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Mateus Schneider Borges

Grievances, hopes, and revolution

The affective politics of anticolonial nationalism in Iran

Dissertação de Mestrado

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Advisor: Prof. Paula Orrico Sandrin

Co-advisor: Prof. Alina Sajed

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Abstract

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What accounts for the persistence of the nation as a central object of identification in Iran during the 1960s and 1970s? How can we understand the appeal and pervasiveness of nationalism when it simultaneously could signify one path to and a pitfall of decolonization, as Fanon warned? This thesis addresses some of these questions in relation to anticolonial nationalism in Iran, its political possibilities, decolonial fantasies, and desires. I discuss how three figures articulated discourses of national liberation which mobilized different attachments to the nation in pre-1979 Iran, attempting to understand what these affective relations with nationalism provided as political imaginary and subjectivity. Through a psychoanalytical framework rested on the theories of Jacques Lacan and Frantz Fanon, I analyze the writings of Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati, and Forugh Farrokhzad to grasp the rhythms and textures of enjoyment those imaginaries assumed while being discursively constituted around specific signifiers and identifications, such as nationalism, Third Worldism, and Islam. This thesis relies on emotional discourse analysis to assess the meanings Iranian national consciousness evoked in the form of desires and fantasies of liberation and decolonization. Thus, I also aim to acknowledge and discuss the transnational entanglements and symbolic connections some of these Iranian figures articulated within the Third World, positioning them in an infrastructure of anticolonial connectivity and showing how they are in debt to the theory and praxis of other movements, intellectuals, and struggles.

Keywords

Nationalism; Third World; Iran; affects and emotions.

Resumo

Borges, Mateus Schneider; Sandrin, Paula Orrico (orientadora); Sajed, Alina (coorientadora). **Ressentimentos, esperanças e revolução: a política afetiva do nacionalismo anticolonial no Irã**. Rio de Janeiro, 2023. 129p. Dissertação de Mestrado – Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

O que explica a persistência da nação como objeto central de identificação no Irã durante as décadas de 1960 e 1970? Como podemos entender o apelo e a difusão do nacionalismo quando ele pode significar simultaneamente um caminho e uma armadilha para a descolonização, como advertiu Fanon? Esta tese aborda algumas dessas questões em relação ao nacionalismo anticolonial no Irã, suas possibilidades políticas, fantasias e desejos decoloniais. Discuto como três figuras articularam discursos de libertação nacional que mobilizaram diferentes apegos com a nação no Irã pré-1979, tentando compreender o que essas relações afetivas com o nacionalismo forneciam como imaginário político e subjetividade. Através de um referencial psicanalítico apoiado nas teorias de Jacques Lacan e Frantz Fanon, analiso os escritos de Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati e Forugh Farrokhzad para apreender os ritmos e texturas de gozo (*jouissance*) esses imaginários assumiram enquanto eram constituídos discursivamente em torno de significantes e identificações específicos, como nacionalismo, terceiro-mundismo e o Islã. Esta dissertação emprega uma análise emocional de discurso para avaliar os significados que a consciência nacional iraniana evocou na forma de desejos e fantasias de libertação e descolonização. Assim, também pretendo reconhecer e discutir os emaranhados transnacionais e as conexões simbólicas que algumas dessas figuras iranianas articularam no Terceiro Mundo, posicionando-as em uma infraestrutura de conectividade anticolonial e mostrando como elas estão em dívida com a teoria e a práxis de outros movimentos, intelectuais e lutas.

Palavras-chave

Nacionalismo; Terceiro Mundo; Irã; afetos e emoções.

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Let Simone de Beauvoir come and live for a year the life I live and if she can still produce one line of writing I'll change my name.

Simin Daneshvar, *An Audience with Simin Daneshvar*

On the heights of Balata a derisory reduction of the Sacré-Coeur of Paris reminds us that we are concerned with reconstituting an elsewhere. Dis-taste governs us. *So, to open to the arduous complexity of the world. Not to an other, but to the martyred vow of the other. May the earth in chaos come to us, for light.* The favor to grant you, Western mariner, is indeed to read your œuvre *diagonally*, to apply other seas to you, other shores, other darknesses.

Thus out of the opacity of the world, out of seasonless suffering we surface dreaming of beauty born to misfortune.

Édouard Glissant, *Poetic intention*

1

Introduction: reading the affective politics of anticolonial "failures"

"All these theories yet the bodies keep piling up" (Zalewski 1996). These were some of the first words I read in March 2020, when I had my first class in the master's program this thesis is supposed to finish. While Marysia Zalewski's text was an eye-opener in many ways with regard to broadening my understanding of International Relations' theorization, little I knew that her title would acquire a life of its own in the months and years to come. As I became acquainted with theories and theories of international politics, the bodies of COVID-19 kept piling up, and I felt like the first chapter I had read in my graduate studies was a nightmarish prophecy. Of course, the deaths of international relations have never stopped throughout history. The COVID-19 pandemic was just one more of those phenomena which suddenly break the diffuse façade of oblivion and amnesia that anesthetize us to the global death toll hidden under what we call normalcy. Nevertheless, it was this haunting moment that introduced me to my master's program and kept me on edge during most of its coursework.

Out of this anxiety-ridden mess, this thesis came into existence. Curiously enough, my journey through my master's studies started and finished with the Islamic Republic of Iran in the international spotlight. Instead of citing this attention to justify the relevance and importance of Iranian politics to international relations, something I hope this research will fulfill by itself, I view it as a symptom of the pervasive self-centeredness of Euro-American imagination. Over three years (2020-2022), Western news gathered attention to Iran first when a U.S drone killed Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in January 2020, in a clear violation of international law (Swart 2020) and as a direct expression of the American empire's total disregard for other nation-states' sovereignty. Moreover, this illegal killing added to the sordid history of assassinations in the Global South by U.S. agencies and officials, not to mention their more general legacy of external meddling in these countries' affairs, of which the 1953 coup in Iran persists as an illustrative case. At the time of this event, this thesis was nothing but a dispersed set of tentative ideas on what was supposed to turn into a project on trauma and martyrdom in post-revolutionary Iran but took a very different course.

More recently, Iranian society was granted the gaze of Western media and countries a second time. On September 13, 2022, Jina (Mahsa) Amini, a young Kurdish woman, was arrested by the Iranian morality police for not properly wearing the obligatory hijab, falling into a coma and then dying three days later (Ganji and Rosales 2022). This sparked a massive wave of protests and demonstrations all over Iran, which soon became a popular uprising against the Islamic Republic, embodied in the figure of Ayatollah Khamenei. The Kurdish feminist motto "woman, life, freedom" (*jin, jiyan, azadi*) was chanted alongside calls of "death to the dictator", with soon the movement being framed as a revolution by its participants (Hedayat 2023) and some Western observers (Kurzman 2022) alike due to its unprecedented mass appeal. Its importance for global politics as an insurrectionary, anti-establishment, and resistance struggle did not take time to appear in international media, but it was accompanied by the well-known regime-change perspective (Weinthal 2022). Commonplace in U.S. newspapers and think tanks, it symbolizes how these are more interested in fulfilling their imperialist aims than with the Iranian population, as the whole sanctions regime put forward against Iran disproportionally affects Iranians more deeply than its supposed object, the Iranian government. Thus, an ongoing process of substantial political significance for their transgressive and revolutionary struggle against authoritarianism, misogyny, and inequality, an inspiration for oppressed peoples worldwide, turns into another business prospect for Western countries and firms.

Against this setting, this thesis has as its subject matter a rather pervasive force that is frequently hidden in plain sight in movements of the like I just mentioned. In the reactions against the Islamic Republic and the killing of General Soleimani, there is an underwritten structure that attaches these collective actions to a sense of "we", which itself is constricted by the boundaries of what it is thought to constitute Iran as a distinct subject in international politics. The modern nation-state appears as a focal point for the identification of Iranians in these movements, which attempt to protect, unsettle, and reframe it according to their diverging objectives. Thus, nationalism's persistence surfaces as the problem I will discuss here.

This research examines why the nation-state persists as a central object of identification even in contexts where its Eurocentrism is put into question, as during decolonization and national liberation struggles in the 1960s and 1970s in Third World countries. By being positioned in Iran, I aim to join an emerging intellectual scene that proposed decolonial futures and radical horizons to change their oppressive status under the authoritarian and Western-looking Pahlavi monarchy. Constrained by the neocolonial predicaments of Westernizing modernization and Soviet communism, they imagined otherwise. Nevertheless, although these intellectuals questioned the necessity and desirability of European and North American modernity in Iran, the nation remained central to some of these alternative visions, trapped in a national teleology even as some reworked it towards a questioning of coloniality. I try to explain this by *going under* the veil of discourse and reaching out to affects and emotions as means of understanding this pervasiveness of nationalism as a modern feature of identification processes in international politics.

The rise of far-right parties around the globe, materialized in the despicable faces of Jair Bolsonaro, Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, and Narendra Modi, for instance, has recently gathered the attention of scholars preoccupied with the affective, emotional and libidinal instances of nationalism (Andreescu 2019; Kinnvall 2017; 2018; M. Mandelbaum 2020; Sandrin 2021). With this endeavor, they present the different mechanisms throughout which political leaders create mythical narratives around the nation in ways that make it appealable for extensive groups of the society, frequently turning it into such a powerful object that it becomes attractive even for social segments who are historically opposed to the ruling regime. Nevertheless, even with these studies considering the ongoing legacies of colonialism and racism, there remains a prevailing focus on Europe and the United States, making invisible experiences pertaining to peoples, communities, groups, and political entities from the Global South.

Nation-building processes in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America advanced through a strenuous relationship with European colonial ventures' social, political, cultural, and economic legacies, domestically and internationally. When talking about anticolonial struggles that happened in the second half of the 20th century and ended up forming new independent countries in

Africa and Asia, there is the sense that most of them failed in accomplishing what their leaders were promising (Prashad 2007, xvii–xix; Sajed 2019a, 258). For David Scott (2004, 4), this is symptomatic of what he calls a "problem-space", meaning a "discursive context" that "oblige[s] us to frame the criticism of the present in terms of the strategic value of responding – or evading response – to the conventions of the language-game we find ourselves participants in". Regarding Iran, this can be seen in Iranian historiography's trend of framing the 1978/79 revolution in terms of failures and successes, usually attributing the first to leftist secular groups and the second to Islamist forces (Sohrabi 2018). By calling it the "tragedy of the Iranian Left" (Mirsepassi 2004b), we evade addressing the actual possibilities posed to such segments in the revolutionary process and their afterlives in the resistance movements against the newly found Islamic regime.

In International Relations, by setting the anticolonial moment as a failure, rarely the question "why this happened?" is invoked without being alongside a discussion of the perks, perils, and appeals of nationalism. Anticolonial nationalism represents a particularly difficult conundrum for thinking about the possibilities and impossibilities of a post-national or alternative order that displaces the nation-state as the center of politics and gets rid of its constitutive colonial violence. As it reflects movements, groups and figures in the Third World that embraced its ideological premises to engage with decolonization, this specific nationalist form deals with the paradox of being trapped within Enlightenment categories of modernity and development while also building a corpus of critique and praxis that moves against these same colonial structures (Sajed and Seidel 2019, 586–87). This contradiction in nation-building processes in the Third World is what made Partha Chatterjee (1986, 2) differentiate between a "Western" and an "Eastern" form of nationalism, the latter occupied with imitating while simultaneously rejecting foreign models and values, yet also denying its own national culture and identities, thought as markers of backwardness and inferiority. Through this refusal of the self violently made out in the name of a nation, the colonial subject "remains a prisoner of the prevalent European intellectual fashions" (Chatterjee 1986, 10).

There was an indebtedness to decolonization as national liberation that was constitutive of many anticolonial struggles that referred to Third Worldism, even as it articulated imaginations that not necessarily relied on a new independent nation being formed. Gary Wilder (2015, 4) argues that "to presuppose that national independence is the necessary form of colonial emancipation is to mistake a product of decolonization for an optic through which to study it", claiming for the need of viewing some anticolonial theorists, such as Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor, as purveyors of non-national options of decolonizing. Similarly, Scott (2004, 2) says that these "anticolonial utopias have gradually withered into postcolonial nightmares", a transformation he associates to the supposed reliance of anticolonialism on emancipatory narratives and utopian horizons of liberation. In this sense, the failures of anticolonial movements reside on their leaders "opting" for nationalism, a Eurocentric ideological formation, as a way of getting rid of colonial domination, although there weren't many other courses of action to choose from (Sajed 2018, 4; 2019b, 636). In this sense, I look at

> […] the larger external forces that undermine the initial impulses of revolutionary struggle, that contain and restrain its idealism and its aspirations, but also that determine what, in fact, can actually be accomplished, and that limit the choices that can be made and the paths that can be taken. (Sajed 2019b, 648)

I contend that these "larger external forces" entail the powerful political work of affects and emotions, such as love, hate, pain, and resentment, which actively attach the subject to its conditions of subjection while articulating its boundaries and identifications (Butler 1997; Ahmed 2014). These emotional experiences mobilize and orient these subjects toward particular objects, such as the nation, fueled by desires and fantasies, which in turn are framed according to the Eurocentric symbolic order of the modern nation-state. Thus, the supposed "choice" for nationalism as a way to decolonization becomes nothing close to a matter of choosing it, as those involved in it, to actually get rid of those structural forces "undermining the initial impulses of revolutionary struggle", have to rework their affective investments and attachments to such ideological formations. The infamous anticolonial failures involve this complicated process, which touches an unconscious realm that was deeply troubled by the psycho-affective work of colonialism and racism, as Frantz Fanon (2004; 2008; 2019) exposed in his oeuvre.

Directly entering this debate, this thesis engages with three Iranian intellectuals to question how their anticolonial and radical discourses articulated attachments to the nation and how these bonds worked by mobilizing affects, emotions, and desires. By adding an affective and emotional layer to the problems and possibilities of anticolonial nationalism, I hope to sustain that "opting out" of nationalism or "escaping the nation" entailed much more than imagining post-national orders away from Eurocentric structures or building national consciousness, as Fanon (2004) would propose. I engage with the burgeoning field of IR dedicated to researching the political work of affects and emotions, especially from a psychoanalytical approach, to suggest that anticolonial groups become affectively, emotionally, and libidinally attached to powerful objects of identification such as the nation-state, a condition that further complicates the postcolonial malaises of nationalism. Getting away from the pervasiveness of a political order centred on the nation entails breaking and reforming community bonds in which subjects are actively invested, a process which often questions the very subjectivity of those involved. This thesis engages with this discussion through the discursive material of Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati, and Forugh Farrokhzad, as they imagined alternative visions of Iran by canalizing resentment, pain, hope, and love.

Iran's fiery 60s and 70s presented a moment in which the links between affect, emotion, discourse, and desire were rearticulated as new national signifiers took the forefront of Iranian national consciousness. The Pahlavi monarch, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was transforming the Iranian sociopolitical landscape through a brutal project of Westernized modernization, making the national context an environment of dynamic and complex changes. Disillusioned with their culture after the trauma of the CIA-orchestrated 1953 coup against the charismatic prime minister Mohammad Mosaddeq, dissident intellectuals started to engage with Third World critiques of cultural imperialism, colonial violence, and imperialism, positioning Iran in a transversal network of decolonization and national liberation struggles. Iran was never officially colonized, but they viewed its society as culturally alienated from its own roots, looking at Europe and the United States as civilizational standards instead. In this context, Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1983) with his framework of *gharbzadegi,* and Ali Shariati (1979; 2003; 2011; 2018; forthcoming), with his theorization of anticolonial Islam, developed alternative imaginations of modernity, within which the nation-state was reappropriated and unsettled from its Eurocentric origins. Also positioned against the shah but differently, Forugh Farrokhzad (2007; 2010) subverted the poetic, political, religious and gender conventions of her time through her transgressive poetry, simultaneously becoming a cultural icon, a sinful figure, and a social outcast. Her works condemned the misogynistic grammar of nationalism and modernity, even of the alternative projects of Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, and proposed a transnational poetics of rebellion which keep inspiring Iranian women nowadays. Though not immersed in the Third Worldist and anticolonial atmosphere of the latter two, Farrokhzad transformed the Iranian imagination, being one of the reasons Fataneh Farahani (2022) says that the recent protests are also for (*baraye*) "Forough Farrokhzad's censored poems".

To analyze these revolutionary figures, I establish a theoretical dialogue between Jacques Lacan and Frantz Fanon, whose insights I deem crucial for my psychoanalytical discussion of nationalism due to the former's conceptualization of desire, fantasy, and enjoyment and the latter's unsettling of the colonial matrix of psychoanalysis. Both contribute to understanding how the nation-state becomes a central locus of emotional investment and how the psycho-affective effects of colonialism and imperialism traverse this process. Therefore, I put them in conversation to then advance an emotional discourse analysis of Al-e Ahmad's, Shariati's, and Farrokhzad's discourses.

International Relations, as a field and worldmaking practice, has been constituted by empire through a myriad of hierarchical categories that excluded and dehumanized difference. Our intellectual efforts are only attempts to engage with the legacy of what Himadeep Muppidi (2006) called "the world school of colonialism" and to find ways of dealing with our own complicity in this postcolonial global order (Inayatullah 2017). Amidst these constatations, this thesis has a threefold character that reflect my own process of being located within these structures of colonial and imperial violence, acknowledging this, and trying to handle critically my own position in the discipline and the political world. First, it contributes to the growing scholarship on psychoanalysis and international politics by considering the psychic and affective dimensions of political phenomena in the postcolonial state. Then, I try to cultivate theoretically attuned knowledge about Iranian culture and politics in IR and, more generally, about identification dynamics, subjectivity, and nationalism in the so-called Third World or Global

South, as much as these terms hide and omit more than reveal global diversity and difference sometimes. And finally, this research positions anticolonial, radical, and dissident groups and intellectuals in Iran amidst other struggles for decolonization and national liberation from the 1950s to the 1970s, showing some of their links, transversal networks, and solidarities and framing Iranian anticolonial nationalism as part of a global movement against the pernicious effects of racism, colonialism, and imperialism.

Even though intellectuals like Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati transited through anticolonial thought when developing their theories, and Iranian activists expressed solidarity towards decolonization movements, their contributions are rarely considered or acknowledged in IR (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2021; Kashani-Sabet 2019). *Gharbzadegi* (Al-e Ahmad 1983) wasn’t only an indictment of the cultural disease brought upon Iranians by Europeans and Americans, but a poignant critique of colonial capitalism, Eurocentric modernity, and racism, an affirmation that sadly doesn’t grant it much credibility outside Iran. Likewise, the literature on Iranian nationalism has failed to grapple with discussions of coloniality, the works of Reza Zia-Ebrahimi (2011; 2016), Hamid Dabashi (2016; 2021) and Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi (2018; 2021; 2022a) being some of the exceptions. Therefore, this research attempts to fill this gap while simultaneously relying on the previous discussions of the ambiguity and contradictions of anticolonial nationalism.

This thesis is divided in three main chapters, each constituting a separate part of my inquiry on the persistence of nationalism. I start by cultivating the theoretical basis that will take root throughout this research, delving upon how I establish a meaningful conversation between such diverging authors like Lacan and Fanon. I address their differences but noting how their ideas converge into an investigation of the enmeshment of the political and the psyche, with an emphasis on the dominating role of colonial violence in the failed identifications and the struggle for subjectivity of the colonized. Then, Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati appear together in the next chapter, as I address their projects of alternative modernity and how mechanisms of pain and resentment underlined their critiques of the modern nation-state. There, I discuss the emerging Islamic revivalism that ended up culminating in the Islamic Republic, despite both authors’ theories constituting a syncretism of Marxism, Shi’i Islam, and anticolonial thought.

Afterwards, in what possibly is this thesis's most distinct chapter, I critically read Forugh Farrokhzad's poetry, presenting her as the most radical intellectual of the three. She established a transgressive grammar that shook the Iranian political culture to its core while manifesting a transnational consciousness which defied the gendered nationalism that banned her voice and words from the public. Against this structure, Farrokhzad articulated a transnational poetics of love that acknowledged her desires, sexuality, and enjoyment as integral for her ideal of an Iranian nation. Finally, I conclude with some final remarks on what we can gather from this discussion.

2
Fanon, Lacan, and IR: the appeal of nationalism

2.1
Introduction

It is common to hear people manifest their love or hate for the nation-state they believe they are part of. They adhere to its precepts of social unity and political belonging, invest in its promises once a "we" is established as the overwhelming object of identification/desire, as their historical experiences and imagined possibilities are framed according to the acclaimed national group's symbolical framework. The ability to build self-referential narratives which enclose subjects in a mythical path from a past of glories and trauma to a better future magnifies the power of those regimes, states, groups, actors whose words touch and construct the meanings, symbols and images that become attached to the nation and its subordinates. As political sites, nationalist discourses work by being enmeshed in affects and emotions "at the libidinal level", experiences that make one love, feel, and die for the nation by articulating fantasies and desires that become inculcated in the psychic life of power which forms collective subjectivities (Kapoor 2020, 16). This dimension, while reflecting unconscious desires, flows in a sea whose tide is politically oriented, whose elements are tied in specific chains of signification where the subject is psychically invested. This way, the nation functions not only as "a love story", as Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (2018, 1) suggests, but becomes an integral part of an identification process capable of moving one towards an obsessive, hateful, painful, though possibly pleasurable, pursuit of its desires, whose imagined attainment national identity is supposed to fulfil.

This chapter sets out the theoretical framework upon which this research is based to show how we can think psychoanalytically about the nation, especially in its anticolonial variant, and the various political effects it has on society when raised as a fundamental object of identification. To address the political conundrum of Iranian anticolonial nationalism, it is necessary that we first dissect the discursive mechanisms that construct the idea of a unified and orderly national community as an unavoidable, and sometimes the only, path for decolonization and integration into the international sphere. Moreover, and of heightened importance here, I will attempt to show how subjects become attached to the nation not as a conscious and free "choice" but by being moved by unconscious desires reliant on ambiguity and contradiction.

With these objectives, I delve into the theoretical work of Frantz Fanon and scholars inspired by Jacques Lacan, as I believe their confluences can point out one of the reasons for the postcolonial malaises of nationalism. Through this move, I follow the question posed by Sajed (2021, 41), who, rather than assuming these failures were due to the anticolonial struggles' reliance on such Eurocentric notion as the nation-state, invites us to reflect upon "what was actually possible" during this period. Thus, the problem of anticolonial nationalism is framed as one relating to global structural constraints that limit the political strategies and imaginative resources of Third Worldist leaders, pushing them towards the nation and signifiers associated with it, such as race and whiteness.

Fanon's centrality in our understanding of anticolonial nationalism comes out of his theorization of the limits and possibilities of national consciousness for national liberation (2004, 97), a point recently picked up by Sajed and Seidel (2019, 584) to look at experiences that questioned or went beyond the necessity of the nation-state for decolonization. Likewise, Fanon's pivotal discussion of the psycho-social paradoxes of colonialism sheds much-needed light on the violence of identity formation for racialized subjects, adding crucial insights for comprehending the ambiguity of identification processes built into Iranian anticolonial movements (Fanon 2008).

It is primarily through this latter inflection that I establish a conversation between Fanonian and Lacanian theory, as both reflect on the psychical instances of politics and subjectivity and, as Hook (2020, 4) and Richards (2021, 233) demonstrate, share a prolific interrelationship that is worth advancing. I attempt to show how "Lacanian theory can be – and already has been – an ally to the decolonizing project of Fanonian theorization" (Hook 2020, 14). In a move somewhat similar to what Sara Salem (2020, 4) recently made with regard to Fanon and Gramsci (and subsequently, Marxism), I contend that synthesizing the theoretical canons of anti/postcolonialism and psychoanalysis opens up innovative explorations of the multiple places the psyche, the affective, and the libidinal assume in postcolonial nations. Moreover, this syncretism points towards the coloniality imbued into psychoanalytic theory and praxis, a critical effort increasingly pursued by many scholars (Greedharry 2008; Kapoor 2020; Khanna 2003; Kilomba 2010; Seshadri-Crooks 2003).

Therefore, this chapter is structured in a way that not only exposes the concepts and ideas from Fanon and Lacan that will be employed in this research, such as enjoyment, desire, subjectivity, identification, but also signals the theoretical power of treating them as complementary and crucial for understanding the affective and libidinal spheres of anticolonial nationalism. After this introduction, the psycho-political thought of Jacques Lacan will be explored as to what his and his followers' insights on language, jouissance and fantasy can provide us concerning the appeal of the nation-state. Later, his remarks and those of Lacanians in IR and political theory are modulated by the Fanonian understanding of the colonial violence and racism embedded into linguistic and symbolic systems. Seeing the Fanon from *Black skin, white masks* (BSWM) and *The wretched of the earth* as part of a single, transversal maturing process of thought, I set his psychoanalytical considerations vis-à-vis the mechanisms through which colonialism conditions the emergence of nations in the postcolony. Finally, as an attempt to conclude and sum up this framework, I expose the importance of establishing this talk between such theoretical powerhouses as Fanon and Lacan for the case of Iranian nationalism.

2.2
Lacan and the persistent force of nationalism, or how we came to enjoy the nation

Lacan's thought has resurfaced in social sciences as a fruitful theory for marking the irreconcilable political constitution of the unconscious and the dominating linguistic mechanisms throughout which we assimilate and signify our social experiences as subjects. Psychoanalysis, Lacanians included, remained absent in IR for some time, as its concepts of subject, desire, fantasy, psyche, and unconscious, for instance, were thought of as detached from the sociopolitical realm, restricted by the presumed individuality of clinical practice. Attesting to the contrary, psychoanalytical theories have been employed and constituted in relation to colonialism, imperialism, and racializing processes reproduced in and through these conceptual apparatuses, presenting profound political undertones exposed by the critiques Fanon's oeuvre advances against the psychoanalytical doxa (Bond and Craps 2020; Greedharry 2008; Khanna 2003; Loomba 2005).

This thesis might be ascribed to the burgeoning field of the so-called Lacanian Left, "a distinct field of theoretical and political interventions seriously exploring the relevance of Lacan's work for the critique of contemporary hegemonic orders" and positing itself as "a signifier continuously sliding over its potential signifieds" (Stavrakakis 2007, 3–4). I move through Lacanian psychoanalysis's openings to study identities, subjectivity, and nationalism in IR, while emphasizing the political importance of establishing Lacan *in conversation* with postcolonial critiques and anticolonial thought.

