Unexpected Leaders
in
Early Persian Social Novels

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1. Introduction

1.1 Foreword

Popular "social" novelists have never been taken seriously in Iran. For instance, they did not have any representative in none of the two prominent writer's conferences held before the Islamic revolution of 1979. Neither did they participate in the first conference of Iranian writers held in 1946 by The Soviet Cultural Institute, nor were they invited to the second conference held by Goethe Institute (the German embassy's cultural department in Iran) in 1978 (Balaÿ 1998:554). In this respect, it is not surprising to know that the research on popular novels is often neglected in this country. Although a large part of theories on cultural studies and modern literary criticism is translated into Persian in recent decades, there is still no serious line of studies on popular culture, in general, and popular novels, in particular. Much of the studies conducted on these novels in Iran have taken a pure aesthetic perspective (based on the high and low culture dualism). In a predictable manner, they have degraded the novels due to their low literary values. The notable works investigating these novels from this perspective are *Modern Persian Prose Literature* (2011) by Hassan Kamshad and *One hundred years of Story Writing in Iran* (2002) by Hassan Mir-Abedini.

I first became pessimistic about the relevance of such researches through studying Leo Lowenthal for the first time. Among the members of the Frankfurt school, Leo Lowenthal seems to take a more complex approach toward the question of popular culture.

> Lowenthal's work represents a unique position within the critical theory tradition that differs saliently, in many nuances if not in ultimate substance, from the work of his colleagues. (…) Of course Lowenthal, like Horkheimer and Adorno, is no friend of the culture industry, but while the authors of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* tend to take an intransigently rejectionist stance towards forms of commercial entertainment, Lowenthal reserves a special place in his research program for the study of popular genres. Moreover, Lowenthal appears to be relatively open regarding the potentials of mass media. (Berman, 1986:792)

Focusing on different cases of what he labels "mass literature" (the best sellers, the popular magazine, the comics and biographies), Lowenthal questions the common cliché

among traditional studies of culture, i.e. popular literature has an escapist function solely, saying that:

> Take the commonly accepted notion that the main function of mass literature is to provide an outlet for the escapist drives of frustrated people. How do we know that this was ever true or is still true today? Perhaps the functional content of the novel today is much less escapist than informative: literature has become a cheap and easily accessible tool for orientation in a bewildering outside and inside world. (Lowenthal, (1948)1983:267)

In a similar vein, I have had the ambition to discover the potentialities of early Persian social novels, and realize in what way, these novels can be read as a "tool for orientation" in the context of Iranian society. But the burden of the critical legacies was really heavy, Iranian literary critics unanimously were inclined to view these novels nothing more that immoral stories of miserable prostitutes and it took me a lot of time and effort to finally gain a different view on these novels and understand the hidden mechanisms of these seemingly accessible literature. For a long time, I, like the previous scholars, just recognized the pitiful narratives of fallen girls in those stories: I could not see the forest for the trees.

After a lot of wandering between different sources and theories, what saved me finally from dead end, was detecting two points: first, I had underestimated the comparative nature of early Persian social novels: as I begun reading French classics of Nineteenth century, I found out more how deeply the Persian novel of the late Nineteenth century and early twentieth century (late Qajar and early first Pahlavi dynasties) were rooted in these French cases; Now, in this new light, I could figure out how the Iranian novelists deployed these borrowed characters and imitative plots in their new context; Second, trying to understand the logics of this contextualization or appropriation, my attention was drawn again to the chaotic socio-political settings of the rise of early social novels. One is surprised by a glance at the list of the most dramatic events simultaneous with birth of Persian novel. In an attempt to alternate Qajar order (a dynasty founded in 1789 by Agha Mohammad Khan), first the Constitutional revolution happened (1905-1911) during which a parliament and constitutional monarchy was established in Iran. The achievements of the revolution was primarily in conformity with the modern culture.

> Yet it was also a period when modern Western ideas where introduced, (…) after the constitutional movement of 1905, was the spread of a modern rationality that grew out of ideas associated with the Enlightenment. Over time, this new rationality reshaped Iranian society (…). Parliamentary democracy came to be viewed as the most desirable form of political organization for society, free trade and economic nationalism were championed, and a gradual move toward a modified and moderate form Europeanization became the goal. (Gheissari, 1997: 14)

However, the constitutional revolution was not able to achieve its ambitious goals:

> Iran's Constitutional Revolution – like many other revolutions – began with great expectations but foundered eventually in a deep sea of disillusionment (Abrahamian, 2008: 34). Then, in a second attempt to abolish Qajars, Reza Khan staged a coup in 1921, which provided the ground for founding Pahlavi dynasty in 1925. During Reza shah's reign (until 1941), Iran, for the first time, enjoyed the features of a nation-state and made significant advances in the area of industrial modernization. However, people experienced the most severe form of dictatorship at the same time. A famous author describes this period in the most concise way as "the age of dictatorship and modernity. (Kamshad, 2009:21)

Then the next thoughts were flourished: How chaos or normative void is addressed in these novels? Did they represent chaos or normative void somehow? If so, how did their writers managed the chaotic situations?

Thus, for the first time, the present study intends to investigate the rise of social novels in Iran from sociological/Symbolic Anthropological theories. The crucial question that arises here is what themes and approaches did those popular novels embody in those tumultuous eras in Iran's political life? Were these novels meant to function as an escape from the harsh reality and status quo? Do these novels provide appropriate and reliable tools for understanding Iranian society of that era?

1.2 "Purity and Danger" in the Narrative Market of Reza Shah Period

For many centuries, Iran has been a land of poetry and great poets. However, the late Qajar dynasty was a period of gradual transition to newer aesthetic and artistic forms of expression. One of the most controversial literary debates of Iran's post-constitutional revolution, the 1917 debate between Mohammad-Taqi Bahar, poet laureate, and Taqi Rafʿat, poet and critic, was dedicated to revising Iran's most established literary form, traditional poetry. Rafʿat radically believed that the abstract works of Persian poets (Saʿdi, Hafez, and Ferdowsi) were no longer relevant for interpreting 'the meaning of life' in the context of Iran's then-transitional society. In fact, Rafʿat was in search of 'Saʿdis of his own time', competent literary figures who could relay modernist messages to the Iranian society. Addressing Bahar as the main defender of Classic poetry, he wrote in the newspaper *Zaban-e Azad* (Liberated Language):

> Our challenge is to find out whether the thoughts and teachings of the poets, literary figures, and philosophers of old times can provide adequate answers to contemporary problems of a modern and innovative nation. In other words, do the poems and prose compositions of our classics produce in us new thoughts, new impressions, new awareness, new sensations, new whatever, or no? (Karimi-Hakkak, 1998: 128)

Simultaneous with such debates, Novel writing appeared as a whole new activity during late Qajar's era in Iran, seemingly an alternative medium for dealing with contemporary social problems. "The novel seems to have entered the Persian literary system to fill a gap, as the solution to a weakened literary institution which was no longer able to respond to the needs of the new environment." (Azadibougar, 2014: 5)

In the second half of the nineteenth century, novels were regarded as a luxury and generally were out of the reach of public in Persia. In the final decades of nineteenth century, Naser al-Din Shah had employed a group of translators in his court, who were exclusively translating for his personal use. A wide range of subjects, from European history, world geography, biographies of political figures to French novels, was covered.

These translations were shelved in the royal library and only the royal family and courtiers had limited access to them (Amanat, 1997: 430).

Only a handful of novels, such as *Voyages et aventures du capitaine* [The Adventures of Captain Hatteras] (1864) by Jules Verne, licensed for publication by the Royal Translation House, were available in limited editions outside the court. During a visit around June 1924 to the Royal Translation House's preserved archive, Gholamreza Rashid-Yasemi referred to the archive as a "graveyard of thoughts" and spoke of the astonishing number of manuscript of translated novels in the archive, which were buried in the dust. The manuscripts were piled on top of each other and never distributed. As Yasemi Reports: "These sweet novels, which have been translated for the study of the Shah and collected after use, if they are not published at this time, then when should they be published?" (Kouhestani-nejad, 1395/2016: 359-360)

Another factor that made the novel not readily available to the public was the publication of many of them outside Iran due to their critical subject matter. *The Travel Diary of Ebrahim Beg Siyahatnameh-ye Ebrahim Beg* (Zayn ol-Abedin Maraghe'i) – considered by many literary critics to be the first Iranian novel – is an example of this occurrence. The three volumes of this novel were published in the cities of Istanbul (1903), Cairo (1905) and Mumbai (1907). Owning a copy of *The Travel Diary of Ebrahim Beg*, because of its critical nature towards the government, was a crime inside Iran, and if it were seen, it would be confiscated by government officials. Similarly, one of the first translations of novel in Iran, a translation of the *Adventures of Haji Baba of Isfahan* by James Morier, was published in Calcutta in1905 (Azadibougar, 2015: 16).

Morier's work was a satirical novel against the Qajar government. A rumor has existed in the Iranian literary circles for a long time that Morier, a British diplomat, used a Persian manuscript by an anonymous Iranian writer found during one of his trips to Iran as the source of the novel (Kamshad, 2011: 21). In addition, the first collection of Iranian short stories, *Once Upon a Time* by Jamalzadeh, a highly critical collection with a novelistic approach, was first published in 1921 in Berlin (the chapter on Symbolic Types discusses the most important story of this book).

A novel had to be considered "politically safe," like Jules Verne's or *Robinson Crusoe* – like the novels mentioned, the sea adventures of a young man – to be allowed distribution in Iranian society. With such a background, it is not surprising to say that a

social novel in Iran, or in other words, any novel that dealt with contemporary issues of society or any novel that could somehow evoke contemporary issues of Iranian society, would be considered a kind of "literature of revolt" from its beginning and was strictly controlled. This trend continued during the reign of Reza Khan (the next "Reza Shah"), especially in the case of the Persian social novels *The Dreadful Tehran* (Morteza Moshfeq Kazemi) and *The Dark Times* (Abbas Khalili), which are analyzed in this work. These novels were repeatedly banned by Reza Khan. Only *Homa*, written by Mohammad Hejazi who was loyal to the government of the time, did not have any problems in its distribution.

If the late Qajar period is considered as the age when the phenomenon of the novel and translation of its first samples was introduced, translating and writing the novels can be seen as flourishing in the age of Reza Shah. Though the number of translated novels was more than the number of Persian novels, it was during the Reza Shah era that a small market of novel readers became firmly established for the first time. Thus, reading novels became one of the most favored activities of leisure time in Iran.

Perhaps this would never have happened if the social status of poets during the Qajar period had not been weakened over time. One of the best examples for understanding the liminal state of Iran's literary polysystem was Mohammad-Taqi Bahar himself – the recipient of Taqi Raf'at's critiques of the state of poetry in modern times. In the late Qajar period, poets, like in former times, no longer had patronage. Bahar's father was Mohammad-Kazem-e Sabouri (1904–1853), whom Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar had given the title of poet laureate and had established a fixed salary. Sabouri, however, warned Bahar against pursuing poetry, advising him with the following words:

> I do not want you to become a poet, to be my successor, because I know that Iran's situation will change, and they will not give any salary to anyone, and poets will be ridiculed (...). Seek business so that you do not need anyone. (Bahar, 2006: 12)

Another prominent poet of the Qajar period, Adib al-Mamalek Farahani (1817-1960), constantly complained that poets' value in the Orient was no longer properly known.

Mohammad-Kazem-e Sabouri's prediction came true very quickly. In the second volume of the *Travel Diary Ebrahim Beg*, Zayn ol-Abedin Maraghe'i devotes a detailed section of the novel to discredit poets. He states that they are unable to cure the social

pains of contemporary Iranian society: “The Persian poets had better compose poems about coal and the sound of train whistles and other manifestations of modernity instead of praising the patron and describing the beautiful sweetheart.”

Although this pessimism about the relevance of poetry and poets was gradually becoming more prevalent, confidence in the Persian novel and Iranian novelists among the cultural elites of the time was still not enough to overshadow the status of poetry completely.

Since its beginning, like any other modern phenomena, the novel raised many mixed reactions in Iran’s cultural milieu. This was very natural because not only was literature essentially identified with poetry in Iran, but also the connection with poetry had been an inseparable component of Iranian identity. As Zabihullah Safa, a prominent scholar, states: “Iranian civilization and thoughts, belief and religion, the aspirations and ideals of Iranians and, in sum, all the inner feelings of this people are summarized in Persian poetry” (Safa, 1350/1971: 49).

As the guardians of traditional literature, traditional literary scholars and belletrists were not pleased that the novel tightened the noose around classical poetry and classic forms of Persian prose, and they felt very insecure in this regard. Overall, the novel was considered a “threat” and, in Mary Douglas’ term, “polluting.” In the ambiguous and liminal conditions between the end of the Qajar period and the rise of Pahlavi’s regime, these literary scholars set themselves the task of purifying the literary scene. They sought to control early novelists, translators and readers of the novel in order to reduce what they considered to be the harms of the new genre in society and to bring the existing conditions as close as possible to their ideals.

The traditional scholars’ specialty was to correct classical Persian poetry and prose manuscripts and provide new and more readable editions of these works. When analyzing novels, their comments rarely had an aesthetic aspect. This is the reason that among the early analyses of Persian novels criticisms in which a pedantic critic considers novels weak due to spelling mistakes and grammatical errors are encountered. Additionally, traditional scholars evaluated the novels based on the criteria of classical Persian literature. One scholar wrote:

> I have not yet (...) read a line in the work of … [a] contemporary novelist as graceful and influential as Ferdowsi’s words or, like the works of Beyhaqi [a

> classical literary historian] and the like, to be representative of art and craftsmanship and to be considered a comprehensive and expressive form. (Iqbal Ashtiani, 1998: 432)

Early novelists had not yet found their own modern literary critics and had no choice but to gain the approval of these scholars. Even Sadegh Hedayat, the author of The *Blind Owl* and the most modern novelist of the Pahlavi period, had no choice but to send his works to Allameh Qazvini, a famous literary scholar living in Paris. Allameh Qazvini wrote with contempt that he did not keep the works of Iranian fiction writers in his home. Moreover, he claimed that among all the fictional works of the end of Qajar and early Pahlavi period he liked only one work, *Once Upon a Time*, and only for its fluent prose and correct use of the Persian language.

The stubborn scholars tried to regulate the literary scene in two ways. First, they managed the novel translation movement formed in the late Qajar period. When the novel had entered as a new literary genre in the country, the scholars tried to present their favorite model of the novel. Thus, in their articles and notes in national newspapers, literary magazines and in the introductions of novels they constantly talked about the "authentic novel" and "authentic representation."

It is necessary to examine the condition of Iran's narrative market at the time of publishing the early instances of the novel. Even though Iran had a long and brilliant tradition of storytelling,[1] it had no background in novels in the modern sense. Franco Moretti describes such countries which lack any tradition in novel writing as 'periphery' in the context of the global 'narrative market' of the nineteenth century: a very large group that imported a lot and exported almost nothing, with very little freedom and creativity (Moretti, 1998: 173-174).

The Moretti's approach should be understand in the light of a wider context, i.e. world system theory:

[1] William L. Hanaway's works provides useful further reading on this subject, for an instance: William L. Hanaway, *Persian Popular Romances before the Safavid period*. PhD diss, Columbia University, 1970. See also: Steven Moore, '[The Eastern Novel:] Persian', in *The Novel: An Alternative History: Beginnings to 1600* (New York & London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), pp. 499-527 and Steven Moore, 'Persian Fiction', in *The Novel: An Alternative History, 1600-1800* (New York & London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), pp. 527-532.

Moretti draws on the tradition of Goethe and Marx to see world literature as one, along with the developments of Immanuel Wallerstein's theory of a world system, and Itamar Even-Zohar's literary systems theory in order to find a basis for formulating relations of dominance between the different areas of the system. Like the political world and the world market, world literature is seen as one system, albeit one that is characterized by difference and unequal conditions for exercising influence. (Thomsen, 2012:138)

Moretti asserts that as a

> *law of literary evolution* […] in cultures that belong to the periphery of the literary system (which means: almost all cultures, inside and outside Europe), the modern novel first arises not as an autonomous development but as a compromise between a Western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials. (Moretti, 2013: 50)

Interestingly, M. M. Kazemi's reading list in his teenage years (in the 1910s) serves as a model for Moretti's 'literary evolution': a hybrid of French materials, and Persian heroic romances such as *Amir Arsalan* and *Hosein Kord-e Shabestari*. (Moshfeq Kazemi, 1971: 58) similarly, one generation later, Ebrahim Golestan (1921-), an Iranian modernist writer, recalls reading *The Dreadful Tehran* alongside Alexander Dumas' works in his adolescence in Shiraz in the 1930s. (Davar, 2016)

Itamar Even-Zohar, a Translation Studies scholar, explains while a country lacks from a specific literary tradition (in case of Iran: novels), there exists a natural tendency towards translating:

> To say that translated literature maintains a central position in the literary polysystem means that it participates actively in shaping the center of the polysystem. This implies that in this situation no clear-cut distinction is maintained between "original" and "translated" writings (…) in such a state when new literary models are emerging, translation is likely to become one of the means of elaborating the new repertoire. Through the foreign works, features (both principles and elements) are introduced into the home literature which did not exist there before. (Even-Zohar, 1990: 45)

According to Even-Zohar, turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a literature give rise to a situation of high translation activity in a culture. The Post-Constitutional revolution of Iran was one of these turning points in country's history: a time when the

old established models were considered outdated and rejected by the younger generation.

The above examples properly show Iran's tendency toward the French side of this prevailing Anglo-French narrative model. It became a French-oriented periphery throughout the long nineteenth century and was under the hegemonic influence of French literature: 'Many French novels, and very few British ones.' (Moretti, 1998: 181).

The prime reason that facilitated the development of French novelistic paradigm in the country was strategic: Iran was seeking an independent policy to counterbalance Britain and Russian colonialist intervention: 'With the Great Game, the fight for supremacy between the United Kingdom and Russia over Central Asian territories between 1813's Treaty of Gulistan and World War II, Iranians suffered the effects of both British and Russian imperialism […].' (Nanquette, 2015: 114). France appeared as the ideal choice: a major power that had no direct interests in the region and no visible colonialist ambition in terms of political and economic issues and therefore, Iran could strengthen ties with it in the cultural and educational domain. (Nanquette, 2013: 11-15).

But what it would mean, when we speak of a French-oriented market? There were several trends in Iranian literature consumption that indicated the nation's preference for French narrative. Educated people started using the French term *roman* for recognising the new literary discourse, i.e. the 'novel' (Ahmadzadeh, 2003: 65), a term which has remained relevant in Iranian culture through the present-day. If anyone was totally ignorant of the phenomenon of the novel, he was advised to read translations from French novels. Mohammad Taher Mirza's translations from Dumas's *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (*Three Musketeers*) and *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* were considered particularly as great reads for beginners. Ebrahim Zanjani, an influential figure of the era, became as well acquainted generally with novels by reading those books in 1895 or 1896 (Mirza Saleh, 1379/2000: 149).

Furthermore, a considerable number of citizens had the ability to read French sources directly. 'Most Iranians who had been and/or studied abroad had been to France and thus French was the lingua franca for cultural matters. According to Eʿtemad al-Saltaneh, in 1887, there were 4,000 to 5,000 people in Tehran who knew French.' (Floor, 2005: 220) At the turn of the century, these citizens could find a large selection of original French

books in the well-known bookshops of Tehran (including the famous bookshop, Tarbiyat). Literary books, which provided related material for the Curriculum of Foreign schools in Tehran, were especially common. (Nateq, 1375/1996: 53-54) People also could reach a wide range of French novels in the library of French books at *Dar al-Fonun* [polytechnic college], which opened in January of 1908 (Kouhestani-nejad 1395/2016: 363). Therefore, it was not surprising that Iranians read and translated world literature (including English novels) from French sources at that time. As Anvar Khamei (1917- 2018), a famous political activist, remembers, in his early childhood his father read the French translation of *Robinson Crusoe* to him and orally translated it to Persia (Khamei, 1380/2001: 14). In some cases, the translation of non-French literary canons such as *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isfahan* (1824) and the abridged edition of *Don Quixote* was based on French versions.

Never any work of Dickens translated in Iran during this period, although novels such as *Bleak House* and *Nicholas Nickleby* by him were available in the Qajar Royal Library (Hakim, 2004: 883-884). While the works of Shakespeare were not published in Persian, aside from exceptional cases, a considerable volume of Moliere's plays were translated and staged. The translations of the plays *Le Mariage forcé* (1664; The Forced Marriage), *Le Médecin malgré lui* (1667; The Doctor in Spite of Himself), and *Tartuffe* (1667) significantly influenced Iranian social novels. *Le Mariage forcé* helped the formation of the theme of criticizing forced marriage and arranged marriage in Persian novels. Moliere's technique in the other two plays enriched the characterization of imposters and hypocrites in early Persian social novels (e.g., symbolic types of the sheikh and dandy). In both plays, the real identity of the main characters is unmasked in the course of the drama.

Another trend in Iran's narrative market was the massive interest in French *roman-feuilleton* (the serial novel running in regular episodes in French newspaper columns between 1836 and the early years of the twentieth century) (Tortonese, 2006: 182-183). According to Brooks, this genre was the first industrial form of literature (Brooks 1992: 146-147). However, Persian readers were rarely aware of the process of publication of these serial novels and consumed them in their final format as books. Many of the widely favored novels in the Iranian market were actually the masterpieces of *roman-feuilleton*, most notably works of Eugène Sue (*The Mysteries of Paris*, 1842-3 and *The Wandering*

Jew, 1844-5), Pierre Alexis Ponson du Terrail (*Rocambole* Series, 1857-71), Michel Zévaco (*Pardaillan* Series, 1907-1926), Maurice Leblanc (*Arsène Lupin* series, 1905-1939). Arsène Lupin's character (a gentleman thief who enjoys solving riddles) was originally created in reaction to the success of the *Sherlock Holmes* detective stories. But Ironically, the Iranian readers of the era selected Lupin over Holmes: another sign for the centrality of French literature in Iranian narrative market.

***

The view of traditional scholars towards Iran's book market, which had roman-feuilleton at its center, followed two main positions. Ahmad Kasravi was a figure who influenced scholars and traditional moralism, and he was at the one end of the spectrum. In a series of essays entitled "On the Novel," he demonstrated that he did not tolerate the phenomenon of the novel at all unless it dealt with historical events:

> I consider novels as a pointless phenomenon and writing and reading them as nothing but wasting life. I regret [that] useless Western phenomena are easily propagated in the East. They might say that the goal of the novel is Teaching lessons, while the theme of most European novels is the story of prostitutes. What lessons have Alexander Dumas and Anatole France taught people except to lead many men and women towards corruption? (…) If the goal of the novel is really mixing lessons with story to teach readers, why doesn't anyone write real historical fictions, which are more effective than anything else? Why don't they translate the history of Napoleon and the biography of George Washington? (Ahmad Kasravi, On Novels, 1932)

The other more moderate view on novels criticized the escapist aspect of the popular literature. According to this view, the Iranian readers of popular French novels took refuge in the stories and their exotic places to escape from the reality of Iran's everyday society. Some who adopted this view addressed the audience of novels as follows:

> O' you youth fascinated by the West who have recently learned French and English, why are you so interested in European novels far from truth? What is the joy of reading a novel about the fate of sailors or pirates or a novel about a journey to Antarctica?" (Farhang, 1926)

> O' readers who are familiar with night thefts of European thieves, what use do you make of the description of the death of a beautiful girl? Go and enjoy reading the stories of thieves and pirates; you can find nothing but strange names and people in those novels. That is why reading them makes you happy. (Shadman, 1929)

An alternative recommended by this more moderate group was translating classical novels. Hassan Taghizadeh, the well-known scholar, when responding to a survey asking what type of books should be translated wrote, "care should be taken in translating novels which have become the everyday nutrition of people around the world, as it can be extremely dangerous". He was concerned that "dangerous novels" might determine youths' lives. Taghizadeh suggested the translation of classical works such as *The Divine Comedy* by Dante, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, as well as the works of Pushkin, Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, Anatole France and Victor Hugo.

This view on novels was also reflected in one of the best-seller novels of the period, *I, Too, Have Wept* (Jahangir Jalili). In an approach similar to Flaubert's in *Madame Bovary*, the main character, who is a prostitute, considers the translators of French roman-feuilletons as the main reason for her fall into prostitution. According to Jalili, the translated popular novels do not possess a quality higher than the most symbolic sample of Qajar's popular literature, which were *Amir Arsalan* and the Persian translation of *One Thousand and One Nights* (1843) and are updated and Europeanized versions of them. In *I, Too, Have Wept,* the prostitute addresses the translators of her time in such way:

> Why don't you ask the translators of romances far from truth why they have translated those books? They try to mislead the thoughts of young boys and girls by translating Western versions of *One Thousand and One Nights*. It must be asked which problem of our society is solved by translating Maurice Leblanc's books [*Arsène Lupin* series] and nonsense stories of Michel Zévaco [Author of *Les Pardaillan* series]; why don't they use the time spent for translating *Rocambole* [series, by Pierre Alexis Ponson du Terrail] for translating more useful works? Most students read *Nostradamus* or European *Amir Arsalan*, but

> translators do not translate better works from the treasure of Western literature. Why don't they translate [John Milton's] *Paradise Lost*, instead? (Jalili, 1932)

It seems that these strictures were limited to the social novel. Rarely was a historical novel – whether originally written in Persian or in translation – criticized for its popular quality. The historical nature alone created a margin of safety for this genre of novel and guaranteed positive reception among critics. Even in some cases, arbitrary interpretations of the history of the novel were given. For example, Abu-Torab Khan-e Nouri-e Nazm al-Dowleh, in the introduction to the historical novel *Mary Stuart* (Dumas), writes:

> It is evident to the elite that Western writers have invented the style of novel writing to adorn historical issues with fictitious elements and encourage different tastes to read [history] due to the sweetness [of the story] so that the taste does not get disturbed soon, and [as a consequence] readers learn and memorize the basic historical principles with ease.

The cultural elites of the late Qajar and the first Pahlavi dynasty assumed that the main duty of the novelist was representing Iran's splendid distant past. According to Ebrahim Zanjani

> The best novels are those that cover the history of an era, celebrate the heads of nation, make the nation to be proud of positive points of their history and raise the national pride in the hearts of youth. Involving romantic relations in such novels encourages the readers to read these types of novels. (Zanjani, 2000:149)

Thus, it is not surprising that during the two first decades of the emergence of Iranian novels (around 1904–1925) that most novels that were considered outstanding or phenomenal were historical in nature. It seems that these novels were used as a tool for managing society during Iran's liminal conditions:

> The emergence of the Persian Historical novels in Iran was an endeavor to locate security and identity in the past. The defeat of the Constitutional Revolution in realizing its aims, liberty and the reign of law and, later, the social and economic consequences of World War I created conditions which were absolutely insecure and ambiguous. Each social class (…) suffred from the unclear and confusing environment of political and cultural life. It was not accidental that the major

> themes of the Persian historical novels focused on those historical past times which bore witness to the greatness of Iranians. (Ahmadzadeh, 2003: 116)

In contrast, social novels seemed to be uncontrollable. In view of their critics, they did not create peace, but instead worsened the situation. These novels had controversial subject matters from the very beginning, dealing with issues such as dark side of urban life, mainly the unfair position of Persian women in the early 'twenties. The first major social novel, *The Dreadful Tehran*/*Tihran-i Makhuf* (written by Morteza Moshfeq Kazemi,), published in 1922 and inspired a trend of social melodramas in Iranian literature. Most popular novels published in 1922 to 1941 followed the themes, cultural stereotypes, and plots of *The Dreadful Tehran*, leading to the emergence of a kind of "formula literature" with social theme in that era. Many of these novels depicted "the naïve young girl who falls madly in love with a man who exploits her sexually, then abandons her to a life of prostitution or death at childbirth. An alternative plot centers on arranged marriages." (Najmabadi, 2005:287)

Regarding the common theme of novels of this era, Ali Gheissari, the researcher of Iranian cultural history concludes:

> Among the most common themes of this literature was the loss of the security of a traditional life; the characters were cast adrift in an unstable and insecure environment. Typical victims were woman and ex-villagers, the two groups most in danger of being harmed by the loss of traditional ways, or at least so regarded by some male authors. (Gheissari 1997:60)

No Surprise, the social novel was presented as an inauthentic and unreliable representation that only distorted society's realities and made everything look unpleasant. Especially since these novels were imitations of popular French literature in many cases, degrading labels were gradually attached to this genre of literature, such as brothel literature.[2] Criticisms and labels made the authors' attempts to interpret their contemporary society's problems to never be recognized (even in contemporary times), and these novels became completely marginalized.

[2] Perhaps one of the other reasons this period's social novels were not so critically acclaimed and approved was that they overlooked the religious sensitivities of a significant number of Iranians by paying too much attention to the detailed narrative of the prostitutes.

1.3 The Socio-Political Context in Rise of Reza Shah

1.3.1 The collapse of the Qajar Dynasty

According to John Foran, the 20th century for Iran was a century of social movements and revolutions (see Foran, 1994: xii). The assassination of the fourth Qajar-king, Naser ad-Din Shah (1831–1896), marked the beginning of the gradual decline of the Qajar dynasty. The long regency of Naser ad-Din Shah gradually made him a proficient preserver of the status quo.

> More significantly he kept both Britain and Russia satisfied and maintained an equilibrium in the award of concessions. Although the country remained stagnant, the last forty years of his rule was a period of relative stability and peace, and whether by chance or his acumen the territorial boundaries of Iran remained substantially intact. (Ghani, 2001: 4)

Nonetheless, scholars agree that the last years of Naser ad-Din Shah's reign were a time of repression, insurgency and disorder (e.g., see Ettehadie Nezam-Mafi, 2012: 333, Richard, 2019: 141).

Naser ad-Din Shah's children were vastly inferior to him. His eldest surviving son, Mas'oud Mirza Zell al Soltan, could not inherit the throne because he did not come from the Qajar tribe. The throne passed to the next surviving son, Mozaffar ad-Din (1853–1907; Ghani 2001: 5). Moẓaffar ad-Din Shah (r. 1896–1907), who was chronically ill and weak of character, was much less able than his father to act as sovereign and maintain authority during his reign. He was unable to effectively support the interests of the Iranian population. He was neither able to protect the country against the interference of Great Britain and Russia in governmental affairs. Rather, Moẓaffar ad-Din Shah tried to personally profit financially from these circumstances (Tohidipur, 2012: 180).

The granting of concessions played an important role during Moẓaffar ad-Din Shah's reign in covering outstanding state finances. As in the time of Naser ad-Din Shah, Russia and Great Britain competed with each other. Trade agreements guaranteed Russian merchants free market access without being subject to Iranian law. The British government was also granted extensive trade concessions.

To finance extravagant trips to Europe for the Shah, his prime minister Amin as-Salṭaneh applied for two loans from the Russian government. The first in 1900 and the second two years later in 1902. The first loan obligated Iran to repay all of its debts in Great Britain and to not take out any further loans in other countries without Russia's consent. With the application for the second loan, the Iranian government accepted to grant Russia certain economic concessions (Keddie, 1999: 52). Due to the high debt sums and the extensive expenditure of the Iranian government, the Russian aid payments were fully paid out within five years (1900–1905). Without Russia's knowledge, the British secured the exploitation of the Iranian oil reserves through concessions acquired by British entrepreneur William Knox D'Arcy (Ettehadie Nezam-Mafi, 2012: 335).

