

UC Santa Barbara

Journal of Transnational American Studies

Title

Persian Huck: On the Reception of Huckleberry Finn in Iran

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1t19f7w9>

Journal

Journal of Transnational American Studies, 12(2)

Author

Fomeshi, Behnam M.

Publication Date

2021

DOI

10.5070/T812255736

Copyright Information

Copyright 2021 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

Persian Huck: On the Reception of *Huckleberry Finn* in Iran

BEHNAM M. FOMESHI

During a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1872, Samuel Langhorne Clemens had the privilege of seeing “the venerable vase that once contained the ashes of Xerxes,”¹ the fourth King of Kings of the Achaemenid Empire, ruling from 486 to 465 BC. The following year he wrote five letters for the *New York Herald* about the visit of Naser al-Din, the shah of Persia, to England and Belgium. Furthermore, in a response written on December 1, 1874, to a request from a Miss Street, he incorrectly wrote “as the Persians say—on your head be it” instead of “on my head be it.”² The American writer’s interest in the Persians as indicated in his willingness to quote them obviously outweighed his knowledge of them. However, as the present paper shows, the Persians’ treatment of the American writer, which can be traced back to 1910, was clearly more serious and informed.

The Persian Reception of American Literature

کتاب خواندن جدی‌ام- البته تا آنجا که به یاد دارم- با هکلبری فین از مارک تواین ترجمه پدرم شروع شد. تمام صحنه‌هایش را در خیالاتم بازی می‌کردم و هزار و صد بار خواندمش. این کتاب من را به خواندن علاقه‌مند کرد.

(As far as I remember it was with my father’s translation of *Huckleberry Finn* that I started serious reading. I played all its scenes in my imagination and I read it one thousand and one hundred times. This book made me interested in reading).³

–Lili Golestan, “دخترک خیال‌باف و هکلبری فین” (Dokhtarak-e Khiyalbfaf va *Huckleberry Finn*: Dreamy Little Girl and *Huckleberry Finn*)

Thus wrote Lili Golestan (b. 1944), a writer, translator, and the daughter of Ebrahim Golestan (b. 1922), the first translator of *Huckleberry Finn* into Persian. Her father, a filmmaker and literary figure, was the first influential figure to promote American literature in Iran. To better appreciate the father's contribution to the Persian reception of American literature, and *Huckleberry Finn* in particular, it is useful to have a brief glance at the history of such reception prior to Golestan.

The Persian reception of American literature can be divided into several periods. The first period began during the Persian Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911) and continued through December 1925, when Reza Pahlavi (1878–1944) became the monarch. This period saw the first instances of American literature translated into Persian and published. Yusef E'tesami (1874–1938), a publisher and translator, established *Bahar*, the country's first literary journal, which aimed to introduce the “advanced” world to a Persian audience; the US definitely belonged to such a world.⁴ He introduced Mark Twain along with several other American figures. This was not a bad start for the Persian reception of American literature and Twain in particular. A few months after Twain's death in 1910, a short story, “Death Disk,” was translated into Persian and published in *Bahar*.⁵ In 1923, a play adapted from Twain was translated into Persian and published in the same journal.⁶ The second period falls during the reign of Reza Shah; it covers December 1925 to Reza Shah's forced abdication in September 1941. This period saw a significant increase in the number of American works translated, as well as the first documented instances of the creative and critical reception of American literature.⁷ Short yet productive, the third period spans 1942 to the 1953 CIA-assisted coup. Twain, whose novel *Huckleberry Finn* was first translated into Persian during this period, turned into one of the most widely read American writers among Iranians.

Major Translations of *Huckleberry Finn*

Golestan's translation of American fiction in the third period paved the way for the forceful presence of American fiction in Iran. His translation of seven short stories by Ernest Hemingway was published in 1949. In the same year he translated *Huckleberry Finn* (see Figure 1).⁸ As an early instance of American novels translated into Persian, it had a major impact on the next generation of Iranian writers, including the translator's daughter, Lili, who later became a translator herself and the owner and artistic director of the Golestan Gallery in Tehran. She was five years old when her father translated the novel. Mesmerized by the novel, she turned into a serious reader of literature as indicated by the quotation. Several decades after its first publication, this translation of *Huckleberry Finn* was reprinted in 2014, 2016, and 2018. This indicates not only the continuing interest in the novel, but also the significance of this first translation.⁹

In the introduction to the translation, Golestan refers to children as the intended readers of the novel and he wants the language of the translation to reflect their language, rather than that of publications for adults. To do so, he employs many

