glorious past whose values they believe are besmirched by the hostile inglorious present. That is why, despite the spate of all traumatic incidents, they struggle hard to recapture that glorious past and reshape their identities based on those values and criteria. Yet, all their fatigueless quests to balance out their sufferings and achieve that desired identity do not end in success and that is why they finally yield to mental and physical eruption and more isolation that balloon into the tragic ruination and dissipation of certain (cultural) values.

Comparative Analysis

The main character (anonymous) in *The Blind Owl* is typified as a paranoid artist, sardonically skeptical and an introvert, reactive towards social events and entirely overwhelmed by a deep-rooted sense of loss of identity. Initially, he finds himself entangled with his platonic love for an elysian girl whom he later on buries in the deepest layers of the ground (First

episode) and afterwards he gets obsessed and nostalgic with his official and legal wife who resembles the ethereal girl in the first section and whom he ends up murdering in her room (Second episode). Witnessing the defilement of his point of nostalgia in both sections, the anonymous character ends up confused in a locked-up world, devoid of any rationality, hope and meaning and this pushes him over the edge into extreme solitude.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner sketches out the life of the Compsons, who suffer from the breakdown of their close-knit familial relationship that is on the verge of falling into decadence. Quentin and Jason, the embittered victims of their neurotically self-absorbed mother who has withheld her maternal love and kindness from all her children, strive to respond to their emotional vacuum by turning to Caddy to fill it. Quentin also proves to have been struck by the same feeling of protection of the beloved that is shattering his mind inescapably. Portraying himself as a hypersensitive brother – and while his sister is the only alternative of emotional support in their family – he is unable to get over his sister’s wrongdoings and does anything to put an end to his sister’s misdemeanours, though it is all in vain.

However, the protagonists’ efforts in bringing disorder back to order and their quest for identity only end up in their total destruction: suicide for Quentin and annihilation of values and perfection for the nameless narrator of *The Blind Owl*. What we find here is, in addition to a lot of other

things, “disruption of familial relationship and reversal of roles and relationships” as Khoshnood calls it in his reading of Nadine Gordimer’s *July’s People* (2012, p. 27-28). Therefore, both stories’ central characters are witness to their loved ones’ defilement, which inevitably triggers madness and leads them to clutch at any possible expedient to lessen the pain. Exploring such a common theme and other similarities between the works of two writers from different societies and cultures brings a better understanding of the cultural and socio-historical contexts of these writings.

This comparative cultural study of Hedayat and Faulkner is based on the principles suggested by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek in his informative article “From Comparative Literature Today toward Comparative Cultural Studies” (1999). In his article, he invites scholars not to try establishing a hierarchy that places one work above the other; instead, he advises them to consider “evidence-based research and analysis” (ibid, p. 16) and focus on ‘comparison’ in order to investigate the ‘how’ and not the ‘what’. In this study of Hedayat and Faulkner’s works we find what Tötösy calls “the processes of [their] communicative action(s) in culture and the how of these processes” (ibid, p. 17). Therefore, we try to make a “dialogue between cultures, languages, literatures, and disciplines” and not to prefer one to the other (Tötösy, 1999, p. 15).

A comparative analysis of these similar works reveals both writers’ predisposition for reflecting and resuscitating and once

valued historical, cultural and even political principles or morals of their plagued societies. We argue here that converging socio-historical, political and cultural upheavals have led both writers to lament such drastic devaluation of values in their societies. In fact, if we decode the polysemous aspects of both works of fiction, we will notice that they are not just the lamentations of two lovers for the loss of innocence in their beloved, but that the women in both cases are symbolic of their nations. The main purpose of this article is to foreground the comparable cultureoscopic strands of these two books that emphasise some similar socio-historical references through which both writers express their awareness and concern of the mayhem existing in their countries and demonstrate their zeal for revitalising a lost but highly valued identity.

Analysis of Texts

“Hedayat and his generation of intellectuals lived in an era marked by fundamental changes in almost all aspects of life. The Constitutional Revolution (1906–1911), the rise to power of the first King of the Pahlavi Dynasty, Reza Shah (1925–1941) and the ensuing industrialisation, modernisation and westernisation of Iran (Yavari 46, 2008) were among some of the significant currents that pulled Iran’s social, political and cultural spheres away from their past influences at a speed unprecedented in the country’s history” (Yavari 46, 2008).