The increasing presence of foreign influences in the economy and politics of Iran and the poor development of the living situation in the country led to increased resentment in large parts of the population. Protest movements in the last years of the nineteenth century led to momentous and radical forms of riot. These reform movements increased between 1900 and 1906.[3] In addition, the victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and the Russian Revolution in 1905 may have also affected these movements (Katouzian, 2009: 178, Keddie, 1999: 54). In 1906, in the last phase of the reign of Mozaffar ad-Din Shah, representatives of a constitutional movement pushed through their demands for the assembling of a parliament and the establishment of law and order. After the establishment of a parliament, the constitution was passed in January 1907 and a constitutional monarchy was proclaimed (Khosrawi Shahroudi, 1998: 13).

With this Constitutional Revolution, the need to reform the administrative system became more apparent. Therefore, various laws were passed to create new administrative areas and prevent personal enrichment. However, due to the breakup of the constitutional movement these legal provisions would not be implemented (Devos, 2006: 40). This movement would nevertheless create the legal basis on which later reforms of the Pahlavi period would be built.

Mozaffar ad-Din Shah died exactly five days after signing Iran's first constitution. He was succeeded by his son Mohammad Ali Shah (r. 1907–1911) who was, under the

[3] On the role of Great Britain in the uprisings at this stage, see, Keddie, Nikki, "British Policy and the Iranian Opposition 1901-1907", in: The Journal of Modern History 39 (1967) 3, p. 266-282.

influence of Russia, hostile to the constitutional movement.[4] In the same year Great Britain and Russia – without Iran's consent – signed the Treaty of Saint Petersburg. In this agreement the two powers agreed on the delimitation of their influence in Tibet, Iran and Afghanistan (Keddie/Amanat, 1991: 204). Iran was then divided into a Russian (in the north), British (in the south) and neutral zone.[5] On June 23, 1908, Mohammad Ali Shah ended the constitutional movement with a bloodbath. He dissolved the National Assembly by force of arms and suspended the constitution. The so-called "little despotism" began (Khosrawi Shahroudi, 1998: 13), and violent unrest ensued across the country. In 1909 the constitutionalists finally conquered the capital, Tehran, and forced Mohammad Ali Shah to resign. He left the throne to the last Qajar-king, his underage son Ahmad Shah (r. 1909–1925).[6] This event was followed by the second phase of the Constitutional Revolution. The parliament resumed its work, but the differences and disparities between the various political directions were too great to be able to achieve a stable situation.

The dire financial situation caused the government to bring a delegation of American financial experts into the country in 1911 (Keddie/Amanat, 1991: 206). This displeased the Russians. Under great pressure from the Russians and their military, the Iranian government yielded to the threats and ordered the expulsion of the Americans, despite parliament's opposition. The government then banned the members of parliament and dissolved the governing body again (Keddie, 1999: 62, Khosrawi Shahroudi 1998: 159-179). This meant the end of the constitutional movement (Katouzian, 2009: 191). Following these events, the so-called "great despotism" emerged, and no new parliament would be elected until the outbreak of the First World War (Keddie/Amanat, 1991: 207).

[4] On the relations of Mohammad Ali Shah to Russia, see Taghizadeh, Hassan, Maghalat-e Taghizadeh, ed. of *Afshar*, Iraj, 4 Vols., Tehran 1349/1970, Vol. I, p. 267.

[5] Interestingly, the first oil wells found in 1908 were in the neutral zone, see Keddie, Nikkie, Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan, p. 59.

[6] For a historical account of the last Qajar king see Qa'em Maghami, Jahangir (Ed.), Asnad-e tarikhi-ye vaghayeʿ-e mashrute-ye Iran: nameh-haye Zahir ad-Dauleh, Teheran 1348/1969, p. 110; Sheykh al-Islami, Mohammad Javad, Sima-ye Ahmad Shah-e Qajar, Tehran 1387/2008.

1.3.2 Iran during the World War I (1914–1921)

The period of World War I, both politically and economically, can be regarded as the most miserable period of the Qajars.[7] Aḥmad Shah came of age and was officially crowned a few days before the outbreak of the war. Elections took place and the third parliament began its work (Katouzian, 2009: 192). Although Iran officially proclaimed its neutrality at the beginning of World War I, the country nonetheless became a battlefield of four great powers: Russia, Great Britain, Germany and the Ottoman Empire (Keddie/Amanat 1991: 208). The war caused severe devastation and famine (ibid.), and the internal chaos in the country was made worse by the far-reaching interventions of foreign powers. The parliament dissolved again and would not reconvene until the post-war period.

During this time, the country fell entirely into the hands of the British and Russians, who made the previously agreed on economic zones of influence from on the Treaty of 1907 their zones of occupation (Ghani, 2000: 18). Though the Russian military supremacy began to gradually decline with the October Revolution (1917) and the Brest-Litowsk Peace Treaty (1918), the Russian troops did not leave the country completely until the post-war period (Keddie/Amanat, 1991: 208). With the weakening of Iran's central power and the subsequent withdrawal of the Russians, the British enjoyed extensive supremacy in the country. They used this dominance to exploit, primarily by urging the Iranian government to sign the 1919 agreement (Katouzian, 2009: 196-199). This agreement ensured Iran's complete economic and political dependence on Great Britain, making Iran its de facto protectorate. The Iranian Parliament, however, did not ratify the agreement, which again led to clashes with the British (ibid.).

In 1921 the British decided not to ratify the 1919 agreement and concentrated instead on strengthening a central Iranian power under the leadership of the Cossack Reza Khan Pahlavi (1878–1944) (Jamalzadeh, 1981: 740). Through a coup supported by the British (Zirinsky, 1992: 650), on February 21, 1921 Reza Khan and Seyyed Ziyaʾ ad-Din Ṭabaṭabaʾi were able to force the then government (with Sepahsalar as prime minister) to resign (Keddie, 1999: 78). Between 1921–1925 Reza Khan acted as war, finance and

[7] For a brief description of this phase, see Keddie, Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan, p. 65-77.

prime minister until he finally succeeded on October 31, 1925 in convincing parliament to depose the last Qajar-king Ahmad Shah and thus end the Qajar dynasty (Katouzian 2009: 203). On December 12, 1925 Reza Khan was raised to king (Reza Shah) and thusly founded the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979). [8]

1.3.3 Reza Khan as a Social Construction

In its socio-political history, Iran lost most of its land during the Qajar dynasty. The reason for this was the numerous armed conflicts with Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century (1804–13, 1826–28) but also the loss of Herat (1837–38, 1856–57) and the cession of Afghanistan to Great Britain during the reign of Naser ad-Din Shah (1857).

> As the century wore on, Iranian self-confidence turned to doubt, and the objectives of both foreign policy and domestic reform turned inwards to become defensive, focusing on the survival of the state. Both early Qajar strategies of regional hegemony, and latterly resistance to further losses of territory and sovereignty, required the strengthening of the state, and the unlocking of the secrets of military success apparently possessed by Europe. (Cronin, 2012: 149)

Ironically, in reforming his army, Naser ad-Din Shah sought help from the Russians. In 1879 a mission of Russian Cossacks arrived in Iran from the Caucasus to officer a new military unit, the Iranian Cossack Brigade.

> The arrival of the Russian mission followed a formal request from the shah, Nasir al-Din, who had been impressed by the troops of the Russian Cossack regiments whom he had seen on parade as he had passed through the Caucasus on his way to Europe. Nasir al-Din Shah's unprecedented request for Cossack officers, offering Russia a direct presence within the Iranian state and its military forces, was a radical departure from the apprehension shown by the Qajars towards their northern neighbour since the defeats of the early nineteenth century. For Nasir

[8] A brief introduction to the Pahlavi dynasty under Reza Shah is offered by Hambly, Gavin, "The Pahlavī Autocracy: Reżā Shāh, 1921-1941", in: The Cambridge History of Iran, Bd. VII, p. 213-243.

> al-Din Shah, the arrival of the Russian mission was another step in the long Qajar quest to tap into the secrets of European military strength. (Cronin, 2012: 163)

Around 1920 the White Russian officers of the Cossack Brigade were dismissed by the British and replaced with Iranian soldiers and a British liaison officer (Keddie, 1999: 78). One of these Iranian Soldiers was Reza Khan Mir Panj, a Persian soldier with an imposing presence, who, with the help of British forces, succeeded in gaining power in February 1921. Whether the British government was the main actor in this coup or only a supporter of Reza Khan in his project is not of great importance here. What is important is that Reza Khan was a social construction that was invented and constructed in the socio-political emergency situation of the Iranian society. The truth was that in that time, Iran found itself in a desperate situation:

> Rebellion raged in the north, with Bolshevik support, and in Tabriz. The country was exhausted. To add further to the misery, Spanish flu did not spare Iran, where the pandemic, worsened by the famine that resulted from bad harvests and the paralysis in transportation, claimed the lives of tens of thousands. To these hardships was added […] constant insecurity. Caravans were regularly plundered by groups of bandits […]. The Iranian army was in total collapse: the soldiers were ragged, and the lack of discipline was amplified by the absence of pay. (Yann, 2019: 157)

The more the situation deteriorated, the more many people hoped for a complete change of government. In such a precarious situation where the intellectuals saw the future of the constitutional movement as hopeless, the rest of the population saw in Reza Khan a savior who, like Bismarck or Garibaldi, would liberate Iran from poverty, hunger and need. He indeed embodied an authoritarian despot who was able, with his extraordinary superpowers, to unite and centralize the broken Iran and to suppress any turmoil.

After one decade of attempts by the constitutionalists to establish nationalist aspirations through political institutions, Reza Khan now strove to secure Iran's borders and territory with the help of a powerful standing army (Kashani-Sabet, 1999: 158). In contrast to Ahmad Shah, who was perceived as libidinal, ingrown, incompetent and effeminate, Rezah Khan was a "true man," a hypermasculine military man, a

superhuman,[9] who was able to protect Iran and transform it to a secure, unified and, above all, modern country (Najmabadi, 2005:129).

In this situation of prevalent anarchy and insecurity, many Iranians wanted a stronger state and greater national unity. The existing chaos and the desire for order cleared the way for Reza Khan to exercise power all over the country. As Ghani describes, Reza Kahn had captured the spirit of the time and this specific need of the Iranians very precisely:

> Reza Khan made no pretence to intellect or learning, but he knew early what his goals were. He was the hedgehog in the saying, "The fox knows many things; the hedgehog knows only one thing but knows that one thing well." The one thing was that tribal power first must be eradicated. Only then could an independent state be constructed. There was, however, a great deal of fox in Reza Khan as well. It was this singleness of purpose and exceptional will that had turned an ordinary soldier into a leader. (Ghani, 2001: 282)

As mentioned before, it was not only Reza Shah himself and his courage that made his leadership possible. He was also supported by many others:

> a great number of political and intellectual actors of that time [who] agreed willingly to the transfer of this authoritarian discourse into Iran, even a number of opponents to Reza Shah! This ruler and the modernist builders who supported him well understood his authoritarian, if not to say totalitarian, discourse [and] succeeded ultimately in exacting not only political but also cultural hegemony in Gramsci's sense. (Fragner, 2015: 227)

The support by intellectuals of Reza Khan's leadership is also evident in a collection of essays written in response to a competition in the journal *Shefaq-e Sorkh.* The competition solicited answers to the following questions: What is the ideal of the nation? What do we want? What shall we want? How, by which means and from whom shall we request it? This competition was held between June and October 1923, and twenty

[9] Reza Khan was also called "the father of nation". In the critical years after the second parliament in 1911 and the coming to power in 1921 of Reza Khan, the nation under the reign of an underaged and ineffectual monarch, remained fatherless. This was until Reza Khan consolidated and centralized power. "In a postcard from this period, an old humpbacked woman (Iran) is depicted as begging the *sardar sipah* (chief of the armed forces, as Riza Khan was at the time) to hug her tightly for the night, so that she would wake up young at dawn." (Najmabadi, 2005: 129).

of the most notable political and cultural actors of that time answered these questions in detail. One red thread running through many of these texts was the explicit or implicit response that Reza Khan was the ideal leader of Iran and that he was the person who could help rescue the country from its current misery (Bayat, 2020: 13–17).

1.3.4 The Coup of 1921 and its Aftermath

The taking of Tehran happened without any resistance. The coup leaders declared martial law and arrested dozens of men close to the court. After the coup d'état Reza Khan became army commander and his companion Seyyed Zia' ad-Din Tabataba'i, a nationalist and pro-British journalist, became prime minister. However, Seyyed Zia' ad-Din Tabataba'I's cabinet would last just a few months.

As a result of weakness in management and lack of functional plans for running the country, the government changed numerous times from the Constitutional Revolution (1906–11) to the 1921 coup. After the term of Seyyed Zia' ad-Din Tabataba'i, Ghavam as-Saltaneh founded the next cabinet on June 4, 1921. The second cabinet of Ghavam as-Saltaneh was next founded on June 17, 1922. The next prime minister, Moshir ad-Dowleh, came soon after on January 25, 1922. The following prime minister was Mostowfi al-Mamalek, whose cabinet was established January 31, 1923. In that same year Moshir ad-Dowleh again became prime minister on June 17, 1923. The last Qajar cabinet was founded on October 26, 1923 and saw Reza Khan serving as prime minister (Rahmanian, 1378/2009: 54–129).

For the Iranian society and government, the years after the coup were years of disorder and disorientation. In these years, Reza Khan attempted to consolidate power and organize a strong, centralized government. Furthermore, Reza Khan's control of the army made his position so strong that he could leave the shah without any power. In October 1923 Ahmad Shah, when preparing to leave to Europe, announced Reza Khan as his prime minister. As in all cabinets before, Reza Khan also kept his war portfolio and was thus also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces (Keddie, 1999: 81–84).

> Finally, in December 1925, he convened a Constituent Assembly to depose the Qajar dynasty and offer him, Reza Khan, the imperial throne. In April of the

> following year, wearing a military uniform and the royal jewels, Reza Khan crowned himself – in a style of his hero Napoleon – the Shah-in-Shah of Iran. (Abrahamian, 1982: 199)

Not until after the 1941 Allied intervention in Iran would any legislative body dare to oppose Reza Khan (Ghods, 2012: 97).

Reza Shah Pahlavi [10] never left his military cloak and boots aside. During his supreme reign, Reza Shah's performance as a military man affected the whole socio-political condition of the country. The army was his domain, and he did not want to see it taken over by either Britons or Russians (Yann, 2019: 161). His political program for Iran can be summarized as despotism and modernization. To consolidate his personal power, Reza Shah reduced the parliament and cabinet. He systematically organized sham elections where candidates had been pre-selected and took care to prevent parliamentary debates.[11] "In 1927, he suppressed the Communist and socialist parties; Communist leaders were imprisoned or forced to flee abroad. All other parties were soon dismantled." (Ghods, 2012: 100).

His idea of prosperity and development was to modernize the country in terms of strengthening the infrastructure and endorsing the culture of nationalism in all levels. Because he could effectively put down any regional threats,[12] build up a strong army and gather an overwhelming power in his own hands, Reza Shah was able to,

> launch major changes from an Iran that had, as yet, no serious public education system, few roads, no railroad, very little reform in the position of women, and was dependent to the west, into a more modernized country with all the contradictory gains and losses for different groups of the population such rapid modernization entailed. (Keddie, 1999: 88)

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[10] After he obliged the Iranians to register their families at the registry office, he chose Pahlavi as surname, "which went back to the Parthian dynasty and the language of the Sasanids, a nationalist allusion." (Yann, 2019: 162).

[11] This fraud of the Constitution was repeated with the exception of the 1942-1953 period until the revolution 1979.

[12] Reza Khan suppressed one by one the rebellions that threatened the unity of the country. In Tabriz (a city north-west of Iran), the uprising by Khiabani had been blanketed in 1920. Further on he crushed, with as much brutality, the local revolts by Colonel Pesyan in the north-west of the country, by Simko in Kurdistan in 1922. He also, put an end to the revolt of Sheikh Khaz'al, an Arab tribal chief ruling over the south of Iran (Khuzestan) and part of southern Iraq (Yann, 2019: 164, Keddie/Amanat, 1991: 208).

At this time when India, Turkey, the Caucasus, and Central Asia were linked by effective networks, Iran had no railroads. One of the symbolic realizations of Reza Shah's nationalism in the economic field was the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway. This railway would link Khorramshahr (in the south) to Tehran and the Caspian plain (in the north). The Caspian plain was thus opened to passengers and goods, and oil products from the Caucasus would now be replaced by Iranian oil products from the south (Bharier, 1971: 206).

> Work on the Trans-Iranian lasted eleven years, from 1927 to 1938. Construction of the line spanned 1,400 km (840 miles), included 4,700 bridges and 224 tunnels, and monopolized many of the fiscal resources of the Iranian state, notably a special tax on sugar and tea, so that Iran did not have to borrow a single rial to finance it. It was an entirely Iranian enterprise. Certainly, the engineering was entrusted to foreign companies, Swedish–Danish, American, German, and Russian, but it was above all a matter of national pride. Ninety percent of the personnel was Iranian, which gave a strong boost to industry and to the training of skilled technical workers. (Yann, 2019: 188–189)

While implementing diverse reforms in different sections of the society, Reza Shah did not take the cultural context and the willingness of the Iranian population for quick change into consideration. For example, the outlawing of the use of the veil in 1936 was one of his most tactless reforms. By instigating such reforms Reza Shah challenged the vast religious population and their rooted beliefs.

> The law prohibiting women to wear the veil in public spaces transferred the problem to the most private area of life. In fact, women in many traditional societies […] are the carriers of the reputation of the family that is jealously defended by men. An attack on the dignity or honor (namus) of a sister or a wife has immediately to be countered with an honor crime. Thus, unveiling women was a form of rape more deeply felt than an ideological attack against Islam. […] Traditional families tried to keep their girls at home instead of educating them in public schools. (Yann, 2019: 175)

It could be said that the obligatory unveiling, far from contributing to the emancipation of women, actually slowed it down.

1.3.5 Reza Khan as a Charismatic Figure

The main reason why such a phenomenon like Reza Khan, later Reza Shah, could emerge in this specific time of Iranian history was the distress and hardship that the Iranian society was dealing with. They longed for a supernatural, charismatic figure to release them from their misery. As Weber notes, an attributed charismatic authority is considered "extraordinary and endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities […] regarded as divine in origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them [qualities] the individual concerned is treated as a leader" (Weber 1978: 241). It is in this sense that Reza Khan was a charismatic leader, especially in the first period of his reign (1921–1926) (Ghods, 1989: 93), and his authority was also charismatic. Later, in his second period of regency, Reza Khan's authority became routinized. Weber further points out that if these relationships are not to remain a transitory phenomenon, they, and the charismatic authority they are connected with "cannot remain stable; they will become either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both" (ibid., 246). What Weber means is that, over time, either a bureaucracy vested with rational legal authority will supersede the charismatic leader or institutionalized structures will incorporate the charismatic impetus. This rationalization or institutionalization process is what Weber refers to as the routinization of charisma.

Years before the final phase of Reza Khan's reign, his charismatic authority had become routinized, and Reza Khan was not the charismatic leader he was before. The superhuman who could unify Iran as a whole nation was now a totalitarian figure who crushed the voice of ethnic monitories (Azeris and Kurds suffered especially from this intensified Persian chauvinism; Ghods, 2012: 107).

On the other hand, for fear of German retaliation, Reza Shah delayed in dismissing, as the Allies had demanded, the many German experts in Iran, among whom there were evidently many political agents (Azari-Sharezaei, 1374/1995: xxv). "The British decision to invade Iran was followed by a very short military campaign. The mighty army that was the pride of Reza Shah did not fight for long, and there were few victims. Thus, the dictator who terrorized his people was swept away without regret, with the collaboration of his prime minister, Mohammad Foroughi." (Yann, 2019: 190).

Intellectuals started to debate again; newspapers discovered freedom of expression; women went around in veils and the clergies in turbans; Iran found itself again at last while under the domination of foreign troops. To replace the fallen king, the British flirted with the idea of placing a Qajar pretender on the throne, who did not speak Persian, but finally agreed to the succession of Mohammad-Reza Pahlavi (1919–80) (Wright, 2001: 213).

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Liminality

Every Academician who is willing to tackle liminality in contemporary societies probably does not find any better entry than Arnold van Gennep's fundamental work, *Rites de Passage* (Finished at the end of 1908, published in 1909, and first become available in English in 1960). However, it is nearly impossible to read van Gennep nowadays and not hear the echoes of Victor Turner's ideas from the lines of van Gennep's classic book. It may not be exaggerated to claim that Turner's rendering of van Gennep's theoretical legacy is such a compelling one that challenges the prospective scholars of this field of study to have an independent view on liminality other than Turner's articulation.

In *Rites of Passage* van Gennep started out by suggesting a meaningful classification of all existing rites. He distinguished between rites that mark the passage of an individual or social group from one status to another from those which mark transitions in the passage of time (e.g. harvest, new year), whereupon he went on to explore "the basis of characteristic patterns in the order of ceremonies" (Gennep, 1960: 10). Stressing the importance of transitions in any society, van Gennep singled out rites of passage as a special category, consisting of three sub-categories, namely rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation. Van Gennep called the middle stage in a rite of passage a liminal period (Gennep, 1960: 11). He called transition rites liminal rites, and he called rites of incorporation postliminal rites. Van Gennep also noted that the rites of separation, transition, and incorporation are not equally important or elaborated in specific rituals, and that the tripartite structure is sometimes reduplicated in the transitional period itself: in liminality proper, the sequence of separation, transition and incorporation is often present. Van Gennep detected a pattern, a sequence, a ritual form. The ritual pattern was apparently universal: all societies use rites to demarcate transitions.

Liminality represents a main factor in the development of society. It is a concept that is described as a reflection phase in which the individuals are introduced in a transition state from separation to incorporation. In liminality, a person is transported in an ambiguous state named by Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner "threshold stage", where the individual is disclaiming his own self where he is dispossessed by what he

had. In the liminal space, the individual is confronting three stages: the uncertainty or the ambiguous state, the possibility to adapt to new norms, rules and values and the third stage is the pre-integration.

The uncertainty is maintaining the person on an unknown level, where his old self has vanished. The individual relinquishes his past in order to pass the threshold stage. The second stage is about the possibility of individuals to adapt to the new norms, rules and values of the new position. From the moment when the person is separated from his old self, he wants to evolve faster to the new position. (Thomassen, 2009; Beech, 2010; Thomassen & Balle, 2012). A person who is in a liminal period is placed in an ambiguous state where his condition is put in an obscure state until he passes the threshold state. In this state, all the entities are localized in an unknown location, they are neither here nor there.

It was Victor Turner who rediscovered the importance of liminality. Turner, the leading name within symbolic anthropology, evolved van Gennep's perspective on the social experience of being in between states. For Turner, liminality was a condition of being betwixt and between socially established catagories, and not simply the condition of being in the midst of two stages in a ritual. Liminality could also be the condition of being suspended or even trapped between two different sets of role expectations, a condition often leading to impassivity, or even to a social impasse. Turner inspired a whole string of anthropologists who have put the concept of liminality as a social category to good use, most famously perhaps Mary Douglas. In her book *Purity and Danger*, Douglas focused on the problem of categorization. Douglas charted in detail how one animal, in one social setting, was seen to be betwixt and between categories, and so effectively beyond categories. She then went on to broaden the perspective by drawing in a plethora of other examples, and landed on the conclusion that where pure categories do not apply, feelings of insecurity and danger ensue. Douglas does not put the category of liminality at the centre of her analysis, preferring to focus on the conceptual pair of purity and danger, but her theorising clearly hails from the liminal tradition. The perspective has changed a bit, too; instead of focusing on temporality, as did van Gennep and Turner, Douglas is interested in how the boundary is a place inscribed by a particular mood, namely fear.

2.2 Symbolic Types

According to Richard Grathoff, the social phenomenologist, symbolic types are most likely to appear in contexts where ambiguity and inconsistency threaten, and their introduction forces a unity on this context. Symbolic Types or potential leaders have always emerged in times of liminality. The Idea of Symbolic Types is connected with the Question of Order, and Don Handelman proposed it, in order to understand how cohesion is regained in liminal and chaotic situations. Handelman formulated this idea, on the shoulders of Orrin E. Klapp, the author of *Heroes, Villains, and Fools: The Changing American Character* (1962) and then, Richard H. Grathoff, the author of *The Structure of Social Inconsistencies: A Contribution to a Unified Theory of Play, Game and Social Action* (1970).

> The symbolic type refers to a human being whose presentation of self is of such extreme selfconsistency that he or she impacts on and moulds the contexts of social order rather than being determined by the latter. The symbolic type upends conventional relationships between social order and person. In traditional, modern and postmodern worlds, certain religious figures, cult leaders, political personages, terrorists, stars of the mass media, clowns, the mad and the aged have become symbolic types. Symbolic typing has been especially prominent, for example, in the aesthetics of fascist and communist leadership, and in those of Shi'a Islam. (Handelman, 1994)

Of all approaches to the study of symbolism, the theory of symbolic types is the only one that makes the living body the essential template of symbolic form. As such, the symbolic type must be distinguished from ideas of symbol, sign, and icon.[13]

[13] This distinction should be clarified because the latter concepts have long dominated discourse on symbolic action. "Umberto Eco's discussion of the Greek etymology of symbol locates precisely how this concept and that of symbolic type are at odds. Eco (Eco, 1985: 385) comments that, Originally a symbol was a token, the present half of a broken table or coin or medal, that performed its social and semiotic function by recalling the absent half to which it could have been potentially reconnected." Symbol is fragmentary, leading elsewhere and elsewhere. The impulsion of symbol, the fragment, is to join with its absent completion. In usual discourse, a symbol stands for, evokes, or brings into conjunction something else, something absent. It denotes that kind of relationship where certain components exist elsewhere, but are brought into some sort of connectivity with others that are present." (Handelman, 19994 &1998)

The symbolic type is an infrequent but potent moulder of the realities of others. Grathoff contrasted the symbolic type to the role type, the social role in sociological usage. “The concept of role is elemental to understanding human beings who act in concert. Although persons know one another through cultural categorizations and their associated normative prescriptions, the social roles they enact are constructed through interaction with others.” (Handelman, 1998:603) Therefore, roles are modified constantly and created anew through give-and-take, that is, through interpersonal negotiation. Constructed through others, roles necessarily are constituted through perspectives that join “self” and “other”. This in line with George Herbert Mead's idea of “taking the role of the other” as the interactionism basis of social life. (Handelman, 1985)

> The role is a locus of dialectical contradictions. These tensions within roles are controlled by and elaborated through the higher-order integration of context. As its etymology implies, "context" connotes a thrust or momentum toward the orchestration of disparate characters, themes, and behaviours. Their "weaving together" as context enables the coexistence of normative prescriptions and the practice of give-and-take. Context therefore reproduces the division of the "ideal" and the "real", without their synthesis. Context controls and directs the interaction of roles in social order. (Handelman, 1994)

Grathoff is focused on conditions in which context does not hold and fell apart, and where social roles either lacks the capacity or are too conflict-ridden to reintegrate social order. These are conditions of social inconsistencies, whose most extreme manifestation is that of anomie. Grathoff argues that in these conditions, “socially significant structural contours become blurred, vague, and finally entirely elusive. Mutual clarification of thematic fields and reciprocal constitution of (roles)...which had been possible before, no longer succeeds ... The situation cannot be united into context.” (Grathoff, 1970:120) Social order unravels, social action loses its relevance to day by day realities, and disintegration exposes irreducible social contradictions. (Handelamn, 1979, 1985, 1994, 1998)

On the other hand, the idea of icon is closer to that of symbolic type. Icon is figurative and holistic.

In Grathoff's view, symbolic types appear in such anomic conditions, tying together context so that an integrated field of social action can be maintained once more. Thus, depending on the logic of its internal composition, the symbolic type either can resynthesize and rearrange order or make and spread disorder. The symbolic type is a living, performing body of being whose embodiment is itself reflective of versions of social order. Embodiment here refers to the formation, coalescence, and incorporation of an integrated holism through the medium of the body. Thus, the embodied symbolic type functions as the equivalent of context, "while the type's premise of internal self-consistency replaces that of give-and-take among social roles that are directed by context. This embodied holism of the symbolic type enables it either to create or to destroy order." (Handelamn, 1985&1998)

The dramatic change from social role to symbolic type is profound in its consequence for social order, and yet it depends in principle on a single premise.

> A symbolic type comes into existence when and only when a person ceases to modify his or her behaviour in response to the reactions of others. That is, he ceases to respond to others through give-and-take. Then that person becomes wholly self-referential, wholly himself. The person contains not only his own self but also himself as Other, since others outside himself no longer partake of nor participate in his being. He becomes a tautological creation, the cause and effect of himself, of his self-reifying being in the world. For others, his being is characterized by extreme self-consistency -- since whatever he is, this is overdetermined. And since he is accountable to himself, his self-consistency can accord with that of an internal design of totalitarianism at one extreme or anarchy at another. Unlike the person enacting roles in relation to others outside himself, the symbolic type becomes a world unto himself, a totalistic being. Nonetheless, he holds to this typing only so long as he is impervious to negotiations with others over the character of his being. (Handelamn, 1994)

Symbolic types are characters that first and foremost signify themselves. The symbolic type signifies nothing beyond itself, thereby encompassing everyone beyond itself who accepts the type's uncompromising self-definition as the only reality. In the others' perceptions, they vary from the inhuman (for example, the Madman) to the superhuman (for example, the Prophet or Saviour). These extremes are intrinsic in the limits set on

others by a symbolic type's closure to give-and-take with them. (Handelman, 1985, 1994, 1998)

This closure radically limits interaction on the part of others with a symbolic type to only two options: either to reject the vision or design of reality projected by the type, or to approve it. “If one accepts the type's vision, one is then encompassed by the type who determines one's own perception of reality in keeping with its own reality. If one rejects the type, it becomes peripheral to the reality of others.” (Handelman, 1994) The rejected type may transforms into a Madman, while the accepted type is made into a Saviour or another culturally constructed charismatic character. Charisma becomes a function of the closure to alternatives that is embodied in symbolic typing. As such, the comprehension of charisma can be removed from the study of individual depth psychology (to where it was relegated by default by Weber), and charisma may be interpreted instead as a response of cultural design to extreme social conditions (Handelman, 1985&1998).

Rejection of a symbolic type (for example, the creation of Madman) makes it signify the boundaries between order and chaos. The rejected symbolic type is made wholly the prisoner of context without even the give-and-take that characterizes the negotiability of roles in everyday life. However, for those who accept the design of reality projected by the symbolic type the consequences are serious. In Meadian terms, those who accept the symbolic type must perceive themselves through its vision of the world. “… this vision is utterly self-consistent and closed to give-and-take. Therefore, those others are ensnared within the self-signifying, self-reifying perspective and discourse of the type. To interact with the type that one embraces is to do so wholly on its own terms”. (Handelman, 1994)

The visions or projections of many symbolic types are more akin to designs of culture than they are to the personal idiosyncracies of the individuals in question. This is why, according to Grathoff, the accepted symbolic type can resynthesize a disintegrated social order.

