Traces of Time

The Image of the Islamic Revolution, the Hero and Martyrdom in Persian Novels
Written in Iran and in Exile

Behrooz Sheyda
ABSTRACT

The present study explores the image of the Islamic Revolution, the concept of the hero, and the concept of martyrdom as depicted in ten post-Revolutionary Persian novels written and published in Iran compared with ten post-Revolutionary Persian novels written and published in exile.

The method is based on a comparative analysis of these two categories of novels. Roland Barthes’s structuralism will be used as the theoretical tool for the analysis of the novels. The comparative analysis of the two groups of novels will be carried out within the framework of Foucault’s theory of discourse.

Since its emergence, the Persian novel has been a scene for the dialogue between the five main discourses in the history of Iran since the Constitutional Revolution; this dialogue, in turn, has taken place within the larger framework of the dialogue between modernity and traditionalism. The main conclusion to be drawn from the present study is that the establishment of the Islamic Republic has merely altered the makeup of the scene, while the primary dialogue between modernity and traditionalism continues unabated. This dialogue can be heard in the way the Islamic Republic, the hero, and martyrdom are portrayed in the twenty post-Revolutionary novels in this study.

Keywords: Modern Persian Novel, Persian Novel in Exile, The Islamic Revolution, the Hero, Martyrdom, Discourse Theory, Structuralism.

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Literature for me is a journey of discovery; an endless and complicated journey in which the understanding of each mystery leads to yet another mystery, and the opening of each window leads to yet another window; a journey in which each resting place leads to yet another window; a journey in which each resting place is just the starting point for the creation of a new world. The present book is just such a resting place on this journey.

The present book is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation, which I successfully defended at the Department of Oriental Philology at Jagellonian University in Kraków in 2013. In compiling this book, I am deeply indebted to my supervisor at the Department of Oriental Philology, Professor Anna Krasnowolska, not only for her scholarly guidance and all her invaluable comments, but also for our very interesting discussions on Modern Persian Literature, and for her warmth and kindness.

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Personal and geographical names as well as religious terms have been anglicized in this book. The only exceptions are names of Persian journals or book titles in which the long /a:/ is shown as /ā/, <ع> as /ʿ/, and <١> as /ʾ/. 
1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The 1979 Revolution in Iran was a tremendous event in the history of the country, not only politically but also socially as it brought with it a huge crisis in human relationships. The mass demonstrations on the streets, the unbelievable solidarity among people, the release of political prisoners, the emergence of political organizations, the Iran-Iraq war, and the intolerance practiced by the newly established Islamic Republic already two years after the Revolution, – all of these things served to spotlight the novel as the best literary genre to mirror this turbulent and eventful period in the history of Iran. Considering the size of the novel, many literary critics consider it be the best literary genre for illustrating the different aspects of human life in detail.¹ There is general consensus among Iranian literary critics as well that no other literary genre could so effectively reflect this enormous event in the history of Iran as the novel.² However, it was not only inside Iran that the Persian novel entered the scene as the best vehicle for mirroring the past and the present, but also outside of Iran.

The establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, especially the massive wave of repression in the 1980s – which commenced with the removal from office of Abu al-Hasan Bani Sadr, the first popularly elected president of Iran – and the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq war led many Iranians to flee the country. The result of this flight was a population of several million Iranian emigrants around the world.

Iranian emigrants everywhere quickly recognized their language and their Persian cultural heritage as being an essential component of their identity; and in their new alien worlds, they set about safeguarding these. Iranians, who once had been filled with optimism and occupied the streets of Iran with their slogans for freedom, suddenly found themselves lonely, lost, and perplexed creatures outside of Iran. They began to question both the past and what once had appeared to be a utopian future. To record the days that had vanished and to search the past for the reasons behind the Islamization of the

1979 Revolution\textsuperscript{1}, hundreds of novelists, poets, literary critics, filmmakers, actors, musicians, researchers, and journalists, all of whom had fled Iran, hastily began to lay the foundations of a cultural construction beyond Iran’s borders. As time passed, a new generation of Iranian writers began to join the older established generation. This new generation consisted mainly of former leftists who had now abandoned their political organizations. This Persian cultural construction in the diaspora soon expanded to such a degree, both quantitatively and qualitatively, that it is now impossible to discuss Persian literature, and thus the Persian novel, without taking into consideration the Persian literature and Persian novel of the Iranian diaspora.

The purpose of the present study is to compare ten post-Revolutionary Persian novels written and published in Iran with ten post-Revolutionary Persian novels written and published outside of Iran in order to investigate the image of the Islamic Revolution, the concept of the hero, and the concept of martyrdom as reflected in each group of novels. These parameters have been chosen for two primary reasons: 1) better than any other parameters, they reflect the contrast between the dominant discourses in novels written in Iran and novels written outside of Iran; 2) these parameters are strongly related to each other. Both martyrdom, whatever the reason and the place, and the concept of the hero, are strongly related to the third parameter, namely the Islamic Revolution.

It must be noted that not all of these parameters are necessarily present in each of the novels. Instead, this study intends to present the collection of these parameters as reflected in ten novels written in Iran against the collection of these parameters as reflected in ten novels written abroad. The present study will attempt to investigate the differences in the ways these events and concepts are reflected in novels written under totally different circumstances.

It should also be emphasized that these novels are not the only types of novels written after the Islamic Revolution. A purely typological survey of Persian novels written after the Islamic Revolution would require a study of its own. Nor is my reading the only possible reading of these novels. My reading is focused on the image of three specific parameters in the selected novels. The same novels can be read and analyzed from other points of view and within other theoretical frameworks.

1.2 Method and Materials

The method used in this study is based on a comparative analysis of ten post-Revolutionary Persian novels written in Iran and ten post-Revolutionary Persian novels written outside of Iran. Roland Barthes’s structuralism will be

\textsuperscript{1} Henceforth; the Islamic Revolution.
used as the theoretical tool for the analysis of the novels. The comparative analysis of the two groups of novels will be carried out by employing the framework of Foucault’s theory of discourse.

As a preface to the analysis, some examples of the Persian novel from five periods in Iran’s modern history will be presented, covering the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911 up to the Islamic Revolution of 1979. To provide context, each presentation will be introduced with a summary of the political and economic conditions of each period. This introduction is necessary in order to demonstrate that the Persian novel has continuously provided a scene for the dialogues between different cultural discourses within Iranian society, and in particular the dialogue between modernity and traditionalism. This dialogue has persisted in the wake of the Islamic Revolution, and is best reflected in the dialogue between the novels written in Iran and the novels written outside of Iran. The presence of this dialogue was the main criterion for the selection of those particular Persian novels presented in this background section.

The selection of the novels for this study’s main focus, on the other hand, was challenging. Selecting twenty novels out of the huge number of novels written after the Islamic Revolution was not an easy task. Regardless of which criteria one employs, it may be expected that the criteria will be challenged. Therefore, the main focus has been upon the themes and upon the presence of the parameters to be investigated. Even so, an attempt has been made to select novels that have received substantial attention from Iranian literary critics for their themes. Hopefully, the novels chosen present a comprehensive picture of one of the most eventful, hopeful, and yet painful periods in the history of Iran.

As stated above, this work’s primary sources include twenty post-Revolutionary Persian novels. Secondary sources include books and essays in the disciplines of history and literary history; the latest theories of literary criticism; and the most recent books and dissertations dealing with Iranian society, the Islamic Revolution, and Persian literature.

1.3 Previous Research

Since the 1990s, there has been a great interest in Persian post-Revolutionary fiction. Personally, I have been studying Persian post-Revolutionary literature, especially Persian fiction for more than twenty years. This has resulted in one monograph, *Az talkhi-ye ferāq tā taqaddos-e taklīf: negāhī be jāpā-ye anāser-e farhang-e irāni dar chahārdah romān-e pas az enqelāb* (From the Bitter Separation to the Holy Duty: Traces of Iranian Cultural Elements in Fourteen Post-Revolutionary Persian Novels) (2001), and eight collections including of essays on Persian women’s literature, Persian exile literature, Persian literature in Iran, etc. Applying close reading in *Az talkhi-
I have investigated fourteen post-Revolutionary Persian novels belonging to three categories—Islamic novels, popular novels, and quality novels— in search of the traces of and different approaches to a number of elements within the Iranian culture and system of thought, for instance dualism, utopia, Iranian–Islamic mysticism, etc.

A number of other works that have taken up the study of Persian post-Revolutionary literature written in Iran are *Sad sāl dāstān-nevisi dar īrān, jeld-e 3 va 4* (A Hundred Years of Fiction Writing in Iran, vols. 3–4) by Hasan Mirabedini (1386 [2007/08]); *Eslāmi-nevisi: bāhārī-ye do āne ādābiyāt-e do āne īrān* (Writing Islamic Literature: A Study of Two Decades of State Literature in Iran) by Asad Seyf (1999); *Sab-e dārdmand-e ārezumandi: majmu-ye maqālāt 1364–1375* (The Painful Night of Hopefulness: Essay Collection 1364–1375) by Faraj Sarkuhi (1999); *Nasl-e do āne ādābiyāt-e ārezumandi* (The Contemporary Third Generation in Fiction Writing: Yusef-e Alikhani’s Interviews with Ten Persian Fiction Writers) by Yusef-e Alikhani (1380 [2001/02]); *The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature* by Kamran Talattof (2000); and *Dāstān-e ketāb dar īrān, jeld-e 1-3* (The Short Story in Iran, vols. I–III) by Hosein Payandeh (1389 [2010]). Among the works that have exclusively studied Persian literature written in exile, one will find *Moqaddame-i bar ādābiyāt-e fārsī dar tabīd* (An Introduction to Persian Literature Written in Exile) by Malihe Tiregol, (1377 [1998]). Houra Yavari, on the other hand, has studied Persian fiction written both in Iran and elsewhere in the article titled “Fiction” in the *Encyclopædia Iranica Vol IX* (1999).

In *Sad sāl dāstān-nevisi dar īrān*, Mirabedini reviews Persian fiction written during 1978–1991 under the headings: a) Factors affecting the creation of a certain literary atmosphere; b) At the threshold of the era of the novel; c) Fictive chronologies; d) Regional and rural literature; e) Literature and the war; f) The Aftermath of the war; g) Historical novels; h) New voices; i) Women fiction writers. *Sad sāl dāstān-nevisi dar īrān* is a literary history applying close reading within the framework of sociology of literature. This work is also in search of socio-historical parallels in the fiction of different periods.

In *Eslāmi-nevisi: bāhārī-ye do āne ādābiyāt-e ārezumandi*, Seyf reviews the specific genre of Islamic literature that has developed after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. This literature is supported and financed by the state. The main characteristics of this literature is its commitment to

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4 The term “quality novels” is certainly disputable. I have used it as is usual within the Iranian literary sphere.

evangelizing Shia Islam, the Islamic Revolution and their values. Seyf traces these characteristics in fiction, poetry, children’s literature and screenplays.

In Shab-e dardmand-e ārezumandi: majmu’e maqālāt 1364–1375, Sarkui analyzes a number of novels written by Taqi Modarresi, Jamal Mirsadeqi, Ahmad Aqayi, Esmail Fasih, Ahmad Mahmoud, Moniru Ravanipour, Gholam Hosein Saedi, Asghar Elahi, Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, Hushang Golshiri, Simin Daneshvar, and Mohammad Mohammadali. Sarkui applies close reading and the sociology of literature in search of the socio-historical parallels in the novels. Moreover, Sarkui investigates elements like characterization, tone, and atmosphere, as is usual in close reading.

In Nasl-e sevvom-e dāstān-nevisi-ye emruz: goftogu-ye yusef-e alikhāni bā dah nevisande-ye adabiyāt-e dāstānī, Yusef Alikhani interviews ten fiction writers, eight of whom made their debut after the Revolution. The authors interviewed are: Farkhonde Aqayi, Bizhan Bijari, Reza Julayi, Amir Hasan Cheheltan, Abutorab Khosravi, Fereshte Sari, Mohammad Reza Safdari, Mansur Kushan, Mohammad Mohammadali, and Shahriar Mandanipour.

Talattof has devoted chapters four and five of his book The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature to the post-Revolutionary literature under the headings: Revolution and Literature – The Rise of the Islamic Literary Movement after the 1979 Revolution; and Feminist Discourse in Postrevolutionary Women’s Literature. Talattof has proposed a model based on uncovering the ideological presuppositions behind literary practices for understanding literary history. In chapter four, Talattof devotes a short section to secular fiction writers. He then discusses the Islamic Persian Literature inspired by the dominant Islamic discourse. In chapter five, Talattof discusses the shift from social discourse to feminist discourse in the literary production of women in post-Revolutionary Iran.

In Dāstān-e kutāh dar irān, jeld-e 1-3, Payandeh studies Persian short stories both before and after the Revolution. He focuses mostly on the stylistic features of these stories and divides them into three categories in three volumes. Volume I is devoted to realistic and naturalistic short stories, Volume II to modern short stories, and Volume III to post-modern short stories. Payandeh is of the opinion that the short story has been more successful in Iran than the novel because of Iran’s long tradition of Persian classical poetry.

In the “Fiction,” Houra Yavari investigates Persian post-Revolutionary fiction (short story and novel) both inside and outside Iran under the following four headings: The post-Revolutionary Generation; post-Revolutionary Short Stories; post-Revolutionary Fiction Abroad; and By Persians in Non-Persian Languages. She characterizes the Persian post-Revolutionary novel written in Iran as possessing two foremost characteristics: the widespread use of magical realism, and the preponderance of women novelists. As far as the post-Revolutionary novels
written outside of Iran are concerned, Yavari maintains that, although most early Persian fiction was written outside of Iran, it is only after the Islamic Revolution that one can speak of Persian exile literature in its broadest meaning. According to Yavari, Persian post-Revolutionary fiction written in exile can be divided into two periods: the fiction of the first period, which strongly reflects the shock and confusion of the early years of living in exile; and the fiction of the second period, which bears witness to the émigrés’ becoming accustomed to the new life in exile. Yavari’s study is also based on close reading in search of the socio-historical parallels in these works.

In her book Moqaddame-i bar adabiyat-e farsi dar tadīd 1357–1375, which includes novel, short story and poetry, Tiregol has made a study of Persian post-Revolutionary novels using a set of parameters as a starting point. The study is divided into four chapters and deals with the relationship between literature and mother tongue; common themes; and the aesthetics of Persian literature written in exile. Among the common themes studied may be found: experiences of fighting for freedom; experiences from prisons in the Islamic Republic; language; love and sexuality. Tiregol applies Freud’s, Jung’s, and Lacan’s theories, as well as New Historicism and mythological critique to trace the impact of the exile on the Persian literary production in exile.

None of these works, however, is a study comparing Persian post-Revolutionary novels in Iran with novels written in the diaspora. The present study is unique in this regard. It is also unique in so far as it is a minimalist study focusing a limited set of three parameters for investigating the possible shift in the dominant discourses in the Persian post-Revolutionary novels. The image of the Islamic Revolution, the concepts of the hero and martyrdom are strongly connected to the primary dialogue between modernity and traditionalism which has colored Iranian modern history since the Constitutional Revolution in the early twentieth century.

1.4 Structure of the Study

This study is divided into six chapters and a bibliography. The present chapter deals with the purpose of the study, its method and materials, previous research, and the structure of the study. Chapter Two deals with the study’s theoretical framework, which is based on structuralism as propounded by Barthes, and on discourse theory as presented by Foucault. Chapter Three is devoted to an examination of the three parameters focused upon in this study: the Islamic Revolution, and the concepts of the hero and of martyrdom. Chapter Four makes a concise survey of the economic, political, and cultural roots of the Islamic Revolution in five different periods beginning with the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, and investigates the ways in which each period’s sociopolitical background are
reflected in the Persian novels of that period. Chapter Five, which deals with the selected post-Revolutionary novels, is the main chapter of this study; each section begins with a brief presentation of the author and a summary of the novel, followed by an analysis of the novel employing the theoretical apparatus of the study. The study is concluded in Chapter Six.

All translations in this study are mine, unless otherwise indicated.
2 Theoretical Framework

The present chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework of this study, which is based on structuralism, as presented by Barthes in his book S/Z, and Foucault’s discourse theory. The aim is to analyze each novel in terms of its symbolic, cultural, and hermeneutic codes, in accordance with Barthanian structuralism; and then to examine and summarize each novel’s dominant voice in accordance with Foucault’s discourse theory.6

2.1 Barthian Structuralism

Barthian structuralism, as presented in his book S/Z has been chosen here, as it serves as an appropriate tool for the study of the impact of cultural and socio-political conditions on a literary text. Barthian structuralism is based on scanning the text into smaller semantic units, designated as lexias, and the recognition of five certain codes in the text. The ambition is to analyze an entire text using these units and the five codes.

According to the structuralist Barthes, reading a text means this alone: finding the hidden meanings in the text. How can the hidden meanings in a structure be revealed? What, in fact, is a structure? Barthes formulated his ideas on structuralism in his book S/Z, which was published in France in 1970. S/Z is a two-hundred-page study of Balzac’s thirty-page book, Sarrasine. In S/Z, Barthes endeavors to show that the reality that Balzac aims to present has its origin in codes existing outside the text:

It is a form of work (which is why it would be better to speak of a lexecological act – even a lexecographical act, since I write my reading), and the method of this work is topological: I am not hidden within the text, I am simply irrecoverable from it: my task is to move, to shift systems whose perspective ends neither at the text nor at the “I”: in operational terms, the meanings I find are established not by “me” or by others, but by their systematic mark: there is no other proof of a

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6 It must be noted that Barthes makes use of two more codes, e.g. semantic code and proairetic code. As to the purpose of present study, I believe the symbolic, cultural, and hermeneutic codes to be sufficient.
reading than the quality and endurance of its systematics; in other words: than its functioning. To read, in fact, is a labor of language. To read is to find meanings, and to find meanings is to name them; but these named meanings are swept toward other names; names call to each other, reassemble, and their grouping calls for further naming: I name, I unname, I rename; so the text passes: it is a nomination in the course of becoming, a tireless approximation, a metonymic labor.  

Now the question arises: How does one find the hidden meanings within a structure? Barthes answers: by finding the codes! According to Barthes any text is made up five codes:

The five codes create a kind of network, a topos, through which the entire text passes (or rather, in passing, become text). [...] Referring to what has been written, i.e., to the Book (of culture, of life, of life as culture), it makes the text into a prospectus of this Book. Or again: each code is one of the forces that can take over the text (of which the text is the network), one of the voices out of which the text is woven. Alongside each utterance, one might say that off-stage voices can be heard: they are the codes: in their interweaving, these voices (whose origin is “lost” in the vast perspective of the already-written) de-originate the utterance: the convergence of the voices (of the codes) becomes writing, a stereographic space where the five codes, the five voices, intersect: the Voice of Empirics (the proairetisms), the Voice of the Person (the semes), the Voice of Science (the cultural codes), the Voice of Truth (the hermeneutisms), the Voice of Symbol.

Barthes discusses the five codes in a writerly text. These codes may be renamed and redefined as follows: the Voice of Empirics as the action codes, codes that include all the actions in a story; the Voice of Person as the conative codes, codes that are gathered in the characters; the Voice of Science as the cultural codes, codes that include all the cultural norms and signs in the story; the Voice of Truth as the hermeneutic codes, codes that include enigmas, questions, equivocations, ambiguities and so on; and the Voice of Symbol as the symbolic codes, codes that include symbolic words, phrases, and paragraphs.

For Barthes working on a text in detail means examining the structural analysis of the text starting from large structures, and not leaving any significant spot without presenting the codes that it may be connected to.

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8 Ibid, pp. 20–21.
Barthes starts working on the text by quoting some lines from *Sarrasine* and seeking after the codes, then quoting some more lines and seeking again after the codes. Barthes calls each part of the *Sarrasine* a lexia. He recognizes 561 lexias in *Sarrasine*. These lexias vary from one word \(^9\) to several lines in length “and each and every lexia will fall under one of these codes.” \(^10\) Let us examine the way Barthes analyzes one very short lexia of *Sarrasine*, namely lexia number 331, in which the tenor at the musician’s party tells Sarrasine that he does not need to fear the rival:

The tenor says “*You have no rival,*” because: (1) you are loved (Sarrasine’s understanding); (2) you are wooing a castrato (understanding of the accomplices and perhaps, already, of the reader). According to the first understanding, there is a snare; according to the second, a revelation. The braid of the two understandings creates an equivocation. And in fact the equivocation results from two voices, received on an equal basis: there is an interference of two lines of destinations. Put another way, the *double understanding*, the basis for a play on words, cannot be analyzed in simple terms of signification (two signifieds for one signifier); for that there must be the distinction of two recipients; and if, contrary to what occurs here, both recipients are not given in the story, if the play on words seems to be addressed to one person only (for example, the reader), this person must be imagined as being divided into two subjects, two cultures, two languages, two zones of listening (whence the traditional affinity between puns and “folly” or madness: the Fool, dressed in motley, a divided costume, was once the purveyor of the *double understanding*). In relation to an ideally pure message (as in mathematics), the division of reception constitutes a “noise,” it makes communication obscure, fallacious, hazardous: uncertain. Yet this noise, this uncertainty are emitted by the discourse with a view towards a communication: they are given to the reader so that he may feed on them: what the reader reads is a *countercommunication*; the reader is an accomplice, not of this or that character, but of the discourse itself insofar as it plays on the division of reception, the impurity of communication: the discourse, and not one or another of its characters, is the only *positive* hero of the story. \(^11\)

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\(^9\) The title *Sarrasine* constitutes the first lexia in Barthes’s study. He devotes twenty-six lines to the analysis of this lexia.

\(^10\) Ibid, p. 19.

Here we may leave Barthes, and begin examining Foucault’s theory of discourse, which constitutes the other half of the theoretical framework of this study.

2.2 Foucault’s Discourse Theory

One can recognize two periods in the history of Foucault’s thinking. During the first period Foucault worked on the archaeology of science with a primary focus on discourse. Amongst the works belonging to this period one can mention History of Madness and The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception. During the second period he worked on the genealogy of power and focuses on the relations between discursive formations and non-discursive domains. Among the works belonging to this second period one can mention Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality.

I will use Michel Foucault’s theory of discourse, focusing on discursive formations and non-discursive domains, as a diagnostic tool to discern and label the dominating ideologies, statements, and values of each respective period in the selected Persian novels. Foucault’s discourse theory has been chosen because it helps readers recognize the dominant discourse in each group of novels and identify the cultural and socio-political conditions of a given period in a given setting.

In the History of Madness, Foucault divides the history of madness into five periods: “Stultifera navis,” “the great confinement,” “the great fear,” “the new division,” and “birth of the asylum.” “Stultifera navis” refers to The Ship of Fools by Sebastian Brant from 1497, a work based on an obscure historical fact. The ship of fools transported the fools from their native city to a distant place, firstly to rid the city of them, and secondly to test the possibility that the fools might recover their sanity in a new location. The ship of fools was a symbol for both the rejection and the recovery of the mad people. This was not, however, the whole story. The ship’s journey at sea was also a ritual act, symbolizing the fact that the mad people were their own prisoners and that their fate was in the hands of destiny. During the Renaissance, the presence of mad people served to remind everyone that man largely lacks a spiritual nature; to remind them of the animalistic nature of human beings; and to remind them that death is not a tragic event, but is an emancipation from one’s animalistic nature.

During the Renaissance, the violent aspects of madness were kept under control, yet madness was allowed to exhibit itself as well. The classical era,

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12 Smart, Barry. (1985), Michel Foucault, London – New York, pp. 41–42.
on the other hand, quashed expressions of madness very violently. In the classical era, madness had become a sign of evil, shame, and scandal. Mad people were put in jails, asylums, or concentration camps. In the classical era, the gap between the human aspect and the animal aspect of man deepened. In the Renaissance, the incarnation of God in Christ’s body was considered as holy madness. In contrast, the Christianity of the classical era considered madness to be a symbol of the degradation of man into animal. In the classical era, every effort was made to exile mad people into darkness. But time and again, madness managed to return to the light.

In the eighteenth century, mad people once again appeared on the social scene; they appeared in the crowded cafés and in the empty lanes with their distorted faces and their worn clothes. Madness was now seen as a result of the conflict between the contrary energies in the heart of man: the conflict between the love of human beings and the desire to kill fellow creatures; the conflict between the inclination to brutality and the desire to suffer. Madness appeared in the eighteenth century in the form of sadism. In the eighteenth century, madness was banned as the symbol of man’s alienation; madness was acutely shameful in the eyes of the people in the nineteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, the inhuman treatment of the insane was condemned. They continued to be kept in closed asylums, though not for punishment, but to receive help and to recover. They accepted their abnormality, and as such they became both the subject and the object of the recovery. In the nineteenth century the punishment of mad people was replaced by the control of their consciousness. However, madness did not remain solely within the consciousness of mad people, but once again found its way out into the world.

It was at the end of the nineteenth century that madness found its way into the world in the form of works of art. The relationship between a work of art and madness is very specific. Madness is the absence of the work of art. Madness is the very moment that stops the work of art from continuing to be present. Madness creates unanswerable questions in the work. It colors the world with uncertainty.

In his account of the history of madness in the West, Foucault moves from holy madness to evil madness, and from the contrary energies that can lead to madness, to the resurrection of madness within the work of art:

That ruse is a new triumph for madness. The world believes that madness can be measured, and justified by means of psychology, and yet it must justify itself, when confronted by madness, for its efforts.

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15 Ibid, pp. 353–381.
17 Ibid, pp. 512–537.
and discussions have to measure up to the excess of the oeuvres of men like Nietzsche, Van Gogh and Artaud. And nothing within itself, and above all nothing that it can know of madness, serves to show that these oeuvres of madness prove it right.\textsuperscript{18}

The main focus of \textit{The History of Madness} is on the various discourses on madness and the insane in different historical periods. Foucault argues that madness and the insane, who once were thought related to holy wisdom, came to be labeled as deviant and a sign of moral decay and laziness by that very “reason” which was considered the absolute truth. Mad people were then placed in asylums and turned into the subjects of knowledge, which paved the way for the psychologists to enter the scene as the source of power and for the patient to be the object of power.

In \textit{The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception}, Foucault tries to show how the subject of the patient took shape in the course of history. The study of diseases in the eighteenth-century medicine was based on epistemological foundations. In this type of study, the recognition of the symptoms of the disease was of great importance. This gradually evolved towards a medicine based on pathological anatomy. This change was of decisive importance, and turned the phenomenon of death into the focus of medicine. The discipline of medicine was now focused on the limitations of the human body; the human body entered the scene as an object of knowledge and power:

It will no doubt remain a decisive fact about our culture that its first scientific discourse concerning the individual had to pass through this stage of death. Western man could constitute himself in his own eyes as an object of science, he grasped himself within his language, and gave himself, in himself and by himself, a discursive existence, only in the opening created by his own elimination: from the experience of Unreason was born psychology, the very possibility of psychology; from the integration of death into medical thought is born a medicine that is given as a science of the individual.\textsuperscript{19}

Already in these two works, Foucault suggested the “archaeology of knowledge” as an alternative mode of investigation of the structure of discourses within the various fields of knowledge. He believed that archaeological analysis enabled us to discover the regularities, the rules of formation, and the modes of organization of thought which lay beneath particular formations of knowledge. He then wrote \textit{The Archaeology of

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, p. 538.
Knowledge as a postscript to *The History of Madness* and *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. In this book, he emphasizes that one should uncover all technological, social, economic, and political statements in order to discover the unity between them. Foucault believed that this unity could not be discovered from a common object, style, concepts, or thematic choices but rather from the presence of a systematic dispersion of elements.\(^{20}\)

In Foucault’s opinion, the unity of a group of statements goes beyond books, texts, and authors, and is independent of the proximity of epistemological validity, scientificity, or truth.\(^{21}\) In other word, discourses are not constituted out of the truth of the things. It is the truth itself which is constituted out of the dominating discourse within a certain field of knowledge. One can argue neither that a consistent discourse is correct nor that a discourse containing contradictions is not correct. It can only be stated that discourses constitute our thoughts and our values within a certain historical context.

To summarize, a discourse is the sum of a set of statements within different fields of knowledge that are in a veiled unity with each other.\(^ {22}\) However, it must be noted that not all statements can constitute discourses; it is only “serious speech acts” that constitute a certain discourse. A speech act is considered as serious when it can be evaluated according to certain methods of evaluation and by a group of experts. For example, “It is going to rain” is an everyday speech act with a local value, but if it is uttered by a spokesman for the National Weather Service, it turns into a serious speech act. In other word, it is only those statements that are a manifestation of a will to truth that can turn into the elements of a discourse.\(^ {23}\)

This means that any theories within psychology, philosophy, politics, economy, or literature, as well as any novel, piece of poetry, painting, film, etc. from which one can extract a serious speech performance, can be considered as discursive elements. Hence Foucault considers discourses as creatures independent of their creators and the time and place of creation. This means that as soon as a text is written, it has the right to kill its writer. What is important is the life of the text. Who has written the text will become a secondary issue for the reader. Other questions will occupy the mind of the reader as follows: How has the present discourse in the text continued its life? Where has it been used? How can it be published? Who can make it his/her own?\(^ {24}\)

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\(^{20}\) Smart, p. 39.

\(^{21}\) Ibid, p. 40.


Discourses are, in other word, a set of answers to questions like: What is mental health? What is mental disorder? Who is mad? Where is the place of mad people? What is the position of body? What is the position of soul? Does the world need heroism? Who is the hero? What is a revolution? Are revolutions necessary? What is martyrdom? And similar questions to which there are neither easy answers, nor a general consensus on the answers. Discourses are “regimes of truth.”25

3 Some Remarks on the Islamic Revolution and the Concepts of the Hero and Martyrdom

The present chapter is devoted to a presentation of the three parameters focused upon in this study. The first section presents the Islamic Revolution from the points of view of a Western scholar, three architects of the Islamic Revolution, and an influential member of Mohammad Reza Shah’s regime. This presentation is vital, as disagreements concerning the roots of the Revolution have been profound from the very beginning. Presenting these three narrations together is essential for this study, as the main discourses intertwined in them have maintained a strong presence on the Iranian political scene even after the Islamic Revolution. These discourses have also been present in one way or another in Persian post-Revolutionary novels, shaping the image of the Islamic Revolution, and the concepts of the hero and martyrdom. The second section is devoted to a brief presentation of the concepts of the hero and martyrdom.

3.1 The Islamic Revolution

3.1.1 The Islamic Revolution as Viewed by a Western Scholar
Fred Halliday summarizes the characteristics of the Iranian Revolution as follows. 1) It rejects the idea of historical progress, with Ayatollah Khomeini explicitly proposing a return to an earlier model of social and political practices. This turns the Iranian Revolution into a comprehensively reactionary revolution, as it rejects almost all that the modern world stands for. 2) It denies the role of economic and material factors and aspirations in the Revolution. This reveals itself in the leaders’ rejection of the importance of material improvement and welfare. Ayatollah Khomeini tried to lower the material aspirations of the population according to his ideal of generalized austerity. 3) It was undertaken in the name of a universalistic religion. The universal character of the Revolution is far more dominant than its national character. 4) In contrast to other revolutions, the leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, regarded almost all earlier Iranian
oppositional leaders as obstacles to his legitimacy, which, according to him, is derived from the Prophet Mohammad and the founders of Shia Islam.\textsuperscript{26}

According to Halliday, the Iranian Revolution is not only characterized by traditional elements, but also by modern elements. He maintains that this “modernity” reveals itself in four respects:

First of all, the revolution took place in a society far more socio-economically developed, in major respects, than was Russia in 1917 or China in 1949. Half of the population lived in urban areas, per capita income was over $2000…, however unevenly this was distributed […]. Second, in contrast to all other Third World revolutions, the Iranian Revolution took place in the cities […]. Thirdly, and again in contrast to other Third World revolutions, the Iranian upheaval was carried out by political confrontations, not by armed conflicts. Thousands of people died in the last months of the Shah’s regime, but they were mainly unarmed demonstrators, not guerrillas […]. Finally the fall of the ancien régime happened without it having been weakened in any external confrontations […]. Neither defeat in war nor serious international economic pressure assisted the advance of the Islamic revolutionaries, and they themselves received no significant help from abroad.\textsuperscript{27}

Halliday is of the opinion that the reasons behind the Iranian revolution may be found in the rapid and uneven economic development that led to sociopolitical tensions in the Iranian society. These tensions combined with class differences, the corruption of the monarchy, and the mobilizing power of Islam to make the Revolution inevitable.

3.1.2 The Islamic Revolution as Viewed by Three of its Architects

The official historians and the architects of the Islamic Republic declare Ayatollah Khomeini’s protest against the new electoral bill in 1962 to be the starting point of the Islamic Revolution. In the accounts by these people, the Islamic Revolution had an Islamic nature from the very beginning. They also submit that no other non-Islamic movements before 1962 played any role at all in the success of the Revolution. Some of the main architects of the Islamic Revolution who chronicled the events of the period, Ayatollah


\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, pp. 35–36.
Montazeri, Ayatollah Khalkhali, and Hojjat al-Eslam Dorri Najafabadi, have confirmed this standpoint clearly in their memoirs. The interesting thing is that all of them give a strikingly similar picture of the Revolution and of its chronology, as if we are listening to one and the same voice with one and the same modulation coming from three different mouths.

Ayatollah Khalkhali writes, for instance, that the first acts of opposition against the Shah and his government took place following the ratification of the new electoral law in 1962 under Prime Minister Alam. In this bill, women were given the right to vote. Khalkhali also writes that with the new electoral law, the prerequisite of being Muslim to be eligible to run for office and vote was eliminated; and swearing by the holy Koran was replaced by taking an oath upon any holy book. In other words, the holy Koran was no longer the only holy book in this country, but one among others. Ayatollah Montazeri recalls that the new electoral bill was met with protests by the mujtahids in Qom, but very cautiously. The only person who protested vehemently against this law was Ayatollah Khomeini; and that was the reason why he became so prominent.

Dorri Najafabadi also regards Ayatollah Khomeini’s protest against the new electoral law as the starting point for the Islamic Revolution. He maintains that according to this new electoral law, swearing by the holy Koran was eliminated and women were given the right to vote. In addition, no consideration was given to age, religion, and so on. According to him, it was Ayatollah Khomeini who recognized the risks inherent in this new law and who then began his campaign against it.

Recalling Ayatollah Khomeini’s protest against the referendum for the White Revolution of the Shah, Ayatollah Montazeri writes that everybody knew that the referendum was the work of the Americans, who were trying to increase the Shah’s popularity. He remembers how Ayatollah Khomeini intentionally ignored the reform program’s points, instead questioning the referendum itself; Khomeini observed that questioning the points of the reform program would give the regime every opportunity to turn the peasants and the people against the clergy.

Hojjat al-Eslam Dorri Najafabadi also reports that Ayatollah Khomeini emphasized that the regime would exploit the clergy’s protest against the land reform and would depict them as supporting the feudalists, capitalists,

30 Dorri Najafabadi, Mohammad. (1384 [2005/06]), Khaterāt va mobārezāt (Memoirs and Struggles), tadvin: Heidar Nazari, Tehran, pp. 43–44.
31 Montazeri, pp. 114–115.
and landlords, and opposing the workers, peasants, and poor people in society.\footnote{Dorri Najafabadi, p. 50.}

The second important event that led to the Revolution, according to the architects of the Islamic Revolution, was Ayatollah Khomeini’s speech at Faiziye, the religious school of Qom, on 3 June 1963. Ayatollah Montazeri writes that on the day of mourning of Āshurā, Ayatollah Khomeini delivered a violent attack against the regime at Faiziye. Following that Ayatollah Khomeini was arrested. Ayatollah Montazeri writes that he was in Najafabad when he heard about the uprisings of Friday, 7 June in Tehran and many other cities.\footnote{Montazeri, pp. 126–127.} Ayatollah Khalkahli writes that the night before 7 June, commandos set out from Tehran towards Qom, by order of the Shah and Hasan Pakravan, the chief of SAVAK. The commandos’ mission was to arrest Imam Khomeini. Following the Imam’s arrest, there began a widespread series of uprisings in Tehran, Qom, Varamin, etc. The uprisings in Tehran were massive. Even in small cities and villages far from Tehran, people stopped working and participated in demonstrations against the regime. These demonstrations were all met by force.\footnote{Hajj Khalkhali, pp. 105–108.}

The third important event in this process, according to these architects of the Revolution, consisted of the protests against the bill that granted diplomatic immunity to American military personnel and advisers, and of the reaction to Ayatollah Khomeini’s being exiled as punishment for his attacking this bill. Ayatollah Montazeri describes this event as follows:

One night Mr. Khazali and I visited Imam to discuss the revolution and what the regime was doing. Suddenly, Ayatollah Khomeini told us that the latest news was that the regime was going to receive a 200 million dollar loan from the USA and that the Americans had demanded diplomatic immunity for their advisors in Iran [...]. Then Ayatollah Khomeini attacked this bill in a pamphlet and delivered speeches [...]. For this reason they could not tolerate him anymore, and Ayatollah Khomeini was exiled to Turkey.\footnote{Montazeri, pp. 139–140.}

Ayatollah Khalkhali writes:

On 25 October 1964, his majesty the Imam delivered a speech at his home in Yakhchal Qazi, and attacked the Shah and Mansur,\footnote{The Prime Minister.} and criticized them for giving diplomatic immunity to the American advisors in Iran [...]. On 4 November 1964, they attacked the house of
the Imam, kidnapped him, and exiled him to Turkey in a gigantic
military plane from Mehrabad Airport.\(^{37}\)

Hojjat al-Eslam Dorri Najafabadi reports that Hajji Mostfa, Ayatollah Khomeini’s son, had once said that his father was not exiled for attacking the Shah, but rather for attacking the United States.\(^{38}\)

In the accounts of the architects of the Islamic Revolution, oppositional activities decreased after Khomeini was exiled, but just like glowing coals hidden beneath ashes, the opposition was still very much alive. This was the fire that finally burst into flame in the years leading up to the Revolution.

The second period of the Islamic movement began following the publication of an article on Khomeini in the daily Ettelāʿāt in January 1978. The article was interpreted as an insult to Ayatollah Khomeini. At that time, Ayatollah Montazeri was in jail. Ayatollah Khalkhali writes:

> After directly insulting the Imam in an article that was published in the daily Ettelāʿāt, the citizens of Qom demonstrated in the streets and began to fight the police [...]. The Iranian regime knew that such an article could not pass by without eliciting a reaction. But the regime had expected that protests would be confined to Qom and its religious school. They believed that the protests would end after some limited street fighting in Qom and possibly in Tehran, with a number of people killed. It would be worth a successful attack on the Imam and would be damaging to his image; and the article could be spread all over Iran. But this time, they were very mistaken, as the publication of that article upset people all over Iran, and led to protests in all cities in Iran.\(^{39}\)

Dorri Najafabadi maintains that this article, written by Ahmad Rashidi, was the work of SAVAK and the Ministry of Tourism, produced on direct order from the Shah. This article, which was published shortly after the death of the Imam’s oldest son, and when the Iranian clergy and the religious school of Qom were in mourning, was an insult to Imam Khomeini, to the Iranian clergy, and to Shia Islam.\(^{40}\)

According to these architects of the Islamic Revolution, this article was the beginning of the final chapter of the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah. In this article Ayatollah Khomeini was called an imposter of Indian origin. The powder keg was now ready to explode.

\(^{37}\) Hajj Khalkhali, pp. 131–132.

\(^{38}\) Dorri Najafabadi, p. 87.

\(^{39}\) Hajj Khalkhali, p. 240.

\(^{40}\) Dorri Najafabadi, p. 179.
The first demonstrations in protest against this article took place in Qom. The security police opened fire on the demonstrators and several people were killed. During the traditional forty-day memorial interval, massive demonstrations took place in Tabriz. Once again the security forces met the demonstrators with weapons, and more people were killed. During the forty-day period of mourning for those killed in Tabriz, demonstrations took place in other cities, and the chain of events continued.

The period between late 1977 and February 1979 was eventful. In July 1977, the Shah replaced Amir Abbas Hoveida, the prime minister, with Jamshid Amouzegar, in response to the growing public discontent. With further escalation of the public demonstrations in 1978, Amouzgar was subsequently removed and replaced by Sharif Emami. Under Sharif Emami’s premiership, which lasted only two months, the casinos were closed. The royal calendar was changed back to the Hijri Shamsi calendar. Martial law, which already had been declared in July 1978 in several cities like Isfahan and Qom, was declared in Tehran in the early morning hours of 8 September. On that day many people were not aware of the declaration of martial law in Tehran. Citizens came into the streets as before and the security forces opened fire on peaceful demonstrators in Zhale Square, killing many people. This day came to be known as Black Friday.

Sharif Emami was soon removed as Prime Minister and General Gholam Reza Azhari was appointed to head a new military government. A short while later Azhari too was removed. Shapour Bakhtiar, an old member of Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Iran (The Iranian National Front), was appointed Prime Minister in January 1979. Mohammad Reza Shah left the country for Egypt. On 10 February 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini arrived in Iran from Paris. On February 19, the special royal forces attacked the air force technicians at one of the air force’s garrisons, while they were watching a TV broadcast of the arrival of Khomeini to Iran. The technicians opened the gates of the garrison and allowed the people seize weapons from the arsenals.

On 22 February 1979, the end of the Iranian monarchy and the beginning of a new era in Iranian history was a fact. According to the architects of the Revolution, 22 February 1979 is a holy day. Ayatollah Montazeri called it the day of the explosion of light, and Ayatollah Khalkhali welcomed it as the day when the country fell into the hands of Islam, Imam Khomeini, and the Iranian clergy.

3.1.3 The Islamic Revolution as Viewed by a Former Commander in Chief of the Iranian Army

In recounting the events leading up to the Revolution, General Qarabaghi, the last Supreme Commander of the Iranian Armed Forces under Mohammad Reza Shah, says that the date for the start of the Islamic
Revolution was that day in early January 1979 when Carter sent General Huyzer to Iran. General Qarabaghi is of the opinion that General Huyzer was sent to Iran to put an end to Mohammad Reza Shah’s regime. He was sent there to encourage the Iranian generals to support Shahpour Bakhtiar, following the Shah’s departure from the country. To prove his statement, he refers to General Rabii’s confessions at the Islamic Court shortly after the Revolution. According to General Rabii’s confessions, General Huyzer had told the Iranian Generals that neither the Iranian people nor the rest of the world could tolerate an autocratic system; that the American administration was no longer willing to support the Shah, and that the Shah must leave the country. He also quotes the ex-chief of the French intelligence service: “I participated in a meeting where the main subject was to see to it that the Shah of Iran left Iran.”

According to General Qarabaghi, one of General Huyzer’s main goals was to arrange a meeting between Khomeini’s emissaries and the generals of the Iranian Armed Forces. General Huyzer had personally said to General Qarabaghi: “I believe you should have a meeting with Bazargan and Doctor Beheshti, the representatives of the oppositional front, and Khomeini.”

General Qarabaghi emphasizes that the generals from the Armed Forces never met Khomeini’s emissaries. His own meeting with Bazargan took place at the initiative of Bazargan. He also emphasizes that General Moqadam’s meeting with the representatives of the oppositional groups had nothing to do with the Armed Forces, but that he met them in his capacity as the Chief of SAVAK and as Vice Prime Minister. General Qarabaghi’s conclusion is that the fall of Mohammad Reza Shah was planned and directed by the American government.

These different narrations of the Islamic Revolution not only deal with the historical events, but also reveal the main discourses that have shaped Iranian society since the Constitutional Revolution. In Halliday’s narration of the Islamic Revolution, one can recognize the leftist discourse and the modernity discourse inspired by the ideology of the age of enlightenment. The narrations of the three architects of the Islamic Revolution are permeated by the Islamic discourse, and General Qarabaghi’s narration reveals the discourse of the despotic modernization and Iranian nationalism based on the pre-Islamic Iranian history and thought.