However, the reign of Reza Shah is deemed to have been a historically overriding

phase in Iran that is often regarded as a failure concerning the usurpation of Iran’s cultural heritage in spite of the King’s exertions in maintaining the country’s sovereignty and unity. Although Iran was never officially colonised, two imperial powers, the British and the Russians, had much economic and cultural control over it. Put simply, the unofficial colonisation changed the country into a high-yielding ground for those who were after its unique cultural and natural heritage. As Mohammad Gholi Majd attests, “State department records document vast amount of antiques and archeological finds taken out of Iran between 1925 and 1941, a period when most of the Persian objects in European and American museums were acquired” (2001, p. 8). He even touches upon the fact that “not only had Iran’s oil resources been plundered, its very cultural heritage had been systematically looted or destroyed” (ibid). This reveals the country’s adverse cultural condition in that period.

Hedayat’s *The Blind Owl* is imbued with this sense of loss of cultural identity. The story presents an ethereal girl whose purity symbolises the importance and value of identity. She is characterised as a girl who “beholds frightening, magic eyes, eyes which seem to express a bitter reproach to mankind, with their look of anxiety and wonder, of menace and promise” (Hedayat, 1957, p. 13). In fact, the writer portrays the girl as a magical and threatening, yet promising character. He mentions the word “promising” though he knows that the girl’s presence would be ephemeral and he would lose her soon.

After the girl dies, he manages to paint her eyes since he “had never been anything else than a painter of dead bodies” (Hedayat, 1957, p. 24). He then decides to chop her body up and put it in a steamer trunk as he is obsessed that strangers might defile her beauty and decency with their glances. As he leaves the house at the break of dawn, he starts asking himself, “What point was there to my existence now that she had gone?” (Hedayat, 1957, p. 26), revealing his apparent sense of loss of existence and identity without the girl.

While leaving the house, he looks for someone who can help him carry the trunk, but dispiritingly enough, he sees no one but a bent-up old man sitting at the foot of a cypress tree, who agrees to help him for no obvious reason. He heaves the huge suitcase up into the hearse and slides it onto his chest firmly; it is so formidable and heavy as if “it has been pressuring upon [his] chest for all time” (Hedayat, 1957, p. 28). While heading towards the cemetery, he witnesses his surroundings as if he is totally alienated from every human being in a way that “the windows, the walls of the houses appear to possess the property of instilling intense cold into the heart of the passer-by, one [can feel] that no living creature could have ever dwelt in those houses” (ibid). Here, he pictures the city enveloped in dense mist, as if it has been jinxed and ravaged probably by ethereal beings or unknown radix. He is carrying the trunk and the dead body to bury it deep under the ground alluding that he wishes to entomb his identity; this bears out the reflective, refluxing and terrorising

pressure he is experiencing.

The rider stops the hearse in the vicinity of the shrine of Shah Abdol-Azim that was of considerable import in Iranian’s cultural and religious tenets down to its destruction by Jengiz Khan in the thirteenth century A.D. The old man helps him dig a hole for burying the body and he surprisingly unearths an ‘ancient glazing jar’ that he later on takes as his payment. After long hours of digging and eventually burying the body, he decides to head home. On his way home, the narrator loses trace of the hearse that took him there and he begins to feel lost. He has no idea where to go since “she had gone, since [he] had seen those great eyes amid a mass of coagulated blood, while [he] felt that [he] was walking in profound darkness... the eyes which had been lantern lighting [his] way had been extinguished forever” (Hedayat, 1957, p. 31). Half way down the road, he stops when he abruptly runs into the old man. He mounts on the hearse again and the rider says:

“Grave digging is my trade. Not a bad trade, eh? I know every nook and cranny of this place. Take a case in point – today I went out on a grave-digging job. Found this jar in the ground. Know what it is? It is a flower vase from Rhages, comes from the ancient city of ‘Rey’”
(Hedayat, 1957, p. 32).

