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目　　次

Unlocking New Perspectives on *Hamlet*: Insights from Early Persian Translations

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Trust that all is for the best. For we carry our fate with us—and it carries us.
Marcus Aurelius

Abstract

Hamlet is a dramatic work perpetually cloaked in layers of mystery; the deeper one delves into its narrative, the more layers of meaning and significance there is to uncover. At the very heart of this enigma lies the character of the Prince himself, whose elusive and enigmatic nature has fascinated scholars and critics for centuries. Widely regarded as one of Shakespeare's most extraordinary and complex creations, Hamlet is often seen as a study in genius. This paper seeks to contribute to this rich body of scholarship by offering a novel interpretation of Hamlet's character through the lens of Persian translations of the play. The central thesis put forth here argues that, within the early Persian renditions, Hamlet's motivations and actions are less a manifestation of the melancholia traditionally associated with him and are instead rooted in his profound belief in fate, the afterlife, and divine justice. His contemplations on predestination, as interpreted in the Persian context, reveal a deeply fatalistic mindset that reshapes our understanding of his seemingly contradictory behavior. By examining the Prince through this alternative framework, the interpretation illuminates facets of his character that have been either marginalized or inadequately explored within conventional critical discourse, thereby enriching our comprehension of his psychological complexities and underlying motivations.

Keywords: *Hamlet*, *Fatalism*, *Persian translations*, *Melancholia*, *contradictions*

in character.

1. Introduction

Shakespearean scholarship on *Hamlet* is a bottomless pit, likely more extensively written upon than any other drama in all of literature. This work, akin to a religious text, has been interpreted from various points of view, with each critic offering their own unique perspective. The accumulated body of *Hamlet* criticism is so extensive and can be so overwhelming that modern scholars often find themselves acting more as mediators or referees between opposing theories. Criticism tends to generate more criticism, leading scholars to focus less on *Hamlet* itself and more on others' interpretations of it. While criticism of criticism can hardly be avoided in *Hamlet* studies, this study does not seek to merely reiterate or criticize previous scholarship on *Hamlet*. Instead, it aims to examine the play through the lens of early Persian translations of this Shakespearean masterpiece.

It is important to note that this study is not a full and systematic interpretation of the entire tragedy, nor does it pretend to be a complete interpretation of Hamlet's character or dare to offer such an ambitious program. Additionally, this study does not intend to squeeze Hamlet into a preconceived mold or limit his character in accordance with a specific prejudice. It also does not claim that the interpretation provided on the prince's character is the only acceptable one. Rather, it aims to provide a window for looking at his character from the viewpoint of early Persian translations, which in turn also offer an outlook on the whole play itself. This approach may raise concerns among many critics who believe that analyzing Shakespeare's plays through character study is distorted and harmful because it overlooks the play's overall structure by treating fictional characters as if they were real people[1]. Despite this concern, we believe that character analysis is inevitable in Shakespearean scholarship. After all, Hamlet's character is the essence of *Hamlet*, and without him, little would remain, as he either speaks or is spoken about for most of the play. However, characters should

1. See especially Knights, 1933; Also Campbell, 1930.

not be studied as a separate entity admired for their own sake, but rather as a way to understand the play as a cohesive work, reflecting the central idea that shapes its form. This study aims to move in this direction and, through character analysis, contribute to the understanding of the whole play from the perspective of Persian translations.

2. Characteristics of Persian Translations of *Hamlet*

Iranian culture and Persian literary heritage are profoundly influenced by the doctrines and principles of the Ash'arī school of theology, which emphasize predetermination and God's absolute control over human life. By the time Shī'ite Islam emerged as the dominant religious force in Iran, the teachings of the Ash'arī school had already left an indelible imprint on the Iranian intellectual landscape, as the doctrines of this creed had been actively taught and widely disseminated throughout Iran for centuries. During the 11th and 12th centuries, the most renowned followers of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 935) came from Persia and played a pivotal role in strengthening the influence of Ash'arī theology among emerging intellectual currents[2]. As Ash'arī theology became the predominant and leading representative of orthodox Muslim thought in Iran, it naturally began to influence Persian poets and prose writers. Thus, the theological themes and motifs associated with Ash'arism became increasingly popular in Persian literature[3].

In the early Persian translations of *Hamlet*, the profound influence of Ash'arī theology is strikingly evident[4]. This influence can be traced back to the fact that these early translations were firmly grounded in the Persian literary tradition, which itself was strongly shaped by Ash'arī theological principles. These translations not only place greater emphasis on passages in the original that subtly allude to concepts like fate and providence, but they also interpret and present many passages in the play that conventionally do not emphasize concepts of fate and destiny in a way that suggests a connection to these themes. Within

2. See Makdisi, 1962, p.37-80
3. See Shafiei-Kadkani, 2018, v.3, p. 309.
4. For supporting statistics and data, see Ahmadi, 2024.

these early Persian translations, Hamlet and the other characters seem ensnared in an inescapable predicament, powerless to alter the course of their circumstances. Hamlet, in particular, is portrayed as a staunch fatalist who attributes everything to fate, always considering the silent and immovable world of destiny. He is depicted as believing that he is prompted to his revenge by heaven and hell. It is in this manner that the early Persian translations of *Hamlet* bring their own cultural and theological influences to the work, shaping the interpretation and emphasis of certain themes within the text. The translations specifically analyzed in this paper are as follows:

Translator	**Publication Date**
• Mas'ūd Farzād (b. 1906- d. 1981)	1957
• Maḥmud E'temādzāda (Bih'āzīn) (b. 1915- d. 2006)	1965
• 'Ala ad-Din Pazargadi (b. 1913- d. 2004)	2002

The prominence of destiny and fate in Persian translations of *Hamlet* highlights that the process of translating a text is far from a simple word-for-word substitution, which can be evaluated using rigid mathematical ideas of matching word-for-word or one-to-one correspondence. Instead, it is a complex task involving interpretation, where the translator's worldview, desires, and cultural background play a significant role in how they interpret and emphasize themes within the text. According to Lawrence Venuti, there are several different interpretations or meanings that a foreign text could potentially convey. However, in the process of translating, the translator unconsciously or consciously chooses one particular interpretation, and this choice temporarily fixes the meaning of the text in that translation[5]. In other words, the translator selects one way to express the content and intent of the foreign text in the target language, but this choice is not the only possible interpretation, and it may change when translated by someone else or in a different context. Venuti explains that the act of settling on a particular interpretation during translation is intrinsically linked to the cultural assumptions that exists within specific social contexts[6]. This selection process

5. Venuti, 1995, p. 18.
6. Venuti, 1995, p. 18.

occurs because the translator endeavors to reshape the foreign text, aligning it with the values, beliefs, and established norms of the target language.

3. The Many Faces of Hamlet

Hamlet is a profoundly complex and multifaceted character who not only displays but embodies a wide spectrum of moods and emotions throughout the play, which makes it both difficult and challenging to define him with a single, definitive characterization. It seems that Shakespeare deliberately fashioned Hamlet as a mystery—one that readers would never tire of debating but would never fully unravel. Thus, there are as many interpretations of Hamlet as there are those who engage with him, whether as readers or spectators. After all, impressions are not meant to be formed by uniformly precise or mechanically accurate tools, but are instead shaped by the intricate and unpredictable sensitivities of individual perception.

Critics in the past have had widely divergent views of Hamlet's character. Some have seen him as a melancholic, others as a trapped avenger, a ruthless egoist, a ruined idealist, a violent misanthrope, and even a walking dead-wish. At different points in the play, he embodies each of these aspects, and each aspect represents a different way of viewing the facts of his situation. However, no single interpretation can fully capture the complexity of Hamlet's character; yet each perspective offers valuable insights. In the context of early Persian translations, Hamlet is depicted as having a fatalistic view of the world in which he exists. All the values to which he subscribes and by which he judges himself and others flow naturally from his fatalistic worldview. Hamlet instinctively sees fate in almost any situation. By looking at Hamlet from this viewpoint we can do justice to the aspects of his character which have been generally ignored or hurriedly dismissed by critics.

4. The Paradoxical and Melancholic Nature of Hamlet

This study will attempt to challenge two common interpretations that are conventionally provided by critics on Hamlet: 1. Hamlet is a man of contradiction; 2. Hamlet is a melancholic character.

In the play, we witness that Hamlet's mind is complex and complementary; he is quite capable of believing and doing two or more things simultaneously, which logically should cancel each other out[7]. Compared to Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, and Laertes, Hamlet's actions seem to be more perplexing and less consistent. All the characters in the play have a consistent approach: Claudius is fond of power, Polonius is a politician, Gertrude is ignorant, Laertes is vengeance-minded, Ophelia is obedient, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are timeserving. However, Hamlets' approach is complex and multifaceted. He exhibits a range of behaviors that defy easy categorization. He vacillates between thoughts of revenge and moments of hesitation and introspection. This complexity in his character has led to varied interpretations of his motives and actions, making him a fascinating and enigmatic figure in literature.

Many critics have attributed Hamlet's contradictory behavior to his melancholic nature or his hypochondriacal distemper. In fact, it has been common for critics to depict Hamlet as teetering on the brink of actual lunacy after the ghost's departure[8]. Many commentators have noted that no logical motivation can be discerned for much of Hamlet's behavior; his actions appear to be rooted not in any ulterior motives, but in his melancholic attitude. Some have argued that the only explanation for Hamlet's behavior and actions is that he is a man whose reason is at times unhinged and unbalanced. Thus many regard Hamlet as an embodiment of Elizabethan ideas of melancholy. Lily B. Campbell writes:

> In Hamlet himself it is passion which is not moderated by reason, a passion which will not yield to the consolations of philosophy. And being intemperate and excessive grief, Hamlet's grief is, therefore, the grief that makes memory fade, that makes reason fail in directing the will, that makes him guilty of sloth[9].

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7. Numerous studies have explored Hamlet as a character embodying contradictions. For further details, one can refer to Schücking, 1966, p. 5.
8. Some of the major studies that have portrayed Hamlet as a melancholy-malcontent type of character include: Hazlitt, 1818; Chambers, 1917; Greg, 1917; Stoll, 1919: Bradley, 1955; Schücking, 1966; Wilson, 1967.
9. Campbell, 1930, p. 144.