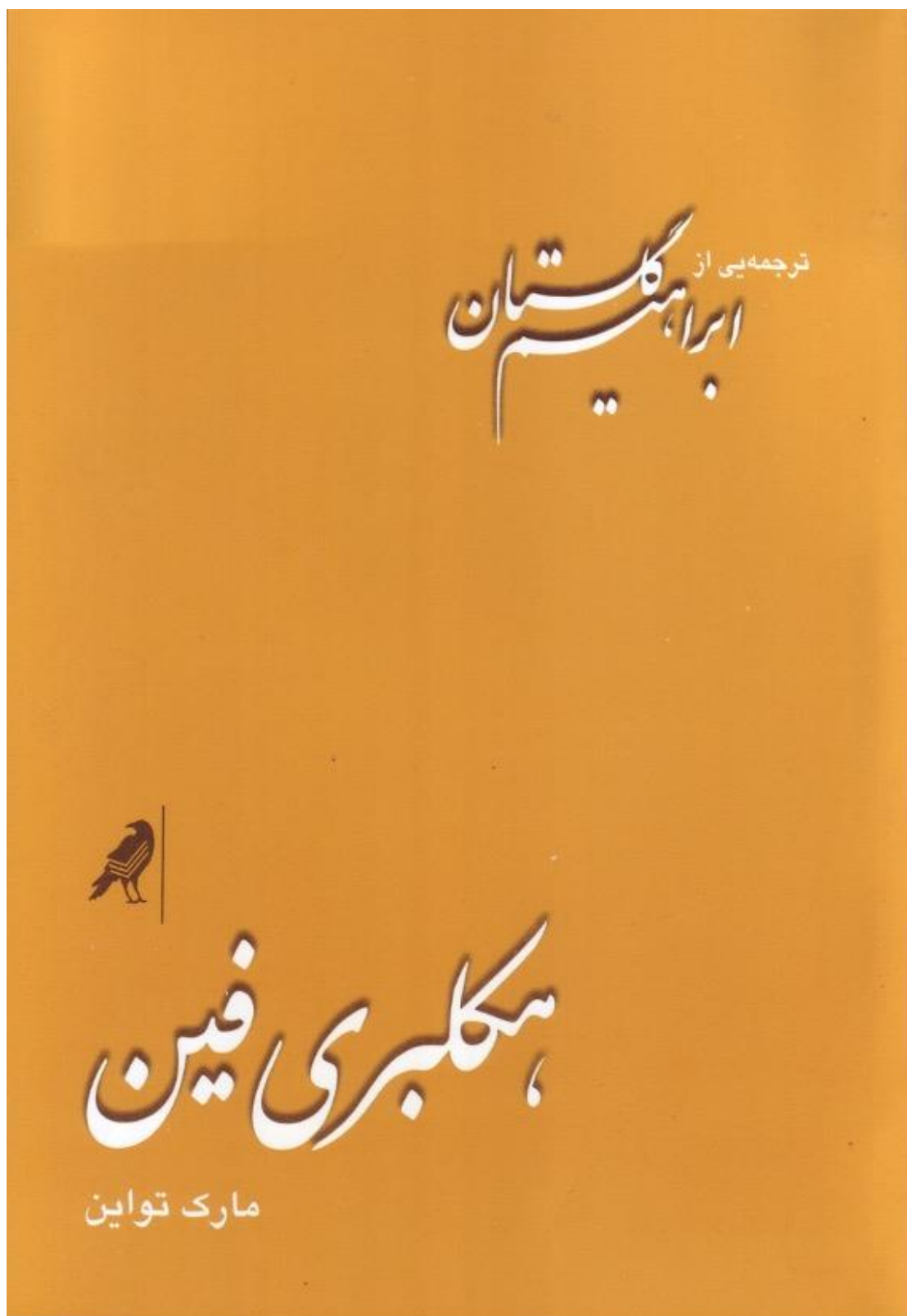


Fig. 1: Ebrahim Goelstan's translation of *Huckleberry Finn* was the first Persian translation (1949). This is the cover of the Kalagh press edition, published in 2014.

idiomatic expressions, a choice which reflects his knowledge of colloquial Persian, to adjust the novel to the taste of the younger readers. To make this strategy more effective, Golestan translated only the dialogue into colloquial language and not the other parts of the novel. This decision was an attempt to systematically translate colloquial language into Persian. However, as an early attempt to do so it was not consistent in using colloquial language to translate the dialogue. Nevertheless, given that the novel was translated in 1949 when such a strategy was not at all common in Persian writing, Golestan's successful attempt to translate dialogue into colloquial Persian was a very significant step in the history of Persian translation.

Golestan's introduction to the translation is the first critique of Twain in Persian. It mentions the history and development of American literature: Walt Whitman's "Song of the Open Road" was the new voice in poetry and Twain's critique of ignorance was the new voice in fiction.¹⁰ At the end of the introduction Golestan asks a question: (Have I succeeded in this job?). His answer to the question concludes the introduction:

اگر بچه ها آنرا بخوانند و، سرگرمی بکنار، اندیشه ها و دید شاعرانه اش را آسان دریابند؛
اگر حس کنند که جمله ها به زبان خودشان نزدیکتر است تا به زبان بزرگترانشان در کتاب
ها و روزنامه ها؛ اگر بچه هایم، لیلی و کاوه، ... درخشندگی محبت وزشتی فریب و حقارت
زندگی بزدل ها و همدردی و رقت را از لای حادثه ها و خنده هایش ببینند، مرا بس است.

(If children read it and easily understand its thoughts and the poetic vision; if they feel that the sentences are closer to their own language than to that of the adults in the books and papers; if my children, Lili and Kaveh, see ... the brilliance of love, the ugliness of deceit, ignobility of the cowards' lives, and sympathy through its events and humor, that is enough for me).¹¹

Lili's quotation confirms the translator's success. This translation was reprinted in the pre-1979 period, in 1970 and 1977. The translator was aware of the influence of this novel on later generations of readers, as he wrote two decades after the first publication of this translation in the introduction to the 1970 reprint:

وهمچنین، هنوز، این آرزو که بچه ها آن را درست بخوانند، دریابند. دیروز اگر خطاب ترجمه ام
دخترم بوده است، امروز مانی، بچه اش، برای خواندن آماده میشود. اما نیاز به آموختن که
مهر درخشنده است، و گول و فریب زشت، همدردی علو و حاجت انسانیست، و زندگی به
بزدلی نمایارزد همچنان برجاست.

(Still [I have] this dream that children read it correctly and understand it. Yesterday the translation was addressed to my daughter and today her son, Mani, is being prepared to read.

There still persists the need to learn that kindness is radiant and deceit is ugly; sympathy is the highest humane need; and life deserves more than cowardice).¹²

Golestan's contribution to the reception of *Huckleberry Finn* in Iran extended beyond his own activities as the first translator of the novel. He discovered a real talent in his friend, Najaf Daryabandari (1929–2020), and encouraged him to translate Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, which was published in 1954.¹³ In the following decades, Daryabandari turned into a major translator of American fiction, whose exemplary translation of *Huckleberry Finn* came out in 1987. This has turned out to be the most popular translation of *Huckleberry Finn* and was reprinted in 1990, 2001, and 2019. Despite its shortcomings,¹⁴ it proved successful in rendering the dialogues, particularly those involving Huck, into colloquial Persian. The several decades between this translation and the first translation (Golestan's in 1949) was a fortuitous time for the Iranian translators to develop writing in colloquial language.¹⁵