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42 Ibid, p. 29.
44 Ibid, p. 61.
3.2 Some Remarks on the Concepts of the Hero and Martyrdom

3.2.1 The Hero

The word hero originates from the classical Latin hērōs (plural hērōsēs) and denotes a man of superhuman strength, courage, or ability who is favored by the gods; especially one regarded as semi-divine and immortal.48 A hero is capable of accomplishing deeds that the ordinary men wish to achieve, but cannot.49

The hero lives and acts in a mythical world; a world in which different interacting narratives reveal to us stories about creation, life after death, the Gods, and extraordinary events with moral aspects.50

This hero usually has three main characteristics: 1) he is immortal and his life is a model for everybody else; 2) he lives in the bipolar world of absolute good and absolute evil; 3) he represents the realization of values that are considered eternal. Heraclitus and Prometheus in Greek mythology, and Jamshid and Fereidun in Iranian mythology, are such mythical heroes.

In heroic, historic and religious epics, heroes usually possess such characteristics. They fight for a higher ideal. They are soldiers of the army of good who are ready to sacrifice their lives to prevent the dominance of evil.51 Thus, the Iran-loving Rostam, the hero of the tenth-century Persian national epic Shāhnāme, has the same characteristics and plays a similar role as the Muslim Imam Ali in the twelfth-century religious epic Hamle-ye heydari (The Heydari Battle), or as the Christian Roland in the eleventh-century epic The Song of Roland.

In the real world however, there are two further groups of heroes: heroes of thought like most eminent figures within literature, philosophy, art, music, sports and film; and heroes of historical actions like all the great men or women who have played an influential role in the course of history. Sidney Hook maintains that most popular estimates of the concept of hero do not differentiate between these two categories of hero.52 He then makes a further

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distinction between the *eventful man*, a man who happens to play an influential role in an event, and the *event-making man*, a “man whose actions are the consequences of outstanding capacities of intelligence, will, and character rather than of accidents of position.” He also emphasizes that the conception of the hero as a morally worthy man should be ruled out “not because ethical judgments are illegitimate in history, but because so much of it has been made by the wicked.”

However, for the purpose of this study the ethical judgment of the hero will not be ruled out for two reasons: 1) this ethical judgment is an inseparable part of the dominant cultural discourse reflected in the studied novels; 2) the focus of this study is on uncrowned heroes in these novels not on event-making men. They are historical figures who fight for radical changes in the dominant social, political, and moral values that they consider to be unjustified. They do not attain godly or half-godly positions but, like epic and mythical heroes, live in the bipolar world of good and evil, fight for a higher ideal, and are ready to sacrifice their lives regardless of whether they meet victory or defeat. As a matter of fact, they are all presented as morally justified heroes, in accordance with what is considered good or evil in these novels. Thus, the reflective ethical judgment of heroes in these novels is closely related to these novels’ judgment of the Islamic Revolution.

This study will also focus on the faith in the hero’s role in influencing the course of history. A corollary to this idea is that the presence of a hero, or a heroic action in a certain text, does not necessarily reflect any faith in the role of the hero. Whenever the heroic action of a hero does not lead to the realization of the goals for which the hero has fought and sacrificed his life, the hero simply becomes a victim and the heroic actions become meaningless.

3.2.2 Martyrdom

A very rough definition of martyrdom might be: suffering death for the sake of a holy truth. In order to define a death as martyrdom, four elements should be present: holy truth, belief, bravery, and an enemy. One who is prepared for martyrdom is one who believes in a holy truth, is brave, and is ready to fight any enemy of this holy truth. Martyrdom, then, is the outcome of a heroic act.

The word “martyrdom” literally means witnessing, and originates from the post-classical Latin *martyr* witness. Martyrdom is the most powerful tool for advertising a religion. As such it can communicate personal

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53 Ibid, p. 112.
54 Ibid, p. 111.
credibility and experience to an audience. Martyrdom, the image of the enemy, and the fight against this enemy constitute important chapters in the history of all religions. A martyr is a representative of a belief system who is ready to fight the representatives of another belief system which she/he considers to be unjustified. The martyr becomes the living definition of a belief system which she/he is unwilling to renounce even at the cost of death. The martyr symbolizes suffering, blood, and sacrifice for the sake of a belief system. Stories of martyrdom and martyrs are usually narrated to affect the readers and to convince them to choose a certain belief.66

Martyrdom has a vital position in all religions. The history of Jewish martyrdom goes back to the fourth century B.C. after the Conquest of the Middle East by Alexander the Great, and especially under the Seleucid monarch, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–163 B.C.). Cook maintains that the later books of the Hebrew Bible are filled with stories about the Jewish martyrs of this period. In these stories, Antiochus IV Epiphanes’ attempts to unify the various cults in his realm by forcing upon them the Greek pantheon are coupled with the betrayal of the Jewish political and religious elite. This provided the cause the Jewish martyrs needed to die for. It was also necessary to create examples, those who were willing to resist and die to safeguard the Jewish population. One of the earliest martyrs within the monotheistic tradition of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is the Jewish Eleazar, who was killed during the Maccabean Revolt (167–40 B.C.). He was whipped to death because he refused to eat pork which is against the Law. He chose “a beautiful death” in the defense of what he considered as the revered and the sacred laws.67

Jesus Christ is the most prominent martyr of Christianity and his martyrdom is the most prominent symbol of Christianity. It is the blood and the suffering of Jesus that gives credibility to Christianity and safeguards the salvation of human beings. On the last night of his life, Jesus Christ offers his disciples bread and wine as a symbol of his flesh and blood. After the betrayal of one of his close disciples, he is caught and then crucified. Before his crucifixion, the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate asks the people present at the scene who they want to be forgiven, Jesus or Barabbas. And they choose Barabbas. Jesus Christ is then crucified. Jesus Christ sacrifices his life for people who betray him. He bravely chooses martyrdom to witness the justification of a religion and to evangelize it.68

Martyrdom in Islam is also based on these elements. Accepting bloodshed and suffering to witness and to proselytize for a holy truth is an inseparable part of martyrdom in Islam as well. According to Ali Shariati, a

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martyr is one who chooses “the red death” as a symbol for his/her love for a belief system for which she/he is ready to fight and die. The martyr is not just present before God but also before the people. The martyr defeats the enemy with her/his “red death” which becomes the heart of the history of a people that pumps blood into the dead and dry veins of a society. This is also reflected in the Koran, for example:

And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision.

And do not say about those who are killed in the way of Allah, “They are dead.” Rather, they are alive, but you perceive [it] not.

The most powerful symbol of martyrdom in Shia Islam is Husain who was martyred in 680 during the Muslim Uprising against Yazid, the Umayyad Caliph. Imam Husain refuses to acknowledge the authority of Yazid as Caliph after the death of Muawiya. Invited by the inhabitants of Kufa to come and visit them, Husain set out towards Kufa together with 72 of his relatives, and his own family members including women and children. Yazid interprets this visit as a political action and sends his troops to meet them in the desert. This ends in all of them, except one son of Husain, being killed. Husain fights nobly until the end. Husain’s martyrdom is an archetype of martyrdom within Shia Islam that is present in all periods and in all wars and jihads of Shia Muslims. Husain dies in Karbala in order to wake up in the body of all the coming generations. We should not mourn for his death but for our absence in the holy jihad against evil.

As has been seen, all the classical elements necessary for martyrdom are present in these narratives of religious martyrdom. However, martyrdom does not occur only for the sake of holy religious truths. History is full of non-religious martyrs; from Spartacus to Che Guevara; from the martyrs of the anti-apartheid movement to the martyrs of the French resistance movement in World War II. Even in Marxist literature, martyrdom is based on blood and suffering, by which the cause is nourished. It is also based on a brave fight for a belief system and against an enemy. One outstanding example within the Iranian Marxist movement is Khosrow Golsorkhi who in

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59 Marg-e sorkh.
63 Cook, pp. 55–58.
64 Shariati, p. 6. See also Motahari, Morteza. (1366 [1982]), Hamāse-ye Hoseini (Husain’s Epic), Tehran, pp. 39–40, 50–52.
65 All these figures are remembered by their followers as martyrs.
his testament writes to his executioners: “Believe me, hundreds of *fudāisi* 66 will arise from each drop of our blood to tear up your hearts!” 67

The question is: What is the holy truth? What are its criteria? A general and universal definition would appear to be impossible. One person’s holy truth is not necessarily that of another. The holy truth is usually determined by the dominating discourse of a certain time in a certain place. The martyrs of a certain holy truth may be considered as the defeated enemies of another truth. It is the dominating discourse that determines which definition should be seen as the right one.

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66 A person who is ready to sacrifice his/her life for a cause or a belief system.
The present chapter is devoted to a brief survey of the economic, political, and cultural roots of the Islamic Revolution in a sequence of five different periods beginning with the Constitutional Revolution in Iran. This chapter also looks at how each period’s sociopolitical background is reflected in the Persian novel of the period by presenting only one representative novel for each main discourse of that period. These five periods are as follows: 1) The Constitutional Revolution 1906–1911; 2) 1925–1941; 3) 1941–1953; 4) 1953–1963; and 5) 1963–1979. As may be known, each of these periods, in one way or another, has been marked by one central conflict that finally resulted in the Iranian Islamic Revolution; namely the conflict between traditionalism and modernity. This background is of importance for the study of the Persian novel, since the Persian novel throughout its history has, to a great degree, been nurtured by socio-political reality. It would be impossible to understand the Persian novel in general and the Persian post-Revolutionary novel in particular without an understanding of the socio-political background and the primary conflict between traditionalism and modernity.

4.1 Introductory Remarks

Iran Modern history since the Constitutional Revolution 1906-1911, in one way or another, has been marked by one central conflict that finally resulted in the Iranian Islamic Revolution; namely the conflict between traditionalism and modernity.

It is the author’s contention that this primary conflict between traditionalism and modernity has taken different expressions since the Constitutional Revolution, and has constituted five main discourses in the Iranian context that still live side by side: 1) the modernity discourse, inspired by the ideology of the Age of Enlightenment, which began to manifest itself in the thinking of the intellectuals of the Constitutional
Revolution, one such intellectual being Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani; \(^{68}\) 2) the discourse of despotic modernization, which can be traced in the official policies of the Pahlavi dynasty; 3) the discourse of Iranian nationalism that can be found in the thinking of a multitude of figures, including Fathali Akhundzade, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, and Mohammad Mosaddeq and that has its roots in the pre-Islamic era of Iran; 4) the discourse of socialism, which entered the scene with the establishment of the Ejtemāʿiun-āmiun Society\(^{69}\) and continued in the Communist Party of Iran, in the group of 53 socialists, and in many other socialist organizations in contemporary Iran;\(^{70}\) and 5) the Islamic discourse, which has manifested itself in the thinking of numerous figures from Mirza Nayini to Sheykh Fazlollah Nuri, from Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran to Shariati, from Khomeini to Abd al-Karim Sorush.\(^{71}\)

The dialogue between a couple of these five discourses has shaped the direction of the cultural discourse of each period since the Constitutional Revolution, and is still shaping the contemporary cultural discourse in Iran. In selecting the novels representative of each period for the background section, the author has searched the novels for the presence of this dialogue. The literary quality of the novels has not been a decisive factor in the selection. This explains, for example, the selection of Sadeq Hedayat’s less famous Hājjī āqā in preference to his respected and famous Buf-e kur. The selected novels are ones in which one can trace the path that led to the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

4.2 The Constitutional Revolution 1906–1911

4.2.1 Remarks on the Economy

It may not be possible to pinpoint a specific date for the beginning of what is known as the Constitutional Revolution in Iran. Nevertheless, according to many scholars, the winds of change began to blow during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah in the second half of the nineteenth century. The main economic developments that led to the Constitutional Revolution can be summarized

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\(^{69}\) The Iranian Social Democratic Party that was established in the early 20th century.


\(^{71}\) See also Alamdari, Kazem. (1380 [2001/02], Cherā irān ‘aqab mānūd va gharb pish raft? (Why Did Iran Lag Behind While the West Moved Forward?), Tehran, p. 492.
as follows: the growth of the population; the expansion of trade; inflation; a steady devaluation of the national currency in national and international markets; a constant increase in trade with European countries; and new patterns of consumption.  

These economic developments led not only to increasing poverty in the lower classes of Iranian society, but also to a crisis in the old system and the emergence of new social classes. Developments in the economy of nineteenth-century Iran resulted in the emergence of an urban bourgeoisie that was in total conflict with the dominating half-feudal system of that time. Still, this emerging Iranian bourgeoisie was in many respects very different from the Western bourgeoisie of that time. It was a social class that for the first time in Iranian history had become aware of its class interests. Abrahamian formulates the reasons for the emergence of this social class in Iran and describes its characteristics thus:

The impact of the West during the second half of the nineteenth century undermined in two separate ways the fragile relationship between the Qajar state and Iranian society. First, Western penetration, especially economic penetration, threatened the many urban bazaars, and thereby gradually induced the scattered regional commercial interests to coalesce into one cross-regional middle class that was conscious for the first time of its own common grievances. This propertied middle class, because of its ties to the traditional economy and the traditional Shi‘i ideology, became known in later years as the traditional middle class.  

The increase in international commerce had led to the accumulation of commercial capital. This accumulation, however, was neither a result of the internal growth of the market economy, nor a result of access to new markets. It was merely a result of the dependence of the Iranian economy on the world market. The expansion of international trade not only resulted in the absorption of foreign investors by the Iranian market, but also in a dramatic expansion in economic activities among Iranian merchants. The establishment of the Imperial Bank of Persia by Great Britain, the establishment of the Russian Bank by Russia, and the establishment of foreign companies and foreign trade agencies, all laid a solid foundation for the expansion of foreign trade activities in Iran.

The expansion of foreign trade, however, was only one of the aspects of the increasing contact with the West. There were other aspects too; among

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74 Katouzian, pp. 54–55.
others the weakening of the Iranian government, the increasing sense of humiliation among the Iranian people, and introduction of the European lifestyle to Iranian people.\textsuperscript{75}

The expansion of foreign trade and the flow of foreign goods such as textiles, sugar, and so on, into the Iranian markets accustomed Iranians to consuming foreign goods to such a degree that Iranian industries began to go into bankruptcy one after another.\textsuperscript{76}

The economic crisis, together with the willful actions of government officials in confiscating the assets of Iranian merchants (bazaaris), induced Iranian merchants to take action. Iranian merchants, supported by the masses, began a series of actions designed to strengthen the national economy and national industries. The establishment of the glassworks, the power station, and the brickworks in Tehran, as well as the silk factory in Gilan, were among these measures. But the ever-increasing flow of foreign goods into Iranian markets and the government’s unwillingness to support national industries drove all of these industries into bankruptcy.

There are two other aspects that should not be forgotten: 1) Iranian merchants benefited greatly from the expansion of foreign trade, and 2) the expansion of foreign trade played a decisive role in weakening despotism in Iran. Unfair trade contracts, illegal actions such as bribing the king, specialization of the production and export of raw materials, the relative collapse of traditional industries, the growth of foreign loans, and the weakened role of the king as a result of the economic competition between England and Russia were all among the factors that weakened despotism in Iran. It must, however, be noted that the Iranian bourgeoisie’s conception of freedom was not the same as that of Western bourgeoisie. Katouzian writes that for Iranian freedom fighters freedom was not equivalent to becoming free from the limitations sanctioned by the law, but becoming free from the endless and official absence of the law. Neither were they fighting for socioeconomic equality. The only thing they wanted was a share in the absolute power of the state. They were longing for a democratization of state power; they were longing for freedom from political and economic powerlessness; and from social humiliation.\textsuperscript{77}

The Iranian bourgeoisie, which was under pressure from foreign investors, longed for a non-despotic government that could protect private ownership as well. The Constitutional Revolution in Iran did not aim to create a new social contract. Its main aim was to construct a legal framework that could enable economic activity. As such, the Iranian bourgeoisie, who

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.


had their roots in the traditional institution of bazaar, became the main actors for social change.

The traditional bazaar included small commercial chambers and mosques. The bazaars were centers where merchants could sell their goods, artisans could manufacture their goods, and priests could call people to mosques. Western influence had changed this situation totally. Even if the Iranian bourgeoisie admired Western freedom and longed for it, the mass import of foreign goods had turned the West into an enemy as well. The Constitutional Revolution was, therefore, very much influenced by the paradoxical feelings of the Iranian bourgeoisie towards the West.

4.2.2 Remarks on the Political Situation

The constitutional movement in Iran arose in December 1905; following an incident in which the governor of Tehran had beaten the feet of several sugar merchants for their high prices. Kasravi writes that as a result of the Iran-Russia war, and because sugar was imported from Russia, the price of sugar had risen from five to seven geran. Ala al-Dowle, who was a rigorous governor, tried to force the sugar merchants to lower their prices. Seventeen merchants were called to the governor’s office. Despite the fact that several of them were not sugar merchants, and that this fact was pointed out to him, Ala al-Dowle ordered their feet to be beaten. One of these merchants was Hashem Qandi, an old and good-hearted Muslim who had financed the building of three mosques in Tehran.

This resulted in protests. A large group of people, together with bazaaris and ulama, and under the leadership of two well-known mujtahids, Sayyed Abdollah Behbahani and Sayyed Mohammad Tabatabayi, took sanctuary in the shrine of Shahzade Abd al-Azim and formulated the following demands to be presented to the Shah: the establishment of ʿadālatkhāne (House of Justice); the dismissal of Ala al-Dowle, the governor of Tehran; and the dismissal of Naus from the Ministry of Customs and Finance. The Shah dismissed Ala al-Dowle and, in January 1906, agreed upon the establishment of the ʿadālatkhāne. The ulama returned to Tehran. The Shah and Ain al-Dowle, his chief minister, were not, however, willing to fulfill the promises. In July 1906, under the leadership of Sayyed Abdollah Behbahani and Sayyed Mohammad Tabatabayi, people took sanctuary; this time in Qom.

78 Keddie, p. 72.
80 A Belgian who under Mozaffar al-Din Shah’s reign was installed as Minister of Customs. The Iranian clergy were very unhappy with having a Belgian as the Minister of Customs. In 1905, a picture of Naus disguised as a mullah at a masked ball, fell into the hands of the people. This led to greater discontent and the Shah was forced to dismiss him.
About twelve to fourteen thousand merchants and tradesmen also took sanctuary in the British legation. It was during these episodes that the idea of establishing a representative assembly or majles began to be discussed. Ain al-Dowle was dismissed at the end of July, but his dismissal was no longer sufficient. Early in August, the creation of the majles, (the Iranian parliament), was accepted by the Shah.82

In his decree, Mozaffar al-Din Shah emphasized that the majles should be formed in accordance with Islamic law. On 9 September 1906, the electoral charter of the majles was accepted and signed by the Shah.83 The first majles opened in October 1906 in the presence of the Shah.84 In December 1906, the Shah, now very ill, at last signed the Fundamental Law. On 8 January 1907, Mozaffar al-Din Shah died. The longer Supplementary Fundamental Law, which was drafted in 1907, had to be signed by the new Shah; and Mohammad Ali Shah signed it in October.85 Mohammad Ali Shah wanted to dispose of the majles as soon as possible. After an unsuccessful attempt on his life, the Shah executed a successful coup d’état with the Russian-led Cossacks cannonading the majles on 23 June 1907, closing it, and arresting and executing popular nationalist leaders.86 Kermani described the cannonading of the majles as follows:

After half an hour, Mr. Majd al-Eslam, the editor-in-chief of Nedā-ye vatan came into my office [...] He began crying: poor people, poor people! [...] Meanwhile the thunder of the cannonades began to be heard and from the morning until now, which is about four hours from dusk, the thunder of cannonades and weapons has been heard everywhere.87

The Iranian constitutionalists did not, however, give up. Popular resistance took shape in Tabriz. Two main leaders of this resistance movement were Sattar Khan and Baqer Khan who were of humble origins. With their men, they resisted the siege by royalist troops for months. When food supplies became critical, the Russians sent troops to Tabriz and took over the city. Many of the popular forces moved to Gilan, where they joined other revolutionary forces and set out towards Tehran. From the south, too, Asad Bakhtiari began leading his Bakhtiaris towards Tehran. In July 1909, the

82 Keddie, pp. 72–73.
84 Keddie, p. 73.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid, p. 75.
northern revolutionaries and Bakhtiaris established their control of Tehran. kasravi describes this event as follows:

By then, Mohammad Ali Mirza was spending his days in Saltanatabad in a state of hopelessness [...]. Liakhov, the Russian commander of the Persian Cossack Brigade, had placed troops by the Qazvin Gate, as well as by the western and southern gates. When the constitutionalists realized this, they turned back and tried to enter the city through the northern gate. At six o’clock in the morning, they entered the city through that gate. Tuesday night was calm. About three o’clock PM on Wednesday the battle began [...]. The battle with the Cossacks went on until late in the night [...]. On Thursday, the battle was still ongoing [...]. On Friday the battle was over. Early in the morning, a telegram came from Shemiran saying that Mohammad Ali Mirza had taken refuge at the Russian embassy. 

4.2.3 The Persian Novel

One representative novel of this period is Siyāhatnāme-ye Ebrāhim beig yā balā-ye ta'assob-e u (Ebrahim Beig’s Travelogue or the Disaster of His Prejudice) by Zein al-Abedin Maraghei (1839–1911). Zein al-Abedin Maraghei was born in Maraghe and died in Istanbul. After finishing school, he moved to the Caucasus and then to Istanbul, where he stayed until the end of his life. He wrote for the Persian journals Akhtar, Shams, and Habl al-matin and left behind several articles. He is best known for his novel Siyāhatnāme-ye ebrāhim beig ya balā-ye ta'assob-e u, which was written in three volumes. The first volume was written in 1895, the second in 1905, and the third in 1909. The first volume, which was published during the last years of Naser al-Din Shah’s reign, occupies a special place.

Ebrahim Beig is a young liberal nationalist Muslim. He is the son of an Azerbaijani merchant, who had immigrated to Egypt fifty years earlier. Ebrahim Beig’s father had been so fond of Iran that he had never spoken any other language than Persian in Egypt. Ebrahim Beig loses his father at the age of twenty. In his last hours of life, the father asks three things of his son: not to forget his love for Iran, to show respect for his teacher Mirza Yusef, and to spend his early years travelling around the world. Ebrahim Beig

88 Keddie, p. 76.
90 Although it has not been stated explicitly, my analysis of the sample novels from the following five periods is also based on Foucault’s discourse theory.
91 Maraghei, Zein al-Abedin. (1362 [1983/84]), Siyāhatnāme-ye Ebrāhim beig yā balā-ye ta’assob-e u (Ebrahim Beig’s Travelogue or the Disaster of His Prejudice), Tehran, p. 31.
obeys his father’s wishes. Together with his teacher Mirza Yusef, he sets out towards Iran. After two days, he arrives in Istanbul. After five days, he arrives in Baku and meets the Iranians living there. The next day he arrives in Ashgabat. Iran is very close now. As soon as the carriage crosses the Iranian border, Ebrahim Beig begs the driver to stop. He gets off the carriage, takes some soil in his hand, smells it and kisses it passionately.\textsuperscript{92} He passes through many cities before arriving in Tehran. In Tehran he visits many places. Wherever he looks, all Ebrahim Beig sees in Iran is severe corruption, backwardness, and misery. Tired and disappointed, he returns to Egypt.

The only thing that gives Ebrahim Beig a little hope is his meeting with a good-hearted reformist. One day during his stay in Teheran, Ebrahim Beig is invited to a house in Tehran. In one of the rooms of that house, he meets a nobleman. They begin discussing the law.\textsuperscript{93} The nobleman takes Ebrahim Beig to his private library and gives him six volumes of a book. Then he tells Ebrahim Beig that he has many more books, but none of them will be as useful for him as these. The nobleman asks Ebrahim Beig to stay at his house during his stay in Tehran, then leaves him alone with the books in the library:

\begin{quote}
I started going around in the library. On one side, the constitutions of several countries – the Ottoman, the Russian, the English and the French constitutions – were arranged, and on the other side the books on the Islamic Fiqh and Islamic principles, which indeed are the pinnacle of human beings’ salvation. I was very excited and started reading those six books that he had given me. I found the books to be written in an exquisitely fine hand, and I realized that they were his own works. In one volume, he had taken up and discussed those parts of the English and French constitutions which he considered not to be in accordance with Islamic Law […], those that he had marked as very good but not applicable to Iran and the Iranians. Then he had approved the rest as in total accordance with Islamic law and in accordance with clear judgment and sound reason. To support this he has referred to books of Islamic Fiqh, Hadith and the words of Islamic authorities and this indeed refreshed one’s soul.\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

The nobleman can be interpreted as a reflection of Ebrahim Beig, himself. Ebrahim Beig is seeking a society run either by rational Islam or by Islamic rationality, a society run in accordance with a combination of moral and Islamic rules together with the teachings of the European Renaissance.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid, pp. 47–59.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid, pp. 112, 113.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid, pp. 117–118.
4.3 Reza Shah 1921–1941

4.3.1 Remarks on the Economy

World War I brought to Iran every form of devastation. Insecurity, poverty, and financial corruption permeated Iranian society everywhere. The central government in Iran was very weak during this period, and many of the Iranian villages and cities were destroyed. Sickness and hunger were widespread and foreign trade decreased greatly. During and after World War I, the British and the Russians initially divided Iran into three zones of control, and then into their own two zones of control. Iranian nationalists, with decades of bitter experiences of their dealings with these two powers, began to grow in their sympathy for Germany. With the signing of the Vosuq al-Dowleh treaty in 1919, not only discontent with foreign powers and with the Iranian government reached its peak, but also misery, insecurity, and poverty in the country:

The war had a devastating effect. The whole country had turned to a battlefield, on which many were killed. Farmlands were ruined by invading armies. Peasants were taken from the fields and forced to work on military projects. Irrigation works requiring careful upkeep were destroyed, and cultivated areas and livestock were reduced.

Meanwhile, the British, who would benefit from a strong central Iranian government, strove to establish such a government in Iran. Reza Khan and Sayyed Zia’s joint coup in 1921 was the result of this undertaking. Five years later, Reza Khan declared himself King and began the work of establishing a stable economy.

With Reza Khan in power and World War I having ended, the Iranian economy began to stabilize. The roads became more secure, transport costs decreased, and the oil industry’s increasing income improved the economic situation slightly. This was not the whole story, however; additional measures were taken. The establishment of the National Bank of Iran and the building of the Trans-Iranian Railroad, for instance, were among the steps that were taken in order to encourage Westerners to invest in Iran. The

95 Katouzian, p. 75.
96 According to the treaty of 1907, Iran was divided into three zones of control. The southern part was under the control of the British, the northern part was under the control of the Russians, and the central part was declared a neutral zone.
97 According to the treaty of 1915, even the neutral zone would come under the control of the British who promised Russia postwar control of Istanbul in return (Keddie 1981), p. 79.
98 Keddie, p. 82.
100 Katouzian, p. 92–95.
Industrial development began in earnest during the 1930s, when the Great Depression drastically reduced the price of capital goods. The state encouraged industrialization by raising high tariff walls, imposing government monopolies, financing modern plants through the Ministry of Industries, and extending low-interest loans to would-be factory owners through the National Bank. The number of modern industrial plants, not counting the oil installations, increased as much as seventeen-fold during Reza Shah’s reign.\footnote{Abrahamian, p. 146.}

4.3.2 Remarks on the Political Situation

Before Reza Khan’s coup, the Iranian government was very weak, and there was a great deal of discontent with the government. Social and nationalistic movements were growing everywhere in Iran. One of the movements of this period was the Gilan movement in the province of Gilan, led from 1915 onward by Mirza Kuchek Khan. The demands of this movement, whose partisans came to be known as \textit{Jangalis} (forest dwellers), included the limitation of landlords’ power, and the adoption of the Fundamental Law of the Constitutional Revolution, and thus the movement sought a more democratic and egalitarian rule.\footnote{Keddie, pp. 80–81.} This was a movement of poor peasants who were afraid of both Russian Communism and the modern West. \textit{Jangalis} were engaged in several conflicts. Living near the sea, they were in cultural conflict with people living in the drier central parts of Iran. They were in conflict with the politicians and landlords who were serving foreign interests, and they were in conflict with the revolutionary ideas of the modernists.\footnote{Digard, Jean-Pierre, Hourcade Bernard et Yann Richard (1378 [1999/2000]), \textit{Irān dar qarn-e bistom (L’Iran Au XXe Siècle)}, translated into Persian by Abd al-Reza (Hushang) Mahdavi, Tehran pp. 63–64.} After being defeated by government forces, Mirza Kuchek Khan froze to death in the mountains near Khalkhal,\footnote{A city in Azerbaijan province.} and his head was brought to Tehran.

Another democratic movement was founded in Tabriz in 1920. It was led by Sheikh Mohammad Khiabani, leader of the Democratic Party and deputy of the second \textit{majles}. Sheikh Mohammad Khiabani demanded the establishment of central and provincial parliaments in accordance with the Fundamental Law of the Constitutional Revolution. Khiabani took power in Tabriz and introduced several reforms such as stabilizing prices, improving
the tax system, establishing schools, and instituting land reform. Khiabani was not a separatist, but he changed the name of Azerbaijan into Azadistan “the land of freedom.”

Another movement was that of Colonel Pesian Khan. He was appointed head of the Khorasan Gendarmerie in 1921; at that time, Qavam al-Saltane was the governor of Khorasan. After the 1921 coup, Colonel Pesian Khan arrested Qavam al-Saltane by order of Sayyed Zia. One year later, when Qavam al-Saltane was appointed Prime Minister, Colonel Pesian Khan revolted and declared autonomy in Khorasan. In the end, his movement was defeated and he was killed. The circumstances of his killing have been described as follows:

Qavam al-Saltane stirred up some of the tribal chiefains against Colonel Pesian Khan. Colonel Pesian Khan sent some of his forces to suppress them. The Colonel’s forces were, however, defeated and taken captive. Together with some of his companions, the Colonel set out to set free the captives. In Jafarabad, a place near to Quchan, a severe battle broke out between the two sides, and Colonel Pesian Khan was killed.

Another noteworthy uprising about this time was that of Sheikh Khazal, the most powerful Arab leader in the province of Khuzestan. Sheikh Khazal, who had served the British during the war, now had British backing. However, his movement was defeated by Reza Khan. In a letter to the French Foreign Minister, the French ambassador wrote that Reza Khan had overcome the Arabs’ uprising in Iran. He also wrote that the British government, which first had tried to mediate between Reza Khan and Sheikh Khazal, took Reza Khan’s part when they learned that Reza Khan was on the verge of defeating Sheikh Khazal. The British government tried to convince Sheikh Khazal to give up, which he did; and no blood was shed.

Early in the morning of 21 February 1921, the troops of a coup d’état marched into the capital city, Tehran. The leader of the coup was Sayyed Zia Tabatabayi, a young pro-English journalist; the commander-in-chief of the troops was Reza Khan Mirpanj. The coup had been planned by the English general Ironside. The troops occupied all the ministries and police

105 Digard, et al., p. 72.
107 Keddie, p. 78.
stations, and stationed military forces in the streets. The coup was supported by landlords, *bazaaris*, and numerous intellectuals.\(^{110}\)

The first action of the perpetrator of the coup was to arrest a group of aristocrats. In one of his first statements as Prime Minister, Sayyed Zia declared that for the last fifteen years, the aristocrats had been sucking the blood of the people. Sayyed Zia’s attacks on the aristocrats did not go unpunished. Four months after the coup, Reza Khan demanded that Sayyed Zia resign and leave the country. At the same time, all the arrested aristocrats were released. The rise of Reza Shah had already begun. In 1921, Reza Khan dismissed Masoud Khan, the Minister of Defense, and personally took over the Ministry of Defense. It was not long before Ahmad Shah, the last king of the Qajar dynasty, was dismissed and the Pahlavi dynasty was founded:

By early 1925, he was strong enough to obtain from parliament the constitutional title of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. 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 the style of his hero Napoleon – the Shah-in-Shah of Iran.\(^{111}\)

Reza Shah’s political program for Iran can be summarized as modernization from above. This program included three main elements: a break with Islamic heritage, westernization, and despotism.

Among the important administrative reforms of this period was the reorganization of the judicial system. New civil laws declared the equality of all citizens, whatever their religion. The legal age of marriage was raised from nine to thirteen, and Islamic punishments were banned.\(^{112}\)

One of Reza Shah’s most sensational reforms was his outlawing of the use of the veil in 1936. Some years earlier, in 1928, modern dress had been decreed for all Iranian men.\(^{113}\) By instigating these reforms, Reza Shah challenged the Iranian clergy – even if he earlier had tried to present a modern interpretation of Islam as follows:

Some people seem to be laboring under misunderstandings. They believe that becoming modern means to break with the principles of Islam. If the prophet himself were alive, he would show that our modernization is in full accordance with the principles of Islam. Unfortunately, the great ideas of the Early Islamic Times became a

\(^{110}\) Ibid, pp. 199–201.

\(^{111}\) Abrahamian, pp. 120.

\(^{112}\) Digard, *et al.*, pp. 98, 105.

\(^{113}\) Abrahamian, p. 143.
tool in the hands of some people who kept our nation underdeveloped... Now, we have to do something about this underdevelopment.\textsuperscript{114}

In achieving the goals of his modernization program, Reza Shah did not set any limits on the methods or severity of suppression. Independent journals were shut down; political parties and labor unions were banned. He eliminated his nearest advisors Teimurtash, the Court Minister; Davar, the Minister of Justice; and Nosrat al-Dowle, a diplomat. Teimurtash died in prison, Davar committed suicide in prison, and Nosrat al-Dowle was killed in prison.\textsuperscript{115}

Nationalist poets like Farrokhi Yazdi and Mirzade Eshqi were liquidated, the former dying mysteriously in prison, and the latter assassinated.\textsuperscript{116} One of the most significant arrests under Reza Shah was the arrest of a group of 53 socialists under the leadership of Taqi Arani, a university lecturer in physics, in 1937:

The most important arrests came in May 1937, when the police detained fifty-three men and accused them of forming a secret ishtiraki\textsuperscript{117} organization, publishing a May Day manifesto, organizing strikes at the Technical College and a textile factory in Isfahan, and translating such “atheistic tracts” as Marx’s \textit{Das Kapital} and the \textit{Communist Manifesto}. Although five of the detainees were soon released, the group became famous as the “Fifty-three,” and a few years later formed the nucleus of the Tudeh Party.\textsuperscript{118}

At the same time, Germany’s political and economic influence in Iran began to increase, since neither Reza Shah nor the Iranian nationalists were happy with the British influence in Iran. Already by the late 1930s Germany had become Iran’s leading foreign trade partner. German firms provided most of the machinery that Iran needed for its industrial, construction, and mining programs. The Iranian government’s political and economic ties with Germany and Reza Shah’s ideological inclinations led to Iran having a strongly pro-German policy already by the eve of World War II.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Ettelāʿāt dar yek rob-e qarn} (Ettelāʿāt Over a Quarter of Century). (1329 [1950/51]), Tehran, p. 156.
\textsuperscript{115} Shabani, Reza. (1381 [2002/03]), \textit{Gozide-yé tārikh-e irān} (Iranian History: A Selection), Tehran, pp. 338–343.
\textsuperscript{116} Ruzbeh, Mohammad Reza. (1381 [2002/03]), \textit{Adabiyāt-e mo āser-e irān: she r} (Iranian Contemporary Literature: Poetry), Tehran, pp. 122, 130.
\textsuperscript{117} The then-current Persian term for Communist.
\textsuperscript{118} Abrahamian, pp. 155–157.
\textsuperscript{119} Keddie, p. 110.
In 1941, Reza Shah was forced to abdicate, and was subsequently exiled to the Island of Mauritius. The allies did not want the pro-German Reza Shah in power.

4.3.3 The Persian Novel

Among the novels written during the period 1921–1941, two types are overrepresented: historical novels and social novels. A few years after the Constitutional Revolution, World War I broke out – a war that resulted in Russia occupying the northern parts of Iran, the Ottomans occupying the western and north-western parts, and the British occupying the southern and eastern parts. The end of World War I coincided with many uprisings in different parts of Iran such as Khuzestan, Gilan, Kurdistan, Lorestan, and Azerbaijan, and with growing nationalistic sentiments among Iranian intellectuals. Iranian nationalism was stoked by pressures from two opposite poles: the Arabs and the colonial powers. Many Iranians believed that the Arab invasion of Iran heralded the beginning of the Iran’s disintegration. As far as colonial power was concerned, feelings were contradictory. Iranian nationalists were very impressed by the progress in these countries; at the same time, however, they found the colonial powers to be a greedy lot that had exploited Iran for many years.

The Iranian nationalism directed against the Arabs and praising the pre-Islamic era, gave rise to the Persian historical novel of this period, and Iranian nationalism directed against the colonial powers gave rise to the Persian social novel of this period. The historical novel became a medium that reflected renowned events in Iran’s distant past: the idealized utopian kings, the glorious Iranian heroes, commanders and kings who had bravely fought against the Arabs. Pre-Islamic Iranian society was strongly praised as an ideal society in these novels.

The social novels of this period, on the other hand, were mainly based on criticism of urban life and the lifestyle of a middle class that had grown from the new bureaucracy under Reza Shah. With these novels, new character types made their debut in Persian novels. White-collar workers and prostitutes were among the most interesting characters in these novels.

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121 Meskoob, p. 8.
One of the typical historical novels of this period is *Salahshur* (Gladiator) (1933) written by Abd al-Hosein Sanatizade Kermani (1895–1973). Sanatizade Kermani was born in Kerman and began writing at a young age. *Dāmgostarān yā enteqām khāhān-e mazdak* (Ensnarers or the Avengers of Mazdak) (1925) is another historical novel by him.

*Salahshur* depicts the coming to power of the pre-Islamic Sasanian dynasty. The Sasanian dynasty is the symbol for the glorious Iranian pre-Islamic era. The main character of the novel is Ardeshir-e Papakan, who led an uprising against Ardavan V, the last Arsacid king. In order to find *Derafsh-e Kāvyāni* (the flag which symbolizes the Iranians’ resistance and victory) and in order to unite Iranians, he sets out towards Kerman. He succeeds in uniting the Iranians, but does not find *Derafsh-e Kāvyāni*. Ardavan V, who has been informed about Ardeshir’s plans, tries to capture him. Caracalla, the Roman emperor, sends assistance to Ardeshir in order to increase his own influence in Iran. Ardeshir, recognizing the Romans’ sinister intentions, does not accept their help. Tansar, the highest priest, aware of Ardeshir’s mission, helps him. Together with the people and the priests, Ardeshir finds *Derafsh-e Kāvyāni*, becomes the King of Iran and marries Mithra, Ardavan’s daughter.

*Salahshur* extolles the pre-Islamic era by both praising the holy status of the king, and condemning the Roman Empire, which serves as a metaphor for the Arab invasion. In the pre-Islamic discourse, *Salahshur* finds an ally of the modern discourse.

One notable social novel of this period is *Zibā* (Ziba) by Mohammad Hejazi. *Zibā* confirms the prediction of *Tehrān-e makhuf*. The author of *Zibā*, Mohammad Hejazi (1901–1974), was born and died in Tehran. He was a novelist, a playwright, and a politician. He published several plays and novels, among which may be noted the novels *Parichehr*, *Homā*, and *Zibā*. *Zibā* was published at the peak of Reza Shah’s dictatorship. In order to circumvent harsh censure, he writes: “This book depicts what happened to Sheikh Mirza Hosein before 1921;” namely before the coup in 1921. *Zibā* is the story of Mirza Hosein who, in searching for a better life and a position as prayer leader, moves first to Sabzevar, a city in Khorasan province, and then to Tehran. In Tehran, he meets a woman by the name of Ziba and falls in love with her. Ziba is a seductive woman who stains Mirza Hosein’s soul. She is a prostitute with contacts in a system based on cheating, lies, unemployment, and lack of knowledge. At her order, Mirza Hosein exchanges his Islamic dress for modern costume and applies for a job at a ministry:

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124 Sanatizade Kermani, Abd al-Hosein. (1312 [1933/34], *Salahshur* (Gladiator), Tehran.
125 Hejazi, Mohammad. (1312 [1933/34]), *Zibā* (Ziba), Tehran.
126 Meskoob, p. 160.
127 Ibid, p. 166.
Call me whatever you want, and laugh at me and my weak-kneedness.
You do right. You are on the top and I am at the bottom of the valley.
At Ziba’s order, my turban turned into hat and my long mantle into a short coat. I left the madrasah and the seminars to lucky people in order to apply for a job at the ministry of…

It does not take long for Mirza Hosein to get a position as “the head of the statistics department” of a certain ministry, change his way of living, and get lost in the glamour of the city. He lies, flatters, and adapts to the situation. He becomes nothing more than a cog in a large bureaucracy. The novel describes the split personality of Mirza Hosein. One part of him longs for traditionalism and a clean conscience. But it is the other part of his personality that dominates. This part of his personality is reflected in the way he treats his colleague Parviz Khan. While Parviz Khan treats Mirza Hosein as friend, and is honest towards him, Mirza Hosein treats Parviz Khan as a rival who must be eliminated. In other words, Mirza Hosein sells his soul completely to the corrupt urban bureaucracy and becomes a creature without any principles or morals.

According to Zibā, the despotic modern discourse, together with the corrupt bureaucracy, destroys the moral values that have their origin in Islam. In the world of the novel, Ziba is the symbol for this corrupt bureaucracy and despotic modernization, and Mirza Hosein is the symbol for the Islamic discourse that is sacrificed for the modern discourse.

While the historical novel of this period appeals to Iranian nationalism by presenting the Arab invasion and Islam as the beginning of the Iranian disintegration, the social novel of this period presents urban life, corrupt bureaucracy, prostitution, and moral disintegration as the results of modern life; and it cries for lost Islamic values and traditions.

The Persian novel of this period is the scene of a confrontation between three discourses: the pre-Islamic discourse, the despotic modern discourse, and the Islamic discourse. The pre-Islamic discourse is supposed to justify parts of the discourse of the new political power, while the Islamic discourse becomes the dominating discourse of the opposition.

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128 Hejazi, p. 46.
129 Ibid, p. 165.
130 Ibid, p. 177.
4.4 Mohammad Reza Shah 1941–1953

4.4.1 Remarks on the Economy

The economic situation during this period was very unstable for several reasons: the occupation of the country by the Allies, the vast insecurity in the country, and a weakened central government. People were suffering from the shortage of essential goods; the inflation rate was high, and hoarding was at its peak. Economic activity in the cities had greatly decreased, unemployment had risen markedly, and the Iranian currency had decreased in value. The only solid source of income, making it possible for the government to run the country, came from the oil sector.

The all-overshadowing conflict of this period was that between the Shah and Mosaddeq, the Prime Minister. During the 28 months that Mosaddeq was the Prime Minister (April 1951–August 1953), the oil industry was nationalized and the National Iranian Oil Company was established.131 The history of the oil industry in Iran went far back in time. The first oil concession was granted to Baron Julius de Reuter in 1872, within the framework of a greater concession that among other things granted Reuter the exclusive rights for almost all mineral extraction. This concession was later annulled. In 1889, Reuter received a new concession for sixty years. In this new concession, the Iranian government’s share of the oil income was set at 16 percent. Some years later, this concession was also annulled. In 1901, D’Arcy was granted a new oil concession; once again for sixty years and with the Iranian government to receive 16 percent of the income. Drilling began in 1904, but it was not before 1908 that the first oil was pumped up. In 1911, Winston Churchill introduced the British government as the main shareholder of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (A.P.O.C.). Under Reza Shah, the oil concession was renewed. The new contract included three new elements: the name of the company was changed from Anglo-Persian Oil Company to Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (A.I.O.C.); the prospecting area was limited to 160,000 square kilometers; and the contract was renewed for another sixty years. 132

In 1951, Mosaddeq sent a delegation to Khuzestan in order to take control of the A.I.O.C. The British government reinforced its naval presence in the Persian Gulf, and warned the owners of oil tankers that the oil bought from Iran would not be accepted in the world market. Mosaddeq broke off

132 Homayounfar, Ebrahim. (2000), Haqāyeqi dānestani dar bāre-ye khal-e yad va melli shodan-e san ar-e naft-e irān: tārikhi, siyāsi, eqtesādi, ejtemāʿi, akhlāqi (Some Interesting Facts about the Nationalization of the Iranian Oil Industry: Historical, Political, Socio-Economic and Moral Facts), Maryland, p. 54.
negotiations with the A.I.O.C. This caused a severe economic crisis in Iran. In the seventeenth majles, the deputies of the opposition painted a very dismal picture of the economic situation:

A deputy from Gilan alleged that the Caspian fisheries hired Armenians, Assyrians, Azeris, and Tehranis, but few Gilanis. A representative from Baluchistan claimed that “the provinces had decayed because the bureaucracy was interested solely in Tehran.” A royalist estimated that the city of Tehran had 29 hospitals, 280 pharmacies, 468 doctors, and 87 dentists, whereas all the provinces together had no more than 79 hospitals, 386 pharmacies, 452 doctors, and 28 dentists. Another royalist accused the government of neglecting its national duty of building schools in the countryside: “Although Iran is conceived as a nation, it contains many local dialects. Consequently, someone from Semnan cannot easily understand someone from Mazandaran, Luristan, Azerbaijan, or Baluchistan. The government should use schools, radios, and literacy courses to spread Persian throughout Iran.”