Recently, there has been a surge of works employing psychoanalytical concepts and theories in IR, with a significative combination of Lacanian thought and poststructuralist and postcolonial approaches (Eberle 2017; Edkins 1999; 2003; Epstein 2010; 2013; Kinnvall 2018; Khanna 2003; M. M. Mandelbaum 2016; 2020; Sandrin 2020; 2021; Solomon 2015; Tomsic and Zevnik 2016; Vieira 2018). Lacan's theorization of fantasy and enjoyment, in particular, has provided valuable insights into the relations between nationalism, desire, and subjectivity in international politics, such as in Ilan Kapoor's and Moran Mandelbaum's work (Kapoor 2018; 2020; M. M. Mandelbaum 2016; 2020). Significantly, while, for the most part, this emerging literature has not turned a blind eye to the universalization psychoanalysis presumes for its subject and to its Eurocentric constitution, whose implications will be addressed in the next section, there is still an overwhelming focus on sociopolitical processes occurring in European and North American contexts.

To approach the nation and nationalism from a Lacanian perspective implies discussing not the formation and content of national identities as contingent discursive formations *per se* but particularly the longevity of affective bonds that sustain the former as major frameworks of modern social life (Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras 2006, 154). Lacan sees the problem inherent to every identification as intimately related to the void at the centre of subjectivity, famously depicted as a constitutive lack that surrounds and haunts social existence while also reproducing it throughout fantasies and desires. It is through an emphasis on identity as a (failed) attempt at fixing, enclosing, or establishing a position in an ongoing and never-finished process, noticed in his preference for the term identification, that Lacan will then connect his theory of the subject with his categories of desire, fantasy, and, more importantly for us, enjoyment.

This section will address these concepts as important and though-provoking for the study of the nation, pushing forward a theoretical approach aligned with critiques that point to the insufficiency of analyses centred only on the discursive, symbolic, and semiotic dimension of political identifications (Epstein 2010; Kapoor 2020, 15; Sandrin 2020; Solomon 2015; Stavrakakis 2007, 166; Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras 2006, 149). As a starting point, I consider the relation Lacanian thought posits between the subject and the identification processes he/she/they endure by producing and sustaining affective, libidinal attachments to specific objects, such as imagined ideals of nation, race, and capital.

The Lacanian subject is inherently split, divided between the overwhelming desire to represent oneself at its fullest in language and the impossibility of doing so due to the contingent, unstable, and ultimately partial constituency of social reality (Stavrakakis 1999, 13–47). This splitting draws on a lack of meanings for part of reality that resists signification, moving through the unconscious sphere of affects, emotions, and desires while engaging the subject in an endless chain of (failed) identifications. As Machin (2020, 289) remarks, in this socio-symbolic field where the subject attempts to settle, “identification emerges as part of the search of the subject who constantly desires to fill the lack on which she or he is constructed”. The nation then becomes a crucial imagined collectivity that promises to establish a secure and coherent sense of identity, which supposedly would cover over the void of subjectivity but, in this process, ends up articulating a circuit of failed attempts at fixing the subject.

More than mobilizing the nation as a continuous, fluid process integral to subjectivity, identification objects turn into signifiers through the workings of desire and fantasy, which provide the incentive and mythical narrative for the subject to be invested affectively in discourses imagined for reclaiming that lost essence. Fantasy consists of a structure through which subjects make sense of the world and signify their split, incomplete and contingently produced social existence or, in Lacanian terms, their entrance into the symbolic order through language and discourse (Eberle 2017, 4–5). These fantasmatic stories are imbued with a desire to fill the ontological lack hidden during subjectivation, to search for the (im)possibility of signifying that which exceeds representation and is in the realm of the real[1]. For Stavrakakis (1999, 46), fantasies function as promises to "cover over the lack in the Other" insofar as "reality can only acquire a certain coherence and become desirable as an object of identification, by resorting to fantasy". This desire to identify is channelled to particular objects, which, in turn, become signifiers that deny any ambiguity and complexity to the subject by constituting an illusory frame of stable and persistent meanings and identities (Stavrakakis 1999, 49; Evans 2006, 128–29). Hence, there is the distancing from one's traumatic encounter with its constitutive lack, aiming at one's much-sought certainty and security (Eberle 2017, 7; Edkins 2003, 11–12).

The "endless attempt to eradicate the lack and impossibility of identity" moves the subject forward in a never-ending chain of failed identifications with idealized objects, which are thought to carry hopes of completeness, fullness, stability and closure (M. M. Mandelbaum 2020, 52). This fantasmatic double-sidedness consists of a beatific and a horrific side: the former constitutes a utopia of imaginary wholeness, while the latter exposes the ultimate failure and impossibility of that struggle, both structuring "the subject's desire by presenting it with an ideal as well as an impediment to the realization of that ideal" (Glynos 2008, 283). By projecting desires into objects-turned-signifiers, there is the constitution of specific narratives throughout which the subject conceives its world and tries to keep the fundamental lack, ambiguity, and antagonism of the social order at bay.

However inconsistent some fantasies might be, they ascribe to, are enmeshed in, and produce power relations and political, social, economic, and symbolic orders. The subject doesn't voluntarily "choose" to which object he/she/they would be attached to gain a sense of security and reduced social anxiety. It is conditioned and formed by the symbolic order in which they are embedded so that the ontological need of a stable and certain identity is politically captured by structures of meaning and centred on objects like the nation. When the subject's fractured and contingent character is exposed, the nation-state apparatus evokes a discursive response by trying to reestablish the promise of security and closure upon which it rests through scapegoating narratives and discourses (Edkins 2003; Sandrin 2020, 6; Stavrakakis 2007, 195). Regarding nationalist thinking, the operations of fantasy constitute the exact timeline and unfulfilled, but never-ending, desire for national unity, for a "we" indebted with a duty to preserve, reproduce and guarantee the nation as a coherent, fixed, ambiguity-averse signifier (Mirsepassi 2004a, 54–55; M. M. Mandelbaum 2020, 55). Societies with an imperial past, like the Iranian and Turkish, often assemble fantasies around myths of imperial grandeur to make sense of a perceived loss or fracture of meaning or, in Lacanian terms, to deny an encounter with the contingency and uncertainty of social existence, in these cases represented by a series of encounters with European imperialism and colonialism (Stavrakakis 2007, 199; Sandrin 2020). In a similar fashion, recently manifested in the rise of far-right, fascist parties, British and Americans often resort to mythical imaginaries which conjure up glorious pasts to be reclaimed from those who had supposedly hindered their linear, progressive, and destined paths, a failure usually attributed to racialized groups of immigrants, Muslims, and Black people by white men (Andreescu 2019; Sandrin 2021).

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[1] Lacan conceives the real as "that which is outside language and inassimilable to symbolization", that which is impossible in its own terms of existence, denied by and exceeding the symbolic order (Evans 2006, 162–63).

Integral to national identifications and fantasies that hide the lack of subjectivity is the articulation of relations of otherness, in which the other is perceived as the ultimate embodying of everything one tries to evade, desires but can't have or could not accomplish as a purportedly complete, secure subject. Othering entails establishing chains of signification in and by themselves formed along the lines of colonialism and racism, topics deeply explored by postcolonial scholars. In our case, postcolonial theory can help address "the Iranian other" of colonial imagination through a sensitivity to the ways it has been produced by European colonial thinking, and the effects it has inflicted on Iranian national imaginaries. A discussion on the construction of "an" Iranian self has to acknowledge how its face-off with "the" Western other not only reverberated in material and discursive processes of nation-building but also insidiously gained pace through affective attachments to colonizing, racializing and assimilationist fantasies of Persianness/Iranianness. Thus, Lacanian psychoanalysis can also help us by being attuned to the symbolic and fantasmatic dimensions subjectivity presents in relation to otherness, like the way the Pahlavis and the post-1979 Iranian regime interpellated their positions regarding Islam and the West differently.

While we can quickly acknowledge the traumatic character of colonialism and imperialism by considering the physical violence upon which these systems rested, the consequences inflicted on the psyche to reproduce the colonial relation are difficult to grasp. As Paula Sandrin (2020, 11) points out:

> For the racialised and the colonised, the psychic harm done by symbolic identification can entail psychic annihilation. Colonialism and racism prevent the colonised/racialized subject from finding its own desire; the colonised/racialised subject's mode of enjoyment is structured in a particular way, the way of the white coloniser. That which the white coloniser possesses and which is valued, can *never* be obtained by the colonised/racialised, since humanness is a preserve of the white coloniser.

In a colonial setting, there is the identification of the colonized with the colonizer resulting from the alienation of the colonized self from itself, from the lack of signifiers for the dehumanizing experiences it is subjected to. Black people's "dream of turning white" functions as a desperate attempt to become human and be recognized through the adoption of the European white man's practices, discourses, and culture, as Fanon explains when depicting the psychic effects of colonialism and racism (Fanon 2008). By emulating the "superior" West to try to get rid of its inferiority complex by "being the same, but not quite", as Homi Bhabha (1984, 126) says, the colonized, racialized subject engages in a process that marks not only its dislodged character and meaning but also creates a partial representation which operates to maintain the colonized national consciousness existing in the terms, frames and symbolic order of its destruction (Fanon 2008, 74; Sandrin 2020, 11). Lacan refers to this difference when faced with three people from Togo, whose unconscious "had been sold to them along with the laws of colonization, this exotic, regressive, form of the master's discourse, in the face of the capitalism called imperialism" and did not follow "their childhood memories" as it would be posited for the "Western" unconscious (quoted in Khan 2018, 149). Therefore, colonial experiences evoke different psychic registers as they put subjects in spaces of non-subjectivity, impossibility and non-beingness, appropriated by signifiers which assert their objectified, dehumanized character throughout national narratives that try to cover the ontological lack by scapegoating fantasies.

Amidst British and Russian imperial enterprises in Iran and the assimilation of Enlightenment ideas during the 19th and 20th centuries, Iranians had to deal with a deep sense of inferiority encroaching on their national consciousness, as colonial and imperial stigma, alongside frequent foreign invasions, affected their collective self (Abedinifard 2021). The identifications they tried to constitute were reproduced through feelings of backwardness vis-à-vis modern Europe. In some sense, this othered Iran accommodated itself to a dominant dynastic order that conceived it as culturally, religiously and politically superior by resorting to its past imperial splendour, thought as happening during or before the Safavid era and attributed to a mythical "excess of historical consciousness" (Ansari 2012, 19–20). An Iranian nationalist strand engaged in emulation and mimicry of Europe emerged with the Pahlavis, channelling desires and affects into attachments to European signifiers of Iranian subjectivities and adopting a specific Aryanist articulation of national identity (Zia-Ebrahimi 2016).

In this postcolonial context, the category of enjoyment provides a powerful way of analyzing why some identification objects are more appealing than others in certain discourses and how symbolic orders embedded in racism and nationalism, for instance, can provide satisfaction and an imaginary sense of fulfilled desire. Jouissance consists of enjoyment that moves towards life's limits, an excessive pleasure infused with pain and pushed by the death drive (Evans 2006, 94). Its extreme character is socially transmitted as a lack, a theft of the enjoyment an identification object had promised but didn't deliver. This structure articulates a notion of otherness, which "also involves a libidinal component, a *prior* attribution of stolen enjoyment, a readymade form of resentment awaiting a blameworthy subject upon whom this crime can be pinned" (Hook 2017, 8).

The construction of the other as a subject of theft requires that we endow it with an excessive enjoyment greater than ours, a process which translates into scapegoating narratives and discourses that blame the other for our failure in reaching our ideals of jouissance, an affective journey poised never to be successful. In this sense, power operates by guiding this frustrated and excessive enjoyment according to socially prescribed limits and norms, determining which symbolic objects will be mobilized as an affective investment's locus and which subjects will be blamed for the supposed loss or theft of the thrill that was promised (Hook 2017, 10). The blame usually falls on those Fanon (2004) famously called “the wretched of the earth”, the oppressed, racialized, dehumanized subjects of colonial violence and imperial domination. Still, it can also be transferred to the primary agents of this system, like in the case of “the West”, mainly Britain and the United States, for Iranians following the discourse of *gharbzadegi*. To pinpoint the blame on a specific object or subject, there is the articulation of discourses which attach specific affects, such as hate, pain, and disgust, to those, while also enclosing space for nuance, ambiguity, and contradiction, as these subjects turn into metaphors for one’s failed identification and lack of enjoyment.

Considering nationalism, this scapegoating process is continuously reproduced as a mechanism aimed at sustaining coherent national identities, for whom the threat of dissolution by external others, who steal their enjoyment and block their desires, is mobilized as the necessary push towards the ever-failing spirals of identification. As Machin (2020, 292) asserts, “nationalist fantasies promise to not just cover over the alienation in the nation but also provide an explanation of *what went wrong, why* our nation is not full and unified – hence the construction of national enemies who can be blamed for ‘our’ lack and alienation”. It is by being an “impossible-possibility” that taps into the registers of enjoyment through promises of its partial attainment, instantiated during war victories, national sports teams’ wins, and official ceremonies, for instance, that national fantasy appeals to subjects seeking the fiction of togetherness, of “what makes ‘us’ unique” (M. M. Mandelbaum 2020, 57; Kapoor 2020, 17). This uniqueness, as desired, idealized, and good-willing as it may be, underlines the violent othering and denial of those who don’t or can’t ascribe to the same categories and identity formations as the nation. This, as we will see when talking about Fanon, happens even by considering the inculcated desires to become white and the colonizer with the reins of symbolic power as their ultimate resort towards an already failed identification and subjectivity. Therefore, by construing scapegoats to be later accountable for the lack inherent in all identity and the incompleteness of enjoyment, “difference becomes antagonism”; subjects deny the ambiguity and contingency acclaimed by external, threatening actors so their identity can continue to be imagined as whole, fixed, and stable (Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras 2006, 149).

By adding the categories of enjoyment, fantasy, and desire to our analysis, we engage with the level of the libidinal, where the building of affective bonds is central to the longevity and pervasiveness of the nation as an object of identification and a site of libidinal investment (Kapoor 2020, 16; Sandrin 2021, 235; Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras 2006, 160). Nationalism provided a singular push for decolonization and national liberation by drawing alternative, anticolonial imaginations around emergent, though fragile, national communities in the Global South. In these contexts, the nation was also mobilized as a central object of identification but answered different questions related to its imbued reliance on Eurocentric signifiers, such as colonial conceptions of modernity and development. Nevertheless, as Fanon (2004) pointed out through his national consciousness category, the nation still provided an array of possibilities for postcolonial countries even with the pervasive insistence of such Eurocentric symbolic order as the one embedded in its origins. National bonds were resignified by figures such as Ali Shariati, Forugh Farrokhzad, and Jalal Al-e Ahmad. In this process, nationalism's subsistence in anticolonial and radical spheres, at least partly, derives from the recurring mobilization of libidinal, affective, and emotional forces.

It is by merging this Lacanian take on nationalism with a Fanonian understanding of the various psychic and affective dimensions of colonialism that this thesis tries to see the affective elements Iranian anticolonial and radical nationalist discourses articulate and the specific "rhythms" of jouissance these symbolic structures mobilize (Persaud 2021). To reach these aims, we must submerge into the basic tenets of Fanon's theory, so his differentiation between nationalism and national consciousness is seen as part of his effort at "stretching" psychoanalysis following his theorizing of colonialism, a fruitful space for a dialogue with Lacan.

2.3
Traversing the colonial symbolic: Fanon and national consciousness

Frantz Fanon perhaps was the first to attest and discuss some incongruencies and blank points psychoanalysis posed for racialized subjects in non-European contexts. Psychoanalytical discourse, in its many variants, including Lacanian, has had a problematic relationship with colonialism, in many instances working in favour of the idea of a universal subject and serving as oil to the Western imperial machine of exploration, dispossession, and dehumanization. The non-Western space is where the colonized's primitivism is attributed to the atrophy of their psychic faculties, "[...] cultural difference is pathologised and psychic growth understood in terms of cultural/racial difference" (Loomba 2005, 119). The universalizing movement of Western modernity and subjecthood is reproduced in the Freudian ideas of the psyche and the Oedipus complex, whose applicability extends without considering other forms of being and subjectivities besides the Western. The European, "rational" and "civilized" self is reflected in the colonized's non-beingness as the product and object of the colonial encounter (Khanna 2003, 6). Therefore, the subject as conceptualized in psychoanalysis's canons is constituted by and through the colonization of difference, racialized, depoliticized and a constituent of the colonial projects in which it is involved and applied.

Acknowledging this doesn't inhibit one's analysis from benefitting from psychoanalytical insights since one doesn't engage with decolonization without critically thinking about knowledge systems made in relation to colonial violence and imperialism. Fanon (2019, 408) denounced how the Algiers School's psychiatrist J.C. Carothers posited that "the resemblance of the leucotomized European patient to the primitive African is, in many cases, complete". This critique connected to his "stretching" of psychoanalysis to analyze the manifold alienations and psychic effects that racism and colonialism brought about. The bridge Fanon built between his postcolonial critique and the psychoanalytical doxa at the time of increasing pressure for decolonization in Africa and Asia ascertained the pervasiveness of colonial violence, reaching even the colonized's self-identities and subjecthood. Moreover, it showed the insufficiency of the current theoretical frameworks, with their strictly individual, clinical, psychiatric/pathological praxis, to understand and explore the alienations raised by black people, for instance.

It is not my intent to discuss at length the far-reaching critiques Fanon's texts raised against the psychoanalysis of his time but rather to explore some of the openings and unanswered questions they provided regarding the postcolonial study of identification, desire, and, of course, the nation as a path for decolonization. Following Stuart Hall (1996, 25), I adopt a "symptomatic reading" of Fanon's work, considering that

> Fanon constantly and implicitly poses issues and raises questions in ways which cannot be adequately addressed within the conceptual framework into which he seeks often to resolve them; and that a more satisfactory and complex 'logic' is often implicitly threaded through the interstices of his text, which he does not always follow through but which we can discover by reading him 'against the grain' [i.e., a symptomatic reading].

By "strategically misreading Fanon", I attempt not to forcefully establish connections and links with Lacanian psychoanalysis nor recover an idealized "essence" of Fanonian thought (Thakur 2022, 285). I will first recover the theoretical connections already explored in the literature on Fanon, Lacan, and psychoanalysis, emphasizing how both authors acknowledged and engaged with each other's work when formulating their conceptualizations, categories, and registers. This section will explore the linkages between the Lacanian notion of the symbolic and Fanonian sociogenesis of psychic disorders, and the critique Fanon applies to Lacan's theory of the subject while investigating racism and the non-beingness of the black, colonial subject. Finally, but most importantly, as Hook (2020, 12) suggests, we move to a "translation of Fanon's existential-phenomenological conceptualizations into a different theoretical register" to pursue a more thorough understanding of the problematic of anticolonial nationalism, in particular by being attuned to how Fanon's theorization of national consciousness matches with our perspective on the nation as a pervasive object of identification.

The claim, common among scholars whose inquiries revolve around reading and re-reading his oeuvre, that "Frantz Fanon was not a psychoanalyst" does not elude the flirting relation the Martinican author developed with the psychoanalytical canon of his time (Macey 1999, 97). Fanon positioned himself beyond the works of Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, Jacques Lacan, and C. G. Jung insofar that he enabled the dissolution and rearrangement of their conceptual edifices according to his diagnosis of racism and systemic colonial violence. In the colonies and metropoles, universities and economic institutions, even in the black, colonized's social, political, and psychic constitution, a forever longing for subjecthood is barred, denied in no other form but impossible desire. Through this effort, Fanon distinguished the stains of blood underwritten in the white shirts of the psychiatrist and analyst, who were guarded by the universalizing concepts, theories, taxonomies, and pathologies present in the clinical practices and Eurocentric knowledge they advanced. However, as remarked earlier, it is precisely by reworking the colonial nature of psychoanalysis and psychiatry that he built his understanding of the condition of the colonized and the colonizer, a condition Lacan does not directly address.

Reading (or misreading) Fanon through psychoanalysis has been a persistent point of debate among Fanonian scholars, who, focusing primarily on Homi Bhabha's Lacanian appropriation of his thought (Bhabha 1991; 2004, 57; 2008), deem such perspective as pushing his theory too far or extracting resources inexistent in Fanon's texts. Bhabha, symbolizing "national bourgeois intellectuals who engage in esoteric [analytical] flights" as Robinson (1993, 85) would have him, is thought as wanting "Fanon to mean Lacan" and turn into "*le Lacan noir*" (the Black Lacan) (Gates 1991, 461–62), failing to reach the "true" meanings and construct the most reliable image of Fanon as a revolutionary actor in theory and praxis. As much as these contestations are valuable when considering that Bhabha (2008), in his foreword for *Black skin, white masks*, synchronized Fanonian theorization according to the rhythm of Lacan's split subject, an innovative move which raised some eyebrows "for ignoring Fanon's revolutionary impulse", it was never Bhabha's intention to engage in a recovery of "what Fanon really meant" (Ward 2015, 225).

In his psychoanalytical portrait of colonial identification and black non-subjectivity, Bhabha (2008) is moving beyond Fanon (2008), passing through the multiple disavowals, silences, and contradictory signals the latter's texts leave unaddressed and raising them from the ground to assume a texture of their own, Lacanian in this case. While it is not my intent to re-examine Bhabha's analysis at length, I follow his take considering its influencing position for later works that put Lacan side-by-side with Fanon but keeping their intertheoretical connections firmly situated in the framework of anticolonial praxis that Fanon sets out to establish. Initially, we must revisit some of the theoretical exchanges between Lacan and Fanon during the short period that the latter was alive so we can start our analysis of anticolonial nationalism from a common ground.

Fanon was an avid reader of Lacan's early writings, especially those on paranoia, as much of the former's ideas on the social character of mental diseases came through a reliance on Lacanian theory (Gibson and Beneduce 2017, 44; Hook 2020, 5; Khalfa 2019, 171–72). Alluding to the latter's structuralism, Fanon (2019, 262–63) referred to Lacan as the “logician of madness” in his doctoral dissertation, defining the Lacanian project as “an unremitting defence of the nobility rights of madness” in a move that decentered mental illnesses from overwhelmingly neurological and organic bases towards a more relational and sociocultural analysis of their causes and origins. By moving against this prevailing view of madness as inherently neurological, Fanon positions himself in relation to Lacanian psychoanalysis in its early stage. This decoupling meant adhering to a critique of language and the power of social structures as foundational to the medical practice he was advancing, a movement Lacan perfectly embodied (Richards 2021, 216). Fundamentally, as Fanon (2019, 268) asserts after mentioning his interest in writing “at length” about “the Lacanian theory of language”, “we ought to recognize that every delusional phenomenon is ultimately expressed, that is to say, spoken”.

Lacan’s influence can be seen at other interrelated sites of Fanonian theorization[2], such as in his remarks on the mirror stage, the family complex (later seen within his critical approach towards the Oedipus myth), and psychic causality, i.e., the notion sustaining that madness is the result of psychic deficit or imbalance, a cause and effect relation limited to the psyche and neurological system (Gibson and Beneduce 2017, 43). All these pertain to the same overarching process of joining the clinical practice and revolutionary action and theory that Fanon mobilized. In this systematization of sociopolitical structures, such as history and culture, we find the most of Lacan in Fanon by framing these dynamics as part and parcel of the alienation, paranoia, and delusional behaviours ascribed to the category of madness. By no coincidence, the symbolic order, one of the three registers Lacanian theory sustains as central to our experience as subjects, presents a close connection to Fanon’s own concept of sociogeny, according to which the colonized internalize social, political, and economic hierarchies, resulting in inferiority complexes, paranoia, and self-negation (Fanon 2008, 4; Nissim-Sabat 2010, 42). Thus, as the link between both, it is language which assumes a transversal position linking Fanon's critique of colonialism's psychic, affective and unconscious mechanisms with Lacan's structuralist analysis of identification and subjectivity.

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[2] While our discussion falls under the purview of social and political approaches to Lacanian and Fanonian thoughts, Fanon’s psychiatric texts prove to be an immensely rich environment for not only seeing the linkages between both but understanding how impactful and deeply seated his work was in the medical field. Though his most acclaimed oeuvre revolves around his two magnus opuses, *Black skin, white masks* and *The wretched of the earth*, his writings on neuropsychiatry, especially his doctoral dissertation and the written observations of his patients during his time at the Blida-Joinville Hospital in Algeria, expose the evolution of his political theory and deserve more analytical attention when trying to grasp the influences, scientific fields, and authors that shaped Frantz Fanon, after all, as Khalfa (2019, 167) remarks, he envisioned himself "essentially as a psychiatrist”. For his recently published clinical works, see Fanon (2019), and for critical assessments of these and Fanon’s positioning in psychiatry, see Bulhan (1985), Gibson and Beneduce (2017), Khalfa (2019), Marriott (2018), and Young (2019).

Inasmuch as they generally share assumptions on the power of socially mediated constructions towards the internalization of subjugation, alienation, and paranoia, Fanon (2008) distinguishes himself from Lacan by historicizing the symbolic, keeping distance from the universalizing and "culturally undifferentiated" character the psychoanalyst implies in the concept (Hook 2020, 12−13). For instance, this distancing occurs when he, as a black man, "had to meet the white man's eyes", a look famously expressed in the white child's speech, "'Look, a Negro!'" (Fanon 2008, 83−84). This encounter symbolizes the colonizer's racist gaze scarring, staining, and crushing Fanon's black body as a site of ambivalence driven out of "a confrontation with an image of himself that fundamentally distorts the relationship with his physical and psychological being, and his collective and individual identifications" (Burman 2016, 4). "Woven […] out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" that made himself "an object in the midst of other objects", Fanon (2008, 82−84) does not resort to a universalizing stance which posits such scene as a mere interpellation act from which he is brought into (non)being through language; according to his account, the black's subjectivity is yet to be found, captured, and "made [itself] known" by further co-habiting the symbolic as its universal means of subjection and by being divorced from it as a historically and culturally specific positionality (Fanon 2008, 87; Burman 2016, 5; Stephens 2018, 26).