The lack of a Persian equivalent for Huck's Southwest accent and Jim's African American Vernacular English posed a challenge for translators of the novel. Daryabandari's creative decision to develop a Persian equivalent based on the dialect spoken in southern Iran, where he grew up, was an effective strategy for translating the novel into Persian. Both Golestan and Daryabandari employed a "compensation strategy" in translating idioms, i.e., whenever an idiom in English could not be translated as an idiom in Persian, the translators compensated for the lost idiom by adding an idiom in the Persian translation where there was a non-idiom in the source text.¹⁶

Not only was Daryabandari's translation successful, but his introduction to the translation was as well. It is the most comprehensive work in Persian on the novel. Titled "سفر بی سرانجام هک فین" (Huck Finn's indecisive journey), the introduction begins with the following quotation by T. S. Eliot: "Perhaps all great works of art mean much more than the author could have been aware of meaning: certainly, *Huckleberry Finn* is the one book of Mark Twain's which, as a whole, has this unconsciousness."¹⁷ However, Daryabandari's rendering is a bit different:

شاید در همه آثار هنری بزرگ بیش از آنچه نویسنده می تواند آگاه باشد معنی وجود دارد. *هکلبری فین* مسلماً یکی از آثار مارک توین است که کلیتاً این ناآگاهی در آن دیده می شود.

(Perhaps in every great work of art there are more meanings than the author can be aware of. *Huckleberry Finn* is definitely one of Mark Twain's works where one can observe such lack of awareness).¹⁸ While to Eliot, *Huckleberry Finn* is the only great book of Twain's, to Daryabandari, it is one of Twain's great books. The Persian translator, who translated another novel of Twain's, *The Mysterious Stranger*, which he called "the little masterpiece," wrote less categorically than the famous critic did.¹⁹

The introduction is divided into three sections, the first of which is an account of Clemens developing the Mark Twain persona and transforming himself from a typical southern funnyman into a major writer. This section refers to the author's childhood in Hannibal, Missouri; his father's death when he was only twelve; working

at his brother's publishing house; investing in silver mines; interacting with mine workers; creating the persona "Mark Twain"; travelling to the Sandwich Islands and Europe; Twain's lack of interest in *Huckleberry Finn*; and his bankruptcy, the death of his daughter Susy, and the illness of his wife in his final years.

The next section concerns democracy: In the nineteenth century, "democracy was growing fast in the US and Twain had the first and loudest voice of democracy in American literature."²⁰ *Huckleberry Finn*'s early reception was not very promising; critics considered it of a low quality and some libraries rejected it on the basis of corrupting children's morality. Even Twain himself did not consider it among his best works. While some may consider *Huckleberry Finn* a sequel to *Tom Sawyer* due to some similarities between the two, particularly the presence of Tom in the opening and concluding chapters, the differences in fact outweigh the similarities. The most obvious difference is the third-person narrator of *Tom Sawyer* and the first-person narrator of *Huckleberry Finn*. To Daryabandari, this difference is the result of Twain's inner conflict. Twain felt more comfortable with the character Huck than Tom, which also leads to another difference in the language of the two characters. The language of *Tom Sawyer* is formal while the language of *Huckleberry Finn* is not. This is the first time that such language was used to write an entire novel in a serious manner, not to just create caricatures. According to the translator, the dialects which Twain used to create humor turned into a medium of expressing tragic realities. This turns *Huckleberry Finn* into one of the greatest works of American literature.²¹ Nevertheless, it is not the mere use of the dialects and colloquial language, but the writer's sensitivity to the nuances of them and his ability to explore their potentialities to express human experience in the most economical way. This section concludes with the following famous quotation by Hemingway: "If you read it you must stop where ... Jim is stolen from the boys. That is the real end. The rest is just cheating"

(اگر این رمان را می خوانید باید آن جا که جیم سیاه را از پسرها می دزدند خواندن را قطع کنید. این پایان واقعی داستان است. باقی حقه بازی است).²²

The final section of the introduction concerns the ending of the novel and challenges Hemingway. According to Daryabandari, the fact that writing the novel took several years (from 1876 to 1883) is the result of the writer's uncertainty on how to end the novel. Twain had two options for the ending: freedom or captivity; either Huck and Jim get to the free lands, or Huck and Jim return to slavery and "sivilization." Daryabandari argues that neither of the endings satisfied Twain. The writer's solution is to bring Tom back to the story. With his presence, the novel rebounds from the tragic to the happy atmosphere of the early chapters. With Tom as the protagonist, "plausibility" loses its significance and anything can happen. Jim's freedom as the result of Miss Watson's decision is the "not plausible" "happy" ending of the novel.²³ To conclude the introduction, Daryabandari quotes the last sentences from T. S. Eliot's "Introduction to *Huckleberry Finn*":

“So the book has the right, the only possible, concluding sentence. I do not think that any book ever written ends more certainly with the right words; ‘But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can’t stand it. I been there before.’”

(جمله پایان دهنده کتاب درست است و تنها جمله پایان دهنده ممکن است. من گمان نمی‌کنم هیچ کتابی محکمتر و با کلماتی درست تر از این پایان یافته باشد:

ولی گمانم زودتر از آن‌ها باید بزخم بروم تو منطقه سرخ پوست‌ها. چون که خاله سالی خیال دارد مرا به فرزندی خودش بردارد و تربیتم کند، من که هیچ حوصله اش را ندارم. یک بار به سرم آمده).²⁴

Huck on the Iranian Stage

Huck also entered Iranian theatre. From May 17 to June 26, 2015, an adaptation of *Huckleberry Finn* was on stage in Tehran. It was directed by Ehsan Majidi and the script was written by Kiumars Qanbari Azar and Mas‘ud Shakarami. It won the best script at the Theater Festival for Children & Young Adults. Except for Huck (Mohammad Nuhiyan) and Jim (Hamed Modarres), no character from the novel featured in the play and, in fact, the missing characters were replaced by new ones. Professor and Bartolomeo, two of the new characters in the play, might have been inspired by the duke and the king from the novel. Many events of the novel are left out in the one-hour play due to time constraints. However, the absence of Huck’s reaching maturity, a theme of the novel, is felt in the play. Perhaps due to the extent of the changes in this adaptation, the brochure for the play does not mention the fact that it is an adaptation of the novel.²⁵ While the novel was intended for adult readers, the play is “specifically for children and teenagers” as the flier reads. This may explain many of the selective deletions of the adaptation. According to a critic, the fact that the development of Huck and Jim, the protagonists of the novel, is ignored in the play may have had negative effects on the adult audience, those who, although not the target audience, wished to “recover their sweet childhood memories.”²⁶ What childhood memories does the critic refer to?