> To take the viewpoint of a symbolic type is not to see oneself in the type, but rather to perceive and feel the symbolic type in oneself -- in other words, to be made over in the image or design the type projects. In extreme religious and political aesthetics alike, this is virtually akin to possession -- that is, to the

> enchanted loss of self in the other, the type, and therefore to becoming an object constructed by that other. These qualities of the symbolic type not only make it relatively autonomous of context, but indeed reify the type above social order. This is so because the type holistically subsumes the totality of its own reality. Thus the symbolic type is its own context. (Handelman, 1994)

As a result, first, the symbolic type imposes limits in keeping with the consistency of its own internal design, and second, the type determines the context of others - the type impacts on social order to deform, to remake, and to change context. Therefore, the symbolic type can resynthesize social orders that have lost their coherence and fallen apart because others, enmeshed, perceive the world through that type. But these processes occur only because the type is constituted as a holistic being, a body in the widest sense. The symbolic type is an ambulatory and performative body, an embodying organism that, as others take on its perspective, projects its own self-referential, holistic vision of the world. Therefore it is not open to give-and-take, so to self-modification. A symbolic type becomes a "symbol" only when it collapses as a holistic, selfreferential typification. (Handelman, 1994&1998)

Applications of the concept of symbolic type have focused on the issue of how particular performative characters transform ritual context, and thereby enable certain rituals to actualize their programs by moving sequentially from one phase of the ritual to another. "The idea of symbolic type also is furthering understanding of how the uncertain give-and-take of mundane interaction becomes ritualized (and therefore more certain) without invoking a formal ritual context" (Handelman, 1998:605). Thus Smadar Lavie in *The poetics of military occupation* (1990) has developed the concept of "allegorical type" to explain how Bedouin personae ritualize the banality of everyday life through the telling of allegories when conversation becomes stuck on identity question. The allegorical type transforms and reorganizes the context of discourse through the narration of spontaneous, emergent allegories. These allegories enable interaction to proceed, while making this highly reflexive for the protagonists.

More generally, the idea of symbolic type extends the thinking of Victor Turner on liminal conditions for the emergence of antistructures. The development of the concept of symbolic type contributes significantly to an understanding of the genesis of ritualization as an emergent property of social behaviour, rather than as a product of

normative prescription. In turn, this provides one basis for the comprehension of how ritual processes, as such, emerge from within conditions of ritualization. (Handelman, 1994)

3. Method

3.1 The Qualitative Content Analysis

Until a few decades ago, not only popular literature, but also all texts of popular narrative structures were considered as irrelevant and superficial basis and data for sociological studies. The sociologists' approach to public issues and methodically and systematically studying it in order to identify social mechanisms is a rather new line of research.

The systematic study of popular texts, particularly popular novels, of a specific and crucial historical era, makes it possible to trace the long-term evolution of discourses underlying cultural structures and schemata in the society. Since this study focuses on a specific historical era, i.e. from the decline of the Qajar dynasty, to the rise of Pahlavis, and it is not possible to directly access that era, qualitative content analysis seems a relevant and applicable method to analyze such data.

Sociological content analysis serves to analyze complex data conserved in written form that cannot be collected through immediate interaction "because it is either very difficult to approach the target persons or it is impossible to do so anymore" (Ernst, 2009: 253). To draw conclusions from the text, a systematic-methodical analysis is required, on which the investigation can be based. Of course, novels cannot be read as realistic representations of reality. If they are to be examined as relevant sources in social sciences, both a historical and a categorical approach are required. In the case of novels, the individual as well as the time and culture-specific requirements of perception must first be reconstructed (Brenner, 1990: 31), but also the social environment and the traditions that have shaped the author must be taken into account. According to Lowenthal, the content and cultural meaning of mass culture, as part of the system of commodity production, and thought, could only be understood by reference to the institutional context in which it is created and marketed. (Lowenthal, 1961: Introduction) Depending on what audience and readership the text aims at, will vary the content, the articulations and even things that are concealed. From this point of view, texts such as novels do not directly open a "gate to the land of truth", but rather they are a construction of the author, but also of the audience's expectations (Agai, 2013: 107). Robert Escarpit (a French sociologist of literature), contending that social factors may be more important

than aesthetic factors, claims that "in point of fact, there is no such thing as a literary work: there are literary phenomena - that is, dialogues between a writer and various publics." (Long, 1985: 18). The author may tell/construct certain episodes and conceal others. Thus, "qualitative content analysis is useful for identifying both conscious and unconscious messages communicated by text (i.e., what is stated explicitly as well as what is implied or revealed by the manner in which content is expressed.)" (Julien, 2008: 120).

In the analytical process of qualitative content analysis, the material to be analyzed is understood as embedded in its "context of communication" (Gerbner et al., 1969). "Who is the transmitter (author), what is the subject and its sociocultural background (sources), what are the textual characteristics (e.g., lexis, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, non-verbal context), who is the recipient, who is the target group?" (Mayring, 2004: 267). All these questions rise up while using qualitative content analysis as a method.

Thus, this method allows the researcher on one hand to examine the social context in which such texts are produced, and on the other hand, it gives the researcher the ability to analyze the structures of relations within the text, and between its linguistic contents and the social conditions to which they refer. Andreas Reckwitz also advocates a cultural and literature analysis that combines both textual and contextual methods (Reckwitz, 2008: 200). Thus, a prerequisite for analyzing the content of a text in relation to its contextual functions is considering the relevant factors that make up the context.

Another methodological aspect in this work is the relationship between the figure of the author and the social actor. The biographical explanations of the author, the circumstances of his time as well as the exposition of his social status serve to understand the author in his socio-historical embedding.

In addition, the role of the author as a social actor is pointed out, because he is the one, who writes the documents and carries out highlighting and concealment his social world. Hence this study is a work which focuses upon the relation between the novels and the social structure in which they are produced and received. It seeks to explain the emergence of a particular work in a particular form of society, and the way in which the mindset of the author is shaped by cultural dispositions, and socio-historical arrangements (Coser, 1963: 4).

The other reason why qualitative content analysis is very relevant for this project is because it is an analyzing method, that is very flexible and can be a useful way of analyzing longitudinal data to demonstrate change over time and it is also nonintrusive because it is applied to an existing text (Julien, 2008: 121).

In this work, the procedure of analyzing the texts was primarily inductive. It means that it began with deep close reading of the texts while attempting to uncover the latent content. According to Mayring, this procedure is also used to develop categories gradually from the material. The system of categories was also revised in the course of the analysis by means of feedback loops and was adapted flexibly to the material (Mayaring, 2004: 268).

Another technique by analyzing the texts was to explicate and interpret some selected passages to make the samples from the original text understandable. Mayring refers to such a technique as "explicating content analysis":

> For individual unclear textual components (terms, sentences, etc.) additional material has to be collected to make these textual locations intelligible. The basic idea in this is the systematic and controlled collection of explanatory material. This makes it possible to distinguish between a narrow contextual analysis that only involves the direct textual environment and a broad contextual analysis that collects additional material beyond the text (information about the communicators, subjects, socio-cultural background, target group). (Mayring, 2004: 269)

In accordance with the research problem and the theoretical background to some relevant criteria for this project, some particular aspects of the material were filtered out and have been structured and typologized in form of categories of a coding frame (which will be introduced later in this chapter). The coding frame was an instrument which helped to focus on selected aspects and specified the angle from which the data was examined. In the final step, the successive parts of the material have been classified according to these categories (Schreier, 2012: 5).

3.2 The Logic of Selecting the Novels

One of the objectives of the present study is to find out to what extent Iranian novels are able to represent the issues of their contemporary society. Thus, novels written about the past history of Iran will not be investigated in this study. According to existing estimations, about 160 social novels or melodramas have been written and published in 1921 to 1941 (Mirabedini 2008:207).

The basis for selecting these novels was the first and the only existing literary list in Reza Shah's period from the novels of this period. Around July 1937, Rashid-Yasemi, a well-known literary critic, prepared a selected list of Persian novels from the beginning to the year of its preparation (1937). In this list, the names of twenty-four prominent social novels of this period are mentioned. I have reviewed these twenty-four novels based on the following comprehensive criteria:

- High public acceptance and significant sales compared to the market at that time,
- Being controversial or banned by the government of the time,
- A high rate of arousing critical discussions among literary critics of Reza Shah period,
- Being translated into other languages,
- Being read by contemporary Persian language readers.

Finally, the novels of *The Dreadful Tehran, The Dark Time* and *Homa* were selected as novels that have at least 4 of the 5 criteria.

3.3 Coding the Novels

Since the main focus of this research is the theory of liminality, what was identified in the first place in these novels was temporal and spatial liminality.

In Turner's famous expression, liminality refers to any 'betwixt and between' situation or object. It is evident that this understanding opens up space for possible uses of the concept even beyond Turner's own suggestions. Single moments, longer periods, or even whole epochs can be considered liminal. Liminality can also be applied to both

single individuals and to larger groups (cohorts or villages), or whole societies, and arguably even entire civilizations. These various dimensions of liminality can be spelled out very simply.

liminality can be related to three different types of subjecthood:

1. single individuals 2. social groups (e.g. cohorts, minorities) 3. whole societies, entire populations, 'civilizations'

The temporal dimension of liminality can relate to: 1. moments (sudden events) 2. periods (weeks, months, years) 3. epochs (decades, generations, arguably even centuries) These different dimensions can function together in a variety of combinations. In addition, Liminality is very essentially a spatial concept. Van Gennep clearly saw territorial border zones or border lines, thresholds or portals, as structurally identical with the intermediate period of a ritual passage: spatial and geographical progression correlates with the ritual marking of a cultural passage. Moreover, van Gennep even indicated that perhaps the physical passage of a threshold somehow preceded the rites that demarcate a symbolic or 'spiritual' passage: 'A rite of spatial passage has become a rite of spiritual passage' (van Gennep, 1960: 22). It should be said very explicitly that van Gennep's work represents a starting point for theorizing space, but also more concretely still, for conceptualizing borders and boundaries. Van Gennep refers to a vast gamut of ethnographic and historical data in his discussion of border crossings in Rites of Passage. In this context he discussed both concrete thresholds such as portals or doorways, but he also included demarcations of tribal societies, villages and towns, and neutral zones between countries (van Gennep, 1960: 17). In other words, liminal places can be specific thresholds; they can also be more extended areas, like 'borderlands' or, arguably, whole countries, placed in important in-between positions between larger civilizations. Staying with the above threefold classification, we suggest that the spatial dimensions of liminality can relate to:

1. specific places, thresholds (a doorway in a house, a line that separates holy from sacred in a ritual, specific objects, in-between items in a classificatory scheme, parts or openings of the human body); 2. areas, zones and 'closed institutions' (border areas between nations, monasteries, prisons, sea resorts, airports); 3. countries or larger regions, continents. (Thomassen, 2014: 89-91)

In the final step, “liminal personae” or, in the context of these novels, symbolic types were identified. As Moser and Schlechtriemen assert “In contrast to ideal types, the birthplace of social figures is not necessarily science – they occasionally appear first in novels, films, or public discourses. Their origin is therefore often difficult to reconstruct” (Moser and Schlechtriemen, 2019: 7) (although it should be noted that there are always liminal personae who are not necessarily symbolic types, such as spinsters in these novels).

Finally, the ability of symbolic of types to redefine narrative situations was examined, which symbolically demonstrates that type’s capability to lead in large social situations. These symbolic types can also be charismatic or trickster, depending on the situation. In this regard, I have tried to show that the plots of each of these novels can be interpreted in a way that highlights the “issue of leadership”: for example, in *Dark Times* and *The Dreadful Tehran*, the main question is: who can save the prostitute (the symbol of lost order and peace).

So far, no study has been conducted independently on the symbolic types of Iranian society; therefore, it was inevitable in the present study to introduce and establish the most important symbolic types of Iranian society before close reading of the novels.

3.4 Persian Symbolic Types

3.4.1 The Carriage of the Possessed: A Reflection on Male Symbolic Types

The short story "Persian is Sugar" written by Mohammad-Ali Jamalzadeh (first published in Persian in the Berlin based periodical, *Kaveh* on January 11th, 1921) is not only the opening story of Jamalzadeh's landmark collection *Once Upon a Time* but also its most iconic story. A close reading of this story is of great importance for the present study for two reasons. First, throughout the story one becomes familiar with the significant symbolic types in Iranian society during the liminal state of the late Qajar and early Reza Shah period. The story allows the reader to accurately observe the connection of each symbolic type with political power and leadership of the society. Second, the artistic articulation of the issue of leadership in a chaotic situation by Jamalzadeh prepares the ground for a literary formula that would be repeatedly employed in later novels of this period.

The comic story of "Persian is Sugar" begins in the sea. The narrator, disembarking a ship, talks about "five years of homelessness and great suffering" (p. 13). After years of loneliness and living in Farang[14] (Europe, probably France), the narrator has returned home seeking solace. This situation reminds the reader of the opening of *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), the seminal novel of Sudanese writer Tayeb Salih. From the very beginning, the reader is faced with a threshold space, a place where the sea ends and the land begins, the place for continuous transition of human subjects: the harbor.[15] In this case it is Anzali Harbor, in the north of Iran.

[14] *Farang* is the Persianized form of the word Franks, by extension means Europe. The root of this generalization refers to the influence of French businessmen and diplomats in the Near East in the eighteenth century. This influence was so strong that for a long time, in these countries, especially Iran and Turkey (and some other countries like India, Thailand, and Ethiopia), the word Franks was used to refer to Europeans (Savage-Smith: 2003: 650). Other derivatives of *farang* are *farangistan* (another synonym for Europe), *farangi* (i.e., European) and *farangi-ma'ab*, which means someone who imitates Europeans' acts or behaviours. These terms are not common in current linguistic use. (Azadibougar, 2014: 324)

[15] It is remarkable that the word *lmn* (vocalized, e.g., in Hebrew as *lmyn* or *lymyn*), the origin of the "Liminality," "was already present in Mediterranean cultures (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic)

The story's scenery rapidly moves to another liminal zone, a prison. The narrator, who did not have the chance to take off his Farangi bowler hat, can hardly be considered an Iranian from his appearance, and he is attacked by the porters who think that he is a foreign customer and, thus, a good catch. After getting rid of the porters, the narrator is suspected by the passport officers and arrested. As one literary critic put, "His 'crime' is that he looks like a foreigner but carries an Iranian passport" (Talattof, p. 381). No matter how much he insists that he is Iranian "seven generations back" and is a well-known figure in Sangelaj, one of Tehran's oldest neighborhoods, he is detained.

For further investigation, he is sent to a prison near the harbor. After all his property has been looted, the narrator states, "the only things I was able to retain untouched from them were my bowler and my faith, neither of which they apparently needed." (Jamalzada, 1985: 33). These two elements, the bowler hat and faith, will be discussed later. Shortly thereafter, the reason for the narrator's arrest becomes clear:

> Once again, the Shah (king) and the parliament in Tehran had gone on the warpath, a new wave of arrests and imprisonment had started again, and special orders had been issued from Tehran stating that the comings and goings of travelers needed special monitoring. (Jamalzadeh, 2002)

The officer assigned to this task of monitoring travelers was arresting people for the slightest excuse to attract the Shah's attention. At this point the narrator has entered his birthplace in the chaotic and liminal post-Constitutional era. It is the time when Muhammad Ali Shah Qajar, as an authoritarian ruler, was discontent to share the government affairs with the newly established parliament, which was considered to be the most important achievement of the 1905 Persian Constitutional Revolution.[16]

The prison is a twilight and womb-like environment. Victor Turner has also connected the concept of liminality with being in the womb and darkness (Turner, 1966: 95). The space accommodates two other prisoners or, as Jamalzadeh ironically puts it, "guests." One such guest is a *farangi-ma'ab* (westernized or Europhile) dandy with a twisted

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in the early Bronze Age and originally meant "harbor," that is, a place where land and sea meet. For thousands of years, harbors have been cosmopolitan places of intersection of various cultures and languages, where material goods and artifacts are exchanged alongside with ideas, customs, religious practices, and so forth." (Spariosu, 2015: 22)

[16] Muhammad Ali Shah's dispute with the parliament did not reach an agreement, and finally, on June 23, 1908, upon his order, the forces of the Persian Cossack Brigade (commanded by Vladimir Liakhov) shelled the parliament.

mustache, wearing a topcoat, high collar and vest. This character "was immersed in a French novel, reading in the light and shadow of the cell" (p. 34). The other prisoner is a sheikh, or clergyman, wearing a threadbare cloak and turban. The narrator describes him as busy with unusual religious recitations in a corner. Both of the cellmates, the westernized dandy and the hypocrite sheikh (hereafter dandy and sheikh), are considered the most recognized symbolic types of the late Qajar and Reza Shah period.

The common characteristic between these two types is that both are "stuck in liminality" (Thomassen, 2012:29). The farangi-ma'ab, intending to modernize, has turned, or, in Van Gennep's terms, separated from traditions. However, he has not managed to reach a new identity. According to Najmabadi, a farangi-ma'ab is often a young figure "who had absorbed only European mannerisms, fashion, and some half-baked knowledge of language and landscape. From his time in Europe, he had brought worthless objects rather than scientific training" (Najmabadi, 2005: 139). In contrast, the sheikh does not seem to be consciously seeking a new identity. He has gradually departed from his traditional, or Islamic identity, so that he no longer genuinely represents it. He has separated from the religion's spirit, leaving only the recitations, words, and gestures associated with it. He solely enjoys the advantages this identity brings for him.

The unexpected point in the prison is that the narrator is not able to identify himself with either of his cellmates, and instead is always speaking critically towards them. This critical view throughout the story makes it possible for the narrator to show his distance from both of the liminal figures. At the end, by highlighting the distinguishing features between himself and his cellmates, the narrator legitimizes his own identity as a new and unprecedented authenticity in Iranian history. His strategy in criticizing both the dandy and the sheikh is to question their authenticity, as according to Eisenstadt who was inspired by Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger*, the question of authenticity in the liminal era is a most relevant one. Eisenstadt's view is that in unstructured situations, societies apply boundary-making by stressing "the purity of the world inside, [and] the pollution of the world outside, "thereby constructing social order (Eisenstadt, 1995: 310–311).

The narrator first questions the authenticity of the dandy's behavior. He refers to him "as a monument of coddling, idiocy, and illiteracy who will surely keep audiences rolling in the aisles of local theaters for another century." (Jamalzada, 1985: 34) He

mocks the dandy's snobbish appearance and gestures in detail; for example, he mentions that even in prison the dandy looks at his watch as if "it was time for *Café au lait*." The remarkable point in this regard is that the narrator even considers the dandy's practice of reading a novel as ostentatious and pretending. A common technique that the first novelists of every country is to show that novel reading has become pervasive in society, which in fact legitimizes the emerging phenomenon of the novel. These writers often depict novel-reading characters who are the sympathetic characters of the novel. However, Jamalzadeh takes another direction.

Still, the narrator shows his familiarity with novel and gains dandy's praise. Suddenly, the narrator's attention is directed toward sheikh who has wrapped his arms around his knees and, in a completely ridiculous image, is "like a white cat curled on a bag of coal dust."[17] In an exaggerated, and perhaps hypocritical manner, the sheikh is engaged in salutations and prayers. The narrator even cruelly criticizes the sheikh's appearance and compares the sheikh's hands with sheep trotters in terms of hairiness. These excessive criticisms are only acceptable in the form of a farce. The radical and strange nature of such a description becomes evident when the author's family background is revealed: his father was Sayyid Jamal al-Din Va'iz Isfahani (sheikh and one of the leaders of the Constitutional Revolution).

Everything in the novel so far seems accidental and innocent. The narrator is imprisoned in a jail where, by chance, there is also a farangi-ma'ab (representing superficial westernization) and a sheikh (representing a superficial understanding of tradition). Jamalzadeh's genius is represented at the moment when, in the novel, the door to the cell opens and another innocent prisoner is added: an everyday man. This man is a tea shop assistant who is imprisoned to intimidate Anzali's people. According to Pedersen the young man's entry to the story "triggers a sort of central event" (Pedersen, 2001:24). The young man, Ramadan, is naturally terrified and aggressive. He feels disorientated in prison and needs an explanation for his arrest, saying, "I wished we could at least find out why they have buried us alive in here" (p. 16). Ramadan complains that he has been put in a liminal situation, and he compares his imprisonment experience with being buried alive. To understand his situation, he tries to get help from others and

[17] Jamalzadeh points to the white colour of the turban and the cloak's black colour worn by sheikh. Cloak and turban are popular attire of the clergymen.

communicate with them. With whom does he choose to communicate? Like porters and passport officers, he recognizes the narrator as a "foreigner" at first glance and ignores him for lack of a shared language. He also has no hope of being able to communicate with the dandy. Inevitably, he turns to the sheikh, who seems more trustworthy than the other existing figures due to his role as the custodian of people's religious affairs and his significant presence in those years of political and revolutionary movements.

Ramadan's communication with the sheikh does not move naturally, and the story continues like a comedy of manners (a trend already present in the story which intensifies from this point on). The sheikh is unable to communicate with Ramadan, because the language he uses is Arabicized Persian (Navabpour, 1996: 72). As Navabpour describes it, the language used by the sheikh is a strange hybrid of Persian and Arabic that is neither Arabic nor Persian. No matter how much Ramadan tries, he cannot make sense of the sheikh's language and the content of his speech. Characteristically, the sheikh is not concerned about this matter, as, according to the narrator, shortly after starting to talk, without addressing any specific person, the sheikh continues his monologue to the wall. Therefore, it appears to Ramadan as if he is speaking to someone absent and communicating with "*jinns* and spirits." The whole situation horrifies Ramadan and leads him to the conclusion that the "sheikh is possessed (jinnī), having an epileptic fit, he doesn't even know our language; he's an Arab."

It is noteworthy to mention that jinn is considered to be a liminal being.[18] Communing with them and being possessed by them provides a liminal metaphor that will be discussed again at the end of this section. Among the characters, only the narrator, due to his mastery of Arabic, familiarity with Quranic and Islamic concepts and previous familiarity with the mentality of clergies, understands the sheikh – with difficulty.[19] Through a "jumbled and abstruse" (Jamalzadeh, p. 17), and therefore inexpressive language, the sheikh provides general religious pieces of advice, such as maintaining hope and anger management in challenging circumstances. However, shortly after, the

[18] Jinns occupy a liminal status in Islamic cosmology and Middle Eastern folk imagination: "They are of the earth, yet unseen on it. They can see and hear the unseen angels, but they can also see the human world. (…) In accordance with their liminal status, jinn dwell in ruined houses, abandoned or isolated wells, graveyards, crossroads, caves, and other places on the borderlands of everyday human social life." (Peterson, 2003: 93, 96).

[19] Ironically, he talks about his extraordinary efforts to learn Arabic during his formal school years and almost says that he wasted a lot of time for learning Arabic.

sheikh loses control and swears those who arrested him as a "servant of the pure and holy law." The sheikh uses the word "obscure of origin" as an insult, which incidentally also has a liminal aspect.

To make sense of the situation, Ramadan inevitably resorts to the dandy, his second option. It turns out that the dandy has ambitious thoughts about the transformation of Iranian society, and he articulates them with a romantic and exaggerated language. For example, he speaks about the necessity of legal tribunes for constitutional revolution, but he articulates this with a strange language, or as Navabpour states, Franchised Persian (Navabpour, 1996: 72). The result is a weird combination of French and Persian syntax and wording. Much like the sheikh not considering how much Ramadan is able to follow his words, the dandy continues his speech. He talks about the necessity of evolution instead of revolution, believes in the responsibility for himself and the youth to "guide the public" and even recites a French poem from Lamartine at the end of his speech. Both the dandy's language and the content of his speech are vague for Ramadan. Once again, the situation confuses him so much that he screams continuously, and only the jailer's threat keeps him silent. He helplessly adds farangi-ma'ab to the category of "madmen and jinnis."

In the meantime, only the narrator, who is watching the conversation between them, understands the dandy's words and thoughts due to his mastery of French. He knows exactly which French idioms the dandy uses in literal translated form and his previous acquaintance with reformative views. He even reminds the reader that the poem the dandy recites belongs to Victor Hugo and has nothing to do with Lamartine. This, however, may not make much difference, since both Hugo and Lamartine belong to the school of Romanticism that dandyism has always been connected with.

What saves Ramadan from absolute madness is the narrator's reaction. The narrator voluntarily steps forward and suddenly starts to speak in genuine Persian which drowns Ramadan in joy. This moment is a practical instance of "proper" and democratic communication with the public which Jamalzadeh discusses in the introduction of *Once Upon a Time*. Ramadan is so relieved that he regards the narrator as an angel sent by God to save his life. Now, Ramadan can dismiss his judgement of the narrator as *farangi* (European). Probably to gain trust, the narrator surprisingly curses Europeans in reaction to Ramadan's acceptance, "Dear son, how could I be a European? To hell with

Europeans, all of them." Now Ramadan's question around the reason for his arrest disappears and gives way to the question of why his fellow prisoners speak in "jinn's language"? (Jamalzada, 1985: 41) The narrator explains to him that they are also Persian, but Ramadan is either not convinced or does not understand it.

The narrator's words at the beginning of the story that he was only able to save his bowler and his faith from the officers become clear. The narrator was referring to the two main components of his identity: familiarity with and adherence to both Islamic and European culture. In the late Qajar and early Pahlavi periods, the presence and gathering of both of these components in one individual was unexpected and phenomenal. The narrator is a *moderate man* and has put all his efforts in creating a rare, balanced mix of different identities within himself. In one respect, throughout the story of "Persian is Sugar" the writer seeks to prove the possibility of this new identity.

Jamalzadeh tries to construct the identity of the moderate man in three main ways:

1. First, he questions the authenticity of the other dominant symbolic types of his age, the sheikh and the firangi. Later, the narrator realizes that they are his rivals in leadership of society. By applying an authorial voice, the narrator reveals the superficial and hypocritical nature of his rivals' behavior. Questioning their authenticity is completed by questioning their capability to communicate with the everyday man and social leadership. It seems that in this story, Jamalzadeh is much influenced by Moliere and the character of Sganarelle (fake doctor) from the play *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*. In the play, Sganarelle tries to intimidate his audiences by clumsily dropping Latin words in his speech to convince them that he is a physician. The dandy and the sheikh characters, both with complex languages (one by dropping Arabic words, and the other by French words), try to influence and intimidate the tea shop assistant, Ramadan (the representative of ordinary people). The dandy and the sheikh have the characteristics of a false leader or a trickster. The farangi-ma'ab (dandy) does not truly represent the modern culture, nor does the sheikh truly represent the tradition. They merely represent "void," as Thomassen describes it.[20]

[20] According to Political Anthropologist Bjørn Thomassen (Thomassen, 2014: 105), Trickster represents the void.

2. The narrator proves that he is considerably familiar with the worlds that the dandy and the sheikh are trying to represent. He is so familiar that he can put their authenticity under question. The narrator presents doubt to the reader. He informs the reader that the sheikh is misusing Arabic, and he is so familiar with French literature that he can identify who the true author of the poem recited by dandy is. Thus, he is sufficiently acquainted with both Islamic culture and texts, which constitute a significant part of the Iranian identity of that time, and French culture, which the Iranian elites of the era were trying to adopt. These aspects make it possible for the narrator to consciously collect a balanced mix of these two elements within himself, and in fact, in a Turnerian sense, to be a state between states.
3. As Guth points out in the criticism of "Persian is Sugar," the issue of language is central in the nation-building process in the whole Middle East (Guth, 2019: 107). Jamalzadeh's sophisticated approach to the element of language is another factor that contributes to constructing the identity of the moderate man. The writer's concern about Persian language's bastardization and loss of authenticity is indeed one of his anxieties concerning westernization.[21] In this story, language reaches a metaphorical level: we witness another collapse of the Tower of Babel and the lack of a common connection among the individuals of society. Standards should be defined anew. In this situation, mastery of the "sweet" Persian language creates the third side of the moderate man's identity. By fluently using Persian, he is able to communicate with the ordinary person and gain his trust, and in fact, reaches the level of a charismatic figure. Through this, the narrator embodies the Iranian elites' wish after the Constitutional Revolution to communicate with masses of the people to mobilize and lead them. The ordinary person of the story addresses the narrator as "an angel sent by God" and attributes him to having a divine gift; something that charismatic individuals usually possess.

[21] Keep in mind that this concern was not limited to Iran, and only seven years after the publication of this story in 1928, Turkey, Iran's neighboring country, abandoned its traditional Perso-Arabic alphabet in favor of the new Latin-based modern Turkish alphabet on its way to modernization.

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At the end of the story, the characters who have been arrested accidentally are likewise released accidentally, re-emphasizing chaos. A new officer arrives, and to prove his power he discharges those arrested in the morning and begins to arrest new cases. After release from prison, the narrator and his companions rent a carriage to the nearest central city, Rasht (and possibly after that to the capital, Tehran). Ramadan (the representative of ordinary people) does not get in the carriage. He does not even dare to do so. Before riding, Ramadan tells the narrator, as he is the only person he can communicate with, the following:

- Excuse me for taking the liberty to say so; but, God! It seems that their madness has affected you too; otherwise, how could you have the nerve to ride with these two?
- [Narrator:] Ramadan, I'm no coward like you!
- May the Lord protect you! Whenever you get fed up with not understanding one another, (…) think of this humble servant of yours. (Jamalzada, 1985: 43)

And at the final moments of the story, the three passengers of the carriage even find a shared object to laugh at: a new officer who passes by their carriage on his way to Anzali to check the passports.

Usually, in the analyses of Jamalzadeh's story the final moments are neglected: the reappearance of the moderate man next to the dandy and sheikh after imprisonment, this time in a carriage, and moving towards the nearest central city, and then possibly to the capital (a metaphor of power), and the collective laughter at a shared object (the abnormal conditions created by the late Qajar's government) are not accidental.

In this way, not only the content of the story is crystallized, but it also is reemphasized. This carriage is not an ordinary one. It is the carriage of the possessed, and its passengers are the dissidents and political critics of the present situation, and the alternatives for future leadership of Iranian society. In the carriage are two ever-present figures of society and writings of that time, the sheikh and the dandy. The final figure in the carriage is the new alternative, the moderate man.

The age is the age of liminal figures. The writer presents these liminal figures as the potential leaders of society that, according to new leadership theories, can have a

charismatic aspect or the capability of being a trickster. Ramadan, as an ordinary man who does not understand the logic of the relations and power dynamics, naively thinks that the narrator, like him, cannot communicate with the sheikh and dandy, and he warns him not to associate with them. He is instinctively and implicitly pessimistic about the narrator's companions, but cannot formulate that they are, in fact, tricksters. Instead, the moderate man talks about courage – another emphasis on his charismatic aspect – implying that he is aware of his companions' trickster and fearful nature. Despite this awareness, he is willing to negotiate with them to play an influential role in Iranian society's politics.

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Some of Jamalzadeh's short stories, including "Persian is Sugar," occur in the utmost degree of liminality. The harbor, the semi-dark prison in the port town, the context of a chaotic situation after revolution, these settings are instances of spatial and temporal liminality. In addition, the strong reference to the possessed is a metaphorical equivalent for describing liminal beings. Against this backdrop, the ordinary man's worry is about *jinnis* and being possessed, showing a naive worry about a loss of authenticity. The ordinary man worries that other identity elements will possess him and disrupt the integrity of his identity. He considers the sheikh and the dandy as doomed ones. In no way does he want to lose his pure entity and become possessed (heterogenous) like them.