For Fanon, the racialized and colonized endure the position of being stretched, dissolved between whiteness (totality, complete identification) as the impossible desire for subjectivity and humanity, and blackness as itself the embodied signifier of impossibility, since there is no such being as black (Hudson 2013, 264). It is at this divisive juncture where Fanon most clearly situates his conception of blackness as non-identification, distancing his theorization of the black colonized subject further from Lacan's lacking subject but still providing openings for advancing his argument through Lacanian theory. Following one of such paths, Thakur (2022, 287–89) concurs with Fanon (2008, 103) by saying that "the colonized is (constitutively) not", not holding but instead *being* the lack while giving way to the articulation of the (Lacanian) real through its non-beingness[3]:

> [a]t the place of the colonised, the symbolic and the imaginary give way because non-identity (the real of the social) is *immediately* inscribed in the 'lived experience' (*vécu*) of the colonised subject. […] The colonised is, in other words, the subject of anxiety for whom the symbolic and the imaginary never work, who is left stranded by his very interpellation. 'Fixed' into 'non-fixity,' he is eternally suspended between 'element' and 'moment' – he is where the colonial symbolic falters in the production of meaning and is thus the point of entry of the real into the texture itself of colonialism (Hudson 2013, 266).[4]

With his persistent critique of the Oedipus complex as "far from coming into being among Negroes" and the unconscious as a far-fetched delusion in the colonies ("the black man has no time to 'make [the racial drama] unconscious'")[5], Fanon (2008, 116–17) posits the colonial symbolic structure, here reproduced through traditional psychoanalysis, as missing in its performative function for the racialized. Lacan views this lack as something that eventually will give way to the subject emergence while still haunting its experience with the omen of the real. Yet, the colonized never engage with this process since the very denial of their subjecthood is integral to the white subject's constitution and, dare to say,

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[3] This reading of Fanon's black *man* (and I purposefully employ this category to mark the undifferentiated character of his analysis in terms of gender) by following Lacan's theoretical coordinates has been one of the foremost points of critique postcolonial Lacanians had to face, especially Homi Bhabha as already mentioned (Gates 1991; Robinson 1993; Macey 1999). The most frequent accusations refer to a privileging of the psychic and unconscious processes Fanon alludes to, mostly leaving untouched the anticolonial praxis he set out in his other writings (Ward 2015, 225). For a rereading of Bhabha's (2008) famous preface of *Black skin, white masks* through Lacanian theory, see Ward (2015). Similarly, but for an overall reworking of Fanonism in relation to psychoanalysis and psychiatry, including a critique of psychoanalytical interpretations, see Marriott (2018).

[4] For an interesting counterpoint, see Neusa Santos Souza (2021), as she considers that everybody enters the symbolic, attempts to become a subject by identifying with signifiers which circulate in the symbolic, and is overwritten with signifiers, but the effects of these processes are different for those who are considered abject. For her, black subjects are not foreclosed to the real or expelled from the symbolic, but their imaginary and symbolic identification processes had distinct psychic effects.

[5] While being expressions of Fanon's argument on the inadequacy, insufficiency, and complicity of psychoanalytical theories towards the colonized's condition, these claims are not to be taken point-blank. Marriott (2018, 163) qualifies them by positing an "*Oedipus colonus*", a symbolic mechanism that takes the place of the Freudian version and throughout which "black desire comes to be ruined – enclosed, petrified – by white symbolic law". Once again, Fanon's ambivalent position from psychoanalysis comes to fore, with him appropriating its resources and putting them to use in his own historically situated analysis on the colonialism.

jouissance (Hudson 2013, 267). This denial, reflective of the introjected inferiority the black must face in relation to the white man, progressively calcifies into desires, narratives, and libido (enjoyment) articulated *through* discourse, in this case, discourses of the civilizing nation and coming out of the civilizing language. The colonized must battle against this civilizing, colonizing symbolic order, so their discourses stand by themselves as everything but variants of such colonial grammar. By no chance, Fanon (2008, 25) starts his first book with a chapter on the power of language, as "to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture", and, I would say, all the symbolic coordinates, meanings, signifiers which end up constraining, dominating, and destroying the colonized existence as such.

With this sharing emphasis on the sociopolitical discursive construction of the subject between Lacan and Fanon, we can read the colonized experience as a failed identification process but not in terms of a universal path towards subjectivity, as Lacan would suggest when talking about fantasy. The identification never occurs, its main feature is its own negation continuously reproduced for the enjoyment and constitution of the colonizer, activating the real at the centre of the colonial symbolic, visible, and not fading away, as this would mean its faltering. For the colonized, there is no other way for their existence than attempting a cruel, bare, and "hellish" detachment from this order and whiteness as its master signifier, accepting the nothingness that confronts, traverses, and ultimately embraces the racialized in the perilous "zone of nonbeing" in which the real and blackness assent (Fanon 2008, 2).

By working against and through psychoanalysis[6] while appropriating much of its conceptual frames for his usage, Fanon articulated a revolutionary practice aimed at anticolonial struggle, building a corpus of critique concerned with not only delving into the postcolonial condition but with providing possibilities of change (Greedharry 2008, 17−18). This is where he engages with the questions nationalism

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[6] Fanon does not spare Lacan in this regard, even as it seems that he holds his most vigorous accusations for Freud and the Oedipal complex; Lacan enters his critique of psychoanalysis in a more detained fashion when talking about the mirror-stage on a long footnote (Fanon 2008, 124–26) where the universality Lacanian thought and psychoanalysis in general presuppose is also addressed by Fanon at length. Lacanian theory, nevertheless, and this must be said, entertains a systematic opening for the discussion of political, social, cultural phenomena, perhaps being one of its greatest qualities that it, in some ways, provides the tools for its own deconstruction, including its universal positioning, a process Fanon was already engaged with from the start.

poses for decolonization, proposing a diagnostic of the symptomatic shortcomings and positive openings attachments to the nation signal. As Macey (2000, 28) remarks in a perspicuous critique of postcolonial readings of Fanon, “[t]he Third Worldist Fanon was an apocalyptic creature; the post-colonial Fanon worries about identity politics, and often about his own sexual identity, but he is no longer angry”. All this anger found its way into Fanon’s texts in the form of an examination of the traps the nation can lead to as a decolonial means of emancipation.

Sajed and Seidel (2019) question whether it wouldn’t be more productive to think about the possibility of “escaping the nation” to address the pitfalls nationalism brings in postcolonial struggles for decolonization. They reflect upon what Fanon (2004, 144) had written on national consciousness, which should serve as a means for decolonizing but not as an end, since “if nationalism is not explained, enriched, and deepened, if it does not very quickly turn into a social and political consciousness, into humanism, then it leads to a dead end”, a familiar predicament for postcolonial states. For Fanon (ibid.), only the “collective consciousness in motion of the entire people” provides the anticolonial struggle with the living force necessary to turn the nation into a greater process of sociopolitical change that disposes of the dangers of confiding the conduction of the decolonial project to bourgeois elites working as agents of domination (Fanon 2004, 144; Sajed and Seidel 2019, 584–85). This relates to a dislocation of anticolonial nationalism from a fundamental nexus with national independence to a “wholesale transformation of the colonized and a reconstitution of the international order”, a radical, revolutionary project of worldmaking (Getachew 2019, 17).

For Fanon (2004, 179–80), national consciousness is intimately connected to international forces, a provocation that inevitably leads to reflections on Third Worldism. As Vijay Prashad (2007, xv) notes, “[t]he Third World was not a place” but “a project”, a project that consumed its constituents with dreams, fantasies and imaginaries of a different, more equal world order and turned on itself by murdering those groups that disagreed with that which came into power after the liberation struggle, as the Algerian War and Iranian revolution exemplify (Sajed 2019b; Mirsepassi 2004b). Sajed (2019a, 248) argues that “the emergence of the Third Worldist project should be understood then within a translocal space of anticolonial connectivity that went beyond (strictly understood) national boundaries and linked together people and ideas across the world". Resisting and fighting against the interpellation of the imperial metropolis, "a global infrastructure of anticolonial connectivity" built upon "a relationality that exists underneath the wounds of coloniality" emerges, according to Robbie Shilliam (2015, 13).

In Iran, this transnational worldmaking process was thought of differently and practised by the Iranian Left, including Marxist Islamists like the Mojahedin and secular intellectuals like Al-e Ahmad and Farrokhzad, and the Shi'i ulema. Though entangled in the fight against the shah, both Leftists and clerics carried imaginations about the Iranian nation and the part it was supposed to play in global decolonization and the Third World that contained opposing elements (Prashad 2007, 77–78). Ali Shariati and Jalal Al-e Ahmad crafted imaginaries of national liberation that referred to Third Worldism as a project of reclaiming their political subjecthood in Iran and reorienting their libidinal energy away from master signifiers associated with imperialism and colonialism, the nation itself included but through an appropriation of its anticolonial value.

This is where the merging of Fanon and Lacan takes hold of our analysis. I consider that the affective work these Iranian figures put up reverberated in specific identification processes linked to an Iranian nation. In this theoretical setting, their writings become discursive formations indicative of the rhythms of jouissance this national ideal articulated within decolonization movements, which can also be framed as an enjoyment source (Persaud 2021, 77). The colonial symbolic, as assailing and subject-wrecking as it is, is rearticulated by the discourses of Shariati, Al-e Ahmad, and Farrokhzad, who, in their own way, charter the course of their desires, fantasies, and enjoyment towards attachments to the nation. Weighting on their shoulders, national consciousness is employed as a path towards liberation and freedom from the shackles of American and British imperialism, themselves inculcated on Iranians' racialized positioning as non-subjects in the global sphere. Whether by viewing the shah and his Aryanist affair (since indeed it involved libido) as the epitome of the self-negation Iranians as colonized experience or *gharbzadegi* as a tentative response against and rearrangement of this symbolic background of subjection, the nation appears with its bulk of ideals, promises, dreams, and perils.

2.4
Conclusion

Setting Lacan and Fanon in Iran entails their translation into the local grammar, context, symbols, and language, especially when considering the universality, though with a certain degree of relationality, to which Lacan aspires. With this, I do not mean to ascertain a projected ideal of Iranian exceptionalism, historically mobilized into narratives of Persian heritage and superiority by Iranian regimes and set against Western depictions of Iran as backward, traditional, and inferior on the one hand, while also being translated into essentialist binaries of Orientalist knowledge (Persians/Arabs, Shia/Sunni) on the other. Instead, I try to read the specific conditions, dynamics, and sociohistorical processes in Iran alongside the translocal, transnational structures to which they mutually related, viewing Fanon and Lacan not as passive means through which to reach my objectives but as actual actors who contribute to constructing realities through theorizing Iranian nationalism. Thus, I try to avoid the dominant colonial logic of knowledge production, which disregards these in favour of truth-seeking practices that systematically "apply" theories to objects, cases, and empirical phenomena, supposedly in a "neutral" fashion, as if this scientific mythology was not subject of enough critique yet (L. T. Smith 1999, 48; Zalewski 1996).

Considering Lacanian and Fanonian theories' performative action towards the realities they address (and help build), there is an instantiation of their conceptual apparatuses in our context in the 1960s and 1970s Iran. The workings of nationalist fantasy, desire, and enjoyment are visible in the discourses of *gharbzadegi*, and the Pahlavis mobilized fixed narratives of an idealized past of Persian glory through an Aryanist mythos which put racial purity (whiteness, yet idealized and never within Iranians' grasp) as central to Iranianness (Motadel 2014; Zia-Ebrahimi 2011). I deem Lacan insufficient to discuss the articulation of these identificatory problems in the postcolonial world, since they do not ascribe to his set of universalistic prescriptions about the subject, whose subjecthood is programmatically denied to the wretched of the earth in Iran, the Middle East, the Global South. This is why I turn to Fanon not seeking answers, a move he cautiously advises against when saying he does not come with "timeless truths" (Fanon 2008, 1) but rather more questions which could aid in setting analytical paths and theoretical openings worth exploring and firmly positioned in relation to the colonial condition.

This conflicted Iranian self manifests the impossible position to which they are directed by European imperialism, imprisoned between the categories, registers, languages, and identities that sustain it and to which they aspire, and the naked, bare reality of objecthood, racialization, and dehumanization that this lexicon inflicts upon Iranian society. As Gani (2021, 547–48) sustains relying on Fanon, this imperial encounter reproduces a civilizational schema that is internalized in the form of racial hierarchies by racialized communities, such as Iran, and ultimately responds to anxieties within the metropole, especially regarding its "Muslim other", a constructed menace to get rid of. Amidst calls to dispose of everything deemed as "Semitic" by the Pahlavi dynasty, of the disease of Western culture by revolutionaries and the Islamic Republic's regime, there appears to persist a continual attempt to claim the lost grandeur of an Iranian nation, a past empire who had to deal with the pervasive positioning of its culture, history, and sociopolitical structures at the bottom of civilization by Europe and the United States.

With this framework, I approach the paradox anticolonial nationalism poses in Iran by being indebted to how Fanon theorized the internalization of this inferiority complex and viewed the nation as not the ultimate or only step towards decolonization but as a critical resource to be appropriated by anticolonial struggles. Both these processes, the internalization of stigma and re-articulation of nationalism, entail touching upon fantasies, desires and affects that have been hailed as the colonial symbolic's bedrock, indicating a theoretical lexicon enriched by Lacanian insights. The affective and libidinal links between the colonized and colonizer paint a more intricate picture of alternatives to the nation, as they seem to lack much space of possibility when you are symbiotically attached to the Eurocentric nexus of the national form. Nevertheless, anticolonial and revolutionary actors in the Third World invoked such object of identification in different ways and through different paths, an effort towards which we direct our analysis now by being positioned in Iran and submerged into the discursive material of Al-e Ahmad, Shariati, and Farrokhzad.

3

The callback to Islam: Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati and the Third Worldist Iran

3.1

Introduction

By exercising psychiatry and underground anticolonial activities in Algeria and Tunisia, Frantz Fanon shaped the revolutionary practice he intended to exercise in the clinic and as a liberatory struggle to be taken in the Third World. Followed and pressured by the French colonial apparatus and the enemies he had attracted through his relationship with the Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN), he emerged with a markedly different understanding of the problems he had laid bare in *Black skin, white masks*. According to Alice Cherki (2006, 170), one of his interns in Algeria and later his biographer, Fanon wrote his last book, *The wretched of the earth*, to speak "directly to the colonized", departing from his previous autobiographical tone and academic prose. Representing years of on-the-ground experiences against imperialist oppression and carrying the pain, anger, and hurry of a dying but resolute man fighting leukemia[7], this book made empire tremble with its open call for revolutionary violence and decolonial futures in 1961. Banned in France while circulating far and wide in numerous anticolonial circles throughout Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, it did proclaim Fanon as the "most famous spokesman of a Third Worldism" rooted in the liberation struggles happening in colonized nations, where the book quickly surfaced as a guide, inspiration, and cautious warning of what was to come during and after the fiery global 1960s and 1970s (Macey 2012, 6; Shatz 2017).

Iran was not different from these countries. With the ousting of the nationalist prime minister Mohammad Mosaddeq, a popular and charismatic leader, from power by American and British hands in 1953, a deep-seated feeling of national shame found a place amongst Iranians (Keddie 2006, 130–31). Displacement, disavowal, and self-loathing about their own cultural-historical experiences, strongly present in Iranian society since it began its series of

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[7] Lying on his deathbed, Fanon manifested his continued commitment to the Third World in a letter to a friend: "[…] I want you to know that even when the doctors had lost all hope, I was still thinking, in a fog granted, but thinking, nonetheless, of the Algerian people, of the people of the Third World, and if I managed to hold on, it was because of them" (Cherki 2006, 165).

encounters with Europeans and their modernist knowledge[8] (Abedinifard 2021), magnified a heightened sense of impotence as Iran's independence and national sovereignty were once again being curtailed by imperialist foreign powers. In reaction to this boiling environment, a growing opposition broadly identified with the Left moved against the Pahlavi dynasty and the shah's attempt at strictly connecting Iranian national identity and symbols to the monarchy. This effort was perfectly exhibited in the lavish 2500th anniversary of the Persian Empire promoted by the shah in 1971, with him identifying himself as the successor of Cyrus the Great, the first king of the Achaemenid Empire (Merhavy 2019, 76–78; Steele 2021, 7). In such context, oppositional movements endeavoured to adapt emerging Third Worldist ideologies to Iran's sociopolitical landscape. Fanon's latest book struck a chord among these Iranian intellectuals, Ali Shariati being arguably one of the most vivid and expressive spokespersons in charge of framing the movement against Mohammad Reza Pahlavi as a national liberation struggle.

This chapter discusses this positioning of Iran in the Third World through an engagement with the thought of Ali Shariati and Jalal Al-e Ahmad, two influential activists in the 1960s and 1970s whose discourses are frequently made responsible for the boiling context of 1978-79 and the Islamic Republic's founding, a widely contested claim (Dabashi 2021, 3; Saffari 2017, 27). While both share space in the resurgent wave that put Islam back at the center stage of Iranian politics, they nevertheless articulated different views regarding the complexity and dynamism of what should be Iran. Shariati mobilized a much more articulated, cohesive (though not free from contradictions), and theoretically based thought and

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[8] Regarding nationalist thinking, Iran's increasing contacts with Europe and the Anglosphere during the Qajar period (1789-1925) brough about the gradual usage and adaptation of racial categories, prejudices, and eugenics, mostly in the form of the construction of the "Aryan origin" of Iranians. Member of the Indo-European family, the Persian language, and therefore culture, history, and "race", supposedly granted the entrance of Iranians, as Aryans, into the same racial hierarchy that their Germanic and Scandinavian counterparts, as they all shared the same heritage. This attempt to relate Iran to an Aryanist mythology, as with what happened in India with its own articulations of Indo-European background, found space among nationalist intellectuals such as Mirza Fath'ali Akhundzadeh and Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani during late 19th century, who employed Aryanism in what is viewed as a self-Orientalization of Iranians by Reza Zia-Ebrahimi (2011, 469). For more on the centrality of race to the formation of Iranian nationalism, see Zia-Ebrahimi (2016); for the deep entanglement between European, especially German, ideas on Aryanism and their indigenization in Iran, read David Motadel (2014); for the articulation of self-Orientalizing practices by Iranian nationalists throughout the 20th century, check Mehrzad Boroujerdi (1996); and for the indebtedness of the construction of Iran as a nation to Persianate Indian intellectuals, read Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi (2001).

praxis rested on Shi'i ideology. Al-e Ahmad, on the other hand, systematized a critique of the deeply felt humiliation Iranians had to live through when caged in the violent hierarchies and dichotomies Western modernity imposed upon them, a criticism most remarkably expressed in his conceptual framework of *gharbzadegi*. In this chapter, I mobilize their discourses to discuss how they articulated, unsettled, or even went beyond anticolonial imaginaries centred on the fantasy of an Iranian nation and how these processes entailed psycho-affective mechanisms of resentment, anger, and hope (mostly canalized through utopian constructions). Thus, we see how their projects reworked Fanon's national consciousness in its internationalist dimension by building transversal networks that differentially employed emotional-affective symbology in the Third World, whether through Shariati's utopia of guided democracy and the *ummah*, or Al-e Ahmad's cultural critique of development.

Aiming at a psychoanalytically inflexed emotional discourse analysis, I first explain the details of my method, so the following sections are advanced more clearly. Methodologically, this emotional discourse analysis imbues the power of grasping the affective content of discursive structures, with emotional, affective, and libidinal attachments coming to the fore of processes of symbolization, identification, and subjectification. Then, I move to a brief but necessary contextualization of the sociopolitical transformations Iran was under in the 1960s and 1970s, where Ali Shariati and Jalal Al-e Ahmad were located. Finally, I proceed to the emotional discourse analysis of these Iranian intellectuals' writings and the affective politics they mobilized concerning Iranian anticolonial nationalism. Specifically, this chapter proposes a reading of a series of lectures that Shariati promoted around the idea of "return to self" (*bāzgasht be khishtan*) (A. Shariati 2011), as his theoretical work frequently departs from and arrives at this concept while also putting it in dialogue with other anticolonial thinkers, such as Fanon (Davari 2014). As for Al-e Ahmad, I focus on his most important and influential book, *Gharbzadegi* [Occidentosis, Westoxification] (Al-e Ahmad 1983).

Before moving forward, it is worth mentioning that besides an analytical endeavour, this chapter can be read as an effort and attempt at translation, theoretical and linguistical. Despite all three (Al-e Ahmad did not have an educational background in Europe) sharing a French education and familiarity with

Western epistemologies, the differences between the contexts where Lacan, Fanon, and Shariati developed their theories pose difficulties to those who try to draw on them for a joint analysis. Not only was Lacan part and parcel of the imperial world to which Fanon most remarkably addressed his rage, as mentioned in the previous chapter, but Shariati adjusted the latter's critique of colonization to the problems of a society markedly different from the French-speaking intelligentsia with whom all of them were in contact. Whereas this chapter puts these authors in dialogue, marking the points of contact where their theories can benefit from each other, there are unavoidable dissonances between them that are out of this research's scope, such as the forms, rhythms, and power relations psychoanalytical discourse constitutes in Iran.[9]

Moreover, with Persian being a profoundly poetic language, grasping all the meanings, expressions, idioms, and symbolisms carried through these intellectuals' words almost proves impossible for someone who is not fluent or aware of its linguistic intricacies. Thus, I had to rely on English and French translations to access the discourses I analyzed. While Al-e Ahmad has benefitted from some good translations of his major writings, though hard to find online due to their old publication (Al-e Ahmad 1982), Shariati's translators have been less consistent with providing reliable and faithful versions of his lectures. Plentiful translated material has emerged, but rarely are the intricacies and poetic qualities of Shariati's speech transmitted in the somewhat informal translations that are accessible, leaving some crucial texts, such as "*Ummah* and Imamate" and some of his treatises on Islamology (*Islamshenasi*), critically unattended[10]. Therefore, this chapter presents shortcomings by being oblivious to the affective content transmitted through specific Persian words and expressions, unavoidably and at least partially lost during translation[11].

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[9] Recently, there has been a surge of works preoccupied with analyzing the relations between Islam and psychoanalysis, granting a specific position for Islam in psychoanalytical inquiry (Mura 2020; 2014; Parker and Siddiqui 2019; Gana 2018; Khatibi 2009; Copjec and Jöttkandt 2009). Wide-ranging in scope, questions, and problems, this literature also problematized the introduction of psychoanalysis in the Middle East and the Arab world more particularly, with scholars investigating the unconscious subject present in Arabic literature (Bou Ali 2020), the reading of Freud in postwar intellectual circles in Egypt (El Shakry 2017), a Freudian analysis of Islam (Benslama 2009), the experience of madness in psychoanalysis and Islamic theological-medical knowledge in Morocco (Pandolfo 2018), and Sufi discourses and practices in Pakistan (Ewing 1997). Concerning Iran, Orkideh Behrouzan (2016) did a marvelous ethnography of the emergence and popularization of a medical-psychiatric discourse in postrevolutionary Iranian society, detailing the growing expansion of psychiatry and psychoanalysis in the country, while Gohar Homayounpour (2012) shared her experiences and the insights she gained as a psychoanalyst in Tehran. In another vein, Farshid Kazemi (2019) analyzed the repressed event of Iranian Shi'ism against the grain of a prevailing masculinist Freudian reading, claiming that this trauma was indeed feminine.

[10] The website "https://shariati.com" has gathered a great collection of Shariati's lectures, books, and articles in what could be called a reference point for those interested in the author. Nevertheless,

3.2
On method: grasping affects and emotions through discourse

As exposed in the last chapter, affects, desires, fantasies, and enjoyment are integral to identification and the psycho-affective appeal it assumes in the sociopolitical realm, nationalism being one instance where this process occurs. While debunking the mythical figure of the rational subject devoid of emotions prevalent in realist and liberal readings of international politics, pioneers such as Neta C. Crawford (2000, 118–19) and Robert Jervis soon raised methodological concerns, with the latter affirming that "at this point the challenge [of researching emotions and cognition] is simply too great" (Balzacq and Jervis 2004, 565). The pervasive question of how we devise and employ methodologies to capture the political value of affects and emotions remains haunting research in IR. The prevailing view posits these subjects as elusive, subjective, oblivious and, therefore, out of reach of further political analysis, assigning emotions to non-Western and

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while hosting and referencing translations of some major works, a meritorious endeavour for making Shariati more accessible worldwide, they are still somewhat lacking in terms of translation rigour by sometimes presenting ungrammatical sentences and spelling errors in English. In this regard, a volume of unreleased translations entitled *Spirit and Defiance: Ali Shariati in Translation* and edited by Arash Davari, Siavash Saffari and Maryam Rabiee is currently under review by University of Minnesota Press, with a special section in the journal *Philosophy and Global Affairs* entitled *Translating Shariati and Political Thought* and edited by Arash Davari and Siavash Saffari being in the same publishing stage. Certainly, these two collections would have been of great benefit to this research, but unfortunately their publication exceeded this thesis's deadline.

[11] L. H. M. Ling (2014, 580) points us in this direction when suggesting that "there are multiple emotional worlds and they need to be recognized and appreciated as such". As an example, in Persian, a simple, everyday expression such as "thank you" could mobilize different affective states when articulated as the French loan word *mersi* or the more poetic but no less common *daste golet dard nakone*, literally "may your flower hand not hurt" (calling someone a flower being a compliment in Persian), and *ghorbāne shomā*, meaning that you are at the other person's sacrifice. Similarly, the characteristic Portuguese word *saudade*, representing a nostalgic and melancholic emotional state mixing happiness and sadness, gets a parallel in the Persian *delam barât tang shode*, i.e., my heart becomes tight for you, whereas both usually are simplified as "I miss you" in English. These Persian expressions are engrained in the cultural practices of *taarof*, customary gestures of politeness that are at the basis of Iranian culture and do not find equivalencies in other languages. Thus, there is always something lost in translations, including emotions, a condition to which this thesis also falls victim, but which does not indicate an impossibility to address the affects, desires, and identifications transmitted and constituted through language and politics. I try to fulfill this task here with the works of Shariati, Al-e Ahmad and, in the next chapter, Forugh Farrokhzad even not being aware of all the linguistic symbology put into use by them in Persian (such as through *taarof*).

indigenous peoples as a weakness in contrast to the knowledgeable, rational, male European (Ling 2014, 580; Hutchison 2016, 14–15; Lutz 1988, 62). As Fanon (2008, 147) remarks, "[i]n Europe the Negro has one function: that of symbolizing the lower emotions, the baser inclinations, the dark side of the soul", attesting that "to look at the Euramerican construction of emotion is to unmask how that schema unconsciously serves as a normative device for judging the mental health of culturally different peoples" (Lutz 1988, 54).

Recently, a growing literature dedicated to addressing this methodological problem has emerged, ranging from micro and macro approaches to emotions (Hutchison and Bleiker 2014; Agathangelou 2019), through studies of specific emotional expressions and the cultural politics of naming them (Ahmed 2014), to investigations of the roles of discourse in transmitting and symbolizing them (Åhäll and Gregory 2013; Koschut 2017; 2018a; 2018b; 2020; Koschut et al. 2017). This last set emphasized language as one of the main mediums of constructing affects and emotions as sociopolitical phenomena, thus serving as a methodological gateway for their otherwise supposedly "unreachable" registers[12]. Discourse works not only as a means through which emotions gain meaning and exert their effects on politics but as a mechanism that conditions them according to prevalent chains of signification in a symbolic order. Therefore, alongside visual and other sensory experiences, discursive formations provide a window through which one can grasp the emotional substratum that traction political movements, events, and institutions, opening and positioning psycho-affective processes at the center of international politics even as their unconscious character remains haunting or, as Ilan Kapoor (2018) frames it, putting "a hole at the center of the glObal".