These events are important to our discussion because they (directly or

indirectly) emphasise the demolition and burial of precious cultural objects that are employed symbolically to refer to the bitter facts of the era. Since Rey, “The Bride of the World” (Hedayat, 1957, p. 44), is Iran’s foremost city with the undeniable reputation of being a culturally distinguished place with a remarkable historical background that stretches back to approximately 400 B.C., the writer seems to have had a deliberate motive in mentioning this spot. Moreover, he even cements this nostalgic feeling of loss of cultural heritage in the proceeding section when he groans, “I do not know where I am at this moment, whether the patch of sky above my head and these few spans of ground on which I am sitting belong to Nishapur or to Balkh or to Benares” (Hedayat, 1957, p. 42), all illustrious cities with well-known historical objects and antiques and seemingly on the verge of degradation.

The important point is that upon returning home, the narrator sees the old man thrust the vase onto his chest and the narrator carries it into his room where he realises the “almond-shaped panel [vase] was ‘her’ portrait ... the face of a woman with great black eyes, eyes that were bigger than other people’s” (Hedayat, 1957, p. 34). He takes out from the tin box the portrait he had painted of her the night before and compares the two. Surprisingly enough, “there is not an atom of difference between [his] picture and that on the jar” (ibid), which suggests there must have been somebody just like him with the same nostalgia, residing formerly in that area. He

then regrets having buried the ethereal girl (cultural heritage) and directly says that, “among those men [ancestors] there had been one, an unlucky painter, an accursed painter, perhaps an unsuccessful decorator of pen-case covers, who had been a man like me, exactly like me” (ibid). Thus, in a provocative declaration he says that, “It is three months- no, it is two months and four days-since I lost her [the ethereal girl] from sight” (Hedayat, 1967, p. 9). According to M. I. Ghotbi, “the narrator repeats the numbers two and four, in an effort to convey that civilization arose about two-thousand and four-hundred years ago” (1934, p. 67).

Consequently, since he is ostracised he writes for his shadow, which is incapable of judging and watching him like a blind owl, because no one understands how he is trying to criticise this cultural adversity, which changed from the wondrous heyday of the past (centuries ago) to the repellent present. In his book, *The Life and Legend of an Iranian Writer*, Homa Katouzian refers to Part I of *The Blind Owl* as “representing the narrator’s life in the present, somewhere in the decaying early twentieth century Tehran” (Katouzian, 2002, p. 120) and to Part II as taking place “in thriving Rey of a golden past” (2002, p. 116) during a previous existence of the protagonist, several centuries earlier, as justification of why that “flitting, elusive, and impalpable [ethereal girl] personifies the Iranian cultural identity” that is no more (Simidchieva, 2008, p. 25).

Hedayat who was fully conversant with this kind of destabilised cultural status in the

late 1930s endeavours to enunciate or report his deep-seated, breathless and chanted expostulation with these unfavourable cultural circumstances via a plethora of astounding imageries in his work of fiction. If the first narration (first episode) is of an upsetting vision or somehow the fleeting and fictional possession of a heritage that he lost due to his inattention that is emblematic of his country, the second narration (second episode) is of his frustration over losing the opportunity of owning that cultural identity that is depicted in the form of his wife in the non-fictional world. Nonetheless, for two months and four days, or perhaps two years and four months, the narrator and his bride have slept apart, he claims. She would, he fantasises, sleep with her various lovers including a repulsive old street vendor – an erstwhile potter – but not with him.

If in the first episode, the plot or sequencing is a quest to seize a flash of inspiration and culture, in the second narration the plot is one of regression, of losing that culture or identity. His wife continues to torture him; she even becomes pregnant. In the first part, he buries the culture with his own hands that is no better than auctioning off your property (to foreigners) for free, yet the grave-digger, who is the symbol of a staunch citizen, keeps and redeems the Rhages Vase. However, the second part displays how others, including the grave-digger, now turned into a nauseating old man who also possesses the glazed jar, are taking advantage of his spouse (culture) regardless of the real owner, and eventually take his vase, which was the

only remnant of his values. By putting both sections into one coherent context, we can conclude and allude that *The Blind Owl* is the well-pictured vision of an anarchic and disordered period in Iran's history that is perfectly symbolised and centralised in a female character in the midst of a bizarre setting, reshaping their role and impression from one section into the next that ultimately changes the sense of love to hate and honour to dishonour as it does from past to present.