This heightened state of liminality, the normative void created in Iran after the Constitutional Revolution, provides the best context for reflecting the issue of leadership in Iranian society at the time: Is there any alternative to a totalitarian ruler like Muhammad-Ali Shah to exit this situation? Moreover, what are the characteristics of the man who presents such an alternative?

Jamalzadeh's proposal is to lead Iranian society with individuals like the moderate man. Threshold characters emerge in Iranian culture and literature mainly in the late Qajar

period, and the character of the moderate man is not unique. Before Jamalzadeh, two characters in a similar vein to the moderate man appear in late Qajar period literature.[22] Nevertheless, the artistry and distinction of Jamalzadeh's work from his predecessors is that he sets the stage for the moderate man and contextualizes it. At one level, he defines this character using the existing symbolic types (the dandy and the sheikh) and differentiating the character from them. At another level, despite their fundamental differences, Jamalzadeh places the three types in one category: potential leaders. Before Jamalzadeh, no one had depicted the connection of these types with the issue of power and social leadership so deliberately. Finally, by the presence of these types and a common man in the prison, Jamalzadeh creates a microcosmos. He offers each category of potential leader to the everyday man to select by his own choice for replacing the imperial despotism, and his choice is no other than the moderate man.

Jamalzadeh's intelligent attempt to create a symbolic type of a moderate man also paved the way for forming a literary formula employed in more complex and more extended literary structures, such as novels. The symbolic type of the moderate man can be traced in many stories and novels of that period, including *The Dreadful Tehran*, *Dark Times*, and *Homa* (which will be discussed in later chapters).

Generally speaking, this formula is based on three essential encounters. There are two encounters of the reader, or in some cases, the main character of the novel with two extremely liminal characters. At one end of the spectrum, is the symbolic type of the sheikh who symbolizes a superficial understanding of religious traditions. At the other end is the farangi-ma'ab, or dandy, who is the symbol of superficial knowledge of modern culture. In the context of these novels, these encounters create mostly frustrating, doomed and extreme experiences.

The third encounter is with the moderate man's character, which is shown as an inspiring and enlightening experience. In many artistic works of the Reza Shah period, the ideal of achieving a balance is embodied even in the furniture and interior decoration of a house. For example, in a narrative poem, an Iranian-European decoration is described as the best possible decoration for a house, such as a house containing both a traditional carpet and sofa (Pejman Bakhtiari, 1929, p. 16–17).

[22] The Characters of Ahmad's father in *The book of Ahmad*, and "honorable presence" in *The Travelogue of Ibrahim Beyg*.

Finally, the paradoxical nature of Jamalzadeh's project of constructing the symbolic type of the moderate man should not be overlooked. In "Persian is Sugar," Jamalzadeh puts all his effort into indicating that the narrator's character is ideally a rare combination of Iranian-Islamic traditions and modern Western culture. While Jamalzadeh is not entirely fair and neutral in his judgment of either the dandy or the sheikh, from the very beginning he is somewhat inclined toward the character of the dandy (farangi-ma'ab). He depicts this character as a more rational picture of him throughout the story for the latter.

This tendency disrupts the balance that this character is supposed to promise. As Talattof points out, Jamalzadeh presupposes from the beginning that the wearing of Western-style clothing by the narrator does not undermine his identity. He understands all words of the dandy, yet does not make sense of some words of the sheikh, and he speaks ironically about the years he had spent learning Arabic in his youth. Like the dandy, he is a novel reader and is interested in the practice. Moreover, by referring to Jamalzadeh's correspondences, it can be understood that throughout his long life (105 years), just like the dandy, Jamalzadeh believed in evolution and gradual reforms for the development of Iranian society, rather than in revolution and radical changes. Nevertheless, it is observed that the narrator has a complicated and wounded relationship with the West. Despite apparently living in Europe for many years and knowing the West, he has tangled feelings towards it.[23] Although Jamalzadeh tends to present the moderate man as having a fixed and definite identity, he too inevitably has a liminal identity and is one of the possessed people riding in the carriage.

3.4.2 The New Woman as Symbolic Type

The symbolic types of the sheikh (the traditional man), the dandy (farangi-ma'ab) and the constructed symbolic types of the moderate man were all male-oriented and are associated with the country's political leadership. Jamalzadeh discusses gender politics in *Once Upon a Time* through another story in this series entitled *What's Sauce*

[23] This issue is further discussed in the next story of the *Once Upon a Time* collection, "With such friends."

for the Goose. He ironically says that you cannot find a woman in Iran.[24] Therefore, it is expected that the female symbolic type in this series is completely absent.

The only female symbolic type in the novels of this period was the "new woman," which was defined more in relation to the empowerment of women in Iranian society but rarely focused on the role of women in leadership of society as a whole. Of course, in practice, there was no favorable or potential ground for it:

> The Iranian Constitution of 1906 banned women from voting or election to office. At no time during the first Parliament was this issue questioned or debated. Women's right of association was briefly discussed in 1908 but not resolved. Interestingly, representatives agreed that the matter should be debated not in the Parliament but in the press. (Amin, 2002: 37–38)

Until the end of Reza Shah's reign (1941), women were still denied political rights and could not play an official role in the formal political sphere of the country (e.g., as a parliamentary representative).

It was probably Annie Woodman Stocking, an American Presbyterian missionary teacher in Tehran from 1906 until 1949, who for the first time in 1912 applied the "new woman" term to describe Iranian women of the post-Constitutional Revolution. The "new woman" term had already entered the English language in 1894 through an article by Irish novelist Sarah Grand. The new woman, as Sally Ledger has studied, has a multi-layered identity, ranging from a feminist activist, a social reformer, a popular novelist to a fictional construct. In the context of my work, I will largely focus on the latter aspect of the new woman as a textual representation (Ledger, 1997: 1).

Rita Felski considers the figure of the new woman as the resonant symbol of emancipation in the early twentieth century. This figure is a woman "whose modernity signaled not an endorsement of an existing present but rather a bold imagining of an alternative future" (Felski 1995: 14). According to Alun Munslow, the new woman phenomenon was "a construct created to cope with the changing role of women in the new social order" (as cited in Brooks, 1996: 101).

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[24] He says this from the words of a foreign advisor: "I had heard that a "city of women" existed somewhere in the world where there were no men, but I've never heard of a "city of men." Back in Europe people say that each Iranian has a harem full of women; good god, how little my fellow countrymen know about the world! In an Iran where you cannot find a single woman, how could each man have a house full of them? Such a stupidity!" (Jamalzada, 1985: 96)

Efforts to present a new model of femininity in Iran became possible following the weakening of the Qajar dynasty. In some cases, the "traditional woman" – a woman trapped in poverty, ignorance, and superstition – was equated with the Qajar order. The liberation of her became the main attempt (Amin, 2002: 23). The raising of the "woman question" was largely due to the increased cultural and political interaction with Europe during the nineteenth century (Ringer, 1998: 304). In general, the "woman question" concerned the arguments for emancipating women from the public and domestic burdens that patriarchal frameworks had always burdened them with, as well as their struggle to claim, eventually, all the civil and political rights enjoyed by men (Bell, 2013: 80).

In order to find a new status, Iranian women inevitably had to break away from their predecessors and completely forget the lessons they had learned from their mothers and grandmothers. Najmabadi describes the process, "to become a woman of modernity was a learning process that demanded an unlearning, a de-constitution, of [former patterns of] womanhood" (Najmabadi, 2015: 111). The concept of the new woman was especially one of the ideas whose grounds for widespread manifestation were set following the Constitutional Revolution:

The seeds of women's activities which were sown during the Constitutional Revolution matured in the post-constitutional era to give rise to a small but vocal women's movement. Women's activities became more structured and organized … (Paidar, 1995: 90–91).

Among the most significant developments in women's activities was the publication of women's journals by women. Thus, the new woman made her first appearance in the press, proving "if the Parliament was closed to women, the forum of the press was not" (Amin, 2002: 40). The new woman as a discursive construction was primarily a journalistic phenomenon and was an increasingly public process undertaken in the pages of women's periodical press. From 1910 onward four major progressive magazines appeared on the scene: *Danesh* ("Knowledge") in 1910 – the first Iranian women's magazine, *Shokufeh* ("Blossom") in 1913, *Zaban-e Zanan* ("Women's Voice") in 1919 and *A'lam-e Niswan* ("Women's Universe") in 1920. The spaces created by women's press provided an ideal place for women to create their utopian ideal of the new woman. A significant number of the editors and authors of these publications were women themselves. Some of them are considered the real and first examples of the new woman

in Iranian society. For example, the founder of *Shokoofeh*, Maryam Amid Mozayyen al-Saltaneh, studied some religious sciences in her adolescence, and learned French and photography (Babran, 1381/2002: 48–49). She dressed fashionably and was "an active educationalist who established three elementary schools and one vocational school for girls during the same period as she was publishing *Shokufeh*" (Najamabadi, 2015: 101). In addition, a considerable number of *Women's Universe*'s writers were graduates of the American Women's College of Iran[25].

The new woman was a common and global concept, but it was also a highly local and context-based phenomenon. Overall, the Iranian new woman can be considered as a conservative case. While different patterns of the new woman in other countries, for example in late-Victorian literature or American fiction around the turn of the twentieth century, ventured into jobs, politics, and culture outside the domestic realm,[26] the Iranian new woman was predominantly identified with domesticity (Buzwell, 2014). The Iranian woman of the early twentieth century mostly kept her interest in marriage, family life, and child-rearing, which was in an obvious contrast with the sexually adventurous side of the new woman in England and the U.S.

What differentiated the Iranian new woman from the pre-modern woman? The central target of reform regarding the status women was education. The new woman in Iran symbolized a woman's right to education. The progress of the nation was perceived as a phenomenon that was in direct relation to female education, with primary emphasis being placed on the household. Questions regarding this topic were raised in the press: "How could any people hope for progress if their women who constitute the first teachers and educators of their children are captives in the realm of ignorance?" (Najamabadi, 2015: 103)

Early women's press in Iran primarily devoted their pages to issues like scientific domesticity: the modernist discourses on hygiene, disease prevention and household management. The whole process created new roles for women, as household managers, scientific mothers and modern wives (Rostam-Kolayi, 2000: 22, 45). Instead of being

[25] The Iran Bethel School for Girls (1874-1968, a Tehran-based American missionary organization)

part of the household subject to the management of the men, women gained the position of the learned manager and head of the household (Najamabadi, 2015: 109).

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The focus of female education shifted later onto girl's schooling. The traditional system of education (*maktab*), which was mainly based on teaching the most important religious doctrines and some samples of Persian classic literature, were no longer regarded as being consistent with the high goals of the new emerging type of womanhood.

In 1901, the first modern private school for girls was founded under the direction of Iranian women. Before this, there were just a few foreign, missionary and Iranian religio-ethnic minority schools accessible to girls. During 1910s, educationalist women, who wrote relentlessly in the press about female education, encouraged women of means to put their resources into this cause. They organized fundraising events and provided free schooling for those who could not afford it. Some of early girls' schools were even established in women's own residences. By April 1910, there were an estimated fifty girls' schools in Tehran, and Iranian women were beginning to organize around female education (Rostam-Kolayi, 2000: 70, 111, Najamabadi, 2015: 109).

The rise of modern girls' schools transformed the Iranian society radically. The presence of girls in school brought them more freedom of movement, expression and participation in the public sphere. The increased mobility of the new woman can be clearly seen in the social novels of the Reza Shah period. In most of these novels, dramatic events happen to girls on their way from home to school or vice versa. This round-trip path is reflected as a route replete with fear and danger. In these novels, home servants (mostly spinster or older unmarried women) accompany the girls along the way to avoid the dangers of dandies, who are present at every street corner.

Some of the first jobs of women were defined in relation to these girls' schools, and some women were able to gain independence through these jobs. Many women affiliated with the Iranian girls' school movement started working as teachers and inspectors of the schools. In addition, a group of them joined journals for women as editors, writers, translators, and office managers (Rostam-Kolayi, 2003: 170–171).

Increasing the presence of women in social arenas also necessitated the ease and comfort of their Hijab. This need in turn led to the gradual change in the appearance of the Iranian new woman.[27] As Najabadi illuminates, "it was within the space of the girls' schools that women had already begun to constitute themselves as citizens from the time of the Constitutional Revolution" (Najamabadi, 2015: 109). This new conception of the woman as a responsible member of society was a significant step forward concerning the status of women.

The girls' school movement naturally had its own serious critics. According to A. W. Stocking's report "the girls' schools were very much talked about, the worst possible stories were circulated in regard to them and it required some courage on the part of the girls to attend at all." (Stocking, 1912: 370) Opponents regarded women's education as a sign of sexual and moral decay. Clerical and popular opposition to female education was based on anxiety concerning female sexual transgression – most notably the loss of chastity – and threats to male honor (Rostam-Kolayi, 2000: 112). The prominent opponent of the growing trend of girls' schools was Sheikh Fazl-Allah Nuri, a charismatic conservative cleric who had positioned himself against the Constitutional Revolution. Nuri labeled girls' and women's schools as "dens of inequity"; "centers of corruption," and he saw "the opening of schools for women's education and elementary schools for young girls" as equivalent to the "spread of houses of prostitution." Such statements had a significant impact on the public mind. The claims were interpreted as the sheikh's fatwa against women's education and was used to agitate for the closing down of the new educational establishments (Rostam-Kolayi, 2000: 112; Najamabadi, 2015: 107).

A decade later, writers of Persian social novels, reached to the very same conclusion through different means. A counter image of the new woman as a dystopic vision of a society gone wrong became popularized by social novelists during the early twentieth

[27] A. W. Stocking, has reported the development in appearance of Iranian new woman of Post-constitutional revolution in great detail: "Seen on the street, she [New Woman] is still enveloped from head to foot in the long, black sheet or chuddur, but in place of the troublesome face veil of white cloth she wears a small square of black net or woven horse-hair which […] is far more comfortable […] she no longer scuffles along in heel-less slippers; she wears well-made shoes with as high uppers as she pleases. […] The full-length European skirt is rapidly displacing the very abbreviated plaited skirt and narrow black trousers […]. […] Many women who have not yet adopted skirts wear a house-veil draped around them like a skirt and caught over the left arm, a graceful and pleasing costume." (Stocking, 1912: 368)

century in Iran. The new woman symbolized as an imagined threat to traditional social structures did not find a better destiny than prostitution in the framework of these novels, albeit with one great exception: *Homa*. Imposing such a harsh punishment on the image of the new woman was inspired by nineteenth century French fiction which had been earlier translated and featured a literature with prostitutes as the center of its cultural imaginary.

In *Dark Times*, one of the finely nuanced novels of the pre-Reza Shah order, the traditional mother of a "new woman" attacks the all girls' schools and blames them for her daughter's corruption:

> My mom said, "I told that man [your father] not to send you to school, or you'd end up being a whore. I asked him to keep you at home and to teach you Quran and Sa'adi, teach you how to read and write. Girls these days are all bold, impudent and shameless, showy and flaunty, I said, and I feared my daughter became someone like them. (P. 124–125)

Viewing women as "potentially polluting and dangerous" justifies male control and protection in the realm of Persian social novels.

The figure of the new woman in all the novels of this period is defined by the three male symbolic types who constantly try to regulate her. These novels present the new woman as a pioneer and a model for the education of women in Iranian society. She is a leader to guide women to cross the threshold of the modernizing Iranian society. In the outstanding novels of this period, we encounter new women who try to help traditional women go beyond their limited life that is mixed with ignorance and superstition. For example, the character of Effat in *Dark Times* speaks to girls about the "principles of life and society" at her graduation party, which was considered an exceptional event for young girls at that time. Another example comes from the character Homa, in the novel of the same name, whose purpose is to educate women. Even in the novel entitled *The Leader of the Maidens* (Zahra Kia, 1315/ 1936) – the most important novel written by a woman writer during the reign of Reza Shah – an attempt is made to draw a suitable female role model for girls in the society of Iran at that time.

4. Analysis of Novels

4.1 The Dreadful Tehran; Revenge and Revirginization in Tehran

The earth, sea, and air no longer have any mystery…
Kazemi

4.1.1 The bible of the popular Iranian social novel

The Dreadful Tehran can easily be called the bible of the popular Iranian social novel from the end of the Qajar period to the Islamic Revolution of 1978. Many of the ideas, formulas, subplots and characterizations that were later widely employed in popular Iranian literature are present in this novel. There are still authors and even filmmakers in Iran who acknowledge being influenced by this novel.

Just as any critical understanding of the social novel in the Reza Shah period is impossible without referring to *The Dreadful Tehran,* any interpretation of this novel would be incomplete without referring to its source of inspiration, *The Mysteries of Paris*. In addition to being a persistent reader of French novels, Kazemi was also interested in adapting them. He states in his autobiography that he had adapted a play based on one of his favorite novels before writing *The Dreadful Tehran* (85).

The Mysteries of Paris, perhaps the most widely read novel of the nineteenth century, published initially as a serial in *the Journal des Debats* from 9 June 1842, to 15 October 1843, served as inspiration for *Les Misérables*, influenced the development of *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*.

In a more intense way, M. M. Kazemi's *The Dreadful Tehran* owes a considerable debt to *The Mysteries of Paris*. This debt varies from the exact imitation (or strictly speaking signs of plagiarism) in the opening scene to the general inspiration related to mood and atmosphere. The prime influence of *The Mysteries of Paris* on *The Dreadful Tehran* is the setting of the novel. Sue shaped nineteenth-century popular imagination by representing the city as a sinister world with secret networks: '*The Mysteries of Paris* exposes a dark, disturbing world of urban poverty, social injustice, criminality and corruption. Almost no other novel before, had focused to such an extent on the grimmer

realities of urban life.' (Chevasco, 2008: 137) In a similar manner, *The Dreadful Tehran* focused on the seedier sides of city life (most controversially, the dilemma of prostitution) in the context of an urban romance with a Gothic sensibility. In the middle of the first volume of his book, Kazemi digress from plot and allocates four whole chapters to narrate the life stories of four innocent young women that have forced in prostitution.

The Mysteries of Paris launched a large number of imitations, adaptations, and appropriations referred to as 'urban mysteries' or, in Laura Hapke's terms, 'wicked city' warning novels in Europe and Americas particularly between 1840s to 1860s (Hapke, 1989: 24). Dominque Kalifa acknowledges The Mysteries as the first great phenomenon of cultural globalization. The most famous among them were W. M. Reynolds's *The Mysteries of London* (1844), José Nicasio Milà de Roca's *The Mysteries of Barcelona* (1844), and Ned Buntline's *The Mysteries and Miseries of New York* (1849). *The Dreadful Tehran* (1922) was as an exception: a late imitation of Sue's novel in a non-European and non-American context. It would not have been surprising if M. M. Kazemi had titled his novel 'The Mysteries of Tehran', hence, even Kazemi's novel is described in its publisher's advertising catalogue as 'a romantic, moralistic, social novel that reveals the secrets of living in Tehran'. (Ghasemi, 1380/2001: 56)

Hassan Moghadam, a well-known playwright and friend of Kazemi, in a short note introducing *The Dreadful Tehran* during its serial publication in the newspaper also emphasized its revealing aspect of Iranian society. He wrote:

> If you want to know our aristocrats, clerics of justice, police, and government better (because you have known them so far) read this book, if you want to know [the behind the scenes] of becoming a parliament representative, if you want to understand the result of the ignorance and servitude of our women, if you want to know the situation of opium dens and other disreputable places of this city, still read *The Dreadful Tehran*.

4.1.2 The Liminal Genre of Urban mysteries

In an elitist manner, Franco Moretti criticized Eugene Sue's novel for its lack of realistic and detailed descriptions of the Paris of his time:

> (…) tracing the novel's geography, one is struck by how hollow Sue's Paris is - depopulated, almost: no Latin Quarter, no trade, no theater, no *demi-monde*, no finance .... The two great antagonists - Prince Rudolphe of Gerolstein, and Countess Sarah MacGregor are not even French: they converge on Paris, like James Bond and the Spectre, to play their dangerous game, but they could be in London, or Madrid, and nothing would change (…). (Moretti, 1998: 101)

However, Moretti disregards the fact that it is precisely for the evasion of an objective description of Paris that Sue in *The Mysteries of Paris* succeeds in achieving an abstract, general and ready-made model of urban life. Sue produces a model dependent on the tensions between social classes and introduces the modern city as the new context for the emergence of crimes. A model that can also be reproduced in different contexts:

> *The Mysteries of Paris* and its avatars offered contemporary readers a new and distinctly modern thematic and narrative mode in which the "complex and alarming cities" of the nineteenth century were geographically and morally mapped across social class in thrilling interlocking dramas of wealth and poverty, virtue and crime, revenge and redemption. (Selim, 2019: 175-176)

The point that literary critics and sociologists often fail to obtain is that this general model emerges mainly in certain circumstances: in the state of liminality. Considering the political context of the period when the first urban mystery emerged after the French Revolution of 1789 the issue is greatly clarified. In his seminal study *Vice, Crime, and Poverty*, Kalifa asks why the Western world after the French Revolution of 1789 produced so many descriptions and stories of the miserable, corrupt and dangerous para-societies said to exist beside or below the normative urban world of safe and respectable folk. He suggests that "these representations are particularly propagated in periods of social opacity and confusion, such as the first third of the nineteenth century." (Kalifa as quoted in Maza, 2019: Introduction)

The Mysteries of Paris provided a way of understanding the terrors the Parisian middle classes experienced in response to the dramatic post-revolutionary swelling of the capital's poorer population. Moreover, those years witnessed the massive patterns of urban growth, which had disturbed longstanding social landscapes: "The city would be growing beyond comprehension or control: within its bounds, systems of public order, moral order, health, sanitation and even sanity were all at serious risk, and needing massive new systems of regulation and supervision." (Selim, 2019)

Sue's novel established a framework to make this chaotic social world manageable and intelligible in two main ways. First, it presupposed a notion of reading a city as text. As a result, the city could be deciphered or 'solved' by a detective-like figure who investigates its mysteries. As Dana Brand argues, in this context the detective "comforts city dwellers by suggesting that the city can be read and mastered, despite all appearances to the contrary" (Frisby, 2001: 53-54). Second, as upper-class fantasies, the urban mystery represented the anxieties bred of changes in class relations: "When the nineteenth century was seeking a new lens for reading social realities, it invented the concept of class, and so here were now the 'criminal classes,' 'predatory classes,' 'dangerous classes.'" (Kalifa, 2019: 34)

The genre of urban mysteries became associated with a fear of the "underworld" (the main zone of the detective) and its marginal inhabitants (the "dangerous classes" in Louis Chevalier's terms). Kalifa posits that images of criminal underworlds always mirror the salient power structures of their time: (…) the early nineteenth-century idea of "dangerous classes" spoke to new understandings of bourgeois social dominance. The myths of the underclass performed a "normalizing role" among the well-to-do. The stories helped them to define the normative core of society in liminal periods of deep social change, and consequently, manage their resulting fears. Thus, *The Mysteries of Paris* provided a formulaic literary frame whose real potential was revealed in the liminal situation.

The other reason this novel had such a liminal characteristic was Sue having been influenced by the fictional world of James Fenimore Cooper, the American author of *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* (1826).

While Cooper was writing his frontier novels,

> the [American] nation stood on a threshold. No longer savage, not yet civilized, no longer wild, not yet settled and formed, the nation was, Cooper observes in *Satanstoe*, in its adolescence: "this period in the history of a country, may be likened to the hobbledehoy condition in ourselves, when we have lost the graces of childhood, without having attained the finished forms of men. (Daly, 73)

Cooper set *The Last of the Mohicans* in a condition of both spatial liminality (frontier) and temporal liminality (the time of the nation's adolescence: the last French and Indian war). It was a period in American history when different cultures and languages (Indian, English, Dutch, French, African, among many others) coexisted. Cooper felt a necessity to perform a boundary to exclude what he considered barbarians and make a new identity.

In a similar manner, Sue was seeking "new barbarians" in the context of the urban society of Paris. Sue was known as *French Cooper* in the beginning of his career. Dissatisfied with the current state of the society, he wrote the following in the first paragraphs of *The Mysteries of Paris*:

> For our own readers, we are going to attempt to depict some episodes from the lives of *French* who are as far removed from civilization as the Indians Cooper so vividly depicts. We will spend time with them in the dens in which they get together to plan murders and robberies, in the holes where they divvy up their victims' spoils among themselves. (Sue, 2015: 3)

Sue connects his new barbarians to a specific class, the poor. Many imitations of Sue's novel, including *The Dreadful Tehran*, attempt to draw an exotic image of this class. An image that needs decoding by the author to be made understandable to the reader.

4.1.3 Reception of *The Mysteries of Paris* in Iran

It took three decades for the name of Sue to attract the attention of an Iranian writer: Mirza Fath-Ali Akhundzadeh (1812-1878), playwright and critic, was the first Persian literary figure who acknowledged Eugene Sue's place amongst important contemporary European authors. Akhundzadeh, 'a turkophone resident of Russian Caucasia who considered himself Iranian' (Miransari, 2010: 239), put Sue's name alongside Alexander

Dumas and Voltaire in a letter dated March 29, 1871 (Akhundzadeh, 1342/1963: 213). In Akhundzadeh's opinion, these author's fictional writings paved the way for progress in European nations through their critique of social issues. Akhundzadeh's literary criticism centred on social aspects of Iranian society in his time, including social problems such as injustice, ignorance and superstition (Parsinejad, 1988: 20-21). By highlighting socially engaged literature such as Sue's novels in his critiques, Akhundzadeh emphasised that reading and creating such works of literature in Iran would push the nation to take further steps towards development.

However, just two decades later *The Mysteries of Paris* was no longer regarded as a serious and reformative text containing social criticism. Instead, it became a popular pastime in the court of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar. At that time, it was one of the more exclusively translated novels and out of reach to the public.[28] By Shah's direct command, the skilful translator Mohammad Taher Mirza undertook the translation of *The Mysteries of Paris* to Persian, which was divided in two distinct parts: the first part in 1892 and the second followed one year later. Both were in manuscript format.

Fortunately, there are two reports from private gatherings of Naser-al-Din Shah's court between 1892 and 1894 that indicate the special interest in *The Mysteries of Paris*. In one report, Naser-al-Din Shah Qajar explains that the book was read aloud every night in the Dooshan-Tappe Palace by his professional storyteller (*Ketabkhan*) in the presence of a few members of his inner circle (Anvar, 1371/1992: 319). *The Mysteries of Paris* was so significant to the Shah that within his inner circle, he had changed its title to "The Book of Rodolphe" after the protagonist, Prince Rodolphe (The Prince of Gerolstein, an imaginary state in Germany). The new title was in the style of Persian traditional romances, such as *Amir Arsalan*, *Samak-e Ayyar*, and *Hamzeh-Nameh*. This suggests that the Shah did not recognise the book as a whole new literary genre, but rather engaged with it as another variation on Persian traditional romances.

[28] In the final decades of nineteenth century, Naser-al Din Shah had employed a group of translators in his court, who were exclusively translating for his personal use. A wide range of subjects, from European History, world geography, biographies of political figures to French novels, was covered. These translations were shelved in the royal library and only the royal family and courtiers had limited access to them (Amanat, 1997: 430). It should come as no surprise that as a result of such procedure, for a while in the second half of the nineteenth century, certain novels (among them some erotic novels) were regarded as a luxury and were out of the reach of public.

In the second report (1954),[29] which is published here for the first time, Dustali Khan-e Moʿay'yer-ol-Mamalek, Naser-al-Din Shah's grandchild, vividly remembers listening to *The Mysteries of Paris* as a child in Qajar's court:

> In 1892, I was 9 years old, and my father, Dust-Mohammad Khan-e Moʿayʿyer-ol-Maʿmalek, had traveled to Farang [Europe], and his journey took three whole years. My mother, Esmat-al-Dowleh, the most noble daughter of Naser-al-Din Shah, had an insatiable desire to read tales (*qasas*) and narratives (*hikayat*). At that time, Farangi novels were not translated and published in Tehran. Muhammad Hasan Khan-e Eʿtimad al-Saltaneh, the minister of press and publication (*wazir-e enṭebaʿat*), was the director of the Government Translation House (*Dar al-Tarjomeh*), and in Shah's order, he was translating Farangi [European] histories and tales; one of these translations was "The Book of Rodolphe". Hence Iʿtimad al-Saltaneh's wife, Ashraf-al-Saltaneh, was aware of my mother's inclination to such books, she had sent my mother the unbound manuscript of the book. It was a lengthy one and reading it would take a long time, therefore my mother divided the pages of the book to several parts and delivered each part to a different scribe to copy it. There were always 10 to 15 persons in my mother's company, including princesses, other honourable women, and old ladies, agreeable in conversation. In winter, they used to gather around a large korsi and took their time by cosy chats and reading books; at the time, my mother or one of her companions, read aloud "The book of Rodolphe", and whenever one became exhausted by reading, the other one kept reading it. Meanwhile, they talked about what is going on in the story in a very pleasant manner.

Among the many topics provoked by this memory (exclusive access of courtiers to Western culture, the hierarchy in the court's Translation House, women as the first readers of novels,), that which is the most salient is the revolutionary shift in reading materials of the Iranian people in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Before this

[29] Unpublished manuscript, Document No. IR 2148 (Tehran: Kitabkhaneh-ye Majles-e Shora-ye Eslami). My Translation.

time, Iranians spent their leisure time together around the *korsi*,[30] reading Persian traditional narratives such as *Amir Arsalan* and *Hosein Kord* and sometimes narratives with a Persian origin such as *A Thousand and One Nights*. They also read from samples from classic poetry such as Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, Sa'di, Hafiz, *Khamseh* of Nizami (Mahdavi, 2007: 490). However, the final decades of the nineteenth century brought a new source of stories: French novels. Same mise en scène (korsi), different stories.

It is not yet known at what point *The Mysteries of Paris* became accessible to the public. The earliest evidence of public access dates back to August 20th, 1907 (Kouhestani-Nejad, 1395/2016: 53), in the heyday of Iran's constitutional revolution. According to a report, written by Ali Dashti, a leading writer and critic of the time, the book was still a favourite one in November 1925 nearly after two decades of its estimated publication. Dashti captures his experience in a bookshop in Tehran vividly, as follows:

> Three or four respectable lady entered the bookstore and one of them asked for a copy of the sixth volume of *The Pardaillan*. They did not have it. Therefore, she requested for 'another good book which could amuse us at least for two or three days'. The head of bookstore gave her a short book entitled *Henry IV* [but] she found it too short and requested for a lengthier book for more amusement. The bookseller gave her the first volume of *The Mysteries of Paris*. A youth who was standing there - seemingly a pupil - also praised the book. (Sepehran, 1381/2002: 38).

[30] *Korsi* is one of the traditional Iranian furniture-heater ensembles, used during cold weather by the members of the families to keep warm. *Korsi* consists of three parts: a low four-legged wooden table or large stool; a heater, traditionally a brazier filled with charcoal or coal, placed under the table; a blanket or quilt covering the table overhanging the sides of the table. The people sit on cushions around the *korsi*, covering their laps with the overhanging parts of the blanket covering the *korsi*. (Dizadji, 2010: 90).

4.1.4 "Dangerous Classes" in Tehran

The Mysteries of Paris reached a young Kazemi at the best possible time: the height of the Constitutional Revolution. The novel's ready-made and, consequently, adaptable format of the urban mystery helped Kazemi to understand the rapid developments of the revolution and to reproduce them in another novel (*The Dreadful Tehran*).