As Lene Hansen (2006, xvii) remarks, methodology is "a way of communicating choices and strategies", and my choice of emphasizing the transition of affect into emotion is by no means trivial. Without entering the endless debate that attempts to demarcate rigid lines between these two, my position sees both as embedded and conspicuously linked but related to different attributes. Affect is typically understood as fluid, diffuse, pre-conscious embodied

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[12] This focus on language can be traced back to discussions in the subfield of anthropology of emotion, especially by feminist scholars, on which Sara Ahmed (2014), for instance, based her cultural approach. See Abu-Lughod (1999), Lutz (1988), and Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1990).

experiences, whereas emotion is consciously recognized and socially structured distinct registers of those (Agathangelou 2019, 133). Characterized by movement and circulation and estranged by efforts at fixing their positionings at an object of investment (discourse, narrative, identity, signifier, bodies…), "[a]ffect still provides the conceptual linkage to understand how a range of socially conditioned, psychosomatic predispositions produce or mediate emotions" (Hutchison 2016, 99). Thus, I prioritize affect as an unconscious intensity, rhythm which can be transformed into distinct emotional categories, tracing it back to the constitutive process it engenders where it circulates, particularly in the realm of discourse.

Methodologically speaking, it is this fluid, contingent, unconscious texture of affect that generally poses hardships to research, specifically Anglo-American social sciences scholarship and their visceral fascination with measurable, objective criteria. In overt avoidance of inadvertently reproducing this dualistic dynamic between "proper" tools of analysis and (supposedly) impossible objects of inquiry, I advance an experimental methodology of *bricolage*. This methodological framework "presupposes the staging of an analytical story" by "experimenting with an assembling of concepts, theories, data, and methods to bring out relations that otherwise remain largely invisible" (Aradau et al. 2015, 9–10). Seeing methodology as experimentation entails refraining from a pre-ordered logic of moving from theory to methodology and then method, instead ascertaining their deeply embedded nature and the multiple openings these encounters provide during research. *Bricolage*, therefore, questions the knowledge practices that posit the idea of "proper methods" or methods more amenable to specific objects of inquiry, a problematization manifested in the methodological interrogations emotions and affects have posed to social science and IR research.

This assemblage provides methodological flexibility without lacking an analytical structure through which we can grasp the various affective articulations Iranian anticolonial nationalism mobilizes in the sociopolitical environment. In this experimental process, I move back and forth between a series of encounters with Lacanian and Fanonian theories, the more overarching approaches of Sara Ahmed and Ty Solomon on affective economies and circulation, and Simon Koschut's emotional discourse analysis apparatus. Through this piecing together of concepts, theories, and methods, this thesis sets the theoretical-methodological stage for its intervention on some of the psycho-affective dynamics revolving around the critiques of the Iranian nation promoted by Shariati, Al-e Ahmad, and Farrokhzad.

Instead of segregating affects from emotions as much of the literature, I, following Van Rythoven and Solomon (2019), suggest that it would be more productive to cultivate the encounters between these two instances insofar as their transformative effects upon political phenomena become visible through their embeddedness, not singularity. Far from being inherently irreconcilable, the difference between emotion and affect becomes a matter of distinct positions in "a spectrum of embodied experience", with the latter indicating more diffuse, ambivalent experiences and the former pointing to socially structured, discrete categories (see Figure 1) (Van Rythoven and Solomon 2019, 133–34). Privileging one over the other could risk oversimplifying a rich range of affects or losing sight of how these diffuse environments become representable as coherent emotional registers. Hence, we delve into the narrowing of affect into emotion and vice versa as manifestations of "a history of social and political encounters", which shape these different configurations of embodied experience and the interactions between agents and their environments (Van Rythoven and Solomon 2019, 139).

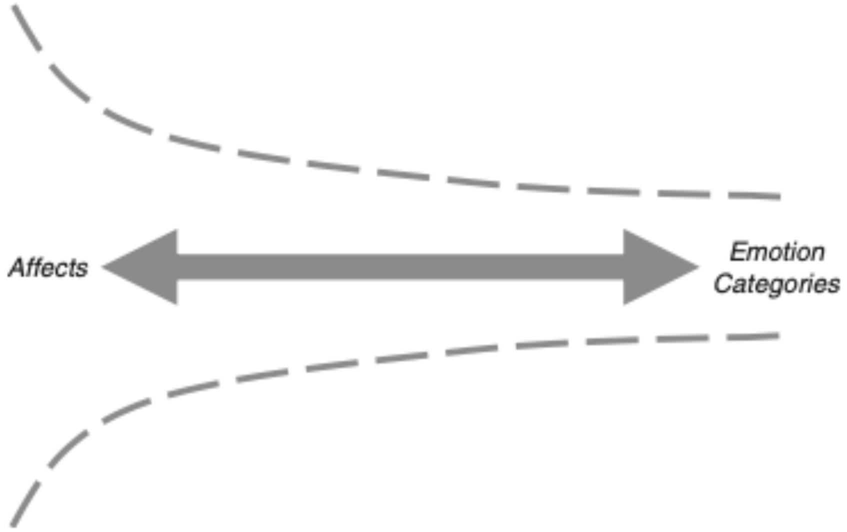

Figure 1. A spectrum of embodied experience (Van Rythoven and Solomon 2019, 139)

This emphasis on process, movement, and transformation ties in with Sara Ahmed's affective economies, whereby affect "is produced as an effect of its circulation" among signifiers, objects, bodies, and subjects (Ahmed 2014, 45).

There is no doubt about the sociality or collectiveness of emotions, which Ahmed uses almost as a synonym to affect, since they are an integral part of moulding the boundaries and divisions between objects and bodies, making some "sticky" and saturated with affect while inciting actions towards or away others (Ahmed 2014, 4). In this movement, emotions "move sideways (through 'sticky' associations between signs, figures and objects) as well as forwards and backwards", opening up past articulations whose only remnants had been lingering effects (Ahmed 2014, 45). This saturation process adds value to some objects to such an extent that they become characterized as hateful, lovable, painful, despicable, as if emotions resided in them, whereas these attachments are nothing more than contingent and products of the flows of history that have been repressed through time.

From love to hate, the nation can be seen as a powerful, attractive, and appealing signifier that instills and pushes distinct affects and emotions towards particular signs, objects, and subjects. So strong is its thrust and far-reaching the desires around it that it can mobilize such disparate movements as far-right parties that aim to "reclaim the nation" according to ideals of racial, ethnic and religious supremacy and anticolonial groups whose decolonization involves employing nationalism for revolutionary goals. Both these examples shared the effects of an affective economy that constituted some bodies as is and others as not and linked them to Manichean moral binaries upon which each widely divergent national ideal rested. As for our case, the Persian-centred, Aryanist mythology of the Pahlavi Iranian nation framed Islamic bodies by saturating them with fear, pain, and hate, as the objects of a Semitic "invasion" of Iran. In contrast, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, through his concept of *gharbzadegi*, went as far as pathologizing Iran, attaching feelings of disgust, nausea, and shame to the West as the pathogen responsible for the Iranian sickness of social and cultural decay. The nation, then, as a master signifier around which affects, emotions, and desires circulate, articulates affective economies which add positive value to specific subjects (Aryans, Persians) while destroying others (Semites).

Dividing, tying together, impressing marks upon each skin, affects and emotions direct each body towards or away from others according to the overwhelming weight of what Anna Agathangelou (2019, 205) termed the "sexual affective empire", visceral feelings predicated on enslavement, colonialism, and imperialism. This mobilization strengthens a matrix of hierarchies which deem whose feelings are legitimate or not, with affective economies serving to channel "feelings of desire, fear, and pleasure that seduce all of us into becoming emotionally, libidinally, and erotically invested in global capitalism and imperialism's mirages of care, security, and inclusion" (Agathangelou 2019, 212). Through this system, the valuation of affects that Ahmed (2014) talks about follows a pattern of violence by branding black and indigenous peoples' emotions with the rubric of madness or excessive sexual desire, forcing them towards sites of no feeling and dehumanization on which this global colonial (dis)order depend for its reproduction. Alas, Fanon had warned us.

Within this messy framework of circulating affects, narrowing emotion categories, and latent unfulfilled desires, as suggested above, discourse assumes a vital role in enabling us to grasp the political substance carried and fuelled through these registers. Hence, the primary method employed here is emotional discourse analysis, thinking through the interplay between discourse, affect, and desire to engage with a discussion of the different appeals of nationalist discursive formations and emotions constituted with them. As Stavrakakis (2007, 166) suggests, "focusing on the symbolic (and imaginary) aspects of political identity […] is not sufficient in order to reach a rigorous understanding of the drive behind identification acts and to explain why certain identifications (old or new) prove to be more forceful and alluring than others", pondering over the emotional, affective, and libidinal power contained in these symbolic and linguistic formations being also a necessary step. His concern stems from a common critique of poststructuralism's emphasis on discourse and language, which supposedly has not addressed "visceral, lived, sensory, felt, and embodied aspects of social life" with the same intensity and depth (Van Rythoven and Solomon 2019, 135). To this end, emotional discourse analysis is used with reference to this extra-discursive domain, that of those things that are unrepresentable and exceed language but continue to exert effects within discourse, being in the realm of affects and desires.

The methodological approach I employ here focuses on affects as the "something else" of language, "the moving element that binds people to their identifications beyond purely linguistic effects", yet only functioning *through* discourse as "emotionally-charged signifiers", albeit with a partial and incomplete meaning (Solomon 2012, 915–20). The relationship between affect and discourse proposed by Ty Solomon (2012, 922) offers a movement of translation of affect by discourse into "discursive representations of specific emotions", the same transforming activity I had mentioned through the idea of encounters. Thus, emotional discourse analysis accounts for those symbolic structures which are suffused within language as a locus of affective and emotional investment but are only captured through unfulfilling, incomplete representations.

Discourse analysis has a wide-ranging and far-reaching scope of practices, tools, and techniques, distinct in their approach towards sources and analytical process. Excellent in her systematization and application of the method in IR, Lene Hansen (2006) proposes a good starting point when defending the central role of language in constituting identity and subjects, whose actions would then also give meaning to signs and policies, which end up reshaping discourse. Nevertheless, I contend that, while offering a general framework, her model is insufficient for affect and emotion research since it usually deals with registers beyond (but not free from) the reach of discourse, such as affect, desire, and enjoyment, besides often putting at centerstage the frequently neglected unconscious nature of politics. To account for these complex objects of inquiry while preserving a flexible and structured method, I follow the pathway set by Simon Koschut, though with certain caveats.

In an organized and well-paced manner, Koschut (2018a) proposes an "emotion discourse analysis" by conceiving a set of strategies from which one could advance their research questions. After selecting texts that indicate a degree of emotional intertextuality, we look for the emotion potential of these discourses so we can show "what kind of emotional meanings are linked to exactly which textual components" (Koschut 2018a, 283). To answer this problem, I offer a reading reliant on an analysis of the emotional potential of figures of speech, precisely metaphor and metonymy, as these are "crucial to the emotionality of texts" (Ahmed 2014, 12). Rather than expressed through more explicit terms or connotations, such as angry or peaceful, emotions can be encoded in discourse in a highly figurative manner, articulating complex affective states through analogies and comparisons that effectively build hierarchies between actors while naming and performing different emotions. These figures circulate and attach emotional meanings to particular objects and subjects, actively contributing to their constitution amidst affective economies.

Metonymy, for instance, “can remake links – it can stick words like ‘terrorist’ and ‘Islam’ together – even when arguments are made that seem to unmake those links”, a displacement of signs that works by “sliding” their meaning and “sticking” them to bodies, such as terrorists and Muslims in this case (Ahmed 2014, 76). We shall see this working in Shariati’s speeches when he articulates his depiction of Iranian history and culture, pushing religious landmarks such as Imam Husayn’s martyrdom and the battle of Karbala towards a postcolonial symbology of redemption, pain, and revolution contemporary to the Iranian struggle against the Pahlavis. Situated almost in the same fiery affective atmosphere, Jalal Al-e Ahmad’s discourse on *gharbzadegi* exerts this metonymic slide in his portrayal of the West as sickness and Iran as a superior, pious entity yet suffering from this Western cultural illness.

Why choose figures of speech as central objects of analysis rather than more explicit and direct emotional terms and expressions? The Persian language carries a heavy figurative weight when framed as poetic, manifested in the plethora of metaphors, analogies, and comparisons found even in the translated texts, speeches, and poems I analyze. Much of the charisma and popularity of Shariati, Al-e Ahmad, and Farrokhzad could be attributed to the rich way they communicate their ideas and play with the language, filled with imaginative examples, stories, and experiences that connect to their audiences through metaphors and metonymies, whether in speech, prose, or verse. I contend that these figures of speech point to more complex affective atmospheres than pre-conceived emotional terms (anger, pain, fear), as much of their symbolic functionality resides in establishing relations between elements. For an analysis so interested in movement, the transformation of diffuse affects into distinct emotions, this broader set of correlations that metaphors, analogies, and metonymies stand up for comes at hand. And for a language so poetic and figurative (and emotional) as Persian, even if, as previously mentioned, there is some affective content lost in translation, focusing on these figures provides elements of analysis of great importance linguistically and socio-culturally.

By first looking at this micro-structure of discourse, i.e., the chains of meaning of specific figures of speech, we then move forward to interpreting and contextualizing the emotional effects these texts exert in a sociopolitical environment. In other words, I try to answer what emotions do for and within a community and through which kind of relation to macro-level structures of feeling, like Agathangelou's sexual affective empire and Solomon's extra-discursive dimension of affects and desires. For Koschut (2020, 10–12), this can include practices of othering, interpellation, and stigmatization, referring to how discourse contributes to building emotional intersubjectivity. Even so, those emotional terms could become embedded into political and cultural institutions in such a way that correlating the nation to piety, goodness, and honour is naturalized, whereas such qualities are denied for all those disgusting, hateful others deemed alien to the national ideal (immigrants, Muslims, etc.). Therefore, after identifying figures of speech and the correlating affective economies within which their meanings circulate, I seek to analyze the identifications and subjectivities they subscribe to, mainly related to Iranian nationalism.

Though helpful in setting methodological guidelines for this research, Koschut's method risks taking for granted and generalizing emotion categories in collective settings, a pitfall he admits (Koschut 2018a, 296). To attempt to remedy this problem, following Ahmed (2014) and Van Rythoven and Solomon (2019), I employ emotional discourse analysis to see the emotional, affective and libidinal forces set in motion through figures of speech and to understand the transformations (affect to emotion and vice-versa) that shape identities, subjects, and objects. This way, I explicitly avoid identifying pre-figured emotional registers while remaining open to the processes that solidify and ingrain emotions in political institutions and symbolic structures, naturalizing the nation, for instance.

With this methodological framework, it becomes possible to grasp the political moves that affects and emotions incite through discourse, which turns into a gateway to these not directly accessible dimensions. By experimenting with affective economies, desires, and discourse analysis, thus, I attentively look at those micropolitical instances, such as chains of signification, master signifiers, and other meaning-making practices, and the embeddedness of emotional, affective, and libidinal processes in political phenomena. In this thesis, the nation takes centre stage as a master signifier whose naturalization passes through affective environments constituted through discourse and whose endurance and pervasiveness unavoidably suppose becoming attached to subjects and their identifications. It is this process that I try to disentangle in the works of Iranian anticolonial and radical figures, who expanded nationalist imaginations while also being constrained by them.

3.3

Tuning to the rhythms of revolution: the global 1960s and 1970s in Iran

The changing political temperature in the 1960s and 1970s could be felt in the Iranian intellectual milieu through the arrival, to widespread acclaim and under the watchful eyes of the Pahlavi regime, of Fanon's oeuvre in the country. By the voice and hands of Ali Shariati, who consistently engaged with him through correspondence, referenced his books in writing, and, to much confusion and historical inaccuracy, is popularly and mistakenly deemed to be the first translator of *The wretched of the earth* to Persian, Fanon found a perfect audience for his revolutionary message (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2020). While perhaps the most committed exponent of this anticolonial thought in Iran, Shariati was not responsible for single-handedly popularizing and disseminating it. Jalal Al-e Ahmad, according to Dabashi (2021, 26), was a "kindred soul of Fanon". However, there is no evidence of the authors' relationship, and the former's work did not engage in any extensive fashion with the latter's, despite the category of coloniality bearing on the development of *gharbzadegi* (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2021, 175–76). But, more than the result of individual endeavours, though these were essential for its success[13], Fanon's reception by Iranian society was symptomatic of the growing anti-imperialist opposition against the shah. Curiously yet also significantly, Fanon (2019, 667) disagreed with Shariati exactly on what would turn out to be a crucial point in the revolutionary process of 1978/79: the role of religion in national liberation struggles, a discussion in which Shariati, Al-e Ahmad and most of Iran were submerged in at the time which anticipated that movement.

Islamic opposition groups, ranging from liberal and nationalist to Marxist, were on the rise after the 1953 CIA-and-MI6-orchestrated coup in Iran, which disillusioned those forces that had been active in promoting a secular democratic

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[13] For a comparison between the successful entrance of Fanon in Iran and his "muted reception" in the Arab world, see Salem (2020, 54–59).

culture embodied in the figure of Mosaddeq, like unions and political parties (Mirsepassi 2004a, 70–71). Intellectual debate, so worried about modernization and Westernization, gradually became dominated by calls for cultural authenticity, for a return to local, indigenous, Iranian culture, or, as Shariati (2011) framed it, a "return to self". Despite their relative success in modernizing the country in relation to literacy, urbanization, and industrial and economic growth, the shah's reform programs, or the so-called White revolution, further consolidated autocratic rule in Iran, enclosing, restricting, and repressing possibilities for dissent. This not only echoed in silencing remaining democratic voices but touched upon historical feelings of skepticism towards and even refusal of modernity in Iranian society, which remembered the vicious encounters and blowbacks that countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, the shah's close friends, had imposed upon Iran over the last decades and century.

Islam played a vital role in capturing and reworking these feelings towards projects that attempted to reconfigure modernity in Iran. For Mirsepassi (2004a, 94), "the hegemony of political Islam was made possible through capturing the 'imaginary' of the Iranians in a way that presented itself as the only desirable answer to the country's dilemmas". Gradually, sociopolitical movements against Mohammad Reza Pahlavi embraced Shi'i symbology to appeal to vast segments of the Iranian youth and working classes enmeshed in religious circles, among which Shariati's lectures stood out. This Islamic revival erupted not as the obvious answer from "traditional", "religious" groups to the shah's modernization, as much of the literature on the 1979 revolution had posited (Matin 2013, 124; Mirsepassi 2021, 20–22; Keshavarzian and Mirsepassi 2021b, 6–7). It responded to growing popular disenchantment with the reforms the regime had been imposing through top-down policies that primarily benefitted the monarchy and its supporting elites (Mirsepassi 2004a, 75–76). As Prashad (2007, 80) asserts, "[t]he Iranian elite, like much of the parasitic elite in the postcolonial world, groomed their aesthetic sense around Europe's Sublime", a fascination that was further expanded with the White revolution. Barred from partaking in the liberal fantasies of consumerism and good life that the clergy, *bazaari* (the merchant class), and military enjoyed, Iranians started looking inward to find authentic, local solutions, lately circumscribed as

Islamic, and outward to produce a culprit for all problems, namely the West and the US, also engaging transnationally with Third Worldism.

It is in this context that emerged what Dabashi (2017, 5) called a "theological language of discontent", one that worked by inscribing injury and pain in the Iranian body and fear and hostility in the all-encompassing figure of "the West". Retrospectively analyzing the come-up to the 1978/79 revolution, a movement encompassing the discourses of Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, he boldly states that "the injured Self, as it was collectively created, is the most compelling force in the contemporary Iranian psyche; the hostile Other is the visceral denial of 'The West'. More than anything else, it is this collective discontent against an imaginative construction called 'The West' that deeply animated the revolutionary movement" (ibid.). While I concur that such dichotomic imaginary contributed to the popularization of the anti-shah opposition, the ideological picture in Iran at that time, especially among intellectuals, reflected a much more nuanced global ecosystem of ideas, hopes, and desires, something Dabashi (2021) recently acknowledged concerning Jalal Al-e Ahmad.

Morphed into the category of the West were grievances and resentment with the legacies of colonial violence and the contemporary reality of imperialist pressure in Iran, of which the shah, put in power by the US and the UK as he was, was a particular embodiment. This critical position towards Western imperialism transpired in intellectual circles in an attempt to situate modernity, its challenges and possibilities in Iran while also integrating into Iranian ideological discourses international currents that critiqued the violent nature of modernization. Lately, there has been a scholarly effort poised to emphasize how Iranian events, such as the 1979 revolution, intellectuals, writers, and activists that have been chiefly framed as local, indigenous, and nativist, were very much connected to foreign thinkers, including Europeans, international processes and their global context[14] (Mirsepassi 2011; 2017; Keshavarzian and Mirsepassi 2021a; Cronin 2021). Trying to make sense out of this increasingly dualistic (othering "the West" vs. Iran) framing of the problems and anguishes of modernity, especially the authoritarian,

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[14] Mirsepassi (2011) pointed out the influence of counter-Enlightenment on the surge of political Islam in Iran in the 20th century, while exaggerating the influence of Martin Heidegger in Iranian thought, including the similarly amplified figure of the philosopher Ahmad Fardid.

unequal, imperialist-inclined variant the Pahlavis attempted to implement, a new generation of intellectuals in tune with Third Worldism was born in Iran, many if not most being secular leftist figures.

This emergent Iranian intellectual movement was responsible for following the revolutionary mood in the Third World, visible in the activism of intellectuals like Fanon and Césaire, and building up a corpus of critique of the problems of Western modernity, colonial violence, and imperialism in Iran upon their work. Within this scene, some, like Shariati, committed Third Worldism to Iranian Shi'i discourses. Though, as previously mentioned, the criticism reserved for the West was already growing in Iranian society at that time, intellectuals such as Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati linked it to a struggle for national liberation and control of the nation-state, which Sadeghi-Boroujerdi (2019, 59) termed Iranian Islamists' "chief vehicle for thinking through the realisation of an Islamic utopia on earth". As parts of a wave of Islamic revivalism in Iran, their political discourses had multiple dependencies with Third Worldist and Marxist figures, an ideological mixture that was employed to critique the Iranian clergy (*ulema*) (Saffari 2017, 27; Dabashi 2021, 3; Khosrokhavar 2004, 193–94). This strand of intellectuals (*rowshanfekran*[15]) saw the unequal modernization in Iran under the Pahlavi monarchy as another instance of Euro-American oppression and imperialist exploitation. With the *Tudeh* party, the leading political group on the Iranian Left, being dominated by Soviet interests and falling into despair after the 1953 coup, they started to analyze the Iranian sociopolitical conditions alongside ongoing

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[15] The Persian term for intellectual passed through great changes throughout the 20th century, each presenting distinct features and meanings in accordance with the ideological milieu of the time. *Monavvar al-fekr*, from the Arabic meaning "enlightened in thought", in currency mostly during the 19th century until the end of the Second World War, symbolized those thinkers fascinated with Europe and the Enlightenment, whose desires revolved around awakening Iranian society to the theories, philosophies, and knowledge produced by Europeans under the latter's utmost sense of superiority (Nabavi 1999, 335). The *rowshanfekran*, in vogue during the 1960s and 70s, on the other hand, committed themselves to social and political change, to be achieved through revolution and armed struggle. In contrast to the *monavvar al-fekr*, they ascribed to Marxist, Socialist and Third Worldist theories while opposing the Iranian state and regime, which they viewed as ultimately corrupted and insufficient for their revolutionary aims (Nabavi 2003c, 2–4). After 1979, with Shi'i Islam outpacing other ideological currents, the *rawshanfekr-e dini*, or religious intellectual, emerged, occupying debates in Iran with questions of reformism, the Islamic state, and *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the Islamic jurist). For more on the complexity and diversity of this last group, see Sadeghi-Boroujerdi (2019) and Khosrokhavar (2004). For a more general trajectory of intellectuals and their roles in modern Iranian thought, see Jahanbegloo (2020), Gheissari (1998), and Nabavi (2003b; 2003a).

colonial experiences in the Third World, such as in Algeria, Martinique, and Tanzania (Prashad 2007, 77; A. Shariati forthcoming).

Despite Iran never being formally colonized, the Iranian struggle against the shah appealed to a sense of loss and misdirection articulated in intellectual discourses attentive to the problem of cultural alienation, a malaise whose primary pathogen was defined as the West. Once constituted this demonic entity, later turned into "the Great Satan" (the US), as the source of most corrupting practices reproduced in Iran, Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, attuned to Fanon and Césaire, promoted a callback to the "roots" of Iranian culture, gaining pace with an appeal for "cultural authenticity". For Mirsepassi (2004a, 96), "the discourse of authenticity emerges as a dialogic mode of reconciling local cultures with modernity", but I would say, following Sajed (2016, 506), that this framing presupposes a national teleology as the unavoidable path for modernity, even if it is rethought by postcolonial nations, as it is the case with Iran. This call for an authentic culture, more than a call for the past, resonated with the political movement those two Iranians, our "Third Worldist intellectuals" (Khosrokhavar 2020), were advancing and reflected their positions in a central dialogue among intellectuals and activists in the Third World, that of cultural imperialism (Prashad 2007, 81–84; Nabavi 2003b, 97). Thus, the Third World project arrived in Iran through a cultural struggle that related sideways to cries made by Fanon and Césaire, with the crucial difference that some of these Iranian utopian imaginaries often committed to distinct degrees to Islam and Shi'i symbology and spirituality.

This battle for culture and authenticity ultimately occurred amidst discourses of national liberation, which involved passing through the setbacks, ambiguities, and paradoxes of anticolonial nationalism. In the prevalent predicament of "the West" vs. Iran, there was an attachment with the Iranian nation-state, which signalled affects, desires, emotions, and fantasies while being reworked by intellectuals and activists. For the emerging Iranian Islamism, the nation was an object of identification in constant dispute. Nevertheless, calls for decolonization, anticolonialism, and Third Worldism stretched the battleground where nationalist imaginaries clashed, modifying the terms and conditions under which new Iranian subjectivities emerged. Jalal Al-e Ahmad and especially Ali Shariati occupied the mostly oblivious space Fanon had left for religion and, more specifically, Islam in his books and writings by clothing their theories with an anticolonial garment, a move that actively questioned while imagining the Iranian nation *otherwise*. When diagnosing Iran and its intellectuals, politicians, activists, and clergy with a cultural illness whose cure demanded a "return to self", a questioning of modernity, they appealed to national consciousness through affective economies of resentment, pain, and hope, carried in the figures of the martyr and the committed intellectual as revolutionaries. We turn to this psycho-affective reading of their writings and speeches now.