Ironically, a close look at the narrative trajectory of Faulkner's story confronts the reader with the same ideology, imagery and nostalgic feeling for regaining certain cultural and historical values and ethics. Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* was first published in 1929, during in a period when the "United States was undergoing transformation more visibly and intensely than in any other period of its history as modern America" (Mainer 60,1999). This change embraced many different aspects of public life like the Wall Street Crash of 1929, known commonly as the Great Depression, and the traumatising repercussions of the Civil War. Nonetheless, the aftermath of these disruptions were perhaps more tangible and permeating in the realm of "private personal experience, where sexual behavior and attitudes became illustrative examples" (Mainar, 1999, p. 61). These piercing anarchies that engulfed certain sections of America's society touched the economic, social and cultural domains into a new territory that "began to weaken all the [standards] by turn of the century [and] it was not until the 1920s and

1930s that one sees a wholesale revision of the norms” (D’Emilio & Freedman, 1998, p. 267).

These tensions that, in essence, took root in the easy access of men to a world of commercialised eroticism, the uncontrolled “movements of women outside the domestic sphere” and “the working-class youth involvement in commercialized amusement” (Mainar, 1999, p. 61-62) overwhelmed the middle-class in its well-established norms of sexuality. As a result of this social anomaly, a gradually undermining “shift toward a philosophy of indulgence [that] marked the demise of nineteenth-century prescriptions about continence and self control” affected America’s cultural norms (D’Emilio & Freedman, 1998, p. 223). Nevertheless, women were still perceived through the notions of purity amidst all these tensions and changes.

Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* reflects these eroding changes as its undercurrent throughout the novel. In fact, the novel represents Caddy as a bridge or route of transformation that connects the honourable life of the Compsons in the past to the degenerated living conditions and norms of the present. She is a sister who also functions as the repository of affection to the three brothers when their innermost feelings are reflected and hoarded. Relatively, if the otherworldly girl in *The Blind Owl* is set to be the axis of alteration from approbation to degradation of cultural norms and values, Caddy in *The Sound and the Fury* resonates with the sound of the transformation of cultural glory to a ravine

of deflation. In fact, Caddy symbolises the United States; especially its Southern States that “after the Civil War, recounting its past, had become the nostalgic memory-keeping and mythmaking of defeated people” (Bleikasten, 1995, p. 89) and which changed from an agrarian culture into an industrial one at the turn of the century. In addition, Caddy’s sexuality embodies unrestrained carnal liberalism during these years that precisely stresses a crucial cultural transfiguration of that age that brought about social turmoil.

As a result of her deciding role, Caddy personates as the central point of balance and equilibrium for her three mentally unbalanced brothers. In fact, the three brothers seem to make their lives engaged deeply with this female character whose sexuality turns to be the harbinger of melancholy and pain. Resultantly, Quentin, who drowns himself because of the loss of innocence of his sister, might be the representative of Faulkner, who subtly censures the turbulences of the Southern States for destabilising the previously peaceful, noble and honourable atmosphere of the past as his value, and instead, echoing the raucous sound and the fury of the idiot brother, Benjy.

Generally, the Compsons, who were a once-respected and integrated family, living in the Southern States, are now victimised and traumatised by these happenings, turning to be gradually fragmented, disintegrated and eventually fallen apart. The portrayal of three different generations of the Compson family in the novel offers the opportunity

to witness their past in comparison with their present decadence. Therefore, *The Sound and the Fury* is a staggeringly artistic narration of America's culture and history prior to its economic downfall.