Ostensibly produced for children and teenagers, the play is promoted as “ برای بچه‌های دیروز و امروز” (for children of today and yesterday) on an online ticket sale page. In the comment section of the same page, one can see the following lines: “Do you remember Huckleberry and Jim? If not, ask your inner child.” The adult audience in their twenties or thirties might remember watching an animation based on *Huckleberry Finn* on Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) in the 1980s and 1990s during their

childhood.²⁷ Capitalizing on memories of watching the anime series is even more significant when one bears in mind that none of those sources even mention that the play is based on the novel. Such promotion, along with the critique of the play recognizing the adult audience's childhood memories as a determining factor in the play's reception, indicate the significance of that Japanese anime series in the reception of *Huck* in Iran.

In the opening lines of the introduction to his translation of the novel, Daryabandari mentions the anime based on the novel broadcast on IRIB. Meghdadi, professor emeritus of literature at the University of Tehran, also mentions the role of the anime; he opens a paper titled “*Huckleberry Finn: An Anti-American Novel*” with an anecdote:

I remember the day, prior to the start of a new educational year, when a few English major students asked me to share with them the list of the novels to study in the course on the novel so that they could read them beforehand and so that they did not have problems when the new [educational] year started. I gave them titles of ten English and American novels including Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. The students were pleased when they heard the two titles. I asked why and they replied that they do not have to read these novels since they watched the animes based on the novels on TV. I assume it is reasonable to start this piece with this anecdote to help the reader realize that how a good literary work can communicate with its readers or viewers in several aspects and that these two novels are excellent examples of this basic principle in art and literature. ... The purpose behind writing this article is to study the social and political aspects of *Huckleberry Finn*, particularly to criticize the American society and to elaborate on the terrible situation of the American blacks, usually ignored by critics. The readers assume that this novel is a sequel to *Tom Sawyer* and a work for entertainment primarily for the adolescent readership.²⁸

Here I would like to reiterate the significant part Japanese anime played in the reception of *Huck* in Iran and how the primarily entertaining medium of TV deprived the novel, at least to some extent, of the potential readers' more serious engagement, in this case that of the English major students. Furthermore, in recent decades there has been a significant increase in translations of *Huckleberry Finn* for children and young adults.²⁹ Most of such recent translations are by the younger generation of translators, who have good memories of watching the Japanese anime in their childhood. It is one of the more significant ways that Japanese anime contributed to the reception of the American novel in Iran, particularly as children's literature.

Another significant point concerning the Persian Huck is the relationship between censorship and Afro-Iranians, which will be discussed in the following section.

Gribben's Huck, Censorship, and Afro-Iranians

Sharq, an Iranian reformist paper, published a piece (in Persian) on Alan Gribben's 2011 combined edition of *Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* that replaced the N-word (which occurs around two hundred times in the original *Huckleberry Finn*) with "slave," and "Injun Joe" with "Indian Joe."³⁰ The Persian piece mentions the fact that American teachers and students were not comfortable with the racial slurs and that the new edition would secure the work's place in schools. It also refers to the controversy surrounding the expurgation of the novel and the views of those opposing it, including Barbara Jones (Office of Intellectual Freedom, American Library Association) and *The New York Times* editorial, "That's Not Twain." The Persian piece concludes with the following sentence:

هیچ راهی برای «تمیز کردن» زبان مارک تواین بدون لطمه زدن به حقیقت اثر وجود ندارد.³¹

In English this sentence states: "There is no way to 'clean up' Twain without doing irreparable harm to the truth of his work."³² The Persian piece mistakenly attributes the concluding sentence to the preface of Gribben's 2011 combined edition while the sentence belongs to *The New York Times* editorial. It is not the editor of the expurgated edition, but a critic of that very edition, who wrote the sentence. The mistake in the Persian piece might be a slip of the pen. The point worth mentioning is the insensitivity of the Iranian writer of the piece in *Sharq* to an apparently clear discrepancy: the fact that the person who willingly expurgated the novel would not write such a sentence or the fact that a person who wrote such a sentence would not expurgate the novel. There is more to this slip of the pen in the Iranian writer's insensitivity to such a discrepancy. Where does such insensitivity come from? It has something to do with heavy state censorship in the Iranian context. In order to avoid the many instances of state censorship, Iranian writers tend to self-censor. They choose to publish a partially (self-)censored work rather than see their uncensored work not granted a publication permit. In such a context, a writer self-censoring or an editor expressing views similar to the sentence concluding the Persian piece, is not as clear a discrepancy as it is to writers in different (i.e., freer) contexts. Iranian writers' (un)willing submission to censorship in its various forms, including self-censorship, leads to the insensitivity toward such a discrepancy.