3.4
Gharbzadegi: pathologizing, injuring, and suturing the Iranian nation

Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969) was an Iranian intellectual and prose writer who grappled with a life filled with ambiguity, anxiety, and a desire to move against the cultural alienation imposed upon Iran through the centuries and markedly during the Pahlavi era. A "seminal figure in the history of the Iranian encounter with colonial modernity," according to Dabashi (2021, 9), he had come from a Shi'i clerical family in Tehran and, throughout his formative years, immersed himself in the cosmopolitan and cultural life of the capital, from which he started to act through writing and political activism. Passing through secular leftist groups such as the Tudeh and the ephemeral Third Force, Al-e Ahmad initially kept his distance from religion, as he wished to take a different path than his father and saw the clergy as one of the powerful forces poisoning Iranian society, preferring to study literature in the university (Dabashi 2017, 45–48; 2021, 16–17). However, after performing the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca in 1964[16], the later-to-be-known "Iranian intellectual par excellence" (Nabavi 2003b, 34) reintegrated Islam into his political discourses

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[16] Throughout his life, Al-e Ahmad journeyed to different places across the world that informed his thinking about the colonial processes pushed by Europe and the US into Iran and the Third World, inciting a sense of anticolonial solidarity in the author. Among these, he wrote travelogues about his visits to the United States, the Soviet Union, and Israel (Al-e Ahmad 2017), as well as about his hajj to Mecca (Al-e Ahmad 1985). For more on his globally informed thinking, see Dabashi (2021); for more details about his visit to the United States and his engagement with topics like race, racism, and decolonization, see Kashani-Sabet (2021). For discussions about his travelogue to Israel and his position on its existence, see Sadeghi-Boroujerdi and Yadgar (2021; 2022), and for an investigation about the emergence of Jalal's and Malcolm X's Islamicized imaginations in their respective pilgrimages to Mecca and how these journeys informed each's revolutionary practices, see Nikpour (2014).

and sociocultural critiques, among which *Gharbzadegi*, first published in 1962, took centerstage.

A neologism now contemporary to Iranian political discourse, *gharbzadegi* was originally coined by the Iranian philosopher Ahmad Fardid, who intended to transmit the anti-modernist and counter-Enlightenment critiques he had apprehended through contact with European thinkers, especially Martin Heidegger, and position them in the Iranian plateau. Al-e Ahmad's detachment of the concept from this European debate, favouring a more "nativist" take, diverged their views on this sociocultural malaise and annoyed Fardid the most (Mirsepassi 2019, 200). Interestingly, it was the former's innovative depiction, with its turn to Islam and positioning in a transnational space of ideas rested on Third World authors, that made *gharbzadegi* gain notoriety among Iranians. As the author remarks, he had thought the discussion he set in the book "would grow dated after a year or two", but "the limbs of [his] society have remained afflicted" and "the contagion spreads day by day" (Al-e Ahmad 1983, 26).

Initially banned by the Iranian Ministry of Education, *Gharbzadegi* informally surfaced as an independently published report that Al-e Ahmad had made regarding the status of Iranian culture under Pahlavi rule. It quickly dominated intellectual circles and became a motto that captured Iranians' despair and disillusionment with the Pahlavi monarchy and fuelled social upheavals alongside growing calls for revolution by leftists, feminists, and Islamists, among other dissident groups. According to Dabashi (2017, 74), "[n]o other term has captured the quintessential *Zeitgeist* of a generation like *Gharbzadegi*". After the 1978-79 movement, most of its meanings became associated with the clerical class that founded the Islamic Republic of Iran, enclosing its symbolical space to a theocratic understanding of Iranian culture and a dichotomic framework of tradition vs. modernity (Saffari 2022, 134). Notably by Ayatollah Khomeini's hands, this brought upon the Iranian ulema the "battle for authenticity" that they had viewed in *gharbzadegi*, which became "an insult against their ideological enemies" (Dabashi 2021, 275). Despite the utopian, anticolonial framework upon which Al-e Ahmad rested and its deployment's diversity[17], this hygienization led to a conservative appropriation of the concept[18], accompanied by the overwhelming violence against and killing of the Iranian Left, including religious groups such as the *Mojahedin-e Khalq*, throughout the 1980s by the regime, culminating in the 1988 massacre of political prisoners[19] (Mirsepassi 2004b, 243–44). Yet, this narrative of "crushed

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[17] Ali Mirsepassi (2019, 4) remarks that the Pahlavi regime paradoxically and strategically embraced "anti-modern" discourses in a political gamble "to establish itself as the authentic governing force

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in Iran" against the "Western-inspired" Iranian leftists and liberals who opposed Mohammad Reza Shah's reign. Proving the malleability of *gharbzadegi* among Iranians, even the Shah's sister, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, espoused its critique in an attempt at favouring the monarchy by capturing the mass movement Al-e Ahmad had incited, a move that ultimately secured the regime's downfall. While Mirsepassi (2019) attests to the framework's diversity, he remains committed to a reading of *gharbzadegi* as a reactionary, "nativist", "anti-modern", and "anti-Western" response to the challenges of Eurocentric modernization, falling short of acknowledging Jalal Al-e Ahmad's anticolonial and Third Worldist dimensions that have occupied recent postcolonial literature (Dabashi 2021; Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2021; Saffari 2022; Ziai 2019). This becomes even more explicit in his continued effort at connecting Iranian intellectuals such as Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati to Heideggerian theory and German Counter-Enlightenment thought, relations that lack supporting evidence despite Heidegger having some influence over the Iranian intellectual milieu until mid-20th century, especially over the philosopher Ahmad Fardid. I take issue with this prevailing claim in Mirsepassi's (2011; 2017; 2019) last books alongside Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi (2021, 188n8), who remarks that "the influence of Heidegger on Al-e Ahmad should not be exaggerated", and Afshin Matin-Asgari (2018, 175), who considers their contact as "far-fetched". In this Heidegger-Al-e Ahmad correlation, I also see a downgrading of the transnational revolutionary atmosphere where the Iranian writer was immersed and from which he formed his corpus of critique against European modernization, as visible in the similarity between *gharbzadegi*, Latin American dependency theory, and the then emergent postcolonial theories of Césaire and Fanon. Privileging Heidegger and a German anti-modern strain of thought over this boiling context of intellectual exchange in the 1960s Third World seems to me a rather far-fetched and exaggerated move indeed.

[18] Perhaps nowhere the Islamic Republic's capture of the *gharbzadegi* discourse has proven to be most visible, pernicious, and enduring than with regard to gender politics. The figure of the *gharbzadeh* woman, the "Westoxicated Barbie dolls" (Moallem 2001, 127) "who wore 'too much' make-up, 'too short' a skirt, 'too tight' a pair of pants, 'too low-cut' a shirt, who w[ere] 'too loose' in [their] relations with men, who laughed 'too loudly', who smoked in public" (Najmabadi 1991, 65), became a trademark of the segregation and social control enforced upon Iranian women after the revolution, with Khomeini's imposition of mandatory veiling turning into a battleground for feminist groups in Iran that has persisted until today. As Nazanin Shahrokni (2020, 19) notes, "Barbie dolls they were no more, but they were surrounded by many symbolic, as well as concrete, walls and boundaries that signaled prohibition and contributed to their exclusion from the public space". Not by chance, whenever women take the forefront of mass protests and demonstrations in Iran, Western media, especially in the United States, makes photos of them during the Pahlavi monarchy's later phase resurface, comparing their "Western-looking", "liberated" looks to the black chador in usage today and attempting to strengthen their deeply orientalist, racist, and misogynistic claim that "they need saving" by the white man (Abu-Lughod 2013).

[19] The massacre of 1988 refers to the assassination of thousands (between 4000 and 10000) of Iranian political prisoners due to the issuing of a secret *fatwa* (Islamic ruling) by Ayatollah Khomeini, which framed the executed as "those who war against God" (*moharebs*) and "apostates from Islam" (*mortads*) (Abrahamian 1999). The executions were carried out by what came to be known as the Death Commission, away from the eyes of the public and the prisoners' families until suspicion of the ruthless killing dominated them and human rights organizations started to investigate the case, now considered a crime against humanity. Akin to movements in Latin America, such as the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, the Mothers of Khavaran demanded information on their relatives' disappearance, assuming a critical role in the founding of mass graves in Khavaran Cemetery and in the struggle for memorialization and acknowledgement of the massacre by the Islamic Republic. Sadly, many members of the Death Commission are still in power, including the current Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi. For a remarkable collection of memoirs, interviews, and testimonies of

hopes" (Inayatullah 2017) does not erase the actual postcolonial utopias that gained pace in Iranian society and gathered political space for dissent through *gharbzadegi*, which appealed to youth, women, students, oil and gas workers, intellectuals. This appeal of Al-e Ahmad's discourse, I will contend, comes partly from the way it articulated an affective economy that resonated with the Iranian population by constructing the Iranian nation as an injured object and, most prominently, by equating it to a body fallen ill.

As Gheissari (1998, 89) explains, "most connotations of *gharbzadegi* include the image of the nation or state as an organism", with its most common English translations referring to it as "Westoxification" or "Occidentosis". The sickness is described as such at the outset of the book:

> I speak of "occidentosis" as of tuberculosis. But perhaps it more closely resembles an infestation of weevils. Have you seen how they attack wheat? From the inside. The bran remains intact, but it is just a shell, like a cocoon left behind on a tree. At any rate, I am speaking of a disease: an accident from without, spreading in an environment rendered susceptible to it. (Al-e Ahmad 1983, 27)

For Al-e Ahmad, Iran lies in bed as a victim of a cultural virus, one that rots its flesh and punctures its skin with the Eurocentrism that has condemned it to life in disarray. This inculcation of national disillusionment and decay on Iranians' minds trapped them in a "rhinoceros's skin", as the ultimate result of a series of bodily changes resulting from a fever, a voice becoming "thick and coarse", the apparition of a horn on one's forehead, the loss of speech in favour of animal cries, and the thickening of the skin (Al-e Ahmad 1983, 136–37). Rather than anthropomorphizing the Iranian national body, it is pathologized and equated to an animal under duress, the fatal condition of those affected by *gharbzadegi*, the *gharbzadeh* (Westoxificated, occidentotic). These metaphors constitute the Iranian subject as an injured object, whose pain is at the same time a testament to colonial violence and a symptom to be cured so an alternative future can be built, a project Al-e Ahmad is eager to advance.

This characterization of Iran reflects a framing made through narratives of pain. The nation draws on a sense of unity through suffering to form its national

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families and authorities involved in the massacre, see Nasser Mohajer (2020); and for a history of the prison system and torture in Iran, see Abrahamian (1999).

subjects, who identify with the performative action such wound evokes. “The experience of pain”, Sara Ahmed (2014, 39) aptly conveys,

> – the feeling of being stabbed by a foreign object that pierces the skin, that cuts you into pieces – is bound up with what cannot be recovered, with something being taken away that cannot be returned. The loss is, in some sense, the loss of a ‘we’, the loss of a community based on everyday conversations, on the coming and goings of bodies, in time and in space [...]. Out of the cutting of this body and this community, surfaces a different body, formed as it is by the intensity of the pain. A community that cries together, which *comes together in this gesture of loss*, and which comes together in the painful feeling that togetherness is lost.

In the assumption of a new skin, a “rhinoceros’s skin”, Al-e Ahmad conducts a nation-building exercise out of the wounds Iran has experienced under coloniality, which has trapped it amidst the promises and fantasies of Westernizing development. This disfiguration is affectively expressed in the pain inflicted upon Iranians by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and, ultimately, “the West”, whether the actual physical pain endured in everyday struggles under “the machine” and the regime’s oppressive practices or the painful experience of losing identity and not being able to become subject. The latter refers to the historical shame of being dictated by foreign actors, of living “on handouts from the West”, building up resentment with what has been lost under the hands of imperial powers such as Russia, Britain, and the United States throughout their violent incursions on Iran (Al-e Ahmad 1983, 78). Against this, Al-e Ahmad (1983, 79) says, we have “to put this jinn [genie] back into the bottle”, “to break it into harness like a draft animal” so it can answer to our wishes and desires while breaking the shackles that had enslaved us to it.

Integral to this discourse, “the machine”, “a demon” manufactured and exported by Western Europe and the United States, further paralyzes Iran in its developing path, as it sentences Iranians to a Westernizing modernity which has been harmful to the population at the hands of the Pahlavi dynasty and its modernization programs (Al-e Ahmad 1983, 81). Poised to accept European modernity as is and the cultural disease that comes with it (*gharbzadegi*) or hark back to tradition and local customs in complete denial of technology and industry, Al-e Ahmad seeks another way out of this sickness. Due to its reductionistic and simplistic character, his message has been considered a nativist, anti-modern narrative, which fed the totalitarian forces that dominated the subsequent revolutionary movement (Boroujerdi 1996; Mirsepassi 2004a; Odabaei 2020). However, more recent literature also read his project as constituting a new anticolonial subjectivity and an alternative vision of development (Deylami 2011; Ziai 2019; Dabashi 2021; Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2021; Saffari 2022). Once again in figurative language, the Iranian writer seeks to break the bondage of dependency by taming the beast of neocolonial capitalism, i.e., the machines, industries, manufactured goods, and symbols imported from Europe and the United States as the baseline standard which Iranians must follow.

In this pathological condition that Al-e Ahmad applied to the Iranian nation, we see the channelling of a diffuse set of affects into a more distinct emotional experience: anguish, self-depreciation, and the feeling of ultimately not being able to achieve (European) subjectivity and to identify away from the imposed fixity of coloniality become encapsulated into the boundaries of national pain. This injury sets the limits of the emergent Iranian subject, differentiated from its corrupted, Western-looking, *gharbzadeh* counterparts by ascribing to new master signifiers that bond Iranians in their lost togetherness through a transnational understanding of their colonial condition. Identifying, or attempting to identify, as an Iranian is conditioned by the wound of being part of the Third World, of sharing their pierced skin with Algerians, Vietnamese, Cubans, in such a way that suturing this wound passes through acknowledging this shared pain as a transnational experience of colonial violence, disconsidering the manifold differences such suffering entails in each national context. This wounded Iran moulds those formless affects of despair and powerlessness fuelled by decades of foreign interventions and puts them in a nation-building process made of the shared emotional experience of pain. In this venture, Iranians "shed [their] old skin" and "study the conditions of [their] permit to enter a new realm" (Al-e Ahmad 1983, 78).

As Saffari (2022, 161) pointed out, *Gharbzadegi* follows the spirit of the Bandung Conference of 1955 in its reaction against the prevailing call for development and modernization by Western powers, as well as in its turn to Islam, a move shared by other intellectuals and activists in the Third World seeking in religion local answers to global problems. For Dabashi (2021, 26–27), this granted a space for Jalal Al-e Ahmad in the same echelon as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor. As a "post-development concept" (Ziai 2019, 164) and "a counter-hegemonic critique of the entwined global processes of racialization and colonial exploitation" (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2021, 177), Al-e Ahmad's framework called for social change by reclaiming an Islamic-Iranian identity, as he saw Islam and Iran as coterminous. By doing this, he not only criticized "the West" for turning Islam into its civilizational enemy through imperialism and colonialism but mobilized an identification process aimed at healing these national wounds, curing this disease, and redeeming Iranian subjecthood.

Even though the book lacks details regarding the concrete steps enabling this process, it hints at a ground-up dynamic of sociopolitical change by mentioning some reforms. Against the hegemony of great corporations and the state in "the great systems for molding opinion", Al-e Ahmad (1983, 105) defends that the television and radio "must be for the benefit and at the disposal of the public, through elected councils of writers and intellectuals". In a similar vein, democracy is only meaningful when it is "made to penetrate the depths of society through a sustained effort at education", whereas, in contrast, the uncritical import of "Western-style democracy" only serves its proponents' parochial interests (Al-e Ahmad 1983, 111).

While indeed this critical position regarding the state evades a state-centrist approach to decolonization, as Saffari (2022, 162) suggested, I take issue with the claim that it also marks a departure from a nationalist framework. These proposals resemble Fanon's call for national consciousness, as they, notably through the work of committed intellectuals, enrich nationalism, so it works for the Iranian people, whose consciousness gets rid of the alienation that infected it. Despite its anticolonial vein, it remains following a national teleology, as the injured, ailing Iranian nation is still articulated as the counterpoint to the overarching "West" in Al-e Ahmad's discourse. Not by chance, it is in this dichotomy of the West vs the East that the writer's analysis is at its weakest, lacking historical evidence of such binary structure and constituting a civilizational schema in which multiple relations and sites of possibility between these opposite poles are subsumed by the presumed conflict of an Islamic East with a Christian West (Saffari 2022, 158). Following Sajed (2016, 506), I would say that *gharbzadegi* ends up *rethinking* modernity (and its accompanying nation-state) by posing an alternative imaginary of Iran that values coloniality as its underlying condition. Yet, it falls short of *unthinking* modernity and moving beyond nationalism “as the telos of anticolonial struggle”, something also seen in its lack of questioning of the necessity of development (“the machine”), which should only be repurposed.

It is not by chance that the powerful discourse of *gharbzadegi* assumed such a prominent position in the revolutionary movement of 1978-79. By blaming Iranian society for “for two hundred years […] resembl[ing] the crow mimicking the partridge”, it explores the desire to be Western as one of the main predicaments of Iranian backwardness (Al-e Ahmad 1983, 31). There are the almost explicit workings of enjoyment in the disease, the “accident from without” that is blamed for the failures of the Iranian nation (Al-e Ahmad 1983, 27). The scapegoating fantasies of the West and the glorious timeline of Islam interpellate the Iranian subject as it deals with the ambiguity and abnegation that colonial violence and imperial pressure brought to the table of the identifications it attempts to accomplish. In this discourse, pain is taken as foundational to a new Iranian nation, one that can enjoy as much as Americans and British. Nevertheless, this new positioning does not change the impossibility of identification, enmeshed in desires and fantasies whose fulfilment remains ever fleeting. Jalal Al-e Ahmad did not want to “escape the nation”, but that does not mean he consciously chose not to do so. Instead, it signals that, in the unsettling and reframing of modernity that he proposed, the nation-state remained as a central locus of affective investment, an identification object surrounded by the pain of suffering *gharbzadegi*, the resentment of not having “the machine” and not enjoying like the West, and the hope of a new anticolonial subjectivity unlocked from the precepts of European (and Pahlavi) modernization.

3.5

Returning to self: the *ummah* and the nation in the face of anticolonial Islam

Even though he shared many qualities and polemical takes with Al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati (1933-1977) carved his own space in Iran’s sociopolitical sphere during the 1970s. One of the most prominent promoters of a revolutionary Shi’i discourse by then, he contributed to the theological-political substrate upon which the fires of 1978-79 were set ablaze, an accomplishment he had not foreseen that would haunt his image as the “ideologue of the Iranian Revolution” until today

(Abrahamian 1982b). Nevertheless, his controversial figure was so much more, and after his death, it became shrouded in hagiographical fantasies that blurred the distinction between the man and the martyr. As Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi (2000, 109) observed, "[t]he 1979 Revolution transformed a multi-faceted, politically inconsistent Shari'ati into a one-dimensional, uncompromising revolutionary".

Hailing from a religious family from the impoverished Khorasan province, in contrast to Al-e Ahmad, Shariati was drawn to Shi'i Islam from an early age[20]. Directly influenced by his father, Mohammad Taqi-Shariati, an Islamic scholar who did not fall short of criticizing the Iranian clerical establishment, he took it upon himself to develop a praxis-oriented discourse of indigenous modernity that would take issue with the isolation of the Iranian ulema from the population and with the absence of meaningful engagement with Islam for advancing radical social, political, and cultural change (Saffari 2017, 5–6). Throughout his life, Shariati made his thought a distinct mixture of Islamic political thought and Western theories, especially Marxism, coalescing the anti-imperialist critiques that were currency in post-1953 Iran with the growing resurgence of Shi'i political discourses. This becomes evident in the political organizations he had joined as a youth, such as his father's Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths and the Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists, which advocated that "Islam was an internationalist idea, capable of providing solutions for all oppressed peoples" (Rahnema 2000, 25–26). After graduating from the University of Mashhad in December 1958, Shariati took a government scholarship to do his doctoral studies at the Sorbonne, where he found a prolific environment for developing his anticolonial thinking and political activities. According to his political biographer, Ali Rahnema (2000, 88), "[o]ut of a smothering, silent cave Shari'ati set foot in the midst of a colourful, blaring carnival on one bright summer's day".

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[20] Shariati's personal relation to Islam entailed a syncretism of his struggle against traditional clergy and his own apprehension of Iranian Sufi mysticism, constituting a particular gnostic position. Separating the external, which he regards as mere appearances of "traditional worshipping", from internal aspects of faith, meaning the soul seeking endeavour to find truth in the divine, he says that "Sufism is the spirit of religion which revolts against the corpus of religion once it realizes that the spirit is perishing and the corpus is uprooting it" (quoted in Rahnema 2000, 150). Thus, Shariati distances himself from the rituals, fasting, and prayers commonly practiced by the people, articulating another dimension of his elitist perspective that posits himself and his "authentic intellectuals" as the population's guides towards spiritual emancipation.

Although Shariati stayed there only until 1964, when he returned to Iran, Paris in the early 1960s provided a revolutionary impetus for the emerging intellectual, who had become acquainted with prominent anticolonial figures of the Third World in the Parisian come-up to 1968 and the global struggles that this year synthesized (A. Shariati forthcoming). Most importantly, alongside his Islamologist mentors at the Sorbonne (Louis Massignon and Jacques Berque), Frantz Fanon left a deep mark on Shariati's thinking, running deep in the discourses and actions he then took back in Iran while teaching and lecturing at the University of Mashhad and the Hosseinieh Ershad, a modern religious institution which became the central platform for his revolutionary message between 1967 and 1972 (Rahnema 2000, 126–27; Saffari 2017, 8). The relationship between the two activists was dubious, to say the least, with the claims that they exchanged letters and that Shariati was the first Persian translator of *The wretched of the earth* recently being questioned (Davari and Saffari 2022a, 93; Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2020). Nevertheless, that his name became mythically entangled with that of Fanon in Iran speaks to the actual impact the latter's oeuvre had upon Shariati, who shared the rage and pain imprinted on Fanon's message and took as a duty to actualize it to the neocolonial reality Iranians were living in under the Pahlavis.

There is little doubt that Shariati performed an "act of translation" regarding Fanon's thought, even though the book translation attributed to him is more urban legend than reality[21] (Davari and Saffari 2022a). As Sadeghi-Boroujerdi (2020) comments, "summarizing and reprising Fanon's insights, as well as interpolating his [Shariati's] own interpretations, remarks and political prescriptions, were crucial elements of his engagement and deployment of the texts and prose of anti-colonial insurgency". From Fanon's theorization of the cultural alienation and profound psycho-affective violence exerted upon the colonized, Shariati positioned

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[21] There is a lot of controversy regarding Shariati's supposed Persian translations of Fanon's oeuvre, particularly of *The Wretched of the Earth*, with some scholars claiming that it was completely or at least partially made by the Iranian author (Salem 2020, 57; Farahzad 2017, 134). While Shariati's role in popularizing Fanon in Iran is undeniable, Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi (2020) recently debunked those claims by identifying Abolhasan Banisadr as the first translator of the book, also denying Shariati's participation in writing its foreword, which was mistakenly published in many versions with him as the author (Farahzad 2017, 143–45). For Arash Davari and Siavash Saffari (2022a, 93), "[t]his false impression, oft repeated as lore, was fostered by the placement of Shariati's name in the text's by-line to hide the actual translator's identity and eventually made its way into tracts of scholarly repute".

Iran within the Third World, with the woes of colonial oppression and imperialism marking the Iranian experience. In a speech in 1969, he said that "[w]e [Iranians] must come to know the intellectuals of Asia and Africa and have contact with their thought, not like [Jean-Paul] Sartre or others who don't at all understand what we have to say" (A. Shariati forthcoming). Furthermore, rather than merely adapting the former's theories to the Iranian socio-historical milieu, Shariati added his understanding of anticolonial struggle, which encompassed the tension between the multiple strands of thought that had shaped Shariati's political militancy and education.

Recently, there has been a recovery of the "anticolonial/postcolonial Shariati", much against the sanitized version that the Iranian regime and many scholars have advocated, which summarizes his political action to the ideological build-up of the 1979 revolution and the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Matin 2011; Davari 2014; Saffari 2019; Marriott 2021; Davari and Saffari 2022b; 2022a; Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2022a). While it is not my aim to extensively cover this literature, I take part in this process by seeing Shariati as not only a "Third Worldist intellectual" and activist who theorized colonial oppression much in the same way as his colleagues in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Instead, he expands anticolonial thought by grappling with elements he had viewed as irrevocable for the struggle against imperialism and Pahlavi Iran: spirituality, mysticism, and religion, all implied in the strengthening and reconfiguration of Iranian Shi'i Islam in his case. As previously mentioned, Fanon was not exempt from his critiques on this matter.

Fanon had an intriguing relationship with Islam. While recognizing the history of anticolonial struggle in Algeria, especially among the peasantry, his oeuvre is remarkably silent about the roles of Islamic groups in building popular resistance against French colonialism. As Fouzi Slisli (2008, 103–4) recalls, "' [t]he 'anti-colonial lifestyle' that Fanon says Algerian peasants always clutched was Islamic. The heroes and the names of this anti-colonial tradition are Islamic in inspiration, in practice and in organization." This absence, willful or not, shows up in the exchanges the Martinican supposedly had with Shariati, with whom there was a discussion on the anticolonial value of religion in national liberation. Though much has been said regarding an alleged correspondence between the two, with claims that members of the FLN and El Moudjahid acted as intermediaries (S. Shariati 2016, 60), only one such letter surfaced in the preface of Shariati's Islamology. Translated from Persian to French by his son, Ehsan Shariati, in a recent volume of Fanon's writings (2018, 666), it has been taken by scholarship (Slisli 2008, 60; S. Shariati 2016, 103; Shatz 2017) as reliable evidence of their interaction, despite Shariati's "penchant to deliberately play the part of an unreliable narrator" (Davari and Saffari 2022a, 94). Considering this uncertainty, possibly set out by Shariati himself[22], I look at this letter's content as a discourse that manifests their supposed disagreement on religion's potentiality as an anticolonial force, not as proof of their correspondence and close relationship.