Kazemi's ancestors were all ministerial officials of Qajar. With the advent of the Constitutional Revolution, their power drastically diminished. Kazemi states that at the time of the revolution, his grandfather was "very saddened by the situation of those days, which was a sign of the awakening of the people and the emergence of constitutionalist and liberal ideas." Kazemi's grandfather was not pleased with the weakening of the foundations of the dictatorship. A short time later, when the constitutional government came to power, "always remembered the good old days with sorrow […] since this change of regime had disrupted our living conditions and deprived us of the income and resources we had" (Kazemi, 1970: 7). To this economic and political instability was soon added an increase in crime. Kazemi explains that during the height of the revolution, his paternal family were constantly worried that their homes would be attacked by either constitutionalists or opponents of the constitution, and he reports the widespread thefts of shops and passengers' belongings in a savage and merciless manner (Kazemi, 1970: 7). Kazemi's adolescent memories of crimes related to the revolution provide the key to understanding the construction of the "dangerous classes" in *The Dreadful Tehran*.

One should refer to the astonishing population growth and expansion of Tehran's territory in this period. "It was on March 21, 1786, that the founder of the Qajar Dynasty, Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar (1742-1797), on his coronation day announced the city of Tehran to be the capital of Iran." (Rashidbeigi, 2015: 25-26) Before the beginning of the Qajar period (1789), Tehran was a town with fifteen thousand people at maximum. During the reign of Mohammad Shah Qajar (1848-1848), the city began to develop and became widely known, and its population increased. During the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah (1848-1896) the uninhabited dry lands around the city became habitable, and the first population explosion of Tehran was experienced. Around 1870, the permanent

population of Tehran was estimated to be one hundred and fifty-six thousand (an unofficial report that included the non-permanent population estimates the population of Tehran around 1870 was three hundred thousand). The population explosion in Tehran provokes the thought that Kazemi's concern was beyond the "dangerous class" and was related to a fear of crowds.

> Crowds were considered highly volatile and dangerous social collectivities. They posed a threat not only to traditional social structures, but also to traditional ways of thinking about the social. Simultaneously with the invention of the crowd, the crowd was problematized as something to be controlled. It is in this context that the figure of the leader enters the scene. (Stäheli, 2011: 64)

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The Dreadful Tehran starts critically from the very first segment of the first volume:

> Monday afternoon, first of August 1912, the capital of Iran, the country proud to having had such an ancient civilization and great poets before the whole world, was bathed in stillness and silence.
>
> A strong wind was blowing hard, making it difficult for citizens to cross the streets due to the heavy dust. There were only a few people [on the streets] who seemed to have been forced out of their homes in this stormy and dusty weather.

It is dirt on the streets and intense dust in the air from a storm that opens the novel in which M. M. Kazemi develops a fully elaborated conception of society through the urban mystery form. "Dirt is the omnipresent motif [in urban mysteries], as much on the social level as on the psychological or moral level. It bespeaks savagery, a depravity of places, people, and activities." As David Frisby points out, urban mysteries' metaphorical element of *uncontrollable nature* (e.g., the dust storm in *The Dreadful Tehran*) and the location of the *second nature* (the construction of the city and its social relations) proved to be a powerful symbol in the nineteenth century and beyond (Frisby, 2001: 56). Douglas considers the concept of dirt as a tool for understanding society (Bleton, 2018: 27), and he posits the pollution beliefs as analogies for the social order

(Malbrancke, 2018: 2). In her view, dirt in all systems is not an aberration, but rather a part of the central project, needing to be purified.

It is August of 1912, one year after the end of Constitutional Revolution's unrest:

> The country's situation was catastrophic. The 1906 Constitutional Revolution had failed to create the conditions for state centralization, the implementation of reforms and the end of imperialist exploitation. Educated and elite opinion had coalesced around ideas that transformative action by a decisive leader was needed to preserve Iran and that a country in such circumstances could not be governed by constitutional forms, especially when the illiteracy rate was around 90 percent. (Shakibi, 2020: 103)

The Constitutional Revolution had not been able to install a new order of government as was expected and promised. According to Kazemi's novel, neither the elements of Iran's ancient civilization nor reliance upon its classic poets could provide peace of mind and social cohesion. There was complete chaos in Iranian society.

Employing Mary Douglas' terms, Tehran was polluted and hence had become a *dreadful* and *dangerous* city. "'Dirt' is always dangerous, and therefore powerful, and its defiance of the rules can provide the impetus to restart the system afresh and forge a new order" (Bleton, 2018:11). Then who in *The Dreadful Tehran* can reinstate order? A determined person, Farrokh, who in the very first pages of the novel breaks through the storm and comes into the foreground.

Farrokh is an early sketch of a moderate man. Though M. M. Kazemi never clarifies that Farrokh is indeed a moderate man, the writer implies that Farrokh possesses the characteristics of such a symbolic type. He has graduated from a modern school (has a diploma) and is an avid reader of French novels. Notably, he is not a passive reader, as he is able to critically relate these novels to his own culture. Above all, Farrokh distances himself from the two poles in the continuum of Persian symbolic types (i.e., dandy and sheikh).

Farrokh has come out in the intolerable weather for a quest. He has descended into the underworld to hire an attendant for a secret plan. To hire a risk-free and adventurous person, Farrokh knows no better place than Chaleh Meydan in the south of Tehran. It is described in the novel as a very criminal neighborhood. Farrokh's quest, which at first seems quite personal, finds extensive aspects and changes into an investigation of class

hierarchy in Iranian society. To pin down class inequalities, Kazemi accords it with geography and makes a sharp contrast between inhabitants of the south and the north of Tehran.

> However, Tehran is a rather large city, but only in its northern section do carriages and wagons cross. The southern sector, which is where the dwellings of the third class [poor people] are, has very narrow and cavernous alleys. In this sector, i.e. the south of Tehran, there is a slum named *Chaleh Meydan*, which, to a great deal, resembles *the Cour des Miracles* in Paris; just as in *the Cour des Miracles*, since olden times many people have lived there whom, due to the lack of social upbringing, have lost their humanity and appear ready to kill for money or for most trivial incident […], they kill them on the spot and rob their properties […].
>
> The people of this part of the city are entirely cut off from politics. They lead their own lives without any restrictions; and most often, they are unaware of the important events that occur in "Northern Tehran", or in the world. Events like the change of government, remain unknown to them for long time. (Aloob, 1988: 119)
>
> Any time a thief or criminal successfully escapes from *nazmiyyeh*[31]'s prison, the police search this slum and are able to arrest them there. One can see special coffee houses in different sectors of this slum, each one a hangout for a band of these people. The day that our story begins, in one such coffee house, a number of people were gathered and talking to each other. The entire coffee house was filled with the smoke of clay pipes, opium, and samovar so that if an ordinary man entered there, he would feel sick and repulsed. […] If one noticed, he could see the vilest people of every trade in that place. (Kazemi, 1304/1925: 2-4)[32]

The representation of Farrokh as both a flâneur and detective figure in *The Dreadful Tehran* serves to reassure the reading public that the apparent chaos of Tehran after the

[31] city's police
[32] My translation except the referenced paragraph.

Constitutional Revolution is both intelligible and legible. Farrokh's wanderings demystify the dreadful points of the metropolis piece by piece (In order: Chaleh Meydan or Persian *Cour des Miracles*, Brothel, unjust courts and prison, opium den).

"Mysteries" lie in the criminal and poor quarters of the nation's capital or the "*cour des miracles"* (court of miracles). "The motif of the courts of miracles was born in Paris in the middle of the seventeenth century: a secret and dangerous place where, when night falls, all the beggars, vagrants, criminals, and prostitutes gather" (Kalifa, 2019: 50). It was Victor Hugo who refashioned the court of miracles in *Notre-Dame de Paris* (*The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, 1832) and turned it into an almost universal motif. From then, the motif "passed very quickly into the common vocabulary as a synonym for 'lower depths'" (Kalifa, 2019: 58).

In the romantic Paris of the 1830s, the *cour des miracles* became an obsessive motif, and its hold over the invention of the underworld seemed decisive. *The Mysteries of Paris* itself belongs to the lineage of Hugo's novel, whose opening pages are about a "mystery" (Kalifa, 2019: 57).

Contrary to Sue, Kazemi clearly refers to the *cour des miracles* in his novel. At this point, Kazemi shows his genius well. In his literature, Kazemi consciously sought a powerful metaphor for discovering the class relations of his society. He managed to discover the relationship between *The Mysteries of Paris* and the cour des miracles as a cultural code, and he took advantage of this relationship in his own work. The novel that acted as a mediator and helped Kazemi understand this relationship was *Triboulet,*[33] which was first published during Kazemi's adolescence in February 1916.

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The Dreadful Tehran is the first literary Iranian work (story, poem, play, screenplay) that recognizes and represents this class. In this work, not only does the reader get the familiar formation of the middle class, but they also witness the emergence and representation of this class as the savior of the Iranian nation in the critical post-constitutional situation.

[33] *Triboulet*, a French popular novel written by Michel Zévaco (under the influence of Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*, with 'Cour des Miracles' as its main setting).

From the 1910s on, an Iranian urban, modern middle class emerged between the country's poor masses and the country's upper strata. This middle class framed modern science as the basis for its distinctly higher and modern education and lifestyle. This set the middle class apart from the other classes. Due to its "enlightened" and "educated" nature, many assumed the modem middle class had a double task. "Every intellectual individual" had not only the mission to educate the "masses," but at the same time, they needed to oppose the country's upper strata, or the dominant forces of the old political order: the aristocrats, clergymen and state officials (Schayegh, 2004:107). As Schayegh asserts, in the situation of after the Constitutional Revolution,

> the people who were in the process of forming the modem middle class saw themselves as the only possible saviors of Iran, the exclusive group able to steer away the country from the chaos, decadence, and lack of progress caused by various social groups. (Schayegh, 2004: 43)

Class conflicts are also evident in the very simplified plot of *The Dreadful Tehran*. The protagonist of the novel intends to marry his cousin (Mahin), who is an early sketch of the *new woman*. Mahin's father, F-Saltanah, does not agree with this marriage and intends to marry his daughter to a Qajar prince (Siavash Mirza), so he too can benefit from the marriage. With the help of the Qajar prince's father, F-Saltanah can find his way to the parliament and restore his wealth. F-Saltanah explains to Mahin the main reason for his opposition to her marrying Farrokh with the following words, "Now the whole world depends on money. However, Farrokh is your cousin but compared to you, he is poor" (p.46, vol. 1).

In one of his last secret meetings with Mahin, Farrokh predicts an ominous event is coming for them. He tells her, "Darling, (...) I am sure that your parents have a big plan for the separation between you and me" (p. 56, vol. 1). Farrokh's prediction comes true. F-Saltanah, aware of the love between Farrokh and Mahin, decides to send Mahin with her mother from Tehran to another city (Qom) for a few months to make sure that Farrokh cannot cause any disturbance in the forced marriage of Mahin to Siavash Mirza. Farrokh has a hidden plan is to thwart the scheme of F-Saltanah and his wife. Farrokh has come Chaleh Meydan or Persian *Cour des Miracles* to find an assistant to help him kidnap Mahin on her way from Tehran to Qom (he has already informed Mahin of this plan). In Chaleh Meydan, Farrokh changes his appearance to make himself look

completely normal in the neighborhood. He looks like someone from the low or dangerous class. The narrator emphasizes Farrokh's appearance in Chaleh Meydan that "anyone who saw the look of the lad meticulously, could understand that he did not belong to the neighborhood, but was from noble society and was there for a certain purpose" (p.11-12, vol. 1).

Farrokh, through previous research, has managed to find a pure person among the members of the dangerous class: Javad, a shoemaker and a former builder who is currently unemployed and in dire financial straits. This conversation takes place between the two at their local coffee shop:

> Farrokh: Would you like to get some money and free yourself of this hard life?
>
> Javad: You surely know how I am fed up with this life and the only thing that can make me feel a bit better is earning some money. (p. 11, vol.1)

Farrokh, with the help of Javad and a few others, manages to kidnap Mahin with complicated arrangements and spends a night with her in a rural area outside Tehran. When Farrokh-Saltanah learns that Mahin has been kidnapped, he tries to thwart Farrokh's plan. Not only does Farrokh-Saltanah separate Mahin from Farrokh, but with the help of a number of his friends (mostly corrupt *nouveau riches* and politicians) he also has Farrokh deported to a remote area.

The Dreadful Tehran reflects the relational construction of class identity. Farrokh's liminal position in terms of class is evident. On the one hand, he is not wealthy and politically influential enough for his beloved's father to agree to his marriage with his daughter. On the other hand, Farrokh has some financial maneuvering power and can hire someone from a class lower than his own. Thus, he belongs to the middle class.

The middle class in *The Dreadful Tehran*, unlike the aristocrats and the poor and dangerous class, is identified with the north and south of Tehran. The middle class is not identified with a specific location, and it is geographically mobile. In addition, it is metaphorically an intermediary between the two class extremes. The middle class is an intermediary that is constantly moving downward and upward on the social class ladder. In *Dreadful Tehran*, "the protagonist ... is portrayed as a sympathetic middle-class idealist who seeks social compromise ... [B]etween the two extremes, i.e. the 'oppressive' feudals and the 'miserable' lower classes." (Aloob)

The novel emphasizes that Farrokh, as a member of the middle class, has a significant understanding of the other two classes. This understanding is symbolically manifested in the form of Farrokh's repeated disguises. He knows how to change his appearance look like a member of the poor class and, if necessary, he can disguise himself as one of the members of the upper class (p. 176-177, Vol. 1). Farrokh is both endorsed by the lower class and earns the respect of the upper class. In the *Persian Is Sugar*, mastery of the sweet Persian language was the main factor in the construction of the moderate man, in *The Dreadful Tehran*, mastery of class language, the ability to communicate with both class poles paves the way for the birth of a moderate man as a member of the emerging middle class.

Mahin, Farrokh's beloved, is an early sketch of the new woman. The practice of reading novels in *The Dreadful Tehran*, a modern and unconventional practice in Iranian society of that time, distinguishes Mahin's character from others. As discussed in the introduction of this essay, in the traditional literary atmosphere of Iranian society the phenomenon of the novel was generally considered a polluting phenomenon and therefore dangerous. It was writers who tried to portray female and male heroes as novel-reading characters to thereby legitimize this emerging activity.

Gradually, in a reflexive manner, the activity of reading novels as depicted in the novels of the Reza Shah period became a cultural code for the representation of modern people. In these texts, modern people are associated with private spaces (having a personal room), individual decision-making power (right to choose in marriage) and public spaces (new schools and new education). The opponents of novels and novel reading are portrayed as people with a traditionalist mentality and in conflict with these spaces.

Mahin's character is defined as being in contrast to the traditional women of society. Early in the novel, the maid – a traditional woman – reports to Mahin's father that Mahin is reading a book in her private room and therefore has not been present. The maid describes the book Mahin as follows:

> My lord! I am an illiterate woman. But it looks like one of those books in which they talk about romance, how mademoiselles fell for the messieurs, and they say one can be educated by reading them. F-Saltaneh said furiously "maybe she read novels." Firuzeh said, "that's right. She reads novels." (p. 41, Vol. 1)

F-Saltaneh blames Mahin for reading the novel and, like many literary critics of Reza Shah's period, equates reading novels with wasting time and disconcerting thoughts (P.43, Vol. 1).

> I don't know. In our times, there were nothing but Amir Arsalan, Book of Alexander and Hosein Kord. No mention of romance. I wonder what went wrong that today that's the only thing they talk about. These all are schools' faults. (P.41, Vol. 1)

The second time that F-Saltaneh sees the new school as the cause of his daughter's transgressive behavior is when Mahin opposes her forced marriage to Siavash Mirza: "If I hadn't sent you to these schools, I wouldn't have gotten into this disaster. What a wrong thing to have sent you to the school!" (P.17, Vol. 2)

The question that constructs Mahin's character as a new woman in *The Dreadful Tehran* is the right to make decisions about her future spouse, in other words, the right to have a romantic marriage. According to F-Saltaneh, attending new schools and reading novels have caused Mahin to gain a rebellious personality and oppose the marriage planned for her. From a perspective, one of the main dramas and suspensions of *The Dreadful Tehran* is whether Farrokh will finally succeed in breaking the forced marriage that has been arranged for his beloved. Getting out of a forced marriage takes on a broader meaning here. The struggle means breaking with tradition and taking a big step towards modern individuality. Mahin is also identified with a full mutual understanding with Farrokh as a moderate man. The ideal romantic marriage presented in the novels of this period is indeed the marriage between a balanced man and a new woman. Mahin's forced marriage with Siavash Mirza, a notorious dandy, is described as an ominous marriage. In the end, insisting on the arranged marriage has no result but the death of Mahin. The ideal modern marriage, which is one of the countless themes of *The Dreadful Tehran*, is the main theme of *Homa*, which will be discussed in another chapter.

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Mahin is not the only woman Farrokh has to adjust his relationship with. Farrokh has to adjust his relationship with another female figure, the prostitute or fallen woman.

As Peter Brooks argues the prostitute "stands out as the key figure and term of access to that eminently storied subworld, realm of power, magic, and danger; she exemplifies the modern narratable." (Brooks, 1995: 162)

How did this obsession with the prostitute take shape? According to Jann Matlock, nineteenth century novels have a peculiar dependence upon the prostitute as the center of their disciplinary regime (Tsuchiya, 2001:2 55). In the context of these novels, the prostitute is a sign of disorder that should be regulated by a heroic figure. Brooks, in his brilliant analysis of *The Mysteries of Paris*, deploys the term "revirginize" to convey the idea of restoring the order. (Brooks, 1995: 150) Once the prostitute, or fallen woman, has lost her virginity against her will because of the corrupt society, the heroic leader or flâneur/detective figure emerges to undertake her rehabilitation and, in a wider context, reorder the whole society.

Perhaps one reason why it took seven decades for an Iranian writer to adapt from Sue was that, at least until 1908, prostitutes were not a concern, and there was no systematic attempt to purify the public sphere from the capital of their presence.

Initially between June 1908 and July 1909, during the height of the Constitutional Revolution, Mohammad-Ali Shah Qajar ordered the prostitutes of Tehran to be settled in a new district on the outskirts of the city. The district was called "Shahre-e Now" (new city), and it formed the primary core of first red-light district in the country. The second major action for controlling prostitutes in Iran was taken by Reza Khan in 1922. On March 7, 1922, Reza Khan ordered the public punishment of two well-known prostitutes for involving themselves with two British diplomats in the central region of the city. By criminalizing the prostitutes, Reza Shah realized two major goals. One was demonstrating his independence from the British state. The second, and more prominent, was obtaining "the support of Muslim communities and the clerics in Tehran, something he desperately needed for the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty" (Rashidbeigi, 2015: 34). Following this event, emphasis was placed on excluding the prostitutes from the urban environment of Tehran for a second time, and Shahre-e Now gained more centrality as the red-light district of the city.

It is clear from the autobiography of Kazemi that narrating the story of prostitutes had an exotic charm in that period. Kazemi explains that since he was a relatively unknown figure at the time of writing his work and in order to have a better chance of publishing

The Dreadful Tehran, he told the newspaper's editor to start reading the story from Chapter 8, entitled "Sick Quarter."

In the middle of the first volume of the book, Kazemi digresses from the plot and allocates four whole chapters (Chapter 8 to 11) to the narration of the lives of four innocent young women forced in prostitution. Influenced by Decameron's episodic narratives, these chapters of the novel later became *The Dreadful Tehran's* most controversial chapters because they were seen as having damaged the literary structure of the novel. The only function of these chapters serve is to exaggerate the corruption and disorder of Iranian society at that time. Only one of the four prostitutes, who is called Effat, is mentioned in the continuation of the story as one of the central characters of the novel.

Effat, like Mahin, belongs to the upper classes of society. Unlike her, Effat "never received an education, did not even learn to read and write, and ended up as yet another 'ignorant' young girl." (Pedersen, P. 122) Effat's naivety and ignorance brings her to a situation where she accepts an arranged marriage and acts as her husband's private prostitute. Her husband, Evilish Ali-Ashraf Khan, is a low-level government official. In order to climb further up the social ladder and obtain a better position, Ali-Ashraf Khan forces Effat to spend nights with higher ranking state officials on several occasions.

The name Effat means "chastity" or "sexual purity," and it seems that Kazemi was influenced by Sue in naming this character. In a similar manner, the name of the main prostitute in *The Mysteries of Paris*, Fleur-de-Marie. In slum slang it means virgin. "Sue invents a new type – the virginal prostitute – that completes, and complicates, his lowlife urban panorama." The creation of the paradoxical virginal prostitute, the prostitute with a heart of gold, was one of Sue's great achievements in his novel. This character later influenced many great novelists such as Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment*.

Effat is not a sinful figure: she is an angelic, naïve and blameless creature, a victim of social misery.

In his first conversation with the prostitute, Farrokh says,

> I understand from your appearance and behavior that you personally do not believe in staying in staying in that house [the brothel] and committing those ugly acts; perhaps a woman has deceived you or taken you there, or your husband's bad temper has forced you to do so. (pp. 157-158, vol. 1)

Taking such an approach to prostitutes in urban mysteries is itself the first step in their revirginization. The second and final step to save them is taken by the story's charismatic leaders.

In the middle of the novel, Farrokh is upset after learning of F-Saltaneh's plan to separate him from Mahin. He begins to roam the streets of Tehran at night and accidentally passes by a brothel. At the same time, a Cossack soldier is quarreling about the possession of Effat with Siavash Mirza (Mahin's fiancé) and stabs and shoots him. Farrokh, upon hearing the noises, enters the brothel because of "his sense of altruism and helping the weak" and saves Effat in the midst of the fight.

The scene of saving Effat from the brothel is one of the key scenes of *The Dreadful Tehran*. The rescuing of Effat answers the formulaic question posed by the novel: Who revirginizes the prostitute? In the scene, the military figure (the Cossack soldier) and the dandy (Siavash Mirza) are presented as characters who have no horizon beyond the exploitation of women. As a result, in the context of the novels of this period, they do not have the ability to get the country out of its political stalemate and to repair the situation. The violent Cossack character could be an allusion to Reza Khan, who was a Cossack officer before he came to power, and clearly indicates Kazemi's negative view of the military taking power in the country's political arena. As Parvin reports, the newspapers during Ahmad Shah Qajar's period were full of news about rape, theft and the excessive alcohol drinking of Cossacks (Parvin, 507-508).

Siavash Mirza is also described as a corrupt aristocrat who constantly spends his time in brothels and even recklessly talks about his homosexual experiences. He is also a trickster in every sense of the word and constantly pretends to be something he is really not. Sometimes it is thought that he is a scientist working in a laboratory (even his father mistakenly thinks that the bottles of medicine that Siavash Mirza uses to treat his syphilis are bottles of chemicals for his laboratory). Other times he has superficial information about all the sciences and arts, including sociology, and "without any understanding, he criticized the ideas of Kant and Karl Marx, he may have only heard of their names in some newspapers." (P. 81, vol. 2)

Farrokh is the only character in the novel who undertakes the revirginization of the prostitute. For a while, he takes care of her in his private home with servants' help and brings the doctor to her bed (the doctor diagnoses that she has tuberculosis). Finally, he

provides the ground for Effat to be transferred to her parents' house. Shortly after, when Farrokh meets Effat again at her parents' house, there is surprisingly little trace of the disease:

> Effat came in, wearing a lemon silk dress, the latest fashion in Tehran, skin-colored stockings, shiny open shoes. She had had her hair tied back like Europeans. In a few days, her pale face had turned a bit rosy; she was regaining her beauty and elegance. It was obvious her wounds were healing. (P. 50, Vol.2)

The much interpretable scene of the prostitute's homecoming is another key scene in the social novels of the Reza Shah period. The prostitute returns to her comfort zone (i.e., her father's or her parents' house). If we consider the prostitute, or the fallen woman, as a symbol of the Iranian nation subject to very rapid modern changes, the return to the paternal home is a kind of fulfillment of the impossible wish of society to return to the stable and traditional state of the past. A place in the past where beauty, elegance and health are completely and perfectly waiting for the characters.

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Farrokh saving Effat also reveals a hidden aspect of Farrokh's life. During his visit to the mansion of Effat's father, the reader discovers that Farrokh's father and Effat's father had friendly relations with each other in their youth and both of them were courtiers of the Qajar kings.

Effat's father explains how those who have lived during the Qajar era have chosen to isolate themselves from the changes established by the current state of affairs. Effat's father expresses his dissatisfaction in the following way:

> The likes of us old [fashioned] people have lately withdrawn from other people, and the reason for that is quite obvious. How can anyone who has witnessed and experienced the earlier period and the epoch of the martyred Shah [Nasser al-Din Shah] and Mozaffar al-Din Shah – may God's mercy be upon them and light shine on their graves – get used to today's life in which everything has overturned. (Vol. 1, 178-179)

This part of the novel seems to be a very honest reflection of the real life of its author. One of the main causes of the formation of the middle class in Iran was the shock caused by the Constitutional Revolution on the part of the upper classes. Effat's father is reminiscent of Kazemi's own grandfather who was isolated in the Iranian political sphere after the Constitutional Revolution. During the visit, the reader also finds out that Farrokh himself was in fact the son of one of the Qajar courtiers. This discovery is shocking and means that before these political transformations, Farrokh was indeed considered a member of the upper class and the bourgeoisie. However, he and his family have fallen down the class ladder through because of the Constitutional Revolution.

Despite this revelation, Farrokh is fundamentally different from the generation of his father. In a situation where everything is overturned in their eyes, Farrokh tries to rearrange his class identity instead of isolating himself. Unlike his fathers, Farrokh does not mention the Qajar period of tyranny as bygone golden days. Farrokh is the messenger of the future. He asks Effat's family, who have just learned of her prostitution, to stop crying and tells them, "Let bygones be bygones, now we need to rehabilitate the past. Regretting the past is of no use: we need to brighten the future" (P. 227, Vol.1).

Another difference of Farrokh is that he tries to define his identity with cultural capital instead of economic capital. This allows him a greater margin safety and is why he emphasizes his own education and personal abilities throughout the novel. Farrokh is also a reformer and avenger figure in the style of Rudolf (from *The Mysteries of Paris*) and *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*. He sees the emerging bourgeoisie, which has appeared only in vague circumstances after the revolution, as a class to be punished. This class's representatives are F-Saltaneh (Mahin's father), Siavash Mirza and his father, and Ali Ashraf Khan (Effat's husband). This is the class that seeks political positions to survive economically and to maintain its class position in society's chaotic conditions. They try to find their ways to the newly-established post-constitutional parliament as representatives – Iran's first parliament was established on October 7, 1906. – or even try to find a high-ranking job in the new bureaucratic system. Of course, in line with these goals, this class considers any action legitimate. F-Salataneh, the corrupt aristocrat, gives his daughter to Siavash Mirza to be a member of parliament and then a minister. This marriage acts like a deal between him and Siavash Mirza's father, because the latter becomes financially stable with this marriage.

The new bourgeoisie class, or the new order, has no mercy on any of the other classes for its development. This is the class that causes Javad (as the representative of the lower class) to live a hard life and to be imprisoned. This class tightens the situation for him. The new bourgeoisie is the class that prevents Farrokh (as a representative of the emerging middle class) from achieving his ideals (his ideal marriage and finding a suitable job). Finally, it is this class that has caused Effat (the representative of the old order) to fall into prostitution.

From the very beginning of *The Dreadful Tehran*, Farrokh has been plotting against the new upper class. As a representative of the middle class, he is trying to mobilize the poor (Javad) against the upper class. He also demands more justice so that Javad can obtain a better financial condition and Farrokh himself can achieve his ideals.

Revenge, like revirginization in *The Dreadful Tehran*, is not an easy job. Farrokh talks about revenge from the upper class in several scenes of the novel. For example, after the arrest of Javad and the forced separation from Mahin, who Farrokh sees both as the cause of the emerging bourgeoisie, he expresses his desire for revenge in the strongest possible way:

> Then he heard a voice deep in his heart that said, 'Blood! Yes, blood! A stream of blood, a blood flood, a blood lake, a blood ocean, a blood globe. Yes, only a blood flood can purify what the unjust man has done on the Earth to the weak on the Earth… (p. 48, vol.2)

We know in advance that the symbolic types of the dandy and the sheikh or military figures cannot take revenge. Certainly, the representative of the old order (Effat's father) cannot do this, especially since Effat's father has gout and is semi-paralyzed (what symbol speaks more than this?). After meeting with Effat's parents, Farrokh considers them incapable of taking revenge because, most importantly, they do not have the necessary insight to do so.

> Could a father who worshipped Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar and considered disagreeing with him as a disobedient of god, find a way to get revenge? Or a mother whose education was limited to some superstitions such as bogeys and sprites? Never! (p. 228, Vol.1)

According to Kazemi, this moderate middle-class man who has the insight to take revenge (the term used in *The Dreadful Tehran* has a very close meaning) can lead and

guide society in these critical situations.[34] Selim considers the liminal condition of the middle class in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century to be a global phenomenon:

> These were all concerns of a transnational bourgeoisie that saw itself threatened from above (a corrupt and capricious aristocracy) and from below (the dangerous masses) in an age of simmering revolt. (Selim, 2019: 85)

The Dreadful Tehran can be described in the most concise form as a conspiracist take on Social Darwinism. Inspired by Maxwell's description of *The Mysteries of Paris*, one can say that: Kazemi understood *The Dreadful Tehran* to be mysteries of intrigue. Tehran becomes a giant conspiratorial mechanism in this novel, describable on the assumption that every class is scheming against the other classes. (Maxwell, 1992: 197)

[34] Kazemi leaves the result of Farrokh's revenge and its consequences to another novel, *Reminiscence of One Night*, the first volume of which was published around 1925 in Berlin.

4.2 Dark Times;
Medical Wars in Iran: Who Heals the Wounds of the Nation?

"Is not one doctor enough to kill a person?"
Moliere

4.2.1 The Liminal Times of Sheikh Khalili

Abbas Khalili (1893–1971) is considered to be one of the most unlikely authors to appear in novel writing in late Qajar and early Pahlavi. To gain a better understanding of *Dark Times* (1924), it is informative to refer to the biography of Abbas Khalili, as, at least in the first half of the story, the main character – the "I" narrator – is completely the same as the real Khalili. Abbas Khalili was one of the Iranians living in Najaf, Iraq, which is the main Twelver Shi'ite center outside of Iran. Najaf is also a city which has traditionally been one of the specialized centers for teaching sciences and Islamic studies[35] in the Islamic world. In the past, many Iranians interested in learning sciences migrated to this city for a short period of time, or even permanently, for study.