While "clean up" has no etymological connections to "censorship," its Persian rendering تمیز کردن (tamiz kardan: to clean up) is etymologically related to ممیزی (momayyezi), the official term for censorship in the Iranian context.³³ Therefore, in the light of this piece of etymological knowledge, the concluding sentence's emphasis on concomitance of censorship and the damage to the truth of the work can be read as an even more forceful attack on state censorship. If the sentence had mentioned the term سانسور (sansur: censorship), instead of تمیز کردن, its criticism of official censorship

(ممیزی) would not have been as clear. Using تمیز کردن, a term of the same etymology as the official word for state censorship, the final sentence challenges state censorship more clearly. The same strategy is employed in the title of the piece. The piece is titled “هاکلبری فین و ۲۱۹ مورد اصلاحیه” (Huckleberry Finn and 219 corrections). The word اصلاحیه (eslahiyeh) meaning “correction” refers, among other things, to the changes (supposed to be) made to a manuscript before a publication permit is granted under censorship in Iran. The writer of the piece could have used the more neutral term تغییر (taghyir) meaning “change.” However, they used اصلاحیه, which is the official word for such changes, to attract the reader’s attention to state censorship in the Iranian context.³⁴

Several months after this piece was published, *Sharq* published a piece titled ممیزی خیرخواهانه نمونه ماجراهای هاکلبری فین (The well-intentioned censorship: The case of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*), on the very subject. After summarizing the critiques of Gribben’s edition as well as the editor’s “liberal censorship” and his good intentions of promoting the novel in a wider circle of school students, Robert Safarian, an Iranian film critic, expresses his ideas concerning all kinds of censorship, both state and otherwise. He writes:

فراموش نکنیم که سانسور غالباً با حسن نیت و به قصد محافظت جامعه از تعصباتی مانند نژادپرستی، ضدیت با زنان، ترویج خشونت و ابتدال به عمل می آید. این آخری گاهی شکل حمایت از برخی جنبه‌های سانسور دولتی را به خود می گیرد: آشکارا به دولت انتقاد می کنند که چرا اجازه می دهد فیلم‌ها و کتاب‌های مبتذل تولید و توزیع شود یا تلویحاً به دولت پیشنهاد سانسور این‌گونه آثار را می کنند.³⁵

(Let us not forget that censorship is often practiced with good intentions to protect the society from prejudices such as racism, misogyny, violence and vulgarity. This last one can be seen in the form of supporting some aspects of state censorship; it openly criticizes the state for the production and dissemination of vulgar movies and books or it implicitly suggests that the state censor such works).

He concludes,

ما در ترجمه، بدون سانسور خیرخواهانه نیز بسیاری چیزها را از دست می دهیم.

(Even without well-intentioned censorship we lose so much in translation).³⁶

Here, Safarian criticizes state censorship and those groups and individuals supporting or encouraging it. Such groups and individuals as well as the state argue that state censorship is “well intentioned.” To challenge such justification, Safarian argues that even without such “well-intentioned censorship” so much is lost in translation of

foreign works into Persian that we cannot afford losing more to censorship, no matter how “well intentioned” it is.

The N-word itself did not create any controversy in various Persian translations of the novel. Nevertheless, the censorship of such a major literary work as *Huckleberry Finn* encouraged Iranian artists to write about Iranian (state) censorship. In Persian translations the N-word was translated to کاکا سیاه (kaka siyah), a derogatory term comparable to the M-word, or translated to more neutral words including سیاه (siyah: black), سیاهپوست (siyahpust: black-skinned), غلام سیاه (gholam-e siyah: Black slave), or مستخدم (mostakhdem: houseman, employee, etc.). As already mentioned, there has never been any controversy over the translation of this word. Even the word *kaka siyah* did not create controversy in the Iranian context, perhaps because it did not refer to Afro-Iranians but to Africans in the nineteenth-century US. One should bear in mind that there is no Persian word possessing all the denotative meaning and connotative (emotive and ideological) associations of the N-word.³⁷

Due to the lack of Iranian awareness on the history of African enslavement in Iran and the subsequent lack of racial justice movements in Iranian history, the term is going to remain uncontroversial in Iran in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, the American censorship of the term made the Iranian writers ponder the consequences of Iranian state censorship and criticize it. Such writers, however, did not mention the racial history of Iran and the fate of enslaved African people in Iran prior to the abolition of slavery in 1929. It is ironic that the ignorance of such a history is the result of both state censorship and the Iranian collective self-censorship, which in an unwritten agreement sweep such a history under the carpet.³⁸ Around the time Twain wrote *Huckleberry Finn*, Africans enslaved in Iran led a miserable life which might be compared to that of Jim. However, Iranian fiction has not yet treated this issue properly.³⁹ More than nine decades after the abolition of slavery in Iran, the country is still in dire need of its own novel on the Iranian Jim. A fresh, domestically informed reading of *Huckleberry Finn* in the light of the suppressed, if not entirely obliterated, racial history of Iran can be a first step.

Notes

I acknowledge my honorary visiting fellowship at Western Sydney University. I wish to express my gratitude to Ben Click, Joseph Csicsila, Ata Heshmati, Elham Naeej, Amin Palangi, Mehrdad Rahimi-Moghaddam, Amy Tahani-Bidmeshki, Zadmehr Torabi, Amirhossein Vafa, and the members of the Iranian Studies Network for providing me with helpful comments and useful materials. I would also like to offer my special thanks to Blake Bronson-Bartlett for his meticulous reading of an early draft of this paper; Samaneh Farhadi for providing me with useful materials as well as valuable feedback; the editors of this special issue, whose initiation inspired this research; and the anonymous reviewers, for the insightful suggestions.

