

Metaphors of Mental Unrest: Making Subjectivity and Resistance in Modern Iranian Film and Fiction

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Abstract

As a creative literary technique, metaphor has found a place in modern Iranian literature as a form of expression against censorship. The purpose of this article is to examine the metaphorical uses of mental restlessness, mental discomfort, and illness with examples from modern Iranian literature. Examples to be examined in this context are Dariush Mehrjui's movie *The Cow (Gav, 1969)*, Simin Daneshvar's novel *Sūvashūn (A Persian Requiem, 1969)*, and Mahmoud Dowlatabadi's *The Colonel (Zaval-e Kolonel, 2011)*. The main uses of metaphors in these artistic productions are subsequently to reflect on a national allegory of poverty and injustice, failing modernization and, critique of admiration for the West, which Jalal Al-i Ahmad defines as *gharbzadagi*, and finally, Iranian nation's alienation, disenchantment, and disappointment as failing revolutionaries. The common theme of the metaphors is through the trope of illness, unrest, or existential crisis such as malnutrition, typhus, mania, depression, psychosis, and posttraumatic stress disorder. The use of metaphors of mental illness does not only bypass censorship. Thanks to the creative direction of metaphors, authors can also experimentally test the limits of representation of the political dissident and unrepresentable such as fear, mental metamorphosis, and madness. The main discussions are how these narratives develop the themes of

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subjectivity, determining the classes as governable or not, and literary articulations of resistance both to censorship and resistance to one's existential crisis. While the narratives elaborate on subjectivity and resistance, they deconstruct the ideas of the human question, westernization, and martyrdom of the Sacred Defense literature (*adabiyat-e defa'-e moqaddas*) as well as fallible ideologies appearing as a result of failing revolutionaries who are tortured and traumatized.

Keywords: Iranian literature, metaphors of illness, trauma, resistance, subjectivity.

Zihinsel Huzursuzluğun Metaforları: Modern İran Filmi ve Kurgusunda Öznellik ve Direniş

Öz

Yaratıcı bir edebi teknik olarak metafor, modern İran edebiyatında sansüre karşı bir ifade biçimi olarak yer bulmuştur. Bu makalenin amacı ise zihinsel huzursuzluk, zihinsel rahatsızlık ve hastalığın metaforik kullanımlarını modern İran edebiyatından örneklerle incelemektir. Bu bağlamda incelenecek örnekler Dariush Mehrjui'nin 1969 yapımı filmi *Gav*, yine aynı yıl yazılan Simin Danişver'in *Sūvashūn* romanı ile Mahmut Devletabadi'nin *Zaval-e Kolonel* isimli romanıdır. Bu sanatsal yapıtlarda metaforun temel kullanımları, sırasıyla ulusal bir yoksulluk ve adaletsizlik alegorisi, başarısız modernleşme ve Celal Al-i Ahmed'in *gharbzadagi* olarak tanımladığı Batı hayranlığı eleştirisi ve son olarak İran ulusunun yabancılaşması ve yanılan devrimciler olarak hayal kırıklıklarının ifade edilmesi olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Metaforların ortak teması, yetersiz beslenme, tifüs, mani, depresyon, psikoz ve travma sonrası stres bozukluğu gibi hastalık, huzursuzluk ya da varoluşsal krizlerdir. Zihinsel rahatsızlık metaforu sadece sansürü atlatmakla kalmaz. Yaratıcı yönleri sayesinde metaforlar, yazarların politik muhalifliğin temsili ya da korku, metamorfoz ve akıl yitimi gibi temsil edilmesi zor durumları yazınsal olarak test edebilirler. Ana tartışmalar, bu anlatıların öznellik temalarını nasıl geliştirdiği, sınıfların yönetilebilir olup olmadığının belirlenmesi ve hem sansüre hem de varoluşsal krize karşı direnişin edebi ifadeleridir. Anlatılar kimlik ve direnişe odaklanırken insan sorusu, Batılılaşma ve şehitlik gibi fikirlerin yanısıra işkence gören ve travmatize edilen yanılmış devrimcilerin yanılabilir ideolojilerini de yapıbozuma uğrattırıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İran edebiyatı, hastalık metaforları, travma, direniş, kimlik.

In *Words not Swords: Iranian Women Writers and the Freedom of Movement*, Farzaneh Milani (2011) writes about an interview in which Simin Daneshvar, one of the prominent writers of Iran, once said: “Let Simone de Beauvoir come and live for a year the life I live here and if she can still produce one line of writing I’ll change my name” (p.184). While Daneshvar’s articulation suggests the hardships of living in Iran as a woman, she reflects on a self-determinant and resistant creativity. She presents the idea that people experience the reality of life differently in various parts of the world. While the Iranian authors experienced censorship and control, they came up with creative pathways to revolt against rules and boundaries. For example, during those early years of the Islamic Republic, authors such as Goli Taraghi, a critical novelist, moved to France and wrote about mental illness and depression, which is rare in the Iranian literature of her time. Taraghi stated that she was recovered thanks to the literature, which helped her to make a “rope of words” so that she pulled herself from the “depth of darkness” (Milani, 2011, p.183). Her emergence as a literary success was not unique, and many Iranian women emerged as literary figures in the post-revolutionary era thanks to their imperative to tell what dissent is.