In this letter, Fanon (2019, 668) initially expresses his enthusiasm regarding Shariati's claim that "Islam harbours, more than any other social powers of ideological alternatives in the third world (or, with your [Shariati's] permission, the Near and Middle-East), both an anticolonialist capacity and an anti-western character". For him, intellectuals should rely on the resistance traditions of Islamic societies to "breathe this spirit into the weary body of the Muslim orient", aiming at "emancipation and the founding of another humanity and another civilization". However, he also shows his skepticism by saying that "reviving sectarian and religious mindsets could impede this necessary unification – already difficult enough to attain – and divert that nation yet to come, which is at best a 'nation in becoming', from its ideal future, bringing it instead closer to its past" (Fanon 2019, 669). Funny enough, this prognostic resembles the previously mentioned critiques on Shariati's role in the 1979 revolution's outcome, whose clerical hegemony and conservatism are taken as results of his "return to self", understood as a unilateral callback to tradition and the past. Whether Shariati performed this exchange or not

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[22] It is known that Shariati frequently constructed fictional characters and stories which he employed to engage a discussion and defend his ideological position. Mentions of Professor Chandel, a play with the French word for candle inspired by Shariati's pen-name Sham (candle in Persian), are frequent, with the Iranian intellectual developing a complete biography filled with books, love affairs, and ideological tendencies for such fictive scholar, who is a pure reflection of Shariati's imagination. According to Rahnema (2000, 161), "[w]hat is essential to Shari'ati is not the actual occurrence of an event or the authentic existence of a character but the necessity of conceiving, developing and depicting a significant occurrence, individual, art form or message". "Where plagiarism is a disease that afflicts intellectuals of all nationalities, Shari'ati did the opposite. He added words of wisdom, poems and sayings to the names of others" (Rahnema 2000, 174). With not even the famous poet Nima Yushij being spared from Shariati adding a new verse to the former's anthology, it would be no surprise that the same could have happened with Fanon's letter.

becomes trivial when we consider the message he is trying to convey as an attempt at differentiating his project from Fanon's, with whom he still had more affinities than disagreements. That the latter did not attain himself to the problem of religion in postcolonial societies, even less so Islam in particular, did not exempt him from the fact that both authors shared the same anticolonial ecosystem and, in Shariati's case, built his theorization relying on the other's critiques.

Shariati, as an intellectual in a Muslim society, committed himself to "decolonizing religion and freeing it from its prison of obscurantism and violence", proposing a nuanced political move that questioned the ulema's detachment from society and popular will while advancing Islam as an emancipatory path from colonialism and imperialism (quoted in S. Shariati 2016, 64). For such a project to take hold, he singularizes Shi'ism as "the Islam which differentiates itself and selects its direction in the history of Islam with the 'No' of the great Ali" [the first Shi'i Imam and Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law], "a 'No' which opposes the path chosen by history, and rebels against history" (A. Shariati 2003). This "no" refers to the refusal of the first Caliph as someone who was not a direct descendent of the Prophet, instead being chosen by its followers, who then famously split into Sunnis and Shi'is, the latter becoming the defenders of Ali's claim for the caliphate. In contrast to the rulings of a "pseudo-clergy" corrupted by power and profit, religion becomes a transformative process of change through the hands of the Iranian Shi'is, who turn into "the fountainhead of the rebellion and the struggle of the downtrodden and oppressed masses" (ibid.). Famously, to the disgust of the mullahs and the willful oblivion of the current Iranian regime, Shariati (2018, 20) said that "[t]he prophets, who left their prophetic homes behind and disregarded us, proceeded to the palaces". He criticized the conservative ulema for turning into the oppressors and, therefore, going against the revolutionary nature of what he called "Red Shi'ism", a "religion of martyrdom" historically espoused by and inherited from Ali, Abu Zarr[23], and Husayn (Abrahamian 1982a, 470). For

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[23] Abu Zarr was one of Prophet Muhammad's first followers who supported Ali and denounced the first caliph's corruption, and whose life was narrated in a book written by the Egyptian novelist Abdul Hamid Jowdat al-Sahar and later translated by a young Ali Shariati. According to the latter's biographer, "[f]rom what Abu Zarr may have been, Shari'ati the sculptor chisels out a hero, a role model and a symbol, who defies wealth, power and even religious authority to save the 'authentic' Islam of the poor, the oppressed and the downtrodden. Abu Zarr, fictional or real, is the personification of the lone righteous rebel who confronts and challenges the canonical validity of the highest politico-religious authority in the Islamic empire. [...] Abu Zarr is the signal, code or

Shariati (2003), "the present version of Islam (in 1972) is a criminal Islam in the dress of tradition, and […] the real Islam is the hidden Islam, hidden in the red cloak of martyrdom".

That Shariati took it upon himself to uncover this Islam was not only a defence of his vision of what Shi'ism and Islam meant and ought to be. It also connected his politico-religious worldview to the critiques he had encountered from anticolonial intellectuals in the Third World, such as Fanon, Césaire, and Julius Nyerere, drawing resources from them and seeing their discourses' applicability *through* religion in Iran. As Ghamari-Tabrizi (2004, 509) suggests, "when Shari'ati translated Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre* into the Qur'anic term *mostaz'afin* (the disinherited) he reinvented both Fanon and the Qur'an and made both of them his own", a reinvention that occupied the whole course of his thought. Islam became the popular medium of discontent and a way of linking the domains of faith and spirituality with the collective struggle against colonial and imperial oppression. It becomes more evident in his articulation of the problem as a "return to self" (*bāzgasht be khishtan*), following Third Worldist calls for the valuation of one's culture instead of assimilation and Westernization:

> The question of 'return to self' is not a motto that has been adopted by religious people in the world today. This question was raised for the first time by most progressive intellectuals who had no religious doctrine, like Aimé Césaire, and Frantz Fanon, Julius Nyerere, and Jomo Kenyatta in Africa, Senghor in Senegal, the Algerian writer [Kateb] Yacine and Jalal Al-e Ahmad in Iran. […] It is in response to this call that we want to raise this question here in Iran, in this society, with this generation, in this time in which we live, and for which we are responsible. […] The question of 'returning to self' is thus transformed for us into a question of 'returning to one's own culture' and to the acknowledgement of this 'self', which is in fact a 'we'. Following this path, we come to the question of the 'return to Islamic culture and Islamic ideology'. (A. Shariati 2011, 18, all quotes of this book were translated by the author)
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> In short, the return to the historical self to which we call is not a return to the saddle of the mule, but to the self which is really present in the soul and the consciousness of society, and which is possible for the intellectual to extract and rework fresh

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allegory for the committed, defiant, revolutionary Muslim who preaches equality, fraternity, justice and liberation" (Rahnema 2000, 58–59). Indeed, on Shariati's lectures, this early Islamic follower epitomized the spirit of the "hidden Islam", the authentic Islam of martyrdom and revolution which embodied the sociopolitical message of revolt against the traditional clergy and the Pahlavis he was trying to instil in his followers. Moreover, for many radicals in the region, including Shariati, "Abu Zarr was the first Muslim socialist", whose figure was carved out by Shariati to carry his own mixture of Islamic and European ideas and set the stage for other Shi'i historical characters, such as Husayn (Abrahamian 1982a, 465).

> again like matter and a source of energy, so that it lives, springs up and starts moving again. (A. Shariati 2011, 37)
>
> It must, however, extract Islam from its degraded form and from the traditions which constitute one of the greatest factors of decadence and bring it towards a progressive, voluntarist Islam which functions as a factor of awakening. It must be made into an ideology capable of bringing light and progress. […] This is how stagnation will suddenly turn into movement, and this long-lasting, centuries-old decadence will turn into an explosive uprising. It is in this way, and in this form, that the intellectual – whether religious or not – will return to the living and strong human consciousness which allows them to stand up to Western cultural imperialism and awaken the religious feeling that sleeps in their society due to the help of religion itself. (A. Shariati 2011, 39–40)

This process necessarily entailed an ethical transformation for Shariati, one that pushed forward a praxis of self-reflection, sacrifice, and awakening, canalized in the figure of the *shahid*, and that ultimately reconfigured the nation-state model to achieve the "ideal society", the *ummah* (A. Shariati 1979, 120). Once again, but differently, the experience of pain appears central to this agenda's actualization. In contrast to Jalal Al-e Ahmad, who embedded the pain of losing identity in the wound inflicted by *gharbzadegi*, Shariati viewed suffering as a necessary starting point for achieving his utopian imaginary of a new humanity. The bonding, shared injury of oppression, whether under the Pahlavis, the traditional clergy, or colonial and imperial powers, was, to a certain degree, ascetically enjoyable for Shariati, inasmuch it cleansed and revived a revolutionary mindset that was lying dormant in colonized societies, most vividly saw in the awakening of "Red Shi'ism" in Iran. For Rahnema (2000, x), this was a repercussion of his personal outlook on life since "Shari'ati always spoke of the pain – his own – that he had to cry out", with his discourses being "an echo of a political, economic and religious system that pained him". He relished his near masochist state (jouissance?), for it was taken as a sign of acknowledging his responsibility and consciousness of his separation from God while on earth, which burdened him like a prison (Rahnema 2000, 42–43). Thus, pushed by this lingering but somewhat liberating agony, Shariati engaged in a fairly elitist, vanguardist, and masculinist[24] movement to spread this inner knowledge, longing for a utopia hailing from his Islamic eschatological views.

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[24] The idea that enduring pain, suffering, and injury forges character, builds honour, and, therefore, is something to be proud of seems to me to be deeply connected to a symbolic, historical, cultural infrastructure that naturalizes a certain degree of violence as a natural instance of being and becoming a man. This not only projects an essentialist masculinity but also marginalizes subaltern views on gender and sexuality, such as coming from trans, queer, and non-binary communities. Of

This painful experience, more than essential only for the "return to self" every individual was supposed to undertake, was a constituting affective and emotional experience for the Shariatian body politic, going as far as to say that "a nation is the sum total of all human beings who feel a common pain" (Shariati quoted in Rahnema 2000, 120). For Shariati (1986, 30), "the history, culture, and traditions of nations are intertwined with their religious spirits"; therefore, the historical process that constituted the Iranian nation is embedded in Shi'i history, whose trajectory has been plagued by the dominance of the Shi'ism of the ruling elites and not of the disinherited, which shall be reclaimed. At his project's core, this last part entailed the founding of a new subjectivity that made the pain of coloniality, embodied in the figures of the Umayyad caliphs who turned Islam away from its rebellious path as well as in those of European colonial powers, an alignment of bodies with other bodies that had shared this loss, as Ahmed (2014, 39) had termed. This alignment moves horizontally and vertically, as Shariati (2018, 79) identifies his pain with that of his "predecessors": "I viewed civilisation as a curse. I felt a burning hatred for the thousands of years of oppression against my predecessors. I realised that the feelings of all those people buried together in the ditches [of the Egyptian Pyramids] were once the same as mine". This ties to one of his conceptions of nation, as "the continuous string of many generations that time, this pitiless, thoughtless sword of nature, separates their physical connections along the course of their history" (A. Shariati n.d.). Recognizing this open wound which cannot be sutured unless through spiritual and sociopolitical emancipation, Shariati proposes a spiritual modernity uncaptured by the limits of the territorial nation-state and aimed at articulating a new humanity.

The diagnosis that Shariati reached by analyzing Iran in the 1960s and 1970s was what he called "the trinity of oppression", a triangle encompassed by economic-political-ideological domination whereby "institutionalized religion [the traditional clergy, the capitalist system, consumerism] ideologically justified the political order and economic power of dominant classes" (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2004,

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course, these critiques were not in vogue when Shariati was alive, even less in Iran, where there was a very different historical background on sex and gender (on this regard, see the fascinating work of Afsaneh Najmabadi (2005; 2014)). Nevertheless, that he was not aware and, perhaps unconsciously, subscribed to this essentialist idea does not exempt him from the violent outcomes it has reproduced regarding women and marginalized communities, among which Forugh Farrokhzad, his contemporary, was a living proof with her poetry.

512). This tripartite system was most aptly captured in a series of allegories he used to mention in his speeches, whose rhythmic character supposedly amplified the discourses' appeal: *zar-zoor-tazvir* (gold-coercion-deception), *estesmar-este'mar-estehamr* (exploitation-colonization-deception), *mälek-malek-mulh* (gentry-majesty-clergy), *tigh-tala-tasbih* (sword-gold-rosary) (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2000, 107). According to Shariati (n.d.), this message or formula "should be melodious, that is, for the effect of the song, it should be expressed in such a way that one feels that it is absolutely beautiful", with each word having a "kind of harmony" and "balance" so it increases its impact. However, it is not only these words' melody that made them appellative to the general Iranian society, but also how they attached signs to specific bodies through an affective economy that canalized the historical experience of pain represented in the "trinity of oppression" towards distinct subjects.

Through a metonymic slide, gold becomes readable as the exploitative means of economic elites (the gentry/bourgeoisie), the rosary wielded alongside the clergy turns into a sign of the deceiving (and untruthful) ideological apparatus of religion ("criminal Islam"), whereas the sword is symbolical of the coercive power of political authorities (the majesty). These figures "stick" their meaning to bodies in such a way that they symbolize what we ought not to be in the struggle towards the "real Islam": the foreign companies that had continually exploited Iranian people and resources (gold), the traditional ulema that turned away from the rebellious nature of Red Shi'ism (rosary), and the Pahlavi monarchy and security apparatus (SAVAK) with their pervasive relationship with the US and British empires (sword). Part of the power of Shariati's speeches is that they establish a platform of public religion and popular revolt through common signs that articulate these authorities as oppressors and traitors of the message of Imam Ali, Abu Zarr, and Husayn, whose martyrdom or pain becomes constitutive, as a reflex effect, of the new "we" Shariati aspires to. Under those circumstances and through this discourse, Iran is turned into a painful, wounded, invaded nation which harbours a grievance against its spirituality while simultaneously viewing it with hope.

As a response to this trinity, besides returning to self, Shariati advocates another tripartite system composed of spirituality, equality, and freedom (*erfan, barabari, azadi*), whose combination mobilized emancipatory movements aimed at a new humanity founded on these universal ideals. For Shariati (quoted in Saffari 2017, 96), the responsibility of his committed intellectuals was "to wage an emancipatory cultural and intellectual struggle to save *freedom* from the barren wastelands of capitalism and class exploitation, *equality* and justice from the violent and pharaonic dictatorship of Marxism, and *God* from the ghastly and gloomy graveyard of clericalism". This entangled dynamic rested on reconfiguring the form of political community, using the nation-state for establishing the *ummah* as the actualization of *erfan* from individual self-awareness to collective sacrifice. *Ummah* refers to a sense of path and intention, which universalize Islam's goals against the backdrop of communities based on blood and soil (nations) (A. Shariati 1979, 120). In a highly polemicized discourse, Shariati (1979, 120–21) discusses this project:

> The political philosophy and the form of regime of the *umma* is not the democracy of heads, not irresponsible and directionless liberalism which is a plaything of contesting social forces, not putrid aristocracy, not anti-popular dictatorship, not a self-imposing oligarchy. It consists rather of 'purity of leadership' (not the leader, for that would be fascism), committed and revolutionary leadership, responsible for the movement and growth of society on the basis of its worldview and ideology […].

This "purity of leadership" takes the form of the Imamate, the ruling of the Imam, responsible for guiding its people toward a classless society and, once there, establishing a new humanity that takes on "the characteristics of God", "the absolute goal and absolute perfection" (A. Shariati 1979, 122). Apart from the religious structuring of such discourse, as Mahdavi (2014, 42) and Davari (2021, 757) suggest, we should consider it as following the spirit of Bandung in its articulation of Sukarno's "guided/committed democracy", whereby a vanguardist group of revolutionaries, committed intellectuals for Shariati, takes hold of power until the society aligns itself to their goals and, therefore, enable the passage to the utopian, classless horizon. In Shariati's agenda, the Imam embodies the *ummah*, encompassing the formation of a new Muslim-Iranian subjectivity "oriented by and toward permanence, predicated on a notion of movement toward a determinate goal" (Davari 2021, 759). As S. Sayyid (2014, 115) remarks, "[t]he *ummah* interrupts and prevents the nation from finding closure and, at the same time, it points to another nation that will come into being at some point in the future. In this, the *ummah* is a becoming – it is a horizon as well as an actuality".

In this process, Shariati does not seek to go beyond the nation but rather mobilize another form of politics rested on the spiritual, with his agenda of returning to self, as a kind of awakening, applying to the whole postcolonial world, secular or religious, despite the Islamic idiom. He aspires to what Robbie Shilliam (2015, 13) called "deep relations", "a relationality that exists underneath the wounds of coloniality" and aims to "bind back together the manifest and spiritual domains", with the latter being foundational for "a global infrastructure of anti-colonial connectivity". As Jasmine Gani (2022, 3) rightly argues, "[f]ocusing on pre-existing deep relations supplied by a shared faith […] can help to break over-reliance on the colonizer as the intermediary of relationality, communication, and motivation". Shariati delves into the spiritual domain supported by the *ummah* as the fountain of this relationality and intends to create a subjectivity inspired by the sacrifice and legacy of Ali, Abu Zarr, and Husayn, to whom he mirrors himself and the movement he aspires. However, despite the multiple references to other Islamic thinkers and in contrast to other Islamicate movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jamati Islam in South Asia[25], Shariati's project starts and ends on the spiritual, leaving almost no space for addressing the material basis of his theorization.

Aspiring to the divine, to a transcendental realm closer to God, to a utopian horizon where the hidden Imam will come back and reclaim the religion of martyrdom in order to establish a classless society and new humanity, Shariati's model of alternative modernity and spiritual subjectivity is tethered to a phantasmagorical desire for a loss essence, embodied in the primordial followers of the Prophet and Red Shi'ism. Ultimately, it seems that, in his agonistic pain, Shariati wishes to become God. When taken alongside this search for divine

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[25] For a fascinating study of the form of anticolonial connectivity constructed by these movements, see Gani (2022). It should be noted that, despite Shariati's reliance on the spiritual over the material domain, his speeches and writings were and remain being widely shared in the Middle East and North Africa, with a lot of Arabic translations present in Shi'i communities. This points to the possibility his discourses opened for building such connections between different locales and movements, and also to the power of the *ummah* as a complex and dynamic transnational network of knowledge, even when considering the hygienization Shariati's figure and books have endured when depicted as a strictly Islamic thinker in places such as Lebanon, erasing his anticolonial and anti-imperialist dimensions (Kassem 2021)

closure, the pleasure such pain incites, considered an awakening factor for him (Rahnema 2000, 43), remarks the workings of enjoyment, as life could never be appropriately enjoyed but through the absolute divine, viewed on the Imamate. Reflecting this eschatological perspective, his vision for Third World solidarity gets bogged down on the undifferentiated shared affective experience he employs as the underlying bond connecting all these postcolonial nations. As Sadeghi-Boroujerdi (2022a, 206) argues when commenting on one of Shariati's speeches, "it is for the most part assumed that the shared condition of exploitation at the hands of the capitalist colonial world would be enough to build enduring solidarity and thereby overcome inevitable disagreements". Thus, by somewhat subsuming anticolonial subjectivity to the experience of pain, Shariati closes space for difference in his Third Worldist politics.

Anticolonial nationalism means a passageway to the triarchy of spirituality, equality, and freedom for Shariati, a path mobilized by the *ummah* in an active process of becoming, which appears endless in his utopian imaginary, lacking a material basis to actualize it. Nationalism is an "inevitable, dialectical and necessary apparition" for the struggle against imperialism and colonialism, one that needs to be worked through to be replaced by universalism at the last stage, encapsulated in the figure of the Imam and the divine utopia that Shariati longs for (A. Shariati 2011, 147). Initially articulated as the underlying affective experience that bonds Iranians with the national body and other nations marked by colonial violence, pain turns against Shariati when it constitutes this distinct emotional category, as it closes space for difference in the diffuse affective environment of the Third World. Shariati, à la Fanon, views the nation as a necessary vehicle toward a new humanity and adds the spiritual realm as a possibility for anticolonial struggle and connectivity. His spiritual subject, or committed intellectual, is founded by situating itself in its own culture, society, and traditions, but without the hierarchies and limits imposed by Eurocentric modernity, as it awakens to the power of standing on its own two feet and returning to self. By proposing an alternative modernity in which Islam becomes one of its ideological supports, Shariati challenges not only the Pahlavis, but also the West as the overarching model to be emulated, against which the *ummah*, in form and content, establishes itself.

3.6
Conclusion

Pre-revolutionary Iran provides a rich scenario for our exploration of anticolonial nationalism, with authors such as Dabashi (2007, 25) going as far as saying that it is a modern nation "by virtue of an anticolonial modernity" which has "blessed" and "afflicted" it. In this context, Jalal Al-e Ahmad emerges as a dissident writer who contested Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's authoritarian politics by marking Iran as a disease-ridden nation and imagining a decolonial future detached from colonial modernity. *Gharbzadegi* sets out a scathing critique of Westernizing modernization by pathologizing Iran through a narrative of pain, resentment, and hope. The wounded Iranian nation, whose cultural and sociopolitical roots had been cut, should claim its anticolonial subjectivity and sit alongside its allies in the Third World, poised to rearticulate a national identification delinked from the impossible standards of Europe and the United States. Nevertheless, as many decolonization struggles in Africa and Asia had proven last century, this detachment is more complicated than it seems. With the 1978-79 experience and the Islamic Republic's clerical establishment's kidnapping of *gharbzadegi* lurking in the back of our heads, Al-e Ahmad's rethinking of modernity seems to have fallen short of its decolonial potential, remaining tethered to the same modern nation-state model Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini would rearticulate for his particular aims later on.

Ali Shariati integrates Al-e Ahmad's critique into a movement of Islamic revivalism profoundly interested in advancing a public platform for revolutionary struggle through religion and spirituality. Against the conservative ulema who forgot what Islam ought to represent (Red Shi'ism) and act upon (inequality and oppression), Shariati proposes to guide the masses by awakening them to their oblivion, by "returning them to their selves" through the words of committed intellectuals. Once again, their suffering under the hands of the Pahlavis and global capitalism surfaces as the "sticky" bond of the Iranian nation to come, which shall be employed for a new humanity's founding inspired by the Imamate. This affective experience, alongside the spiritual connectivity projected by the *ummah*, becomes the starting point of Shariati's agenda, which remains open-ended yet longing for the divine and transcendental transformation of becoming close to God. While his call for action was successful in galvanizing ample segments of Iranian society, his discourses' appropriation by the Islamic Republic, of which he generally became a reflection as its "chief ideologue", could be partly due to the appeal of the utopia he mobilized and the lack of material support for his revolutionary theory against the clergy that took power. Shariati, in his obsessive agonistic pain, had the nationalism he was supposed to employ for a new spiritual subjectivity entrapped in the same undifferentiated framework upon which the modern nation-state is founded after 1979, with the *ummah*'s universalism remaining as nothing but an ideal.

4
Reading Forugh in Tehran: Farrokhzad's transnational poetics of transgression

4.1
Introduction

Forugh Farrokhzad (1934-1967) was a renowned poet that emerged as part of the mid-20th century modernist turn in Iranian literature and revolutionized Iranian poetry with her innovative writing, soul-wrenching stanzas, and sharp and explicit sociopolitical critiques. Called by Michael Hillmann (1987, 1), one of her biographers alongside Farzaneh Milani[26] (2016), "the most famous woman in the history of Persian literature", Farrokhzad became an icon not only due to the transgressive and subversive aspects of her verses regarding women sexuality. Her struggle against a life marred by the repression of the voice, desire, and subjectivity she aguishly longed for in the conservative Iranian context stands as an illustration of Iranian women resistance which cannot be reduced to a gender dimension, speaking to social, political, and cultural issues of her time. It entailed discussing who has the right to speak, enjoy, have pleasure, be heard, and be recognized as part of the collective and fictitious construction of the Iranian nation, a debate informed, but not defined, by her life circumstances as an Iranian woman, poet, and filmmaker.

This chapter intends to analyze how Farrokhzad's work, reflective of her time and place in Pahlavi Iran, articulated an affective economy around her ideal of an Iranian nation, which included women's subjectivity as integral to it. To do this, I approach her oeuvre not aiming at a form of literary criticism but proposing a reading of the sociopolitical conditions that her poems and life attempted to change through the work of specific affects and emotions, particularly love, and the libidinal mobilization of jouissance. Her writing, as Dominic Parviz Brookshaw and Nasrin Rahimieh (2010, 4) suggest, "laid bare" the relation between woman's enjoyment and subjectivity, a bond I try to delve into concerning its reflections for the national ideal Farrokhzad aspires.

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[26] Sadly, I could not get access to Milani's biography of Farrokhzad and, if I had, I would not have been able to read and analyze it with proper care and depth due to linguistic reasons. This makes this chapter not up to date with the most recent literature on the author's life and oeuvre and partial to perspectives of the Anglosphere, something I unfortunately could not avoid.

As in the previous chapter, this analysis focuses on a specific set of sources: selected poems from the four collections Farrokhzad published (*Captive, The Wall, Rebellion,* and *Another Birth/Reborn/Rebirth*) and from the one that was organized posthumously (*Let Us Believe in the Dawn of the Cold Season*) (Farrokhzad 2007; 2010). I chose not to analyze her documentary, *The House is Black*, a landmark for Iranian New Wave cinema, due to its specific affective and emotional structuring through images, sounds, voices, and music (Farrokhzad 1963). These resonate in audiences by generating feelings that a text alone could not, enticing one's senses by making someone feel a social reality more broadly. As I do not intend to realize a visual analysis, to avoid a cursory treatment of the film by attending only to its text, I preferred to read Farrokhzad's work only through her poetry, not implying a devaluing of her other artistic endeavours, including in Iranian cinema, since they are just as significant in forming her sociopolitical critiques[27].

I emphasize Farrokhzad's last two collections since they marked her trajectory as more sophisticated in form and content than the previous ones. In those later works, she develops her distinctive poetic style while directly expressing her rage against the series of categories, hierarchies, and prisons that Iranian patriarchal culture imposed upon her. I chose to work with poetry because it constituted a crucial cultural dimension around which the opposition movement to the Pahlavi dynasty garnered forces, one enmeshed in Iranian secular culture (Talattof 2000). Considerably, Farrokhzad's secular grammar diverges from the religious tone Al-e Ahmad and especially Shariati employed in their theories and praxis. Persian poetry remains a powerful site of national pride, attesting to its importance for Iran's social and political atmosphere, to which Farrokhzad directly contributed.

Dick Davis (2021) frames Forugh's poetry "as a kind of psychological collodion plate responsive to every shade of light and dark that flirts before it". However, this urge to somewhat psychologize her work as a direct reflection of her life, anguishes, and suffering falls short of addressing the different persona she assumes when writing, who, despite being a mirror of questions of her time, is not coterminous with her biography (Brookshaw and Rahimieh 2010, 3–4). This tendency to collide her poems' autobiographical form with her life also represents her privacy's fetishization, which accompanied her trajectory to general acclaim and controversy. That Farrokhzad addressed themes like sex, desire, and love became almost equal to a life lived in promiscuity, eliciting an obsessive fascination for her affairs, romantic and otherwise, which she expressively rebutted (Farrokhzad 2010, 189; Milani 2011, xvii). For her, poetry is of an inherent liberatory nature:

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[27] For discussions of *The House is Black*, see Milani (2011, 145–48), Rahimieh (2010), and Hillmann (1987, 43–44).