- ¹ “Mark Twain’s 1872 English Journals,” *Mark Twain Project* (MTDP 00358), n21, <http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/MTDP00358.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp#an21>.
- ² Miss Street is a daughter of James Street (d. 1867), an agent for the Overland Telegraph Company, whom Clemens and his brother Orion had met in 1861 when they stopped in Salt Lake City en route to Nevada Territory; SLC to Miss Street, December 1, 1874, Hartford, CT (UCCL 01158), n1, <http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL01158.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp#an1>; Clemens might have used the phrase either jokingly or wrongly. However, the context of the letter makes the first scenario less probable; SLC to Miss Street, December 1, 1874, Hartford, CT (UCCL 01158), <http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL01158.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp#an1>; In Persian “on my head” or “on my eye” is used to positively respond to a request.
- ³ Lili Golestan, “Dokhtarak-e Khiyalbaf va Huckleberry Finn,” *E’temad*, May 7, 2017, 9, <http://www.etemadnewspaper.ir/fa/main/detail/74348>. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.
- ⁴ For more on E’tesami and his journal, refer to Behnam M. Fomeshi, *The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception* (Leiden, Netherlands: Leiden University Press, 2019).
- ⁵ Twain, Mark. فرشته نجات [The saviour angel]. Translation of “Death Disk.” Translated by Yusef E’tesami. *Bahar* 1, nos. 5–6. (1910): 308–16.
- ⁶ The play *Le Cultivateur de Chicago, ou How I Became the Editor of an Agricultural Paper* is an adaptation by the French writer Gabriel Timmory (1870–1965) of a short sketch by Twain called “How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once” (1870). While the first publication of the Persian translation in *Bahar* (volume 2, issues 8–9) did not mention the author of the play, the 1943 reprint of the journal misattributed the play to Twain. Gabriel Timmory, *Le Cultivateur de Chicago, ou How I Became the Editor of an Agricultural Paper: Comédie en deux actes, tirée d’une nouvelle de Mark Twain; Représentée pour la première fois, à Paris, au Théâtre du Grand-Guignol, le 6 Mai 1906* (Paris: Pierre Lafitte et Cie., 1906); Gabriel Timmory, جریده [Agricultural paper], translation of *Le Cultivateur de Chicago, ou How I Became the Editor of an Agricultural Paper: Comédie en deux actes, tirée d’une nouvelle de Mark Twain; Représentée pour la première fois, à Paris, au Théâtre du Grand-Guignol, le 6 Mai 1906*, trans. Yusef E’tesami, *Bahar* 2, nos. 8–9 (1923): 513–31; and Mark Twain, “How I Edited an Agricultural Paper Once,” *The Galaxy* 10 (1870): 133–35.
- ⁷ See Fomeshi, *The Persian Whitman*.
- ⁸ Mehdi Akhavan Saless, a major modern, brought the translation to the publisher. Golestan self-funded the publication.

- ⁹ Although *Huckleberry Finn* is not the first American novel or even the first novel by Twain translated into Persian, and although the Persian translation of Archibald Clavering Gunter's *Mr. Potter of Texas*, Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes*, *The Son of Tarzan*, and *Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar*, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper* preceded Golestan's translation of *Huckleberry Finn*, none of those early translations has been reprinted in recent decades except for this particular translation.
- ¹⁰ This poem was translated into Persian in 2010 by Farid Ghadami; Walt Whitman, "ترانه "جاده باز" [Song of the open road], in "ای ناخدا، ناخدای من: زندگی، شعر و زمانه والت ویتمن" [O captain, my captain: Life, poetry, and era of Walt Whitman], trans. Farid Ghadami (Tehran, Ruznameh-ye Iran, 1389/2010) 59–90. For a study on the reception of this poem refer to Fomeshi, *The Persian Whitman*.
- ¹¹ Ebrahim Golestan, "Moqaddameh," in *Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, trans. Ebrahim Golestan (Tehran: Agah, 1356/1977), 8.
- ¹² Ebrahim Golestan, "Bara-ye Chap-e Dovvom," in *Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, trans. Ebrahim Golestan (Tehran: Agah, 1356/1977), 2.
- ¹³ Safdar Taqizadeh, "Sadeq Chubak va Tasirpaziri az Adabiyat-e Dastani-ye Mudern-e Amrika," *Kelk* 145 (1383/2004): 6.
- ¹⁴ Khayam Fuladi Talari mentions several of these shortcomings, mostly the result of not understanding the source text. For instance, the translation missed the religious allusion in the following sentence, "A body would a thought he was Adam, he was just all mud." "Gozari va Nazari bar Tarjomeh-ye Farsi-ye Yek Roman," *Adabestan-e Farhang va Honar*, no. 17 (May 1991): 52–53.
- ¹⁵ In the meanwhile, Hushang Pirzanan's translation of *Huckleberry Finn* (1960) was published. However, it was not a major contribution to the reception of the novel in comparison with those by Golestan and Daryabandari; Zahra Salari, "Be Ebarat-e Digar (2): Majaraha-ye Hauckleberry Finn," *Motarjem* 24, no. 56 (2015): 165.
- ¹⁶ Khalil Motallebzadeh and Seika Tousi, "Employing Compensation Strategy in Translation of Idioms: A Case Study of the Translation of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in Persian," *International Journal of Linguistics* 3, no. 1 (2011): 1–9.
- ¹⁷ T. S. Eliot, "An Introduction to *Huckleberry Finn*," in *Huck Finn*, ed. Harold Bloom (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 23–24.
- ¹⁸ Najaf Daryabandari, "Safar-e Bi Saranjam-e Huck Finn," in *Az In Lahaz*, ed. Najaf Daryabandari (Tehran: Karnameh, 2013), 121.
- ¹⁹ Daryabandari, "Huck Finn," 128.

- ²⁰ Daryabandari, “Huck Finn,” 129.
- ²¹ Daryabandari, “Huck Finn,” 132–133.
- ²² Daryabandari, “Huck Finn,” 138.
- ²³ Daryabandari, “Huck Finn,” 150.
- ²⁴ Daryabandari, “Huck Finn,” 152.
- ²⁵ Ali Jafari Futami, “Revayat-e Shakhshiaz Safar-e Pormajara-ye Hak,” *Iran Teatr*, June 14, 2015, <https://www.google.com/policies/privacy/>.
- ²⁶ Jafari Futami, “Revayat-e.”
- ²⁷ *Huckleberry Finn no Bōken* (1976, ハックルベリイの冒険), 26 episodes, Group Tack, Fuji Television Network. This anime series was dubbed into Persian and broadcast on IRIB. In early 2015, it was broadcast once more. Thorough discussion about the Japanese anime of Twain's works (including the 1976 *Huckleberry Finn*) can be found in Tsuyoshi Ishihara, *Mark Twain in Japan: The Cultural Reception of an American Icon* (University of Missouri Press, 2005).
- ²⁸ Bahram Meghdadi, “Huckleberry Finn: Romani Zed-e Amrikayi,” *Pazhuhesh-e Zaban-haye Khareji*, no. 7 (1999): 5–6.
- ²⁹ Some twenty new translations up to 2021.
- ³⁰ “‘Hakelberi Fin’ va 219 Mored Eslahiyeh,” *Sharq*, January 9, 2011, 9.
- ³¹ “‘Hakelberi Fin’ va 219 Mored Eslahiyeh,” 9.
- ³² “That’s Not Twain,” *The New York Times*, January 5, 2011.
- ³³ Originally devoid of the negative connotations of the infamous term “censorship,” “momayyezi” replaced the old term after the 1979 Revolution. However, the new term, which signifies post-1979 state censorship, has also acquired negative connotations like its older infamous counterpart. For more on the censorship of literature in Iran refer to Alireza Abiz, *Censorship of Literature in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Politics and Culture Since 1979* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2020).
- ³⁴ It is interesting that the Iranian writer of the Persian piece, which challenges the Iranian official censorship, is too insensitive to the aforementioned discrepancy to attribute the concluding sentence, which clearly challenges censorship, to the critic of the expurgated edition rather than to the editor of the edition. Such an instance indicates the heavy influence of censorship on the process of writing and publishing in Iran and, more importantly, its detrimental effect on the mentality of the Iranian writers, even those criticizing censorship.