Also A. C. Bradley claims that the prince's entire conduct in the last four acts of the play is dominated by melancholy that resulted from shocking revelation of his mother's despicable character[10]: He is overwhelmed by the degrading incestuous marriage of his mother, which he perceives as a profound betrayal. This interpretation is so widely quoted in handbooks and editions that a survey of *Hamlet* criticism can hardly leave it out. But is it really Hamlet's melancholy that does not destroy our intense sympathy for him? Early Persian translations of *Hamlet*, offer us a different perspective, allowing us to interpret prince's seemingly contradictory actions in another way and resolve any apparent inconsistencies in his behavior. This viewpoint not only enhances our understanding of Hamlet's complex character but also provides a fresh outlook on the play. While the original text may suffice for this purpose, the Persian translations significantly enhance the accessibility of this interpretation and make it more conspicuous than the original text.

5. Hamlet in Early Persian Translations

5.1. His Complex Relationship with Ophelia

Nowhere is Hamlet's contradictory behavior more apparent than in his scenes with Ophelia. At the beginning of the play, we learn that Hamlet is in love with Ophelia. He writes love letters to her and shows many signs of affection, and is tender with her[11]. However, soon after his father's ghost appears to him, he adopts a different demeanor and suddenly becomes harsh and unpardonably coarse with her, saying rude things and acting strangely—behavior far from what is expected from someone who is truly in love. In the famous nunnery scene, for example, the theme of harsh irony is present throughout. From Hamlet's first question "Ha, ha! Are you honest?"[12] to his hurried exit, his speech is a series of

10. Bradley, 1955, p.71-143.
11. This is easily inferred from the conversation between Ophelia and Hamlet in Act III, Scene I, L. 96-101 where Ophelia says: "My honour'd lord you know right well you did; /And, with them, words of so sweet breath composed/And made the things more rich: their perfume lost,/Take these again; for to the noble mind/ Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind." All Hamlet quotations are sourced from Thompson and Taylor's 2006 edition of The Arden Shakespeare.
12. Act III, Scene I, L. 103.

sharp twists and turns. This astonishingly brutal verbal assault upon Ophelia, with savage contempt and obscene remarks, is not just evident in the nunnery scene but also in the play scene, where it shows itself again in the deliberately coarse tone of Hamlet's remarks to Ophelia. As A. C. Bradley notes: "The disgusting and insulting grossness of his language to her in the play scene is such language as you will find addressed to a woman by no other hero of Shakespeare's, not even in that dreadful scene where Othello accuses Desdemona."[13] It is certainly strange that Hamlet, who has shown himself on other occasions to be so sensitive, should adopt such an attitude. Hamlet in these scenes is hardly the noble and gracious philosopher pictured by romantic critics. Such an astonishing level of brutality makes us question whether Hamlet was ever sincere in his love for Ophelia, because if he truly cared for her, such words and actions would seem unthinkable.

Various attempts have been made to explain Hamlet's cruel and sadistic behavior, his savagery of language, and contradictory actions in these scenes. Many argue that Hamlet's scornful brutality and inconsistent attitude are the most profound expressions of his melancholy, suggesting that his callous inhumanity does not reflect his true character but is instead a manifestation of his melancholic state. A. C. Bradley also expresses uncertainty in interpreting Hamlet's love for Ophelia: "I am unable to arrive at a conviction as to the meaning of some of his words and deeds, and I question whether from the mere text of the play a sure interpretation of them can be drawn."[14] Bradley observes that Hamlet's love was intertwined with suspicion and resentment, and that his harsh treatment of her was partly a result of this inner turmoil. Furthermore, Bradley detects signs that Hamlet was haunted by the disturbing idea that he had been deceived by Ophelia, just as he had been by his mother—that she was shallow and artificial, and that what had appeared to be genuine, affectionate love might have actually been something quite different[15]. In a similar vein, Schücking suggests that Hamlet's cruelty towards Ophelia is not simply an isolated act, but a

13. Bradley, 1955, p. 103.
14. Bradley, 1955, P. 153.
15. Bradley, 1955, p. 155.

continuation of the melancholic cynicism we have already witnessed: "He is only continuing the role we have already seen him filling in his earlier conversion with Ophelia: that of a melancholic, who finds an outlet for his cynicism and his hatred of women by trying to wound them: in itself a psychological reaction".[16] However, early Persian translations suggest that Hamlet's contradictory behavior appears to stem not from melancholy, but rather from a deeper sense of fatalism.

Hamlet is fully aware that his once intimate and trusting relationships with Ophelia, as well as with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, are rapidly deteriorating from affection and trust—even love—to suspicion and revulsion. This heightened awareness suggests that his behavior is not driven by an uncontrollable melancholy; as he himself states, "I am but mad north-northwest."[17] Hamlet is able to distinguish between himself and his supposed madness, and a man who can describe his own mental state in such a rational manner and with such precision is far from truly insane. His apparent madness is, in fact, a deliberate act, one that is not as complete or genuine as his friends, as well as his uncle-father and aunt-mother, might perceive it to be.

Throughout the central portion of the play, everyone believes Hamlet to be mad, and he actively, even deliberately, fosters this belief in those around him. This deliberate encouragement serves as clear evidence of his sanity, proving that he is not using feigned madness to mask real madness or near-madness. His conversion is a sign of his acknowledgment of his fate. Hamlet knows that against destiny, he is all but defenseless and does not want Ophelia—whom he deeply loves and ultimately confesses his love for at her grave— to be entangled in his tragic and horrifying fate. To obey his destiny, Hamlet has to repress not only his wonted gaiety and usual cheerfulness but also his natural affection for Ophelia, his old friends, and the mother who lived almost by his looks. Hamlet feels that his great task demands him to renounce all his attachments.