> Poetry for me is like a friend to whom I can freely unburden my heart. It's a mate who completes me, satisfies me.
>
> Poetry is like a window which automatically opens when I go to it. I sit there, I stare, I sing, I cry out, I weep, I become one with the vision of the trees… on the other side of the window there is an expanse, and someone hears.
>
> Poetry is a serious business for me. It's a responsibility I feel vis-à-vis my own being. It's a sort of answer I feel compelled to give to my own life.
>
> I don't search for anything in my poems; rather in my own poems I discover myself. (quoted in Hillmann 1977, 291)

In Farrokhzad's view, "creative work is a kind of expression and reconstruction of life, and life is something, which has a changeable nature" (Farrokhzad 2010, 189). With her poetry being "a companion, mirror and means to self-knowledge" (Hillmann 1987, 3), we see her directly intervening in the tensions encapsulating the dynamic environment of post-1953 Iran, critiquing and changing the Pahlavi's cultural environment that was such an overwhelming burden for Iranian women. Her work, as a whole, though not resumed to this, is thoroughly informed by the suffering she endured in Pahlavi Iran, and the emancipatory horizons she framed as possible against this patriarchal structure. In an interview, she says: "[i]f, as you've said, my poetry contains a degree of femininity, it is quite natural, due to my being a woman. Fortunately I am a woman. […] and if (my femininity) appears, it is quite unconscious. It is inevitable" (Farrokhzad 2010, 193–94). Farrokhzad's "discovering herself" through her poems points to this autobiographical tone latent in her work, which punctures her writing and filming alongside her profound anti-establishment position against the political, religious, and cultural discourses that submitted Iranian women's voices.

Diverging from her contemporaries, Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, it is difficult to frame Forugh Farrokhzad as an anticolonial, decolonial or postcolonial activist.

She did not follow the Third Worldist discourses of her time nor exchange ideas with other intellectuals from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, like Fanon, theorizing colonialism never being her oeuvre's intent. Nevertheless, she was resolutely invested in articulating a radical discourse of rebellion, transgression, and resistance out of the pain and suffering of her life. It challenged the traditional parameters that she, as an Iranian woman, was supposed to follow concerning love, sex, and marriage, and the underlying patriarchal, clerical force pushing her towards a submissive, marginalized position in Iranian society. While Farrokhzad did not try to promote an alternative modernity, she was critical of its adulation by Pahlavis and Westernized groups, such as intellectuals (Farrokhzad 2010, 98–107). Her verses exposed how a new humanity in which female desire is accounted for cannot be founded by remaining attached to a religious, conservative past nor by emulating a supposedly benevolent Eurocentric future.

Throughout this chapter, I will argue that Farrokhzad takes a turn and differentiate her affective politics from those of Al-e Ahmad and Shariati in that she exposes the profoundly gendered grammar of nationalism and misogynistic character of pain, the emotional experience that, as I claim in the previous chapter, subsumes their anticolonial projects. With this critical move, she proposes a transnational poetics of love which denies the reparative, redemptive power of pain defended by the other two authors, advancing a vision which acknowledges but does not ultimately reside in the wounds she identifies in the Iranian national body.

Before moving forward, a couple of caveats should be in order. Regarding my methodological approach, Farrokhzad's poetry mobilizes different affective and emotional responses compared to political speeches and writings. Due to their distinctiveness as literary, creative, and artistic experiences, the former entail characteristics that are not captured by the analysis I am exercising here. As Jahan Ramazani (2009, 19) argues, "in poetry, more than perhaps in any other literary genre, the specificities of language matter", in this case, a language I am not well-versed in, Persian. Poetry commits to literary form, technique, and metrics in such a way that it is hugely reliant on the work of metaphors, with Iranian literature becoming a somewhat safe space for expressing dissident ideas and feelings precisely through the work of these metaphorical devices. As Kamran Talattof (2000, 12) suggests, "the connection between ideology and literature is best understood as the locus where metaphors convey social realities". Iranian women writers position themselves in this intersection, so that "[m]etaphors of containment […] coexist in their works side by side with the desire to sprout wings, fly, flee, run, dance, sing through their texts, bear witness to the hitherto unspoken, and push boundaries into the unsaid and the forbidden" (Milani 2011, xxiv). Similar to my previous limitation regarding the Persian language, my lack of comprehensive knowledge of Iranian literary movements and Persian ghazals (a form of lyrical poems that originated in Arabic poetry) prevents me from grasping the meaning changes of specific signs and words according to their sociocultural atmosphere.

This would seem like a significant blank space for a discussion of an innovative author like Farrokhzad. However, I address this issue by emphasizing her novel appropriation of terms, analogies, metaphors, and signs and their corresponding attachment to bodies, including the nation-state, through channelling emotions and affects. Thus, I do not aim at the changes that metaphors passed through time, instead focusing on their affective work on the social sphere with their present meanings.

It would be highly reductionistic, preposterous to some extent, and even violent towards her life and oeuvre to summarize Forugh Farrokhzad's work to a specific emotional experience, such as love or pain. As Michael Beard (2010, 101) asks, "[i]f we see her as a machine for suffering, how do we account for her exuberance?" While both are present there, this chapter tries to capture the space of ambivalence within which they articulate Farrokhzad's affective politics, where love and pain become entangled in each other's effects on the bodies and subjects they constitute. Focalizing the workings of these two also provides a means to analyze their encounters in Farrokhzad's poems, which, following our emotional discourse analysis, could signal a becoming or fragmentation of distinct emotional categories. Thus, while this chapter does not reduce her to these encounters, it emphasizes the central position love and pain assume for Farrokhzad's radical politics, symbolizing the hopes and grievances she puts into her text.

After this introductory section, I will proceed to a quick contextualization of Farrokhzad's life and the modernist cultural atmosphere in which she was embedded, with an emphasis on the secular oppositional movements against the Iranian regime. This secularism contrasted with the Islamic renaissance advocated by Jalal Al-e Ahmad, to a lesser extent, and Ali Shariati, despite both employing secular leftist theories, mainly Marxism, to develop their discourses. Then, I devote one section to address the transnational discussion of desire and subjectivity and the critique of Iranian nationalism present in her poetry. Finally, I end with a brief conclusion. As Milani (1992, 15) rightly argues, "[n]o document charts more accurately the difficult road to liberation of the Iranian woman than her poetry", a path which Farrokhzad the person traversed, and Farrokhzad the "eternal light" continues to influence. This chapter attempts to revisit her troubled yet radically hopeful path.

4.2

Writing the sins of Iranian life: transgressive literature and the eternal light

In one of her few poems with the theme of death, Farrokhzad (2007, 17) writes: "[f]rom my headstone my name / will softly wear away in wind and rain, / and thus will my faceless grave remain / undisturbed by tales of me and tales of shame". This prognosis could not be further from what awaited her figure after her untimely death. Posthumously granted with the epithet "eternal Forugh" (*javdanaeh Forugh*) in an allusion to the Zoroastrian eternal fire, which persists as the sacred guiding light in life and death, Forugh Farrokhzad experienced a short life filled with sudden change and rebellion (Keshavarz 2007, 35). She lived at a time of critical transformation in Iranian society, culture, and politics, with the wide-ranging modernizing incursions of the Pahlavis simultaneously becoming a symbol of progress for some and revolt for others. At the intersection of these hopes and grievances, Farrokhzad situated her politics, made possible "through the constant shifts of darkness and light" in her poetry (Milani 2011, 133). The eternal light she had cast upon Iran burst into the insurrectionary flames of the 1960s and 1970s and became a call for action remembered by Iranians today, as, for Hamideh Sedghi (2007, 193), "[n]o other secular nonconformist woman had such a powerful impact as Farrokhzad on Iranian women's history". In this changing environment, her poems personified "both the pleasures and the agonies and anguishes of mingling the old and the new, the familiar and the unfamiliar" (Milani 2011, xviii), with her persona expressing profound discomfort with the conventions and traditions employed to subjugate her.

Contrasting with Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, Farrokhzad did not become synonymous with the 1979 upheavals and the resulting Islamic Republic of Iran. Nevertheless, her name coalesced with women's movements that anticipated such a revolutionary process, her poems converting into some kind of lingua franca among these intellectual circles of the time. As Haideh Moghissi (1996, 1) contends that "women have been the main losers of the 1979 Revolution in Iran", strengthening Valentine Moghadam's claim that "gender relations and the question of women" have been one of the postrevolutionary regime's supporting pillars (Moghadam 1993, 91). To understand what has been lost, the emergence of Farrokhzad as one, if not the, voice of rebellion provides a glimpse into the boiling context in which she articulated her beautiful and acute stanzas. In a scenario of growing discontent with the violent modernization and oppression of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's monarchy, which espoused a modern conservative discourse of women's rights that focused on their development but not on their liberation, she created a space for dissent that questioned the patriarchal structure that sustained it. This inspired women who would then participate in the marches of 1979 and the subsequent protests against the newly formed Islamic regime, despite the ban on Farrokhzad's books after the revolution (Hillmann 1987, 3).

Iranian history, culture, and literature have been a recollection of masculine figures for most of their trajectory (Hillmann 1987, 1; Milani 1992, 1). In defiance of this men-centred structure, women writers emerged as direct advocates for their participation and representation in the country's social, cultural, and political affairs throughout the 20th century. Deliberately muffled and silenced under the usually religious[28] and fallacious pretense of protecting them and the society from falling into despair and chaos (Hoodfar 1999, 8), their voice gained space through their written words. According to Milani (1992, 15), in this liberatory struggle, "[f]or various reasons, many women, far more than is commonly recognized, turned to poetry to exercise literary capacities otherwise frustrated by social and cultural restrictions", their poems becoming vehicles for their otherwise suppressed politics.

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[28] This silencing of female voices was directly correlated to their physical segregation from public spaces and public debate, with male Islamic theologians interpreting a Qur'anic verse restricting women from public appearance for wanton display as a sacred guideline dictating their exclusion (Milani 2011, 2–3). Womanhood was to be exercised solely at home, within the delineated spaces defined by and for men. For an intricate research on gender segregation in contemporary Iran, see Shahrokni (2020).

There was the formation of a fascinating and diverse cultural scene composed of these women poets and prosaists from the 1950s to the 1970s, a moment when the mainly masculine paint present in Iranian sociocultural spheres started to acquire some feminine tinges.

Amidst this scene, a significant secular and leftist strain emerged after the 1953 coup, despite the empowerment of religious factions that ensued during the following decades. A central point of contention was regarding Iran's modernization and the effects it had exerted on society, including women as the beneficiaries of a conservative, unequal, and elitist approach to gender policies by the Pahlavi monarchy, notably advocated by Ashraf Pahlavi, the shah's sister and one of the most powerful women in his regime alongside his wife, Farah Pahlavi (Sedghi 2007, 164–65). This perspective promoted a Western-oriented vision of women's rights, establishing women's suffrage and electoral rights in 1963 due to decades of struggle against the state's and clergy's denial of such civil liberties. Following the shah's will to identify Iran as a free, equalitarian, and democratic country, they never intended to change the overarching patriarchal structure that sustained the monarchy, instead being employed as an underlying feature of the modernizing, authoritarian, and repressive state apparatus (Paidar 1995, 142–43; Sedghi 2007, 156–57). As Najmabadi (1991, 60) notes, "women's rights were to be royal grants". This self-proclaimed image of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi as the sole promoter of gender policies in Iran was a blatant lie that obscured the legacy of women's movements that had opposed his regime and historically had enfranchisement as one of their main aims, such as the Women's Council, the New Path's League, and the Federation of Iranian Women's Organizations (Paidar 1995, 137).

The Pahlavi vision "as father of the nation who had to have total control over the women of the nation" (Paidar 1995, 142) directly contrasted with the imagination promoted by secular women writers, Farrokhzad included. Their framework was opposed to the male dominance found in the majority of Iranian society, from the workforce to culture and politics, contrary to the underlying dependence of women on men that the Pahlavi modernization viewed as necessary and left utterly untouched (Shahrokni 2020, 8). In an interview with Oriana Fallaci

(1973), Mohammad Reza Pahlavi exposed to what extent he was contrary to liberatory struggles from women and even despised them:

> In a man's life, women count only if they're beautiful and graceful and know how to stay feminine and… This Women's Lib[eration] business, for instance. What do these feminists want? What do you want? Equality, you say? Indeed! I don't want to seem rude, but… You may be equal in the eyes of the law, but not, I beg your pardon for saying so, in ability.
>
> […] You've never produced a Michelangelo or a Bach. You've never even produced a great cook. And don't talk of opportunities. Are you joking? Have you lacked the opportunity to give history a great cook? You have produced nothing great, nothing!
>
> […] All I can say is that women, when they are in power, are much harsher than men. Much more cruel. Much more bloodthirsty. I'm quoting facts, not opinions. You're heartless when you're rulers. […] You're schemers, you're evil. Every one of you.

Nevertheless, as a repressed yet desirable signifier, Iranian women "come to rule the symbolic order. […] From their veiled seclusion, they come to dominate the psychic order, inverting hierarchical norms of gender, position, and rank. They embody their nation's dreams and nightmares" (Milani 1992, 4). Their political articulations rupture the Pahlavi perspective of the nation as dominated by a "father", fracturing the gendered grammar of nationalism which has been accompanying Iran ever since the constitutionalist movement of early 20th century. As Najmabadi (2005, 211) explains, "[t]he modern Iranian nation drew its sense of manly brotherhood from an order of gender and sexuality whose genealogy in past notions of manhood was reconfigured through the political language of patriotism and constitutionalism". The Iranian motherland (*vatan*) came to symbolize the submission of the female body to this order[29], an articulation which was contraposed by claims of citizenship and equality from women and their language of patriotic sisters (*khvaharan-i vatani*) and gender sisters (*khvaharan-i naw'i*) (Najmabadi 2005, 230). While this constitutionalist moment crafted modernity as "a heteronormalized patriarchal order" (Najmabadi 2005, 211), the Pahlavis refashioned it to transform Iranian women into role models of the Euro-American

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[29] Milani (1992, 71) recalls that this submission has been ingrained even in the words the Persian language ascribes for woman, *zan* and *khanum*, as both also mean wife, implying a dependent relation between femininity and marriage which does not occur with the words for man (*aqa* and *mard*). For a genealogy of the word *vatan* which accounts for its gendered dimension throughout Iranian history, see Tavakoli-Targhi (2001).

modernity the monarchy aspired to, which continued to dehumanize them with repression and prohibitions. Iranian women writers worked precisely at these subliminal and antagonistic spaces, where they embodied their ambivalent position as the “nation’s dreams and nightmares” or, to paraphrase this thesis’s title, the nation’s hopes and grievances. In almost complete antagonism to the regime’s approach to gender politics, they claimed their subjectivity as an active part of the national consciousness, questioning the masculinist order and language imposed upon them.

Perhaps nowhere can we find such a clear expression of this novel mobilization of imaginative resources than Farrokhzad’s life and oeuvre. When reflecting upon her leaving Iran for her first trip to Europe, she wrote:

> I wanted to be a ‘woman’, that is to say a ‘human being’. I wanted to say that I too have the right to breathe and to cry out. But others wanted to stifle and silence my screams on my lips and my breath in my lungs. They had chosen winning weapons, and I was unable to ‘laugh anymore’. (quoted in Hillmann 1987, 31)

Her poetry encapsulated the lifelong suffering she had gone through as she longed and hoped for another world possible while battling her scars and wounds. Forugh Farrokhzad was born in Tehran in 1934 to an affluent urban middle-class family, among which her father, a career military officer, was a source of inspiration, reprisal, and authority. At the same time that he stimulated her intellectual and artistic endeavours since her childhood, he condemned her for her boldness and outspokenness, mainly when these transpired against the strict gender confines he had imposed upon her as a woman (Hillmann 1987, 6–7). At sixteen, Farrokhzad fell in love and left school to marry a distant cousin, with whom she had a son a year later. Their strenuous marriage and demanding roles as a mother and wife became at odds with her poetic aspirations, a symptomatic expression of the clashes women writers, artists, and intellectuals confronted amidst social, family, and career expectations. As Milani (1992, 63) explains, “[…] until recently, women have too often been deprived of the right of both creative achievement and the joys of families”, an irreconcilability that took an immense burden on Farrokhzad due to her overt rebellion against such lack of freedom and agency. In a society strained between the push toward modernity and nostalgic calls for an idealized past, this environment took its toll on Farrokhzad by making her choose her life as a poet over her family. In 1955, she divorced her husband, who took custody of their son, a loss that produced an open wound that directly accompanied her early works to 1958, in particular, through the themes of love, motherhood, and sexuality. In her early poem “The Ring”, Forugh expresses that the wedding ring “so lustrous and aglow / is the clamp of bondage, of slavery”, showing the feelings of entrapment that dominated her perspective on marriage (Farrokhzad 2007, 8). Afterwards, to an astonished and inquisitive public reaction, she engaged in a love affair with the film director Ebrahim Golestan, a married man, after starting to work in his studio, where she would later release her documentary. Milani (2016) recently published their letters in a new biography, building further evidence of their endearing relationship. To general shock, Farrokhzad tragically died at 32 years old in a car accident, transforming her bold and controversial figure into a lasting influence over Iranian politics, culture, and society.

Farrokhzad’s suffering with divorce, the separation from her son, and the recurrent gossip and polemics from an invasive public overwhelmingly concerned with her intimate life caused profound psychological stress. The pressures with which she had to struggle amassed to multiple suicide attempts and psychiatric therapies, adding to the already tense and charged atmosphere Iranian society, with its battle for a modern, primarily male-oriented, definition of femininity, had thrown at her. As Moghissi (1996, 86) notes, “[t]he sexist attitudes of Iranian males toward Forugh Farrokhzad, the only female poet who refused to succumb to male values, mirror the dominant sexual norms and perceptions of the ‘cultured’ circles”, where women’s emancipation was evoked only so leftist, “committed” intellectuals paid lip service to its cause. This behaviour ran against Farrokhzad’s reserved, self-contained, and discrete manners, exposed in a letter to Golestan: “I have always tried to be like a closed door, so that no one would see and get to know my frightful inner life. … I have tried to be a human being, and at the same time be a living presence within myself” (Farrokhzad 2010, 183). Early on in her first collection, *Captive*, in a poem called “Runaway”, she recalled the hypocrisy she had to endure: “[t]hese people, when they hear my poetry, / smile like fragrant flowers to my face, / but call me a mad woman of ill fame / when sitting in their own secluded place” (Farrokhzad 2010, 5). Pervasive and violent, the interest in her intimacy remained as a haunting spectre, hovering over her life and, through its myopic gaze, transforming her poetry into supposedly adulterous and promiscuous attitudes' ultimate reflection.

Forugh was immersed in secular circles of intellectual and artistic exchange, pursuing radical change in the authoritarian Pahlavi context. Even though these topics indirectly appear in her texts, she did not talk about imperialism or colonial violence but rather expressed her anguish with the ongoing political oppression and social inequality at the hands of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. As Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, Farrokhzad valued the idea of intellectuals whose commitment to sociopolitical issues was at their praxis's core, integrating the movement of committed literature (*adabiyat-e moteahed*) alongside other prominent women writers, such as Simin Daneshvar (Jalal Al-e Ahmad's wife), Simin Behbahani, and Tahereh Saffarzadeh (Talattof 2000, 93–95).

There was a sense of loss of identity, a void of meaning underlying this literature's struggle for an alternative imagination amidst the dynamic global context in which Iran was immersed. Even if gender was not the main theme[30], women were undoubtedly at the center of the debate. Cultural imperialism, the hot topic that occupied almost every Tehrani café and bistro of the 1960s, was to be blamed on those Westernized (*gharbzadeh*) women whose practices, looks, and voices ran afoul of the social rules that dictated them to be silent and at home (Milani 1992, 154). While indeed the shah showcased young women in shorts and miniskirts to "signal modernity" and a "progressive political agenda" (Shahrokni 2020, 8), the reaction in intellectual circles did not fall short of condemning what was then viewed as excesses of a potential fifth column. By increasing its reach and appeal in Iranian society, *gharbzadegi*'s discourse soon turned modern women into one of the scapegoats for Iranian social and cultural decay, with its author claiming that emancipation, in its current form, would succeed "only in swelling an army of consumers of powder and lipstick" (Al-e Ahmad 1983, 70). The *gharbzadeh* was "effeminate" (ibid., 96), with Iranian women, to avoid being marked as "the painted dolls of the Pahlavi regime", having to actualize their image to the ideal of "modern-yet-modest" (Najmabadi 1991, 65–66). What was particularly notable was that the

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[30] Curiously, during the 1978/79 upheavals, Iranian women refrained from advocating gender as a point of their struggle, fearing identification with the Pahlavi regime's discourses on women's rights (Hoodfar 1999, 22). However, this did not last long, as Ayatollah Khomeini and his accompanying clergy soon showed that women's liberation surely was not on the Islamic Republic's agenda.

dominant political culture in Iran at the time made most factions, regardless of how politically divergent, religious, or otherwise, coalesce around the prevailing sexism and misogyny, which were reproduced as structures of social control of women (Paidar 1995, 168; Moghissi 1996, 78). *Gharbzadegi* applied to all women deemed culturally ill and supposedly disconnected from their indigenous culture, who were either represented through unveiling for the Islamic groups or modern attire, attitudes or freedoms associated with the West for the more secular and leftist.

This system acquired an affective quality through the workings of *sharm*, a Persian emotional spectrum which encompasses meanings ranging from shame to charm and ruled the public appearance and expression of Iranian women. As a framework of embarrassment that interpellated them to a position of shyness and modesty, *sharm* was “one of the main constellations of attributes that qualifies a woman as beautiful and desirable”, “an ideal that combined such virtues as chastity, silence, seclusion, and obedience” (Milani 1992, 52–53). Women writers broke this psycho-affective barrier by voicing their desires, choices, and ideas, even as the lingering possibility of public and family disapproval concerning their liberation persisted. Of course, this had a toll, as Farrokhzad’s multiple nervous breakdowns and her pervasive feeling of grief exemplify. Declaring her love to her son in “A Poem for You”, she says: “I was the one branded with shame / who laughed at vain taunts and cried: / ‘Let me be the voice of my own existence!’ / but alas, a ‘woman’ was I” (Farrokhzad 2010, 15).

Facing such a conservative context, “[a] woman such as Forugh Farrokhzad, who dared not only to transgress socially legitimate boundaries of male-female sexual relations, but to celebrate her sexuality openly in her poetry became an outcast, even among the most enlightened Iranian intellectuals of her time” (Najmabadi 1991, 66). In an example of the conservative reaction to her poetry, Jalal Al-e Ahmad reportedly said that she “was using her sex in life and sex in her verse as her only means of achieving some prominence in Persian literature” (Hillmann 1987, 32). In a country where men and women across the political spectrum shared a culture of female contention, muteness, and non-expressivity, her poetry transgressed this political, cultural, and affective order so radically that she carved her own space among the Iranian oppositional scene. It can arguably be said that Al-e Ahmad’s and Shariati’s projects became more politically fruitful, despite them, especially *gharbzadegi*, being superficial in many practical and historical aspects. Branwen Gruffydd Jones (2022, 17) recalls that "[j]ust as the meaning of poetry cannot simply be translated into prose, so too we cannot expect a direct relationship between the poetic imagination and what is achieved through political practice". Farrokhzad pushed the *zeitgeist* of the Iranian 1960s to unchartered coordinates by promoting a poetic imagination that shook power structures as no one had before, to the violent reaction of her contemporaries to her overt expressions of female desire and sexuality. In this sense, as I shall claim going forward, her project, even if it was not mobilized as one, was much more radical than her male counterparts.

4.3
In the mood for love: the rebellion, the desire, and the alternative world

During the 1960s, poetry provided a much-needed space for transgressing repressive rules, traditions, and conventions and articulating alternatives to the global colonial system, with authors using their pen toward anticolonial, anti-capitalist, and anti-establishment goals (Gruffydd Jones 2022). Through their intellectual work, poets from the so-called Third World questioned the overarching structures within which their struggles were positioned, stretching the imaginative, ideational, and symbolic battleground. One of the instances they defied was the nation-state. Jahan Ramazani (2009; 2020) underlines that, against the mono-national histories and methodological nationalism prevalent in literary studies of specific authors, there was and is a cross-fertilization and enmeshment of locales, cultures, and languages in poetry that point to an almost inherent transnationalism with the upcoming of modernity. As he argues, "under modernity, even a 'national poet' turns out, on closer inspection, to also be a transnational poet" (Ramazani 2009, 14). This transnational poetics is constructed out of the translocal experiences of poets that collected cross-cultural influences in their poems' form, content, and techniques, showing "a deliberate mixing and combining of multiple reference points, images, and styles from diverse sources" alongside "complex inter-penetrations of local and distant places, cultures and histories" (Gruffydd Jones 2022, 4). Thus, away from nation-based frameworks, a modernist poet becomes a site of global entanglements, punctured by colonial modernity's fluxes and influxes, hybridizations, and appropriations.

Hugely important for national pride, Persian poetry is embedded in Iranian nationalism. From Hafez's ghazals, through Ferdowsi's monumental epic, the *Shahnameh*, to Rumi's love lyrics, the construction of an Iranian nation has been interwoven in poetic images, symbols, and stanzas, which are recounted daily by Iranians as reflections of their feelings toward their history and everyday struggles (Shams 2021, 8–9). In such a context, it might seem counterintuitive to propose a transnational reading of Persian poetry, even more of Forugh Farrokhzad's, a "cultural icon" of national and international status (Brookshaw and Rahimieh 2010, 1). However, I claim that her poetry traverses the Iranian plateau and goes beyond the territorial and imaginative domains of the nation-state by framing her search for desire, freedom, and love as a struggle for subjectivity and humanity.

As a modernist poet, Farrokhzad was influenced not only by the great echelons of Persian poetry, like Nima Yushij, Shamlu and Hafez, but also by the Western contacts she had made, such as with the works of T.S. Eliot, Edward Fitzgerald, and Paul Éluard, and that transformed her verses, pushing her to develop her own style and reappropriate modernity to her problems, questions, and trajectory (Javadi 2010, xiii–xiv; Hillmann 1987, 24, 34). Her travels to Europe marked her poetry through the changes visualized from her third collection (*Rebellion*) onwards, making the majority of its poems "not identifiable as exclusively Iranian in setting or content" (Hillmann 1987, 35; Talattof 2010, 87–88). As Milani (2011, 143) notes regarding travelling's importance for Farrokhzad, "[t]hese journeys – from one city to another, from one country to another, from one universe of definitions and meanings to another – stretched her mind to new dimensions", while also revealing "a sense of homelessness, perpetual wandering, and exile". Through this expansion of horizons, Farrokhzad instantiated her social critiques in a more global, transnational network of ideas and influences, even more than the already multicultural Persianate world.