In order to deal with the economic crisis, Mosaddeq reduced the military budget and increased the peasants’ share of the annual production by 15 percent. Despite all these measures, Mosaddeq’s government suffered from the decrease in oil income, mass unemployment, and high inflation; it was an economic crisis conflated with a political crisis.

4.4.2 Remarks on the Political Situation

After the occupation of Iran by the Allies, Reza Shah was forced to abdicate. He left Iran first for the Island of Mauritius and then for Johannesburg. In the beginning, the British were in favor of putting the kingdom under a Qajar prince, but they changed their minds and the kingdom was put under Reza Shah’s Swiss-educated oldest son Mohammad Reza. The same day as Reza Shah left Iran, his son Mohammad Reza took the oath before the majles and ascended the throne.

The following twelve-year period saw the struggle of four political forces trying to gain a superior position: the Tudeh Party, Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Iran, the Islamists, and the court. The Tudeh Party was founded in 1941. Nur al-Din Kianuri, the last chairman of the Tudeh Party before his arrest in 1982 under the Islamic Republic Iran, describes the establishment of the Tudeh Party as follows:

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133 Abrahamian, pp. 269–270.
135 Keddie, pp. 113–114.
The founders of the party can be divided into four groups: the first group includes members of the circle of “53 socialists”... the second group includes a number of national liberals... the third group includes Communists who had been arrested before the circle of “53 socialists”... and the fourth group includes those whom Iraj Eskandari and his followers intended to recruit as nationalists.\(^{136}\)

In the beginning, the Tudeh Party was like a political front and included the representatives of different political philosophies. The program of the party was nothing more than a program for a front: to establish parliamentarian democracy, to revive the political economy, and to expand the general welfare and social justice.\(^{137}\) However, the Tudeh Party’s tight contact with the Soviet Union led to its being identified as a Communist party. The political life of the Tudeh Party during this period was full of incidents. Here follow some of the events that affected the Tudeh Party during this period: the Soviet oil concession; the declaration of autonomy in Azerbaijan by the Democratic Party; its participation in Qavam’s cabinet; Khalil Maleki’s departure from the party; the attempted assassination of Mohammad Reza Shah; and Mosaddeq’s fall. These events require further elucidation.

In 1944, the Soviet Union started negotiations for an oil concession in northern Iran; from Azerbaijan to Khorasan. The Iranian cabinet at that time – Šaedd’s cabinet – did not have any clear policy on this issue. Mosaddeq was against this concession, while the Tudeh Party worked intensively for the concession to be given to the Soviet Union. The Tudeh Party lobbied for granting the concession partly through its deputies in the majles, and partly by organizing a mass demonstration.\(^{138}\)

On Friday, 27 October 1944, the Tudeh Party called for a demonstration. The main demand of this demonstration was to give the northern oil concession to the Soviet Union. The leaders of the party were also marching at the head of the demonstrators... the military vehicles of the Soviet Union, escorted by armed soldiers, followed after the demonstrators...\(^{139}\)

The Democratic Party of Azerbaijan was founded in September 1945. The leader of the party was Jafar Pishevari, an old Communist who had spent twelve years of his life in Reza Shah’s prisons. He was elected deputy of the

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\(^{137}\) Katouzian, p. 145.


fourteenth majles, but was denied entry by the electoral supervisory body. In November 1945, the Democratic Party took over the military posts and declared the autonomy of Azerbaijan. Some of the autonomous government’s major programs were:

A large portion of tax receipts was to remain in the province, local administration was to be based on self-government and not Tehran appointment, and the Turkish language was to be used in the schools, including a new university. A land reform program included the lowering of rents and the distribution of land belonging to the government or to the landlords who had fled the province.  

Autonomous Azerbaijan was defeated after signing of the Satchikov-Qavam agreement in March 1946. According to this agreement, the Soviet Union promised to withdraw its troops from Azerbaijan in return for the concession for northern oil. The Soviet Union ceased its support for the autonomous government of Azerbaijan, and the royal military forces invaded Azerbaijan. Pishevari fled to Soviet Union and autonomous Azerbaijan fell.  

The policy of the Tudeh Party towards the Democratic Party was conflicted. The Party followed the policy of the Soviet Union towards the Democratic Party. In the beginning, it supported the Democratic Party so completely that it left its provincial organizations in the hands of the Democratic Party. Later on, however, the Tudeh Party completely ceased supporting the Democratic Party. In both cases, the policy of the Tudeh Party was a result of its participation in Qavam’s cabinet.  

In February 1946, Qavam was once again elected Prime Minister. One of the main elements of Qavam’s policy was to safeguard the support coming from the Soviet Union. To this end, he not only visited the Soviet Union at Stalin’s invitation, but also signed an agreement with the Soviet government. In August 1946, Qavam accepted into his cabinet three ministers belonging to the Tudeh party. The Tudeh Party’s participation in Qavam’s cabinet caused conflicts within the party. In February 1947, some members left the party under the leadership of Khalil Maleki. Regarding the reasons for their departure, they mentioned the party’s policy of unconditional support for the Democratic Party, the northern oil concession, and the participation of the Tudeh Party in Qavam’s cabinet. Further, Khalil Maleki writes:

By acting as the protectors of the interests of the Soviet Union in Iran, by their unconditional support of the independent Democratic Party,

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140 Keddie, pp. 119–120.
141 Katouzian, pp. 154–155.
142 Maleki, p. 40.
and by accepting the roles given to them in that important political play, they saved the weak government of Iran from falling down.\textsuperscript{143}

The decisive blow in the political destiny of the Tudeh Party came when the party was accused of having participated in the attempted assassination of Mohammad Reza Shah that took place on 4 February 1949. The assassin, Naser Fakhrayi, was killed by the Shah’s bodyguards. According to his papers, he had been working for the newspaper \textit{Parcham-e eslām} (The Flag of Islam), and had paid some money to the journalists’ union, which in turn was associated with the Tudeh Party.\textsuperscript{144}

In the wake of this assassination attempt, five leaders of the Tudeh Party and nine of its members were arrested. The trial was rushed and they were sentenced to two to ten years in prison. These fourteen persons escaped the Qasr prison in 1950.\textsuperscript{145} The attempted assassination signaled the twilight of the Tudeh Party. The decisive role of the Tudeh Party in the history of Iran is never to be forgotten, just as is the decisive role of Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Iran.

The central figure of Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Iran was Mohammad Mosaddeq. In the election for the sixteenth \textit{majles} the royal court did everything in its power to hinder oppositional deputies from being reelected. In November 1949, twenty of these deputies gathered at Mosaddeq’s house and declared the establishment of Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Iran.\textsuperscript{146}

Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Iran’s demands were as follows: reform of the election laws, freedom of the press, and the declaration of a state of emergency.\textsuperscript{147} The events that followed made the issue of oil Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Iran’s main concern, and turned Mosaddeq into the unquestioned symbol of Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Iran.

Mosaddeq was elected Prime Minister in April 1951.\textsuperscript{148} Before that, in March 1951, he had, as a deputy, seen to it that the law enabling the nationalization of Iranian oil industry was passed by the 16\textsuperscript{th} \textit{majles}. The law nationalizing the Iranian oil industry was signed by the Shah in May 1951. It was only after the Shah’s signing of this law that Mosaddeq, as Prime Minister, presented his program to the \textit{majles}.\textsuperscript{149} In July 1952, Mosaddeq resigned because of his disputes with the Shah. The Shah appointed Qavam al-Saltane prime minister, but people filled the streets and demonstrated their support for Mosaddeq. On July 22, 1952, Qavam al-Saltane was forced to

\textsuperscript{143} Maleki, p. 383.
\textsuperscript{144} Abrahamian, p. 249.
\textsuperscript{145} Kianouri, p. 194.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{148} Abrahamina, p. 267.
\textsuperscript{149} Movahhed, pp. 157, 158.
resign, and Mosaddeq was once again appointed prime minister. The disputes between Mosaddeq and the British government continued, however, and seemed endless. For the British government, the only way out of this situation was to overthrow Mosaddeq. At the beginning, the United States was skeptical towards this plan; but the British government so thoroughly managed to convince the American administration to give its support, that in the 19 August 1953 coup against Mosaddeq, the government of the United States was the main actor. The Islamists had already turned their back on Mosaddeq.

Two of the Islamists’ main anchors in those years were Ayatollah Kashani and the fundamentalist group Fadaian-e Eslam. Ayatollah Kashani was a well-known mujtahid in Tehran. After the British occupation of Mesopotamia, Ayatollah Kashani had been exiled to Basra. On his way to Basra, he had jumped overboard and fled to Iran. In 1925, and as a deputy of the Constitutional Assembly, he cast his vote for Reza Khan to become king of Iran. During the reign of Reza Shah, he was not politically active. During the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry, he fully supported Mosaddeq; but by the time of the coup, other political disputes with Mosaddeq had led him to side of with the coup-makers.

Fadaian-e Eslam, led by Navab Safavi and Sayyed Mohammad Vahedi, were working to establish a state based on the Sharia law. Their tactic for achieving political power was to assassinate the figures they saw as the enemies of Islam. They assassinated the historian Sayyed Ahmad Kasravi, the royalist politician Abd al-Hosein Hazhir, and the Prime Minister General Razmara. They also attempted to assassinate Mosaddeq’s Foreign Minister, Hosein Fatemi. After an attempt on the life of Hosein Ala, the Prime Minister, in 1956, the leaders of this group were arrested, put on trial, and executed.

At last, the day of the coup arrived. Some days before the coup, Kermit Roosevelt Jr. and General Norman Schwarzkopf had arrived in Tehran to prepare the coup. Hasibi, one of Mosaddeq’s closest colleagues, describes the day of the coup as follows:

At eight o’clock I left my house … for the house of Doctor Mosaddeq. We received worrying news of some groups of people armed with sticks moving and plundering in different parts of the city… From 2:30 onward, after the radio station had fallen into the hands of the rioters, they all moved towards the house of Doctor Mosaddeq, and used every means to destroy his house… The shooting and cannonading of Doctor Mosaddeq’s house was intensifying for every

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150 Ibid, p. 246.
151 Katouzian, p. 190.
moment... Doctor Mosaddeq refused to leave the house and said that he preferred to die there.\footnote{Movahhed, pp. 828–829.}

Some minutes later, Mosaddeq fled the house together with his friends. The coup had succeeded and Mosaddeq’s house was destroyed:

At five o’clock a number of tanks and soldiers were ordered to set off towards Doctor Mosaddeq’s house... A heavy tank destroyed the iron door of Mosaddeq’s house, and people ran into his house and plundered all the furniture.\footnote{Ettelā āt, 31 mordad 1332.}

The coup succeeded. The Tudeh Party, which had been the hope of the intellectuals, was totally passive and did not move a finger.

4.4.3 The Persian Novel

One of the representative novels of this period is Hājji āqā by Sadeq Hedayat. Sadeq Hedayat (1903–1951) was the most important novelist of this period. He was born in Tehran and committed suicide in Paris. His novel, Būf-e kūr (The Blind Owl), is regarded as his masterpiece and as the most important Persian novel. It has been translated into many languages. It took him almost a decade to prepare this novel, which he finally published in 1937 in India. It could not be published in Iran until 1941. The list of Hedayat’s works is long. A number of them are as follows: Zende bē-gūr (Buried Alive) (Short story collection, 1930), Parvin dōkhtār-e sāsān (Parvin the Daughter of Sasan) (Drama, 1930), Se qatre khūn (Three Drops of Blood) (Short story collection, 1932), Ālaviyeh khānum (Madame Alaviye) (Short story collection, 1933), Būf-e kūr (The Blind Owl) (Novel, 1937), Sag-e velgard (The Stray Dog) (Short story collection, 1942), Hājji āqā (The Pilgrim) (novel, 1945), Tup-e mowrāri (The Pearl Cannon) (Novel, 1947).

Hājji āqā (1945) is the story of a bazaari merchant, Hajji Abutorab, during the time of Reza Shah. Hajji Abutorab is in the full sense of the word a symbol of the old; he is a mean old man, a vulgar liar, and a marionette of those in power. He is a Muslim hoarder as well. Hajji has offered to stand as a candidate to the majāles. A great part of Hājji āqā takes place in the vestibule of his house, where Hajji Abutorab meets representatives from different social classes and shows more than one thousand different faces of himself. He supports Reza Shah’s despotism, and is of the opinion that freedom leads to anarchy.
One of the persons who usually comes to meet Hajji Abutorab, is a poet called Monadi al-Haqq. Monadi al-Haqq believes in the inevitable victory of the lower classes, and the inevitable fall of the capitalists. He symbolizes a modern future, free from Islamic traditionalism and free from class distinctions.

Hājji āqā, is a novelistic portrait of a social class that amounts to nothing but manifold baseness.\(^{155}\) It portrays Islamic traditionalism standing side by side with despotic modernization. Monadi al-Haqq goes to meet Hajji Abutorab in order to remind him of his contempt. Monadi al-Haqq’s voice is the voice of the future protesting against the present and the past.

Monadi al-Haqq’s voice was shaking… you are breathing through your anus. All your senses are concentrated on the toilet, the kitchen, and the bed. You want to be elected deputy of the majles just to be able to plunder people more easily; you are worried about your future descendants so that your ugly figure can be imposed on future generations too. You want this vestibule to remain after you, so that someone like you in lascivioussness, in hypcrisy, and in impudence can continue with this rubbish.\(^{156}\)

Monadi al-Haqq in Hājji āqā, whose voice is that of the author as well, preaches the Marxist-Leninist discourse. This discourse stands against two other discourses: the despotic modern discourse manifested in the Pahlavi dynasty, and the Islamic discourse that according to Hājji āqā is in collusion with the despotic modern discourse. In other words, the despotic modern discourse and the Islamic discourse are just different disguises for the plundering and the moral decadence of capitalism.

The Persian novel of this period with examples like Hājji āqā mainly supports the leftist discourse and confronts both the despotic modern discourse as well as the Islamic discourse.

4.5 Mohammad Reza Shah 1953–1963

4.5.1 Remarks on the Economy

The main foundations of the Iranian economy remained much the same in the first years following the coup. But about 1955–56, the change began to accelerate. State revenues increased as a result of an increase in oil income, and because of economic aid from the USA. This increase in income brought


with it some changes in economic policy. The major characteristics of this policy were the uncontrolled selling of oil and the uncontrolled import of consumer goods.

The increase in oil income and foreign aid resulted in the signing of a pact between the nationalized Iranian oil industry and a consortium of large international oil companies. The bill of this pact was presented to the majles in September 1954. Among the pact’s provisions were these: (1) Partners, five American oil companies and nine independent oil companies (a total share of 40%), British Petroleum (40%), Royal Dutch Shell Company (14%), and the Compagnie Francaise des Pétroles (6%); (2) Region, the same region that the former Anglo-Iranian Oil Company had the right to explore; (3) Length of the pact, 25 years, with the option of three five-year extensions.\(^{157}\)

As a result of this pact, the American government gave Mohammad Reza Shah aid in the amount of 125 million dollars. With the rise in Iran’s oil income, the Plan Organization headed by Ebtehaj, scheduled a Seven Year Plan to start in 1955. The final cost of this plan was estimated to be about 1.16 billion dollars. Despite the original plan to let all oil income go to the Plan Organization, only 55% of the oil income reached the Plan Organization, a large amount of which was used to build poorly planned dams and undertake large-scale agricultural projects that only served to harm the already functioning small-scale agriculture. Furthermore, a large part of the proposed plan was never implemented, due to corruption, inexperience, and the royal family’s interference. However, together with foreign loans and aid, the oil revenue did help some of the Plan Organization projects to succeed. The GNP grew, but it was not long before this caused price hikes and inflation. In the autumn of 1960, the financial crisis was a fact. The Shah’s American advisors convinced him that some kind of land reform was needed, and a bill was drafted. This was met by such strong opposition from big landlords and influential ulama like Ayatollah Borujerdi in Qom, that it ultimately was turned into a toothless bill.\(^{158}\)

To deal with the financial crisis, a stabilization program was declared and stricter controls on nonessential imports were imposed. The most important event of this period was the declaration of a new major land reform in 1962. The Kennedy Administration saw land reform as a measure that could prevent the spread of Communism and help to avoid a Chinese-style land reform. The main architects of the land reform were the Prime Minister, Ali Amini, and his Minister of Agriculture, Hasan Arsanjani.\(^{159}\)


\(^{158}\) Keddie, pp. 148–149.

4.5.2 Remarks on the Political Situation

Politically, this period can be summarized in two main points: the suppression of oppositional groups, and the Iranian government’s intensive cooperation with the USA. After the 1953 coup, the members and followers of the Tudeh Party, Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Iran, and Fadaian-e Eslam were all attacked by the police. The suppression of the Tudeh Party, however, affected the intellectual atmosphere in Iran most strikingly. A great number of the imprisoned leaders of the Tudeh Party recanted after severe torture. Mohammad Bahrami, the leader of the Tudeh Party, wrote a letter of regret, after which he was released. Morteza Yazdi, another leader of Tudeh Party, wrote a letter of regret after ten years in jail. He then became a defender of the Shah and the Iranian government. Many of the leaders had fled from Iran and were living outside of Iran. The weakness of the leaders of the Tudeh Party affected its members and its followers in many ways. Some continued with their resistance in prisons, but a great number of them wrote letters of regret and were released.

The Tudeh Party’s organization within the military forces was also suppressed and dissolved in 1954. The legendary figure of this organization, Khosrow Ruzbeh, was arrested and executed five years later. Of those arrested in 1954, twenty-seven persons were executed; some were given long prison sentences, and some became agents of the government. Mohammad Mosaddeq and his closest associates were not safe either. Most of the ministers, a number of deputies, and a number of military officers were arrested. Some were sentenced to jail and others were sent into exile. The destiny of two of these people, however, has a symbolic meaning: Mohammad Mosaddeq himself, and Hosein Fatemi. Mosaddeq’s trial was conducted in 35 sessions in November–December 1953. During the trial sessions, Mosaddeq continued to call himself the Prime Minister of Iran, and he labeled the coup a foreign conspiracy. He was sentenced to three years in prison. Hosein Fatemi, Mosaddeq’s Foreign Minister, was arrested in March 1954 after a long period in hiding. Hosein Fatemi was sentenced to death and was subsequently executed. The suppression of the Tudeh Party and Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Iran took place directly after the coup in 1953. The execution, however, of the members of Fadaian-e Eslam, following the attempted assassination of Prime Minister Hosein Ala, was postponed for three years. This was because of the fact that Fadaian-e Eslam, together with Ayatollah Kashani, had earlier supported the Shah under the coup.

The 1953 coup was the beginning of the ever-increasing political and economic dependence of the Iranian government on the USA. On 7

160 Katouzian, p. 195.
161 Nejati, p. 74.
162 Movahhed, p. 983.
December 1953, students at Tehran University demonstrated to protest Nixon’s visit to Iran. Three students were killed by the police.\footnote{Nejati, p. 113.}

The military forces and SAVAK were the main organizations that secured the interests of the USA in Iran. SAVAK was established in 1957 with the aid of the American CIA and Israeli Mossad. General Teimur Bakhtiar, one of the key figures of the 1953 coup, was appointed head of SAVAK.\footnote{Milani, M., p. 43.}

In late 1950s, while the opposition to the government was growing, the Shah introduced a two-party system in Iran creating: Hezb-e melliyn (The Nationalist Party), headed by his Prime Minister, Eqbal, and Hezb-e Mardom (The People’s Party), headed by Asadollah Alam, one of the oldest friends of the Shah.\footnote{Keddie, pp. 149–150.}

In early 1960, the majles election was approaching. Dr. Ali Amini, one of the oppositional voices against the government, was supported by the Americans. Although the Prime Minister, Eqbal, had announced that no pro-mosaddeq or Tudeh candidate could be elected, the oppositional groups aimed to participate in the election.\footnote{Ibid, p. 151.}

When it became clear that massive vote fraud had occurred, the general discontent grew. The Shah was forced to replace Eqbal with Sharif Emami. In April 1961, Ali Amini succeeded Sharif Emami.

As events developed, the Shah, who was uneasy with Amini and Arsanjani’s ever-increasing popularity, decided to take the land reform into his own hands. Ali Amini resigned in April 1962.\footnote{Milani, Abbas. (1380 [2001/02]), Mo amā-ye hoveydā (The Riddle of Hoveyda), Tehran, pp. 165–187.}

4.5.3 The Persian Novel

*Malakut*, (Heavenly Kingdom) by Bahram Sadeqi, is one of the best and most representative novels of the post-coup period. Bahram Sadeqi (1936–1983) was born in Najafabad and died in Tehran. He published several works, among which one can mention *Malakut* (Heavenly Kingdom) (Novel, 1961), and *Sangar va gomgomehā-ye khāli* (The Trench and the Empty Canteens) (Short story collection, 1970).

*Malakut* is narrated in six chapters titled: 1) The Incarnation of the *djinn*; 2) He Is Talking Now; 3) Thirteen; 4) The Last Meeting before Dawn; 5) The Last Dialogue before Dawn; and 6) The Earth. Chapters one, four, five, and six are narrated in the third person, and chapters two and three are narrated from the point of view of one of the characters, M.L.

\footnote{Nejati, p. 113.} \footnote{Milani, M., p. 43.} \footnote{Keddie, pp. 149–150.} \footnote{Ibid, p. 151.}
Malakut begins with this sentence: “It was at eleven o’clock PM on Tuesday that a djinn entered the body of Mr. Maveddat.”\textsuperscript{168} This happens in the moonlight on a meadow, when Mr. Maveddat is drinking with three of his friends. Mr. Maveddat’s friends take him to the city and to Dr. Hatam. The first of Mr. Maveddat’s friends is a young, hard-working, simple-minded, and helpful secretary, the second is a fat man, who only thinks of having fun, and the third is a mystical man who can predict the future and seems to know Dr. Hatam. It is said that Dr. Hatam hires a new apprentice every year, kills him, and makes soap of his body fat. Dr. Hatam has also had several wives that he has killed.

In his clinic, Dr. Hatam is taking care of a patient, called M.L., who has come from another city together with a mute servant. M.L. has killed his own son and cut out the tongue of his servant. Suffering from what he has done to his son and servant, M.L. has been amputating different parts of his body during the last forty years. Now, he wants Dr. Hatam to amputate his right hand – the last healthy parts of his body. Dr. Hatam drives the djinn out of Mr. Maveddat’s body. The djinn tells Dr. Hatam that Mr. Maveddat will soon die because of the widespread cancer in his stomach.

Before leaving his clinic and the town for another town, Dr. Hatam kills his last wife and M.L., and gives a deadly injection to the fat man and the secretary as well as to the inhabitants of the town.

The young and simple-minded secretary has a beautiful wife, called Malakut, whom he loves very much. Dr. Hatam tells the young secretary that he also had a beautiful wife called Malakut who died of poisoning:

That very day I came to this region alone and anonymously […]. I had just lost my young and beautiful wife, whom I loved very much […]. This is really a coincidence. Her name was “Malakut.” She was poisoned.\textsuperscript{169}

Malakut, the name of two women in the novel, can be interpreted as Paradise, the promised heavenly kingdom on earth. One is dead and buried, and the other one is going to die in innocence because of Dr. Hatam’s injection:

- Did you give an injection to Malakut too?
- It was her wish.
- And you couldn’t let her go? Didn’t you see how young and innocent she was?\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{168} Sadeqi, Bahram. (1357 [1978/79]), Malakut (Heavenly Kingdom), Tehran, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid, pp. 18–19.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid, p. 87.
M.L. can also be interpreted as an acronym for Marxism-Leninism: a lost paradise; a dead ideology that has killed its loved ones and mutated those who honestly served it. Marxism–Leninism, which during 1941–1953 was the Iranian freedom fighters’ leading ideology, had now, after the 1953 coup, left its followers behind.

In the melancholic narrative world of Malakut, all Malakuts (read “heavenly kingdoms on the earth”) are lost, and those who still believe in and love Malakut are nothing but simple-minded persons who are condemned to die. In the melancholic narrative world of Malakut, everybody carries a djinn in his body.

The Persian novel of this period is very much influenced by the 1953 coup; mostly shaped by the defeat, by the weakness of the leaders, and by the Tudeh Party’s false promises, made by the representatives of the leftist discourse, of a utopian future. Malakut represents the dominant voice of this period: a lament over the defeat of the leftist discourse.

4.6 Mohammad Reza Shah 1963–1978

4.6.1 Remarks on the Economy

The land reform of 1962 was the earliest phase of a new economic policy in Iran. This was later included as one of the six points of the later White Revolution. Keddie writes:

To demonstrate his own and his regime’s popularity he called early in 1963 for a national plebiscite on a combined six-point reform program including (1) land reform; (2) sale of government-owned factories to finance land reform; (3) a new election law including women’s suffrage; (4) the nationalization of forests; (5) a national literacy corps, mainly for rural teaching; and (6) a plan to give workers a share of industrial profits.\(^{171}\)

In 1963–1978, oil revenues increased markedly. This was decisive for the strategic planning of the Iranian economy. The main elements of the political economy of Iran during these years can be summarized as follows: investment in heavy industries; encouragement of imports; elimination of traditional agriculture; and bureaucratization of the villages.\(^{172}\) It was during these years that the Shah promised Iranians that they would become one of

\(^{171}\) Keddie, p. 156.
\(^{172}\) Katouzian, p. 255.
the world’s five major industrial nations.\textsuperscript{173} What in fact happened was something else. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Iranian government initiated an expansive development project, which resulted in an imbalance between the Iranian economy and its politics; the economy made progress, but without any renewal within the political sphere. The more the project progressed, the more unbearable the political situation became.\textsuperscript{174}

The main aim of the political economy during this period was to let a new middle class enjoy a higher income and higher standard of living in order to prevent political opposition from taking form. This policy resulted, however, in the polarization of Iranian society. This polarization in urban society manifested itself even in a polarization between affluent and poor residential areas. This, in turn, had two consequences: the authorities neglected to invest in poor parts of the city; and everyday social contact between the rich and the poor very nearly ceased. As a result every form of solidarity and co-existence between the different social classes vanished.\textsuperscript{175}

In 1973, the price of oil on the world market increased once again. A great part of the oil income, however, was used for buying weapons and other military equipment. Beginning in 1973, 30 percent of the national income was devoted to the military budget. The purchase of weapons and military equipment from USA had quadrupled, to two billion dollars. To finance this, the Iranian government not only used its oil income, but also the strategic credit that the USA used to give to its allies. This also led to an increase in the number of Americans working in Iran. In 1976 the number of American military and civil employees in Iran rose to 24,000 persons. During these years, every kind of investment was allowed. The Shah had chosen to follow “the big push” policy. Many foreign countries drove one or several large-scale projects: France was building five nuclear power plants; Germany was building two nuclear power plants and one factory for producing chemical fertilizer; Italy was building a smelting foundry; Japan was building the largest petrochemical factory; England was working on a building project in northern Tehran covering an area of 550 acres.\textsuperscript{176}

The first signs of the economic recession appeared in 1975. Oil income decreased by 12.2 percent; inflation increased; there were shortages of some types of goods; and capital began to flee the country.

\subsection*{4.6.2 Remarks on the Political Situation}

Among the political events of 1963–1978, there are a number of events that are of key importance: the Islamic movement led by Ayatollah Khomeini;
the assassination of Prime Minister Hasan Ali Mansur; the emergence of Muslim political figures such as Ali Shariati and Islamic groups such as Nehzat-e Azadi (The Freedom Movement) and Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran (Iranian People’s Mojahedin); and the emergence of the Marxist group Fadaian-e Khalq-e Iran (Iranian People’s Fadaian). Ayatollah Khomeini’s oppositional activities began with his protest against the new electoral bill, according to which being a male and a Muslim were no longer prerequisites for voting or running for office. After the approval of this bill in the majles, Khomeini wrote in a letter to Alam, the Court Minister:

> During the time between two sessions when the majles was closed, it became known to us that the government was planning to take measures that were against Islam and constitutional law. You must know that both your Excellency and your government are greatly responsible before God and the nation by breaking the Law of Islam and the constitutional law.177

In February 1963, Ayatollah Khomeini issued a pamphlet in which he boycotted the referendum that was going to be held for the White Revolution. In March 1963, Faiziyeh, the religious school in Qom, was attacked by SAVAK and a number of students were killed. Ayatollah Khomeini condemned the attack and strongly criticized Mohammad Reza Shah:

> The attack by paratroopers, agents of SAVAK, and policemen on the center of the clergy, reminded us the Mogul invasion… Being a monarchist has come to mean nothing but plundering…, violation of Muslims’ human rights, and invasion of the centers of knowledge.178

On 3 June 1963, Ayatollah Khomeini delivered very sharp criticism of the Shah at the religious school of Qom. The next day, on the day of Āshurā, the anniversary of the martyrdom of the third imam, Hosein, Khomeini was arrested. When the news became known, demonstrations spread to the university. The demonstrators attacked the radio station and burned a number of buses and military vans. In Tehran alone, hundreds of people or more were killed.179

Ayatollah Khomeini’s religious movement continued after June 1963. In October 1964, the majles passed a bill to grant diplomatic immunity to American military personnel and their advisers.180

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179 Keddie, p. 158.
180 Nejati, p. 303.
denounced the bill and criticized the Shah violently. After Ayatollah Khomeini’s attack was circulated as a pamphlet, he was arrested and exiled to Turkey. From Turkey, he moved to Najaf in Iraq. It was only after spending fourteen years in exile that Khomeini came back to Iran.\(^\text{181}\)

In February 1964, Hasan Ali Mansur, who had presented the above-mentioned bill to the majles, was shot by a young man called Mohammad Bokharayi. Some days later, Hasan Ali Mansur died at the hospital. Mohammad Bokharayi had been a member of the group Hey’atha-ye Mo’ talefe-ye Eslami (The Coalition of Islamic Associations). Some days after the assassination, he was arrested together with other members of this group. Among the arrested, four were sentenced to death: Mohammad Bokharayi, Sadeq Amani, Reza Saffar Harandi, and Morteza Niknezhad.\(^\text{182}\)

Nehzat-e Azadi was founded on 17 May 1961, by Ayatollah Taleqani, Mehdi Bazargan, and Yadollah Sahabi. Mehdi Bazargan, the first prime minister after the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1979, summarized his ideas as follows:

\[
\text{[...]} \text{the main principles of the Nehzat-e Azadi can be summarized as follows: being Muslim, being Iranian, being loyal to constitutional law, and being a follower of Mosaddeq.}\(^\text{183}\)
\]

The leaders of Nehzat-e Azadi were arrested in 1963. The first session of their trial was on 22 October 1963.\(^\text{184}\) The media paid a great deal of attention to their trial. After a long process their verdicts came. Ayatollah Taleqani and Mehdi Bazargan received the most severe punishment: 10 years in prison each.\(^\text{185}\)

Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran was founded in 1965 by three members of the Nehzat-e Azadi: Mohammad Hanifnezhad, Saeed Mohsen, and Ali Asghr Badizadegan.\(^\text{186}\) The ideology of the group was Islam, but they also studied some Marxist texts. Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran formulated their attitude towards Marxism as follows:

\[^{181}\] Keddie, pp. 159–160.  
\[^{182}\] Nejati, p. 311.  
\[^{185}\] Ibid, pp. 456, 566.  
\[^{186}\] Nejati, p. 393.
We say no to the philosophy of Marxism, especially when it comes to not believing in God, but we say yes to its social thinking on issues like feudalism, capitalism, and imperialism.187

In 1968, Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran declared armed struggle as their main tactic. Their first armed action was planned for 1971. The plan was to blow up the country’s main electricity system during the ceremonies observing the kingdom’s 2500th anniversary. But before they could act, many of them were arrested. Their trial began in February 1972 and twelve persons were sentenced to death, among them the three founders of the group.188

Fadaian-e Khalq-e Iran first began to take shape in 1971. On 8 February 1971, a guerrilla group called Goruh-e Jangal (The Forest Cell) attacked the gendarmerie station in Siahkal, Gilan, in northern Iran. They seized all the weapons at the station. The commander of the station and his assistant were killed. For one month, the guerrillas were surrounded by government forces in the region. At the end of the standoff, two members of the group killed a number of policemen in a suicide attack. Seven other members of the group were arrested.189 At the same time, ten members of another group, called Goruh-e Shahr (The Town Cell), which cooperated with Goruh-e Jangal, were also arrested. Of the seventeen persons arrested, thirteen were sentenced to death and were executed.190

Fadaian-e Khalq-e Iran was founded through the fusion of two groups: Goruh-e Jangal and another group consisting of a number of students who believed in armed struggle. The founding of Fadaian-e Khalq-e Iran has been called the beginning of a real Communist movement in Iran by all leftists who were disappointed with the Tudeh Party. This led to a powerful renewal of interest in Persian heroic literature as a source of inspiration. In their first pamphlet, and after the assassination of General Farsiyo, the military prosecutor, they wrote:

Wherever there is injustice, there is a resistance movement and fighting…. We are the children of all those masses that for hundreds of years have fought and taught us to fight for freedom and for a life with dignity.191

Ali Shariati was born in 1933 in Mazinan, a village near Mashhad. He completed secondary school and his teacher training in Mashhad. He received a B.A. in Persian literature from Mashhad University in 1953. In 1959 he received a grant to continue his studies at the Sorbonne University in France. In 1964 he received his Ph.D. in Comparative Linguistics. The same year, he returned to Iran. In 1965, he began to deliver lectures on Islam at a Mosque in Tehran known as Hoseiniye-ye Ershad. These lectures soon became very popular, especially among the younger generation. In 1973, SAVAK, which was frightened by his popularity, closed Hoseiniye-ye Ershad, and arrested Shariati. He spent eighteen months in prison. In May 1977, he fled from Iran with a forged passport. One month later, he died of a heart attack at a hospital in London.  

Shariati saw it as his main duty to present a dynamic Islam as opposed to an Islam favoring passive silence. He believed that there were two different kinds of Islam: one which could provide an ideology for a better life, for social change and progress; and a passive one that only served as a source of Islamic laws without showing any interest in the socio-political change.

4.6.3 The Persian Novel

Three of the representative novels of this period are *Nefrin-e zamin* by Jalal Al Ahamd, *Shāzde Ehtejāb* by Hushang Golshiri, and *Hamsāye-hā* by Ahmad Mahmoud.

Jalal Al Ahmad (1923–1969) was born into a religious family in Tehran and died in Tehran as well. He was a writer and a social and political critic. Al Ahmad published several short story collections and novels, a number of which are: *Zan-e ziyādi* (The Unwanted Woman) (Short story collection, 1952); *Modir-e madrese* (The School Principal) (Novel, 1958); *Nun al-Qalam* (By the Pen) (Novel, Tehran 1961); and *Nefrin-e Zamin* (The Cursing of the Land) (Novel, 1967). He also wrote several books and essays in the fields of social and political criticism, the most famous of which is *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxification) (1962).

*Nefrin-e zamin* follows a teacher who, some years after the land reform, moves to a village to teach children. The novel begins with him entering the village, and meeting the principal and the assistant to the village’s landlord. During his walks in the village, he also meets a *dervish*. They begin to discuss the migration of the peasants to cities. The *dervish* believes in Sufism as a path of salvation for the whole world; the teacher criticizes imported technology, Western imperialism, and the despotic modernization.
of the country. The novel is full of dialogues between different characters. All these dialogues take place between those who oppose despotic modernization, westernization, imported technology, and the newly arisen bourgeoisie which was in the process of eradicating traditional agriculture; and those who are against traditional Islamic culture, against traditional agriculture, and who find the ultimate salvation in westernization. The main aim of all these dialogues in Nefrin-e zamin is to express grief over the death of traditional agriculture following the land reform. According to Nefrin-e zamin, the urban and modern way of life has not brought anything but decadence. Through the teacher, Jalal Al Ahmad gives credit to the dervish living in a village:

In what way is he less worth than me...? He does not need any books for what he learns…. Yes, it is me who is unnecessary.

Criticizing the invasion of the villages by technology and the consequent destruction of the traditional structure of agriculture, Nefrin-e zamin criticizes despotic modernization. By giving credit to the dervish who does not owe his knowledge to the westernized schools, Nefrin-e zamin gives its support to the Islamic discourse.

Hushang Golshiri (1937–2000) was born in Isfahan and died in Tehran. Golshiri was one of the founders of the literary journal Jong-e esfahān, the first issue of which was published in 1965 and which became a platform for the period’s innovators in the field of Persian fiction. He published several short story collections and novels, the most famous of which is his novel Shāzde Ehtejāb (Prince Ehtejab) (1969).

Shāzde Ehtejāb by Hushang Golshiri follows Khosrow, Prince Ehtejab, one of the last survivors of the deposed Qajar dynasty. Sitting on a chair on the last day of his life, he recalls memories of his background and the life of his ancestors: his father, Colonel Ehtejab; his grandfather Shazde-ye Bozorg (the Great Prince); and his great grandfather. All his ancestors have been very familiar with brutality. His great grandfather was the governor of a province, when he was only thirteen years old. He had as his hobby removing the eyes of sparrows with a penknife. His grandfather, Shazde-ye Bozorg, killed his mother, his brother and his children and threw them all in a well. Under Reza Shah, Colonel Ehtejab had opened fire on demonstrators; but Khosrow himself is an irresolute man. Fakhr al-Nesa, Khosrow’s wife, is his cousin. After marrying Khosrow, she was followed by her servant Fakhri

195 Al Ahmad, Jalal. (1379 [2000/01]) Nefrin-e zamin (The Cursing of the Land), in Jalāl jāvedāne (The Eternal Jalal), Tehran, p. 694.
196 Translated into English as The Prince by James Buchan, 2005.
197 For more information on Golshiri, see Appendix.
to his household. The narrator appears occasionally in the story, in order to connect the fragments of Khosrow’s memories. *Shāzde Ehtejāb* ends with the narrator’s description of the death of Khosrow. *Shāzde Ehtejāb* is the story of the defeat of eastern despotism; a symbol of the inevitable destiny of the Pahlavi dynasty that has blended modernization with despotism. Morad, Prince Ehtejab’s servant, repeatedly comes with news of death. He cries out the death of a system, an ideology, and an era. Khosrow himself says that he is dismissing Morad in order to put an end to hearing about death:

> When he had let me know about the death of all my cousins and all my step-cousins, I told myself that now it is over, but the day after he came to me again before noon and said... “Dear Prince, have you heard that Hajji Taqi is dead too?”

In illustrating the brutality of the Qajar kings, *Shāzde Ehtejāb* criticizes the history of despotism in Iran. *Shāzde Ehtejāb* criticizes this despotism, and expresses a longing for the practice of modernity discourse inspired by the ideology of the Age of Enlightenment.

Ahmad Mahmoud (1931–2002) was born in Ahvaz, and died in Tehran. Before beginning to write at a young age, he worked as day laborer, driver, and construction worker, and he suffered imprisonment for leftist political views and oppositional activities. He published a long list of short story collections and novels, a few number of which are as follows: *Zā’eri zir-e bārān* (A Pilgrim in the Rain) (Short story collection, 1968); *Pesarak-e bumi* (The Little Native Boy) (Short story collection, 1971); *Hamsāyehā* (The Neighbors) (Novel, 1974); *Zamin-e sukhte* (The Scorched Earth) (Novel, Tehran 1982); *Madār-e sefr dareje* (Zero Degree Orbit) (Novel, 1993); and *Derakht-e anjir-e ma ābed* (The Fig Tree of the Temples) (Novel, 2000).

Ahmad Mahmoud’s *Hamsāyehā*, depicts the political events of 1941–1953. The novel takes place in a house where people from the lower classes are living: a teahouse owner, a donkey owner, a mechanic, and a seasonal worker. Khaled, the narrator in the novel, is a young man living in this house. He is going through the chaotic period of puberty. Bolur Khanom, the wife of the teahouse owner, has let him experience the body of a woman. The more important event in his life, however, is when he is drawn into political activities. Once he is arrested by accident and he meets a young man in jail. The young man asks Khaled to take a message to a man in a bookshop when he is released. The bookseller is a member of the Tudeh Party. It is he who draws Khaled into political activities. As a political activist, Khaled experiences many things, from participating in political activities...

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demonstrations and producing political pamphlets to sitting in jail and taking part in ideological disputes. The house in which Khaled is living is marked by loneliness, disgrace, and kindness. In the last chapter of the novel, the reader is informed about Khaled sitting in jail for having initiated a strike in a factory together with a member of the Tudeh Party. We also read about Khaled being sent to serve in the military after being released from the prison.

_Hamsāyehā_ criticizes the despotic modernization from a somewhat socialistic point of view. In _Hamsāyehā_, there are four different groups of people. The first group consists of ordinary people; the second of people working for the state; the third of revolutionaries; and the fourth of those in power.199 Of these four groups, it is those in power and those who work for the state that stand on the side of despotic modernization. Revolutionaries propagate for socialism and ordinary people are the potential army of socialism, even if they strictly follow a traditionalist way of life. Some words from Khaled’s mouth can probably give the best picture of the novel’s atmosphere. Khaled is discussing the plan for a general strike with his friends:

Pendar says: we have to plan a general strike. To get the arrested people released and to get the fired people back to work. We have to see to it that the textile factory goes on strike […] I hear Shafaq saying: in my opinion we have to prepare other worker groups to initiate a strike as a sign of solidarity with them. Didar asks: Do you mean even those who work within the oil industry and railroad?
- Not together!
Nader says: I agree… If the textile industry’s strike does not give any result, then the oil industry and the railroad should initiate a strike.200

By illustrating the poverty and the difficult life of the lower classes, _Hamsāyehā_ takes the side of the leftist discourse; it stands on the side of the leftist freedom fighters who struggle against despotic modernization, and for a better, even utopian world.

The Persian novel of this period criticizes one discourse and praises three other discourses. The discourse that is criticized is despotic modernization, while the discourses that are praised are the modernity discourse inspired by the ideology of the Age of Enlightenment, the Islamic discourse, and the leftist discourse.

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Chapter five is the main chapter of this study, and deals with the selected novels. Each section begins with a short presentation of the author, followed by a summary of the novel and an analysis of some of the lexias in the novel in the same fashion as Barthes used to analyze *Sarrazin*. This means analyzing each lexia as a substructure of the overall structure of the novel and identifying possible symbolic, hermeneutic, and cultural codes present in the selected lexias. It also means examining and summarizing each novel’s dominant voice in relation to the image of the Islamic Revolution, the concept of the hero, and the concept of martyrdom, all in accordance with Foucault’s discourse theory. The chapter concludes with a short comparative analysis of the novels.