Abbas Khalili "came from a well-off family with an old learning tradition, in religious and medical studies" (Naef, 2004: 143). His family was regarded as one of the most influential figures of the city. "The Khalilis owned two schools in Najaf. Moreover, a mosque, two cemeteries, and two libraries had their name" (Naef, 2004: 144). Abbas Khalili's great grandfather, Mirza Khalil Tabib[36] Razi Tehrani (from whom the Khalili family name was adopted) was the first member of the family to migrate from Tehran to Najaf. He was a well-known figure of medicine in the Qajar period, so much so that during his lifetime he was nicknamed "resurrecting the dead doctor" (Roosta'ee, 1382/2003: 80). Of Mirza Khalil Tabib Razi Tehrani's five children, three were completely skilled in medicine (Naef, 2004:143). The Khalilis were among the most

[35] Six major disciplines in Islamic studies include theology, mysticism, principles of jurisprudence, jurisprudence, philosophy, and logic.
[36] *Tabib* means Physician.

eminent figures of the seminary in Najaf and were also considered as religious-political leaders of the Muslims. The grandfather of Abbas Khalili, Mullah Ali Khalili, was one of the religious authorities of the city. His father's uncle, Mirza Hossein Khalili Tehrani, was Muslims' *marja'-i taqlid*[37] and was influential beyond Iraq (Naef, 2004: 143). In addition to being an influential figure, like Akhund Khurasani, Mirza Hossein Khalili Tehrani was one of the staunch leaders and supporters of Iran's 1905 Constitutional Revolution, and as one of his major actions he declared the rule of Muhammad Ali Shah illegal.

Abbas Khalili seems to be more influenced by the second group of his family. In the 1910s, after a short period of studying Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic philosophy in the seminaries of Najaf, he soon became involved in appalling political activities. In his youth, following World War I, Najaf was occupied by British forces which led to the emergence of a resistance movement in 1918–1919 in the city. He was a member of the League of the Islamic Awakening, an anti-colonial secret society which carried out extremist and armed activities against Britain. Such activities led to the assassination of Captain W. M. Marshall, the British political officer in Najaf, during the 46-day siege of Najaf by British forces. This event also led to vicissitude of Khalili's life. There are many ambiguities regarding Khalili's role in this assassination. Some consider him as a simple secretary who handled the group's correspondence, while others state that he had a more influential role (Tabarrāʾiān, 1997: P. 44–45). Whatever his role, because of this action, the British blockaded the city, executed a number of revolutionaries, and exiled many others. Ḵhalili was also sentenced to death, but he fled to Iran. In one part of *Dark Times*, Khalili refers to this event: to exaggerate how much he was affected by confronting a tubercular prostitute, which is the central event of the novel, he says that even "those horrific events of British army had not brought me to tears" (Khalili, 1924: 22).

Khalili started his career as a journalist in Tehran, using the alias Sheikh "Ali Fatiy-al-Eslām". At first, he was employed by a pro-British daily, *Ra'd* ("Thunder"), as an Arabic translator. The director of this newspaper was Seyyed Zia'addin Tabatabaei, who was known to be an agent of the British government[38] (Amini, 2016: 232). Some researchers

[37] literally means "source of emulation" or "source to follow".

[38] Shortly afterwards, together with Reza Khan, Seyyed Zia'addin staged the 1921 coup d'état.

have been astonished by Khalili's change of attitude in a short time and call it the result of historians' erroneous recording (Amini, 2016: 231–232).

However, it appears that this change is one of the signs of Khalili's paradoxical personality. This aspect will show up again later when analyzing the central character of the first part of *Dark Times,* a moderate man based on Khalili's character.

Apparently, while working in *Ra'd* and after the announcement of a general amnesty in Iraq by the British, Khalili revealed his real name. Ahmad Kasravi, one of the famous scholars of that period who knew Khalili, writes, "We suddenly realized that Sheikh ʿAli Fatiy-al-Eslām has become Abbas Khalili and is living a better life" (Amini, 2016: 230). After short periods of working for the *Baladieh* ("Municipality") newspaper – a job he had acquired with the help of Seyyed Zia'Addin – and *Bahar* ("Spring"), a monthly literary magazine, Khalili finally published his own newspaper, *Eghdam* ("Action"). Published periodically from 1921 to 1949 and banned several times, it was one of the most controversial newspapers of the Reza Shah era because of its critical approach towards sociopolitical issues (Parvin, 1998: 520).

In one of the early issues of this newspaper dated May 9, 1922, Abbas Khalili conducted a laudatory interview with Reza Khan, who was then minister of war. In this interview, Reza Khan stated that he would defend Iran to the last breath and would create a new life for the country (Behboudi, 1389/2010: Vol. 2, P. 104).

Khalili's destiny was to live in an unstable and liminal condition. Shortly after his escape from Najaf (which is in fact his true hometown) and moving to Tehran (his father's hometown), he had to experience a new liminal condition. Writing a harshly critical essay against Reza Khan (Amini, 2016: 321) dated June 1923, caused him to be deported to Kermanshah (near Iran-Iraqi borderline) for six months, from November 1923 to May 1924, where political dissidents of that time were sent.

During his exile, Khalili became completely poor, his physical condition deteriorated and his request for pardon was rejected by Reza Khan (Behboudi, 1389/2010: 237, 444, 450, 465, Vol. 3; Behboudi, 1390/ 2011: 41, 66, Vol. 4). The outcome of this exile would be the novel *Dark Times*. Although Khalili authored other novels afterwards and is considered the most prolific novelist of the Reza Khan era, none of his novels gained the importance and wide audience of *Dark Times*. Khalili regarded this novel as the

direct outcome of his journalistic experiences during *Eghdam* and introduced it as the summary of the newspaper's articles (Kouhestani-nejad, 2016: 273).

The events of *Dark Times*, like many other literary works of that period, occur in a highly liminal background. It is set around 1923, after the coup d'état of 1921 which weakened the Qajar dynasty and increased Reza Khan's power in the country's sociopolitical sphere. The 1921 coup practically marginalized the Constitutional Revolution. Although the movement led to the formation of institutions like the parliament and enhancement of ideas like the rule of law, its power lasted for only one decade despite the passion and idealism of the constitutionalists. This coup d'état also granted Reza Khan an established position as the minster of war and then as prime minister in all cabinets from 1920 to 1925.

At the time that *Dark Times* was written (1923/1924), Reza Khan was generally considered as an influential and charismatic figure. He was even mentioned in the parliament as one of the "saviors" to get the country out of political deadlock. On the other hand, Reza Khan had not yet been able to oust Ahmad Shah as the last survivor of the Qajar dynasty. Ahmad Shah, was trying to continue the 135-year-old Qajar rule by consulting with potential rivals and the support of foreign forces. Thus, the country was in a state of absolute political chaos (temporal liminality). After his presence in numerous cabinets, Reza Khan finally managed to convince the parliament that he was a proper alternative for the government. He was subsequently crowned on April 25th, 1926 and formed the new Pahlavi dynasty.

In *Dark Times*, Khalili clearly points to this normative void, and regarding the failure of the Constitutional Revolution and uncertainty of the country's political future, states that, if this government does not last, it is not yet clear that its substitute will be a dictatorship or republic (With complete pessimism, Khalili says whatever the outcome the Iranian people will not give up their bad habits). (Khalili, 1924: 53, 54)

Nevertheless, Khalili's suspension does not end here; he is still in a spatial liminality, exile. Exile, "whether it is voluntary/involuntary or internal/external" can be regarded as another instance of cultural "in-betweenness" (Eglāja-Kristsone, 2015: 150). An exile is associated with no state, "once the exiled person leaves his country, he is no longer at home anywhere, including his own land, […] He is literally 'in no man's land,' between cultures, languages, social structures, and so on" (Spariosu, 2015:30).

The sense of displacement in the exilic condition drives the individual to resituate himself in the new place and redefine his identity. The main concern of the exiled person becomes comprehending "(the) relationship between the experience of cultural displacement and the construction of cultural identity" (Eglāja-Kristsone, 2015: 151). Therefore, it is logical that in the liminal state of exile, in the first part of the novel, Khalili tries to create a new identity for himself.

In the context of medical issues and disease treatment, Khalili reflects on the alternatives of leadership for the Iranian society, and implicitly, proposes a person with similar characteristics to him as a potential leader. Indeed, this can be considered in line with his own familial history of political-religious leadership as well as his own political struggles (attempts to overthrow and confront British forces) in Najaf when he was young. Elwell-Sutton rightly refers to Khalili as the Islamic leader and author on a biographical note (Elwell-Sutton, 1968: 78).

The discussion of leadership in exile by an exiled person in minority with a marginalized status might seem very unexpected. However, Turner considers the liminal situation as a scene for creativity and potential:

> An interval, however brief, of margin or limen, when the past is momentarily negated, suspended or abrogated, and the future has not yet begun, [is] an instant of pure potentiality when everything, as it were, trembles in the balance. (Turner, 1982: 44)

From such a viewpoint, exile becomes a sort of utopia (Spariosu, 2015: 30). Spariosu describes the possibilities of this state in the following manner:

> The neutral playground or liminal space opened by exile can then be used to effect changes on both the expelling and the receiving political systems or cultures. […] Understood in this manner, the exilic condition may become a form of creative play, because the exiled individual can now perceive it as both free and joyful. (2015: 30)

The comic and playful mode of the first part of the novel also comes from the creative confrontation of Khalili with his liminal situation: As it will be seen, this part, despite the horrifying title of the novel (*Dark Times*) is unpredictably replete with humor. Khalili, himself, is totally conscious of this issue, and even in an advertisement written

by him in the press of that time on December 1st, 1924, introducing the work, he presents it as a critical and comic social literary work. (Kouhestani-nejad, 2016: 273)

Szakolczai believes that most metaphors and terms used for analyzing ambivalent societies, or in his own term "carnival societies," have comic affinities (Szakolczai, 2017: 226). With respect to a humorous approach to issues (e.g., leadership), as will be seen, Khalili is simultaneously influenced by Moliere and Jamalzadeh (especially in "Persian is Sugar"). This is a significant influence because Szakolczai places Moliere beside Socrates, Joyce and Dickens as the greatest masters of satire, irony or humor (Szakolczai, 2017: 227). The interesting point of Jamalzadeh's influence is that he also tends to present the Iranian society as a carnival society. In one story of the *Once Upon a Time* collection, Jamalzadeh considers Iran from the viewpoint of a foreign advisor and describes it as a society where it is not possible to truly know its people:

> Although I didn't spend more than eighteen months in Iran, this much I know: the whole country is like a carnival where anyone can wear whatever costume he pleases and doesn't owe anybody an explanation. (Jamalzada, 1985:92)

4.2.2 Leadership in Dark Times

Presenting the issue of leadership in *Dark Times* is so important that it is also reflected in the structure of the novel. *Dark Times* has two parts: The first part is told in the narrator's present time and is a frame story. In this part, the anonymous narrator, an exiled journalist who is also a clergy member (characteristics which match the details of Khalili's real life). While touring his place of exile, Kermanshah (Khalili's real place of exile near the Iranian-Iraqi border), he comes across a dying tubercular prostitute named Effat (which ironically means chastity).

The narrator becomes curious about the prostitute's fate and tries to treat her by referring to different physicians. In the second part of the novel, Effat, who is now better off under the narrator's care, tells a classic and detailed story of her change from an innocent and educated girl with a respectable family to a fallen girl in the form of a flashback.

The frame story employed in *Dark Times* (the first part of the novel) is abnormally detailed and comprises one third of the novel. It should be stated that the frame story is

too long and affects the main story to a large extent. Its length does not move the reader quickly to the main story. Except for some short references of the prostitute and her life history, the formulaic main story of how Effat became a prostitute, is not presented in the first section. Also, for some unknown reasons,[39] the writer does not complete the frame story at the end of the novel. Rather than returning to the present time to recount the end of the Effat and the narrator's encounter, the writer ends the story in the past, in a brothel where Effat is telling her story to other prostitutes.

The abnormally long frame story and its open-endedness at the end of the novel turns *Dark Times* into a two-part novel. Each part has its own theme, atmosphere and protagonist. The first part, the unfinished frame story, is remarkably comic. It has a largely theatrical atmosphere, as if it was to happen on a theater stage. In this part, Khalili is concerned with leadership in the political and liminal crisis of the Iranian society. To address it, Khalili completely operates Jamalzadeh's literary formula of the three confrontations.

The main question of this section is, who is finally going to get the society out of the crisis? On the one hand, the reader is offered the narrator who is trying to present himself as a charismatic hero. Throughout this first story, the narrator proves his capability for diagnosing the girl's disease and facilitating her treatment. He thus shows he can lead and save society from a critical condition. On the other hand, there are traditional and dandy (farangi-ma'ab) physicians who function as antagonists or tricksters and solely pretend to know the cure for the girl's disease. The character of the prostitute in the first part, contrary to the reader's expectation from such stories, is marginalized, and she is merely an excuse for advancing the novel's events.

The second part of the novel is the tragic and straight narrative of a girl who is forced into prostitution. The story in this section is completely in line with the literary formulas of its period and, thus, more predictable. In the atmosphere of novels of that period, this narrative means a forced and undesirable cessation of the past traditional identity and, as a result, becoming liminal. After presenting the pervasive liminal crisis through the first part of the novel, Khalili, like a skilled sociologist, makes the issue more grounded by using a case study: the story of a change in status of an educated girl (the new woman

[39] Most probably, Khalili intended to write the sequel to this work but has given up, as at the end of the book (p. 184) he mentions that "this is the end of the first volume".

symbolic type). With this example Khalili reaffirms the liminal crisis within Iranian society.

The frame story of *Dark Times* is therefore not solely used as a literary or structural technique. It is as important as the main story. The first part narrates the story of saviors and presents a list of symbolic types. Then, the story of the object of salvation or sacrifice follows. Selection of such structure and precedence of narrating the story of saviors over that of victims reveals that Khalili takes the crisis for granted. In his view, it is already too late, and the society has entered a critical situation that seems irreversible to the previous order. The prime problem at this point is to find an appropriate political alternative to exit the situation.

4.2.3 The Medicalization of the Iranian Society

Dark Times was written in the final years of Iran's Qajar dynasty. Some aspects of the novel are only perceptible in light of the history of medicine and in the context of the gradual process of medicalization within the Iranian society that occurred in this period.

Across this era, Iran's medicine experienced radical changes. Iranian students were sent to Europe to study medicine (the first medical student was sent to England in 1811). The Daral-Fonun (a polytechnic school) was established in 1851, which is where modern medicine was taught systematically for the first time in the medical department (a group of European physicians were amongst the teachers). The first modern hospital was founded in 1852, which was a turning point that resulted in the construction of more hospitals and clinics in future. The practice of medicine became institutionalized, increasing the number of physicians in Iran. For the first time, the parliament on the 1st of June 1911 approved the official laws for medicine. Scientific methods for treating patients became prevalent. The Tehran-based Institute Pasteur (an institute for microbiological research and immunology) was launched in 1921. Finally, the emergence of medical journalism resulted in the rise of modern medicine with all its aspects in Iran (Roosta'ee: 1382/2003: 19).

Nineteenth-century epidemics were one of the key factors that triggered the medical transformation of Iran. The country suffered from multiple epidemics, such as plague,

diphtheria, measles and cholera, and diseases became commonplace in Qajar era life (Kashani-Sabet, 2011: 8). As Ebrahimnejad asserts, the repeated waves of epidemics proved to be a significant factor in awakening the country's social consciousness towards public health (2014: 52). Most notably, the establishment of the *Majles-e Hefz al-Sehheh* ("Sanitary Council") in 1861, which in the subsequent years formed the core of the Iranian Ministry of Health, was mainly aimed at tackling epidemics (Ebrahimnejad, 2014: 117).

Iran's endeavor to independently control the nineteenth century's epidemics provides a ground for studying modern nation-building. While struggling with these diseases, whose prevalence correlated with the low level of public hygiene in the country, Iranians obtained new terminologies to describe their homeland. To overcome crises, intellectuals, journalists and policy makers stressed the shared responsibility of citizens towards their society, which as an unprecedented emphasis. They promoted hygiene not only as a remarkable social concern, but also as a patriotic and humanitarian mission.

The main strategy was to focus on the body and hygiene as categories of understanding the modernization of Iranian society:

> To instill patriotism, the homeland had first to become intimately tied to the human experience. Anthropomorphism accorded this hitherto-abstract territorial entity – homeland – a corporeal (and therefore familiar) identity. […] Newspapers and other literature projected and popularized this biological gaze by drawing an analogy between bodily health and political prosperity. (Kashani-Sabet, 2000: 1196, and 1201–2)

For example, after the issuance of the constitutional decree in 1906, a constitutionalist journal, *Habal-al-Matin,*[40] raised the question, "Is Iran sick?" Sometime later, the *Musawat* newspaper asked, "What is the situation in Iran?" The *Tamaddon* replied, "Iran is in ruin." Earlier, constitutionalist publications had spoken of the disease of "the sweet body of the beloved homeland" and offered the worries, "Where will the situation lead?" and "Where does the cure lie? ...which pharmacy sells its cure?" (Tavakoli-Targhi, 2008:108–109).

[40] Litearally means strong cord.

Applying medical terminologies and anatomical metaphors became such a relevant and popular approach that gradually, epidemic diseases gained meanings beyond the illness itself. The diseases became equal with social backwardness. Overcoming them and recovering health represented being in the path of advancement and civilization. Along with epidemic diseases, there were discussions of other diseases, namely political and social diseases. For example, the prevalence of bribery, which affected the Iranian government and society, became an item of talk:

> On a literal level, hygiene accentuated the need to promote public sanitation and bodily health; on a political level, hygiene underscored the need to keep the homeland flourishing. In seeking remedies, Iran found itself slowly shifting toward a new setting – a modern environment that relied on scientific methods and solutions as well as innovative political structures to relieve the country's various ills, whether social or political. (Kashani-Sabet, 2011: 27)

In this regard, physicians were considered as the true healers of the society. The society would seek healers for other areas as well. For example, journalists tried to present themselves as the healers of social illnesses (Kashani-Sabet, 2000: 1191).

At this period, the medicalized entity of the nation also found its gendered expression. The imagery of Iran as a female figure – a beloved sister, but mainly mother – gained currency in this era. [41] This concept did more than just create an image, "[it] also made the whole discourse of protection of woman – a body that needs protection against alien designs, intrusion, and penetration – and defense of honor available to nationalism" (Najmabadi, 1997:445).

In parallel, a new image of male guardianship was also crystalized. "Iranian men were enjoined to protect 'Mother Iran' and her daughters from symbolic and actual harm at the hands of foreign imperialists and treasonous 'nation sellers' (Amin, 2001:336). In an allegorical sense, men, "as a brotherhood of patriots, were concerned over the penetrability of the porous borders of Iran's geo-body, much as they displayed anxiety over who penetrated the orifices of the bodies of their female possessions" (Najmabadi, 1997:445).

[41] Najmabadi suggests that "the discursive production of nation as a female body (mother nation) was achieved through the rearticulation of the classical literature of love into patriotic poetics" (Najmabadi, 1997: 445).

As a result, preserving women's sexual purity (*ismat*) was taken to be the responsibility of brothers, fathers, and husbands of the nation. In this context, we can conceive the reason why in *Dark Times*, and other melodramatic novels of the period, exaggeratedly all of the men (not only the directly guilty ones) deserve the blame for failing to protect the female protagonist from prostitution and disease, overall, for their poor guardianship over women.

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In the popular novels written before *Dark Times*, a physician at best was a minor character. The character would have a short appearance on the deathbed of a fallen girl to announce what the readers already knew, she had syphilis. This figure then rapidly disappeared from the scene of the novel. However, Khalili, in the early decades of the twentieth century, makes dramatic use of the medicalization of society, and for the first time in the genre, fashions the character of a physician as a major actor of the society. Khalili's interest in medical issues is partly rooted in his family's history in the profession. It was also partly obtained through modern Arabic journalism (another sign of the global or regional influence on the Persian novel), notably the journal *Al-Muqtataf*.

Al-Muqtataf (1876–1952), founded in Cairo and then based in Beirut, was a journal of popular science with a Darwinist approach. A fixed part of this journal was dedicated to introducing modern medical achievements (Bou Ali, 2008: 13). It was through this publication that Khalili had obtained a preliminary familiarity and general knowledge about contemporary medical issues. Throughout the novel, the narrator refers to such medical achievements as "the miracles of modern medicine" (P. 30).

A report gives insight to the reception of this journal in Baghdad at the time. Significantly, Baghdad is 175 kilometers away from Najaf, the residence of Khalili.

> *Al-Muqtaṭaf* [was] met with strong opposition from entrenched traditionalist circles in the Muslim world. When its first issues arrived in Baghdad, for instance, conservatives in all communities, Sunnī and Shīʿī, Christian and Jewish resisted it because it preached new and "dangerous" doctrines. Only some of the younger generation welcomed it. (Ryad, 2009: 83)

Ahmad Kasravi, a friend of Khalili in his youth, was also a reader of this journal, and by studying its astronomy section, he became a believer in Western science's superiority (Shayegh, 2004:98).

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Khalili explicitly uses medical and gender metaphors in both his journalism and in *Dark Times*. With a ruthless candor, considers the Iranian society a sick one. He generalizes the patient's critical condition (the tubercular prostitute whom we later find out also has syphilis) to the critical condition of the whole country. He asks the readers not only to be affected by the severe situation of the tubercular prostitute (of whom he says he has not seen anybody more miserable), but also to shed tears for the unfortunate country (P. 33). Furthermore, in the footnote of the novel, Khalili confirms the statement of one of the novel's characters:

> Iran is sick, and the country has no doctor [and] also [these statements that] 'Iran has become full of microbes' and 'there is no one [to take care of this situation]' and 'the politicians of the country are [also] blind' are the sheer truth. (p. 41)

From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, in the Middle East countries, including Iran, travelers and students to Europe were ridiculed for bringing syphilis back with them as a souvenir, instead of civilization. It was said about them, "they came back 'syphilized,' not 'civilized'" (Boroujerdi, 2001:12, Roosta'ei, 1382/2003: 540).

The association of syphilis with European countries has a much longer history. In Persian medical literature and starting from the end of the sixteenth century (1569), the source of syphilis was known as "*farang*" and it was called "the *farangi* smallpox".

Consideration should be given to the prostitute's infection with syphilis, as it complicates the metaphor and places her in a double-liminal situation. The first liminal condition refers to the woman's status as a prostitute, and the other is the disease itself. Syphilis has been one of the most symbolic diseases of the recent centuries. For example, in European countries, especially France, the source of the disease was considered to be prostitution, and the government, in the name of disease control, thus regulated the practice (Barnes, 1995: 162).

In the first part of *Dark Times*, the formula of three encounters is completed. Again, like in "Persian is Sugar," three people gather around one person (Effat). The subject of the encounter here is the "treatment" of the woman. In this moment, who is the proficient doctor that can save the woman from this situation? As we have seen, rescuing the prostitute is not ordinary in this context. This is a question about community leadership. According to Khalili, the current leaders of society are incapable of resolving this situation. On one side there is the decline of the Qajar, and on the other, are the insufficient constitutionalists. Everyone is looking for a new leader. Among the saviors Khalili presents is the anonymous narrator, or Abbas Khalili, who is not a doctor but has useful information about medicine to the extent that he acts like a skilled physician in diagnosing the disease. The other potential saviors are the pro-traditionalist physician and the pro-modern physician (dandy or farangi-ma'ab).

The narrator, has a major difference from the other two doctors who come to the woman's bedside. He knows from the beginning that the woman's disease is tuberculosis, and this awareness puts him (and the reader) in a better position than the two doctors. It sets the stage for Khalili to critique the physicians' knowledge and methods of treatment, as well as their appearances, behaviors and gestures. Through these criticisms, which sometimes appear in the form of parenthetic sentences in the text and sometimes in the footnotes, Khalili also constructs his identity. In a few cases, he identifies the similarities he shares with these two physicians, but mainly the narrator emphasizes his differences with them. Finally, he proves his superiority (and that of others with characteristics similar to his own) to get the country out of the normative disorder.

Khalili and Effat (the prostitute) meet in a ruined house on the margin of the place of exile, which again is a very liminal place. It is a space of potential and chaos, in between the past and the future, or in Franck and Stevens' term (2007), a "loose space" (in contrast to a "tight" or regulated space). This space represents freedom from constraint, the embracing of ambiguity and the potential to play with and critique social norms. Furthermore, Khalili and Effat are both liminal beings. One has broken the social rules, and the other has confronted the political power. Now, both have been expelled from their society (perhaps, this is the main reason Khalili identifies with the prostitute). The prostitute says, "she has only suffered the whole [of] her life and found no cure" (p. 22).

Suffering is the main difference between the prostitute in *Dark Times* and the prostitutes in *The Dreadful Tehran*. Compared to *Dark Times*, the stories of prostitution of women in *The Dreadful Tehran* are more similar to naive fantasies. In *Dark Times*, in addition to the spiritual suffering, which is effectively described in a way that the reader cannot remain indifferent to it, special emphasis is placed on physical pain. In the style of *La Dame aux Camélias* (1848), many realistic and graphic details such as bloody coughs and bloody pillows are displayed to make the world of the work more believable. Literary historian Yahya Arianpour believes that Abbas Khalili's *Dark Times* was influenced by La Dame aux Camélias with respect to focusing on the life of a tuberculous woman. Arianpour believes that the wave of influence from Duma's novel was regional and that it influenced many Turkish novels before it affected the Persian novel (Arianpour, 1976: 264).

At the beginning of the day, Khalili intends to visit the *Tagh-e-Bustan* near his place of exile, but he changes his schedule to attend to the bedside of Effat with the first, the traditionalist, doctor who was indeed chosen by one of the locals. In this situation the narrator acts as a mediator between the patient and the doctor.

Khalili seems to have been inspired by his ancestors in processing the character of this doctor. The first physician looks like a perfect example of traditional Qajar physicians. The character even claims to have been a physician for the Qajar court. Like the *ulema* (mullahs or sheikhs), the traditionalist doctor wears a robe and turban. This clothing was completely natural for the doctors of that period, as "at the end of the nineteenth century, most physicians dressed like the ulama, indicating that they were knowledgeable in divine science as well as in medicine" (Ebrahimnejad, 2014:18).

The pro-traditionalist doctor of *Dark Times* claims that he has not only taken Islamic courses, but also has passed them at the highest possible level and is also a *mojtahed*.[42] Khalili is actually a sheikh too and is completely similar to this doctor in appearance (wearing a robe and turban). However, throughout the novel (p. 25–33) it is seen, contrary to expectation, Khalili constantly tends to distance himself from the doctor. For example, the doctor is grotesque in appearance: a short humpbacked man with a reddish beard and old worn-out clothes. It quickly turns out that the pro-traditionalist physician

[42] Mojtahed (literally "those who practiced ejtehad," interpreting the Koran and the sunna (the traditions of the Prophet) or religious scholar.

is, in fact, a charlatan. The reader discovers that the physician has neither a specialization in medicine nor any special knowledge of Islamic sciences. Rather, it is Khalili who constantly reminds the readers of the doctors mistakes in these areas, which proves his mastery and knowledge in both modern sciences and Islamic sciences (including *hekmat*).[43]

The pro-traditionalist physician's strategy to show that he is competent is to intimidate his audience. Thus, he uses complex Arabic words and phrases. He name-drops and names strange medical books and herbs that do not exist. He claims to have invented a healing potion. He pretends to be a man of God and hypocritically and inappropriately uses Quranic verses and religious anecdotes in his speech, although he does not use them correctly even in its context. He later resorts to religious superstitions and also uses techniques such as tautology. Finally, the doctor cannot correctly diagnose the woman's disease and attributes her problem to her kidney disorder.

Since this part of the novel has a comic aspect, Khalili ridicules the pro-traditionalist physician with titles such as "the distressed old man"; "the idiot"; "the ridiculous man" and "the representative of death."[44] Lastly, using Western terminology, Khalili calls him a physician "contemporaneous with [the] dark ages."[45]

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Disappointed with the pro-traditionalist doctor, Khalili goes to look for another. One of the locals suggests going to a traditional healer. Khalili says it would have been better for them to visit a doctor who has been educated in the West right from the beginning. It appears through these actions that he has volunteered to take guardianship of the woman. He makes decisions for her and acts as an intermediary between the patient and the doctor. Based on a large and colorful board erected outside the western (*farangi*) doctor's clinic, he holds "medical diplomas from Germany, the United States, France, Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia. He is also a teacher at *Paris Medical*

[43] hekmat (Islamic philosophy)

[44] The pro-traditionalist doctor is unable to take care of the psychological issues of the deceased patient. He constantly discourages her and tells her that she is on the verge of death. That is why Khalili calls him by this name.

[45] Dark ages (the Middle Ages period, before the Renaissance)

Université." A little later, Khalili, after a minor examination of one of the diplomas hanging on the office wall, realizes that the date of issuance of the diploma does not correspond to the doctor's age. The western doctor is young and, thus, this document cannot belong to him. The title of this chapter is "The *Farangi* Doctor: Still a Funny Man." Considering the case of the first doctor, we already know that we are facing another charlatan, however, with a different background that claims a modern medical education in Western countries.

Finally, the *farangi-ma'ab* doctor cannot correctly diagnose the woman's tuberculosis-syphilis either. Yet, the important point is that his diagnosis is far more accurate than that of the pro-traditionalist doctor and that at least it fits into the medical discourse of the nineteenth century. The *farangi-ma'ab* doctor concludes that the woman is suffering from hysteria.

Relevantly, the debate of the mental health of prostitutes was a recurring topic throughout the nineteenth century. Doctors at this time had largely accepted the correlation between madness and prostitution (Matlock, 1994:125). As Felski points out,

> hysteria was to become the exemplary instance of the medical pathologization of the female body, a catchall term that was increasingly used to label any form of behavior not consonant with established social norms of femininity. Its indeterminate and protean symptoms resisted neat classification, presenting a chaotic clinical picture that engendered considerable bewilderment among doctors. (Felski, 1995: 182)

Different from the first doctor, the second doctor uses French words in his speech. Khalili, who understands them well and much like Jamalzadeh's narrator, criticizes the use of these words. He states, "unfortunately, Iranians who travel abroad for a couple of days and learn some incomplete words in a parrot-like fashion, intentionally or unintentionally lose their own sweet language" (p. 40). The Western physician also exaggerates the technological advances of the West and the backwardness of Iran. For example, he says, "I saw Iran from a 300-stock skyscraper in New York with a binocular that Edison personally gave me. There were all trains, cars and planes in New York, but in Iran, everything was ruined, and all was ruined, and only mullahs could be seen" (p. 49). Khalili agrees with the *farangi-ma'ab* doctor's words about Iran's backwardness to a great extent. In general, he has more sympathy with his words for this doctor than he

had for the pro-traditionalist doctor. Still, he is not happy that the *farangi-ma'ab* doctor does not respect the clergy and writes, "the *farangi-ma'ab* doctor is going too far and offends the respected position of the mullahs and Sayyids whose existence is necessary for the nation and the country" (p. 50). Although Khalili, in practice, as much as he could, has ridiculed the mullah by way of the pro-traditionalist doctor, here he tries to create a balance. In his view, the presence of a mullah is necessary, but it cannot be just any clergyman. I should be a balanced cleric, like Khalili, who understands both Iranian-Islamic culture and Western culture and science.

At this point Khalili has cast doubt on both physicians' scientific competence through their misdiagnosis of the type of disease. Khalili has questioned these men's capability in treating the patient and, indeed, their social leadership. According to Khalili, the Qajars – the eighty-year-old physician who previously served in the Qajar court is in fact the embodiment of the decline and exhaustion of this government – are not qualified to remain in charge of society, and neither are the educated Westerners – portrayed by the thirty-year-old *farangi-ma'ab* doctor – a reliable option for leadership. Another means of constructing a balanced man emerges in *Dark Times*. He appears as a symbolic type that evokes a sense of respect for the pro-traditionalist physician and the f*arangi-ma'ab* doctor at the same time. The former describes him as a "holy and scientific man" and the latter as a "civilized man with an amiable appearance" (pp. 45, 63).