- ³⁵ Robert Safarian, "Momayyezi-ye Kheirkhahaneh," *Sharq*, June 18, 2011, 12.
- ³⁶ Safarian, "Momayyezi-ye Kheirkhahaneh," 12.
- ³⁷ Safarian, "Momayyezi-ye Kheirkhahaneh," 12.
- ³⁸ In recent years, scholars of Iranian studies based outside Iran have paid attention to the history of Afro-Iranians. See Behnaz A. Mirzai, *A History of Slavery and Emancipation in Iran, 1800–1929* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).
- ³⁹ Enslaved Africans have been major characters in a very few works of fiction. Mehrangiz, an enslaved African woman, is the protagonist in "شهری چون بهشت" [City like heaven], a short story by Simin Daneshvar (1921–2012); Simin Daneshvar, "شهری چون بهشت" [City like heaven], in شهری چون بهشت [City like heaven] (Tehran: Kharazmi, 1361/1982), 9–29.

Persian Translations of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Iran)

- هکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. 1949. Translated by Ebrahim Golestan. Tehran: Kalagh, 2014.
- برده‌ی فراری: سرگذشت هاک فین [Bardeh-ye Farari: Sargozasht-e Hak Fin; The runaway slave: The story of Huck Finn]. Translated by Javad Mohyi. Tehran: Bongah-e Matbu'ati-ye Gutenberg, 1955.
- ماجراهای هاکلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Hushang Pirnazar. Tehran: Feranklin, 1960.
- ماجراهای هاکلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Shahram Puranfar. Tehran: Zarrin, 1983.
- هاکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Khosrow Shayesteh. Tehran: Sepideh, 1985.
- ماجراهای هاکلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Shahram Puranfar. Tehran: Arastu, 1985.
- ماجراهای هاکلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Sudabeh Zarkaf. Tehran: Dadju, 1986.
- سرگذشت هاکلبری فین [Sargozasht-e Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Najaf Daryabandari. Tehran: Kharazmi, 1987.
- هاکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Parviz Najm al-Dini. Tehran: Tusan, 1990.

- ماجراهای هاگلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn].
Translated by Shahram Puranfar. Tehran: Mahtab, 1991.
- ماجراهای هاگلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn].
Translated by Roya Gilani. Tehran: Arghavan, 1993.
- ماجراهای هاگلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn].
Translated by Shokufeh Akhavan. Tehran: Nahal-e Navidan, 1993.
- هاگلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Nafiseh Darbeheshti.
Tehran: Nashr-e Peyman, 1997.
- هاگلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by by Khosrow Shayesteh.
Rewriter: Majid Seyf. Tehran: Sepideh, 2003.
- ماجراجویی های شگفت انگیز تام سایر و هاگلبری فین [Majarajuyi-haye Shegeftangiz-e Tam Sayer
va Hakelberifin; Amazing Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn].
Translated by Allahverdi Azari Najafabad. Tehran: Aftab Mahtab, 2003.
- ماجراهای هاگلبری فین: متن کوتاه شده [Majara-haye Hakelberifin: Matn-e Kutahshodeh;
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: An abridged version]. Translated by Mohsen
Soleymani. Tehran: Ofoq, 2007.
- هاگلبری فین [Hakelberifin; *Huckleberry Finn*]. Translated by Mohsen Soleymani. Tehran:
Ofoq, 2009.
- ماجراهای هاگلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn].
Translated by Mohammad Hemmatkhan. Tehran: Asr-e Andisheh, 2012.
- ماجراهای هاگلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn].
Translated by Shokufeh Akhavan. Tehran: Nahal-e Navidan, 2012.
- هاگلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Mehdi Alavi. Tehran: Dabir,
2013.
- ماجراجویی های هاگلبری فین [Majarajuyi-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry
Finn]. Translated by Hasan Majidi. Tehran: Sokhangostar, 2015.
- ماجراهای هاگلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn].
Translated by Akram Shekarzadeh. Tehran: Negah-e Ashena, 2016.
- هاگلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Daryush Shahin and Susan
Ardakani. Tehran: Nezareh, 2017.
- هاگلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Ma'sumeh Mosavi. Tehran:
Ava-ye Biseda, 2017.

- هاکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Narges Bahrami. Tehran: Guyesh Now, 2017.
- هاکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Shima Mohammadi. Tehran: Panguan, 2017.
- ماجراهای هاکلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Maryam Tayyebi. Tehran: Atun-e Ketab, 2017.
- هاکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Fatemeh Nazarahari. Tehran: Guhar-e Andisheh, 2018.
- هاکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Ma'sumeh Mosavi. Tehran: Yaqut, 2018.
- هاکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Ma'sumeh Mohammadi. Tehran: Yushita, 2018.
- هاکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Ma'sumeh Mosavi. Tehran: Yaqut, 2018.
- هاکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Mohammad Qasa'. Tehran: Shahr-e Qalam, 2018.
- هاکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Mojtaba Nikseresht. Tehran: Daryush, 2018.
- هاکلبری فین [Hakelberifin; Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Alireza Khosravi. Tehran: Fanus-e Danesh-e Tarvij-e Ketabkhani, 2019.
- ماجراهای هاکلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Akram Shekarzadeh. Tehran: Asmangun, 2019.
- ماجراهای هاکلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Elham al-Sadat Yasini. Tehran: Ketabestan-e Ma'refat, 2019.
- ماجراهای هاکلبری فین [Majara-haye Hakelberifin; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn]. Translated by Elham Keshavarzi Khuzani. Tehran: Dadju, 2019.