5.1 Ten Persian post-Revolutionary novels published in Iran

5.1.1 *Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man* (The Mysteries of my Homeland) by Reza Baraheni (1990)


Colonel Jazayeri is serving at a garrison in Tabriz. He is depressed and addicted to drugs. Since his wife, Mahi, left him, life has lost its meaning for

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201 See Appendix for a brief presentation of the lives and works of the authors discussed in Chapter 5.
him. Captain Crosley is an American captain who despises him and humiliates him constantly. One day, a couple of sergeants who are tired of seeing Captain Crosley humiliate colonel Jazayeri, ask Colonel Jazayeri to let them to kill Captain Crosley. Colonel Jazayeri gives his approval and they kill Crosley. After that, Colonel Jazayeri, the sergeants, and the interpreter of the garrison, Hosein Tanzifi, are arrested. The Colonel and the sergeants are executed and Hosein Tanzifi, who has had nothing to do with the whole event, is sentenced to life in prison. He spends 21 years in prison and is released on the threshold of the Revolution.

At the time that Captain Crosley is killed, the commander in chief of Tabriz is General Shadan, a morally corrupt man who encourages his own wife, Sudabe, to have love affairs with other men. He himself has sex with young men who are his servants. It is only Tahmine, his wife’s sister, who has a high sense of morals. Mahi, colonel Jazayeri’s ex-wife, is also in close contact with people in power and moves in their circles.

After his release from prison, Hosein Tanzifi meets Ebrahim Aqa who is the principal of a secondary school. Ebrahim Aqa takes him to his house, where Hosein meets Roqaye, who he learns had been a prostitute. Hajji Golab, a neighbor of Ebrahim Aqa, has taken her from the brothel and married her. After the Revolution, Ebrahim Aqa dies of sorrow over the death of several of his young students during the unrest. Some time later, Hajji Golab also dies. Hosein Tanzifi and Roqaye marry each other. Ebrahim Aqa’s mother dies of sorrow when the TV broadcast of Khomeini’s arrival in Iran is interrupted. Hushang, who is now working as a secret agent for the CIA, kills Hosein Tanzifi. Disguised as a servant, Roqaye sees to it that Hushang burns to death in the sauna at the house of Hajji Fanus, where he is hiding. Mahi, who has married General Zarrab and lives in London, commits suicide. Sudabe is arrested. Babak Pouraslan, who is the author’s alter ego, marries Tahmine.

Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man is narrated from different points of view. The common thread that runs through the stories of the different narrators is the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor, their inevitable destinies, and the inevitable and justified outcome of this relationship. The first lexia to consider is related to Captain Crosley’s attempt to humiliate Colonel Jazayeri. It is narrated in the third person. Captain Crosley says to Hosein Tanzifi, the interpreter:

I am a Caucasian! You know what that means? Pure silk white! Tell the colonel about it!202

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This lexia clearly reflects a step in the overall structure of the novel as mentioned above: Americans control the Iranian army and humiliates Iranians. Captain Crosley’s “pure silk white” reflects the hermeneutic code of this lexia, which is the open racism among the officers in the American armed forces. The next lexia on American officers reads:

Sometimes, two homosexual officers travelled to other cities together. They let an interpreter follow them. They worked for the army in the daytime and slept together at night. The interpreter had heard that homosexuality was forbidden in the American armed forces, but it seemed as if they had other rules and regulations outside their own country.203

This first part of this lexia falls under the cultural codes in the story according to which homosexuality is considered a sign of moral decadence. The second part reflects the overall structure of the story: foreign officers in Iran act as if they own the country; they do not show any respect for Iranian culture. To satisfy their sexual needs, they disregard all rules and limits. Here is another lexia on Captain Crosley checking a prostitute that the cook has brought to him:

The captain told the cook: Andranik, tell her to take off her chador. […] The woman did so and showed her body and her face. She was a plump woman with a round face and dark brown hair and round eyes […] The captain looked up and down the body and the face of the woman with the eyes of a customer. Then he said: she is good, Andranik. Tell her to go to the bath and wash herself carefully, especially the lower part of her body, and to come to me afterward.204

This lexia reflects the same structure mentioned in relation to the former lexia. This lexia can fall under a symbolic code: the prostitute symbolizes a nation that is not only living under a despotic regime, but also is sold to foreigners. The prostitute symbolizes the plunder of the body and soul of a whole nation by foreigners.

This sexual anarchy is not limited to the American officers, and selling one’s body and soul is not limited to the prostitutes. It is present among the influential Iranians as well. General Shadan, the military governor of Tabriz, has left his wife alone with Captain Baltimore so that he can make her pregnant with an American child. Captain Baltimore is scared and asks Sudabe to put on her clothes:

204 Ibid, p. 73.
- What would happen if General Shadan sees us in this situation? Please, go and put on your clothes. I will go now.
- Don’t be silly. Do you believe that I would do this if the General himself did not want me to do so? [...] This room is a historical room. The king has spent time in this room, his brothers, a couple of ministers, as well as the servants. The general and I have missed you in this room. We need you for a certain purpose.\(^{305}\)

This lexia not only confirms the symbolic code in the former lexia but also reflects a cultural code: women are considered the property of men; their honor. So a nation with men like General Shadan is already lost. The hermeneutic code of this lexia can be read as follows: the officials of the Iranian regime are not only morally corrupt, they view themselves and their own nation as belonging to an inferior race. The next lexia falls under almost the same hermeneutic code. On a mountaineering trip, Captain Baltimore asks Hushang, the brother of General Shadan’s wife, whether he is ready to work as secret agent for the US government:

- Do you mean to become a secret agent for your country?
  He was bent over me in the middle of the night, and asked me this question unabashedly. I chose to be silent. Then I pulled down the zipper of the sleeping bag. He repeated his question. You mean for me to become a secret agent? And he lay down beside me. I pulled up the zipper and said: be my brother.\(^{306}\)

This lexia can be reduced to two hermeneutic codes: not only American officers but also Iranian officers are morally corrupted; Iranians use their bodies in order to get a higher position in society. From all the lexias seen so far, we can identify a final symbolic code: people in power everywhere are only interested in the body of the world, not its soul. The Pahlavi regime is no exception.

Moving forward to read another lexia: thirteen sergeants have come together and killed Captain Crosley after consultation with Colonel Jazayeri. The colonel and the sergeants are arrested and subjected to torture before execution. Captain Baltimore narrates:

They had pulled out the colonel’s nails. With the help of two SAVAK agents from Tehran, they had severely tortured the lieutenant who used to sing in his room. They had injected hot water into his bowels, which became infected. When the order of the Shah came, they saw to it that they were executed immediately. [...] On the day of execution,

\(^{305}\) Ibid, p. 210, 211.
\(^{306}\) Ibid, p. 238 – 239.
in the morning, we called Lieutenant Parker and Corporal Collins into the garden and told them the story. Lieutenant Parker expressed his true feelings about Captain Crosley: “You know I think the fucking captain should have been shot anyway.”

[...] But they both accepted the assignment to carry out the execution.207

The structure reflected in this lexia is that humiliation by foreigners cannot be tolerated by people forever. Soon or later, they may revolt against foreigners, despite the very high price they have to pay. This lexia falls under this hermeneutic code: the Pahlavi dynasty is a puppet of the Americans, for whom the life of a corrupt and malicious American officer, who is disliked even by his American colleagues, is worth more than lives of fourteen Iranian officers.

Several lexias reflect the structure of Iranian modern history as presented in this novel: the opposition to the Pahlavi dynasty and its officials, and sporadic unplanned revolts, like the officers’ killing of Captain Crosley that at last result in an overall revolution. The inevitability of this revolution is predicted by signs and symbols in these lexias. The first is a lexia narrated from Hosein Tanzifi’s point of view. Once, in the prison, Hosein Tanzifi meets General Shadan’s servant. He tells Hosein Tanzifi about a time when a couple of old men had come together with a clergyman to meet General Shadan:

The servant said that it was not clear what they were speaking about, but he had heard one of the old men from the other side of the wall crying and entreating the general. The clergyman from Ardebil had shouted at the general several times and told him: fear God! God will take revenge! And when the General had used foul language towards the clergyman, the people who had come from Ardebil began to cry […]208

It is not just the sporadic revolts that signal that the Revolution is approaching; there are other signs coming from the heavens. This lexia falls under one symbolic code: men of God predict the historical future. This prediction is confirmed by another symbolic code in the next lexia, which relates to people’s beliefs concerning a certain wolf.

In the first part of the novel, Lieutenant Davis, together with his interpreter, is driving towards the garrison in the middle of a very cold winter night. On their way they meet a wolf. This wolf is known as the foreigner-killing wolf in that region. The wolf attacks Lieutenant Davis and

kills him. An old man who has arrived at the scene, tells the story of the foreigner-killing wolf:

The old man said: it is him; it is the foreigner-killing wolf. You know sir; it is about a sense of honor […]. When we are helpless and cannot do anything, the foreigner-killing wolf’s sense of honor awakens.²⁰⁹

The awakened sense of honor of the foreigner-killing wolf is the symbolic code of this lexia. It symbolizes the awakening sense of honor of the nation and predicts the immanent revolution. The next lexia relates to the Islamic Revolution. It is narrated from Hosein Tanzifi’s point of view. He has spent eighteen years of his life in prison and has been released during the days of the Revolution:

[…] I stayed in prison so long that I forgot what my crime was. The person, he was speaking to, began to laugh, because there were reasons to laugh now. The faces have turned very kind. I kissed a couple of persons and I saw that they met my kisses with kisses very naturally. It was as if all of us were stepping into a process where laughing and kissing were allowed.²¹⁰

The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be that the Islamic Revolution has given birth to kisses; to laughter. It strengthens the goodness and solidarity in people, and makes them put aside their selfishness. These hermeneutic codes are confirmed in another lexia.

Another lexia: Hosein Tanzifi participates in the Revolution and shouts his support for freedom and justice. During one of the street demonstrations he meets Mr. Ebrahim, a school principal. He takes Tanzifi to his home, where Tanzifi meets Ebrahim Aqa’s mother, Hajji Fateme, who is a holy woman. She tells Tanzifi that he is suffering because of his lack of faith. Ebrahim Aqa’s mother has one last wish: to meet Ayatollah Khomeini. The day of Khomeini’s arrival in Iran, Hajji Fateme is watching his arrival on TV. The special royal forces stop the broadcast. Hajji Fateme is furious. She throws a hairbrush at the TV and dies on the spot. There is a paper in her hand with instructions that she must be buried on the very same day:

- This is my testimony to my son Ebrahim: bury me immediately after I die. Do not wait at all. I moved towards Ebrahim Aqa and gave him the testimony. He read it. With tears in eyes, he looked at me and asked:

²⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 44.
²¹⁰ Ibid, p. 38.
Why has she written this, why? 

This lexia also reflects another step in the structure of the novel: those who have a relationship with the heavens are aware of the future. Hajji Fateme dies on the same day that Khomeini enters Iran and while he is on his way to Behesht-e Zahra, Tehran’s cemetery. It is as if Hajji Fateme was aware that she would die on that very same day, and she has begged to be buried immediately. Why? The answer to this question is the hermeneutic code of this lexia: the holy Hajji Fateme wants to be buried in that same soil on which Khomeini, the most prominent symbol of the Islamic Revolution, is going to put his feet. She joins the other martyrs of the Islamic Revolution and its leader.

The next lexia relates to Roqaya, a former prostitute who has left that life behind and married Hajji Golab, a religious and trustworthy man in Mr. Ebrahim’s quarter. Roqaye is now a religious woman for whom wearing a veil is very important. One day, her mother dies in the prostitutes’ quarter. In order to hide this from Hajji Golab, she asks Hosein Tanzifi to help her bury her mother. Hosein Tanzifi helps her and they develop feelings for each other. After Hajji Golab’s death, they decide to marry, but Hosein Tanzifi is killed by Hushang. Hushang is hiding in the sauna at the house of Hajji Fanus, a bazaar who collaborates closely with the Pahlavi dynasty. Roqaye goes to Hajji Fanus’s house disguised as a servant and sees to it that Hushang burns to death in the sauna. Let us read this lexia about Hushang’s death narrated from Hushang’s point of view. It begins with him repeating Roqaye’s words:

I know that you are there. You will never know how I found you. Today is the last day of my edde [212]. Why did you kill Hosein? He was supposed to become my husband; the father of my child. Why did you kill him? […]. The temperature was increasing constantly. I could not breathe. I began to cry loudly and kick the walls. I looked out through the opening several times. That woman sat there. I began to hallucinate. The heat had made me mad. I lay down on my back. It was as if the paws of a huge wild animal were pressing on my breast […]. I cried: I am burning, help me please, open the door, open the door! For God’s sake open the door!”

The structure reflected in this lexia is a further step in the overall structure of the novel in relation to the usual course of history: sooner or later the victims

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211 Ibid, p. 780.
212 The period during which a divorced or widowed woman is not allowed to marry another man.
will take revenge upon those who have victimized them. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that the future is in the hands of those who have abandoned a disgraceful life. The symbolic code is that those who continue to embrace disgrace will burn in hell. The sauna is a symbol for hell. The cultural code is that the corporeal world is the world of destruction; it is the spiritual world that decides the direction of historical development.

Then there is a lexia that portrays martyrdom from Hosein Tanzifi’s point of view. After the Revolution, Mr. Ebrahim, the principal, returns to his school. Seeing the empty seats of the students who have died during the Revolution, he says to Hosein Tanzifi:

Mr. Hosein, look! So many martyrs and all of them our best students […]. Mr. Ebrahim said: So many? How come so many martyrs come from our school? And then he showed the papers to the superintendent and said: Look! The best of them! […] The superintendent had now removed his hands from his eyes and cried openly. Mr. Ebrahim said: tell the students that the classes are cancelled for today. We are going to Behesht-e Zahra, to these boys’ graves.214

This reflects a further step in the structure of the novel: those who fight for a historically justified goal are not afraid to sacrifice their lives for the truth. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that the Islamic Revolution is justified; its justification is given, among other things, by the blood and martyrdom of the best of the students.


On one side, we have the narrators that belong to the old regime such as Baltimore, Mahi, Hushang, Sudabe, and on the other side the emancipated narrators, i.e. those who work for the Revolution and who, like Hosein Mirza, Tahmine, and Babak Pouraslan, are the children of the Revolution. The utterances of the evil side have nothing to do with the real direction of history. They narrate only to see the defeat of their narration through a revolution that unites the myth of the foreigner-killing wolf and the future of the homeland of Iran free from the influence of the foreigners.

\textit{Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man} calls onto the stage all the narrators of this story in order to demonstrate the victory of a certain narrative; the victory of a narrative that is in accordance with the earlier predictions.

In the narrative world of \textit{Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man}, the Islamic Revolution brings an end to a political system which was controlled by foreigners, and which was permeated by dark despotism, moral decay, and large class inequalities; the Revolution puts an end to a political system which used to offer nothing but torture and imprisonment to people who sought after political independence, moral values, and justice. According to \textit{Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man}, the collapse of such a corrupt system is inevitable. As was predicted by the story of the foreigner-killing wolf long before the Revolution, the Islamic Revolution is the realization of the final destiny of the Pahlavi Dynasty. The political and moral corruption of characters like General Shadan, Captain Baltimore, and Captain Crosley clearly illustrates how unjust the old regime had been. The Islamic Revolution puts an end to this unjust system and marks the first glints of emancipation. This emancipation has not been gained easily, however; many lives have been sacrificed for its sake. The concept of martyrdom in \textit{Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man} is defined through its relationship to the Islamic Revolution, and in relation to all who sacrificed their lives before and during the Revolution.

According to \textit{Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man}, all those who sacrificed their lives during the Revolution; all those officers who were executed for the assassination of Captain Crosley; all those political prisoners who were tortured and executed before the Revolution; even Colonel Jazayeri who approved the assassination of Captain Crosley – all are martyrs of a justified heroic battle. Their martyrdom has taken place for the sake of the Revolution, and their heroic actions have influenced the course of history. In the narrative world of \textit{Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man}, the faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history is alive.

5.1.2 \textit{Shāhkelid} (The Master Key) by Jafar Modarres Sadeqi (1999)

\textit{Shāhkelid} is set in late 1998, a while after the so called Chain Murders, after it had become known that the Chain Murders were organized by a faction within the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence. This has brought to the fore the case of mystic murders of the previous years. \textit{Shahkelid} follows the

\footnotesize{215 The Chain Murders were series of murders of liberal writers and intellectuals like Mohammad Mokhtari, Mohammad Jafar Puyandeh, Dariush and Parvaneh Foruhar in Iran in 1997–1998. The Chain Murders were organized by a faction in the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence. After these murders the authorities arrested a number of people and accused them of being "rogue agents" of the Ministry of Intelligence.}
narrator who has been arrested for his involvement in these murders. He has been asked to write down his own confession about the murder of one of the victims, Mir Mohammad Malakuti.

We then read that Mir Mohammad Malakuti was a friend of the narrator in his childhood. In their teenage years, the narrator was interested in poetry and Mir Mohammad in “more serious things.” After finishing secondary school, Mir Mohammad begins studying sociology at university, while the narrator does his military service. Then we read about the narrator and Mir Mohammad during the days of the Revolution. The narrator begins selling books in front of Tehran University where he gets acquainted with a girl called Shadi; a member of the leftist opposition. Like many other members of the leftist opposition, Shadi is engaged in political discussions in front of Tehran University during the days of the Revolution. It is also there that the narrator sees Mir Mohammad again; now as an oppositional journalist, delivering a speech. One day the narrator sees a man in a long raincoat accompanying Mir Mohammad. In his fantasies, the narrator sees the man as a sheikh and names him Sheikh Ahmad. Then he begins to tell Mir Mohammad and Shadi stories about the miracles of this Sheikh Ahmad.

The story then skips to about two years after the Revolution, during the naked oppression of the opposition by the newly established Islamic regime which began after 21 June 1981. One day, the narrator meets Shadi on one of the Friday mountain hikes. She has lost much weight, is depressed and very scared. Many of her friends have been arrested and executed. Shadi is also persecuted by the Revolutionary Guard. The narrator makes an appointment with Shadi for some days later. He takes her to a clock and watch shop that belongs to Ahmad. At this point, the narrator has finished selling books in front of Tehran University and is also working as a clock and watch seller. Ahmad tells the narrator to take Shadi to his house and hide her. Shadi stays at the narrator’s house for fifteen months. One day she leaves the house and never comes back. There is no trace of her. Ahmad believes that Shadi is hidden in Mir Mohammad’s house. Together with Ahmad and two agents of the security police, the narrator goes to Mir Mohammad’s house. Mir Mohammad tells the narrator that he has not heard from Shadi, but he guesses that she is hidden in the house of Khosrow, one of his colleagues, a former leftist activist who has left political life and is a full time writer. Ahmad, the narrator, and the security policemen go to Khosrow’s house, search it, and arrest Khosrow. On their way back, Ahmad tells the narrator they should return to Mir Mohammad’s house. The narrator tells him that he has promised Mir Mohammad not to disturb him anymore. Then he gets out of the car. Some time later, the bodies of Khosrow and Mir Mohammad are found, Shadi is executed, and Ahmad disappears. The narrator replaces Ahmad in the Ministry of Intelligence and receives a master key that can open all doors. In the last episode of the novel, the narrator recalls a dream in which he finds Mir Mohammad’s book published under Ahmad’s name.
The events in *Shāhkelid* recall the days of the Revolution, when Iranians went out into the streets to see the Pahlavi regime fall and the Islamic Republic arise; the days of a general enthusiasm about sharing an exceptional event together with the masses. This lexia recollects those days:

In my opinion, people were all confused and no one really knew what they were looking for. Most people deceived themselves and hung onto something, someone, some idea, some party or even some newspaper in order to find some peace of mind. But I was looking for real peace of mind, someone I could trust and whose presence I could feel all the time; someone before whom I could fall to my knees and do whatever he ordered me. I was just following the waves without being aware of what I was doing. I joined different demonstrations and shouted the slogans – different slogans belonging to different organizations.\(^{216}\)

This lexia reflects the substructures related to the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty and the victory of the Islamic Revolution. It begins with sporadic demonstrations against the Shah’s regime by smaller groups; people just join these groups and let them decide on the slogans, the demands, and the direction. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be written in two sentences: there was no consciousness during the Islamic Revolution; the Islamic Revolution was there to compensate for the meaninglessness that had occupied peoples’ lives and turned them into creatures without any will of their own.

The Islamic Revolution begins with provocations, with an unbelievable urge towards destruction, to set fire to cinemas and brothels, to break the windows of the small liquor shops and all other such places that now were felt to be in discord with the awakened religious consciousness. Here is a lexia dealing with this phase:

When for the first time, I saw someone dressed in black breaking the windows of the liquor shops, I trembled with anxiety. I realized that despite all the confusion, something was happening, something that was out of our control. The decisive faces of these people, their calm, and their self-esteem seemed very strange to me… as soon as they arrived at the Pahlavi crossroad and saw the liquor shop there, they stopped and picked up some stones from the gutter and cast them at the windows. And, when the windows crashed down, they kept moving with the same calm they had come with. Their pace didn’t increase and none of them turned to look back.\(^{217}\)


This lexia also reveals a further step in the structure related to the Islamic Revolution: the blind fury of the oppressed resulting in destruction. The hermeneutic code of this lexia can be written as follows: the Islamic Revolution begins with destruction. In the light of this hermeneutic code, we can write the cultural code of this lexia: in a closed culture based on a master–follower social psychology, people act according to cultural paradigms without being aware of why they act as they do, and without feeling any need to look back and reflect over their acts.

Another lexia: together with Shadi, the narrator is in Ahmad’s clock shop. Ahmad gives Shadi a watch as present:

Ahmad said: “Miss Shadi, this shop is a clock shop and is full of different types of watches. Choose the watch you like.”
Shadi pointed to one of the clocks in the display case and said: “How much is this one?”
Ahmad took out the watch from the display case and gave it to Shadi; a man’s watch without any lines or numbers, only two hands. He said: “It’s a little something for you.”
Shadi said: “I am serious, I want to buy that.”
I said: “Miss Shadi, Ahmad is not joking. He is always serious in what he says. He wants you to have this watch as a present. You needed a watch.”
Shadi said: “Many thanks!” Then she put the watch on her left wrist. She said: “I like the simplicity of this watch; it doesn’t have any unnecessary things.”
Ahmad said: “We have simpler watches than this, and picked up another watch from the display case. It was a man’s wrist watch with a round white face, without any numbers or lines, only one hand.
Shadi said: “No thanks, this is fine”.
Ahmad said: “We have simpler ones than this too.” He showed her the watch he had on his left wrist. It had a round white face, without any lines, numbers, or hands at all.218

The hermeneutic code of this lexia can be read as follows: the representative of the ideology of the Islamic Republic gives a present to the representative of the leftist ideology, to an opponent of the Islamic Republic. Through the acceptance of the present, the oppessor and the oppressed begin to become one and the same body. They are not so far from each other. One can also recognize a symbolic code in this lexia in relation to wristwatches: the representative of the leftist ideology is simple-minded. She chooses a watch without details like lines or numbers. The representative of the ideology of the Islamic Republic offers her a much simpler watch; one without any lines,

numbers or hands; a watch that does not show the time at all; time has stopped, and nothing is going to change or to move forward.

Yet another lexia follows the narrator who, together with two agents of the security police, is on his way to Mir Mohammad’s house, looking for Shadi:

Ahmad and I sat in the back and the car began to roll. Ahmad introduced the two men: Ebrahim, the driver, and his brother Esmail. […] Ebrahim and Esmail were both young; twenty-two to twenty-three with thin beards. They were silent and serious too. From the back, they were like copies of each other (Ahmad said: they are brothers). In the darkness of the car, I glanced at Ahmad from the side and saw that even we two likened each other very much. I watched Ahmad, and it was as if I was watching myself. Both of us had lush beards and round faces, sharp aquiline noses and unruly hairs on our foreheads.219

This lexia too is another step within the same structure related to the Islamic Revolution: those who have replaced the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah begin to oppress anyone who is not like them. It is as if everything that happened was only about who should oppress whom. The symbolic code of this lexia is the similarity between the two young agents, and between the narrator and Ahmad; they begin to resemble each other and develop similar characters due to their positions and social roles. They do not represent individuals but a system. The next lexia is taken from the occasion when the narrator has received a high position at the Ministry of Intelligence:

Now, when I think back, I am very surprised over how much respect I had for Ahmad and how I shrank in his presence. Ahmad’s distinguished behavior now seemed childish and cheap to me, and did not match his claims. There were no doors that the master key in my pocket could not open. There was nothing I could not manage to do, and there were no problems that I could not solve. Like Ahmad, I also had followers, and I could tell them stories about my fantastic achievements that could make them all tense with surprise.220

This lexia confirms the former lexia. The symbolic code of this lexia is the master key and means that the master key for reaching higher positions is to be ready to sanctify the powers that be.

In the narrative world of *Shāhkelid*, the Islamic Revolution is the product of a political atmosphere in which rational thinking has been replaced by a collective unconscious excitement. This infectious excitement affected the followers of all ideologies, both those who favored the establishment of an Islamic state and those who rejected the idea. This collective excitement led to the creation of a poisonous political system in which each and every innocent individual could be transformed into a murderer. According to *Shāhkelid*, the leftist opposition of the Islamic Republic suffered from the same despotic behavior as the Islamic Republic did, with its dogmatism and its master-follower thinking. According to *Shāhkelid*, the Islamic Revolution was both the outcome of a sick atmosphere and in turn the creator of a sick and evil political system. In the narrative world of *Shāhkelid*, there is no faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history. Those who once had faith in heroic actions are just victims.

5.1.3 *Ādāb-e ziyārat* (Pilgrim’s Rules of Etiquette) by Taqi Modarresi (1989)

*Ādāb-e ziyārat* is the life story of Professor Hadi Besharat, who is a lecturer in history, archaeology, and ancient languages. He has received his Ph.D. in the USA. The novel takes place a short while after the Revolution. Hadi Besharat lives in an old neighborhood with high-ranking civil officials of the old regime. In his correspondence with his old teacher in the USA, Professor Humphrey, Hadi Besharat discusses ancient religions, philosophy, and death. After his forced retirement as lecturer, the only student he meets is Mehrdad Razi, the son of a colonel who has been executed by the Islamic Republic. He shows a deep interest in ancient languages and cultures. Mehrdad goes to war and is killed.

One of his neighbors, Engineer Qarib produces makeup articles and vodka at home. Another, General Qavanlu, has nothing to do, and Mr. Bayat is alcoholic. Farangu, Hadi Besharat’s wife, is on the verge of leaving him and moving to the USA. Mehrdad Razi’s mother leaves the country. Nili, the girl who was in love with Mehrdad, begins taking English lessons from Besharat. Gradually, Besharat, whose mind is very much occupied with issues like death, develops some form of mental illness after Mehrdad Razi’s death and wants to sign up as a volunteer soldier in the war. He repeatedly goes to the mosque to sign up. After quarreling with a pāsdār221 he is arrested. The story ends with his wife meeting him at the jail and trying to take him home. She has Professor Humphrey’s letter to Besharat with her.

One must search for the hidden meaning of *Ādāb-e ziyārat* in the personality of Hadi Besharat, the main character of the novel; in his interest for Mani; and in the way the characters around him and in his mind are

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221 An officer of the Revolutionary Guard.
presented. Among those who are present in his mind, Professor Humphrey and his secondary-school teacher in history and geography, Fakhr-e Zanjani, have a special place. During his years as a student in America, he had the opportunity to talk with Professor Humphrey about Fakhr-e Zanjani. The first lexia to be discussed here concerns this passage about Fakhr-e Zanjani:

Hadi Besharat told Professor Humphrey: Fakhr-e Zanjani could determine the age of a stone by just touching it. Whenever we asked him how he could do that, he just answered by quoting this poem of Rumi: Next time I shall die as a human/ Bringing forth wings and feathers like angels/ To soar higher than angels/ What you cannot imagine/ I shall be that.\(^{222}\)

The structure reflected in this lexia is related to Islamic mysticism, the core of which is turning toward heaven and trying to understand things that are beyond the reach of ordinary people. In the framework of hermeneutic codes, this lexia can be rewritten as follows: all the particles in the universe are united with each other. Man is a part of the divinely beloved and will at last return to that beloved. Salvation is nothing other than believing in the world of the spirit, as the body is a mortal element that functions only as a cage for the soul. The next lexia concerns Professor Humphrey’s way of thinking and his reaction to Hadi Besharat’s words on Fakhr-e Zanjani:

Professor Humphrey stared at him for a moment and then began to talking about the last minutes of Mani’s life and his execution. He tried to prove that the time of Mani’s death was to be at dawn on Monday, the first of Roman February, while in Parthian documents found in Turfan, this Monday was referred to as the fourth of Parsi Shahrivar.\(^{223}\)

This lexia is also another step in the same structure based on despising the earthly world and its details. This is presented in the form of a symbolic code: Professor Humphrey’s head is occupied with details of Mani’s bodily death. The hermeneutic code of this lexia will be: the details of Mani’s bodily death are more important to Professor Humphrey than Mani’s thoughts, which are the mystics’ primary pillars of support. According to Manichaeism, there is a speck of light inside every man – a speck of light that is imprisoned there by his demons. This light seeks a way out. It is the obligation of every man to help this speck of light out; and this is possible

\(^{223}\) Ibid, p. 8.
only through the rejection of earthly pleasure. By focusing on the details, Professor Humphrey cannot find his way onto the path of salvation as he misses his chances for helping that speck of light to emerge. Now comes another lexia that reflects Fakhr-e Zanjani way of thinking:

Go and read the history of your glorious nation that has performed so many heroic deeds. This nation has many times been on the verge of annihilation. Every time, a helping hand has come from the invisible world and saved us from annihilation by the will of God. Don’t forget that the ancient world conquerors were not only concerned about conquering lands and bodies. Their main concern was conquering the minds of the people.

The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be read thus: this homeland has always been saved by heroes who have constantly struggled for the light and against the darkness; these righteous heroes have always received help from heaven; what has always saved this land is its people’s way of thinking which they have not given up when confronting the conquerors; a way of thinking that always goes beyond the earthly life.

It is precisely this way of thinking that has given Islamic warriors the power to stand against a very strong enemy like the Iraqi army. Fakhr-e Zanjani is not alone in this way of thinking. A young man from Hadi Besharat’s neighborhood, Mehrdad Razi, has become a martyr in the war. Mehrdad Razi’s father was a colonel in the old royal army of Mohammad Reza Shah, and has been executed by the new Islamic regime. Hadi Besharat is very upset about Mehrdad Razi’s death and cannot understand it. He remembers his long talks with Mehrdad about death, and about Mehrdad’s decision to go to the front to see Mesopotamia with his own eyes. He remembers Mehrdad’s innocent face, looking as if he longed to become a martyr. After having been informed of Mehrdad’s death he feel that he needs to talk someone who might understand him. He starts writing a letter to Professor Humphrey:

In every man’s heart there is a cleft in which his secret is hidden, and no one knows anything about that. They become vagabonds in cities, but their secret is like a piece of stone that no one is able to split.

The hermeneutic code of this lexia can be that the real meaning of life is greater than an ordinary life in safety; the heroic acts of the heroes are an

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225 Ibid, p. 79.
226 Ibid, p. 43.
attempt to find the meaning of life. Even though Mehrdad’s father was executed by the Islamic Republic, Mehrdad chooses to go to war just to give a meaning to his life.

In the next lexia, we read about other people living in Hadi Besharat’s quarter, including the representatives of the old regime:

Before the Revolution, the neighbors had a nodding acquaintance with each other. Occasionally, they would be familiar with who had died, who was behind with his mortgage payments, and who was ill. But now, it was as if everybody was retired. With the extra time they had, they gathered together constantly [...]. Each one of them had a profession. He himself was interested in history and had a certain poetic gift. Occasionally, he wrote some meaningless texts and called them poetry. Engineer Qarib produced makeup articles and vodka in his laboratory. He used to take photos of the neighbors and sell them to them. Despite his age and his alcoholism, Mr. Bayat knew a lot about carpets and natural medicine. Even General Qavanlu who did not care about anything, tried to take lessons in Arabic from Mr. Bayat.227

This lexia portrays the meaningless lives of people who are occupied with the earthly world. It contains a cultural code: it is only the belief in higher spiritual goals that creates meaning in life; a meaningful life is possible only by ignoring earthly pleasures.

Hadi Besharat believes that people do not understand the real essence of Mehrdad’s martyrdom. At one point in the novel, Hadi Besharat talks to his wife about Mehrdad Razi’s martyrdom. Herein lies the lexia:

Get up and see how the people in our neighborhood have gathered around that poor boy’s hejle,228 ask for mercy, mourn him by beating their breasts, and narrate the tragedies of Karbala, as if the son of an Imam has emerged. We Iranians are a nation always waiting for a master to emerge and perform miracles for us.229

This lexia reflects a cultural code: Iranians blindly seek after heroes, martyrs and saviors. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be read as follows: for people in this culture, Mehrdad Razi is just an object.

Hadi Besharat is wandering between two powers: Farangu, General Qavanlu, and General Bayat on one side, and Mehrdad and Fakhr-e Zanjani

227 Ibid, p. 31.
228 A symbolic bridal chamber usually placed in a neighborhood to honor the memory of a young unmarried man who has died.
229 Ibid, p. 49.
on the other. The dominant voice in Ādāb-e ziyārat, however, gives credit to Mehrdad Razi and Fakhr-e Zanjani, not to Farangu, General Qavanlu, and General Bayat. The next lexia concerns Hadi Besharat’s letter to Professor Humphrey mentioned above. Hadi Besharat continues the letter and asks Professor Humphrey some questions. We read Besharat’s questions as a lexia:

My request is that you give your opinion on the questions that follow:
1) Does the soul exist before the body? 2) Is there any supernatural power? 3) Is the thinking capacity of man limited, or can we expect man to find satisfying answers for philosophical questions? 4) How can one use his life in a meaningful way? And what are our prospects for understanding life in a deeper way? 5) Is there any possibility that wars might disappear from our planet?\footnote{Ibid, p. 54.}

The hermeneutic and cultural codes of these questions must be found in those texts that Hadi Besharat reads, those memories he remembers, and those texts he translates into Persian. Hadi Besharat is working on the translation of a book. Which book? Here is the lexia about this book and the process of translation:

He began the translation of the third chapter of The Death of a Great Savior. He had come to Professor Humphrey’s introductory discussion about Mani’s last journey from Meisan to Parglia. In Parglia, Mani reads part of his writing about repentance and confession, and his students and his followers begin to cry when he tells the story of the angels from Babel: Jebra’il, the death angel of the young people; Kefza’il, the death angel of the kings… the death angel of the children… the death angel of domestic animals.\footnote{Ibid, p. 58.}

This lexia reveals the structure of Hadi Besharat’s thinking, which is based on the superiority of the soul over the body. The book about Mani is the symbolic code of this lexia; the book is like a mirror in Besharat’s hand in which he will find satisfying answers to his philosophical questions. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that wars will be eradicated from our planet, if and only if man learns that the spiritual world comes before the bodily world. This is confirmed in two lexias almost at the end of the story; one is related to Professor Humphrey, and in it he refers to their first meeting and Besharat’s reciting of Rumi’s poem:
To be honest, I have to admit that at that time I did not pay much attention to this poem, but on the anniversary of the victims of the Vietnam War this year, I realized that there is a kind of consolation in annihilation.  

And the other one is related to an Arabic phrase *huw al-hayyu, huw al-mayyitu,* which means “He is ever-living, he is dead.” The hermeneutic code of the first lexia is that Professor Humphrey has come to the same conclusions regarding the soul’s superiority over the body; the hermeneutic code of the second lexia is that physical death is not the end of a person’s life.  

*Ādāb-e ziyārat*, gives credit to a system of thought that has resulted in the Islamic Revolution, a system of thought that seeks purity of the mind and salvation of the soul; one that affirms the superiority of heroic action over daily life, and the superiority of spiritual, heavenly values over earthly values. In this story, the spiritual effect of the Islamic Revolution has been so overwhelming that even Mehrdad Razi goes to war and sacrifices his life for the same Islamic homeland that executed his father. The Islamic Revolution is safeguarded by the heroic actions of those who sacrifice their lives for the homeland of Iran.  

In the narrative world of *Ādāb-e ziyārat*, the death of Mehrdad Razi in the war, the thinking of Fakhr-e Zanjani, and Hadi Besharat’s longing to participate in the war, have all been interwoven to portray the Islamic Revolution and its ideological foundations as emancipation. In the narrative world of *Ādāb-e ziyārat*, martyrdom takes place in the war and for the defense of the Islamic homeland; and the hero and the hero’s actions influence the course of history. Thus, the faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of the history is still alive.

5.1.4 *Del-e deldādegi* (The Heart of Heart-Giving) by Shahriar Mandanipour (1997)  
*Del-e deldādegi* begins with an introduction titled *Chahār mādarān-e hejrān* (The Four Mothers of Separation) and continues with seven books. The titles of the books are: *Bād va khākestar-e zeitun* (The Wind and the Olive Ashes); *Khāk-e sheidā-ye sarandīb* (Sarandīb’s Love-Sick Soil); *khonyā-ye āb* (The Song of the Water); *Duzakhāshām o ātashāshām* (Hell-drinker and fire-drinker); *Dānāyi-ye dāne-ye afrā* (The Wisdom of the Maple Seed); *Dornāhā-ye noqre-i* (Silver Cranes); and *Daryā-ye behesht* (The Sea of Paradise).

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The main subject of *Del-e deldādegi* is two earthquakes: the first the natural earthquake that ruined the mud houses in Northern Iran in 1990, and the second the social earthquake resulting from this and the Iran-Iraq war. The first book depicts the natural earthquake, and the seventh book portrays the days following that earthquake. The other books, coming in between, picture the social earthquake and the Iran-Iraq war. They illustrate the inner conflicts of the exhausted and confused characters that there happen to be many of in *Del-e deldādegi*.

Among the characters of the novel, five are more distinguished: Roja, Kakayi, Davud, Yahya, and Samir. Roja is a rural girl, who in contrast to other girls living in the countryside, has pursued her studies up to the final year of secondary school. She is an ambitious girl, very tired of the limited rural life that hinders her attempts to realize her dreams and aspirations. Roja lives on a mountainside in Northern Iran, but she has experienced urban life as well. Roja dreams of marrying a man capable of meeting the needs of her passionate soul and body.

Kakayi is a simple and strong hunter who is living with his father. He is in love with Roja. For him the whole world is nothing but Roja. The Iran-Iraq war is going on. The inhabitants of the village sarcastically ask Kakayi why he does not go to war. Kakayi knows nothing about the geography of the world. For him, the war is going on in a place which exists only in theory. Furthermore he is in love with Roja and wants to stay close to her. But the war comes to his house and knocks on his door too. Kakayi declares his love for Roja, and ask her if she will marry him when he returns; Roja tell him: “We’ll see” just to make him happy. Kakayi leaves his hunting rifle at home, and goes to the front, hoping to marry Roja when he returns. But Kakayi never wins Roja’s heart. Instead, she marries Davud, the frenzied teacher.

Davud is the son of a colonel who during the Revolution participated in the suppression of the people and then fled to the USA. Davud is an intellectual who has left Tehran to live and work as a teacher in that small village in Northern Iran. Searching for a remedy for his loneliness, he meets Roja. Despite the strong opposition of Roja’s father, he marries Roja and initiates a tension-filled relationship with her; a relationship that turns into a trap for him. One of the reasons for these tensions is the presence of Yahya and Davud’s suspicion that he is having an affair with Roja.

Yahya is an albino. After a long period of excavations together with a companion, he has found golden antiquities in Southern Iran. He has now taken refuge on that mountainside in Northern Iran where Roja lives, having built a cottage there, and living with a dog that is his only confidant. Yahya has eyes for Roja. For him, Roja is the only woman who with her passionate soul can fill his empty arms. This, however, does not come to pass.

Samir is a soldier at the front who has lost all the members of his family in the war. He is ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of his homeland.
Del-e deldâdegi begins with a portrayal of the beginning of the earthquake. One of Roja and Davud’s daughters has died under the ruins. Roja is crying and, in a moment of fury, accuses Davud of not being a real man. This is not the first time that Roja insults Davud for his poet’s mentality and his indifference to money.

A couple of days earlier Yahya has killed and buried his companion in his yard to take over his possession. Davud goes to him, exchanges some words with him, comes down the mountain, gets drunk and drowns himself in a river. Before reading about his death, we read about the death of Kakayi too. Kakayi, who has lost all hope after Roja’s marriage to Davud, devotes himself to the war and becomes a commander. But in the end, he is killed by the Iraqis.

Roja is confused. She goes to Yahya in search for Davud. Despite Yahya’s earnest attempts, she refuses him. After returning from Yahya’s house, Roja learns that Davud has killed himself. She is tired and has a guilty conscience. Together with her daughter, she continues living in one of the tents for the victims of the earthquake. Yahya continues to live alone on the mountain, with his companion’s body in his yard and a desire he cannot satisfy.

A large part of Del-e deldâdegi takes place during the Iran-Iraq war and many scenes depict the war. Among all the characters present in these scenes, two are most prominent: Kakayi and Samir. One day, Samir tells Kakayi about his grievance. It may be read as a lexia:

All my relatives were killed by a Katyusha rocket during a single night. I am the only one left from our family; just this boy you see. My ancestors’ history comes to an end with me. But until then, I will shed the blood of Iraqis, brother! […] Do not judge me by my appearance. I am not alone. I have someone that you have forgotten. With him [God], I am neither scared of death nor am I worried about tomorrow.

This lexia reveals the structure of the Iran-Iraq war as reflected in Del-e deldâdegi: the Iraqi army attacks Iran; and to defend the holy homeland, Iranians fight the Iraqi army with empty hands and pay with their lives and the lives of their relatives. But what encourages Kakayi to go to war is his love for Roja. When he finds out that Roja has married Davud, he abandons earthly material life, and participates in the war whole-heartedly without any fear for his life, and becomes a martyr. He is inspired by Samir who, long before him, turned his back on earthly life. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia and the former lexia are thus: the war against Iraq is a holy war;

reaching holy values is not possible without overcoming bodily temptations; only those who overcome their bodily cravings, who find the secret of eternity by returning to that which is dear to heaven will find salvation. The following lexia relates to a conversation between Davud and his Colonel father during the Revolution, which Davud recalls in his mind shortly before drowning in the river. Davud accuses his father of being involved in killing people. His father tells him that he should think about himself, take a girl to a dance and enjoy his life:

We belong to the generations convinced by typhoons. We have reached so far and no one believes us. We stand on lands swept by water… I want to pray. I’m sick of disturbed virginities […] I’m sick of Kissinger’s face …I’m seek of Siberia.

- You are free to report me to the security police, but you should know that I will stand by the people and I will be wherever they are; in front of them. I will shout Allahu akbar together with them.235

In this lexia, another step of the basic structure of the novel is reflected: all his life, Davud has commuted between the imported Western modernity and his native culture: between earthly needs and spiritual needs. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be read as follows: the world of the soul should be valued more highly than the world of the body; it is those heroes who defend the values of the world of the soul who shape the history of Iran. Davud rejects his father’s values and chooses the values of the Islamic Revolution. The symbolic codes of this lexia are Kissinger, a symbol of the political system in West; and Siberia, a symbol of the political system in the Soviet Union. He chooses the native Islamic discourse.

The next lexia is a part of Davud’s monologue in which he describes the river in which he drowned himself. Here is a lexia:

The golden eyes of the cranes… and far away, on the horizon of the copper desert, before the heat of the sun, the black silhouette of a high tower is seen […]. Look at the cranes! They stand on one foot in the shallow water; napping quietly and wisely, with their eyes half open, half closed, and ignoring the clouds of punishment and dispersion; they have drawn up one leg wisely, not to be dependent on the earth…The golden eyes of the cranes […].236

Death opens Davud’s eyes to the truth. Understanding the truth opens his path to purification. For Davud, who has spent his entire life in the prison of his body, and who has tolerated Roja’s derision because of his bodily needs,

236 Ibid, p. 731.
the goodness of man reveals itself only on the verge of death, when one is ready to become free from one’s body. The symbolic codes of this lexia are: the river and the cranes standing on one leg. The river is a place for purification, and is also a symbol of time passing, and of departing the earthly world. The cranes stand for understanding the mortality of the world and not being dependent on it. These symbols can be found in another lexia as well. On his way towards the river, Davud sees a light:

He passed the last house in the lane. The mountain lay before his eyes. Up there, under a rock, the same light, that has shown itself in the occasional darkness of his eyes, was shining…

“I have come to the right place. He is sending signals. He drew me step by step so that I could see the place, to reach him. He has chosen me, because no one has suffered as I have, and no one has been longing after him as I have.”