The distinguishing feature of *Dark Times* from other novels of this period is its special emphasis on the effeminate qualities and unmanliness of the *farangi-ma'ab* doctor. This critique, in fact, extends to other *farangi-ma'ab* people who have these characteristics, as the narrator says that the streets of Tehran are full of these people (p. 48). Perhaps this is the most important problem that Khalili has with the *farangi-ma'ab* doctor. Interestingly, the pro-traditionalist doctor also shares this anxiety.

Neither Khalili nor the pro-traditionalist physician attribute these qualities of the second physician to his dandyism. He is a dandy-physician. As Felski states, the effeminate aristocratic dandy is one of the common ways of representing homosexuality in nineteenth century literature (Felski, 1995: 104). Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, modernity in Iran was received as a polluting effeminizing force, and according to Tavakoli-Targhi, Europeanization was feared to be effeminization (Najamabadi, 2005: 14, 303). Throughout the novel, a person with these characteristics is described as "evil"

(p. 92). In fact, questioning the sexual identity of the second physician is another piece of evidence that proves his disqualification to lead the society in critical situations.

The final chapter of the first section of *Dark Times* is entitled "The War of the Two Doctors." The two physicians finally confront and clash, signifying the conflicting atmosphere that has existed since the mid-nineteenth century between the emerging paradigm of modern and traditional medicine in Iran. The *farangi-ma'ab* doctor is examining the prostitute when the pro-traditionalist doctor suddenly comes back and causes controversy when he sees her on the patient's bed. The pro-traditionalist doctor exclaims, "You, *farangi* pervert! What's this monkey doing here?" (P.59). The two characters are incapable of conversing with each other, and their comic dispute, which is verbal at first, ends only with the intervention of government officials. (This scene illuminates that the symbolic silence between the *farangi-ma'ab* and the sheikh symbolic types in "Persian is Sugar" was not a peaceful silence.)

Finally, the author announces casually and without giving details that a "competent physician" has been found. The last doctor diagnoses the disease, confirms what Khalili knew from the beginning and begins treating Effat. Obscuring the details about the last doctor can be interpreted to mean that no one but Khalili is to stand out as a healer or an alternative for leadership.

As mentioned earlier, the constructed identity of the "moderate man" inevitably bends towards one of the two poles. The golden mean or golden middle way (the desirable middle between two extremes in ancient Greek thought, and later in Aristotelian philosophy) could never be achieved. Abbas Khalili is in fact a moderate cleric: a man balanced between religion and science. The phenomenon of balanced mullahs is one of the unexpected or surprising phenomena of the late Qajar or Reza Shah period. Balanced mullahs were generally subject to a variety of radical changes. These were people[46] who first studied theology, then revised it, and in some cases even went as far as atheism. After a while, some of these mullahs left the clergy customs and put on suits and joined the first Pahlavi government offices as employees. In the following decades, in the late Reza Shah period and the early years of Mohammad Reza Shah's rule, negative literature

[46] Ali Dashti, Sayyed Hassan Taghizadeh, Ahmad Kasravi are the most prominent examples of this case in Reza Shah's era.

about these people was formed. The well-known author, Sadegh Hedayat, referred to these people with the humiliating title of *ex-akhund.*[47]

Fakhreddin Shadman, a famous cultural critic of the Pahlavi period, referred to these mullahs as "dandy-akhund" (Shadman, 2003: 41). According to the typology presented by Shadman, these were mullahs who tried to differentiate their appearance. They wore adorned robes and wore small turbans and kept their beards short. Shadman also described the dandy-akhunds' limited knowledge as follows:

> They read only a few books by prolific but low-level authors from Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, and with great difficulty, remembered two or three hundred words or phrases that were the incomplete translation of the western scientific and philosophical materials into Arabic. They used some *farangi* words in their speech and commented on every discovery and invention without knowing the new and old science and literature. (Shadman, 2003: 41)

In the years after the end of Reza Shah's rule, Abbas Khalili became a different person and found another world. He left his clerical clothing and assimilated into the government of Mohammad Reza Shah. However, at the time of writing *Dark Times* Khalili had not come up with a better solution than a moderate man inclined to religion as an alternative leader of society.

4.2.4 In the Realm of Paranoia

Medical imposters, the key characters of *Dark Times*' first part, were not completely unprecedented characters, and their presence can be identified in different cultures. This character is present in both the stories of medieval Islam (Maqamah genre) and commedia dell'arte (the character of dottore). What distinguishes Abbas Khalili's approach is the way the real identity of these doctors is revealed. The first writers of Iranian social novels were also greatly affected by the atmosphere of detective novels. In *Dark Times*, the narrator, like an inquiry agent, with a scientific spirit that is necessary for such investigations, enquires about these doctors with suspicion and uses a set of

[47] https://fis-iran.org/fa/irannameh/volxvi/hedayat-qazzieh-parody

detective techniques to reveal their true identities. For example, as experienced detectives, the narrator asks the traditional doctor to repeat the bizarre name of a drug he claims to have invented to test his honesty (and, of course, he is unable to repeat the name correctly). Or, like professional detectives, he uses his power of observation to find the clue: he pessimistically examines the college degree that the Farangi doctor has hung in his office like a potential evidence for crime and concludes that it cannot belong to him, or he has forged it. His attention is also drawn to the fact that the Farangi doctor disguises his voice over the phone and speaks instead of his secretary, which resembles to a criminal act.

Unmasking in the style of Molière, for example, in a play like *Tartuffe*, which was done with the aim of criticizing the pious hypocrites, takes on a new dimension in the context of Persian novels: the process dominating unmasking becomes a detective process during which the true identities of the criminals and, in fact, the tricksters are revealed.

With such an approach, Khalili creates a paranoid atmosphere and, in fact, encourages his readers not to take the real identity of the people in the society of Iran at that time for granted and to go beyond what they see to discover their true identity.

But who has the authority to do such unmasking? It is the symbolic type of moderate man who does this job successfully. On the other hand, the symbolic types of dandy and Sheikh are always subjected to unmasking.

4.2.5 The Fallen New Woman

Another great achievement of Khalili in *Dark Times* is merging the modern figure of the new woman with the figure of the fallen woman. For the first time in a Persian social novel, the new woman finds a similar fate to that of the fallen woman.

In *Dreadful Tehran,* as the pioneer of the genre, the story of the new woman and that of the fallen woman are narrated. The new woman in *Dreadful Tehran*, Mahin, faces a tragic fate different from prostitution: death during childbirth. What binds these two entirely distinct characters (new woman and fallen woman) together is suffering from a bad reputation and their vulnerability to social judgment. Both women have moved beyond social norms and disturbed the social order in one way or another and have been

stigmatized by society. They share a fate as "both the fallen and the new woman are subject to a crisis of reputation if they lack a home and family, the essential prerequisites of a protected, or 'good' reputation" (Brooks, 1996: 91). By combining these two literary constructs, the fallen woman and the new woman, Khalili makes a very dynamic and potent metaphor: the fallen new woman.

The fall of such a person is not a simple and normal matter. With the fall of the new woman, what she represents (i.e., modern principles) is also challenged. Therefore, Iranian anxieties over modernization can be well understood by the form of the fallen new woman.

Another element that was already implicitly present in the Persian novel, but was emphasized by Abbas Khalili in *Dark Times* is the irreversibility of female purity. Ortner considers this concern and sensitivity towards female purity as a common feature of what are called great traditions, especially Christianity, Islam and Hinduism (Ortner, 1979: 23). In *Dark Times*, sexual chastity is described as an irrecoverable object; losing it leads to an irreversible state. Therefore, Khalili often refers to the "world of prostitution" as a completely new and unprecedented world (p. 156). Further, he considers entering it as a "new stage" (p. 152). Since Khalili had already established a good relationship between the prostitute and the nation-state, the loss of sexual chastity in the context of the Persian novel means the complete separation of society from its traditional status and the passage of a definite stage of social evolution.

These points are also well represented in the reflections of the prostitute. In a crucial flashback of the novel, Effat meditates on her situation after prostitution to finally make this "new world" understandable for herself.

In these open reflections, there is talk of the impossibility of returning to the former state, like returning from the world of the dead to the world of the living. After an accidental encounter with a young military man, whom she sees as the prelude to her impurity, Effat, as the fallen woman, asks the readers a question, "Have you ever heard of or seen someone who, after his farewell to this mortal world, unearths his grave and comes back to life? No way!" (P. 73) The prostitute describes her, and the nation's, new critical situation as "a suspension between death and life, a state between drunkenness and sobriety, an instant between light and darkness. Love is the purgatory of existence.

It is a bridge between mortal and immortal life" (P. 73). She ultimately calls it the "*barzakh* (limbo) of existence."

The concept of *barzakh* conveys the idea of liminality in Islam. It is "a transitional state between the moment of death and the day of resurrection, during which sinners are punished while the righteous repose in peace and comfort" (Spariosu, 2015:23). The prostitute's effort to understand her situation still continues by deploying liminal spatial metaphors. She likens this new and unknown world to a bridge between life and death. Effat describes this bridge in detail:

> [It] is very difficult and dangerous to cross because there is undoubtedly [the risk] of falling and slipping. I wanted to jump over that gutter, and instead, I suddenly fell into this beautiful yet morbid world, unconscious of this earthly world. Each foot on one side of the gutter, I slipped, my veil fell off and my burqa was removed. The servant took my hand but I saw another hand as well, who wanted to save me. I saw that handsome man. My lapse seemed of no importance nor danger but I wonder how I ended up in the midst of that stormy water. (P. 74)

Finally, this indeterminacy of the heroin in *Dark Times* leads to her fall. With one foot to the left of the stream, and the other foot to the right, Effat indicates that she, and indeed the whole nation, has not fully decided on the options that are presented. She does not know whether to stay on one side (the world of tradition) or to walk completely to the other side (the modern world). This continues until danger and crisis come metaphorically in the form of the danger of colliding with a chariot. Effat, who has not made her decision in time, as a result falls into a limbo between the two worlds, into the stream.

Now who can save her after the fall into this precarious situation? Who can take her hand and help her get her balance? Neither the military figure, the spinster, the dandy nor the sheikh (who were dealt with in the first part of the novel) are qualified individuals for this. In *Dark Times*, only the moderate man constructed by Khalili, the moderate or modern cleric, can competently be in charge.

4.3 Homa;
Hermeneutics of Suspicion

4.3.1 The Engineer Who Became a Novelist

Mohammad Hejazi (1901–1974), along with Morteza Moshfegh Kazemi and Jahangir Jalili, was another "angry young man" of this era who criticized Iran's sociopolitical situation. However, his similarity to the others ends here. His major difference with the other writers of this period lies in the fact that he, before being a novelist, had experienced living in Europe and was familiar with its recent modern changes.

From 1919 he was an employee of the Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone. In 1921, he was sent by the same ministry to pursue his education in Europe. He spent roughly eight years in France and Belgium, mainly to study and master telecommunications engineering by official request of the Ministry of Post. He was to teach in this field upon his return to Iran. In addition, Hejazi elected to study political law by his own choice (Ghanoonparvar, 2003: 141–143, Hakimfar, 1353/1974: 90, Aryanpoor 1974: 243).

Having studied an engineering field distinguished Hejazi from other writers of the period, whose educational background was mainly in literature and the humanities. The immediate experience of living in Europe and being acquainted with modern technologies only led to more anger of the young Hejazi towards his country's political situation. In a technical dissertation in Persian entitled, "Wireless Telegraphy" (Berlin, 1923), written as a pretext to introduce new communication technologies, Hejazi attacked the so-called "backwardness" of Iran as much as he could. In the introduction of this writing, the young Hejazi mentions the invention of "wireless telegraphy" as one of the most important discoveries of the twentieth century. He considers the invention of wireless telegraphy as important as the invention of the airplane (p. 3). After mentioning the recent developments in Europe and "civilized countries" (his own interpretation) during the years of World War I, Hejazi blames his compatriots and asks,

"What have we done in building the great palace of human civilization and prosperity?" (Hejazi, 1923: p. 4). He answers, "nothing."

In his criticisms, the young engineer uses common exaggerations of many cultural agents of the late Qajar and post-constitutional period (Foroughi, 1309/1930: 1). For example, he employs the analogy of man with animal, "Europeans are so advanced in the stages of humanity and we are so behind that the distance between Europeans and [us] has become comparable to the distance between humans and animals." (Hejazi, 1923: p. 4–5) At the end of the introduction, Hejazi desperately states that the only solution for Iran to survive in the international arena is to imitate the Europeans and adopt their technology.

Two years after these radical statements, Hejazi started the authorship of *Homa* in Paris, or as David Harvey puts it, in "the capital of modernity." Hejazi, willingly or not, was caught in a liminal situation. To get rid of his disorientation, he had to specify his position in relation to his own culture and that of the Western world.

Another serious difference of Hejazi and other writers of this period is that he was employed by the Qajar government from his early youth. His grandfather, Mirza Ismaeel Mostowfi, and father, Seyyed Nasr-Ollah Mostowfi, were both high ranking *mostowfis* (traditional accountants) of the Qajar government. Hejazi, after the early death of his father, had to take over the financial guardianship of his mother and four siblings. (This experience was probably the origin of the idea of guardianship, one of the central themes in *Homa*; Hakimfar 1973: 90) Hejazi later joined the government of Reza Shah, where he held several jobs and positions. The direct impact of this commitment to the government and the first-person account of the country can be seen in *Homa*.

Hejazi also had the highest artistic skill among his contemporaries for creating the plot of a novel. As a result, his novels are highly readable. Having a moderate degree of intellectual application, they could be considered as "middlebrow" by the standards of contemporary literary criticism. *Homa*, for example, has an elaborate plot of the Jane Austen type. The rather complicated plot of *Homa* is reviewed for better interpretation of the work.

4.3.2 Marriage Plot

The story of *Homa* takes place a year or two before the Russian Revolution of 1917. Homa is an attractive, educated 21-year-old girl (and a virgin). She does not have a father, so her achievements are due to the guardianship of Hassan-Ali Khan. Homa's father had died in her youth, so her guardianship falls to his friend Hassan-Ali Khan, who takes charge of Homa's education and upbringing.

The main conflict in the story happens when a suitor appears asking for Homa's hand. The proposal comes from a young man named Manouchehr who is seemingly a modern, educated youth, having completed his education at the American Institute in Tehran. Homa's mother beseeches Hassan-Ali Khan to conduct a background research on the new suitor and to offer his opinion on the pending match between the young couple. Hassan-Ali however becomes increasingly bewildered at the prospect.

Homa, however knows the true reason behind this bewilderment. Upon discovering Hassan-Ali's personal diary, she realizes that despite being a married man without any children, he harbors secret feelings and affections for her. Hassan-Ali Khan, though deeply saddened, agrees to conduct the background check. After learning of Manouchehr's good character, he vouches for the marriage to take place. Homa is then faced with a difficult decision. Feeling a sense of obligation toward all the kindness that Hassan-Ali has bestowed upon her and owing her life's success to him, she feels her romantic liaison with Manouchehr will be hurtful to Hassan-Ali Khan. Therefore, she asks Manouchehr to end their relationship.

Manouchehr becomes suspicious of Hassan-Ali and sees this new development as a direct result of his influence as guardian of Homa. He seeks revenge by plotting with a corrupt sheikh to publish slanders against Hassan-Ali, who works at the treasury office, and ruin his reputation. When Hassan-Ali Khan reads the papers with the slanders, he becomes frantic with dismay. During the same time, Hassan-Ali's wife dies. The event renders him free to pursue his dream of a relationship with Homa, without the obstacles of moral obligation to his marriage. However, upon learning of Homa's reluctance to pursue her pending marriage to Manouchehr, Hassan-Ali persuades Manouchehr to seek her further.

Homa reinstates her relationship with the young man, but little by little the perfectly crafted mask of Manouchehr falls apart to reveal his true evil nature. The facts emerge that Manouchehr was the mastermind of Hassan Ali's demise in the papers and that he is already married with two children in his hometown of Isfahan. Homa immediately breaks her engagement with Manouchehr. Meanwhile, Hassan-Ali Khan has been deployed on a business trip to Qazvin. In order to provide a change of scenery for the heartbroken Homa, he takes her and her mother along with him.

The northern parts of Iran, including Qazvin, are occupied by the Russian military forces. Manouchehr once again seeks the assistance of the corrupt sheikh who is in reality a Russian spy. The Sheikh, enchanted by Homa, plots an elaborate conspiracy against Hassan Ali and creates the groundwork for Hassan-Ali Khan to be imprisoned on charges against the Russian Tsar's government. Ultimately, the Russians sentence Hassan-Ali to be shot. During this time the corrupt Sheikh tries his utmost to conquer Homa and secure her hand in marriage. Homa, however, continues to reject his advances. While imprisoned, Hassan-Ali Khan befriends his jailor, who happens to be a high-ranking Russian Officer. The officer, deeply moved by Hassan-Ali's moral and ethical conduct, tries relentlessly to prevent the death sentence from taking place, but to no avail. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the political mayhem of the Russian Revolution, Hassan-Ali is released from prison, and Homa and Hassan-Ali Khan eventually get married.

4.3.3 Homa as a New Woman

In this novel, Homa is a new woman. She is the only new woman who gains a destiny better than prostitution and death in all novels of this period.

"Homa" is the name of the bird of fortune in Iranian legends. In this story, Homa represents an ideal womanhood, or perhaps perfect nation in the context of the post-Constitutional Revolution era. Every man wishes to marry her. Homayoun Katouzian, the literary critic, describes the novel as "a journey through pure, unmitigated, literary idealism" (Katouzian, 1991: 11). Applying Mary Douglas' terms, we could call Homa a

pure girl. Her authenticity, or virginity, is never questioned or threatened in the course of the novel.

One of the most common and instant characterization methods in novels and dramas of this period is to describe the characters through their rooms. In the first chapter of the novel entitled, "Homa's Room," her room is described as follows:

> It's a clean and tidy room with comfortable chairs and short tables. Colorful, patterned embroideries on the furniture and walls are quite a sight. Several landscape paintings, large or small, with Homa's signature are hung on the room walls. The books are visible through the glasses of the spacious bookcase. Near it, there is a desk with pile of books stacked on it. (P. 2)

Having an independent room is an emphasis on the individuality of this character. Sensitivity to the room's decoration, the painting on the wall, the library with these characteristics, and Homa working behind a desk reveals elements that are not typical of Iranians' daily lives at that time. All of these components represent the character of Homa well and quickly. She has a hand in painting and reads novels (she even reads them in French). She wears adorned clothes. She constantly speaks of the "moral principles" or civil ethics to which she adheres, which is an alternative to religion. She is looking for a romantic marriage, unlike other women of this period who have no choice but forced marriage. Her ambitious goal is to dedicate herself to educating "miserable Iranian women" (p. 139).

Indeed, the other female characters in the novel are each miserable in their own way. Homa's uniqueness is further highlighted when we examine the situation of these women.

Homa's mother, Tal'at Khanom, is a superstitious woman. Once, when Homa feels sick, she uses whatever charm and spell she knows. Tal'at Khanom gives an example of her methods in this manner, "I even uttered some incantations into a glass of water and tried to get her drink it" (p. 129). In a conversation with Hassan-Ali Khan, Homa calls her mother an "ignorant woman" and both consider her deserving of compassion (p. 152). Hassan-Ali Khan's wife, Roghieh khanom, is a druggy wreck. She does not follow modern hygienic principles, and this will cost her life.

Manouchehr's wife is illiterate and religious by habit. Manouchehr says the following about her:

> I wish she had a bit of intelligence. All she enjoys is going up to the roof and to listen to the neighbour's tragic *rowzeh*[48] and to moan and cry without even understanding it. (P. 141)

Manouchehr's mother is in a similar situation. One of the novel's sub-characters is a rural girl who is treated as an exchangeable commodity, whom Homa is later supposed to train. In this novel, Hejazi again resorts to the exaggerated comparison of human and animal, and he considers the women of the Iranian society as having a liminal position "between human and animal" (p. 142).

In an environment where all women are drowned in ignorance and superstition, it is only Homa who has been able to go beyond this situation because of Hassan-Ali's support. It is this characteristic that has made her a very desirable option for marriage. The formulaic question that Hejazi could raise through Homa would be, who is able to save the Iranian woman and get her out of the situation of being "between human and animal"? Yet, the question that he actually raises is, who is qualified to marry Homa, the new woman? The typical literary formula of this period of the three encounters is repeated in the novel, centering around Homa's character. Again, a list of symbolic types or, in other words, suitors are presented: the modern young man (Manouchehr), the traditional man (the corrupt sheikh) and the moderate man (Hassan-Ali Khan).

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The order of Homa's fictional world is disrupted when Hassan-Ali Khan is informed of Manouchehr's marriage proposal to Homa. Hassan-Ali Khan, who has been Homa's guardian for eight years since she was thirteen, suddenly finds himself in the position of a jealous man whose true love is being taken out of his possession. The idea of considering a female ward as the perfect wife seems to have been inspired by Moliere's play *L'école des femmes* (*The School for Wives*, 1662). In this play, the protagonist trains the girl under his guardianship to marry him.

[48] A Shiite sermon recalling the tragedies of Karbala (i.e., the martyrdom of *Imam Hussein* and his supporters).

Since romanticism is one of the stylistic features of *Homa*, the disruption of this order is emphasized by natural elements.[49] After hearing the news of this proposal,

> there was a storm inside Hassan-Ali Khan […], the air became dark, the trees were thrown into the air like feathers of straw […] It did not take long for the heart of Hassan-Ali Khan to be broken. He was terrified of this sudden change. (P. 24)

A metaphor of a ruined house is present here. As will be seen in the rest of the story, the consequences of this "instantaneous change," that is this mental disorder, are not confined to Hassan-Ali Khan and will completely overshadow the lives of others.

In this novel, Hassan-Ali Khan has the characteristics of a moderate man. He is basically an isolated intellectual. He has been educated at the Dar al-Fonun School, the first higher education school of Iran, which is also of symbolic importance. He implicitly considers himself a "civilized human" (p. 97). For example, he pays special attention to the observance of hygienic principles (p. 74–75, 161). He is a bureaucrat, a high-ranking employee of the Ministry of Finance, but he has a critical view of bureaucratic affairs. For example, he says:

> What a slavery and humiliation to be on a specific time at a specific place every single day, to do some useless job and to read and write stuff that do no good to any human's bliss! (P.14)

His studies include the Greek philosophers, such as Socrates and Zeno,[50] and French writers, like Rousseau and his contemporary novelist Bourget.[51] In addition, he studies the classical Iranian poets Saadi and Hafez. However, in the midst of all this, just reading Hafiz's poems heals his soul. Hassan-Ali Khan demonstrates this when he says, "My soul is wounded... I will read some Hafiz, and I will feel better" (P. 20). Hassan-Ali Khan is also a writer. Apart from writing regular diaries, he has written several books on economics that he has not published (p. 8). In his room, maps of geography and

[49] Around 1915, under the influence of European (French) romanticism, and especially Rousseau's works, a kind of romantic naturalism found its way into Persian prose. Especially writing short and independent pieces describing nature and walking in nature with a sorrowful tone became common in the Persian press (especially in the literary magazine "Daneshkadeh"). This style of writing also found its way into the novels of that period, especially in the works of Khalili and Hejazi (Jafari, 2007: 50-59).

[50] Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoic school of philosophy

[51] Paul Bourget (1852-1935)

statues of great men and writers are installed (p. 6), which also refers to his broad view toward the outside world.

He sees himself a victim of forced marriage, having married his cousin upon his father's order (p. 10–11, 56). Hassan-Ali Khan seeks his happiness somewhere outside of his marriage (in relation with Homa). His dream is to one day reach a financial position where he can send Homa to Europe to specialize in "the science of women's education" (p. 16).

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Hassan-Ali Khan is facing one of the most difficult challenges of his life. It was he who taught Homa about romantic love and marriage to "the person who is in every way appropriate" (p. 95). Hassan-Ali Khan knows very well that this relationship has basically been realized under his own teachings to Homa, and unlike the forced marriages of that time, Homa's full consent has been obtained. Hassan-Ali knew this from the liberal thoughts he had taught Homa, and since they had already seen, known and loved each other, his proposal was with her consent (p. 26).

Manouchehr, on the other hand, indeed seems to be a perfect choice for Homa in every aspect. He is close to her age (28 years old). He is a young businessman and a *farangi-ma'ab* who graduated from a modern school, the American College of Tehran.[52] He has become acquainted with [modern] ethical principles (p. 143). In addition, his appearance in every way shows he is a well-groomed person; he ties his ties beautifully and walks stylishly (p. 27, 80, 120, 177). Finally, Manouchehr's ideas about living together with Homa are perfectly in line with her concerns, "[Manouchehr imagined that he and

[52] The American School for boys, an American Presbyterian missionary institution in Tehran, started as a grade school in 1873 (from 1898 known as American College of Tehran). In the beginning, it was considered a threat to Muslim's religious faith and no Muslim enrolled in the school. But gradually the situation changed significantly and by 1891, over half of the 135 students were Muslim. Also, some of its faculty members and staff were Iranian, alongside its European and American faculty members and staff (Armajani, 1985: 821-823)." By 1922, it was becoming clear that the missionary teachers were walking a narrow and, at times, contradictory path in advocating spiritual but secular-like values, and espousing American-like but national aspirations. Their educational purposes were Christian and ethical but respectful of Islam and Iranian cultural values." (Ricks, 2011: 631).

Homa] think every day about decorating the house, and in consultation with each other, they choose the lady's clothes (p. 45–46).

4.3.4 The Birth of Conspiracy in Persian Social Novel

Why is the marriage proposal of Manouchehr, who seems to be "the right person" in every respect, disregarded? Luc Boltanski explains the reason:

Hence, regarding the rise of modern states in the nineteenth century, reality is in crisis: except for the apparent and everyday reality, there exists another layer of reality: a more concealed one. And this links us to the thematics of mystery and conspiracy. As we mentioned before, Boltanski considers these thematics, as keys for the understanding of not only the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's fiction (especially detective and spy fiction genres), but the functioning of the whole society (Boltanski, 2014: XV). In Boltanski's view is the following:

> The *conspiracy form* is necessarily double-sided. A conspiracy is an object that does not contain its own intelligibility. It can only be distinguished from ordinary relationships through the *unveiling* process, which brings together on the same level the apparent but fictitious reality and the hidden but real reality. That is why the moment when the conspiracy is exposed has all the properties of a coup de théâtre. (Boltanski, 2019: 5)

Homa also has a high potentiality to be read as a detective or even a spy novel. Up to now, it has been merely studied as an exemplary social novel. Hejazi is the first Iranian popular writer to introduce social paranoia as a theme and conspiracist elements with such a depth to the literary culture of the early twentieth century of Iran (it is worth mentioning that the detective genre fiction and paranoia as a clinic disorder emerged at the same time (Boltanski, 2014: 175)).

In *Homa*, Hejazi always challenges the fictitious (or apparent) reality. He believes the conspiracy reality has spread through society and urges his readers to think as he does and become a suspicious reader of the real world. Manouchehr serves as an example of a noble modern man, only in the first half of the novel. Even though Manouchehr is Homa's neighbor, Tal'at Khanom, Homa's old-fashioned mother, asks Hassan-Ali Khan

to do some research[53] on Manouchehr. Carrying out such an investigation makes Hassan-Ali Khan comparable to a private detective to some degree, as evidenced in the text, "For several consecutive days, Hassan-Ali Khan inquired about Manouchehr, here and there" (p. 33).

The first person with whom he enquired about Manouchehr is the American principal of the American College of Tehran. He tells Hassan Ali Khan in broken Persian that Manouchehr was a very good student and that he wished all Iranian youth were like him (p. 33). Then, Hassan-Ali asks his coworkers in Bazar. They also emphasize his moral and human behavior in business (p. 34). At the end of his research, Hassan-Ali reports to Homa, "His fame is undeniable. If his look is as good as his soul, he should be a noble person." (P. 35)

In the later stages of the novel, it becomes apparent that Hassan-Ali Khan's semi-detective investigations have not been sufficient. At the end of the story, he blames himself that all the current complicated problems are due to his failure to perfectly perform the investigation. Hassan-Ali Khan explains,

> "I take full responsibility for what happened," said Hasan Ali Khan. "That's because I had to look through Manouchehr's past and present life. Particularly, I needed to go to Isfahan, since that's where his past lies". (P. 132)

Using Boltanski's terms, Hassan-Ali Khan failed to find any evidence to unveil the hidden workings of society. Hence comes the question, who unmasks the reality in *Homa*? It is Hejazi as the narrator. "The 'paranoid' narrator is both a proto-detective, and a proto-conspiracy theorist" (Carver, 2020: 417). Using a third-person omniscient point of view, he takes the role of a god-like detective and occasionally surprises his characters while they are scheming against each other. It is quite a shocking scene when, for the first time in the middle of the novel, we are introduced to the wretched side of

[53] In Iranian traditional marriages, a common and accepted procedure for ensuring that the groom or suitor is a fitting one. After initial agreement, usually one elder member of the bride's family (father, uncle, older brother) rather secretly makes some investigations about the groom or the suitor. The degree and the seriousness of the research depends on the level of previous familiarity with the groom, his background and family. In some cases, they do research to get know the groom's characteristics better; in more serious researches, the investigation is done to find out whether the groom has a criminal record or not. The potential references are usually among the groom's present or previous colleagues and the neighborhood.

Manouchehr through his conspiring with the Sheikh to bring disgrace to Hassan-Ali Khan. *Homa* is thus about endless suspicions. It is intriguing that Manouchehr, in his own regard, is suspicious towards Hassan-Ali for disrupting his romantic relationship with Homa. As a consequence, he wants to take revenge on him by publishing fake allegations against him in the newspapers.

In Hejazi's articulation, reality is no more what it seems. Tehran is becoming a dreadful *Gesellschaft,* and everyone should beware of even his or her neighbor. People are considered potentially unreliable and fraudulent in the context of the modernizing society of Iran. Echoing horror science fiction, Hejazi writes about the masks that people perpetually carry with themselves, claiming, "We never show ourselves as we really are. We don't let anyone see our true selves. It's as if we have several masks, and within a second, we pick one to wear to fit the situation" (p. 62).

Manouchehr does not just wear a mask (or masks), but instead has a double life. A traditional one behind him in Isfahan with a superstitious wife and two children expecting him. In the other life, he has escaped from the traditional world and tries to conceal it. This life is new and modern, and he has gained it after residing in Tehran and attending The American College of Tehran. Manouchehr seeks to complete this second life with a new wife: Homa. Homa, too, later refers to Manouchehr's double life in another way. She says that she knows two Manouchehrs, "the first Manouchehr or the Manouchehr who was an angel in the form of human and another, Manouchehr the conspirator" (p. 140).

Manouchehr's case also is a liminal one. He is not able to release himself from the burden of the past in a logical manner. He could easily separate from his wife, but instead he just escapes from his previous and – in his view – "unpleasant" life and negates it. Rather than resolving the past situation, he engages with designing a whole new life.

Breaking up with the past is not an easy task. When finally, after eight years, Manouchehr makes up his mind to divorce his wife, his mother (an element from his first life) intervenes. She reveals her son's secret marriage to Homa, and practically puts a definite end to their relationship. In fact, here, Manouchehr's mother, who does not agree with his remarriage, is conspiring against him. Not only does she secretly inform Homa of Manouchehr's previous marriage, but she also swears that she will not let Manouchehr know that she was the revealer of the news (p. 130–131).