5.2. His Calculated Threat to Claudius

At the end of his conversation with Ophelia in the nunnery scene, Hamlet,

16. Schücking, 1966, p127.
17. Act II, Scene II, L. 378-379.

fully aware of the eavesdroppers—Claudius and Polonius—recklessly and deliberately threatens the king. He declares, "I say we will have no more marriages. Those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are."[18] Hamlet's statement, veiled in thinly disguised menace, clearly signals his intent to target Claudius, the "one" who shall not live. This raises an important question: Is Hamlet truly insane to threaten the king so openly and freely?

Contrary to the belief that Hamlet is paralyzed by inaction[19], he reveals himself to be a man poised for decisive action. In Persian translations, there is no suggestion that Hamlet is uncertain about Claudius's guilt; he knows with conviction that his uncle is his father's murderer. In fact, the impression one gains from reading these translations is that Hamlet's words and actions throughout the play reflect a man constantly on the verge of carrying out his revenge. When fate calls upon him again, Hamlet will not hesitate. In fact, his willingness to kill, even those closest to him, underscores his resolve. If Hamlet is prepared to kill his own friends—Rosencrantz and Guildenstern—to fulfill his duty, how can we accuse him of inaction or claim he lacks the will to complete his task?

Far from being paralyzed by melancholia or consumed by doubt, Hamlet is certain of his path. In Persian translations, he is not depicted as suffering from melancholic paralysis as a result of moral shock, as some critics have suggested[20]. Rather, Hamlet is waiting for fate to guide him, fully aware of his uncle's guilt and ready to act when the moment is right. The argument that Hamlet suffers from a weak will or is unequal to the task of avenging his father falls apart when one reads early Persian translations, where his clear determination and readiness are unmistakable. Hamlet is not a victim of indecision or moral weakness; instead, he is a man waiting for the right moment, fully conscious of the gravity of his actions, and prepared to embrace his fate when it arrives.

5.3. His Divergent Treatment of the Living and the Dead

Another example of Hamlet's contrasting attitudes is evident in his treat-

18. Act III, Scene I, L.149-151.
19. On this view, see Waldock, 1931; Bradley, 1955; Trench, 2018.
20. Bradley, 1955, p.71-143.

ment of the living and the dead. He makes corpses of the living without hesitation or scruple, yet he regards long-decayed bodies with respect and reverence. He shows no compunction in killing Polonius like a rat, for instance, and in sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths. When he has unknowingly killed Polonius, he looks on his corpse with an unmerited contempt and speaks an ironically causal valedictory and makes a cruel mockery of him as if such an ignoble end was all he deserved:

> Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!
> I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune.
> Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger[21].

He regards the corpse as nothing more than waste, displaying not the slightest respect for Polonius, the father of the woman he is supposedly in love with. Similarly, in Act V, Scene II, when Horatio appears to sympathize with ill-fated Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and expresses concern over their fate and seems to feel that they do not deserve the death they go to meet, Hamlet, who sees them as shallow time-servers to royalty and puppets of conspiracy[22], cruelly holds them responsible for their own demise and shows no remorse for orchestrating their deaths. In his reaction to their passing, there is no anguished recognition that he has destroyed two former friends. He harbors only bitter enmity, without even a murmur of regret that he had for old Polonius. He exults and rejoices in sending these former playmates to their destruction:

> Why, man, they did make love to this employment;
> They are not near my conscience; their defeat
> Does by their own insinuation grow:
> 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
> Between the pass and fell incensed points

21. Act III, Scene IV, L. 31-33.
22. Unlike what John Dover Wilson (1967, p. 34-124) suggests, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not intentional political spies. They do not inform the king that Hamlet has discovered that they were sent for, nor do they imply that the prince is only mad north-north-west. In fact, they seem to lie in an attempt to protect and shield the prince.

Of mighty opposites[23].

Pazargadi's translation of this passage suggests that Hamlet is also referring to fate and destiny rather than solely reflecting on being caught between conflicting forces or involved in a conflict between powerful and opposing forces:

وجدان من به هیچ وجه ناراحت نیست. عاقبت شومشان ناشی از چاپلوسی خودشان است. وقتی طبیعت پست بین تیر خشم دو رقیب بزرگ قرار گیرد نتیجه‌اش برای وی جز مخاطره نیست[24].

Hamlet hurries them to their deaths without for a moment thinking that they were but obeying their duty, and only wished to save him from the consequences of the murder of Polonius.

Hamlet's treatment of Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is in stark contrast to the graveyard scene, where he is appalled by the callousness of a gravedigger who can sing while performing such a grim task and treat the skulls of men with indifference. In this scene, Hamlet shows a muted compassion for anonymous souls who have all come to the same end. He is moved by the change wrought by the course of nature, in the reduction of what once had been so greatly honored to something that can only arouse disgust. His meditation on the skull of Yorick in this scene is soul-stirring:

Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know
not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your
gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment,
that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one
now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen?[25]

When the play is viewed through the lens of early Persian translations, Hamlet's contrasting treatment of the living and the dead doesn't seem as contradictory as one might expect. Rather than encountering overt contradictions, a

23. Act V, Scene II, L. 58-63.
24. Pazargadi, 2002, vol. 2, p. 975. Translation: I feel no guilt at all. Their grim fate is the consequence of their own sycophancy. When base intentions meddle between the fierce animosity of two powerful adversaries, the result is nothing but peril for them.
25. Act V, Scene I, L.186-190.

reader of these translations is likely to discern a fatalistic undertone in Hamlet's thinking and persona. For instance, when Hamlet kills Polonius, he swiftly absolves himself of any blame for the act and unloads all responsibility for his death onto Heaven, implying that fate has guided his actions:

> For this same lord,
> *Pointing to Polonius*
> I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so,
> To punish me with this and this with me,
> That I must be their scourge and minister[26].