In this lexia lies the last step in the structure of Davud’s life. At the end of his life, Davud gives up the earthly world and prepares himself to reach the divine beloved – God. This enables him to see things that earthly man is unable to see.

In Iranian religious mythology, God is nothing but light. According to Iranian mythology, in the beginning – even before the creation of the earth – the world was nothing but a divine light. It was the creation of earth that led to the mixture of light and darkness. This light may be thought of as a symbolic code: the divinely beloved. This symbolic code can then be read as a cultural code: the world of the soul should be respected more highly than the world of the body. It was the world of the body that had hindered Davud’s unification with the light. By leaving the earth, Davud can now become one with the light. Roja’s words following an earthquake are a lexia; Roja, who has always despised Davud for not submitting himself to the implications of earthly life, begins to realize the value of Davud:

It is now that I understand you Davud, and I no longer want to make you jealous… I am no longer frightened of dust on my clothes… I put my face on your grave… I long for the smell of your breath, laden with cigarette smoke… I swear to God, I remember all your words; I remember you saying that people could live together peacefully and happily. I realize now that there are many lies, injustices, and evils in the world, but people do not do anything to remove them.”

238 Ibid, p. 889.
The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be read as follows: the approach of death reveals the mortality of the earthly world and its values, while heavenly values are eternal. The cultural codes of this lexia can be read thus: the earthly world and its values are just bonds that hinder man from taking the heroic path of the martyrs who sacrifice their lives for the sake of their belief in God and their holy homeland.

In the narrative world of Del-e deldādegi, salvation is available only to those who ignore their own earthly needs and surrender themselves to heroic spiritual values. It is the Islamic Revolution that has provided the opportunity for salvation, and the rejection of earthly needs can be seen in Davud’s life and death.

The Islamic Revolution influenced Samir to leave behind all earthly fears and temptations; and it has also lead Kakayi to follow his idol, Samir, and sacrifice his life in a heroic war. The Revolution is the victory of people like Kakayi, Davud, and Samir over people like Yahya, who are in thrall to gold and bodily pleasure. It is the spiritual values of the Islamic Revolution that have created heroes like Kakayi and Samir. Kakayi and Samir are martyrs who have sacrificed their lives in a heroic war in order to safeguard the Islamic homeland. According to Del-e deldādegi, the Islamic Revolution has opened the path to emancipation. The faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history is still alive in Del-e deldādegi.

5.1.5 Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān (Tehran; A City without Sky) by Amir Hasan Cheheltan (2001)

Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān depicts the life of an infamous villain, Karamat. In his youth, he was a follower of another infamous villain, Shaban Jafari. Karamat was an enthusiastic supporter of Mohammad Reza Shah, and an active participant in the 1953 coup against the popular Prime Minister, Mohammad Mosaddeq. Two things have been of great interest for Karamat during his entire life: women and money. There have been many women in Karamat’s life, among others Batul and Tala. For his whole life, Karamat has been a slave to his body, but now under the Islamic Republic he has turned over a new leaf and is trying to present another picture of himself. He is now married to Ghonche and has a son and a daughter: Yaser and Somayye.

As previously mentioned, Karamat played an active role in the 1953 coup, in the suppression of intellectuals who wear glasses, and in the suppression of members of the leftist Tudeh party. Here is a lexia regarding this:

The members of the Tudeh party were demonstrating in the streets. They wore ties and glasses. Among them, one could see women without veils. They had a few demands: bread, and two or three other
things. Shaban had left him in the hands of Gholam Dade. With his knife, he had made fritters of a couple of demonstrators. Shortly thereafter, tanks and armored cars entered the scene. Bodies were spread everywhere and blood was running in the streets. Karamat was waving the knife over his head, and the smell of the human blood became familiar to his nose. Early in the morning, he had stuffed himself with half a bottle vodka.  

This lexia reveals a substructure of the history of the socio-political movements in Iran, namely how the power holders use thugs to suppress the intellectuals and dissidents, in order to remain in power undisturbed. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be read as follows: beneath the modern surface of the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah, there is a thick layer of violence committed by the most traditional and uneducated thugs; the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah sees intellectuals as its enemies. At this time, many intellectuals were gathered around the Tudeh Party, which was the greatest threat to the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah. Thugs like Karamat are not just tools for the suppression of the Tudeh party, but are symbols for and propagators of the fake modern culture:

The covers of the magazines and the pages of the newspapers were no longer enough for people who wanted to see pictures of their favorite stars with their half-drunken eyes and their plump lips. They did not have enough space for the traditional stew pots, the flying pigeon, the copper bowls in public drinking places, the bloody knife, the black hat, and the woman with bare shoulders and torn clothes running in the lane. These were the entirety of both the resources and the problems of a city.  

This lexia confirms the structure of Iranian society under Mohammad Reza Shah as reflected in the former lexia. The cultural codes of this lexia can be read as follows: the dominant culture under the Shah is a mixture of tradition and repressive modernity; a mixture of the nakedness of women and the power of the traditional religious thugs with their black hats and bloody knives; a mixture that could not be tolerated by the Iranian clergy who saw it as a major threat to people’s “real” religious faith:

The people cast them all in the rubbish bin of history: Mahvash with her miserable bundle, Fardin with his national stew pot, Iraj with his street songs, Behrouz with his qeisari manner of wearing traditional

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239 Cheheltan, Amir Hasan. (1380 [2001/02]), Tehran shahr-e bi-āsmān (Tehran; A City without Sky), Tehran, p. 17.
240 Ibid, p. 97.
cotton summer shoes, Aghasi with his lame leg and his quivering chest, Googoosh with her song *Kajkolāh khān*, Ashraf with her libertines, Farah with her Shiraz Art Festival, Bakhtiar with his opium pipe, SAVAK with all its agents, Amjadiye with its football players, Hotel Marmar with its intellectuals, Hozhabr with his factories, [...].

Let us take a closer look at the characters in this lexia. Mahvash is a slightly fat popular singer in the cabarets of Lalezar. She was known for helping the poor. Fardin is one of the most popular actors of the 1960s. In his films, he often plays a poor honest worker who eats the Iranian national stew, or one with whom rich girls fall in love. Iraj is the singer whose voice is used to dub for Fardin in those scenes where he sings a song. Behrouz Vossouqi was one of the most popular Iranian actors from the late 1960s until the Islamic Revolution. *Qeisar* is one of his most famous films. Qeisar is the name of the main character of the film. In this film, Qeisar’s sister is raped by one of Abmangol’s three brothers. These three brothers also kill Qeisar’s older brother. Then Qeisar, wearing his shoes as a sign of being ready to do a big job, kills these three brothers one after the other. Aghasi is also a popular singer in Lalezar cabarets. He is lame in one leg, shakes his manly chest, and waves a handkerchief while dancing. Googoosh is a young singer who is only 29 years old on the eve of the Islamic republic. One of her famous songs is *Kajkolāh khān*. Ashraf is Mohammad Reza Shah’s sister and is known for having had many young men as lovers. Farah is the Shah’s wife who tries to present herself as a patron of the arts. Amjadiye is the famous football stadium in Tehran. Hotel Marmar is the intellectuals’ haunt under Mohammad Reza Shah. Hozhabr Yazdani is one of the great capitalists of the period.

This lexia also reveals a part of the structure of socio-political movements in Iran: how a large part of the population are unconsciously drawn in and influenced by the revolutionary atmosphere, but suddenly find all their previous values to be anti-values. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is almost the same as that of the first selected lexia above: Mohammad Reza Shah’s modernization from above has collapsed, but the Islamic aspect of the Shah’s regime continues its life under the Islamic Republic. Here is

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241 Ibid, p. 106
242 Lalezar was an old quarter in southwest Tehran with many theatres and cabarets where popular singers held their performances. Many men used to spend time in these cabarets and theaters.
243 Together with her poor father, Googoosh began to perform at Lalezar Cabarets already at the age of six. Later, she became very famous, rich, and popular, and found her way into royal parties.
244 She was the initiator of the Art Festival in Shiraz with international artists from all over the world.
245 He was known for having started from scratch.
another lexia about Karamat: he is now a supporter of the Islamic Republic and sees it as his mission to suppress the young boys and girls who sell oppositional groups’ newspapers. He attacks them, beats them, and tears their newspapers:

Some days, he became very angry with young girls whose mouths still smelled of mother’s milk, girls with braids selling newspapers.  

This lexia too is a further step in the overall structure of *Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān*. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be written thus: however the two regimes may appear on the surface, the foundations of their power are guarded by the same traditional and uneducated thugs, by those who hate thinking and who change sides as quickly as the wind changes direction. In the next lexia, we read about the mentality of the thugs depicted by Karamat in this novel. In this lexia, Karamat accuses his mistress of being lesbian:

Karamat was roaring... the woman did not hear. She was pressing her back to the wall and was crying. Karamat roared again. Stop crying you bitch! He put his hand into his pocket and roared again: you are having an affair with that bitch Malihe who sleeps with an army of men... you know, I just hate you!  

This lexia is also a further step in the overall structure of the novel: the thugs despise women and see them as satanic creatures who deceive men. The cultural code of this lexia is as follows: the human body and women’s sexuality together constitute the main source of sins. This cultural code can reveal the hermeneutic codes of this lexia, namely that the Islamic Republic uses thugs to maintain its power, and that the Islamic Republic shares the cultural codes of the thugs.

*Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān* views the Islamic Republic as the logical heir of the old regime, and considers the old and the new regimes both to be corrupt systems that rely on thugs like Karamat, a character who ostensibly represents “ordinary people,” to suppress any oppositional voices. According to *Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān*, both regimes are of the same suppressive nature. The sole difference is that social and individual freedoms became extremely limited following the Islamic revolution. In the narrative world of *Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān*, the political scene of the Islamic Republic is characterized by hypocrisy and lies, and populated by frenzied masculine power-lovers who hate thinking, and despise women. The Islamic Republic is presented in this novel as a totalitarian republic that relies for its survival on know-nothing little tyrants like Karamat. Instead of heroes, it is people...

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like Karamat who influence the course of history. The only time the martyrs of the Iran-Iraq war are mentioned is in the final episode of the novel when Karamat is getting married to a seventeen-year-old girl. Out of respect for the martyrs of the war, Karamat tries to avoid a lavish wedding party.\textsuperscript{248} According to *Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān*, the Islamic Revolution and its supporters do not represent a just and fair system.

5.1.6 *Jazire-ye sargardānī* (The Island of Perplexity) by Simin Daneshvar (1993)

*Jazire-ye sargardānī* depicts the life of Hasti, the twenty-six-year-old daughter of an old member of the opposition. Hasti’s father had dedicated his life to defending the ideals of Mohammad Mosaddeq. Now, in the last years of Mohammad Reza’s reign, Hasti is living with her grandmother; separate from her mother, and with the memories of her father. Her mother has married again, this time to a man who works not only as a dealer in economic contracts with Americans, but who also makes arrangements for the Americans’ partying and drinking.

Hasti, who is a graduate of the College of Art in Iran, has a close relationship with her mother; even if she has a different opinion, she cannot ignore her mother’s wishes. That is the reason why she goes along with meeting the young man who is her mother’s candidate to become Hasti’s husband. This young man’s name is Salim. Salim lives a Sufi-like life and is a member of an Islamic guerrilla movement. Before meeting him, Hasti was in love with another young man, Morad. Morad is an atheist and a member of a non-religious guerrilla organization. He has no plans to marry anyone, not even Hasti. The whole novel, which takes place in the 1970s, depicts Hasti’s uncertainty and perplexity regarding two loves that ends with Hasti, at last, choosing Salim. Salim is the one who can put an end to her perplexity and bewilderment.

Through the context, the events, and the voice of the author, who is present as a character in the novel, we read about the thinking of historical figures such as Jalal Al Ahmad, the Iranian Muslim writer of 1960s; Ali Shariati, the Iranian Muslim reformist of 1970s; and Ebn-e Arabi, the famous 13\textsuperscript{th} century Sufi.

In one scene in *Jazire-ye sargardānī*, we read about Ahmad Ganjvar, who is now married to Hasti’s mother:

[Hasti] knew Ahmad Ganjvar; mostly from what Maman Ashi had told her, and from her grandmother’s sarcastic comments about the man who had replaced her son [...]. Finally, she realized that her stepfather actually acted as a broker and errand boy, but with big sums

\textsuperscript{248} Ibid, p. 116.

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of money involved. She knew that his job was to rent and furnish houses for Americans who came to Iran, and hire servants for them; he went to the airport with a name placard in his hand to pick up newly arrived Americans – with or without their families – and drive them to their furnished houses.\(^{249}\)

This lexia reveals the psychology of those close to power during the Pahlavi regime. Their only interest in Iran is as a place to make a fortune for themselves. The hermeneutic code of this lexia can be read as follows: the old Pahlavi regime is a corrupt regime and a puppet of the USA.

In the next lexia, we read about a large Nowruz party with American and Iranian guests. The party is organized by Ahmad Ganjvar. Ahmad Ganjvar’s son, Bizhan, has just returned to Iran after several years of studies in the USA:

Mory put his hand on the Bizhan’s back and said in Persian: So you’ve come directly from the heart of America? Aren’t you really insane coming back to this ruin? I know, there is easy money here, spread out on the ground. You just need to bend over and pick it up. Then he turned to Maman Ashi. He stretched his hand to his small mustache and said: Oh, let me sacrifice my life for you [...]. Mr. Hiti was much shorter than Maman Ashi. Maman Ashi could kiss him on his head and Hasti could see the trace of Maman Ashi’s lipstick on his head [...]. Mr. Hiti wanted to kiss Hasti too, but she apologized and told him that she was a Muslim.\(^{250}\)

This lexia also confirms the former lexia. This lexia can be interpreted within a cultural code: the members of the Pahlavi regime and the foreigners supporting them are despicable beings who think about nothing but their sexual desires and who do not respect the Islamic–Iranian traditions; but there is some resistance. The cultural code of this lexia can be read as saying: they are threatened by the Islamic traditions. The next lexia portrays Maman Ashi trying to learn English:

For several years she has studied English in order not to be speechless before their American friends. The Americans, especially their wives, had no interest in learning Persian. A few of their men knew some Persian, but neither Maman Ashi’s seductions nor Ahmad Ganjvar’s flattery interested them. The only occasions their American friend

\(^{249}\) Daneshvar, Simin. (1372 [1993/94]), Jazïre-yé sargardâni (The Island of Perplexity), Tehran, pp. 120–121.

\(^{250}\) Ibid, pp. 124–125.
showed any interest in them were when this couple spoke English with a very strange accent. Sometimes they just laughed at them.\footnote{Ibid. p. 14.}

This lexia reflects the power-relation between Iranians and Americans. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia are as follows: those Iranians who are close to the center of power have no pride. They accept being humiliated by American, as in their eyes American are superiors; and the powers that be despise their errand boys. In the next lexia, Salim talks to Hasti about how to save the world:

The main problem of human beings is that their essence has been conquered by Satan [...]. Satan may conquer us individually or collectively. In our era, we have been conquered by Satan collectively; Satan has occupied the entire earth. Man considers himself as God, and this is also a kind of being under the control of Satan. Salvation is dependent on the emergence of a revolutionary Messiah [...]. This dark era will come to an end. The world of the hidden and martyrdom is mentioned in the holy Koran too.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 33–34.}

The hermeneutic code of this lexia can be read thus: martyrdom has its real meaning when it is committed for the sake of Islam; for the sake of higher spiritual goals; for the sake of heavenly, not earthly goals. Another lexia now comes from the mouth of Jalal Al Ahmad, the famous Muslim Iranian intellectual of 1960s, and the husband of Simin Daneshvar, the author of the novel.\footnote{Jalal Al Ahmad was one of the most influential thinkers in Iran in the 1960s. He was a critic of the Pahlavi regime and its modernization project. He was a representative of anti-Western ideas, which he published in his most famous book Westoxification. He was in favor of a return to the traditional Islamic way of life.} Jalal Al Ahmad appears in Hasti’s dream:

Hasti is on the boundary between sleep and wakefulness. She sees Jalal standing beside her bed. He looks like his picture on the wall when he was young. Suddenly Hasti thinks of asking him a question: Mr. Al Ahmad, do you believe in revolutionary Messiahs? Jalal says: What I know is this: he who believes in martyrdom, is not perplexed.\footnote{Daneshvar, S., p. 264.}

The structure reflected by this lexia is thus: Jalal Al Ahmad’s thinking and the Messianic Revolution are alive in Hasti’s dreams. This lexia can be read in two symbolic codes: the name Hasti, “existence,” symbolizes “existence” as a whole; and the revolutionary Messianism is a symbol for the Islamic...

\footnote{Daneshvar, S., p. 264.}
Revolution. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be read as: the Islamic Revolution is justified; the triumph of the Islamic Revolution is a fact.

*Jazire-ye sargardāni* depicts a period in the history of Iran during which the Islamic Revolution is going to put an end to the corrupt system that was controlled by, and dependent upon, foreigners. The Revolution puts an end to the reign of a social class that is thoroughly permeated by Western values and shows no respect for genuine Iranian culture; a social class that believes neither in freedom, nor independence, nor moral values.

According to *Jazire-ye sargardāni*, the Pahlavi regime suppresses both the Islamic and the Marxist opposition. It suppresses both Salim and Morad, but it is Salim who holds in his hands the key to real emancipation. It is him, whom Hasti at last chooses. Salim is not only involved in a heroic struggle against the Pahlavi Dynasty, he is also searching for the divinely beloved. Salim is a representative of an Islamic movement that will drive the Americans and the Pahlavi dynasty out of Iran. Salim’s role personifies the thinking in several of the works of Jalal Al Ahmad, e.g. *Nefrin-e zamin*, in which he advocates a return to Islam and the traditional way of life.

In the narrative world of *Jazire-ye sargardāni*, there is still a faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history. Both the Muslim Salim and the Marxist Morad are ready to sacrifice their lives for their homeland, and are considered heroes for it – even if the Muslim Salim is superior. They are not portrayed as victims. Martyrdom has meaning in the context of opposition to the old regime and for the sake of the nascent Islamic Revolution.

5.1.7 *Koshte-ye ʿeshq* (Sacrificed for Love) by Esmail Fasih (1997)

*Koshte-ye ʿeshq* is narrated from the first-person point of view. The time is about five weeks after the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war. Because of a stroke, Jalal Aryan is hospitalized at the National Iranian Oil Company Hospital in Abadan. At that same hospital, a twelve-year-old boy, Ahmad Adnan Mousavi, is also hospitalized. His legs are bandaged and he is sitting in a wheelchair. He is sad and talks about his mother all the time. Jalal Aryan becomes curious about his life and tries to find out more about him. After a while Ahmad is moved to another hospital. Jalal Aryan visits him at that hospital, where he meets a wounded man, Bahman Mehrabi. Bahman Mehrabi is a member of the Revolutionary Guard and has witnessed what has happened to Ahmad. He tells Jalal Aryan the story of Ahmad. Ahmad’s father was killed by Iraqi missiles on the third day of the war. One day, Ahmad’s uncle, also an officer of the Revolutionary Guard, took Ahmad

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255 See section 4.5.3 The Persian Novel.
256 A city in Southern Iran near the Iran-Iraq border.
with himself to a weapons depot. The depot was surrounded by Iraqis. After hard resistance, all the soldiers at the depot were captured. The high Iraqi officer ordered all of them to be executed. Bahman Mehrabi, who was shot in his leg and belly, played dead. This made it possible for him to survive and witness what happened to Ahmad. The Iraqi officer was about to kill Ahmad too, when Rana, Ahmad’s mother, showed up. She proposed to follow them as a prisoner of war, if they let her son go. The Iraqi officer accepted this proposition. The mother gave a picture of herself to her son and asked him to go. As soon as Ahmad had left, his mother began to swear so much at the Iraqis that they killed her immediately. Jalal Aryan listens to this story with eyes full of tears. The same night, he takes Ahmad to his uncle in Mahshahr, a city in southern Iran.

In one scene in Koshte-ye ʿeshq, Jalal reads a piece of poetry that Bahman Mehrabi has written in a notebook with a blue pen. This piece of poetry can be read as a lexia:

The soldiers in the “blood-red entrenchment” are captured together with a brave child/ only twelve years old/ Were you there too? […]/ Yes, with those brave men? Then, we aim at your body too!/ Wait for your turn!/ The rifles turned to a long row/ The fire aimed at the body of his fellows in the entrenchment […]/ That dear witness cast dust into their faces saying:/ You bastards, you shameless people/ shoot me!257

This lexia reflects the cruelty of the Iraqi army and the bravery of Iranians, young and old, who participate in the war to defend their homeland. They display unbelievable bravery and pay with their lives. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that it is the Islamic homeland that has brought up such brave heroes who are not afraid of sacrificing their lives. The next lexia relates to the scene where Ahmad’s mother begs the Iraqi officer let her son go free and take her as a prisoner of war instead. The Iraqi officer asks Ahmad’s mother whether she is ready to lose everything and sacrifice her life for her son. Ahmad’s mother answers:

Ahmad’s mother said: becoming a martyr is not losing! You bastards… Let this boy go free. I forgive you… you, too, show mercy and manly courage… I swear to you by the holy Koran… Let this boy stay alive… take me as captive… she pounded on her breast and sobbed while tears ran from her eyes.258

258 Ibid, p. 66.
This lexia reflects the same structure as above: the Iraqi army is unlimited in its brutality, while Iranian mothers, like their sons, show no limit to their bravery. The hermeneutic code of this lexia can be read thus: to become a martyr for the sake of Islam is a value in itself that brings both earthly honor and heavenly salvation.

After Ahmad has left the place, Ahmad’s mother changes her tone and begins to swear at the Iraqi officers in order to get them to kill her. We read this lexia:

She said: shoot me, kill me, you bastards! In the same way that she had told her son: go my son, go and let me live… she was now telling them: shoot me, shoot me! You shameless people, shoot me in my breast! She was not pounding her breast any more.259

The same structure as above is reflected in this lexia: the heroic bravery of Iranians is unlimited because of their belief in Islam and in martyrdom for the sake of Islam. The symbolic code can be read as saying it is better to be dead than a captive of the enemy.

At the end of the novel, Bahman Mehrabi talks about Rostam, the hero of the early eleventh-century Persian epos Shāhnāme, by Ferdowsi. Jalal Aryan tells him: “Rostam is an imaginary character, while our soldiers are real.” In Shāhnāme, Rostam is a powerful hero and a symbol of the power of the land of Iran, the land of the good. He fights the enemies of Iran and defeats all of them. The symbolic code of this short lexia can be read thus: the Islamic Republic represents the good, and its heroes sacrifrice their lives for the sake of the land of the good. This could be a fine substitute for the heroic deeds of the good kings in Iranian mythology, the rightful heirs of everything magnificent in Iranian history.

Koshte-ye ʿeshq is the story of the heroic fight of the Islamic army of Good against the Iraqi army of Evil. In the narrative world of Koshte-ye ʿeshq, it is not the professional soldiers of the army of Islam alone who create scenes of heroic actions, but also ordinary men, women, and children. In the brilliant light of Islam, they have all metamorphosed into heroes; for them, defending the Islamic homeland of Iran has become a holy duty. Under the banner of the army of Islam, even women are transformed into heroes and willingly die to safeguard their honor and their status as holy mothers. According to Koshte-ye ʿeshq, the soldiers of the army of Islam, fighting against the evil army of Iraq, are all Rostams having been incarnated by the Islamic Revolution. The Islamic Revolution has emancipated the souls of these soldiers from the captivity of bodily needs and has transfigured them into heroes who are ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the Islamic homeland. In the narrative world of Koshte-ye ʿeshq,

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martyrdom has taken place to safeguard the Islamic Revolution; and the hero is believed capable of determining the course of history.

5.1.8 *Āyenehā-ye dardār* (Mirrors with Cover Doors) by Hushang Golshiri (1992)

*Āyenehā-ye dardār* follows an Iranian writer who has travelled to Europe at the end of 1989 to introduce his works to Iranians living in different parts of Europe. We read two parallel stories in this novel: the life story of Iranians in exile, which is presented in the description of the meetings with them; and the writer’s life story, which is presented in those stories he reads for the audience. What unites these two stories is a woman, named Sanam Banu.

Sanam Banu was the writer’s beloved in the days of his youth. She is now a refugee in Paris, and has divorced her husband, Engineer Imani. Before the Revolution, Engineer Imani had joined SAVAK after having been arrested for his opposition to the Shah. They have two daughters and one son, all over the age of twenty. Engineer Imani is doing business in Dubai. The writer is also married and has children.

A large part of the story is devoted to portraying Iranians in exile: Iranian political refugees in Europe, living in misery. One of them is Zamyad who has started a restaurant. The first lexia we read is Zamyad’s words on Iranian refugees:

Zamyad […] said: to be honest, I realized that I was getting old, and that, sooner or later, I would be forced to live on monthly benefits for refugees or on unemployment benefits. And then? You see the oppositional groups too? And he pointed to those who sat here and there and said: they can just tear each other apart.260

This lexia is a step of the overall structure of the novel related to the participation of the leftist opposition in the Iranian Revolution, and the brutal wave of repression they met with after the Revolution. Many were forced to leave Iran for western countries, where they recognize the vanity of what they once believed in, and choose ordinary daily life.

This lexia conveys a number of hermeneutic codes: Iranian refugees lead a miserable meaningless life of loneliness in exile; Iranian oppositional groups oppose each other more than they oppose the Islamic Republic; they have no real support in any of the social classes of Iran; they are narcissists, out of contact with the real world; they are just as intolerant as the Islamic Republic, the only difference being that they lack political power. In the next lexia, the author is reading from one of his novels. In his novel, Mina is

talking about her husband, Taher, who was a guerrilla during the time of the Shah:

I knew Taher already. We had met at the department. He liked good food, tidy restaurants, and newly washed towels that were a little stiff like new towels. After having got the idea of changing the world, he killed all these things within himself. If I did not comb my hair or if I did not put on my new dresses, he did not care anymore [...]. At nights he slept on the ground with a tiny rug under him and a tiny blanket over him [...]. If I had used perfumes when we met, he became angry with me, and he made fun of my high-heeled shoes.261

This lexia reflects the structure of the history of Iran’s guerrilla movements as reflected in the novel: how the members of the guerrilla movement sacrificed everything in their ordinary lives for their beliefs. The cultural code of this lexia is that the leftists have a culture based on denying the body and bodily and materialistic pleasure. The paradox is that they were acting like this for the sake of a beautiful day in the future, when everybody would have the opportunity to enjoy these materialistic earthly pleasures. The hermeneutic code is then that the Islamic Republic and the leftists are nourished by the same cultural source, according to which one should neglect the body in order to find one’s own way to paradise, either in heaven or on earth.

The following passage regarding Engineer Imani, Sanam Banu’s ex-husband, provides the next lexia. As mentioned above, after having been jailed, he joined SAVAK. It is only after the Revolution and outside of Iran that he, in a state of drunkenness, tells one of his comrades what he had done:

He was drunk; he who used to drink seldom and very little. He had my hands in his hands and cried: Confess that you wanted to kill me! In order to calm him, I said: You, leave it alone. There were many others who promised to work for SAVAK when they had no other way out, but they did not report anything at all against their comrades. He cried: Not me. I believed in what I did then, and I still believe in it. I knew from much earlier that nothing good would come of guerrilla cells.262

This lexia confirms the cultural code in the former lexia: that the oppositional groups and the Islamic Republic are nourished by the same cultural wellspring that has given birth to little dictators and to the supporters.

261 Ibid, p. 73.
of dictators. The oppositional intellectuals and the agents of SAVAK could just as well exchange places; they are of the same nature and act the same – so much so, that they can be confused with each other.

The next lexia is about the time when the author in the book, together with a friend, is in Copenhagen. His friend describes the Iranian family’s situation living abroad:

He stayed in Copenhagen for five days. Together with a friend, coming from that other country, he left Copenhagen by train. He said: The institution of family has lost its meaning here. Two persons live together as long as they want to. When they don’t want to anymore, then they say goodbye to each other. The children are not any big issue either. One of the parents takes custody. Everything is up to them. He said: I have also told Azita that we both are free. Whenever one of us wants to leave this relationship, that is just OK!263

This lexia reflects a hermeneutic code related to the dialogue between the two main cultural discourses in Iranian society: modernity and tradition. The victims of the Islamic Republic’s oppression contradict the cultural discourse of the Islamic Republic by questioning the traditional institution of family. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that worshiping the body and its pleasures and denying them are two sides of the same coin, and are a result of the perplexity of Iranians lost between modernity and tradition. This hermeneutic code can be heard in the sarcastic tone of the narrator.

The next lexia is taken from part of a short story that the author reads for the Iranian audience in Frankfurt:

Half awake, we heard the camel bells. It was as if we still were sleeping. No, it was the same familiar camel bells that sound after each other. In those days, they always came from the rice fields, until they arrived under one’s window and rang for a while as if they were ringing just for you. They stood under one’s window and rang and then left the place, and one could hear the bells ringing for a good while afterward.

Not even when we leaned out of the windows and balconies and looked at them, could we believe it. It was a caravan of camels. It was twenty, no, twenty-five camels with bent necks and lathered mouths. Many of us ran down the stairs and opened the doors and saw with our own eyes that they really were there, and that they were eating something noisily; snorting and moving their heads so that the higher

263 Ibid, p. 29.
and closer sound of three-four bells could interrupt the monotone sound chain of the other bells like a knot on a rope.264

The story is narrated from the collective first-person point of view, “we.” It begins with us, half awake, noticing the arrival of the camels. Some of us lean out of the windows to see “what is happening,” and some of us hope for “the past” to come back. The story is narrated in the past tense. This past tense also refers to a time in the past when we welcomed the camels. The arrival of the camels symbolizes the Arab invasion of Iran and the fall of the Sassanian dynasty and the last Sassanian king, Yazdgerd III. At that time, the Iranians welcomed the Arabs, because they were unhappy with the Sassanians. They put all their hope in the Arab Muslims and in Islam. The same thing is happening again. Unhappy with the Pahlavi dynasty and the Shah of Iran, we welcome Khomeini and his Islamic Republic, unaware of what is going to happen. Now that the results are known to us and the camels have eaten the leaves of all the trees, the narrator chooses the collective first-person point of view to refer to the collective guilt of the intellectuals who welcomed the camels.

This lexia carries a symbolic code: the camels symbolize the Islamic Revolution; a symbol for Islam that has its roots in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. The camels represent the Arab Muslims that invaded Iran in the seventh century in order to expand the new religion, Islam. The Islamic Republic is an extension of those Arab Muslims. The hermeneutic code would be as follows: the intellectuals pave the way for the Islamic Revolution and hence for the Islamic Republic.

Āyenehā-ye dardār is the story of the defeat of the leftist revolutionaries; it is the story of those revolutionaries, who together with the Islamic revolutionaries, ensured that the Pahlavi dynasty was overthrown. The leftist revolutionaries’ share of the Revolution, however, came to nothing – or worse: if they were not killed, they were jailed and tortured, or exiled. The narrator of Āyenehā-ye dardār is an Iranian writer who presents his life story through those stories he reads for the audience. According to the narrator of Āyenehā-ye dardār, the Islamic Revolution has resulted in nothing but yet more cruel oppression. The problem is that the opposition to the Islamic Republic, now in exile, is of the same despotic nature, and nourishes itself with illusions and exaggerated propaganda. According to Āyenehā-ye dardār, the history and the cultural foundations of Iran have affected the Islamic establishment and its non-Islamic opposition in the same way. It is as if the narrator of Āyenehā-ye dardār is travelling not through Europe but through Iranian history. It is as if the narrator tells the reader that given this historical and cultural background, the eventual outbreak of the Islamic

Revolution was inevitable. The narrative world of Āyeneh-ye dardār is populated by victims. It does not reflect any faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history.

5.1.9 Virān miāyi (You are Coming Destroyed) by Hosein Sanapour (2003)

Virān miāyi is written in a chronologically reversed order; from the end to beginning, and in six chapters titled: 1) The Last Contact: The Benches are Always the Same, 2) Fifth: Those Things I Want to Keep, 3) Forth: A Stone With the Name of all the Girls Born in Aban 53, 265 4) Third: Your Name is my Treasure, 5) Second: A Place to Hide, 6) The First Contact: Find a Name for Me. The chapters are narrated from different points of view as follows: chapter one in the third person; chapter two in the first person and from the point of view of a young twenty-year-old woman called Ferdows; chapter three in the third person; chapter four in the first person and from Ferdows’s point of view; chapter five in the third person; and chapter six in the first person and again from the point of view of Ferdows.

The story, which is related to the student movements in Iran in 1997–1998, is as follows: Ferdows is a young girl who falls in love with Ruzbeh, a young student activist. Because of her love for Ruzbeh she gets involved in political activities and is arrested. After being tortured and spending several days in solitary confinement, she reports several of Ruzbeh’s friends to the security police, but she says nothing about Ruzbeh, not even his name. She is released after two months, but it has already been rumored that she has died in prison. Ruzbeh, who blames himself, is looking for her grave in the cemeteries. After her release, she marries an addict called Majid. She also becomes an addict. Two years later, having divorced Majid, she is working at a dentist’s clinic when she meets Zohre, one of Ruzbeh’s old friends. Zohre tells her that Ruzbeh is still living in his old flat. She calls him and makes an appointment with him. The novel begins with the last scene of the story, when after more than two years Ferdows meets Ruzbeh in the same park where they met for the first time. This scene offers a lexia:

I believed that I would come out of prison as a justified person from whom others should ask forgiveness. I believed that I would come and sit beside you; that you would just look at me and ask for forgiveness; and then my grief would lighten a little. Oh, I just wish it could lighten; now, after two years and four or five months; after several days in solitary confinement, and two months in the common cell. In

265 A date on the Iranian calendar corresponding to October–November 1974.
the darkness of the solitary confinement cell, my only hope was that you would be proud of me when I came out.\textsuperscript{266}

The structure reflected in this lexia is the Islamic Republic’s intolerance concerning the dissidents. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia are as follows: being imprisoned by the Islamic Republic is something to be proud of; the Islamic Republic stands for oppression and injustice. In the following lexia, Ferdows talks about the days in prison:

\textit{I became very embarrassed when Zohre came into the clinic, and I should have been too. I didn’t know what had happened to them, after I had reported them to the security police and caused them to come to where I myself had been taken. I just could not resist anymore… How could I resist giving their names to the security police after several days of torture and lack of sleep?}\textsuperscript{267}

This lexia also reflects a hermeneutic code, namely that in the prisons of the Islamic Republic torture is used, and a symbolic code, that in the prisons of the Islamic Republic heroes are broken and made ashamed of themselves.

Now we read another lexia about Ruzbeh’s father, an old member of the Tudeh party in the 1940s, and about the days following the 1953 coup. Ruzbeh’s father talks to Ruzbeh about those days:

\textit{For thirty years, I worked for banks and private companies from morning to night. Not even in my young days did I dare read anything other than what was needed for my missions in the party. If I read a novel, I read it on the quiet, so that my comrades would not laugh at me. It is only in the last two or three years that I feel happy and secure reading novels or history books. It is only now, when I have time to sit and think about myself and about what I have done, that I realize that I have tormented myself for things of the past for no reason. No, I couldn’t do anything better; neither could the times have been better than they were. You don’t know how ashamed I was when I came home after every time that I was denied my promotion just because of my earlier political activities. You don’t know how many times I have regretted that I have given you the name of a man who had assassinated Mohammad Masoud.}\textsuperscript{268}

\textsuperscript{266} Sanapour, Hosein. (1382 [2003/04]), \textit{Virān miāyi} (You are Coming Destroyed), Tehran, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid, pp. 158–159.
This lexia reflects the steps in a structure that has shaped the Tudeh Party: in order to fight for democracy and social justice, Iranian dissidents choose the Tudeh Party; they suffer from the lack of democracy within the party; they become limited and fearful personalities; they believe the Party’s propaganda; they honor false heroes like Khosrow Ruzbeh who killed Mohammad Masoud, an oppositional journalist assassinated in the 1940s. At the time, everybody believed that he had been assassinated by the government. Later, it became clear that Khosrow Ruzbeh, a member of the Tudeh Party, had killed him. After having been arrested for his anti-governmental activities, Khosrow Ruzbeh was sentenced to execution. He acted very bravely at his execution, and for a very long time he was a symbol of resistance and bravery for the members of the Tudeh party. Against this background, the symbolic code of the above lexia can be read as follows: the heroes of the previous generation are dead in every sense. The cultural code would then be as follows: as far as freedom of speech, freedom of thinking, and pluralism are concerned, the oppositional organizations would have reacted in the same way as the Islamic Republic, if they had got access to political power.

The next lexia concerns Ruzbeh. After witnessing Ferdows’s arrest, he expects the security police to come for him at any moment. He has returned to his apartment and is trying to empty the apartment of all political books and pamphlets. Ruzbeh recalls his father’s words, telling the story of his generation and how he hid books and papers from the security police at that time. In his mind, Ruzbeh relates his father’s words to everything he has seen and read about history, power, and society in Iran:

Other people earlier, under Reza Shah, or under Naser al-Din Shah, or Mozaffar al-Din Shah, and even earlier, used to hide intellectual and independent newspapers in their furniture or sew them into their clothes in order to smuggle them into prisons, or abroad over the borders of Turkey. It has always been like this, and it will always be like this. We can fight each other over a pamphlet or a newspaper or over the election of a representative; over everything that has the color of power. His father used to say: we had not read the originals, they had not been translated […], and still […] we discussed everything and wrote manifestos and were imprisoned. Before being executed, some of us used to cry out from the bottom of our hearts: long live the classless society, and so on.\(^\text{269}\)

This lexia can be read within two hermeneutic codes: the Islamic Republic is not an exceptional case in Iran’s history. It is of the same nature as all other

\(^{269}\) Ibid, p. 120.
dictatorships in Iran’s history; the opposition in the Islamic Republic shares
the same naivety and the same destiny as its forerunners.

Virān mīāyi portrays the environment of Islamic Republic’s prisons about
twenty years after the Islamic Revolution. It enumerates the physical and
mental tortures used in these prisons. After her release from prison, Ferdows
is a completely crushed and hopeless soul. Her hopelessness has its roots in
the history of a land in which all struggles for freedom and social justice
have repeatedly been defeated. The 1979 Islamic Revolution has resulted
neither in freedom nor in social justice. Again, the prisons are crowded with
dissidents, torture is used in the prisons, and every form of opposition is
suppressed.

Ruzbeh’s father, who survived the 1953 coup d’état, has tried to convince
his son of the meaninglessness of any struggle for freedom in Iran. In spite
of this, Ruzbeh and his beloved Ferdows choose to struggle for freedom in
much the same way that the earlier generation did; and as a result, they
experience the government’s viciousness in the same way that the earlier
generation did. Ruzbeh and Ferdows are the victims of the vicious circle in
Iranian history; they are victims of the Islamic Revolution that had promised
freedom, but has offered the opposite. They wanted to play heroic roles, but
the story of their lives only bears witness to the meaninglessness of heroic
actions. Virān mīāyi shows no faith in the role of the hero in determining the
course of history.

5.1.10 Pāgard (Vestibule) by Mohammad Hasan Shahsavari
(2004)
Pāgard relates to a student demonstration in the second half of 2001 in
Tehran. Bizhan, Marjan, Nushafarin, Mehrdad, Heidar, and Khalil have
taken refuge in the vestibule of Azar’s house near Tehran University. They
have escaped the hands of hezbollāhi mace-bearers.270 It is written in twenty-
two chapters and from three different points of view: in the third person;
from the point of view of Bizhan Moshfeq, the main character of the novel;
and from the point of view of Mohammad Taleb.

Bizhan Moshfeq is not a student but a physician who just happened to be
in the area and was chased by hezbollāhis. Bizhan is now 35 years old, but
once, when he was studying medicine at the university, he was suspended
for protesting against the Islamic Association of Students’ interference in the

270 Hezbollāh means God’s Party. Since the very early days after the Islamic Revolution in
Iran, there have been Islamic phalange groups who call themselves hezbollāhi and attack
oppositional groups or individuals. Together with the regime, they claim that they are
ordinary people without any connection at all to the government and that they act just for the
sake of Islam. In reality, however, they are paid and organized by the government, though
entirely off the record.
election of student representatives. Following his suspension, he decides to do his military service and is sent to the front during the Iran-Iraq war, where he fights together with an officer who tells him that the war will never be over for him. After completing his military service, he returns to his university studies and becomes a physician. He begins working at a clinic in a small township where Mohammad Taleb is working as an assistant. Bizhan Moshfeq tries to help the deprived people of that region, but is accused by the township’s mullah of acting against Islam. At the mullah’s instigation, the inhabitants of the township attack him and beat him almost to death. He tells Mohammad Taleb that he will never again practice medicine, and leaves that place for Tehran.

Azar is the daughter of a former university lecturer who after the Revolution was never again allowed to teach at the university. Together with her mother, she lives on the first floor of a house belonging to an old man. Marjan is a politically active student. She is the daughter of an ex-member of the Tudeh party. Nushafarin is a friend of hers, and is also politically active. Mehrdad, who comes from a poor quarter of Tehran, is engaged in political issues just for the sake of Marjan. Heidar is a young boy who has been knifed for defending the students. The security police are looking for him. Khalil is an influential member of the Islamic Association of Polytechnic Students. When they are all gathered in the vestibule, Khalil knocks on the door, enters the house, and sees Heidar. This scene may be read as a lexia:

Khalil seemed to have seen Heidar just then, and came closer to him, as if he had found a reason for entering the men’s circle. He said: what has happened, sir? He was looking both at Bizhan and Heidar. Bizhan said: Nothing, it is a part of the struggle. Khalil stared at him as if he had not realized how serious Bizhan was. Bizhan said: They have knifed him in the shoulder.
- Fascists!
Khalil came closer to Heidar, and took him under his arms and lifted his shirt to see the wound. He said again: Fascists?

271 The Islamic Association of Students was founded in 1941. After the Islamic Revolution, they were actively involved in the so called “Cultural Revolution” in Iran in 1980s, the stated aim of which was to be purify the universities of foreign influences. The real aim, however, was to cleanse the universities of leftist students and lecturers. During the Cultural Revolution, which lasted until 1987, the universities were closed for three years and thousands of students and lecturers were purged from the schools. It was first in the mid 1990s that the Islamic Association of Students made a shift in its position in favor of democracy.
272 Shahsavari, Mohammad Hasan. (1383 [2004/05]), Pāgard (Vestibule), Tehran, p. 126.
The structure reflected in this lexia is the following: there is a confrontation between the Islamic Republic and the political opposition; to show their dissatisfaction with the politics of the Islamic Republic, the political opposition uses street demonstrations; the Islamic Republic uses violence to suppress them. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that: the Islamic Republic has trained hezbollahi mace-bearers, who act just like the fascists. Their main objective is to silence any opposition and to create an atmosphere of fear in which no one dares to question the absolute power of the regime. The presence of Khalil in that house together with Bizhan can be read as a symbolic code: the Islamic Revolution is eating up its children generation after generation.