Hassan-Ali Khan and Manouchehr's final meeting in the presence of Homa performs like a police investigation as Hassan-Ali fact-checks the accuracy of the information about Manouchehr's secret marriage. Manouchehr admits the charge, but he also has his own excuse to hide it. He considers himself a victim of forced marriage and says that his marriage to his 12-year-old orphaned cousin was forced by his mother. He states, "I don't love her. I have never had. They forced her on me. I fled from her to Tehran" (P. 141).

Hejazi does not do justice to the characters in his story to the same degree: Hejazi makes it impossible for Manouchehr to get rid of the forced marriage. Instead, he paves the way for Hassan-Ali Khan (probably his own alter ego) to go beyond his inappropriate marriage. Hejazi does not consider Hassan Ali Khan's sinful thinking of Homa at the time of his marriage to be a weakness, although he is constantly portrayed throughout the novel as a person who adheres to high moral principles. Instead, Hejazi warmly serves her to him. His wife, Roghieh, who is the most serious moral obstacle to marrying Homa, is defeated in the shortest possible time: two paragraphs.

> Roghieh khanom doesn't believe in microbes; she never drinks the boiled water that is prepared for her husband. She laughs at such beliefs and curses those who invented such nonsenses. To her, the canal water, which is stored in the cellar[54] is pure and pleasant.
>
> Opposite beliefs between wife and husband (Roghieh and Hassan-Ali Khan) have separated them from each other and each of them lives almost on their own. Now it is a few days since she has typhoid, and her health is getting worse every day. She refuses to take her medication and doesn't want to poison her body with impure stuff. (P. 75)

As was seen in *Dark Times*, the emphasis on modern public health arose in Iran during the nineteenth century. Since then, the Pasteurian paradigm was gradually recognized in Iran and water pollution, and its unconditional use, were warned. According to the novel, Roghayeh is a victim of her traditional mentality before she became a victim of Salmonella typhi bacteria. As a traditionalist, she considers purified water and modern

[54] Hejazi Originally uses *āb-anbār*, which refers to a traditional reservoir or cistern of drinking water in Iranian antiquity. It has a roofed underground structure, constructed to store freshwater for domestic uses. The water reservoir was fed from a near shallow *qanat* [an underground channel].

medicine impure and, therefore, dangerous. For her estimating the purity of things depends first and foremost on one's status. She then refrains from taking modern medicine when she becomes ill and subsequently dies quickly. At this moment, two-thirds of the novel have passed, and the plot has entirely unfolded, and the love triangle is resolved. Manouchehr's modern identity and his affiliated institute, the American College of Tehran, is discredited. Hassan-Ali Khan's old-fashioned wife has died, and everything is furnished for Hassan-Ali Khan's perfect marriage with Homa.

4.3.5 Rise of Reza Shah in the "Contact Zone"

However, at this point, the atmosphere of the novel changes drastically. *Homa*, which was a well-structured domestic fiction with illicit references to the social background of Iran, becomes an uneven blend of spy fiction, postcolonial novel, and propagandist literature in the context of the Anglo-Russian great game in central Asia. This duality of the work is evident even from the advertisement published in the press at the time the story was published: "*Homa* is a true love story … Read an example of the Russian tyranny within your beloved homeland and cheer over the end of such unyielding, monstrous plague!" (*Taghaddom*, 1307/1928).

This aesthetic break is marked with the transition of the novel's location from Tehran to Qazvin. For the sake of Homa's recovery who is shocked after Manouchehr's scandalous behavior, Hassan-Ali Khan takes her and her mother with him on his official mission to Qazvin. The choice of this city was not accidental. Qazvin, a northern city of Iran, was occupied by the Russian army in the aftermath of the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907.[55] Relocating the novel to this city provided a basis for Hejazi to exalt Hassan-Ali

[55] The convention was concluded on 31 August 1907 to try to resolve the long-running Anglo-Russian rivalries ("The great game") in Persia. It called for "security on their respective frontiers in Central Asia and to maintain in these regions a solid and lasting peace." The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 formalized British and Russian spheres of interest and dominance over economic development in the area. Persia was divided into spheres of Russian interest in the North and British interest in the southeast, keeping the Russians away from the Persian Gulf and the Indian border (Also a "neutral zone" in the middle was demarcated between the two powers) (Lehner, 2007: 52). "However, the fact that since the early 19th century, Russia and Great Britain tried to isolate Iran, to prevent the other's dominance, to divide Iran between themselves into spheres of influence (1907-1919), and to keep it out of any third power's ambit,

Khan as a serious critic of the imperialistic politics of Russians, and the true son of the nation. Hejazi also uses this space to pursue the theme of conspiracy in a greater canvas, namely the international scene.

In *Homa* nothing is as ordinary as it seems. The reader discovers that the Sheikh is more than an ordinary conspirator and, in reality, is an official spy of the Russian government and a traitor. This fact marks another negative point against Manouchehr, who, in this new light, had resorted to working with an international spy to save his romantic relationship. In addition, this section sees the Sheikh being introduced as Homa's new suitor. The Sheikh's interest in capturing Homa can be largely considered a comic subplot. It is clear from the beginning that the Sheikh does not have the minimum requirements to marry Homa as a new woman. He is described as a creature with "animal habits" (a main characteristic of trickster personas): his bad eating manners torment everyone, he sleeps in a dirty bed at night, and he does not treat women well (In one case, he even attempts to rape Homa).

The important point about the Sheikh's character is that, for him, modernization, as well as tradition and its manifestations, is considered a disguise. Aware of Manouchehr and Hassan-Ali Khan's interest in Homa, he believes that whenever he wants, he can turn from his traditional form to a modern one and gain her hand:

> Sheikh laughed and said [to Homa], "if I [go to the bath and] shave my beard tomorrow, wear a hat [instead of my turban], tie a necktie or wear the *faux col*, then you'll see who is more fashionable. Me or Hassan-Ali khan or Manouchehr khan! (P. 204–205, combined together)

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Homa's Qazvin has the potential to be read, in Mary Louise Pratt's term, as a "contact zone." Iran, a country never formally colonized, finds the status of a "semi-colonial" state between the story's years of 1907 to 1919.

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was a major impediment to the introduction of modem sciences and technologies, an adverse situation which Iran's weak political center certainly did not improve." (Schayegh, 2004: 20 footnote) Another function of the entente was to improve the balance of power in Europe and the Near East against Germany.

According to Pratt, contact zones are imaginary or real areas that allow the intermingling of two or more cultures. Specifically, these are colonial encounters between Westerners and non-Westerners. These interactions are governed by inequalities and hierarchies of power. Thus, Pratt generally makes a "contact zone" synonymous with a "colonial frontier" (Pratt 2008: 8). As a multi-layered web of communication, contact zones can be defined as a liminal space of cultural plurality. Pratt elaborates on what contact zones are in the following:

> social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today. (…) [In contact zones] peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. (Pratt, 2008: 7-8)

Contact zone is a concept in connection with Homi Bhabha's notion of the "third space" (Sarkowski, 2008: 323). This idea is a tool for analysis, particularly in processes of transculturation in native literatures. Pratt posits transculturation as a "phenomenon of the contact zone," and defines it as a process where subjugated or marginalized peoples determine what they absorb from the materials and codes transmitted by the dominant culture (Stein 2008: 256). Therefore, contact zones are subject to constant negotiation and appropriation, and thus, change and development (Lehmkuhl, 2015: 9–10).

In this part of the novel, Hejazi is inspired by Iran's history two decades ago. *Homa* has been authored between 1925 and 1927. He creates a "contact zone" and challenges the dominant colonial ideologies of that time. Hejazi prepares the reader for a completely unexpected encounter between Hassan-Ali Khan and Russian colonialists. As a result of the Sheikh's conspiratorial plots, the Russians imprison Hassan Ali as a person acting against Russia's national interests. In the prison, lengthy negotiations take place between Hassan-Ali Khan and a high-ranking Russian general, Popov, who is fluent in Persian and aware of Iranian culture. Popov, is influenced by Hassan-Ali Khan's high knowledge and different personality (p. 178).

The contact zone provides an opportunity for Hejazi to express in detail his critical views on the condition of Iranian society. Hejazi himself has stated many of these views years

earlier in the introduction to his thesis on wireless telegraphy. This encounter allows Hejazi to clarify his anti-colonial views in Hassan-Ali's words and present him as a national figure.

Popov justifies the colonial invasion of Russia in Iran with social Darwinism. He says that this situation has arisen in accordance with the "law of nature," which is "based on the strong overcoming the weak" (p. 178). He considers the secret of Russia's sovereignty and progress the unconditional reflection of Western Civilization.[56] Moreover, Popov attributes the backwardness of the Iranians to their non-compliance with Western culture. He says:

> You are still busy with superstitions and nonsenses, which fits fifteen century years ago; you have not recognized the worldly and unworldly advantages of the civilization. You will say civilization is just a lie – I know what you'd think. It's something I often hear from people from the East. They say if the civilization is right, then why [does] it causes this much corruption and war? This is a huge mistake. Civilization has cut a good part of violence and man's misery. […)]. You don't want to see the danger; you do not know that your only remedy is to accept the West unconditionally. Whether it's good or bad, your existence depends on it. Women have not yet participated in your society […]. Science has not yet been translated into your deficient language. You are still unaware and ignorant of techniques which are essential to daily lives of civilized nations. And studying them takes a lifetime. (P. 179)

Hassan-Ali Khan (as in Hejazi) completely agrees that Iran is no longer considered a civilized country. Hassan-Ali Khan asks the general a question:

> "What, in your opinion, can be done for the improvement of this country?"
>
> Popov pondered for a while and then said, "Now it's too late. Reviving the country is now not possible only by yourself." (p. 182)

[56] General Popov says "But it's now hundreds of years since we have started to follow the western civilization and to change our customs and manners. We have shortened our beards and cloaks, have rejected superstitions, and have accepted new ideas which are closer to rationality. […] We are always hunting for new western civilization secrets to apply them to our own country, unconditionally." (P. 179)

Popov frankly states that if Russia manages to limit Britain's grasp on Iran and rule the country, within one decade Hassan-Ali Khan "will see that Iran will develop and will be full of population and wealth."

It is expected that Hassan-Ali Khan will not agree[57] with the Russian general's proposed solution for lifting the country out of crisis. He, instead, will favor a kind of modernity without colonialism. Hassan-Ali states, "Patriotism obliges us to reject foreigners' dominations – even if it's advantageous – and to ward them off with all our forces" (P. 186). The Russian officer implicitly agrees on this issue with Hassan-Ali Khan, but the puzzle remains unresolved. Who is an appropriate leader for the present situation of Iran? On this topic the Russian officer says the following:

> I wish a wise, chivalrous man could lead Iran. Indeed, *only one man* is needed to improve Iran. I have no doubt that all institutions of civilization can be built in this land within ten years. There is no obstacle, nor any objection to such improvement and development, *despite what the ill-disposed ones or those who benefit from it*, claim" (p. 187, my emphasis).

The person whom the Russian officer describes without naming could not have been anyone other than Reza Shah at that time. In reference to the "ill-disposed ones," he also alludes to Reza Shah's opponents. From here, the propagandist aspect of the novel becomes fully apparent. The anti-colonialist debates were an excuse to introduce and unveil a suitable alternative to leadership.

As mentioned earlier, Hejazi defined his identity from the beginning of his career in connection to government jobs and bureaucratic affairs, including in the Ministry of Finance and the Bureau for Public Enlightenment.[58] In *Homa,* and even in his next novels, Hejazi used every opportunity to escape the main plot and propagate his favorite policies in the story. He does so here in such an exaggerated and artificial way that in the continuation of the story the Russian officer becomes more and more interested in

[57] Here, the author also reflects the "historical hatred" of the Iranians against the Russians, who invaded Iran several times in the early nineteenth century following the expansion of the territory (most importantly between 1804-1812 and then 1828-1828). Hassan-Ali Khan says somewhere in the novel about the Russians:
"Barbarian Africans are much more chivalrous than these white people who call themselves civilized." (P. 161) Then, He blames "the pretentious European civilization" for embracing barbaric Russians: "Maybe other people are not better than Russians but they commit their crimes more delicately." (P. 162)

[58] Sāzmān-e parvareš-e afkār, a publicity organization for the Pahlavi regime.

the fate of the Iranians. At the end of the novel, the Russian officer changes his citizenship and becomes an Iranian. He even chooses an Iranian name for himself.

This propagandist aspect harms *Homa* artistically and aesthetically. Also, at the time of the publication of this work, Ahmad Kasravi, who was one of the general opponents of the novel phenomenon in Iran, mocked the confrontation between Hassan-Ali Khan with the Russians in detail without mentioning the title of the novel. In the treatise "On the Novel," Kasravi criticizes the Hejazi's work for not conforming to historical facts and cites, showing these aspects as a proof of the novel's futility.

Ghanoonparvar, the literary critic, has summarized Hejazi's record well:

> [Hejazi's] earlier position as an official propagandist for the Pahlavi regime, had an adverse effect on his literary reputation and provided ample ammunition for the dissident intellectuals and the leftist *engagé* writers of his time, as well as sufficient material for parodies of his sentiments and pastiches of his style in satirical journals. (Ghanoonparvar, 2003: 141–143)

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In *Homa*, the moderate man is constructed differently. In some stories of this period, such as "Persian is Sugar" and *Dark Times*, the character of a moderate man himself enters into a direct dialogue with the symbolic types of the dandy (farangi-ma'ab) and the corrupt sheikh, and judges them. In this novel, as a new woman, Homa is the criterion, and everyone is assessed according to her. The symbolic types represented by the Sheikh and Manouchehr both have hidden aspects and are conspiratorial. The Sheikh is also presented as a traitor in the novel. The hidden elements of these characters lead to the invalidation of their identities. In the plot, Hassan-Ali Khan is the only male symbolic type that presents his true identity and attracts Homa as a new woman. Like all moderate figures of this period, Hassan-Ali Khan has managed to gather a wonderful and rare combination of Iranian and Western culture. His special feature in this regard is that he only selects Iranian elements from the spectrum of Iranian-Islamic culture. This choice was itself a modern one and referred to the nationalistic ideology that was greatly promoted in Reza Shah's government.

According to Hejazi, modernization is the main and essential need of Iranian society. It is necessary to let go of tradition as soon as possible, as being traditional can even be harmful and deadly. The best example in this regard is the death of Hassan-Ali Khan's spouse by consumption of contaminated water. Although Hejazi considers progression a vital element for the Iranian society his world, it is strongly associated with brutality. Thus one should be careful in choosing role models of modernization and have a suspicious and selective view in this regard.

Another issue that distinguishes the construction of the moderate man in *Homa* from other works of this period goes back to Hejazi's position in Reza Shah's government. *Homa* is a novel in support of Reza Shah's leadership. Occasionally, his cultural policies are praised in the novel. For example, the Russian character endorses Reza Shah's policies on unifying menswear, such as the forced wearing of the Pahlavi hat[59] (p. 180–181). Moreover, Hejazi asserts the legitimacy of the character Hassan-Ali Khan through various literary techniques throughout the novel. At the end, in the chapters on the conversation with the Russian officer, Hejazi transforms Hassan-Ali into an intermediary to convey and extend the legitimization of Reza Shah as Iranians' real leader.

[59] In August 1927, the government decided to institute the "Pahlavi hat," similar to the French képi (A cylindrical hat with a peak), as the official hat for Iranian men as a part of Europeanizing Iranians' clothes. The changing of the hats was celebrated officially in some major cities of the country. "The choice may have fallen on the French hat because the French army, unlike the British or Russian, had no history of imperialist involvement in Iran." (Chehabi, 1993: 212).

5. Conclusion

The atmosphere dominating the Iranian novel in the first Pahlavi period is well reflected in the book *The Writer's Manual* published in 1940 (one year before the end of Reza Shah's era). Hossein Omid, a novelist himself, in this book, written for teaching writing and storytelling to high school students, asks his audience to write about the following topics as "exercise":

1. Write a narrative in which a youngster's love of his homeland is explained.
2. Write a short story that shows the fate of an a capricious and lascivious young man.
3. Compose a narrative about a deceived and miserable girl who commits suicide.
4. Describe chastity and purity.
5. Compare primitive man with civilized man (Omid, 1940; pp. 61-62).

In the late Qajar and early Reza Shah periods, only the writers who wrote about the first subject matter were mainly encouraged. The realistic social novel, which dealt with "capricious and lascivious young man" decieving the miseable girl and harming her chastity and honour, Although was developed during this period, it was largely disregarded by critics.

Perhaps the most telling example in this regard is Mojtaba Minovi, the well-known literary scholar, who, at least for a time, considered historical novel as the only authentic novel among the various genres and considered such books to be the main need of the readers of the Iranian market at that time. On the one hand, he helped Sanatizadeh Kermani to publish *Plotters* (a historical novel), and and wrote an introduction to this book, in which considerd the outstanding feature of this novel to be dealing with historical events (Minovi, Preface, 1925). On the other hand, considering a global context, he strictly criticized the social novels: "If the people of Farang are learning Persian today, it is not because they are able to read *the Dreadful Tehran* and the *Dark Times*, but because they are to read the poems of Khayyam and Hafez and other great Iranians in the original language." (Minovi, Preface, 1951)

The new value of the Reza Shah era was "national loyalty": a value, which the new-emerging state tried to force above and against "local loyalties".[60] Therefore, historical novels, with their focus on the past glories of pre-Islamic Persia and its historical heroic leaders (such as Cyrus the great), were the symbolic form of the period: In conformity with cultural currents which ultimately became not only part of the official Pahlavi state propaganda but also surfaced later in the works of elite writers and intellectuals of the era (Yavari, 1999: 581).

> Knowledge of the exploits of Cyrus and Darius created a confident feeling that if the ancient Iranians could lead the world of their time, their modern descendents could at least catch up with the advanced nations of the present time. Pride in the ancient, particularly the Achaemenid, past became part of the regime's ideology under both Pahlavi Shahs and was emphasized in its propaganda and school text books. Emphasis was also laid on Iranian resistance to Arab rule and on the persistence and revival of the Iranian national identity after the Arab and Mongol conquests. (Navabpour, 1981: 302)

As a result, social novels simultaneously, and paradoxically were condemned for not following aesthetic rules of story writing as well as not addressing national identity. Martí-López's comment in *the Borrowed words*, a study on the reaction of Spanish book market against French popular literature, also applies to the situation of novels in Iran. She writes:

> "I address the apparent paradox at the base of the processes of cultural production and consumption in the mid-nineteenth-century Europe, that is, the simultaneous emergence of two, seemingly contradictory phenomenon: the dependence of literary markets on the importation of French and English cultural paradigms and a notion of art, specifically literature as being closely linked to national identity." (Marti-Lopez, 2002:2)

However, the publication of the first samples of social novels in the Reza Shah Period shed light on the everyday lives of contemporary Iranian men and women for the first time. Apparently, by representing Iran's contemporary society, the social novelists

[60] Franco Moretti (1998: 17) inspired by Charles Tilly.

had broken a taboo and following the birth of social novels, gradually a large body of criticisms appeared in the press of that time. Almost all of the critics begun to blame these writers and speak about whether their work is original or not and overall, they were unanimous in inauthenticity of these novels.

The most striking thing about Persian social novels was their imitative nature (Marti-Lopez's point), which caused these novels to be completely condemned as "non-national literature," and their other strengths were ignored completely. Saeed Nafisi's[61] view expressed in general about the social novels of this period, and in particular about the *Dreadful Tehran* - the most prominent social novel of this period - well reflects the views of the critics of this period:

> The whole new literature of Iran is limited to Cloak and dagger drama. *Amir Arsalan* and *Hosein-e Kord-e Shabestari* have been Westernized and replaced by *Sherlock Holmes* and *Arsène Lupin*. Thousands of literary canons have not still entered Iran, but several thousand copies of *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *The Mysteries of Paris* are published and benefit booksellers. The strange thing is when an Iranian wants to compose a novel, he writes *The Dreadful Tehran* which is totally the same style with Western novels. (Nafisi, quoted in Sepehran, 2002: 55-56)

Some critics, including novelist Ali-Asghar Sharif, in a different manner thought that novels in line with *The Dreadful Tehran* portray a distorted image of Iranian society:

> Iranian Contemporary novelists depict Tehran and Iran as "Dreadful" and hard to live, and instead of praising and celebrating Iran's milieu and Iranian lifestyle, present it as bad and frightening. I once heard a girl fascinated by European novels, was interested in traveling to Europe. It is obvious that such a false interest was created by French novelists and in contrast, the opposing feeling, i.e. hatred for Iranian lifestyle, was created by Iranian novelists. (Sharif, 1925: 4-5).

The excessive emphasis on these novels' imitative nature influenced not only his contemporary critics but also the next critics and historians of Persian novels. It misled them and caused them to gain a narrow view regarding this issue: The issue was not that

[61] One of the prominent scholars of the era.

how original *The Dreadful Tehran* and its imitations are, in the terms of aesthetic achievement: The Persian novel was in its infancy on that time and imitating Western novels and modelling writings on them was a practical solution (As Itamar Even-Zohar has proved in similar cases). Moreover, in the terms of social criticisms, the issue was not how original the first samples of Persian social novel are. Critics in an inaccurate way, criticised the novel for its distorted portrayal of Iranian society. Totally neglecting that it is one of the first samples of Iranian narrative prose ever written which deals with contemporary social issues. This was while before that, the Iranian writers of that period did not even consider Iranian contemporary issues interesting enough, as Nasrollah Falsafi, translator of *Arsène Lupin* series, writes: 'The incidents that take place in Iran are worthless for inspiration to write a work of fiction; while it is sufficient for a writer to wander in Paris and gain a lot of ideas for writing.' (Falsafi quoted in Farzaneh, 1988: 32)

The publication of *The Dreadful Tehran* and its imitations was the realisation of one of the post-constitutional revolution's dreams to represent social issues and the leading critics of the period missed the chance of recognising it. Writing *The Dreadful Tehran* was an extraordinary and exceptional chance for an Iranian writer, M. M. Kazemi to create an image of his own society based on a French novel, *The Mysteries of Paris*.

The main theme of *The Mysteries of Paris* was the possibility to restore order in a liminal, unstructured, and chaotic condition (The prostitute was the embodiment of this disorder). *The Dreadful Tehran* and other social novels of this period employed this liminal metaphor (prostitute) in the best possible time. The period from 1905, the beginning of the Constitutional Revolution, until 1925, when Reza Shah ascended the throne, can be considered the most liminal period in the contemporary history of Iran. The one who succeeded in rescuing the prostitute or, in the words of Peter Brooks, in revirginizing her, was the one who could symbolically be the future leader of society and restore order to society.

The Qajars were no longer acceptable leaders, nor could the leaders of the Constitutional Revolution meet the expectations of the nation. The existing normative void caused different sections of society, each in turn, to raise the "leadership question" and seek a suitable alternative to leadership. On the one hand, religious scholars sought a comprehensive theory of a suitable leader for the Islamic society of Iran based on

religious sources (an attempt that led to Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of Velayat-e Faqih ("guardianship of the jurist") in later decades), and on the other, these novels were the answer of the secular (or secularizing) section of society to the question of leadership in the liminal situation.

Metaphors related to spatial liminality (prison, exile, ruined house, precipice, contact zones, dangerous zones) have been used repeatedly in these novels. Also, narrative or real situations such as being haunted or possessed, getting sick (tuberculosis and syphilis), and falling to prostitution are all mentioned in these stories as liminal metaphors. The main question in these novels is who can get society out of its complex and dangerous situation? And the answer of the novelists of this period to this question is a moderate man.

Perhaps the moderate man could be regarded as a Weberian ideal type. It is not possible to have the symbolic type of the moderate man in the perfect form considered by novelists of first Pahlavi. This type is not – and cannot be – wholly moderate and inevitable, rather it is inclined toward one side. The moderate man of Jamalzadeh in "Persian is Sugar" is more inclined towards the West and, the moderate man of *Dark Times*, written by Abbas Khalili, tends toward the religious culture, and finally, Mohammad Hejazi's moderate man in *Homa* tends towards the political establishment. It was a type that did not exist previously in Iranian literature and culture, and was constructed exclusively in the post-constitutional and Reza Shah's period. As soon as the popularity and charisma of the first years of Reza Shah disappeared, the symbolic type of the moderate man also disappeared from the Persian novel. In the second half of Reza Shah's rule, best-selling novels (*Men's Crimes*, and *Lovers' Nights*) were written in which the prostitute no longer could be saved and encountered a tragic death. There was no moderate man who could restore the order: Reza Shah and the moderate man of the Persian novel lost their magic at the same time.

However, there is a lesson in Jamalzadeh's initial attempt to design this type. Apart from the issue of socio-political leadership, Jamalazadeh and his literary followers raise the possibility of adopting a multiple and hybrid identity to his contemporary Iranians. Although the unexpected leaders of these novels seldom appeared in the novels of the next years, the permanent achievement of these novels was to draw their readers' attention to the possibility of adopting hybrid identities. The period between the

Constitutional Revolution and Reza Shah was a period in which a unified traditional identity was seldom found, and on the other hand, modern elements had entered Iranian culture, but modern individual identities had not yet been formed. The symbolic type of a moderate man depicted how traditional and modern elements could be combined to achieve new and unprecedented identities.

It was during the late Qajar and Reza shah era that Iranian people generally and in a large scale became consciousness of the arbitrariness of construction of their identities: "the Consciousness that any given order is only one of several, perhaps many, possible alternatives, including the possibility of living beyond any social order whatsoever." (Eisenstadt, 1995: 310)

A century later after the rise of Persian novel, the insistence of critics of the Reza Shah era on the supremacy of the historical novel seems more than ever a politically reactionary approach. While the writers of historical novels dealt only with fixed national identities, it was the writers of social novels who were able to reflect the emergent identities of their age in a progressive way; the identities that were mainly hybrid and multiple due to the liminal condition of the modernized society of Reza Shah. The social novels deftly portrayed the characters with hybrid identities, characters who first and foremost had a fictional presence, and gradually became widespread in society.

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English Abstract

Novel writing appeared as a whole new activity in the late Qajar (from the 1870s onwards) in Iran. *The Dreadful Tehran*/*Tihran-i Makhuf* (written by Morteza Mushfiq-Kazemi), the first popular novel with a social theme, was published in 1922 and inspired a trend of social melodramas in Iranian literature.

Since its beginning, like any other modern phenomena, novels raised many mixed reactions in Iran's cultural milieu. The main reason for such reactions was the presence of a serious rival for Iranian novels at birth; French novels. Before that time, the Iranian society was acquainted with the phenomenon of the novel in the late Qajar period, mainly through Persian translations from works of French writers such as Alexander Dumas, Victor Hugo, Jules Verne, and Eugene Sue. The popularity of these translations in Iran's book market made the situation difficult for native writers of Reza Shah's era. The novels of Iranian writers were compared with the existing French novels, and the intellectuals and literary critics of Iran accused the Iranian novelists of imitating French samples and not being able to create an original work, representing the problems of their own society.

However, the writers of the first Iranian popular social novels (M. M. Kazemi, Mohammad Hejazi, Abbas Khalili) were highly engaged with issues related to western modernity and its manifestations (dealing with the dark sides of the urban life, adopting new technologies, redefining the role of the women in the society, etc.) and their novels could be considered as one of the best frames for investigating the early critical debates on modernity in Iran.

Based on these considerations, the present study intends to investigate the rise of social novels in Iran from a sociological/Symbolic Anthropological perspective. The most crucial questions are: what themes and approaches did those popular novels embody in those tumultuous eras in Iran's political life? Were these novels meant to function as an escape from the harsh reality and status quo? Do these novels provide appropriate and reliable tools for understanding Iranian society of that era?

German Abstract

Das Romanschreiben erschien im Iran der späten Qadscharen-Zeit (ab den 1870er Jahren) als eine völlig neue Regsamkeit. Der *gräuliche Teheran / Tihran-i Makhuf* (geschrieben von Morteza Mushfiq-Kazemi), der erste populäre Roman mit einem sozialen Thema, wurde 1922 veröffentlicht und inspirierte einen Trend sozialer Melodramen in der iranischen Literatur.

Wie jedes andere moderne Phänomen haben Romane von Beginn an viele gemischte Reaktionen im iranischen Kulturmilieu ausgelöst. Der Hauptgrund für solche Reaktionen war die Anwesenheit eines ernsthaften Rivalen für iranische Romane zur Zeit ihrer Geburt: Französische Romane. Vor dieser Zeit wurde die iranische Gesellschaft der späten Qadscharen-Zeit, hauptsächlich durch persische Übersetzungen von Werken französischer Schriftsteller wie Alexander Dumas, Victor Hugo, Jules Verne und Eugene Sue, mit dem Phänomen des Romans vertraut. Die Popularität dieser Übersetzungen auf dem iranischen Buchmarkt erschwerte die Lage für die einheimischen Schriftstellern der Reza Shah-Periode. Die Romane iranischer Schriftsteller wurden mit den bestehenden französischen Romanen verglichen, und die iranischen Intellektuellen und Literaturkritiker kritisierten die einheimischen Schriftsteller, französische Proben zu imitieren und kein Originalwerk zu schaffen, das die Probleme ihrer eigenen Gesellschaft darstellt.

Die Autoren der ersten populären iranischen Sozialromane (MM Kazemi, Mohammad Hejazi, Abbas Khalili) beschäftigten sich jedoch intensiv mit Fragen der westlichen Moderne und ihrer Erscheinungsformen (Auseinandersetzung mit den dunklen Seiten des städtischen Lebens, Übernahme neuer Technologien, Neudefinition der Rolle der Frauen in der Gesellschaft usw.). Ihre Romane könnten daher als einer der besten Rahmen für die Untersuchung der frühen kritischen Debatten über die Moderne im Iran betrachtet werden.

Basierend auf diesen Überlegungen beabsichtigt die vorliegende Studie, den Aufstieg sozialer Romane im Iran aus einer soziologischen / symbolisch-anthropologischen Perspektive zu untersuchen. Die wichtigsten Forschungsfragen lauten: Welche Themen und Ansätze verkörperten diese populären Romane in jenen turbulenten Epochen des politischen Lebens Irans? Sollten diese Romane eher als Flucht vor der harten Realität

und dem Status Quo dienen? Und überhaupt, bieten diese Romane geeignete und zuverlässige Werkzeuge, um die iranische Gesellschaft dieser Zeit zu verstehen?

Appendix 1

Erklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, Ali Behpajooh, dass ich keine kommerzielle Promotionsberatung in Anspruch genommen habe. Die Arbeit wurde nicht schon einmal in einem früheren Promotionsverfahren angenommen oder als ungenügend beurteilt.

Teheran 01.04.2021

Ort/Datum	Unterschrift Doktorand

Appendix 2

Eidesstattliche Versicherung:

Ich, Ali Behpajooh, versichere an Eides statt, dass ich die Dissertation mit dem Titel: „Unexpected Leaders in early modern Persian Novels“ selbst und bei einer Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Wissenschaftlerinnen oder Wissenschaftlern gemäß den beigefügten Darlegungen nach § 6 Abs. 3 der Promotionsordnung der Fakultät für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften vom 24. August 2010 verfasst habe. Andere als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel habe ich nicht benutzt.

Teheran 01.04.2021

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Ort/Datum Unterschrift Doktorand

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