Bih'āzīn's interpretation of these lines introduces elements not found in the original text and states more explicitly that Hamlet believes God has chosen him to carry out Polonius's execution:

> و اما دربارهٔ این خداوندگار (پولونیوس را نشان می‌دهد) بهراستی پشیمانم؛ ولی خواست آسمانی چنین بود که او کیفر من باشد و من کیفر او، و بدین‌سان خداوند مرا تازیانهٔ خود و کارگزار خود کرد[27].

Hamlet accepts Polonius's killing as a divine decree and rationalizes his deed with minimal remorse or regret. Bih'āzīn's interpretation amplifies these aspects, emphasizing the idea of predestined fate and an all-powerful, inescapable destiny.

5.4. The Prayer Scene

In the course of their private conference, the Ghost delivers approximately eighty lines to Hamlet, of which a dozen are dedicated to the crucial task for which he has returned from the grave to charge his son:

> If thou didst ever thy dear father love,
> Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder[28].

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26. Act III, Scene IV, L. 173-176.
27. Bih'āzīn, 1981, p. 97. Translation: As for this lord (Pointing to Polonius), I am truly sorry; but heaven willed it to be such that he would be my punishment and I would be his, and thus the Lord made me his avenger and executor.
28. Act I, Scene V, L. 23-25.

Yet, despite the Ghost's urgent and impassioned command, Hamlet hesitates, allowing significant time to pass before he finally embarks on the path of revenge. The central enigma of the tragedy lies in understanding why Hamlet delays avenging his father's murder. Some like E. E. Stoll, see this delay as a dramatic necessity; for, if Hamlet had killed the king immediately, the play would have been deprived of its intricate layers[29] . Others, such as C. M. Lewis and G. F. Bradby, find no logic in Hamlet's hesitation and consider it a perplexing flaw within the play's fabric[30]. However, the great majority of critics attribute this delay to the subjective condition of Hamlet's mind[31]: He was too much of a philosopher, too deeply involved in the complexities and intricacies of thought to be capable of swift action. A. C. Bradley's interpretation is particularly influential, suggesting that Hamlet's procrastination is primarily due to an unusual and morbid melancholy induced by the sudden and shocking revelation of his mother's incestuous marriage and her adultery during the lifetime of the former King, a matter to which the Ghost is believed to have alluded[32]. Bradley characterizes Hamlet's mind as sickly and diseased, with melancholy at its core, driving the tragedy. But is it truly chronic melancholy that hinders Hamlet's action, paralyzing his will, leading to procrastination, and ultimately preventing him from fulfilling his sacred duty?

The specific occasion that highlights Hamlet's delay in avenging his father's murder is the prayer scene, where he refrains from killing the king while he is at prayer, despite his burning desire for revenge. Many interpret this scene as Hamlet hoping for, or waiting for, another opportunity—one less favorable to Claudius's salvation—that would allow for a more complete vengeance[33]. However, when examined through the lens of early Persian translations, the Hamlet who hesitates to kill the king is one for whom this decision, like all choices, is divinely ordained. Therefore, there seems to be no inconsistency in his actions in Persian translations. Instead of hoping or waiting for another chance to strike,

29. Stoll, 1919, p. 14-29.
30. See Lewis, 1907 and Bradby,1965.
31. On this view, see Waldock, 1931; Bradley, 1955; Trench, 2018.
32. Bradley, 1955, p.71-143.
33. See for example, Johnson, 1765, P. VII, 236; Bradley, 1955, p. 134-135; and Stoll, 1986, p.16.

Hamlet is portrayed as knowing and confidently expecting such an opportunity to emerge in the future, almost as if he believes it is his destiny. He anticipates that Heaven will provide the means for him to act in fulfillment of public justice. In Bih'āzīn's translation, Hamlet's soliloquy in this scene is rendered as follows:

نه، ای شمشیر من، فرود میا، خود را برای زخمی دهشتبارتر نگهدار؛ هنگامی که او مست خفته، یا دیوانهٔ خشم گشته، یا در بستر زناکاری سرخوش از لذّت است، یا هنگام قمار، یا هنگامی که ناسزا بر زبان دارد، یا سرگرم کاری است که هیچ بوی رستگاری از آن نمی‌توان شنید[34].