The next lexia concerns the conversation between Salari, the head of the faculty, and Bizhan. Salari had called Bizhan to his office in order to explain to him that he had no role in dismissing Bizhan from the department and to convince him to talk to Baghabadi, an influential member of the Islamic Association, who was on his way to Salari’s office:

Moshfeq, you know well that I have been engaged in your case from the very beginning. Your first protest was something that could be taken up, even if it was dangerous […]. But, these new accusations against you have spoiled everything: leading a perverse band, having unlawful sexual relationships, consuming and selling drugs, and that’s why I am telling you not to just let Baghabadi go like that.273

After coming to Salari’s office, Baghabadi tells Salari:

I’m not here to solve any problem. I just have a message for this friend of ours. The decision is already made […]. Baghabadi moves toward Moshfeq with small and fast steps: You, dear friend, you might return to this university one day, and I might even welcome it, but we had warned you several times. We don’t mind the things you are protesting against. Believe me! […] Salari tells Moshfeq: he was telling the truth, they really didn’t mind the things you were protesting against. What was important was … Do you know Moshfeq? Unquestioned authority is important.274

This lexia confirms the hermeneutic code of the former lexia: that the Islamic Republic’s main objective is to create an atmosphere in which no one would dare to question its absolute power. To silence their opponents they accuse them of things like sexual immorality and narcotics addiction. These accusations reveal a cultural code: extramarital relationships are taboo.

273 Ibid, p. 149.
and can be used against one. This culture is so deep-rooted that accusations of having extramarital relationships can be used anywhere and at any level.

The next lexia concerns the conversation between Bizhan and Azar. Azar asks Bizhan whether he thinks that his hands are clean just because he avoids politics and political activities. Bizhan answers:

Do you want an answer? Why you, who are from the same generation as me? A generation that was born between 1966 and 1971 and has lost everything. When we were teenagers, the generation before us was trying its ideals. When they after only twenty years realized that they had made a big mistake, we had already been totally lost… In our young days, when we looked at girls and wanted to go to parties, it was the religious police that suffocated us. When we got engaged in politics, it was the Islamic Association at our university that suffocated us… this was still the case for us boys. Being a girl in this country was worse and meant nothing but suffocation from the very beginning.275

The structure reflected in this lexia is the following: generation after generation makes the same mistakes; each generation accuses the earlier generation of mistakes. This lexia can be written within two hermeneutic codes: the Islamic Republic was the result of the mistakes of a generation; the Islamic Republic has destroyed two generations: the first generation or the founders of the Islamic Revolution, and the second generation or the victims of the mistakes of the first generation. The cultural code reflected in this lexia is the position of women in the Islamic Republic, as second-rate creatures.

A song heard during Bizhan’s visit at Azar’s house provides the next lexia. He has his arms around Azar’s waist and is drawing her towards him. Azar releases herself from Bizhan’s arms and tells him that it is too late for them. Suddenly they hear the sound of music. Someone is singing:

I have no wings to fly
But I have a heart and the crane’s longing
At times the emigrant birds are paddling on the moonlight’s lake,
it is good to drop everything and leave!
Sleeping again in another lagoon
It is good to go to another pond
To another coast, to another sea!
It is good to fly, to be free
It is good to die in freedom, if it is not possible to live free,

275 Ibid, p. 159.
Oh, this bird cannot sing in this tight cage.\textsuperscript{276}

In every freedom movement, Iranians express their aspirations in songs; these songs are symbols of the unfulfilled wishes of a nation; their wish for the arrival of spring, of light, of morning, sea, and flight. This song can be summarized in one symbolic code: under the Islamic Republic there is no chance of living free or flying free. Here is another lexia about Mehrdad leaving his house, when the \textit{hezbollah} attack him:

Mehrdad opened the door immediately and ran. Nothing happened for several seconds. Then some sounds were heard. Bizhan saw that big Coleman\textsuperscript{277} rolling in the lane and those two persons who were running after Mehrdad. Bizhan, Azar, and Khalil came several steps closer. Mehrdad reached the end of the lane. One patrol car was there. Three or four persons were around it. Those two were still yelling. One of those who were turned toward the patrol car saw Mehrdad. From where he was standing, he raised his leg and kicked Mehrdad in the belly. Mehrdad collapsed. Now the other two had reached Mehrdad. One of them elbowed Mehrdad in his back so that he hit the window of the patrol car. The window was bloodied. The one who had kicked Mehrdad grabbed his shirt and drew him behind himself towards the street. Now they could not see Mehrdad anymore.\textsuperscript{278}

The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that the Islamic Republic has meant nothing but oppression for Iranians. The symbolic code is that Iranians do not manage to escape the hands of their oppressors.

According to Pāgard, the product of the Islamic Revolution has been a system in which love and freedom of speech are banned, and in which thugs are employed to suppress dissidents and intellectuals. All the people who are gathered in the vestibule in Azar’s house are the victims of a tyrannical system. Those thugs who beat Mehrdad; those thugs who suspended Bizhan from his university studies; those thugs who stabbed Khalil – all are of the same nature.

In the narrative world of Pāgard, the Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic have left behind them a wasted and heart-broken generation. Under the Islamic Republic, hopelessness has pervaded the atmosphere; rage and desperation that find no means of expression lead to deep depression. In this kind of system, people come to the conclusion that nothing will ever change, and any attempt at heroic action will merely lead to further defeat. A vicious

\textsuperscript{276} Ibid, pp. 214–215.
\textsuperscript{277} A brand of thermos.
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid, p. 239.
circle is in force, and will lead people to their destruction. In the narrative world of Pāgard, the Islamic Revolution is of a destructive nature, and there is no faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history.

5.2 Ten Persian post-Revolutionary novels published outside of Iran

After the Islamic Revolution, and particularly after the harsh suppression of dissidents that began in 1981, many Iranians saw no other alternative but to leave the country. Most of them emigrated to Europe, the USA, and Canada and came to constitute the great bulk of the Iranian diaspora with all that it implied. The existence of Persian literature in the diaspora is just one of many such implications. The volume, the variety, and the quality of Persian diaspora literature is such that one no longer can talk about Persian literature without considering this as inseparable part of it.

One very significant feature of the Persian novel published outside of Iran is that it reflects what cannot be written in Iran because of the Islamic Republic’s censor. In Persian novels published outside of Iran, one can read about dissidents leaving the country illegally; the pain caused by living in exile; and the brutality exercised by the Islamic Republic in prisons. The Persian novel of the diaspora paints a different picture of the Islamic Revolution, of the hero, and of martyrdom.

5.2.1 Bigāne-i dar man (A Stranger within Me) by Shokuh Mirzadegi (1993)

Bigāne-i dar man is narrated from the first person-point of view. The main character of the novel, Luba, is from Czechoslovakia. She is the daughter of Peter Libby, a comrade of Dubcek. Luba has studied archaeology at London University. She is married to Amin Jalali, the son of Hajji Hedayat Jalali. Together with her husband and their two sons, Bardiya and Bahram, Luba has come to Iran on the eve of the Revolution. Bardiya is not the biological son of Amin Jalali. No one apart from Amin Jalali’s cousin Saeed knows anything about this, not even Bardiya himself.

Some months after the Revolution, on August 9, Amin Jalali disappears from his clinic. After a while, his body is found in front of a mosque the construction of which his father has financed. The security police accuse anti-revolutionary agents of the old regime of having committed this murder and declare him a martyr of the Islamic Revolution. Later, it becomes known that Amin Jalali had been kidnapped and killed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard for his contacts with Shahpour Bakhtiar, the leader of the National
Movement of the Iranian.  It also becomes known that Amin Jalali had had an affair with his secretary, and that the day he disappeared, he had gone to his clinic to help his secretary abort his child.

After the death of Amin Jalali, Bardiya, who is only fourteen years old and considers himself the son of a martyr, begins reading religious books and visiting the mosque regularly, and becomes an Islamic extremist. He considers himself to be a guardian of the Islamic Revolution. Bardiya reports his aunt’s fiancé, Ahmad, to the security police for his paintings that symbolized the execution of a number of oppositional activists in Kurdistan. Ahmad is released after three long months of torture. He marries his fiancé Narges, and leads a calm, but depressed life.

Amin’s cousin, Saeed, who has been in love with Luba for a long time, declares his love for Luba. Bardiya forbids his mother to meet Saeed, and he does everything to turn his own brother into an obedient soldier of the Islamic Republic. To be free from Bardiya’s pressure, Luba flees to England together with her younger son, Bahram. Ten years later, she meets Bardiya in London; he is there as a representative of the Ministry of Commerce of the Islamic Republic Iran. After eleven years, Saeed joins Luba in London. Hajji Hedayat Jalali has isolated himself in his home since the removal of Bani Sadr as president.

Searching for her missing husband in cemeteries, mortuaries, and police stations, Luba confronts the reality of the newly established regime and learns a great deal about hidden aspects of the Islamic Revolution. At one mortuary, she sees the body of a writer. The person working there tells her: “Look! They have cut one of this person’s hands. On his chest they had left a note on which it was written: an anti-revolutionary writer.”

This lexia reflects the political structure of the post-Revolutionary Iran as depicted in this novel: members of the political opposition are forced to act in secret; they are identified by the agents of the Ministry of Information and murdered. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia are clear: the Islamic Republic does not tolerate any other voices; violence is an innate characteristic of the Islamic Republic. These codes are repeated in other lexias as well.

One night, Amin’s sister is in bed with her fiancé, Ahmad. The Revolutionary Guards attack Ahmad’s house to arrest him for his political activities and his paintings. They arrest both of them. She receives a number of lashes of the whip as her Islamic punishment for having an extramarital relationship, before being released to her father’s house after he convinces

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279 Nehzat-e Moqavemat-e Melli-ye Iran (The National Movement of the Iranian Resistance) was founded by Shapour Bakhtiar in 1979; slightly after the Islamic Revolution. Shapour Bakhtiar was Iran’s prime minister 4 January 1979 – 11 February 1979. He was murdered in 1991 by agents of the Islamic Republic in Paris.

280 Mirzadegi, Shokuh. (1992), Bigâne-i dar man (A Stranger within Me), Uppsala, p. 11.
the head of the Amiriye Committee\textsuperscript{281} that they had been temporarily married. We read this scene as a lexia:

Please forgive us Hajji, we are really ashamed... Damn these stupid young men... they have punished your daughter without further investigation [...]. I wish they had the related papers at home.\textsuperscript{282} Narges had no clothes [...]. A hatching of red diagonal lines on her hips and legs was visible, and the red flesh that has come out of the torn skin was covered by a thick layer of the yellow ointment. In some places a narrow brook of the recently dried blood changed the route of the lines. The lines continued down behind the knees and ploughed her young skin.\textsuperscript{283}

This lexia reflects a cultural code: enjoying bodily pleasure is not a sin if it is done under the control of the religious laws, but outside of religious control it is a sin and must be punished. This lexia confirms the hermeneutic codes of the former lexia in relation to the brutality and the totalitarian nature of the Islamic Republic, which does not accept any other interpretation of right and wrong than its own.

Ahmad has been tortured in prison for three months. His crime is his painting, which is reminiscent of the execution of some members of the guerrilla organization Fadaian Khalq in 1979 in Kurdistan. The novel’s description of Ahmad’s painting is a lexia:

One could see a large number of black trees. Their stems likened boots that had become stuck into the soil. Beside the boots, a number of small white, yellow, and rose-colored flowers with green stems had fallen on the ground, and from the stems, a drop of blood, like a teardrop, had trickled.\textsuperscript{284}

This lexia offers symbolic codes that are related to the symbols in Ahmad’s painting: the black trees are a symbol for the Islamic Republic. The flowers symbolize the dissidents that have been killed by the Islamic Republic. The symbolic codes here reflect the bipolar opposition in Iranian history, with the boot-like black trees serving as a symbol for the deeply rooted Evil and the flowers as a symbol for the fragile Good. The whole novel is based on this

\textsuperscript{281} Refers to the Islamic Revolutionary Committees organization that was founded directly after the Revolution. This organization functioned as a parallel Law Enforcement Force in Iran until 1991 when it was merged with other similar forces to form the Law Enforcement Force of the Islamic Republic.
\textsuperscript{282} Ibid, P. 184.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid, p. 186.
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid, p. 174.
opposition. The hermeneutic code in Ahmad’s painting can be summarized in one phrase: death is the holy principle of the Islamic Republic.

As mentioned above, Luba flees to England in order to be free from Bardiya’s pressure on her and on her younger son, Bahram. Some years later, in London, she once again meets Bardiya as a representative of the Ministry of Commerce of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The next lexia refers to this meeting:

And he came; tall and with a short moustache and a thick beard. He was surrounded by his bodyguards and the British police. He had a limp, but moved calmly and with dignity. And he was not like my Bardiya anymore. He went towards the car. 285

The symbolic code of this lexia relates to Luba’s words on Bardiya “he was not like my Bardiya anymore.” In the context of ancient Iranian history, the name Bardiya has similar connotations, and symbolizes falseness. The story of the ancient Bardiya is as follows: after the death of Cambyses, the Achaemenian king, Gaumata the Magian, pretends to be Bardiya, Cambyses’s brother, in order to become the King; but this was exposed. That is why he is referred to as the False Bardiya in history books. In this novel Bardiya is the sum and product of several lies. This can be read as a hermeneutic code: the Islamic Republic is based on false foundations. The rest of the above passage offers another lexia when someone attacks Bardiya with an egg:

Suddenly an egg flew over the heads of the people and landed on his head. A small stream of yolk and egg-white ran over his forehead. He took out a handkerchief from his pocket and cleaned his forehead with the same anxiety in his eyes as in his childhood and looked at the crowd there. Now, he was like my Bardiya. His eyes were like mine; and his look was full of surprise without any fury. I wished I could cast myself from the middle of the crowd towards him, hug him and cry: oh, my son, oh, my son … 286

The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that the Islamic Republic has destroyed the innocence.

In the narrative world of Bigāne-i dar man, the victims of the Islamic Revolution are myriad: this Revolution has robbed Luba of her husband and her son; it has robbed Hajji Hedayat Jalali of his faith in the Islamic Revolution and in his son; robbed Bardiya of his father; Ahmad of his desire for life; Narges of her pride; Amin of his life; and Bahram of his brother and

286 Ibid.
father. The Islamic Revolution has crippled all moral values in a strict interpretation of Islam. It has caused the nephew to spy on his aunt, and has turned the son against his mother.

According to Bīğāne-i dar man, Luba’s life in the Islamic Republic is a life in a real hell; a hell that is the Islamic Revolution’s creation. According to Bīğāne-i dar man, martyrdom takes place in opposition to the Islamic Republic, but the faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history is not alive.

*Bedun-e sharh: sharh-e hāl-e nasl-e khākestari* has a complicated structure. Eight years before, Hamid Reza, whom the narrator calls “the hero of the story,” had entrusted the story’s narrator with three of his photos and some other personal belongings promising either to come back soon or to send him his new address. The narrator has now found the photos together with two notebooks at his house, eight years after saying goodbye to the main character at the train station. The narrator has not heard anything from him since then. He is simply lost. One of these photos shows this main character at a teahouse, sitting on a bentwood chair by a wooden table. A cup of tea is seen on the table. In the background, a white wall turned grey by smoke and dust can also be seen. Around the teahouse, four or five barefoot children clothed in rags are playing. On the back of the photo is written: “Quetta, Pakistan, 1983.”

The second photo shows Hamid Reza together with a man and a woman in Paris. On the back of the photo is written, “Together with Bizhan and Mitra in Paris.” In his search for the main character, the narrator meets Bizhan “who is very much like the main character in the photo.” Bizhan tells the narrator about his lost friend Hamid Reza; how he had begun to revise his political beliefs after arriving in Paris. How he began to write poems, and how after a short time he began to seek out his so-called old roots, and finally joined Sufi circles. Bizhan tells the narrator that Hamid Reza was a little dictator. The narrator is now desperate and does not know how to narrate a story when “the hero of the story” has already turned into an “anti-hero” for him. This offers a lexia:

> The narrator is wondering how to narrate a story without a “hero.” People in this country have always lived with heroes; have been mobilized by their love for the heroes; and have relied on help from heroes in their struggles. The shadow of the hero has always been present in their mentality […]. Which is why the narrator had always believed that nothing could be done without heroes. Not enough time had passed for real life to open its way in his mind and let him understand that he had to let go of the myth of the hero for ever and

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287 The accepted term for main character or protagonist in Persian works of fiction is *qahremān*, which means hero. The writer seems to use the Persian term amphibologically.


289 Ibid, p. 23.

290 Ibid, p. 23.

begin to act independently. This meant not acting as a hero, but understanding that he must live the life without any heroes. 

The hermeneutic code of this lexia is clear. The faith in the role of hero is dead.

However, after the narrator’s meeting with Bizhan, the story takes another path and tells the life story of Bizhan and several other characters around him. Bizhan’s life story is portrayed from the third-person point of view. Bizhan left Iran for Austria at the age of twenty. In Austria, he joined the oppositional student organization against the Shah of Iran. On the eve of the Iranian Revolution, he returned to Iran, but soon after the Revolution he realized that he had to leave the country. From this juncture, the point of view changes from the third person to the first person, and Bizhan begins to recount his story: how he fled from Iran via Iraqi Kurdistan, and his time in prison in Iraq before he arrived in Europe.

In Bizhan’s story, the reader meets several other characters in the novel: “Comrade Majid”; Maria, Bizhan’s wife; Ali Reza, who is imprisoned in the same cell with Bizhan; Jamshid; and some others; all characters with different destinies but with the same ideals and aspirations. The last chapter of the novel begins with the telephone ringing at Bizhan’s apartment. Bizhan is sitting at his computer writing his novel. On the other end of the line, the narrator is speaking. Bedun-e sharh: sharh-e hāl-e nasl-e khākestari ends with the story of the computer; the birth of the computer and its further development.

Bedun-e sharh: sharh-e hāl-e nasl-e khākestari is the story of a lost generation. The lost main character of the novel is a typical representative of this generation who has lost his home. He has written a diary. A paragraph in his diary serves as a lexia:

I will never return to my town. My town does not exist anymore. It took years for it to be destroyed. A short while ago, I found out that it does not exist anymore. Since then, my perplexity has doubled. Before that, even at the peak of my perplexity, I always flattered myself that my town was still there and that I would some day finally return to it. But now, in my defenselessness and my homelessness, in the middle of these hopeless nights that turn into days without any goals in sight, I feel lonely and isolated.

292 Ibid, p. 45.
293 Konfedrasiyon-e daneshjuyan va mohasselin-e irani.
This lexia reflects a structure as follows: a generation participates in a revolution hoping for a better world; it becomes the first victim of that revolution.

The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be summarized in two words: perplexity, and defenselessness. “Perplexity,” because without the hometown, there is no gravity to keep one on the earth; there is no goal. This means that the next place to stay will be determined by accident, just as a ball lands where it may in roulette. The recurring question is: Why am I here? “Defenselessness,” because the perplexed person owes his life to chance; he owes his life to the powers that be. He could just as easily have been killed without any problems at all.

In the continuing search for these hermeneutic codes, a lexia can be found in yet another paragraph Bizhan has written in his memoirs:

By the beginning of the extensive wave of arrests and executions towards the end of 1981, I was also persecuted for my oppositional activities against Khomeini’s regime. In February 1982, and after much consideration, I decided to leave the country […]. At that time it was not possible to pass to Turkey through Iranian Kurdistan, so I decided to go to Turkey through Iraqi Kurdistan. On our way through the mountains of Kurdistan, we met the Iraqi army […].

After two weeks in arrest in Suleimaniye, I was sent to Baghdad, where I was imprisoned for more than two years without any interrogation or trial.295

This lexia also reflect the basic structure of the novel: the contrast between the evil forces and the well-intentioned representatives of the lost generation. He tries to escape the hands of these evil forces by leaving the country; already on the other side of the border he confronts other evil forces. He pays for his illusions with long-lasting suffering. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be condensed into two words: the captivity and the helplessness of a generation, for which the Islamic Republic is responsible. These states of mind and the Islamic Republic have not come from nothing; instead, they are rooted in a particular culture containing elements like Islamic mysticism. Islamic mysticism can be found in the following lexia, in which one of the characters of the novel opens a book entitled: Mohayy al-Din Arabi (1165–1240), the Great Islamic Mystic, and reads this paragraph:

Arabi’s mysticism is based on the principle that the existence of an original truth is exclusively possible in the existence of the absolute truth, God; and that the existence of the earthly world is figurative and excessive and receives its validity from something else. The existence

295 Ibid, p. 34.
of the earthly world is possible only under the shadow of God and it is dependent on God. As such it is unstable in its nature; as a matter of fact, it is just an illusion. And…. Those who are imprisoned in the darkness of their ignorance and are deprived of the real light of mysticism are trapped in the illusion that a real world exists independently of God. This is in contradiction with the existence of God.  

As can be seen, for Ebn-e Arabi the earthly world is figurative and metaphorical, and just a shadow of the holy beloved. Within this ideological framework, an active role for individuals is excluded. Therefore the only thing for man to do is to strive to reach the divine world, to kill his individuality, to turn his back on the earthly world, and to find a master who can open a window to the original, heavenly world for him. Since Khomeini was very much inspired by Ebn-e Arabi, this paragraph serves as a symbolic code for the ideology of the Islamic Revolution with Khomeini as the “master.” The paragraph also contains a cultural code: the master-follower relationship in Iranian culture. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that the Islamic Republic is a natural outcome of this culture; by the time the intellectual realizes this, it is already too late.

The cultural codes and the hermeneutic codes are in a cause-and-effect relationship. The narrator is the victim of his own ignorance. What he writes is a kind of confession: a confession of the superiority of the earthly world that he was ignorant of in the days of the Revolution. The narrator presents these ideas in a lexia on Spinoza’s philosophy, which represents Western post-Renaissance humanism:

His revolution in philosophy consisted of his attempts to draw the philosopher’s attention to the earthly world. In his thinking, the earthly world is a complete totality; a totality that is the only real existence, and the main source of moralistic principles, political authority, and social relations. It is with this understanding that Spinoza formulates his view, with statements such as: the whole of existence is summarized in this earthly world […]. In this view God is the same as nature, and divine order comes from the laws of nature and from reason, and not from holy books. 

This lexia highlights those cultural codes whose absence has caused the hero’s perplexity, destruction, and defenselessness. It shows appreciation for

297 Ibid, p. 87.
what has been lacking in the Iranian Revolution: the body, earth, and individuality.

In the narrative world of *Bedun-e sharh: sharh-e hāl-e nasl-e khākestari*, the Islamic Revolution has elevated all the religious and mystic components of the Islamic culture and installed them in a position of power. The Islamic Revolution is the outcome of an ideology that views the earthly world as a shadow of the divine light, and views Khomeini representing the perfection of man on the earth. Given the nature of this kind of thinking, there is no space for rational thought. This way of thinking is so firmly rooted in Iranian culture that not even the leftist opposition can escape it. That is why those who believed in “dialectical materialism” accepted the leadership of Khomeini; they saw it as a step toward the realization of the “Dictatorship of the Proletariat.”

*Bedun-e sharh: sharh-e hāl-e nasl-e khākestari* is the story of the triumph of melancholic thinking and the total absence of modernity; it is the story of a generation who wanted to build a better world, but who instead served as soldiers in a vicious revolution’s army. It is also the story of a generation who wanted to act heroically, but who lost all faith in the concept of the hero and in the role of the hero in determining the course of history.

### 5.2.3 *Khosrow-e khubān* (The King of the Good Men) by Reza Daneshvar (1994)

*Khosrow-e khubān* depicts the strange life of Bahram Rastin, and is narrated in the third person. It is a complex novel with many references to Iranian mythology. At the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war, one of the delegations of the Islamic Unions for the Investigation of Official Documents and Dossiers finds a dossier in SAVAK’s archives. This dossier contains reports on the suspicious events in Kohandezh, a village near the Alborz Mountain. SAVAK’s report is accompanied by three other reports from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Planning Organization, and the Registration Office of Estates and Properties. The strangest report was prepared by an employee of the Registration Office of Estates and Properties. This report has caused a furor at SAVAK and led to the forced retirement of that employee.

After the Revolution, the Islamic Unions of the Investigation of Official Documents and Dossiers makes a request of *Jehād-e Sāzandegī* (Reconstruction Struggle) to send a delegation to Kohandezh to investigate this strange dossier. After extensive inquiries, they find a spot of blood in a remote place, and after months of excavation there, they find a

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298 An institution founded after the Islamic Revolution. This institution sent youth to rural areas to help the poor by constructing cheap or free housing, irrigation, and so on.
body with hundreds of wounds from which blood is still running. This is the body of Bahram Rastin.

This takes place in the middle of the Iran-Iraq war. Many families who have lost their sons are trying to find the bodies, or at least parts of the bodies, of their sons. The staffs of mortuaries have developed this into a profitable affair. They dismember the bodies and sell parts of the bodies to families so that they can be registered as the families of war martyrs and receive state benefits. Bahram Rastin’s body is also dismembered. His arm becomes the property of a woman who has lost her husband. The woman wraps the hand in her chador (head cloth) and sets out towards her house. Just when she is about to give money to a beggar, the hand falls out of her chador. One of the beggars cries out that the hand belongs to his son. In court, the other beggars witness that the claimant beggar has never had a wife or son. During the trial, the hand is stored in a flower pot. When the verdict is handed down that the hand should be returned to the women, and they go to pick it up, they find that the hand is missing and flowers have grown in the pot. One of the staff at the court is very amazed and curious. He begins further investigation, and writes the story of Khosrow-e khubān. But the Ministry of Guidance finds the story heretical, and the writer is sentenced to be whipped in public. The writer of this novel, Khosrow-e khubān, is one of the people who witness the whipping from his window. He becomes curious about the story. He seeks up the writer of the story Khosrow-e khubān to hear the whole story from him. He then writes the novel Khosrow-e khubān, the strange life story of Bahram Rastin.

The life story of Bahram Rastin is not so complicated on the level of objective reality. A young couple moves to Zabol to work there for the state, and a son is born to them. They stay there for couple of years, save some money, and return to the capital city. At the age of fifteen, Bahram falls in love with a girl, Geati, but he is soon separated from her as she and her family move to another city. A while later, Bahram’s mother dies and the father marries a prostitute. The stepmother falls in love with Bahram. One night she goes to Bahram’s bed, but Bahram rejects her. She is furious and accuses Bahram of trying to rape her. Enraged, Bahram’s father sets the house on fire, but Bahram is saved from the fire. He leaves his father’s house to go do his military service. As a member of Sepāh-e dānesh (The Literacy Corps),299 he is sent to the village of Kohandezh, where he is falsely accused of murdering an old man and is sentenced to five years in prison. After his release, he finds his father in Shahr-e now (the red light district),300 where his

299 The Literacy Corps was formed at the initiative of Mohammad Reza Shah’s White Revolution in 1963. Those who had a high school diploma and were required to do military service could discharge their duty by fighting illiteracy in the villages instead.

300 A quarter in Tehran before the Revolution, where the brothels were located.
stepmother is running a large brothel. He gathers a caravan of prostitutes and pimps and set out towards Kohandezh.

The novel ends with the battle between Bahram Rastin and an opponent with a turban and a coat of mail made of snakes. Bahram manages to tear his opponent’s snakeskin apart. The opponent falls to the ground. From inside of the empty slough a fifteen-year-old Bahram, with sarcastic smile and mocking eyes, appears.

Khosrow-e khubān is a symbolic novel. In order to understand it, a careful examination of the symbolic codes is necessary. To start at the beginning: One day Bahram’s mother goes to Hamun Lake to go boating. The boat overturns and the mother sinks to the bottom of the lake. Here is the whole lexia:

They row far away towards the deepest point of the lake, where its depths were considered sacred. Neither fishermen nor boatmen ever approached that area, as they believed that sacred semen/seed had been deposited there for centuries, and that dead warriors were guarding it. The boat was turning over very slowly, as if it had struck a rock. It stopped, shook a little, and overturned very slowly, so slowly that none of them could believe they were going to drown. Within a second, all three of them were under the water; the women’s shawls and hats were floating on the water. Then the young bride felt as if a belt of steel was rolled around her waist and that her body was stung by thousands of metal scales [...]. A woman’s scream for help broke the silence. The fish fled to the bottom of the lake. The slime and the mud that had come up to the surface looked like the fearful wakefulness of a man with nightmares [...]. When they were found some minutes later, the young bride was at the surface of the water, half-dead and heavy with her wet clothes. When they came to the shore, the young woman opened her eyes slowly. The eyes in her pale face were like two water lilies in an unreachable dawn [...]. The man took his wife home quickly. He took off her clothes respectfully in a state of madness. With perfumed oil, he massaged her body; it was alive down to its smallest atoms, and full of an inner fire. The woman was feverish and the heat of her body slowly conquered her husband. She made love with him the whole afternoon and night, without any preventive considerations, in a way completely different from their previous mild, tepid lovemaking. She sought a union which was unknown to her; a union that until then, she had never felt any need of.301

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According to Zoroastrianism, the last three saviors of the world are the sons of Zarathustra. They will appear on the earth one after one, and bring eternity and happiness. According to Zoroastrianism, creation begins with Ahura Mazda, the Uncreated Creator’s, creation of the spiritual world, and lasts for twelve thousand years, divided into four periods of three thousand years each. Ahriman, who is not aware of Ahura Mazda’s existence, leaves the world of darkness and attacks the spiritual world. But when he realizes that he cannot destroy the spiritual world, he returns to his world of darkness and creates demons in order to fight and defeat Ahura Mazda. Knowing how this fight will finally end, Ahura Mazda tells Ahriman this fight will last for nine thousand years. The first three thousand years will be in favor of Ahura Mazda, the second three thousand years is the period during which the two worlds are mixed, and the third three thousand years is the period of the final fight. It is during the fourth period that the saviors, Zarathustra’s sons, will be born to fight Ahriman.

Zarathustra’s semen is deposited at the bottom of Hamun Lake and in the fourth period, three virgins will become pregnant with it. Then Hushidar, Hushidarmah, and Sushiant, the Zoroastrian saviors, will be born. The symbolic codes in the above-quoted lexia can be written thus: Bahram Rastin has gathered in himself the three saviors of Zoroastrianism, the birth of Bahram Rastin is related to a deeply-rooted belief in Iranian culture: waiting for a savior, and the holiness of the savior. These symbolic codes can be sought in another lexia:

It was right in the critical seconds of the delivery of the baby that the power was cut. When the child, Bahram Rastin, was born, the hospital’s generators were not yet operating. No one heard him coming. When it thundered again, they saw him; with an open mouth, with outstretched arms and with open fingers, with a sun-like birthmark on his forearm.

According to Iranian Mythology, the sun will stand in the middle of the sky for ten days after the birth of Hushidar, for twenty days after the birth of Hushidarmah, and for thirty years after the birth of Sushiant. Within the frame of the symbolic codes, the birthmark on Bahram’s forearm refers to the three saviors of Zoroastrianism. The newly born Bahram is going to act as a savior. But it is not just the three saviors that are gathered in Bahram,

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305 Daneshvar, R., p. 42.
but also other mythological figures. Here is yet another lexia: One day Bahram, during his service as a member of the literacy army, meets a warrior and begins to fight him. This lexia is a description of Bahram’s fight:

Bahram gathered all his hidden power and all his bodily skills and followed after the opponent. At times, like the wisest, cleverest crow, he foresightedly avoided spellbinding, deceptive traps. At times, he leapt over the uneven stony ground like a lion, and moved forward with the heavy steps of a wild boar. Like a soldier intent on conquering, he walked through all the mirages and traps that the snake put in his way. Every second, he killed with his sword one of those creatures belonging to that poisonous flock.307

According to Iranian mythology, Bahram, the God of victory and the guardian angel of the land of Iran, appears as ten incarnations, each of which symbolizes a special ability: the wind, the bull, the white horse, the wild camel, the crow, the wild boar, the 15-year-old youth, the goat, the ram, the man with a sword.308 The similarity between Bahram Rastin and Bahram, the God of victory, is another step within the structure of the novel. The symbolic code of this lexia can therefore be thus: Bahram Rastin also symbolizes the God of victory. It does not end here; there are more mythological figures gathered in Bahram Rastin.

On his first day on duty, Bahram Rastin meets a lieutenant who has a head like a crow and a stick in his hand shaped like a question mark. With a rural dialect, he tells Bahram how he should live his life. The man’s speech serves as a lexia:

Try to become so powerful that you would be able to knock down the white bull, so obedient that you would be able to cut off his head with a single order, and so decent that you would never eat of its meat even if you had been hungry for forty days.309

In Mithraism, which is one of the ancient Iranian religions, there are two main elements: the heroic element and the mystical element. Mithra is the God of war and light, but is at the same time a representative for the inner journey of the soul, which is the main pillar of mysticism.310 To join the circle of true believers in Mithraism, one must go through seven difficult phases. These phases are called: crow, hidden, soldier, lion, pārsi, sun, and

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307 Daneshvar, R., p. 208.
308 Boycepp. 62–63.
309 Daneshvar, R., p. 100.
father.\footnote{311} After passing these phases, the devotee becomes united with Mithra and receives the same status as God; the guardian of light and of good warriors; the God that kills the holy bull and irrigates the earth with its blood so that plants grow green everywhere; the resurrection of nature. The bull in Mithraism is not just a symbol of greenness and productivity; it is also a symbol of man’s soul. Mithra captures the bull in a pasture and takes it to a cave. The stretch of road to the cave is a symbolic passage along which are placed the seven phases through which the devotee must pass. Mithra passes the symbolic passage in order to devote himself to eternal battle in the dark cave; the battle between the body and the soul.\footnote{312} Therefore, what the man with a head like a crow and a stick like a question mark says is just a paradox. This lexia is a further step within a structure: the savior/hero passes the test with dignity. Even though he talks like a person in the seventh phase, the lieutenant symbolizes a person who has not progressed beyond the first phase. In another scene of the novel, Bahram Rastin is the object of the lieutenant’s wish to kill the bull. This lexia relates that Bahram Rastin symbolizes even Mithra, the God of war and light. Other symbolic codes can be found in the text.

One night, Bahram Rastin’s stepmother visits his bed. When Bahram rejects her, she accuses him of attempting to rape her. This paragraph is a lexia:

\begin{quote}
Mahane cried that this boy [...] wanted me [...] he attacked me [...]. 
Her husband began to smash things [...] the face of the boy was shining like a crown of diamonds in the middle of the night.\footnote{313}
\end{quote}

According to \textit{Shāhnāme}, Sudabe, the wife of Kaikavus the King, does the same when Siavash, son of Kaikavus and a symbol of innocence and purity in \textit{Shāhnāme}, rejects her. Sudabe accuses Siavash of having attempted to rape her. To test his innocence, Kaikavus asks Siavash to walk through fire. Siavash does as his father wishes, and comes through the fire with honor.\footnote{314} This lexia reflects the same structure as above: the savior/hero passes the test with dignity. One of the symbolic codes of this lexia is that Bahram Rastin also symbolizes Siavash, who personifies innocence in Iranian culture. Further on, more symbolic codes appear.

Eskandar, the old Macedonian man whose shop is covered with green fungi, is the recurrent figure in Bahram’s dreams. He is an old warrior who is well aware that the war is still going on; an old man whose body has

\footnote{312} Ibid, p. 272.  
\footnote{313} Daneshvar, R., pp. 96–97.  
absorbed all the poisons of this land. It is only he who reveals all the secrets to Bahram; it is only he who knows that Kohandezh is just the tip of a flag that has come out of the ground as a fragmentary sign of an ancient homeland. One day, Eskandar reveals to Bahram the location of a utopian town that has been moved from the sky down to the earth by a victorious warrior. This lexia tells the story:

Once upon a time, a victorious warrior recalled a heavenly town built by his father as his sister, since a father creates children with his seed, builds towns by divine knowledge, and makes his own blood a guarantee of his children’s victory. In this way, the victorious warrior became the architect of his time, but this was the last victorious warrior; and many centuries have passed since then.315

According to Iranian mythology, Gangdez is a town built in heaven by Siavash, the God of the plants, and moved down to earth by Kaikhosrow, the son of Siavash.316 Hoping for a heavenly town, as promised by holy men and saviors, is another step within the structure of Iranian culture and the structure of this novel. In Shāhnāme, Kaikhosrow is a wise king who leaves the earthly world for the heavenly world after defeating Afrasiab, the king of Turan.317 A search of this lexia for its symbolic codes reveals this: for the Iranian man, the ideal economic and socio-political system is precisely a Utopia. Seeking other symbolic codes, one arrives at this:

In his last battle, Bahram meets someone who is very much like Ayatollah Khomeini and like the picture of Mohammad Reza Shah that he has seen on the back of a mirror at the house of the chief of Kohandezh. The scene of Bahram’s battle with this creature offers a long lexia:

The God of War roared in Bahram’s soul and issued from his mouth:
“Come out now with all your leopards, your vultures, and your snakes, as it is time and there is not enough space for both of us.”
A hero of ponderous stature and height appeared; with snakes in circles like a huge turban on his head; and with a bowstring woven of hundreds of moving snakes which changed shape every second; a hero with a face covered by blue scales and a look that could move rocks and stones. He answered Bahram’s shout with a heavy, calm voice:
“What have you that makes you so audacious?”
“I have all the earth’s impatience to send you back to your den and make you leave this planet alone;

315 Daneshvar, R., p. 107.
317 Yaghmayi, pp. 259–404.
“All the earth’s impatience is for swallowing your body.”
“What gives you the confidence to boast like this?”
“I am confident of nothing. My nature is of doubt, and that is why I am the eternal inhabitant of the earth. You are certain only through your will, and thus exposed to hurricanes. But I am this planet itself.”

The opponent fell to the earth with his severe wounds. Out of his skin, covered with a thousand rivulets of blood, poured a multitude of snakes; from inside his empty slough a fifteen-year-old Bahram with a sarcastic smile and mocking eyes appeared. His last words were, “Here is another illusion; until you find another opponent you must live with the uncertainty of who the real Bahram Rastin was.”

The appearance of saviors in different shapes is also another step within a structure. The symbolic codes of this lexia can be read thus: the certainties in Iranian history have not led to anything but defeat.

There are three women in the life of Bahram-e Rastin: Rudabe, Mahane, and Geati. In Shāhnāme, Rudabe is the wife of Zal, the white-haired hero who was raised by Simorgh, the mythological holy bird. Rudabe is the mother of Rostam, the greatest hero of Iranian mythology. In his relation to Rudabe, Bahram is like a Zal who wants to have a son like Rostam. In relation to Mahane, Bahram is a Siavash who must walk through fire in order to show his innocence. Bahram’s first acquaintance with the body of a woman is with Geati, who was his neighbor in his youth. Here follows a lexia about Geati:

The girl was one year older than Bahram, a perfect beauty who was unmatched in captivating the hearts of men. She used to sit at the window with hair tousled in a way that distressed the whole alley […]. The dreamy silk of her neck near her ears was the watering place for the horses of the boy’s imagination – horses which had grazed there every afternoon at the beginning and end of summer; horses of dreams and desires that laze in youth’s pasture; in those summer pastures that are the trysting place for unconsciousness and passion. The owner of this magic was Geati.

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318 Daneshvar, R., p. 201.
321 Ibid, pp. 132–137.
The symbolic code of this lexia is the name of the girl, Geati, which means “the world” in Persian. This lexia reflects a further step in the structure reflected in the novel: in Iranian culture earthly life is just a test on the way toward heavenly life. According to Manichaeism, which is one of the foundations of Iranian culture, Geati, the earthly world, is created by demons; but there is a speck of light in every man’s body. This speck of light is the result of the entrance of a godly spirit into a demon’s body. This light will only shine when a man turns his back on the earthly world, Geati; it will shine when the earthly world is replaced by the heavenly world. In this lexia, Geati is a symbol of the earthly world. Geati is a symbol of that world which one needs to abandon in order to reach the heavenly world.

In the narrative world of Khosrow-e khubān, the Islamic Revolution is seen as the logical outcome of a way of thinking that harks back to Iran’s pre-Islamic era. The Islamic Revolution has not come to the world on the basis of Islamic thought alone. It is also the heritage of a pre-Islamic ideology that has suffused Islam, has affected it, and been affected by it. This way of thinking is so deeply rooted in the Iranian mind that not even leftist opposition is immune to it. In this system of thought, which is based on a dualistic world of absolute good and absolute evil, pious people should ignore the earthly world, and instead join in heroic battle together with the saviors in order to pursue and realize the long-expected utopian community in the world.

According to Khosrow-e khubān, every person who found a savior in Khomeini, everyone who fought as his soldier for the realization of a paradise on earth, and all who despised the body; in the final analysis, all these became victims of the tyranny of the Islamic Republic. The Islamic Republic was the last act and final outcome of a system of thought in which the murderers appear as saviors, and in which utopian communities are exposed as nothing but the hell of the suppression of the body and soul. Daneshvar draws on Iranian mythology in this novel in order to emphasize that the history of Iran is one of waiting in vain for saviors and hoping for a utopia that will never come.

According to Khosrow-e khubān, the real emancipation of Iranians is possible only if this system of thought is abandoned. Otherwise the viciousness of the Islamic Revolution will continually be repeated in new forms. This system of thought has its roots in the cultural foundations of a nation who, unaware of the death of the role of the hero, is still waiting for a hero.

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324 Bahar, Mehrdad. (1376 [1997/98]), Az osture tā tārikh (From Mythology to History), Tehran, p. 205.
5.2.4 *Pāyān-e yek ʿomr* (The End of a Life) by Dariush Kargar (1994)

*Pāyān-e yek ʿomr* portrays the life of a thirty-year-old man. He is on his way to leave Iran illegally by way of the Iranian-Turkish border. His thirty years of life are running through his head: his childhood, the execution of his brother under the Islamic Republic, his own fight for freedom before the Revolution, memories of his parents’ anger, memories of being in love, his wife’s tears when they said goodbye, the brutality of oppression in Iran, and the innocence of the freedom fighters. The entire story takes place in the mind of the narrator; and although the beginning and end of the novel both occur at the same second, the chronological time of the narrative is full of events.

*Pāyān-e yek ʿomr* is the review of a historical period in the mind of a young man; a period that has driven him from his homeland. One can see his images of this period in the books he remembers—books that were thrown into streams during the extensive wave of suppression that began in June 1981. A lexia can be found in the titles of some of the books:

*Chashmhā-yash*, *Kharmagas*, *Panjāh o se nafar*, *Mādar*, *Hājī āqā*, *Hamsāyehā*, *Pesykolozhi*, *Zamin-e now-ābād*, *Gharbzadegi*, *Sohuri.*

In order to write the hermeneutic codes of this lexia, one must be somewhat familiar with these books. *Chashmhā-yash*, (Her Eyes), (1952) by Bozorg Alavi, follows a beautiful young woman’s love for an outstanding painter, who was also a member of the Tudeh party. *Kharmagas* (The Gadfly) (1897) is a novel by Ethel Lillian Voynich. It portrays the struggles of an international revolutionary in the liberation movement of Italy against the Austrian Empire in the 1830s and 1840s. *Panjāh o se nafar* (Fifty Three Persons) (1942), is Bozorg Alavi’s memoirs of his time as a member of a Marxist group under the leadership of Taqi Arani, during the last years of Reza Shah’s reign. All the members of this group were arrested in 1937. *Mādar* (The Mother) (1907), by Maxim Gorky follows Communist revolutionaries in Tsarist Russia, before the October Revolution. *Hājī āqā* (1941) is a novel by Sadeq Hedayat. It follows an unscrupulous traditional capitalist under Reza Shah. *Hamsāyehā* (The Neighbors) (1974) by Ahmad Mahmoud depicts the life of a young man called Khaled, and his role in the oppositional movement against Mohammad Reza Shah during 1941–1953. *Pesykolozhi* (Psychology) (1927) is a book on psychology by Taqi Arani, the leader of the circle of “53 socialists” who were jailed in 1937. *Zamin-e now-ābād* (Virgin Soil Upturned) by Mikhail Aleksandrovich Sholokhov is

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composed of two parts: *Seeds of Tomorrow* (1932) and *Harvest on the Don* (1960), and reflects life during collectivization in the Don area. The characters in the novel are members of the Cossack army, with the exception of the main character, Davidov, who is one of the 25,000 workers that the Communist party has sent to the villages. *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxification) (1962) is a book that condemns influences from the West. It was written by Jalal Al Ahmad, one of the most influential Iranian intellectuals of the 1960s. Jalal Al Ahmad was a socialist who later turned to Islamic thinking. *Sohuri* (1970) is a collection of poetry by Nemat Mirzazade. The word *Sohuri* refers to those who before dawn pound drums to awaken people for Morning Prayer. Here it is used as a symbol for the guerrillas, especially religious guerrillas, who saw it as their duty to awaken people from their ignorant sleep, through their guerrilla operations.