The literary traditionalists condemned her for her modernism since "modernist verse constituted in their minds a rejection of the noblest art in Iranian history, a rejection of what, in other words, made Iranian culture particularly significant", resonating critiques of Western cultural imperialism prevalent at that time (Hillmann 1987, 22). Moreover, Farrokhzad frequently has been compared to Sylvia Plath, showing "remarkable similarities in tone and subject" that speak to the transnational dimension of the former's poetry (Rahimi Bahmany 2015, 16–17). It makes Milani (2011, 152) characterize her "as exuberant and expansive in her poetic rhythms as Walt Whitman, as precise and infatuated in her choice of words as Gustave Flaubert, as candid and controversial as Sylvia Plath, as intense and suicidal as Anne Sexton, part Iranian, part universal".

Farrokhzad's modernity was not a direct, one-way process of assimilation of Western standards, whether in poetic rhythm, tone, or metric, but moved sideways, horizontally, and back and forward in puncturing European influences with her cultural background. As much postcolonial literature has already proven, these categories' separation (West-East, Europe-Middle East) is more a result of Eurocentrism than historically accurate, as, ever since the Middle Ages, there is evidence of cross-cultural influences between them, frequently through colonialism and imperialism (Ramazani 2009, 9–10). For Jasmin Darznik (2010, 115), "Farrokhzad's poetry also manages to suggest a female agency that does not deny historical repression of women in Iranian culture, while the 'Iranianness' of her work disrupts an idea of modernity that depends on the West for its inspiration and explication". She associates her modernity with the liberating manifestation of love, of being free to love and enjoy her sexuality, expanding the horizons such emotional experience mobilizes in the sociopolitical sphere:

> The attitude of modern poets toward love is one hundred percent superficial. Love in today's poetry is confined to a certain amount of desire, heartache, and anguish, culminating in a few words about union which is considered the end of everything, while it could and should very well be the beginning. Love has not found an opening to newer dimensions of thought, reflection, and emotion. It is still revolving around pretty legs and thighs, which, separated from their human sources, are indeed hollow images. (Farrokhzad quoted in Milani 1992, 259)

Love navigates throughout Farrokhzad's poetry by signifying at the same time her prison in a male-dominated society, embodied in the marriage institution, and the hopeful possibility of transgressing these categories that submit her to the prevailing social order. According to Milani (1992, 132), "[i]t entails a radical reordering of values, acknowledges the limitations and failure of conventional love to satisfy the poet, and appropriates new communicative and personal terrain denied women previously”. Underlying this ambivalent and ambiguous space, grief, or *sharm*, surfaces as an affective spell whose magic power in coordinating and condemning Iranian women’s emotions to a realm of psychic introjection, repression, and self-denial must be broken. In this sense, Farrokhzad reverts what bell hooks (2015, 103) would later advocate in her U.S.-based feminist politics, “there can be no love when there is domination”, overtly saying that there can be no domination when there is love. In yearning for love out of her suffering and sadness, Farrokhzad did not simply subscribe to a critique of romantic love, as many feminists did at the time, but asked for the recognition of female sexuality, a taboo in Iranian society. Her poetic persona invites the reader, “Come closer / now, / and listen / to love’s restless rhythm / spreading like the tom-tom of African drums / through the hoah-hoah of my tribal limbs” (Farrokhzad 2007, 43). This metaphor of love constructs it as an unstoppable beat which moves up-tempo, contaminating people with life as the sexual energy warning of the approaching wave of change and revolution. Succeeding in its spread, love becomes a beacon of hope against the predominant melancholy and depression in Iranian society, a theme that almost monopolized the *zeitgeist* of the 1950s and early 1960s.

Perhaps her most controversial poem, “Sin” (*gunah*) captures this affirming expression of love desires amidst a mixture of pain and guilt: “I have sinned a rapturous sin / in a warm enflamed embrace, / sinned in a pair of vindictive arms, / arms violent and ablaze” (Farrokhzad 2007, 3). Instead of repenting for committing adultery, a crime punishable with death for Iranian women, “for Forough, feminine love and desires become the meaning of sin and the concept of disobedience”, with her pleasurable sin illustrating a path toward subjectivity, a desire which she will develop more in her later poems (Vali-Zadeh 2021, 114). In this framework, enjoyment appears as a libidinal, carnal force that transforms the social order by stopping being a restricted affective domain for Iranian women, instead turning into one of their desires’ aims. According to Milani (2011, 132), [i]nstead of expressing self-denial, instead of agonizing about sexual repression, she gives voice to her bewilderment in the grip of physical desire and the consummation of her passion”. Even if not wholly reachable, the *jouissance* Forugh attains by transgressing the patriarchal symbolic order in which she is located, by sinning a “rapturous sin”, ruptures the prevalent political motif that determined her seclusion, silence, and disappearance from the public.

As the scapegoats of Iranian society at the time, Iranian women who defied men and their male-based system "embody at once all social ills", despite the façade of this only applying to the *gharbzadeh* (Najmabadi 1991, 65). In their aspiring liberation, they become the culprits of the cultural decay that dominated the collective imagination of so many Iranian intellectuals, hurdles for Iranian males *to enjoy* their positions as subjects, humans, and members of the glorious fantasy of an Iranian nation. Farrokhzad enjoying her desires, her sexuality, her love affairs, her subjectivity, and her humanity configures an Iranian nation in which these are accounted for and women's liberation from patriarchal rule is not equated to capitulating to Western modernity, committing heresy against Islam and, ultimately, impeding men's enjoyment.

This imagination ties in with the maturing process Farrokhzad's poetry endured, leaving the more confessional style of her first two collections and intervening more directly in what she identified as pervasive social, political, and cultural problems in Iran during the 1960s (Ghasemi and Pourgiv 2010, 767–69). Upon returning from Europe, she recounts that "[f]aces among the creases of *chadors* / were like spirits in shackles" and that "[a]las, my city [Tehran] was the boneyard of my dreams", again in a display of strangeness towards her nation that orients her to a transnational poetics (Farrokhzad 2007, 18, 20). In this scene, Iranian women's plight for freedom and liberation assumes center stage:

> Only you, O Iranian woman, have remained
> In bonds of wretchedness, misfortune, and cruelty;
> If you want these bonds broken,
> grasp the skirt of obstinacy.
>
> Do not relent because of pleasing promises,
> never submit to tyranny;
> become a flood of anger, hate and pain,
> excise the heavy stone of cruelty.
>
> It is your warm embracing bosom
> that nurtures proud and pompous man;
> it is your joyous smile that bestows
> on his heart warmth and vigor.
>
> For that person who is your creation,
> to enjoy preference and superiority is shameful;

woman, take action because a world
awaits and is in tune with you. (quoted in Hillmann 1990, 151)

For Vijay Prashad (2007, 78), there is here "the basic structure of the national liberation story", in which Farrokhzad praises women for their struggles, condemns the patriarchy, which does not recognize them as the creators of the world, and calls for rebellion and the foundation of a new order. However, this same national liberation model usually turns women into hostages of its nationalism, as they "bear the burden of being 'mothers of the nation' […], as well as being those who reproduce the boundaries of ethnic/national groups, who transmit the culture and who are the privileged signifiers of national difference" (Kandiyoti 1991, 429). As Abu-Lughod (1998, 4) remarks, "[…] wherever nationalist movements sought to shape new nations, marks were left on gender ideals and possibilities", something visible in both Pahlavi's and Al-e Ahmad's and Shariati's projects on women. In another piece entitled "To My Sister", Farrokhzad continues her rallying cry against such patriarchal agendas:

Sister, rise up after your freedom,
why are you quiet?
Rise up because henceforth
you have to imbibe the blood of tyrannical men.

Seek your rights, Sister,
from those who keep you weak,
from those whose myriad tricks and schemes
keep you seated in a corner of the house.

How long will you be the object of pleasure
In the harem of men's lust?
How long will you bow your proud head at his feet
like a benighted servant? (quoted in Hillmann 1990, 152)

Taken together, these two poems are direct expressions of Farrokhzad acting against the prevailing male-dominated system by stating Iranian women as subjects of their own life their own world, not as mere "objects of pleasure" as the shah, and countless others, would prefer with his "beautiful", "graceful" and "feminine" women. Not only that, when evoking the images of excising "the heavy stone of cruelty" and imbibing "the blood of tyrannical men", she proclaims the "cruel" and "bloodthirsty" figure present in his abovementioned interview as nothing more than an illusion and nightmare of a misogynistic and authoritarian man who could not stand women that stand up from their secluded corner of the house. Moreover, in this rising-up movement, there is a rupture of *sharm*, with Iranian women claiming their voice not through grief or embarrassment but by becoming “a flood of anger, hate and pain” which unsettles that affective atmosphere that condemned them to the position of voiceless, dehumanized objects. Thus, Farrokhzad articulates her national liberation story in such a way that women are integral subjects and agents of the revolutionary process, “writing revolution as if women mattered” (Sohrabi 2022), something Iranian historiography, in its obsession with 1979, has continuously avoided, although with some notable exceptions[31] (Moradian 2021; Sohrabi 2018; Najmabadi 2014; Sedghi 2007).

In her last two collections, Farrokhzad engages with the issue of modernity more attentively, expanding her thematic scope to address critiques of intellectuals, the government, and nationalism. The poem “O Bejeweled Realm”, whose title is based on a Pahlavi national anthem, exposes her irony towards the supposed blessings of modernity the monarchy actively promoted by recounting one’s identification process:

> Victory!
> Got myself registered.
> Decorated an ID card with my name and face,
> and my existence took on a number.
> So, long live number 678, precinct 5, Tehran.
>
> No more worries, now I can relax
> in my motherland’s bosom,
> suckle on our past glory,
> lulled by lullabies of progress and culture
> and the jingle jangle of the laws’ rattle.
> Ah yes, no more worries…
>
> [...]
>
> From tomorrow on, I can stroll in the city streets
> overflowing with nationalistic love,
> walk among lampposts’ weightless shadows,
> and on the walls of public toilets pen with pride 678 times:
> I WRITE THIS TO DARE JACKASSES TO LAUGH.

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[31] Based on David Scott (2004), Sohrabi (2018) connects the trend in Iranian historiography of framing the 1978/79 revolution in terms of failures and successes, usually attributing the first to leftist secular groups and the second to the Islamist forces, to the similar pattern existent in anticolonial literature, in which Third Worldist movements, for instance, are analyzed according to a presentist perspective that disregards the contingent nature of many of these anticolonial struggles.

[…]

From tomorrow on, I can snort a few grams
of a first-rate product in Khachick's backroom,
consume a few glasses of impure Pepsi,
and after a few *Ya Allahs, Hallelujahs,*
whoofs whoofs, and *moo moos*,
officially join the ranks of high-minded literati,
intelligentsia's cream of the crop, and the followers
oompah oompah school; and my first masterpiece novel
will be officially printed by a bankrupt press
some time in the Tabrizi Solar Year 1678 –
the plot noted on both sides of 678 packets
of Genuine Quality Oshnu cigarettes. (Farrokhzad 2007, 73, 75–76)

Farrokhzad mocks seemingly modernized Iranian intellectuals by attributing to them, as extensions of the regime's narrative, a false national consciousness that dominated the ever-changing Iran of the 1960s. An ID card becomes a statement of independence, freedom and, ultimately, subjectivity, and the membership symbol for integrating the Iranian nation with whose glorious past and progressive culture one can now identify. Now, one can fully rejoice in their complete national identification, enabled to enjoy "nationalistic love" unconcernedly. Nevertheless, as Hillmann (1987, 52) remarks, "[w]hat the speaker means is that her worries have just begun", illusioned by the ID card's fake sense of security in a hostile cultural environment. Relating this eluding feeling to Westernized modernity, Farrokhzad alludes to the incongruency between the supposedly modern Pahlavi regime's fleeting promises and the violent underside of social conventions, traditions and hierarchies that barred Iranian society's many segments from attaining identity, sovereignty, and humanity. Rather than her existence "taking a number", Farrokhzad experienced a life of captivity, with her oeuvre capable of being read as "a prison memoir" for Milani (2011, 149), and of reprimands when manifesting her anxious desire for freedom, subverting the pledges a social security number was to fulfill in the poem. Segregated from the nation of a self-centred monarch who despised free-willed women and from male intellectuals who were complicit in not liberating these from such oppressive order, Farrokhzad longed for the love that would create an alternative world:

When my trust hung from the feeble rope of justice,
and the whole city tore my lamps' hearts to shreds,
when love's innocent eyes were bound

with the dark kerchief of law, and blood gushed
from my dreams' unglued temples,
when my life was no longer anything,
nothing at all except the tick tick of a clock on the wall,
I understood that I must, must, must
deliriously love. (Farrokhzad 2007, 97–98)

Farrokhzad transformed the Persian literary canon to accommodate her transgressive oeuvre, a remarkable feat considering the dichotomous views concerning her figure and the role of gender in excluding women from such (Pishbin 2017). Yet, she also contested the nation-state to accommodate her as a subject, human, and actor, stretching its limits by promoting the liberating practice of love. Farrokhzad's modernism implicates a transnational collage of images, rhythms, and texts not restricted to an Iranian domain, with African drums and Pepsi appearing in her movement against the defacement of her voice and figure as an Iranian woman. She articulates an affective economy that disrupts the illusion of complete identification, of a pre-determined gender role fixing her in the positions of mother, wife, and daughter, questioning the Pahlavi discourse of no worries when becoming modern. In a moment of intense misogynistic hatred in Iran, she subverted the identity of the *gharbzadeh* woman to expose the cruel hypocrisy of Iranian society, for whom Farrokhzad's love affairs ("sins") mattered more than reading what she was writing with so much pain and suffering. Fundamentally, her poetry articulated a world "in tune" with women and their desires and sexuality, tropes that have remained alive in Iran ever since.

4.4
Conclusion

Forugh Farrokhzad defies easy categorization. In the previous chapter, though both similarly cannot be ascribed to one restricted realm, I attempted to argue in favour of setting Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati in an anticolonial, Third Worldist network, much against the one-dimensional Islamist framing the Islamic Republic has advanced. For this one, perhaps the somewhat intuitive path would have been to advocate her as a pioneer feminist and someone attentive to gender politics and women's rights struggles. Still, not even her feminist credentials are that straightforward, with her feminist leanings being constantly punctured by the overwhelming grief she felt for not being able to conform to what was socially expected of her as a wife, a mother, and, ultimately, a woman. As Talattof (2010, 95) points out, "Farrokhzad adheres to the traditional notion that a woman should sacrifice herself for her love – that is, a man". Even as she expanded the love notion in a liberatory framework, she still subscribed to an ideal of passionate, romantic love, which haunted her trajectory. For Milani (2011, 153), her work is a double metaphor for "a moment in the history of her nation that reflects the tensions and crises as well as the triumphs and joys that she faced as an individual". Therefore, this chapter claimed that Farrokhzad exerted her radical force in this subliminal space of ambiguity, contradiction, and transgression, making her message particularly appealing to a public in a dynamic and multifaceted changing process.

Latent in her poetry, modernity surfaces as an indirect theme for Farrokhzad. At the same time that she subverts classical Persian poetry to a series of modernist practices, like free verse, she mobilizes direct discourses against the Westernized modern national identity the Pahlavis were actively promoting, for whom women's liberation did not matter. Her imagination does not fit the alternative models proposed by her compatriots, such as Al-e Ahmad and Shariati, who were preoccupied with pushing the boundaries of nationalism for decolonization. In a scene of intense debate on cultural imperialism, Farrokhzad's oeuvre explicitly questioned the gendered grammar of nationalism, anticolonial or otherwise, and modernity, as the Iranian nation that was projected into her throughout all her life could not accept her desires, sexuality, enjoyment, and freedom as a subject and a human. Whether through *gharbzadegi* or Pahlavi women's rights policies, she was an outcast, exiled from her own home of social rules and moral conventions while asking to be heard. With her rallying cry not being defined by her experience as an Iranian, Farrokhzad advanced a transnational poetics of love in response to this hostile environment. In this sense, she also radically questioned the limits of nationalism, though not integrating an infrastructure of anticolonial connectivity, the anticolonial label being a rather farfetched move toward her figure. Her transgressive politics inspired anti-establishment movements in Iran, as she exposed women's central yet repressed position in Iranian society. As the Iranian political activist and prisoner Bahareh Hedayat (2023) wrote regarding the recent wave of protests in Iran, for which women and gender are central themes, “revolution is inevitable”, and Forugh Farrokhzad cast a light that wrote women into the revolutionary process.

5
Conclusion: reading the affective afterlives of crushed hopes

This thesis told the tales of unfinished projects. Avoiding the spectre of the 1978/79 revolution proved to be a daunting task, but I would like to finish on a different note. The reading of Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati, and Forugh Farrokhzad I developed here intended, in its own sort of way, to present glimpses of a highly complex and dynamic affective atmosphere, whose legacy, as much as the Islamic Republic tries to hide it, still lives on in Iran. Contrary to dichotomous views that frame it as a conglomerate of dispersed chants of "death to America" and "hail to the *mullahs*", Iranian politics has been punctured by moments of intense struggle against imperial pressure and colonial violence. In privileging one of these, the 1953-1979 period, I tried to present a picture of the transversal networks and alternative projects articulated at a time of Third World solidary and anticolonial connectivity, advocating the importance of Iranian contributions for this framework. Hence, the emphasis on, or choice for, radical imaginations of modernity means to incite a reflection not on their supposed failures but on the afterlives that lived on in post-revolutionary resistance movements such as the one we are seeing today.

Though challenging, I tried not to read Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati as unavoidable precursors of the revolutionary process that succeeded them, instead interpreting their interventions contingently. However, in my perhaps futile attempt to somehow get rid of this phantom, another one emerged to take its place: Frantz Fanon. Through his perspective on the "trials and tribulations of national consciousness", Fanon (2004) became almost a hegemonic presence, floating over my discussion of the alternative national imaginations of Al-e Ahmad and Shariati. While his insights were crucial for analyzing the limits and possibilities of anticolonial nationalism in the Iranian context, I believe that I ended up "fetishizing translocality", to use Sajed's terms (2022, 2), to a certain degree in my employment of Fanonian theorization. It seems that, in attempting to keep a distance from 1979 and the narratives of anticolonial failures, I subscribed to another set of precepts around which my "horizon of identifiable stakes" hanged (Scott 2004, 4), those of the present postcolonial debate on anticolonial connectivity and Third Worldism

(Sajed 2016; 2019a; Sajed and Seidel 2019; Gani 2019; 2022; Gruffydd Jones 2022).

Considering this thesis retrospectively, this tendency looms over particularly chapter 3. As I mentioned earlier, neither Al-e Ahmad nor Shariati was interested in going beyond the nation-state model, with their projects challenging the Eurocentric and Westernized modernity of the Pahlavi dynasty and, in this process, articulating alternative visions for the Iranian nation. Even by considering the transnational influences Shariati cultivated through his spiritual framing of the *ummah* and contacts with Fanon, Césaire, and Nyerere, for instance, he did not succeed in actualizing the future he aspired to in such a relational way, his discourse of "returning to self" becoming betrothed to fantasies of past national glories. Al-e Ahmad suffered from the same fate, as *gharbzadegi*, despite its secular critique of modernization resembling other intellectual trends of the Third World, such as dependency theory, failed to generate great appeal for other anticolonial movements and vice-versa (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2021). As Sadeghi-Boroujerdi (2022b, 3) points out,

> [t]heir [Al-e Ahmad's and Shariati's] postcolonial visions for the future […] remained for the most part indeterminate and unspecified, and even when broadly defined, vacillated between messianic deferral (or sometimes, messiah as Kantian regulative idea) or continued reliance on more familiar repertories and forms of political voluntarism, mobilization, and organization e.g., democratic centralism, the kibbutz, guided democracy, among others.

Therefore, looking at instances of translocality in their discourses exerted a force that pushed me away from seeing that "what was actually possible" for both did not fundamentally entail instantiating a translocal understanding of modernity, despite both collecting influences from a transnational network of struggles and movements.

In the case of Forugh Farrokhzad, her distance from anticolonial movements and intellectuals precluded the possibility of thinking about her alternative perspective in the same manner as in the previous chapter. Her rethinking of the Iranian nation-state did not involve questioning the nation-state model *per se* but rather included a non-Eurocentric perspective of Iranianness that traverses her poetry through cross-cultural images, metaphors, and rhythms. In this chapter, Fanon's figure emerges in the masculinist framework of national liberation

Farrokhzad tried to reframe. Farrokhzad's transnational poetics showed a particular desire for transcendence, as her last two collections showed by connecting her poetic persona to nature: "I plant my hands in the garden soil – / I will sprout, / I know, I know, I know. / And in the hollow of my ink-stained palms / swallows will make their nest" (Farrokhzad 2007, 80). Nevertheless, her wish to transcend referred to changing the traditions and conventions she had to endure as an Iranian woman, especially by mobilizing love, "the birth cradle of another Christ" (Farrokhzad 2007, 45). It did not encompass going beyond the nation-state model, as the overwhelming grief (*sharm*) she faced throughout her life kept her attached to some of the same structures she aimed to transgress, including the Iranian nationalism that hid her voice, sexuality, and desire.

The overarching problem this thesis tried to address was how the nation-state persisted as an object of identification with such appeal in international politics during the decolonization and national liberation moment of the 1960s and 1970s in the Third World. I approached this question by establishing a theoretical dialogue between two figures that hover over two distinct realms of psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan in what became known as the Lacanian Left, and Frantz Fanon pioneering what we might call postcolonial psychoanalysis, contradictory as it seems. Fanon and Lacan provided ways of thinking, understanding, and theorizing the nation and the processes that sustain it as a major structuring force in international relations. By suffusing one's insights into another's, I attempted to engage in a conversation that, I contend, is important for discussing the critical usage of nationalism by anticolonial movements, intellectuals and activists, Fanon included. The nation's Eurocentrism is usually remarked as one prevailing straitjacket for their emancipatory and liberation potential (Sajed 2022, 2; Sajed and Seidel 2019). Similarly, disentangling and disattaching their struggle from its pervasive appeal as an identification object filled with affects, desires, fantasies, and enjoyment is difficult, to say the least. Taken together, these two considerations provided a framework to grasp the actual facticity of promises of alternatives to the nation.

For Fanon, the paradox of anticolonial nationalism, as part and parcel of a modernist teleology, and simultaneously its reformulation from different bases (Sajed 2016, 509), incites an opening to be taken and reworked towards "a more sustainable intellectual foundation to anticolonialism" (Gani 2019, 657), national consciousness. Nevertheless, for such a move to occur, the colonized would have to traverse such symbolic order with distance from the categories, hierarchies, languages, and signifiers violently made to interpellate and submit them at the deepest hell of non-beingness and the real of non-subjectivity. It is here that Lacan enters by viewing this identification, or non-identification, process as being enmeshed in, pushed forward by desire, fantasy, and jouissance. This framework sustained this thesis alongside the method of emotional discourse analysis, which looked at the affective work of discourse through figures of speech, in particular metaphors, and the concept of affective economies (Ahmed 2014).

In chapters 3 and 4, the modern nation-state is reproduced through the specific work of certain emotions through discourse, canalizing hopes and nightmares towards the articulation of certain objects, signifiers, and subjects. *Gharbzadegi* pathologizes the Iranian nation by framing it as a wounded, culturally sick collectivity, whose experience of suffering under the hands of imperial powers, such as the UK and the US, serves as the underlying material upon which an anticolonial subjectivity should emerge. Al-e Ahmad picks up the diffuse affective atmosphere of early 1960s Iran, in which feelings of national shame, embarrassment, and grief were prevalent, and channels it to a distinct emotional category, pain. This embodied experience then forms the national body's bonds from the feelings of injury and sickness that circumscribe its subjects. As mentioned, Al-e Ahmad's perspective rethinks modernity but does not try to push beyond its underlying structures, including the nation-state.

Shariati, on the other hand, aspired to the universalism of the *ummah* with a utopian imaginary deeply embedded in a movement of Islamic revivalism. He proposed a spiritual subjectivity that longed for the divine out of the pain of the Iranian nation under the Pahlavi monarchy but turned out trapped in the limits of his utopia. Shi'i Islam became a rallying cry for Shariati's anticolonial struggle, which amassed popular support while failing to live up to its intended revolutionary potential. Religion and spirituality are taken as foundational to his alternative modernity, a move that questions nationalism's Eurocentrism. Yet, the nation-state model persists by enclosing the space for difference when Shariati relies on pain to call for Third World solidarity, an emotional experience with various forms, repercussions, and articulations in such a realm of profound colonial violence.

Intended to simultaneously show some of the limits of the previous projects and present the uniqueness of her radical imagination in the same Iranian context, Farrokhzad's life and oeuvre perhaps were the perfect embodiment of Iran's "anticolonial modernity" and its set of blessings and anguishes (Dabashi 2007, 25). Her transgressive poetry made the Pahlavis tremble and challenged an Iranian society which had cast her aside, deemed as a promiscuous, sinful, and problematic woman or simply a *gharbzadeh*. Inhabiting a space of ambiguity, in which her desires, sexuality, and enjoyment cohabited with her underlying grief for expressing them, she longed for the love she did not have and perhaps would never have due to its fantastical idealization. Farrokhzad's contradictory figure longed for an Iranian nation that accounted for her subjectivity, aiming to create space for women in the restricted national body. In this sense, the enduring spectre of *sharm* was one of the affective forces that kept Farrokhzad attached to the exact nationalism she aguishly desired to transgress and transcend, despite her transnational poetics of love unsettling its undifferentiated framework.

These three intellectuals embodied the hopes and grievances of their time, with their emancipatory horizons always punctured by structural constraints, including affective, emotional, and libidinal ones. When I started this thesis, I longed for the successes their projects had, being blinded by a preoccupation with their absence in global histories of anticolonial, national liberation, and radical struggles. Now, I see that their value resided in how each occupied a different field of possibilities by being contradictory, ambiguous, contingent, and ambivalent. Framing Al-e Ahmad's *gharbzadegi*, Shariati's spiritual modernity, and Farrokhzad's transnational poetics as stories of success or failure eludes us into thinking that their movements stopped their courses once they performed some change or were defeated, such as during the 1979 revolution. However, when I said at this section's opening that they were unfinished stories, I meant that their afterlives continue to live on in the form of crushed hopes, borrowing the term from Naeem Inayatullah (2018). The transgressive spirit of Farrokhzad keeps guiding feminist protests in Iran, as the shortcomings of Shariati and Al-e Ahmad, usually epitomized in the creation of the Islamic Republic, teach us about the pitfalls in which their discourses had fallen.

6
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