Accordingly, Faulkner utilises the novel's characters to represent the (lost) identity of his country and culture. Through Caddy's behaviour, the reader is led to remember the economic collapse and difficulties that the Compsons have had to face: of "selling Benjy's pasture for Quentin to go to Harvard" (Faulkner, 1929, p. 251) and of Jason's moderate job in a hardware store. Importantly enough, she can also be epitomised as a symbol of the radically mal-transformed sexual norms and attitudes of that period in which women were "ashamed of being a virgin" (Faulkner, 1929, p. 120). As a result of these changes, Quentin, who views his sister's virginity as a symbol of the family's honour, picks an ineffectual fight with her lover, Dalton Ames, to battle the changes, although figuratively and instinctively, which are affecting Caddy, who represents his social values and ethics.

Relatively speaking, both narrators in *The Blind Owl* and Quentin in *The Sound and the Fury*, exert themselves in recapturing their concerns for the suffocating cultural and historical changes. This is symbolised by watching over their loved ones to keep them away from any loss or change. *The Blind Owl* is the perfect manifestation of the unremitting labours of the protagonist in taking care of his beloved (identity), who will finally be defiled. Turning to Faulkner's

novel, Quentin and Caddy play the role of Hedayat's leading characters, and Faulkner makes great use of them as tools to transcend venereal aspects to arrive at a new sphere of meaning in which politics and history are highlighted as well.

What has been said about the protagonist in *The Blind Owl* and his concerns regarding the purity of the female character of the Hedayat novella is also true of Quentin's concerns about Caddy's transition from purity to defilement. Here, too, we may understand and interpret the novel in terms its socio-political determinants. Reading Faulkner's novel in the context of overwhelming American capitalism yields an interesting but surprising image of Quentin. For Southern men, as Wilbur Cash maintains, "the pure woman embodies established social order, while threats to that order are cast in terms of sexual assault" (1941, p. 114). This mode of representation is also quite prevalent in the literary works of southern agrarians that aimed at revealing and defending the "assault of crass and materialistic northern industrialism" (Atkinson, 2006, p. 112) through various forms of imageries and metaphors concerning the breakdown of southern values and honour.

Along the same lines, Quentin interprets Caddy's sexual maturity as the tainted picture of her previous innocence that diminishes her standing as a symbol of purity to that of capital or a traded commodity. Philip J. Hanson makes a keen observation that *The Sound and the Fury* expresses "anxiety over a traditionalist Southern socioeconomic

system in the process of disintegrating; a system which had long regarded itself as opposed – and superior – to capitalist marketplace values” (1994, p. 4). Thus, Quentin’s response to Caddy is instigated by the idea of anti-capitalism pervading Southern ideology, resistant to modes of capitalist production.

The fact that Quentin tries to shield Caddy’s virginity demonstrates that Quentin has perfectionist tendencies that make him value and struggle to preserve this old southern virtue. Nevertheless, his inability of making this happen leads him to contemplate incest with Caddy not because “he loved her body but some concepts of Compson honor” that he might be able to protect in hell (Faulkner, 1929, p. 459). However, his obsession with incest is paradoxical as incest would be a total violation of Southern morals; yet, Quentin has so strong a desire for guarding Southern integrity by any possible means that we are encouraged to see him as a man mainly concerned with Caddy’s innocence. Unable to hold Caddy back from her misconduct (culture and identity) and incapable of unifying his splintered family, who suffer from consecutive socio-historical failures, Quentin strives to deactivate the passage of time as the only possible panacea. This is similar to what the narrator of *The Blind Owl* does when he tries to manage his suffering with opium and alcohol when time is already dead and stopped.

Quentin’s obsession with time is the motif that proves to be distressing as it is an external determining force “whose

very progression brings disruption and destabilisation of the familiar” (Atkinson 2006, p. 96) simply because clocks and time are the markers of change in the historical past. In other words, everything Quentin assumes he might have missed, like the chance to fix and ameliorate Caddy’s life and resurrecting Compson honor only become feasible when the clock stops, holding up the difference between the past and the present. This shift of time is even more glaring through the exchange of the pocket watch, from his father to Quentin, which stresses the shift and exchange from the past generation to the present in order to push Quentin to “spend all his breath trying to conquer” (Faulkner, 1929, p. 117) the present, which is sullied with dishonour and failure. In addition, as Ted Atkinson states, “Time is the outward measure of the Compson decline, extending from the past when the family boasted prominent statesmen to the present when its members are plagued by diminished material means and debilitating neuroses” (2006, p. 96).