Hamlet is convinced that another opportunity will arise and believes it will come easily. He lets this opportunity slip not because he is unsure of Claudius's guilt and his skepticism, but because of his faith. When it comes down to the wire, Hamlet passionately believes in orthodox Christian theology and firmly adheres to the principle of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Since his father was sent unprepared to his death, he feels the same fate must befall the king. He is such a devout Christian that he firmly believes divine punishment will be proportionate to the death his father suffered. If the old king died with his sins upon his head, then the new king should die in precisely the same condition. Hamlet firmly believes in even-handed justice; thus, in his mind, to dispatch the king at a moment so favorable for the welfare of his soul is not a fitting punishment and is irrelevant to heavenly providence. He is certain that another opportunity will shortly come and in the very next scene, he finds the king "about an act that has no relish of salvation in it."[35]

In Hamlet's view, before king's punishment can be justly delivered, the veil of lies that mocks heaven and man by disguising evil as good must be torn away. Thus, Hamlet devotes all his energy to unmasking this evil, striping off its disguise, and exposing it in its full ugliness and corruption. He is determined to bring the truth into the light—not because he seeks to establish guilt or gather proof, but because he is convinced that unmasking evil is his destiny and that

34. Bih'āzīn, 1981, p. 90-91. Translation: No, my sword, remain sheathed; reserve yourself for a more dreadful blow—when he is drunk asleep, in a fit of rage, indulging in the incestuous pleasures of his bed, at gaming, swearing, or engaged in some act that bears no hint of salvation.
35. Act III, Scene III, L. 92.

heaven has appointed him as its agent. To a casual observer, Hamlet's devotion to this mission might seem absurd and irrational. His actions could be interpreted as stemming from doubt in the ghost's story, ennui or moral paralysis or debilitation. His delay in action might suggest a lack of awareness of the opportunity he is letting slip. However, when viewed through the prism of early Persian translations, Hamlet's decisions and choices are seen as an embrace of fate and an unquestioning adherence to heavenly providence. His procrastination is not born of doubt, but rather from a belief that timing itself is divinely ordained. Hamlet perceives himself as part of a broad structure that includes the rest of humanity and a higher system of nature. He understands that events must take their course and accepts that what must happen will happen in its own time. This stands in stark contrast to Laertes' approach in the play. Laertes impulsively seeks revenge, forcing events to unfold before their preordained time. He strikes out of raw emotion, without the careful planning or balance that Hamlet exhibits. Hamlet rejects Laertes' reckless haste, as he has no intention of defying the ambiguous decree of fate. Instead, he chooses patience and forbearance over rash revenge, understanding that the ways of providence are beyond his control.

5.5. His Exile to England

Despite the imminent threat of exile to England, Hamlet's demeanor remains unexpectedly composed, displaying a curious lack of fear or anxiety that one might expect in such perilous circumstances. This enigmatic calmness further complicates his already seemingly contradictory character, leaving the audience to question his true motives and the extent of his internal conflict. When Act IV, Scene III—where Hamlet learns of his impending exile—is examined in the early Persian translations, it appears as though he accepts his punishment with an almost unnerving ease. It's as if Hamlet is certain that his enemies' schemes will ultimately fail and that he will survive their intrigue, or perhaps he has reconciled himself to the inevitable fate shared by all humanity —being eaten by worms[36]—and acknowledges that he, too, must partake in this eternal

36. See Act IV, Scene III, L 21–22, where Hamlet says: "Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him."

cycle that governs all matter. Hamlet appears resigned to being led, like a lamb to the slaughter, making no effort to resist or preserve his own life. Instead, he seems to surrender himself fully to fate. The dangers inherent in his journey do not seem to trouble him, nor does he take any steps to avoid them. Rather, his acceptance appears to bring him a sense of calm, even joy, as if he is convinced that, regardless of the outcomes, his destiny is fixed and beyond the reach of earthly threats:

دولتمندان فربه و گدایان لاغر با هم فرقی ندارند. فقط دو غذای مختلف هستند که بر سر یک سفره صرف می‌شوند، و عاقبت همه همین است[37].

In this translation by Farzād, he subtly weaves the concept of destiny into Hamlet's words, an element that is not explicitly present in the original text. In the original, the line "Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table: that's the end[38]" makes no direct reference to fate. However, Farzād's interpretation introduces an underlying sense of inevitability, suggesting that both the king and the beggar, regardless of their worldly status, are ultimately bound by the same inescapable destiny.

5.6. The Paradox of Revealing His Return to Denmark

Following his miraculous escape from death at sea, Hamlet's behavior takes another puzzling turn. Instead of seizing the moment to exact his long-delayed revenge, he chooses to inform the king of his return, effectively giving his adversary time to devise yet another deadly plot against him. Hamlet could have rallied supporters upon his return. Perhaps the same mob that followed Laertes could have been more easily summoned by him, especially since, as Claudius himself admits, Hamlet is beloved by the people[39]. However, Hamlet shows no interest in taking such a course. He neither entertains ambitions of rallying a revolt nor expresses any desire to seize the throne or take revenge in such a direct

37. Farzād, 1991, p. 174. Translation: The fat statesmen and the lean beggars are no different. They are only two different dishes served at the same table, and that is the destiny of all.
38. Act IV, Scene III, 24-25.
39. See Act IV, Scene VII, L. 18: "The great love the general gender bear him...".

manner. This raises the natural question: why does Hamlet return to Elsinore with no apparent intention of deposing or executing his usurping uncle? Schücking ascribes this to Hamlet's melancholic disposition and his unstable state of mind, suggesting that such inaction is typical of one in Hamlet's psychological condition[40]. However, could this not also be interpreted as Hamlet's submission to a preordained fate? In early Persian translations, Hamlet's decision to inform the murderous king of his return is framed not as hesitation or folly, but rather as a reflection of his belief in Divine providence. Rescued from certain death, Hamlet seems to view his survival as a sign that his fate is divinely guided. Hamlet is confident that informing the king will not alter the ultimate outcome, which he believes to be both predetermined and inevitable. His destiny, he feels, is inescapable and will reach him regardless of whether he actively pursues it or remains passive. For Hamlet, his life and death—even the mysteries of what may follow after death—are rendered insignificant in the face of the greater destiny. This deep sense of resignation to destiny becomes more pronounced in his conversation with Horatio in Act V, Scene II, where Hamlet fully embraces the idea that his fate is beyond his control, surrendering himself entirely to the workings of providence[41]:

ما اگرچه منتهای کوشش را بجا بیارویم تا زندگانی خود را بر طبق عقل و دلخواه خویش اراده کنیم، باز یک تقدیر آسمانی در این میان هست که عاقبت ما را معین می‌کند و سرنوشت ما در دست اوست.[42]

Hamlet avoids schemes and plots because he believes that providence has made him his tool. He envisions himself as an instrument in the hands of providential powers beyond himself. In his mind, he is not merely a participant in worldly events but serves as a lieutenant of God on earth, carrying out the inscrutable designs of fate.

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40. Schücking,1966, p. 59.
41. Act V, Scene II, L. 8-10: When our deep plots do pall: and that should teach us /there's divinity that shapes our ends, /rough-hew them how we will.
42. Farzād, 1991, p. 232. Translation: Although we may strive to shape our lives according to reason and desire, there is still a heavenly fate that determines our ultimate outcome, and our destiny lies in its hands.

5.7. His Embrace of the Poisoned Duel

Why does Hamlet willingly walk into Claudius's murderous trap—the poisoned duel with Laertes? He is fully aware that he is stepping into the final scheme laid by Claudius, yet he doesn't resist it. Hamlet clearly understands the potential consequences of the duel, but instead of avoiding it, he embraces the challenge with a determined resolve. Is this acceptance a manifestation of his melancholic disposition and his contradictory nature, or is it driven by deeper, more profound forces? When viewed through the lens of early Persian translations, Hamlet's consent to the duel takes on a different meaning. Here, he appears to see the duel with Laertes as an act of compliance with a universal plan, a surrender to the inevitable workings of fate. It becomes an expression of his acceptance of a painful and inscrutable providence that governs his life. This idea is hinted at as early as Act I, Scene V, where Hamlet acknowledges the weight of divine providence, suggesting that he has been singled out to bear a burden too great for ordinary human strength[43]:

روزگار خراب است و تقدیر چنین رفت که من برای اقدام به اصلاح آن از مادر بزایم. تفو بر تو سرنوشت[44]!

Even Laertes hints at this notion of providence in Act I, Scene III, suggesting that Hamlet is subject to the whims of fate and the constraints it imposes upon him. Laertes implies that Hamlet's actions are not entirely his own, but rather governed by the inescapable forces of destiny[45]:

اختیار اراده‌اش منحصراً در دست خودش نیست، بلکه رفتار او مشروط به مقام مادرزادی اوست[46].

Hamlet knows that he was born to fulfill his destiny and set things right. He

43. See Act I, Scene IV, L. 188-189: "The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right."
44. Farzād, 1991, p. 242. Translation: Time is corrupted and destiny has determined that I be born from a mother to set it right. Curse on this destiny.
45. See Act I, Scene III, L. 17-18: "For his will is not his own;/ For he himself is subject to his birth."
46. Farzād,1991, p. 40. Translation: His will is not entirely under his own control; instead, his actions are dictated by his inherent destiny.

knows that fate is knocking at the door, and when Horatio warns him of the impending dangers of his duel with Laertes, Hamlet pays no heed to the cautionary words. Instead, he reassures his friend with words that reflect a deep and unwavering belief in managing divinity and man's limitations against all-powerful providence. To Hamlet, this duel is not something to be feared but rather an inevitable part of a greater, divinely orchestrated plan that he is destined to see through[47]:

> ابداً، ما از تطیر باکی نداریم، ولی از تقدیر آسمانی نمی‌توان جلوگیری کرد. هیچ گنجشکی بی اجل نخواهد مرد. بشر چه می‌داند؟ اگر اجل من اینک رسیده باشد تأخیری در آن روی نخواهد داد، و اگر هم نرسیده باشد به موقع خود بی تخلّف فراخواهد رسید. به هر حال، آماده بوده شرط عقل است. و در آن زمان که از این جهان رخت برندیم ذره‌ای از متاعی که در این جهان اندوخته‌ایم نمی‌توانیم همراه ببریم. پس دیر رفتن با زود رفتن تفاوتی دارد؟ هر چه می‌شود بشود[48].

If the forthcoming duel with Laertes is indeed a trap, then that destiny will unfold as it must. And if that destiny is to include the death of Claudius, that too will come to pass. Regardless of the outcome, Hamlet submits to the will of fate, whatever it may be. He shows an acceptance of an external force, a higher principle guiding the course of events, and a resignation to the inherent mystery of life's unfolding. This attitude of fatalism is not new for Hamlet; he has demonstrated it before. When he insisted on following the ghost to a more remote spot on the battlements of the castle, he ignored the pleas of his friends, who feared the apparition might be an evil spirit leading him to the edge of the cliffs to drive him to his death. Yet, with headstrong determination, Hamlet surrendered his will