The books that were thrown into the streams represent two main discourses in Iranian society on the eve of the Revolution: Marxist and Islamic discourse. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can, then, be read thus: the Islamic Revolution is the result of cooperation between Islamic and Marxist ideas in the struggle to remove the Pahlavi dynasty from power. Hatred for the Pahlavi dynasty was the main focus of most oppositional groups in Iran. Totally different forces within the opposition were united for this fight, but the Marxists were later suppressed by the Islamic forces.

The next lexia portrays the members of a young generation that whip themselves in order to become good guerrillas:

One must suffer hardship. One must fall down from high walls! One must run until one is on the verge of collapsing, one must learn how to flee, learn to suffer hunger and thirst. One must be ready to sleep in a cold place without any mattress or quilt. One must be ready to be beaten. And we tied each other to a tree and beat each other nearly to death. We beat each other with a belt, with a twig or a whip. And we have agreed on one thing. Anyone, who opened his mouth and said even a single word, was out. He had shown that he could not endure possible future torture, that he could betray his friends. He was not good enough to be a guerrilla.326

This lexia reflects similarities between the religious and the Marxist opposition: their denial of the body and employment of the same methods. The cultural code of this lexia is that heroic action is worth more than critical thought. The action itself is also worth more than the result of the action; heroes are born of heroic action. The lexia is a critique of the praise of heroic action. The heroic actions of this younger generation have simply resulted in the establishment of the Islamic Republic. The heroes have turned into the

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victims of the newly established Islamic Republic. The brother of the narrator is one of these victims. He has been executed by the Islamic regime, and the narrator has not been able to cry:

I want to cry, but I can’t […]. I didn’t cry. I couldn’t. Not even when they informed me, each in his own way, that he was killed with 11 shots […]. Another one said: with seven shots, but his eyes were open. My mother was at least happy that they had got his body back and that my sister had closed his eyes, even if she had not been able to kiss his face. 327

The hermeneutic codes of this lexia are clear: the Islamic Republic has given its blessing to nothing but prison and death. Martyrdom has taken place as a result of opposition to the Islamic Republic. Perhaps the next lexia can begin to offer answers to the questions “Why this prison? Why death and why martyrdom?” The narrator is standing close to the Iranian-Turkish border. He wants flee from Iran, from the Islamic Republic, but he has lost his way:

I’ve been swindled; we’ve been swindled, once again. If not, then this guide does not know the way. If not, it’s because of the night. It’s because of the darkness. I am lost; we are lost, once again. If not, then this guide has no idea of the time. How come his “within two hours” never comes to an end? We’ll never see the other side of this murky night. We are not supposed to see it, never, never. I’ve been swindled; we’ve been swindled, once again. 328

This lexia offers several symbolic codes: the guide and the way serve as symbols of the leaders and the way of thinking of the leaders the generation to which this young man belongs. The guide who has no idea of the time stands for oppositional leaders as well as the religious leader of the Revolution who are unable or unwilling to lead the young generation towards prosperity. They are deceived by their leaders. The cultural codes of this lexia can be written as follows: the heroes offer nothing but defeat; Islamic thinking offers nothing but defeat.

Here is another lexia that is made up of four fragments of poetry that the narrator remembers. Each fragment relates to a certain period in Iranian history. The narrator has not yet fled from his homeland.

328 Ibid, p. 5.

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1) What is life, seeing the enemy in your homeland? Either the life out of my body or the enemy out of my homeland? 2) My home is placed in the hunter’s garden; I know; But I stay in that garden. 3) O little eagles - I told them – where would my grave be? In my arms, the Sun said; In my throat, the Moon said; In the branches of the Laurel tree; In the body of the naked pigeon. 4) I am not the one whose back you can see in battle; I am the one in the window.

The first fragment was written by Farrokhi Yazdi (1887–1939), a Communist poet during the Constitutional Revolution and under Reza Shah. The second fragment was written by Siavash Kasrayi (1926–2005). He was an influential figure both as a member of the Tudeh Party and as a poet, particularly for his very famous poem, Ārash-e kamāngir (Arash the Archer). The third fragment is from a poem by Federico Garcia Lorca (1898–1936), the Spanish poet and playwright who was executed by the Nationalists at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. The fourth fragment is said to come from a poem by Reza Baraheni (1935–).

These poetry fragments can be read as symbolic codes as follows. The first fragment: My homeland is in the hands of the enemies; the second fragment: I will never leave my homeland; the third fragment: my grave should be placed in my homeland; and the fourth fragment: I will never flee from the enemy.

These symbolic codes reveal, however, that what happens in the novel is in contrast to these fragments of poetry: the narrator has left his homeland, his grave will be placed somewhere else than in his homeland, and he has fled from the enemy. This reflects the contrast between this generation’s wishes and hopes and the reality it has met. To flee the enemy is the only alternative left.

In the narrative world of Pāyān-e yek 'omr, the Islamic Revolution declares the death of the entire Iranian nation’s aspirations for freedom and social justice – aspirations that have been expressed ever since the Constitutional Revolution. The victory of the Islamic Revolution has led to books being thrown into the streams for fear of persecution, and dissidents being tortured and executed in the prisons of the Islamic Republic. Pāyān-e yek 'omr is the story of a generation of leftist dissidents who had practiced revolution for several years before the Revolution, and the story of a generation that reluctantly accepted that its only realistic chance of toppling the Pahlavi dynasty was to join the fight under the banner of the Islamic Revolution, only to be among its first victims. The subsequent heroic

330 Ibid, p. 64.
331 Ibid, p. 73.
332 Ibid, p. 74.
struggle of this generation against the anti-democratic Islamic Republic has resulted in nothing but the creation of yet more victims.

According to Pāyān-e yek omr, The Islamic Revolution has brought nothing but destruction; martyrdom has occurred in opposition to the Islamic Republic. Pāyān-e yek omr reflects no faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of the history.

5.2.5 *Noh tu-ye ‘esht o kīn-e ta’ziyedārān* (The Labyrinth of the Passion Play Leaders’ Love and Hatred) by Sardar Salehi (1993)

*Noh tu-ye ‘esht o kīn-e ta’ziyedārān* is narrated from the third-person point of view. It takes place in a city in southern Iran, where Darab, his wife, and his son Sayyedollah are living. Sayyed Gale, the priest and a follower of Khomeini, also lives in this city. The setting is the 1970s and is coincident with Mohammad Reza Shah’s crowning and the costly celebrations of the 2500th anniversary of the Iranian kingdom. Sayyed Gale is arrested and executed. It is his own son, Moro, who has supplied SAVAK with the information that has led to Sayyed Gale’s execution; but the only one who knows this secret is Sayyedollah, the son of Darab. After the Islamic Revolution, Moro receives a high position within the security police. But he works under an interrogator called Ostad. Ostad is working on killing his bodily temptations. Long before the Revolution, Ostad slept with the wife of his imprisoned employer, got her pregnant with a child, and killed her. At the same time, he enjoys breaking down political prisoners. Moro is afraid that Sayyedollah might reveal his own role in the execution of his father, and sees to it that Sayyedollah is arrested and killed. He then kills Ostad too, freeing himself from a long period of fear and degradation.

A great part of *Noh tu-ye ‘esht o kīn-e ta’ziyedārān* takes place in the prisons of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ostad, the powerful head of the prison, makes use of torture to see to it that the objectives of the history of Islam are realized. Ostad’s goal can be seen in this lexia:

The last innocent was the very one whom the Muslims had been waiting for since his great absence. And Ostad was striving hard to leave just a hint of his presence on the soil of the little city. In the absence of his strong arms, the very weak arms of Ostad were like single strands of hair striving to let God’s decree be executed.333

This lexia offers a cultural code that reflects an essential element of Iranian culture: waiting for an ultimate hidden savior who is expected to come and fill the world with justice. It is every man’s duty to pave the way for this

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savior’s arrival. This lexia contains a couple of hermeneutic codes. The Islamic Republic and people like Ostad view themselves as the final link to the promised savior, namely the Shia Twelfth Imam, the hidden Imam. They consider it to be their holy duty to prepare the way for his return. According to the Twelver school of Shia Islam, the twelfth Imam, Mahdi, is absent from the world of the senses, but present in the hearts of believers. Mahdi, was the son of the eleventh Shia Imam, Hasan Askari. He disappeared at the age of five in Baghdad, the same day his father died at the age of 28. His absence is said to consist of two periods. The first period lasted 72 years, during which he had four representatives on earth. They worked as links between him and the believers. This period is called gheybat-e soghrā, (the minor absence). The minor absence was followed by gheybat-e kobrā, (the major absence), which is still ongoing. During the major absence, the hidden Imam has no representatives on earth. This means that Shia Muslims reject the institution of the Caliphate and are always waiting for that hidden savior to arrive. It is the Mujtahids that function as links between the hidden Imam and the believers.

In Shia Islam, the philosophy of waiting is blended with a belief in paradise. This is a step in a structure within which one is waiting for a savior who is able to establish paradise on earth.

Now comes a lexia in which Ostad interprets his mission: “our hands are nothing but an instrument for showing the fingers of God and for executing the decree of God.”

This lexia confirms the hermeneutic codes of the previous lexia: the Islamic Republic has the mission of executing God’s punishments on earth; The Islamic Republic exists to pave the way for the appearance of the hidden Imam, which in turn indicates that Khomeini is the final link to the hidden Imam on earth, because the hidden Imam will not appear until people are capable of understanding the secrets of the divine laws. According to Ostad, the execution of the opponents of the Islamic Republic paves the way for the appearance of the hidden Imam.

The next lexia relates to Ostad’s conversation with Moro about to the type of punishment the political prisoners should be subjected to. For him physical punishment, although justified and necessary, is not enough:

He is the absolute perfection. Every act we do for the sake of God should also be perfect, even death […]. A perfect death, totally perfect! […] The execution of the corrupt has always been justified; very much justified.336

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334 The first four caliphs.
335 Ibid, p. 56.
This lexia reflects another step in the overall structure of the Shia belief about the duty of man on the earth: one should fight for God and eradicate God’s enemies. The hermeneutic code of this lexia can be read thus: as the final link to the holy goodness, the Islamic Republic’s mission is to kill the bodies and souls of its enemies, who are thought to be representatives of the devil.

Ostad and Moro have a master-follower relationship, but it is not just this relationship that connects Ostad and Moro. They both have something in their past that they are trying to hide from other people. Both fear being unmasked. Their pious image is based on people not knowing their secrets; this is the source of their fear and suffering. They are connected to each other by a sense of guilt. Ostad’s secret is that he had a relationship with the wife of his employer, and making her pregnant with a child that had to be eliminated. The story is contained in this lexia:

Kal-Banu lay down on her back, and gave Ostad a big stone. Then he drew up her dress. Ostad closed his eyes. Strike; strike hard, strike it hard on my belly [...]. You bastard, strike! Strike hard on my belly so that it is aborted; now that you have done this to me [...]. If he comes back, he will stone me to death [...]. Jump on my belly, with your two feet. Jump on my belly with all your strength; but not a single sign of abortion; not a single drop of blood! Last time, when he came back from the shop, he saw Kal-Banu in the yard [...]. He removed the flies from her open mouth and from her whitened eyes. He drew the body into the basement, dug a pit deeper than his own height, and rolled the body into it.

Ostad wonders what he would do if he met that woman now? Would he be ready to punish her by stoning her to death? Would he be ready to punish himself with lashes of the whip? Ostad is suffering from his past and places much emphasis on Satan trying to deceive people’s souls. Ostad’s musings generate the next lexia:

One should know the difference between the body and soul! Any idiot is able to kill the body or to revive it; but the soul? It was the soul that Satan could ride on. And Satan had already ridden on his soul, hadn’t he? He had become so tame and obedient to Satan that just recalling that time could get the sweat of shame to flow on his forehead. And Ostad had not become free from Satan yet. Satan used to come back with sophistry and with repeated, unreasonable, and misleading questions.

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337 Ibid, 90.
338 Ibid, pp. 57–58.
This lexia reflects a further step in the above-mentioned structure: on his way to perform his duty to God, man is hindered by temptations. The cultural code of this lexia can be read as follows: Ostad believes that the emancipation of the soul comes before bodily pleasure. He carries a sense of guilt for his relationship with his employer’s wife. He believes that the person who satisfies his bodily pleasure closes the door to the salvation of his soul. This way of thinking has its roots in Islamic mysticism. According to one branch of mysticism, fury is like a hound, lust is like a horse, and reason is like a knight. If the horse and the hound are not under control, the knight risks falling down. Here again we are dealing with steps within a structure: the sense of guilt encourages self-punishment; self-punishment encourages the punishment of others.

Moro, too, has a sense of guilt. In his youth, he informed on his own father and caused his execution. Seidal is the only one who is aware of Moro’s secret about having provided SAVAK with information against his own father. Seidal is now working with some oppositional groups and Moro is an interrogator, working in one of the prisons of the Islamic Republic. When Seidal is arrested, Moro sees it as a golden opportunity to eliminate the witness to his sin. Moro kills Seidal. The scene is related to the reader in the next lexia:

He hated Seidal so much. When Seidal was arrested, he was in such a hurry to act that he did not extract any information from Seidal. Moreover, Ostad became suspicious [...] Standing above the body of Seidal, he wondered how death could come so easily and through unknown means. He could not believe that Seidal’s life had ended so easily with a kick to the neck. 339

This lexia too reflects another step in the overall structure: a person lower in the power hierarchy acts independently and without the approval of those higher in the hierarchy; he becomes a slave to his fear of being exposed as criminally sinful. Considering what we have read so far, this lexia can be read as comprising two cultural codes: a sense of guilt leads to crime; and preferring the soul over the body leads to crime. These codes once again reveal some steps within a certain structure: the sense of guilt enables and encourages self-punishment; and self-punishment enables and encourages the punishment of the others.

To hide his past, Moro shouts loudly; he gives orders; he tortures and executes prisoners just to fill the shoes of a powerful and scary man, but in the presence of Ostad, he shrinks to nothing. Consider this lexia:

339 Ibid, p. 150.
Moro was not furious. Moro, who had delivered so many speeches on TV, Moro, who had published his threats in newspapers, Moro, who knew that even babies knew him; that the mere mention of his name could make the most fearless counter-Revolutionary troops tremble, Moro, whose name, Hajj Aqa Morteza, was behind the destruction of every safe house; Moro, who broke the back of the counter-Revolutionary groups, simply did not dare to ask Ostad how the safe house had become known to the police and how many had been executed [...].

Ostad and Moro are both imprisoned in one and the same structure; a structure based on the presence of the dominator and the dominated. There is no winner in a world like that; a world based on fearfully obeying the superior master and on dominating the inferior follower. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is thus: the sufi-like master-follower relationship, as between Moro and Ostad, brings about death, and brutality.

All the significant elements of the Islamic Republic are gathered in the next lexia. It refers to a period during the days of the Revolution, when a rumor was spread that one could see the image of Khomeini reflected in the moon. As a matter of fact, many people who looked at the moon confirmed that they saw Khomeini in the moon, but many other people denied any such thing:

He regretted it very much; he regretted that he had not killed Seidal that very night; that holy night that God put the sign of the holy Revolution in everyone’s heart and took Āqā to the moon. He remembered that he had struck Seidal on his head with his fist and asked him, “You bastard, how come everybody else sees him, but not you? His holy beard is also visible.”

The symbolic code of this lexia is that the heroes are usually created by people who need heroes. Heroes, especially the so-called holy heroes, can be used to oppress those who deny this holiness.

According to Noh tu-ye eshq o kin-e ta ziyedârân, the Islamic Revolution has resulted in a regime based on despising the body, making people feel guilty, and controlling everyone’s mind and soul; a regime that relies on prisons, torture, and executions for its continued existence. The Islamic Republic interprets any other voice as being the voice of Satan. The Islamic Republic severely punishes the sinful, using an army of the sinful to do the work. Suffering from their own sinful temptations and subconsciously aware

340 Ibid, pp. 69–70.
341 Khomeini.
342 Ibid, p. 149.
that they are just as guilty as the people to be punished, the members of the Islamic Republic’s army of control try to purge their own sins by unleashing the fury of the psychopaths on their defenseless victims.

According to *Noh tu-ye eshq o kin-e ta ziyedārān*, the Islamic Revolution has brought nothing but brutality and destruction; martyrdom has taken place in opposition to the Islamic Republic, and those who once were heroes have become the victims of the Islamic Revolution. In the narrative worlds of *Noh tu-ye eshq o kin-e ta ziyedārān*, there is no faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history.

5.2.6 *Gosal (The Breaking)* by Sasan Ghahreman (1995)

*Gosal* is about the lives of three young men and a young woman who have left the post-Revolutionary Iran for Europe. The novel is narrated from five different points of view: twice from Azar’s point of view; once from Khosrow’s point of view; once from Mohsen’s; and once from Majid’s. Azar’s narratives are titled “The Earth” and “The Rain”; Khosrow’s narrative is titled “The Sunshine”; Mohsen’s narrative is titled “The Wind”; and Majid’s is titled “The Fog.”

Majid is a painter and is married to Azar. Before leaving the country, he was serving a jail sentence. In jail, he met Hojjat, a member of the Forqan343 organization. Hojjat was executed, but Majid had been very impressed by Hojjat. Khosrow is a writer and poet. He met Mohsen when crossing the border illegally. All of them have come to Germany through Prague. In Berlin, Azar divorces Majid. Majid is upset about their separation and about Western culture. He feels very lonely and longs for Iran. After a while, Khosrow and Azar become a couple. Mohsen does not take things so seriously. In Prague, he had a Czech girlfriend, but he left her to come to Germany, and now he is on his way to Canada. While Azar and Khosrow are a couple, Mohsen sleeps with Azar a single time before leaving Germany for Canada. Azar is pregnant, but decides to leave Khosrow, and raise the child by herself, just as she raised Lale, her daughter with Majid. . Like thousands of other Iranians abroad, Azar, Khosrow, Mohsen, and Majid are lost in the new world. Among them, however, Azar has a clearer understanding of what she wants for herself and for her child.

From *Gosal*, four lexias have been chosen for closer examination. Two are from Azar’s narratives “The Rain” and “The Earth”; and two are from Majid’s narrative “The Fog.” Each of the four lexias appears here as a paragraph, one after the other, beginning with Azar’s point of view in “The Rain”:

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343 An extremist post-Revolutionary Islamic organization in Iran which did not believe in the institution of the clergy in Islam. This belief was the reason behind their assassination of a couple of ayatollas following the Islamic Revolution.
When Lale fell asleep, we sat and drank wine and ate grapes. I had his head on my chest and caressed his hair and his face. I did not see him, I felt him. He was warm. He was kind. When he touched me, he did it as a child touches his mother, and then I was sure that I belonged to him; that he had the right to do so. And he played like a child, he tried to discover me. He used to smell me and make my body his own possession. And I used to say, “I love you, I miss you. Is there anything wrong with that? Is that a sin? Why should it be?”

This lexia is a step within a structure, and reflects the life of a woman who says goodbye to religious and traditional thinking, divorces her unwanted husband, then takes a lover, and turns this into a source of dignity. The lexia contains a cultural code. It appears to be a critique of the old cultural norms based on the denial of earthly pleasures. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia follow its cultural code: the pleasure of drinking wine and enjoying the body of another person is morally justified; satisfying the needs of the body is the first step towards the elevating the soul.

In another lexia of the novel, Azar talks about making love with another man, Mohsen:

I looked at him. I put my head on his chest and my tears just rolled down. He embraced me and pressed my head towards his chest. He kissed my eyes and dried my tears. Then, he opened the door and we entered the room slowly. We did not turn on the light. Our lips met in the darkness. It was as if spring had come to my body to make me warm. Spring was there with rain to let things turn green. How warm we were. We were burning inside. The fire was spreading and the flames were running through our fingers and our lips, through our bodies. It made us naked; it melted us and twisted us.

This lexia is another step within the above-mentioned structure. Azar leaves because she wants to, disregarding the old and traditional cultural norms. Her former lover, Khosrow, has been replaced by another, Mohsen. The hermeneutic code based on such a structure is this: longing after the body of someone else than the beloved is justified. Love without bodily pleasure is not a complete love. Love without bodily pleasure accustoms one to oppression and deprivation. The cultural code of this lexia can thus be that one should obey the orders of the body. Any system of morals that interprets this private affair as a “moralistic deviation” just paves the way for oppression in all areas of human activity.

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344 Ghahreman, Sasan. (1374 [1995]), Gosal (The Breaking), Toronto, p. 73.
The following lexia is taken from Majid’s monologue. He experiences loneliness and is critical of western culture:

We’re just foreigners. We know what love is; we know what mysticism is. We know the value of sharing bread with someone else. We talk to our neighbors in the corridors. We talk to people in buses. We offer our place to others, and we don’t put our parents in service flats for the elderly. We are warm. We have soul.346

In this monologue, Majid presents a structure that is in complete contrast to the structure presented by Azar. This structure is based on loyalty, on seeing to the needs of the others, on neglecting one’s own needs; a structure based on self-sacrifice. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia are then that no individuality is worth the loneliness it brings. The cultural codes are that the world of the East is better than the world of the West; and the world of the soul is superior to the world of the body.

Majid’s monologue offers another lexia. He is talking about his friend, Hojjat, who had been executed. Majid was very impressed by Hojjat. Majid recalls Hojjat’s words in prison. Here is the lexia:

They force you; they force you to be dependent, not to be able to free yourself. But you must be able to cut the bands that tie you to the earth, and make yourself free. Then you will see the light, and you will feel the warmth that gives you life. To be dependent on this is freedom itself.347

This lexia presents further steps within a structure that Majid presents, and is in contrast to the structure that Azar presents. The cultural codes of this lexia can be read as follows: the body is not worth worrying so much about; satisfying the needs of the body is not as fulfilling as the satisfaction reached by rejecting earthly pleasure; the world of the soul is superior to the world of the body. Here follows a lexia related to Hojjat’s execution:

The next morning, I received thirty whiplashes. I peed on myself during the lashing. They forced me to take a shower despite my wounded body. One weeks later, they executed Hojjat. After one week I also was released. But which one of us was really released, me or him?348

347 Ibid, p. 130.
348 Ibid, p. 131.
While sharing the structure and the cultural code of the former lexia, this lexia presents a parallel structure: the opponents of the Islamic Republic represent different ideologies. The Islamic Republic oppresses all opponents, regardless of their ideologies, even those who share its cultural principals; and a hermeneutic code: martyrdom occurs in the prisons of the Islamic Republic.

Now, in the light of the symbolic codes, the four lexias, which are both these narratives’ titles and elements of nature, can be read. All the codes witness to the dominance of one single voice in Gosal. The titles of the two narratives of Azar, who has left the Eastern culture; the culture that gave birth to the Islamic Republic, are “The Earth” and “The Rain.” The narrative of Khosrow, who has also left the Eastern culture and sees to his bodily needs, is titled “The Sunshine.” The narrative of Mohsen, who thinks like Azar and Khosrow, is titled “The Wind.” These four elements together symbolize life. The narrative of Majid, who is longing for the Eastern culture, but does not realize that he is longing for the same thinking that has resulted in the Islamic Revolution, is symbolized by “The Fog” – fog, which makes it difficult to see clearly, and which casts a shadow over life.

Gosal is written in praise of the revolt against divine and spiritual values, and in praise of bodily and earthly pleasures. According to Gosal, heavenly and spiritual values have been the sole source of inspiration and justification for torture and killing in the Islamic Republic’s prisons, and for the suppression of social and political freedom. According to Gosal, the Islamic Republic is founded upon an ideology and a patriarchal culture which have forced the characters in Gosal to flee Iran. These ideological and cultural elements nurture the Islamic Revolution and have led to martyrdom in its prisons. This martyrdom has transpired in opposition to the Islamic Republic, but sadly, these martyrs are just victims. Their heroic action has not and will not change anything. According to Gosal, the faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history is dead.

5.2.7 Chāh-e bābel (The Pit of Babel) by Reza Ghasemi (1999)

Chāh-e bābel is written in seven parts titled: Part Zero: Darkness; Part One: The Wandering Icon of Felicia; Part Two: The Most Secure Place in the World; Part Three: A Dress of Stupidity and Insult; Part Four: The Eternal Sundays; Part Five: Coquille Saint-Jacques; Part Six: The Murder Day of the Pigeons. In these seven parts we read about many lives in different times; it is a labyrinth without a visible entrance or exit.

Mondo is an Iranian refugee in Paris who has a beautiful voice. This is not the first time he was born. Two centuries ago, he was the special envoy of a Qajar king to Russia and his name was Abu al-Hasan. In his present life, he has gone through many experiences. In the Islamic Republic of Iran he was a singer of religious songs at the Iran-Iraq war front. Because of his
sexual relationship with Nahid, the widow of a martyr, he was sentenced to be stoned to death together with her. He succeeded in escaping from the hole and killed his lover with a concrete block in order to save her from dying under a rain of stones. Today, the forty-two year old Mondo is in love with a French woman, Felicia, who in turn is in love with a poor musician.

Kamal, too, is an Iranian refugee in Paris. He is a painter who always uses live models for his paintings. He was a political prisoner in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and now lives with horrible memories from his many years in prison. He was a tavvāb and went so far as to participate in the execution of other prisoners. He became a tavvāb after seeing one of the highly positioned members of his political organization working for the security police – the same person who had once raped him in one of the organization’s safe houses.

Nader is also an Iranian refugee in Paris. He has a very unhappy life with a woman, Anne Laure, and three children of different ages. The oldest child is not his own. Anne Laure was already pregnant with her first child with another man when she married Nader. The father of Anne Laure’s first child is Mondo.

F. V. ZH. is a seventy-year-old politician, who is occupied with writing a novel titled Chāh-e bābel. He has a wife much younger than him and a servant who also has written a novel – a novel in which the characters are modeled on F. V. ZH. and his wife. Chāh-e bābel is full of events from darkness to the murder of pigeons.

As was mentioned above, Chāh-e bābel is written in seven parts. These seven parts begin with darkness and end in darkness. Part Zero contains a strange question directed to a female character, Nayi:

Why is there such a big difference between darkness and darkness? Why is there such a big difference between the darkness of the grave and the darkness of the room? – And the darkness at the bottom of a well? – And the darkness of the womb? [...] You tell me Nayi. Why is there a difference between the darkness of eternity without beginning and the darkness of eternity without end? Tell me, you who are from another planet – you tell me...

349 Stoning is a form of punishment where a group throws stones at a person buried up to the chest in a hole until the person dies. If the convict manages to escape from the hole, she/he will be spared the punishment.
350 Tavvāb, actually, means a person who repents his sin before God. This word received a political meaning after the wave of suppression in Iran after 1981. It was used for political prisoners who after having been tortured, repented their sin of opposing the Islamic Republic, and promised to be loyal servants of the Islamic Republic and fight its enemies. Their duties included delivering information against their comrades and other members of oppositional groups.
This question is repeated and expanded in part six as well. Nayi, the bag lady, and Mondo, the blind singer, are begging at a metro station in Paris. Nayi has her pants down and Mondo has his head under her skirt and asks Nayi this question helplessly:

O, Nayi, you are so good. Why have you left your planet for this place? I am dirty and stinky, Nayi. Be my shelter, Nayi. It is cold here. I turn dark… let me go back to my own darkness. It is cold here… Why is there such a big difference between darkness and darkness? ...
You tell me Nayi. Why there is a difference between the darkness of eternity without beginning and the darkness of eternity without end? ³⁵²

This lexia adds yet another step to the other three steps of the structure described above: anxiety about death makes one long to return to the safety of one’s mother’s womb. The hermeneutic codes of these two lexias must be written in relation to each other: existence consists of seven phases. These phases begin with darkness and end with darkness. Because the latter darkness, namely the darkness of death, makes the former darkness, namely the darkness of birth, into a journey which goes nowhere, these hermeneutic codes can be summarized within one symbolic code: darkness is the inevitable destiny of existence.

These words of Aziz al-Din Nasafi, a thirteenth-century mystic, might contribute to the interpretation of the novel:

O, Dervish, the universe is made up of two things: light and darkness; it is made up of a sea of light and a sea of darkness. These two seas are blended at the moment. We should separate the light from the darkness so that the light can manifest its character… ³⁵³

This reflects a structure that contrasts with the structure of the previous two lexias; creation is founded on three bases: the separation of light from its origin, the mixture of light and darkness, the return of light to the original light. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is then thus: the seven phases of the spiritual journey of the mystics are nothing but stages in separating light from darkness. This hermeneutic code can be summarized within a symbolic code: the final destiny of the seven phases of the circle of existence is nothing but light. This light is nothing other than the divinely beloved, namely God, to whom every real mystic longs to return.

Now, two lexias that contradict each other have been found; and the search is on for an answer to how Chāh-e bābel will resolve the conflict. One day, at the front, during the Iran-Iraq war, a clergyman asks Mondo to

³⁵² Ibid, p. 274.
³⁵³ Razi, Hashem. (1379 [2000/01]), Hekmat-e Khosrowāni, Tehran, p.132.
wear a white mantle and ride a white horse, and play the hidden Imam. Mondo tells him that instead of that, he can sing such powerful religious songs for the soldiers that they all will be possessed of the courage to charge across the minefields. The clergyman accepts Mondo’s suggestion. At the clergyman’s office, Mondo sees a book, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, by William L. Shirer.

He looked at the swastika on the cover of the book, and asked, “Why don’t you use the same method that other people used? They tied the explosives to the dogs’ bellies and sent them towards the Germans’ tanks.”

This lexia can reflect a further step of the earlier structure based on searching for the divine beloved, namely that those who search for a divine beloved may end up mired in fascism! Considering that *The Third Reich* was in the office of the Iranian clergyman, the hermeneutic code of this lexia can be read thus: the Islamic Republic and Nazism are nourished by the same source. The answer of the clergyman can be read as another lexia:

The Revolution needs its lord; we must have martyrs so that this Revolution does not go without its lord, sir.

A further step in the previously mentioned structure is that fascism takes advantage of martyrdom to justify and advance itself. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be read thus: martyrs at the front are just instruments for a fascist policy that promises unification with heavenly light and paradise. The next lexia concerns Mondo after he has returned from the front. He has been assigned to inform the wife of a soldier about her husband’s death. Her name is Nahid. Mondo and Nahid fall in love and sleep together. This has become known to the authorities, and both are sentenced to be stoned to death for their extramarital relation. Mondo remembers the scene:

I could see Nahid’s eyes behind the gunny sack and her tiny nose which was going to be smashed in the coming seconds […] I could not hear anything; behind the darkness of the gunny sack I could see Nahid’s wet eyes […] the crowd’s condemnations passed through the pores of the sack… I was ashamed of myself. She was buried in the ground up to her chest, and I, up to the waist. A monstrous animal came to life in my body […] by a trembling, I took myself out of the ditch… there was a gutter behind me […] I stepped on the cement curb. It was loose.

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354 Ghasemi, p. 142.
[...] His eyes fell on the cement curb of the gutter that was loose... She was like a fountain of blood. She was still moaning. He lifted the cement block: Forgive me Nahid!\(^{356}\)

This lexia reflects the same structure mentioned above. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is not so complicated: the Islamic Republic offers nothing but death and destruction. This hermeneutic code can be reduced to one cultural code: the body is the main source of unforgivable sins, and the main obstacle to unification with the divinely beloved and to salvation.

Kamal is a political prisoner and a member of a leftist organization. After having withstood weeks of torture in prison, Kamal becomes a penitent \(tavvāb\). Kamal has turned \(tavvāb\) after seeing that his own supervisor in the organization, Javadi, has turned \(tavvāb\), and even offered damning information against his comrades. Kamal, however, is not an ordinary \(tavvāb\); he turns \(tavvāb\) to such an extreme degree that he participates in executions. This lexia portrays him in his role as a \(tavvāb\):

Kamal looked at the hairy and untidy face that had come out of the crane... The hairy face came closer; while looking askance with his puffed eyes, Kamal asked in a familiar tone: you’re not a Communist, are you? His bad breath was horrifying. Kamal looked at the blood he had on his palms and said: you’d best know that I have already gone through interrogations. He then said: the important thing is that you want to become a real Muslim, and showed Kamal a lever: a metal shaft with a black ball of rubber at its end, and said: you just push this donkey cock forward when the rope is around his neck. He will be pulled up just like that. When he has farted and life has left his body, push the lever back. He will fall down like a piece of dry human excrement.\(^{357}\)

The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be read as follows: those who once fought for freedom have become executioners; the hero is dead. Both the hero and the anti-hero will be trapped by the Islamic Republic and show the worst sides of their characters; those who need a hero will in the end be destroyed.

\(Chāh-e bābel\) paints the Islamic Republic as hell on earth. In this story, the Islamic Republic is the scene of women being stoned to death, of torture, and of executions in prisons; it is a place where children are brainwashed to prepare them to be soldiers in the Iran-Iraq war. The most striking characteristic of this hell, however, is the widespread technique of

\(^{356}\) Ibid, pp. 146–151.
\(^{357}\) Ibid, p. 221.
transforming prisoners into executioners and subjecting them to severe mental and physical torture. The Islamic Republic is not content to accept signed letters of regret from its prisoners, but also asks them to demonstrate their loyalty by participating in the execution of their friends. To maintain its hold on power, the Islamic Republic employs many forms of physical torture; but it also coerces souls, already depressed and broken by prison torture, to take part in the commission of new crimes that the Islamic Republic finds useful for its continued survival and control of the populace.

According to Chāh-e bābel, the Islamic Republic is the Republic of Darkness; a darkness virtually impossible for a stranger to imagine. This Republic of Darkness has left behind many martyrs in the prisons. Martyrdom has occurred in opposition to the Islamic Republic, but here, the martyrs are just hapless victims with no chance of influencing the course of the events. According to Chāh-e bābel, the mere realization of this Republic of Darkness on the earth bears witness to the death of any faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history.

5.2.8 Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad (The Incident Happens as Written) by Iraj Rahmani (2001)

Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad is mainly narrated from the third-person point of view. It depicts the lives of Iranian political activists who have fled the Islamic Republic of Iran and are now living in Canada. The main character of the novel is Mr. Tahmasbi whose wife, Soheila, has left him after moving to Canada. Under Mr. Tahmasbi’s flat in Toronto there is a café. In the absence of Soheila, this café has become a place for him to overcome his loneliness, and it is where he meets Mostafa. They decides to call this café “Kharābābād,” (A Place for the Ruined), as it is a place where ruined people usually gather: addicts, prostitutes, and smugglers. About ten years have passed since Mostafa fled from Iran. At the moment, he is writing down memories from his five years in the prisons of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Tahmasbi’s brother was also a political prisoner and was executed by the Islamic Republic. Tahmasbi spends many hours talking to Mostafa about his brother and his wife Soheila.

Mostafa is of the opinion that everything happens as written. He writes in order to change reality as he wishes, but finds out that it is not as easy as he thought. In his writing he describes Soheila as “a tall woman with short, black hair… She was thirty-four years old with curious and rebellious eyes,” but Soheila is not the only character in Mostafa’s imagination. In another part of Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad, we meet the owner of a yacht who calls himself Salomon and calls the woman who keeps

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358 Rahmani, Iraj. (1380 [2001/02]), Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad (The Incident Happens as it is Written), Canada, p. 91.
him company Mekada, the Queen of Sheba. Then, Mostafa writes about Salomon and Mekada, who have come to Toronto and invite Mr. Tahmasbi, Mostafa, and Gord – another customer of the above-mentioned café – to Salomon’s kingdom.

As mentioned, Mostafa was imprisoned under the Islamic Republic. The first lexia deals with his time in prison:

And what strange things he had seen: prisoners working as prison guards, and prisoners having their own cousins as prison guards. He had seen Communists performing daily prayers, and prisoners being punished with thirty lashes of the whip just for smiling. Then he had burst out crying, as he realized that things in prison were not as easy as he had thought.359

This lexia reflects the structure as follows: those in power have the victims in their control; they force the victims to become prison guards for other victims. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be read thus: the outcome of the Revolution is in total contrast to his expectations. The symbolic code of this lexia relates to “having one’s own cousins as prison guards”; the prisoner and the prison guards belong to the same family. Those who once were freedom fighters have become prison guards. No one can save anyone else; everyone is his/her own savior. Another lexia:

Here was a hell; a hell that has received its fire from the fire of Prometheus. Here, there was eternal punishment. Everyone was nailed to the Caucasian mountain and a vulture was continually eating his liver. One died, then came back to life in order to die again.360

The hermeneutic code of this lexia can be read as follows: prison in the Islamic Republic is like a hell where those who dare to revolt are punished by a god who shows no mercy. The symbolic code would be: the Islamic Republic has created hell on earth. The next lexia concerns the prisons and the prisoners’ inscriptions on the prison’s walls.

The prisoners said that Qezel Hesar is better than Gowhardasht.361 On the walls of the corridors, however, it was written Saddam is the worst; and someone else, using a pointed thing, had written on the concrete wall: please memorize this phone number and call my family when you are released. I am going to be executed tomorrow.362

359 Ibid, p. 84.
360 Ibid, p. 298.
361 Two prisons in Karaj, a city near Tehran.
362 Ibid, p. 299.
The walls of the prisons in the Islamic Republic witness to the unavoidable destiny of heroes trapped by the gods. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that martyrdom has occurred in opposition to the Islamic Republic.

The following passage, about the love between Soheila and Mr. Tahmasbi, is a lexia. Mr. Tahmasbi is incapable of treating Soheila like a free woman. He is jealous, and fears her sexuality:

Soheila was very irritated by his suspiciousness. As soon as someone called her, he became suspicious and tried to find out who was calling and why. He was jealous, and used to say: yes, Othello manifests real love; love without jealousy is not real love. And Soheila used to say: But what kind of love is that? Love without freedom is not love; it is Shakespeare multiplied by Khalkhali.363

This lexia reflects a cultural code: the contrast between modern love and traditional love, or the contrast between respecting the freedom and individuality of a loved one, and treating her as a slave. The symbolic codes of this lexia are: Shakespeare as the symbol of the traditional romantic; and Khalkhali as the symbol of tradition and brutality,364 which are inimical to women’s sexuality. The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that the Islamic Republic is the total of the cultural discourses of a nation, as embodied in Tahmasbi.

The lexia that follows deals with Solomon the prophet,365 and his wife Mekada. Their images have come out of history books, but history books are not a source for the truth about them. It is in Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad that the true tyrannical nature of Solomon is exposed. Solomon is in reality a power-seeking prophet who destroys his opponents. He has seven hundred wives. In the chronology that he ordered, Solomon has provided the world with a divine picture of himself. As related in Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad however, Solomon is a symbol for all tyrants who hide the falseness of their character behind religion. Solomon is a symbol for the religious leaders of the Islamic Republic who have given deceptive pictures of themselves in the historical texts ordered by them. They make every effort to hide their criminal deeds so that these do not come to light in history books; but their true nature is revealed in fiction, as demonstrated in Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad:

364 The Chief Justice of the revolutionary courts and known for his summary executions.
365 Solomon was known for his piousness; there are many legends about his great virtue.
What was rumored among the people of Jerusalem, and had also been spread through a pamphlet, concerned the king’s indulgences and Queen Mekada’s lust for power [...]. Solomon was aware of all these rumors and of the pamphlet through his spies. Solomon, who also strongly believed that things happened as they were written, called the scribes and ordered them to add a page to the chronology in order to confront these rumors. The scribes then wrote:

“And when the Queen of Sheba heard about Solomon and his connection with the name of the God, the highest, she came to Jerusalem in order to examine him using difficult tests. She came to Jerusalem with a caravan of camels loaded with spices, gold, and precious stones. When they were alone, there was no secret between them. The Queen of Sheba learnt about his knowledge, and his wisdom, and his justice, and the holy temple that he had built for God, the highest. Then she said that all she had heard about Solomon was true.”

The symbolic code of this lexia is Solomon’s calling the scribe to add a page to the chronology and manipulate history. This lexia also reflects the same structure: to safeguard their power, those in power need to present themselves as holy figures. To do this, they find it justified to manipulate history. The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be written thus: history is always manipulated and written by the “conquerors”; the history written by the Islamic Republic is false.

The very title of the book Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad is the most important lexia of this novel. Its hermeneutic code confirms the hermeneutic codes of the former lexia: history is written by the “conquerors.” The truth can only be revealed in fiction. Mostafa cannot write and change reality as he wishes, but he can reveal the truth in fiction.

Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad is a work of fiction that reveals the true nature of the Islamic Republic; an overview not only of those cultural elements upon which the Islamic Revolution is founded, but also of the extensive oppression practiced by the Islamic Republic and of the false history written by those in power. Some elements of the Islamic Republic can be seen personified in the character of Mr. Tahmasbi, and some can be seen in Solomon, the prophet.

The Islamic Revolution is based on the belief in the superior position of men and the subordinate position of women; on the “innate sinfulness of man,” and on the necessity of punishment. The Islamic Republic has made manifest God’s hell on earth. It is an extreme form of hypocrisy to promote and revere prophets like Solomon, who had 700 wives, and at the same time preach the rejection of bodily pleasure and earthly values. With prophets like

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366 Ibid, pp. 265–266.
Solomon as a model, the Islamic Republic seeks to break down prisoners and coerce them to deny their beliefs so that neither resistance nor heroism would be likely to arise.

In the narrative world of Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad, the Islamic Republic has brought nothing but destruction, martyrdom has occurred in opposition to the Islamic Republic, and there is no faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history.

5.2.9 Dar Ānkārā bārān mibārad (It is Raining in Ankara) by Hosein Dowlatabadi (1992)

Dar Ānkārā bārān mibārad is narrated from the first-person point of view. It is about Jamile, a young woman who has fled Iran illegally. She is now living in a basement in Ankara that she rents from an old Turkish woman. She cannot stop thinking about the past: how she lost her father very early in life; her childhood and youth in a village together with her mother and brother, Enayat; and how they were forced to move to Tehran because of her brother’s love affair with Soltan, a girl in their village.

After the Islamic Revolution, both Jamile and Enayat become active in an oppositional Marxist organization. Siavash is the theorist and is a high-ranking member of the organization. Siavash and Jamile fall in love with each other and marry despite the opposition of Siavash’s family and Jamile’s mother. The fruit of their life together is a daughter, Nilufar. Soon after the Revolution, the newly established Islamic Republic begins persecuting members of oppositional groups. Enayat is arrested and killed under torture. Jamile is also arrested. In prison, she once again meets Soltan who works as prison guard. Soltan does her best to help Jamile. After a short while, Jamile is released. The security police have not been able to find out any information about her political activities, but there is a clear risk of being arrested and exposed. She decides, therefore, to leave the country, especially since she has heard that Siavash is in Turkey. She places her mother in a home for old people and hides at the home of friends, waiting for the smuggler to take her and her daughter out of the country. One day Soltan visits her and tells her that she has been living with Enayat for a long time and has a child with him. She invites Jamile to hide in her house, but Jamile refuses.

On her way out of the country, the Revolutionary Guard shoot at them. Her daughter falls from the horse and dies. Jamile arrives in Ankara, where someone is waiting for her: a woman who was one of her political comrades for a long time and who was in love with Enayat. She tells Jamile that Siavash is not in Turkey, that he was arrested on his way out of Iran and that she does not know whether Siavash survived or was killed.
Jamile refuses to follow her comrade to Istanbul, staying instead in Ankara together with Ayla, the little girl whose mother had been killed by the Turkish police on the way to Istanbul. Jamile stays in Ankara plagued by nightmares and talking in her sleep. The owner of the flat, an old lady who has heard Jamile talking in her sleep, asks her to leave the house, because she believes Jamile is insane.