Therefore, the Compsons do not really think of the present as their friend because that is not what they can honour as a value as ‘present’ no longer embraces their ‘past’ values and identity. Ultimately, when Caddy is shunned by the Compsons due to her transgression, Quentin, who cannot accept her actions, tries to lighten Caddy’s absence as the main alternative to hope and love by taking diverse measures. In reality, since he no longer possesses his cultural value (Caddy and her purity) intermixed with socio-historical collapse (failure of

Southern State), he feels tormented and commits suicide as a fruitless search for identity. Surprisingly, at the beginning of his last day, he “breaks [his] pocket watch” (Faulkner, 1929, p. 127) and “avoids clocks since he is highly aware of the position of his shadow as a symbol of time” (Anderson 32, 2007). Edmond L. Volpe also suggests, “Quentin, in effect, kills himself to stop time because time is the ultimate reality” (2003, p. 115) and Quentin cannot cope with reality as “he yearns for an ideal world of innocence, gentility and nobility without change” (Anderson 37, 2007).

Accordingly, *The Sound and the Fury* can be read as a perfect example of grievance at the downfall of the Southern States. It contains some allusive anti-capitalist undertones that remind us of the socio-historical upheavals and turbulences culminating in Caddy’s immorality that stands as a symbol for the contemporary tarnished cultural norms. Faulkner denounces these heart-lacerating changes that depict the process of change from glory to debasement as time shifts from past to present and nostalgically pursues a once-present valuable identity that he thinks is cruelly disfigured and lost.

CONCLUSION

Having compared Hedayat and Faulkner in the light of Zepetnek’s principles of comparative studies and in terms of the authors’ awareness of their respective cultural and socio-historical contexts, we come to the conclusion that both authors were both stimulated by the similar spirit of

their own era and their unique overwhelming socio-historical features. Their reliance on the symbolic loss of feminine innocence and purity that represents the loss associated with cultural values makes us convinced that both Hedayat and Faulkner’s stories can be studied as of two ‘patriotic’ fictional pieces, aiming at presenting cultural and historical decay and searching wistfully for retrieving some tarnished or even lost identities. They both seek their glorious past in order to, sentimentally, avert their subsequent decline by employing the past for critiquing and bemoaning the present. Although decay and misery existed in the past as well, the “past’s beauty can flicker into life like the narrator’s fantasy about the ethereal girl’s corpse” (Fischer, 2004, p. 183) and his wife’s dead body and the remembrance of the once-present pride and honour of the Compsons.

In conclusion, it should be noted that this paper did not attempt to designate or confirm any clichéd presuppositions as to whether these apparent Beat Writers had psychological tensions, gender oppositions, religious polarities or even political hostilities, but in fact, it tended to manifest few unalleviated cultural and social diseases that affected or might affect even our everyday life. Both Hedayat and Faulkner direct us to the exhibition of history to show us a few tainted paintings of societies that suffer from cultural shifts and decline. The climax of disintegration is visibly seen in both stories: Hedayat’s narrator buries his identity or murders his wife and Quentin comes to commit suicide as his final and

only resolution. However, the dramatic climax of the stories seem to reveal more a message of warning than a pessimistic point of view. The writers of the works studied here warn us that upon neglecting our cultural values and social norms (and criteria) we may lose our irreplaceable heritage; what we have inherited from our ancestors can be ironically compared to our loved ones or even our being.

Based on what has been discussed in this paper both Faulkner and Hedayat have been affected by the overwhelming socio-historical and cultural shifts and alterations of their time. The socio-political and cultural instability of Hedayat's contemporary society accompanied by the usurpation of the cultural heritage of his country by foreigners affected the artist in the same way that the Great Depression and socio-cultural alternations affected Faulkner. Both writers, dispirited by the decline and demise of a seemingly glorious past and disillusioned by a suffocating devalued present (and future), have employed the loss of innocence in female characters to symbolise the loss of values and glories of their respective society and culture. Their artistic products are, therefore, portraits that remind us of a lost identity and urge us to resuscitate what we will need if we want to complete an arduous journey that crosses the confusing present to connect a glorious past to a possible promising future.

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