Selected Bibliography

- Abiz, Alireza. *Censorship of Literature in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Politics and Culture Since 1979*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2020.

- Daryabandari, Najaf. “سفر بی سرانجام هک فین” [Safar-e Bi Saranjam-e Huck Finn: Huck Finn’s endless journey]. In *Az In Lahaz* [From this post of view], edited by Najaf Daryabandari, 121–52. Tehran: Karnameh, 1392/2013.
- Daneshvar, Simin. “شهری چون بهشت” [City like heaven]. In شهری چون بهشت [City like heaven], 9–29. Tehran: Kharazmi, 1361/1982.
- Eliot, T. S. “An Introduction to *Huckleberry Finn*.” In *Huck Finn*, edited by Harold Bloom, 17–24. Broomall, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004.
- Fuladi Talari, Khayam. “گذری و نظری به ترجمه فارسی یک رمان” [Gozariva Nazari bar Tarjomeh-ye Farsi-ye Yek Roman: A look at a Persian translation of a novel]. *Adabestan-e Farhang va Honar*, no. 17 (May 1991): 52–53.
- Fomeshi, Behnam, M. *The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception*. Leiden, Netherlands: Leiden University Press, 2019.
- Golestan, Ebrahim. “برای چاپ دوم” [Bara-ye Chap-e Dovvom: For the second reprint]. In *Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, 1–2. Translated by Ebrahim Golestan. Tehran: Agah, 1356/1977.
- . “مقدمه” [Moqaddameh: Introduction]. In *Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, 3–8. Translated by Ebrahim Golestan. Tehran: Agah, 1356/1977.
- Golestan, Lili. “دخترک خیالباف و هکلبری فین” [Dokhtarak-e Khiyalbaf va Huckleberry Finn: Dreamy Little Girl and *Huckleberry Finn*]. *E’temad*, May 7, 2017. <http://www.etemadnewspaper.ir/fa/main/detail/74348>
- “Huckleberry Finn” va 219 Mored Eslahiyeh: *Huckleberry Finn* and 219 corrections]. *Sharq*, January 9, 2011.
- Ishihara, Tsuyoshi. *Mark Twain in Japan: The Cultural Reception of an American Icon*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005.
- Jafari Futami, Ali. “روایت شخصی از سفر پرماجرایی هاک” [Revayat-e Shakhsiaz Safar-e Pormajara-ye Huck: A personal account of Huck’s adventurous journey]. *IranTeatr*, June 14, 2015. <https://www.google.com/policies/privacy/>
- Meghdadi, Bahram. “هکلبری فین رمانی ضد امریکایی” [Huckleberry Finn: Romani Zed-e Amrikayi: *Huckleberry Finn*: An anti-US novel]. *Pazhuhesh-e Zaban-haye Khareji*, no. 7 (1999): 5–22.
- Mirzai, Behnaz A. *A History of Slavery and Emancipation in Iran, 1800–1929*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017.

Motallebzadeh, Khalil, and Seika Tousi. "Employing Compensation Strategy in Translation of Idioms: A Case Study of the Translation of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in Persian." *International Journal of Linguistics* 3, no. 1 (2011): 1–9.

Safarian, Robert. "ممیزی خیرخواهانه" [Momayyezi-ye Kheirkhahaneh: The well-intentioned censorship]. *Sharq*, June 18, 2011.

Salari, Zahra. "به عبارت دیگر (۲) ماجراهای هاگلبری فین" [Be 'Ebarat-e Digar (2): *Majaraha-ye Hauckleberry Finn*: In other words (2): *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*]. *Motarjem* 24, no. 56 (2015): 161–66.

"That's Not Twain." *The New York Times*. January 5, 2011.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/06/opinion/06thu4.html>

Taqizadeh, Safdar. "صادق چوبک و تاثیرپذیری از ادبیات داستانی مدرن امریکا" [Sadeq Chubak va Tasirpaziri az Adabiyat-e Dastani-ye Mudern-e Amrika: Sadeq Chubak and the influence of modern American fiction]. *Kelk* 145, (1383/2004): 4–7.

Timmory, Gabriel. *Le Cultivateur de Chicago, ou How I Became the Editor of an Agricultural Paper: Comédie en deux actes, tirée d'une nouvelle de Mark Twain; Représentée pour la première fois, à Paris, au Théâtre du Grand-Guignol, le 6 Mai 1906*. Paris: Pierre Lafitte et Cie., 1906.

———. "جریده فلاحت" [Agricultural paper]. Translation of *Le Cultivateur de Chicago, ou How I Became the Editor of an Agricultural Paper: Comédie en deux actes, tirée d'une nouvelle de Mark Twain; Représentée pour la première fois, à Paris, au Théâtre du Grand-Guignol, le 6 Mai 1906*. Translated by Yusef E'tesami. *Bahar* 2, nos. 8–9 (1923): 513–31.

Twain, Mark. "فرشته نجات" [The saviour angel]. Translation of "Death Disk." Translated by Yusef E'tesami. *Bahar* 1, nos. 5–6. (1910): 308–16.

Whitman, Walt. "ترانه جاده باز" [Song of the open road]. In "ای ناخدا، ناخدای من: زندگی، شعر و زمانه" [O captain, my captain: Life, poetry, and era of Walt Whitman]. Translated by Farid Ghadami, 59–90. Tehran: Ruznameh-ye Iran, 1389/2010.

———. "Song of the Open Road." In *The Portable Walt Whitman*, edited with an introduction by Michael Warner, 139–50. New York: Penguin Books, 2004.