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47. See Act V, Scene II, L. 215-220: Not a whit. We defy augury. There's a special /providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now,/'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be/ now. If it be not now, yet it will come. /The readiness is all: Since no man has aught of what he / leaves, what is't to leave betimes?
48. Farzād, 1991, p. 242. Translation: We pay no heed to signs and predictions, for no one can thwart the hand of heavenly destiny. Just as no sparrow falls without the decree of fate, what can mortals truly comprehend? If my demise is upon me now, it shall not be delayed, and if it is yet to come, it will surely arrive in its appointed time. In any case, preparedness signifies rationality. When we depart this world, we carry none of our worldly possessions with us. So, is there any distinction between departing early or late? Let destiny unfold as it may.

to what he believed to be the workings of heaven[49]:

سرنوشت من به من فریاد می‌زند و می‌گوید برو و کوچک‌ترین اعصاب بدن مرا مانند اعصاب شیرجنگلی سخت و محکم می‌سازد، روح مرا می‌خواند. آقایان، مرا رها کنید[50].

Hamlet's apparent resignation in the duel with Laertes stem from a profound sense of fatalism —a belief that his fate is sealed, regardless of his actions. When one believes the conviction that everything is preordained and that what must happen will inevitably come to pass, life loses its value except through the fulfillment of one's unique, divinely ordained destiny. It is within this conviction that Hamlet settles into the role of the minister whose end a divinity will shape. He submits his will to heaven and need only patiently wait. When the moment comes, he will know how to act. When at the duel, Hamlet sees his mother fall and hears Laertes cry: "The king, the king is to blame"[51], he knows how to act. He stabs the king and forces him to drink the dregs of the infamous potion.

6. His Acceptance of Fate

Many critics have argued that Hamlet only comes to terms with his fate after having given it a thorough shaking up and subjecting it to intense scrutiny and upheaval[52]. According to these interpretations, Hmalet struggles to endure the unendurable[53] and to impose order or meaning upon a chaotic, disordered world—a struggle portrayed in his soliloquies, most notably the famous "To be or not to be" speech. However, when this soliloquy is read in Persian translations, a different interpretation emerges. In these versions, Hamlet does not appear to be resisting or rebelling against his fate. Instead, he seems to be in agreement with it from the outset. Rather than grappling with fate or doubting its course, the soliloquy becomes a moment of a realization that the fundamental dilemma—

49. See Act I, Scene IV, L. 81-81: My fate cries out/And makes each petty artery in this body /As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve. /Still am I called. Unhand me, gentlemen!
50. Farzād,1991, p. 51. Translation: My destiny cries out to me, telling me to go, and it makes the smallest nerves in my body as tough and strong as those of a lion. The ghost is calling me. Gentlemen, let me go.
51. Act V, Scene II, L.326
52. For such interpretations of the play, refer to: McElroy, 1973; and Proser, 1965.
53. Mc Elroy suggests that this is the theme of all Shakespeare's mature tragedies.

being versus non-being—may not even lie within the purview of human choice and within man's power at all. Man, regardless of his desires, cannot truly choose whether he exists or not; even the act of self-annihilation does not lead to the peace of non-being but instead to another form of existence. In this sense, the soliloquy conveys the idea that escape from fate is impossible, a theme that deeply permeates the early Persian translations of the play. In these works, Hamlet is depicted as deeply compliant with his destiny, and his actions perfectly aligned with the inevitable course of events. He is aware that he, too, is caught up in the rottenness of Denmark. "Destiny at his very birth threw the burden upon him; for he is his father's son and the presumable heir to the Danish throne"[54]. There is no escape from this role. The providence's burden of responsibility requires him to accept his destiny and the role accorded to him by fate, even if such acceptance leads to his own self-sacrifice. Hamlet gives complete and ungrudging obedience to his fate.

7. Conclusion

It should be evident from the foregoing that early Persian translations do not depict Hamlet as a disillusioned idealist suffering from melancholy, as he is often portrayed in some interpretations. Instead, these translations emphasize Hamlet's belief in fate, his unconditional acceptance of divine will, and his deep conviction that ultimate justice lies in the hands of heaven. Rather than being driven by melancholia, Hamlet is portrayed as a fatalist, whose actions and decisions are shaped by his acceptance of a preordained destiny. This perspective offers a distinct and compelling understanding of Hamlet's character, in which his seemingly contradictory actions are not the result of internal conflict, but are instead expressions of his alignment with the inevitable workings of fate. When viewed through this lens, Hamlet's actions no longer appear enigmatic or self-contradictory. There is no need to reconcile conflicting aspects of his character to force a false sense of consistency. Instead, his fatalistic worldview allows us to embrace the full complexity of his personality: the rational and the irrational, the

54. Proser,1965, p.86.

virtuous and the flawed, the tragic and the pitiful. This interpretation also casts new light on some of the play's most troubling contradictions—such as Hamlet's harsh treatment of Ophelia, his callous mockery of Polonius's death, his prolonged hesitation to kill the king, and other actions that have long shocked and puzzled critics. When seen through the framework of his profound acceptance of human limitations and submission to the forces of fate, these actions are no longer perplexing but become integral parts of his character's larger journey. The Persian translations thus offer a more holistic view of Hamlet, revealing a character whose actions, though paradoxical, are in harmony with his deep belief in an inescapable destiny. Through this interpretation, the many contradictions within the play find resolution, and Hamlet emerges not as a figure of indecision and melancholy, but as a tragic hero resigned to the mysterious, unyielding forces of fate.

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