A significant part of Jamile’s narrative describes the Islamic Republic’s policy towards oppositional political groups and what Jamile has suffered under the Islamic Republic; it is about the fates of her husband, Siavash, and her brother, Enayat. Here is a lexia from part of her narrative:

For every day that went by, we became more and more isolated. Siavash used to sit behind his desk and smoke and count the dead bodies. Still, he could not believe that they had turned into such wild creatures. What was going on in the country did not match his and his friends’ estimates. Every day, they took people in droves to the sacrificial altar, and recited the names of the victims from the loudspeakers.367

This lexia reflects some of the steps of the basic structure in the novel: the intellectuals, especially leftist intellectuals, have participated in the Revolution; the Revolution succeeds; an open political atmosphere follows the Revolution; the leftists express their ideas openly; all power is in the hands of the Islamic Republic; the Islamic Republic starts to suppress every kind of opposition to its power. The hermeneutic code of this lexia can be read thus: the intellectuals had very naive expectations about the outcome of a revolution under the religious leadership of Khomeini. The occasion when the hezbollahis, supporters of the Islamic Republic, attacked Jamile’s house, is the subject of next lexia:

There was not enough room in the small alley for the crowd of hezbollahis. The children climbed the trees and whistled, and cast everything that was near at hand into the yard. A stone struck the glass of the window. It was as if the glass in my heart broke into thousands of pieces. My daughter cried and fled into the darkness. My mother spouted curses, then followed her. The younger boys pounded on the iron door in the rhythm of a Revolutionary song, and Zeinab’s sisters, like ravens, fluttered among the crowd.368

368 Ordinary people referred disparagingly to the female members of the Muslim phalange groups as “Zeinab’s sisters.” The women themselves were proud of this name, since Zeinab was Imam Hosein’s sister, who stood by his side to the end.
This lexia reveals another step in the basic structure in the novel: the Islamic Republic makes use of paramilitary groups in the name of Islam. The hermeneutic code of this lexia confirms the hermeneutic code of the former lexia: the intellectuals are shocked not only by the totalitarian and destructive nature of the Islamic Republic but also by people’s support for it. The symbolic code of this lexia is reflected in Jamile’s words: “The glass in my heart broke into thousands of pieces.” The same people for whose sake Jamile, his brother and Siavash had fought, and for whom they had been ready to sacrifice their lives, were now acting as the oppressing army of the Islamic Republic.

In the next lexia, concerning Jamile’s time in prison, she speaks of her situation and the general atmosphere in the prison:

I was frantic with pain. In the cell, I drew my swelling and benumbed feet toward me like a child smashed by a thresher might do. The smell of burnt flesh spread in the crypt’s heavy air, and those heart-rending screams could still be heard behind the cement walls, and rasped on my already worn nerves.370

The hermeneutic code of this lexia is also clear: the Islamic Republic uses all possible means to break and destroy oppositional groups; they torment the bodies of the prisoners harshly. They force the prisoners to provide information on their friends in order to torment their souls too. The next lexia recounts the time the prison interrogator forces her to look at the body of her dead brother:

My brother’s feet were swollen like two pillows all the way up to the knees. He had no nails. Instead of nails, there was old coagulated blood. There were wounds and bruises everywhere in his face. There was a big open wound between his eyebrows up to his forehead, from which blood was still running. They lifted his head. His big eyes were still open; staring at me with an unanswered question in them. The strong light prevented me from seeing the hyenas circling his body.371

The hermeneutic codes of this lexia are almost identical to those of the previous one: the Islamic Republic offers torture and death; the intellectuals were shocked by the evil nature of the Islamic Republic until the very end. “Hyenas” serve as the symbolic code of this lexia: the Islamic Republic lives on dead bodies.

369 Ibid, p. 42.
Jamile’s illegal flight, in the company of a smuggler, and her daughter’s death on the way, serves as another lexia:

The smuggler was running after the mule and swore. Meanwhile, I was trying to climb up the earthworks and reach the gap in the mountain. My daughter had turned blue and didn’t make a sound. My voice calling her name echoed in the mountain, but she didn’t hear anything. She didn’t answer. I fell on my knees beside her and stared at that red blood that had come oozing out of her temple. I was struck dumb.\footnote{Ibid, p. 124.}

The hermeneutic codes of this lexia are also clear, and refer to the calamitous results of the establishment of the Islamic Republic: exile and the death of innocents.

*Dar Ānkārā bārān mibārad* tries to encompass and portray as many dark outcomes of the Islamic Revolution as possible: horrible prisons, torture, execution, the collapse of families, the massive and illegal escape of dissidents from Iran, and the deaths of children fleeing with their parents. In the narrative world of *Dar Ānkārā bārān mibārad*, the Islamic Revolution is a lightning bolt that has struck the forest. Jamile, Siavash, Enayat, Soltan, Nilufar, and Jamile’s mother are all victims of the Islamic Revolution’s army of Hezbollāh, and *Dar Ānkārā bārān mibārad* is their narrative. According to *Dar Ānkārā bārān mibārad*, the Islamic Republic has built an army of thugs whose job it is to attack the dissidents, participate in pro-government demonstrations, and work in the name of Allah as torturers in prisons. *Dar Ānkārā bārān mibārad* is the story of the victims of a vicious revolution, the story of martyrs in the prisons of the Islamic Republic; yet at the same time it is the story of the heroic resistance of dissidents in the prisons. In the narrative world of *Dar Ānkārā bārān mibārad*, there is no faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of the history.

5.2.10 *Fereidun se pesar dāsht* (Fereidun had Three Sons) by Abbas Maroufi (2001)

*Fereidun se pesar dāsht* is written in four chapters titled: Me, You, He, and We. The narrator of the first three chapters is Majid. The fourth chapter is a so-called *Sangesari* legend. The main character in chapter one is Majid, in chapter two it is Iraj, and in chapter three the central character is Saeed. Briefly, the plot is as follows: Hajj Fereidun Amani is an influential capitalist in Iran under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. He is the owner of a large tire factory and an enthusiastic supporter of the Shah. He has four sons: Iraj, Asad, Saeed, Majid, and a daughter: Ensi.
At first, Hajj Fereidun Amani is an opponent of the Islamic Revolution, but after the Revolution he changes sides and becomes an enthusiastic supporter of the Islamic Republic. By doing so, he saves his factory from confiscation and is also elected deputy in the Islamic Parliament. None of his children are alike. Ensi is married and has a disabled child. She is also divorced. Among the sons, Iraj has a special nature. A stage actor, he was arrested, tortured, and forced to repent on public television during the time of the Shah. He is released during the days of Revolution, but is arrested again and executed under the Islamic Republic. Asad is a high-level official of the Ministry of Intelligence. Saeed, one of the leaders of the oppositional organization Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran, is killed during the organization’s military attack on Iranian territory in 1988. Majid, having been a member of another oppositional organization, Fadaian-e Khalq-e Iran, has left the country for Germany after the wave of suppression in Iran in the 1980s.

For the last four years, Majid has been hospitalized in a mental hospital in Aachen Germany. It is from here he tells us his life story; in the first- and third-person points of view, moving back and forth in time. Majid has longed to return to Iran for a long time. He has got in touch with the Iranian embassy in Germany in order to get a passport. They have promised Majid all kinds of help. After a while the personnel of the embassy, led by a person called Mahdavi, come to him with an Iranian passport and a car which is supposed to take him to Iran. The journey begins, but a couple of days later, according to the Iranian newspaper Keyhan, on Sunday the 3rd of March, Majid committed suicide, before arriving at Sivas in Turkey. The truth, however, is that he was killed by the embassy’s agents – by Mahdavi and his companions.

The novel ends with an Iranian legend called Sanegsari, legend that tells the story of seven brothers and a sister who have lost their mother. Their father is a hard and violent man who torments them and deprives them even of daily bread. They run away from home. Tired, hungry, and freezing, they end up in a village where an old lady is giving food to her goat. The old lady tells them that she will give them shoes if they give her one of their brothers. They answer that they would rather continue barefoot than to separate from each other. They pass several other villages and receive similar offers which they do not accept. They keep going until they come to a rivulet. The sister is very tired and cannot continue anymore. She disappears into the ground and turns into a rosebush. The brothers follow their sister into the ground and turn into seven non-fruit-bearing trees: plantain, aspen, elm, willow, maple, cypress, and spruce. After a while, the father begins to miss his children. His

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373 This was a military operation launched by the National Liberation Army of Iran on Monday, July 25, 1988, which left thousands killed on both sides. This operation is referred to as Forugh-e jāvedān (Operation Eternal Light) by Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran and Mersād, (Ambush), by the Islamic Republic.
life has become a desert; his garden and his farm too. He sets off after his children and reaches a very green meadow. He realizes that this greenness is because of his children. He goes to pick the rose of his daughter. The daughter asks her brothers: should I give him the flower or not? The brothers reply: “Don’t give him the flower, don’t!” However, the father picks the rose in anger. The sister dies. The brothers become very sad. When night has fallen, they put their sister in a coffin and go into the sky. And now, if you look at the sky, you will see four of the brothers carrying the coffin and three of the brothers walking before them, all of them singing: “Don’t give him the flower, don’t!”

Fereidun se pesar dāsht is filled with symbols. The title of the book and the final chapter on the Sangesari legend are lexias with clear symbolic codes:

The title refers to the tale of Fereidun in the Shāhnāme. Fereidun was a legendary king who had three sons; Iraj, Salm, and Tur. Fereidun divided the world into three territories and gave one to each of his sons. He gave Iran, which was the best of the territories, to Iraj; Greece, Rome, and Damascus he gave to Salm; and Turan he gave to Tur. Salm and Tur became jealous of Iraj, who had a pure and passionate soul. Iraj was willing to give his realm to his brothers, but they invited him to their court then murdered him. The title of the book refers to the martyrdom of the envoy of the army of good by the envos of the army of evil, even though all of them are of the same blood. It also refers to the power struggle between brothers who symbolize different groups and ideas in Iranian society on the eve of and during the Revolution. The hermeneutic codes embodied in the book’s title are: the purity of Iraj, the son of the legendary Fereidun, does not belong to our times. The Iraj of the novel is dead. The hero is dead; it is as if Fereidun, the father in the novel, had never had four sons, but only three – three sons who choose different paths. The title and its reference to Iraj being killed by his brothers also refers to the general fratricide after the Islamic Revolution.

The sangesari legend that concludes the novel also serves as a lexia with a clear symbolic code in relation to Iranian history: the united brothers end up carrying and forever mourning their sister who was killed by their own tyrannical father. The sister stands for the homeland. This tyrannical role of the father – understood as the Islamic Republic – is confirmed in another lexia with another symbolic code. It is a part of a monologue by Majid, now in exile in Germany:

We were not the children of the Revolution; we were just like bread; warm bread in the mouth of the leaders of the regime.
They tore us up and swallowed us and threw what remained of

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374. Maroufi, Abbas. (1379 [2000]), Fereidun se pesar dāsht (Fereidun had Three Sons), Essen, p. 286.
us here and there. As if we were otiose creatures of God. They
don’t even use us for our society, they just spoiled us…\(^{375}\)

The next lexia is also a part of Majid’s long monologue, when he is
hospitalized in the mental hospital talking to himself:

God damn it! You put so many years of your life into political
activities and then – nothing. Being politically active and imprisoned
brings privileges for people everywhere in the world. But in my
country, it is just the beginning of the misery when a political prisoner
is released. After thirteen years of hard work in exile, I tell you my
comrade: it is meaningless to continue. What do I mean by that? I
mean that the opposition is fragmented. There is no cooperation
between the oppositional groups; there is no struggle, and if anything
is left, it is just individual struggles. What struggle? How is it possible
with all these people newly become to carpet merchants, businessmen,
and café owners? People who have suddenly realized that they have
lost their lives; that they have to take care of themselves in this late
phase of their lives? How? It would have been impossible, even if
they had not. In the best case, they would have become like me: silent
and waiting for an opportunity; like me against killing policemen.\(^{376}\)

During the 1979 Iranian Revolution, many political groups and organizations
with different slogans and goals were fighting for the Revolution. Several
Marxist groups were also active. Despite their differences, they all promised
a better, utopian world. The above lexia, however, gives another picture. The
hermeneutic code of this lexia can be read as follows: the Marxist groups
have collapsed; not only politically, but also morally. They have not been
better than those they were opposed to. The above lexia is followed by
several other lexias in which Majid introduces his brothers and fat
her as a
miniature
of Iranian society after the Revolution, starting with Asad: “Asad
is the head chief of the pimps, a high official of the Ministry of
Intelligence.”\(^{377}\) The hermeneutic codes of this lexia can be written thus: the
Islamic Republic is the pimps’ regime. Moving on, there is another lexia on
Majid’s other brother Saeed, who is a member of Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran:

Now and then, we received some news about Saeed. Once, I heard
that he had divorced his wife at the order of the organization. The
reason was that she had a lower rank in the organization; a matter that
causd problems in their political activities. I also heard that their

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\(^{375}\) Ibid, p. 30.


\(^{377}\) Ibid, p. 49.
child, Masoud, had been sent to Germany and that he was being raised together with other children in a large house belonging to Mojahedin. Then, I heard about him having gone through seven marriages in his life. Before Operation Eternal Light, he was said to have had a twenty-five year old wife […]\footnote{Ibid, p. 36.}

Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran was one of the main oppositional groups under the Islamic Republic. They began their armed opposition against the Islamic Republic in 1981. This group follows the model of a military organization with very strict discipline. The hermeneutic codes of the above lexia can, then, be read as follows: Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran is an organization that demands blind devotion from its members; it controls their minds and private lives, and destroys their individuality in a collective where they live under tough military discipline. Two lexias follow here. In the first one, Majid talks about his father before the Revolution and in the second one about his father after the Revolution:

Father was strongly against the Revolution; partly because of his social position. He didn’t know whether the Revolution would save his position or not. His situation was different from poor people for whom the change of regime was of no importance. They had nothing to lose […]. Father was worried about his own position; about his B. F. Goodrich tire company. How could he sell his tires if the country stopped functioning as it used to do? […]. When he crossed one leg over the other, he had to hold his wrist so that everything could stop moving. Sometimes, he also took his long Winston cigarette and lit it with his black Dunhill lighter […]. He used to say that the Shah smoked the same cigarettes.\footnote{Ibid, pp. 104–105.}

Not a week had passed before father saw to that the strike declaration of the B. F. Goodrich tire company was published in the morning and evening newspapers […]: “The personal and management of the B. F. Goodrich company are pleased to announce their solidarity with the truthful and glorious revolution of the Iranian nation under the leadership of His Majesty, the high exalted, Imam Khomeini. We also congratulate our martyr-bearer nation and our respected clergy, especially His Majesty, the brave Ayatollah Taleqani, and praise the installation of Mehdi Bazargan, the popular figure among all freedom-fighters and academics.”\footnote{Ibid, pp. 116–117.}
These lexias reflect steps within a structure: the capitalists, the supporters of the Shah, turn their back on him as soon as they realize that his time is over and join Khomeini. The hermeneutic code of these lexias can be read thus: Fereidun Amani is an opportunistic capitalist who sails whatever direction the political winds are blowing. The above-mentioned lexias can be summarized in two symbolic codes: Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran, the regime of the pimps, the opportunistic capitalists, and the leftist opposition all share the same qualities and are not reliable; all of them are products or children of the Shah’s regime. In the next lexia, Majid recalls the revolution and his socialist and humanist brother, Iraj – the intellectual who has now been executed:

No one was there. All that tumult had calmed down; there were no men, and no voices. The Revolution has left all the voices behind. It had sent a great number of people to their graves, forced millions of people to flee the country, and it swallowed you.  

This lexia reflects steps within a structure related to the results of the Islamic Revolution: the Islamic Revolution has forced all the oppositional voices into silence; forced people to flee the country. Silence is widespread everywhere and is called “security.” The hermeneutic code of this lexia is that martyrdom has occurred in opposition to the Islamic Republic. 

Fereidun se pesar dāsht is a story that illustrates the similar character of brothers who have followed in their father’s footsteps. Hajj Fereidun Amani, the father, though previously a close supporter of the Pahlavi dynasty, has overnight become a willing supporter of the Islamic Republic. His sons, Asad, an agent of the Ministry of Intelligence; Saeed, a member of Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran; and Majid, a member of the leftist Fadaian-e Khalq-e Iran, are all very much like their father. All three love to wield power, even though they each represent a different ideology. In Fereidun se pesar dāsht, the similar nature of Hajj Fereidun Amani and his three sons is an allegory for the vicious history of Iran, in which both the establishment and the opposition have in common the characteristics of being totalitarian and not believing in democratic principles. Iraj, on the other hand, represents all those moral values that are absent from the establishment as well as the opposition. He personifies the fundamental rejection of the foundations of the Islamic Revolution that has brought nothing but suffering and death. In the narrative world of Fereidun se pesar dāsht, the Islamic Revolution has brought nothing but destruction, martyrdom has occurred in opposition to the Islamic Republic, but the faith in the role of the hero in determining the course of history is dead.

381 Ibid, p. 139.
5.3 A Comparative Analysis of the Novels within the Framework of Foucault’s Discourse Theory

The time has come to summarize the structures found in the two groups of Persian novels in terms of Foucault’s discourse theory, beginning with the ten novels written in Iran.

Among the ten Persian post-Revolutionary novels published in Iran, Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man by Reza Baraheni, Jazire-ye sargardāni by Simin Daneshvar, Del-e deldādegi by Shahriar Mandanipour, Ādāb-e ziyārat by Taqi Modarresi, and Koshte-ye eshq by Esmail Fasih, give credit to the Islamic discourse not as a justified ideology in itself, but merely as one political alternative among many in the struggle against the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah, against the interference of foreign powers in Iranian politics, and against the enemy in war.

In Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man, which takes place in the years from the 1953 coup until the Islamic Revolution, the victory of the Islamic Revolution is portrayed as the victory of all those who had sacrificed their lives for freedom and justice in the struggle against the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah and against his American supporters.

Set in Iran in the lead-up to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Jazire-ye sargardāni emphasizes the decisive role of the Islamic discourse in the fall of the Pahlavi dynasty. Considering the cultural foundations of Iranian society, Jazire-ye sargardāni views the Islamic discourse as the only discourse capable of mobilizing the masses against the corrupt system headed by Mohammad Reza Shah.

In Del-e deldādegi, Ādāb-e ziyārat, and Koshte-ye eshq, which all use the Iran-Iraq war as a backdrop, the emphasis is on the crucial role of the Islamic discourse in defending the Iranian homeland against the enemy. In Del-e deldādegi, the Islamic discourse has given the soldiers fighting at the front the moral support they need to overcome their earthly temptations and achieve spiritual purity. In Ādāb-e ziyārat, the heroic actions of the Iranian soldiers, inspired by the Islamic discourse, cause those who are still skeptical about divine spiritual values to overcome their skepticism. In Koshte-ye eshq, the Islamic discourse turns all Iranians into brave soldiers who then defend their homeland even if it is only with their bare hands.

In the above five novels, martyrdom takes place either for the realization of the Islamic Revolution or for its defense against the enemy in the war. In Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man, the Islamic Revolution is the result of the martyrdom of all who, regardless the discourse they followed, sacrificed their lives either in the prisons or in the streets. In Jazire-ye sargardāni, the martyrdom of the followers of both the Islamic discourse and the socialist discourse results in the victory of the Islamic Revolution. In Del-e deldādegi, Ādāb-e ziyārat, and Koshte-ye eshq, the martyrdom occurs in the war for the defense of Islamic Iran, and is the manifestation of goodness on earth.
All five of these novels emphasize the decisive role of the hero in determining the course of history. While in *Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man* and *Jazire-ye sargardānī* the heroic actions of Iranian people and members of different oppositional groups pave the way for a better future, the heroic actions of Iranian soldiers in *Del-e deldādegi*, *Ādāb-e ziyārat*, and *Koshte-ye eshq* aim to safeguard the homeland of Iran. Heroes and heroic actions are not meaningless.

The other five novels written in Iran, *Āyene-hā-ye dardār* by Hushang Golshiri, *Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān* by Amir Hasan Cheheltan, *Pāgard* by Mohammad Hasan Shasavari, *Virān miāyi* by Hosein Sanapour, and *Shāhkelid* by Jafar Modarres Sadeqi, tell another story. These novels not only reject the Islamic discourse, but also condemn the socialist discourse and the modernity discourse for giving support to the side of the Islamic discourse during the Revolution. They see these two discourses as accomplices of the Islamic Revolution. These novels consider the Islamic Revolution to be the result of a predetermined cultural destiny, and focus on the destructive nature of all the political and cultural discourses in the modern history of Iran. Each of these five novels narrates one or more aspects of the destructive nature of the Islamic Revolution.

*Āyenehā-ye dardār*, which portrays the biographies of Iranians living in exile about one decade after the Revolution, sees the mistakes of Iranian intellectuals before and during the Revolution as being among the decisive factors behind the occurrence of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

*Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān* is the story of the overnight transformation of those whose job it is to suppress dissidents: the thugs who until recently had served the Shah’s regime suddenly become thugs in the service of the newly established Islamic Republic.

*Pāgard* and *Virān miāyi* deal with both the huge disappointment after the failure of Mohammad Khatami’s reform policy, and the robustness of the destructive aspects of the Islamic Revolution.

There is not a trace of martyrdom in any of these novels. In *Āyenehā-ye dardār*, *Pāgard*, *Virān miāyi*, and *Shāhkelid*, there is no faith in the role of the hero, while in *Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān* there are no references to the concept of the hero or to heroic action.

The Persian novels published in exile take a different path. In all of the ten studied novels, *Bigāne-i dar man* by Shokuh Mirzadegi, *Bedun-e sharh: sharh-e hāl-e nasl-e khākestari* by Mehdi Estedadi Shad, *Khosrow-e khubān* by Reza Daneshvar, *Pāyān-e yek ŏmr* by Dariush Kargar, *Noh tu-ye eshq o kin-e ta ziyedārān* by Sardar Salehi, *Gosal* by Sasan Gahreman, *Chāh-e bābel* by Reza Ghasemi, *Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad* by Iraj Rahmani, *Dar ānkarā bārān mibārad* by Hosein Dowlatabadi, and *Fereidun se pesar dāsht* by Abbas Maroufi, the Islamic Revolution is considered to be of a destructive and totalitarian nature. Although they all come to this very
same conclusion, however, they adopt different points of view and travel by way of different discourses.

Shokuh Mirzadegi’s *Bigāne-i dar man* appears to appreciate the modernity discourse, inspired by the ideology of the Age of Enlightenment. *Bedun-e sharh: sharh-e hāl-e nasl-e khākestari* praises the modernity discourse, but criticizes the paradigm of the master-pupil relationship, the need for heroes, and patriarchal culture. *Khosrow-e khubān* criticizes both the pre-Islamic discourse and the socialist discourse. *Pāyān-e yek omr* spotlights the naivety and the innocence of the followers of the socialist discourse. *Noh tu-ye eshq o kin-e ta ziyedārān* also criticizes the master-pupil relationship, the philosophy of waiting for a savior, and the hypocrisy in Iranian culture. *Gosal* is a criticism of the patriarchal nature of Iranian culture, and of its disregard and denial of earthy values. *Chāh-e bābel*, criticizes hypocrisy, the patriarchal culture, and the philosophy of waiting for a savior. *Ettefāq ānt o rejāl ke neveshte mishavad mioftad* focuses upon the totalitarian and patriarchal culture in Iran that longs after heroes. *Dar ānkarā bārān mibārad* focuses upon the dark outcomes of the Islamic Revolution. *Fereidun se pesar dāsht* additionally casts light upon the totalitarian and opportunistic nature of Iranian society and culture.

In eight of the ten novels published in exile, *Bigāne-i dar man*, *Pāyān-e yek omr*, *Noh tu-ye eshq o kin-e ta ziyedārān*, *Gosal*, *Chāh-e bābel*, *Ettefāq ānt o rejāl ke neveshte mishavad mioftad*, *Fereidun se pesar dāsht*, and *Gosal*, one finds the concept of martyrdom. In all of them, the martyrdom has occurred in opposition to the Islamic Republic. In *Bigāne-i dar man*, the martyr is a victim of the Islamic Republic’s terrorism. In the other novels, the martyrs are the victims of executions in the prisons of the Islamic Republic. In none of the ten novels written outside of Iran is there any faith in the role of the hero, although heroic acts of resistance are praised.

The ten Persian novels written in Iran build upon two types of discourse. The first type equates the Islamic Revolution with emancipation; it lavishes praise on the roles of the heroes and martyrs of Islam. *Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man* by Reza Baraheni, *Jazire-ye sargardāni* by Simin Daneshvar, *Del-e deldādegi* by Shahryar Mandanipour, *Ādāb-ye ziyārat* by Taqi Modarresi, and *Koshte-ye ʿeshq* by Esmail Fasih can be assigned to this first type of discourse. The martyrdoms in these novels occur in two historical periods. In *Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man* and *Jazire-ye sargardāni*, martyrdom occurs during the Islamic Revolution, while in *Del-e deldādegi*, *Ādāb-ye ziyārat*, and *Koshte-ye ʿeshq* martyrs are created during the Iran-Iraq war.

The second type of discourse considers the Islamic Revolution to be the result of a general lack of consciousness, does not mention martyrdom at all, and views the role of the hero as belonging to the past. *Āyenehā-ye dardār* by Houshang Golshiri, *Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān* by Amir Hasan Cheheltan, *Pāgard* by Mohammad Hasan Shahsavari, *Shāhkelid* by Jafar Modarres
Sadeqi and *Virān miāyi* by Hosein Sanapour belong to this second type of discourse.

The ten Persian novels written and published outside of Iran, however, build just one discourse. According to this discourse, the Islamic Revolution is nothing but destruction; and martyrdom has occurred in opposition to the Islamic Republic, both inside and outside its prisons. Concerning the role of the hero, the novels written in exile take two separate paths. Although the heroic resistance of the individual characters is praised in these novels, the role of the hero is considered outmoded and belonging to history.

This classification shows that the discourses that guide and steer behavioral, economic, political, social, and educational factors in a given direction differ inside Iran and outside Iran. The discourses also present contrasting views of Iranian history, in addition to differing along the lines of traditionalism and modernity in Iran. They seek different cultural standpoints, and represent diverging ontological views. All of these differences exhibit themselves in the different pictures of the Islamic Revolution and the concepts of Martyrdom and the Hero. To use Foucault’s words, these two groups of novels represent two different “regimes of truth.”
Employing Barthian structuralism, the present study has investigated ten Persian post-Revolutionary novels written in Iran and ten Persian post-Revolutionary novels written outside of Iran to discover the picture they present of the Islamic Revolution and the concepts of the Hero and Martyrdom. The novels have then been classified in relation to these parameters in terms of the Discourse Theory of Michel Foucault.

Since its emergence, the Persian novel has been a stage for dialogue between the five main discourses active in Iran’s history since the Constitutional Revolution of the early twentieth century. These five discourses are: 1) the modernity discourse inspired by the ideology of the Age of Enlightenment; 2) the discourse of despotic modernization, which partly shaped the official policy of the Pahlavi dynasty; 3) the discourse of Iranian nationalism, based on pre-Islamic history and mythology; 4) the socialist discourse; and 5) the Islamic discourse.

The victory of the Islamic Revolution amounted to the victory of the Islamic discourse over other discourses. The Islamic discourse did not achieve this victory by virtue of its own strength alone. During the Revolution, both the socialist discourse and the modernity discourse joined under the leadership of the Islamic discourse in order to overcome the discourse of despotic modernization and the extreme version of Iranian nationalism, as represented by the Pahlavi dynasty.

Directly after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the new holders of power launched a widespread wave of suppression which was directed not only against the representatives of despotic modernization and Iranian nationalism, but also against the representatives of the other three discourses that had helped them to power. A wave of arrests and executions was followed by a massive wave of emigration. From about the middle of the 1980s, the Iranian exile community was an undeniable fact. This large Iranian exile community soon began to produce a huge amount of literature in different genres. As was the case inside of Iran, the novel soon proved itself to be the literary genre best-suited to mirror this eventful period in the history of Iran. Although they used different approaches, one can recognize several common subjects in Persian novels written outside and inside Iran. Among those common subjects are the concepts of the hero and martyrdom, and the image of the Islamic Revolution, on the basis of which the novels analyzed in the present study build three different discourses.
The ten Persian novels written in Iran build upon two types of discourse. The first type equates the Islamic Revolution with emancipation; it lavishes praise on the heroes and martyrs of Islam. The second type of discourse considers the Islamic Revolution to be the result of a general lack of consciousness, does not mention martyrdom at all, and views the role of the hero as belonging to the past.

The ten Persian novels published in exile, however, make up just one discourse. According to this discourse, the Islamic Revolution is nothing but destruction; martyrdom has occurred in opposition to the Islamic Republic, both inside and outside its prisons; and role of the hero, is considered outmoded, and belonging to history.

This classification presents contrasting views not only of Iranian contemporary history but also of traditionalism and modernity in Iran. They seek different cultural standpoints, and represent diverging ontological views. They represent two different “regimes of truth.”

The present study has merely touched upon one particular aspect of a number of Persian post-Revolutionary novels. The Persian post-Revolutionary novel, however, has now grown to an enormous corpus; and it invites researchers to make many new investigations.
Appendix

Reza Baraheni (1935– ) was born in Tabriz. Since 1996, he has been living in Canada, where he is a visiting professor at the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. He was president of PEN Canada 2001–2003. Baraheni is one of the pioneers of Persian literary criticism. Since the 1990s, and especially after the publication of his post-modern poetry manifesto, Khetāb be parvānehā va cherā digar shā̄r er-e nimāyi nistam (To the Butterflies and why I am not a Nimayan Poet any Longer) (1995), he has established himself as the father of post-modern Persian poetry. Some of his poetry collections are as follows: Zellolāh (God’s Shadow) (1979); Āhovān-e bāgh (The Gazelles of the Garden) (1962); Gol bar gostare-ye māh (Flowers on the Moon) (1970); and Esmāil (Ismail) (1987). He has published several works in the field of literary theory and literary criticism, e.g. Qesse-nevisi (Writing Fiction) (1990); Kimiyā va khāk (Alchemy and the Soil) (1985); Gozāresh be nasiš-e bi-senn-e Ferdā (Reporting to the Ageless Generation of Tomorrow) (1985); and Talā dar mes (Gold in Copper) (New edition, 2001). He has also published several novels: Āvāz-e koshtegān (The Song of the Slain) (1983); Chāh be chāh (From One Well to Another) (1983); Rāzhā-ye sarzamin-e man (The Mysteries of my Homeland) (1990); Āzāde khānom va nevisande-ash (Madam Azade and her Writer) (1997); and Ruzegār-e duzakhi-ye āqā-ye ayāz, the French translation of which Les saisons en enfer du jeune Ayyaz was published in Paris (2000).

Jafar Modarres Sadeqi (1954– ) was born in Isfahan. He has published several translations, short story collections, and novels. A number of his short story collections and novels are as follows: Gāvkhuni (Gavkhuni) (Novel, 1983); Bālon-e Mahtā (Mahta’s Balloon) (Novel, 1989); Davāzdah dāstan (Twelve Stories) (Short story collection, 1990); Sharik-e jorm (Accomplice) (Novel, 1993); Shāhkeli (The Master Key) (Novel, 1999); Ān taraf-e khīyābān (Across the Street) (Short story collection, 2002); and Āb o khāk (Homeland) (Novel, 2005); Tup-e shabāne (The Night Ball) (Novel, 2009); Ruznāme-nevis (The Journalist) (Novel, 2014); and Kāfe-i kənār-e āb (A Café by the River) (Novel, 2015). He has also edited and re-published a series of Classical Persian texts.
Taqi Modarresi (1932–1997) was born in Tehran. In 1952, he emigrated to the United States of America and lived there until his death in 1997. Modarresi has left four novels, all of which were published in Iran: *Yekilā va tanhāyi-yeye u* (Yekilia and her Loneliness) (1954); *Sharifjān Sharifjān* (Sharifjan Sharifjan) (1965); *Ketāb-e ādamhā-ye ghāyeb* (The Book of absent people) (1989); and *Ādāb-e ziyārat* (Pilgrim’s Rules of Etiquette) (1989).

Shahriar Mandanipour (1957– ) was born in Shiraz. He is currently living in the USA on a scholarship. His first story collection titled *Sāyehā-ye ghār* (Shadows of the Cave) was published in 1989 in Tehran. He has published several short story collections and novels, among which may be mentioned *Hashtomin ruz-e zamīn* (The Eighth Day of the Earth) (Short story collection, 1992); *Māh-e nimruz* (Midday Moon) (Short story collection, 1997); *Sharq-e bānafshe* (Violet Orient) (Short story collection, 1999); and *Del-e deldādegī* (The Heart of Heart-Giving) (Novel, 1997). His latest novel, titled *Censoring an Iranian Love Story*, was published in English in New York in 2009, and has been translated into several languages. Shahriar Mandanipour was also the editor-in-chief of the literary journal *Asr-e panjshanbe* which was published in Shiraz before being banned by the Iranian authorities.

Amir Hasan Cheheltan (1956– ) was born in Tehran. He has published several short story collections and novels, a number of which are these: *Sighe* (Temporarily Married) (Short story collection, 1976); *Tālār-e āyene* (The Mirrored Saloon) (Novel, 1990); *Digar kasi sedāyam nazad* (No One Called My Name Again) (Short story collection, 1992); *Tehrān shahr-e bi-āsmān* (Tehran; A City without Sky) (Novel, 2001); *Sā- at-e panj barā-ye mordan dir ast* (Five O’clock is too Late for Dying) (Short story collection, 2002); *Chand vaqe’iyat-e bāvarkardani* (A Few Unbelievable Facts) (Short story collection, 2014); and *Sepidedam-e irāni* (The Iranian Dawn) (Novel, 2005). His last novel has been translated into German and published in Germany (2009) but censorship has blocked publication of the book in Persian in Iran. The German title is *Teheran Revolutionstrasse*.

Simin Daneshvar (1921–2012) was born in Shiraz and died in Tehran. She was the first Iranian woman novelist. In 1950, Simin Daneshvar married Jalal Al Ahmad, one of the most influential contemporary writers and social critics. Simin Daneshvar has published several short story collections and novels as follows: *Ātash-e khāmush* (The Quenched Fire) (Short story collections, 1948); *Shahrī chon behesht* (A City as Paradise) (Short story collections, 1961); *Sauvushun* (Mourners of Siavash) (Novel, 1969); *Jazire-

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382 See page 76 on Al Ahmad.

**Esmail Fasih (1934–2009)** was born in Tehran. He published several short story collections and novels, a number of which are as follows: Sharāb-e khām (Unripe Wine) (Novel, 1968); Khāk-e āshnā (The Familiar Soil) (Short story collections, 1970); Del-e kur (Blind Heart) (Novel, 1972); Dāstān-e Jāvid (The Story of Javid) (Novel, 1980); Sorayā dar eghmā (Soraya in a Coma) (Novel, 1984); Zemestān-e 62 (Winter 1983) (Novel, 1987); Namādhā–ye dasht-e moshavash (The Symbols of the Distressed Desert) (Short story collections, 1990); Panāh bar Hāfez (Refuge to Hafez) (Novel, 1994); Koshte-ye ʿesḥq (Sacrificed for Love) (Novel, 1997); Talkhkām (Bitter) (Novel, 2007); He also published several translations.

**Houshang Golshiri (1937–2000)** was born in Isfahan and died in Tehran. He was one of the founders of the literary journal of Jong-e esfahān, the first issue of which was published in 1965 and became a platform for the period’s innovators in Persian fiction. He was also the editor-in-chief of the literary journal of Kārnāme (1998-2001), which was published in Tehran. The bibliography of Hushang Golshiri is long. He has published several short story collections and novels including: Shāzde Ehtejāb (Prince Ehtejab) (Novel, 1969); Jobbe-khāne (The Antique Chamber) (Short story collection, 1983); Panj ganj (Five Treasures) (Short story collection, 1989); Āyenehā-ye dārdār (Mirrors with Cover Doors) (Novel, 1992); Jenn-nāme (The Book of Djinns) (Novel, 1998); and Dāst-e tārik dāst-e rowshan (Dark Hand Light Hand) (Short story collection, 1999). He also wrote several books and essays of literary criticism, among which are She ʿr-e sokut, (The Poetry of Silence) (1994), and the essay collection Bāgh dar bāgh (A Garden in a Garden) (1999).

**Hosein Sanapour (1960– )** was born in Karaj. He has published several short story collections, poetry collections, and novels, some notable examples of which are these: Siyāhe ye man (My Biography) (Poetry collection, 2010); Nime-ye ghāyeb (The Absent Half) (Novel, 1999); Virān mīyāi (You are Coming Destroyed) (Novel, 2003); Samt-e tārik-e kalamāt (The Dark Side of the Words) (Short story collection, 2005); and Lab bar tīgh (Lips on a Blade) (Novel, 2011). He has published a work within literary theory, Yek shive barāye romān-nevisi (One Approach to Writing Novel) (2010). He has also worked as journalist for the Persian newspapers Hamshahri and Hayāt-e now, published in Tehran.
Mohammad Hasan Shahsavari (1971– ) was born in Birjand. He has published several works of fiction among which one should mention the short story collections *Kalame va tarkibhā-ye kohne* (Old Words and Phrases) (2000); and *Taqdim be chand dāstān-e kutāh* (Dedicated to a Couple of Short Stories) (2007); and the novels *Pāgard* (Vestibule) (2004); and *Shab-e momken* (The Possible Night) (2009). He has also published two works within literary criticism: *Hamkhāni-ye kātebān* (The Assonance among the Scribes) (2001); and *Dah jostār-e dāstān-nevisi* (Ten Essays on Fiction Writing) (2008).

Shokuh Mirzadegi (1944– ) was born in Tehran and lives in the USA. She has published several short story collections, including *Golden Ārk* (Golden Ark) in 1996. Her first and only novel, *Bigāne-i dar man* (A Stranger within Me) was published in 1993. For eight years she has co-edited a literary magazine together with Esmail Nooriala called *Puyeshgarān* (London, 1999).

Mehdi Estedadi Shad (1958– ) was born in Tehran. He lives in Germany. He has published several works in different fields, some highlights of which are these: *Mā va qahqarā* (We and Retrogradation) (Literary critique, 1994); *Bedun-e sharh: sharh-e hāl-e nasl-e khākestari* (No Comments! The Autobiography of the Ashy Generation) (Novel, 1996); *Yād va roʿyā-ye tehrān* (In the Memory of Tehran) (Short story collection, 1998); *Hotel tehrān* (Tehran Hotel) (Novel, 2000); *Shāʿerān va pāsokh-e zamāne* (Poets and the Epoch) (Literary critique, 2001); *ʿEshq va falsafe dar adabyāt* (Love and Philosophy in Literature) (2013); and *Irān diyār-e shegeftihā: dar fāsele-ye pardis va duzakh* (Iran, the Land of Wonders: In Between Paradise and Hell (Sociology 2015). He has also published several translations.

Reza Daneshvar (1947–2015) was born in Mashhad. In 1982. In 1952, he emigrated to France and lived there until his death in 2015. He has left behind several plays, short story collections, and novels, a few of which are: *Namāz-e Māyyet* (Prayer for the Dead) (1971); *Hei hei jebeli qom qom* (Hei Hei Jebeli Qom Qom) (Short story collection, 1974); *Khosrow-e khubān* (The King of the Good Men) (Novel, 1994); and *Mosāfer-e hich-kojā* (The Traveler of No Man’s Land) (Play, 2007). *Khosrow-e khubān* has been translated into French as *le Brave de braves* (2001) by Zeinab Zara. Daneshvar’s last published work was *Bāghī miyān-e do khyābān: chahār hezār o yek ruz az zendegi-ye kāmrān dibā* (2010), which was a long interview with Kamran Diba, the contemporary Iranian architect and painter.
Dariush Kargar (1953–2013) was born in Hamadan. In 1984, he emigrated to Sweden and lived there until his death in 2013. He has left behind several short story collections and novels, a number of which are as follows: Pāyān-e yek omr, (The End of a Life) (Novel, 1994); Arus-e daryāyi (Sea Nettle) (Short story collection, 1996); Bāḡ, bāḡ, bāḡ-e mā (Garden, Garden, Our Garden, 1998), Tu-ye in kāfe-ye sholugh (In this Crowded Café) (Short story collection, 2002). He also acted as editor-in-chief of the literary journal Afšāne in Uppsala. In 2010, he received his PhD in Iranian studies from Uppsala University. Kargar’s most important work in the field of Iranian studies was his doctoral dissertation, Ardāy-Vīrāf Nāma, Iranian Conceptions of the Other World.

Sardar Salehi (1954– ) was born in Borazjan. He lives in the Netherlands. He has published several works, a number of which are as follows: Māhigiri dar bār-e zarrāfe (Fishing in Giraffe Pub) (Short story collection 1992); Ānsu-ye mordāb (Across the Lagoon) (Novel, 1993); Noh tu-ye eshq o kin-e ta ziyedārān (The Labyrinth of the Passion Play Leaders’ Love and Hatred) (1993); Donyā-ye mā va shāh-e holland (Our World and the King of the Netherlands) (Short story collection 1994); Sālgardān dar madinat al-nohhās: taqāstalabi-ye nostāzhik (The Anniversary in the City of the Coppersmiths: a Nostalgic Vengeance-taking) (Novel, 1996); and Da’vat be shāhkoshān (Invitation to King-Killing Ceremony) (Novel, 1998).

Sasan Ghahreman (1961– ) was born in Mashhad, and is now living in Canada. He has published works within several fields: Gosal (Breaking) (Novel, 1995); Kāfe renosāns (Novel, Café Renaissance) (1997); and Be bachchehā nagoftim (Novel, We didn’t tell the Children) (2003); Sabz (Green) (Poetry collection, 1995); Hefdah ravāyat-e marg (Seventeen Narratives of Death) (Poetry collection, 2008); Nim negāh: mohājerat-e farhang; farhang-e mohājerat (A brief glance: the emigration of culture; the culture of emigration) (Essay collection, 2002).

Reza Ghasemi (1949– ) was born in Isfahan. He lives in France. He is a novelist, playwright, and musician. He has published several works, some of which are as follows: Kosuf (Eclipse) (Play, 1968); Māhān-e kushyār (Mahan Kushyar) (Play, 1983); Hamnavāyi-ye shabāne-ye orkestr-e chubhā (The Nocturnal Choir of the Sticks) (Novel, 1996); Chāh-e bābel (The Pit of Babel) (Novel, 1999); and Verdi ke barrehā mikhānanad (The Incantation Recited by the Lambs) (Novel, 2008). Ghasemi has also directed a number of plays of his own and others in Tehran.
Iraj Rahmani (1954–) was born in Iran and lives in Canada. He has published several works among which are: Āqā-ye sād: Āqā-ye sād (Mr. Saad: Mr. Saad) (Short story collection, 1992); Ettefāq āntor ke neveshte mishavad mioftad (The Incident Happens as Written) (Novel, 2001), and Farār be Sāmera (On the Run to Samarra (novel, 2013).

Hosein Dowlatabadi (1947–) was born in Sabzevar, and is now living in France. He is a novelist and a playwright, and has published several works among which are these novels: Kabudān (Kabudan) (1978); Dar Ānkārā bārān mibārad (It is Raining in Ankara) (1992); Godār (Fording Place) (vol. I 2003, vol. II 2005, vol. III 2008); Bād-e sorkh (Red Wind) (2010); Chubīn dar (The Timber Door) (2011); Zendān-e sekandar (Alexander’s Prison) (2014).

Abbas Maroufi (1957–) was born in Tehran, and now lives in Germany. He was the editor-in-chief of the literary journal Gardun (1990–1995) in Tehran. He has published several short story collections, novels, and plays; a selection of those are as follows: Pish-e ru-ye aftāb (In Front of the Sun) (Short story collection, 1980); Verg (Wolf) (Play, 1986); Samfoni-ye mordegān (The Symphony of the Dead) (Novel, 1989); ʿAtr-e yās (The Scent of Jasmine) (Short story collection, 1992); Sal-e balvā (The Year of the Riot) (Novel, 1992); Zowb shode (Melted) (Novel, 2009); and Fereidun se pesar dāsht (Fereidun had Three Sons) (Novel, 2001).
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