This imperative to represent the dissident voice is also available in the prerevolutionary eras in Iran. To make an analysis and comparison of how the literature of resistance worked in Iranian literature, an example from prerevolutionary cinematic representation, *The Cow (Gav)*, 1969 by Dariush Mehrjui, a novel, *Sūvashūn (A Persian Requiem)*, 1969 by Simin Daneshvar, and finally a narrative in the post-revolutionary period, *The Colonel (Zaval-e Kolonel)*, 2009 by Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, will be discussed. What is common to these artistic creations is that they employ *metaphors of illness* to express what is not expressible because of censorship by the state. However, the use of metaphors is not only a creative resistance to censorship. Authors use it also to represent one’s resistance to existential unrests such as Dowlatabadi’s *The Colonel*, in which the characters suffer from disappointment, fear, and violence, thus becoming an image for the disappointed society. In other words, the family in the novel is an analogy of the Iranian society after the Islamic Revolution.

To reflect on the changes that the Iranian revolution experienced after the revolution and the colonization of Iran before the revolution, literary figures use the metaphor as a literary technique to avoid being censored by the state¹. One reason for choosing pre and post-revolutionary novels and a movie is to develop the idea of the importance of metaphor for Iranian literature and textuality independently from the timeline when the works were produced and their genres in which they were created. Metaphor itself is a manner of existence for the Iranian artistic creation. In *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, Hamid Dabashi's (2001) discussion of metaphor reveals that Iranian creativity employs metaphor to explain reality and their identities. The poetics of the metaphor have always been a way of making politics and making of everyday life in Iran, according to Fatemeh Shams (2021) in her *A Revolution in Rhyme: Poetic Co-option Under the Islamic Republic*. While authors such as Mahmoud Dowlatabadi defined the terms of aesthetics of sociality and politics in the post-revolutionary era, writings by the authors of the era from the 1950s to 1970s such as Simin Daneshvar, Forough Farrokhzad, and Sadeq Hedayat and the filmmaker Dariush Mehrjui used aesthetic apparatuses to critically engage in Iran's belated modernity. The common theme through which the metaphors in the works of these authors function is mental sickness and unrest because their works tell the stories of traumatized people who suffer from physical and mental symptoms.

¹ In terms of creating an analogy of the Iranian society, Shahrnush Parsipur's *Women Without Men* (Zanan Bedoone Mardan, 1989) is a similar novel with Dowlatabadi's (2011) *The Colonel*. Parsipur's aesthetic mode in the novel embeds the conflictive and chaotic atmosphere of the post-revolutionary society to the language of the text which distorts the sequence of time, reason, and space while narrating the "unexpected" events. In other words, the novel sheds light on the unexpectedness of the revolution and its impacts while embodying the unbelievability of this unexpectedness to the tone of the text thanks to the magical realism as a mode of its aesthetics. It is not surprising to realize the proximity between the terms "magical" and "unexpected" from this statement, which is a clear indication of the novel's dedication to the atmosphere of ambiguity in the post-revolutionary Iranian society as an existential issue. What is unexpected of course is both the attributions to the revolution, which implies radical political changes, their outcomes, and the sense of ambiguity that emerge as a result of these radical changes that Iranian society did not anticipate for.

Metaphors of illness or mental unrest play several important roles in representing the themes subjected to censorship and deconstructing the dominant ideologies' ossified ideas. For example, the Sacred Defense literature (*adabiyat-e defa'-e moqaddas*) in Iran, the official narratives of war fiction supported by governmental organizations, creates a recasting of martyrdom of Imam Hussein in Karbala through the Islamist revolutionaries fighting at the fronts during the Iran-Iraq War. However, the postwar representations in literature diverged from the Sacred Defense culture (Bajoghli and Moosavi, 2018, p.74). The authors such as Mahmoud Dowlatabadi who is not governmentally supported and has a novella allowed to be published in Iran only in a foreign language but not in Persian, created examples of such divergent literature or literature of resistance to the Islamic Republic's monolithic ideology of war. Dowlatabadi's (2011) novel *The Colonel* in this sense deconstructs the idea of modern-day martyrdom through the themes of grief, mourning, and traumatic experience. In terms of content and form of representation through different figures of speech, *The Colonel* diverges from the sacred narrative of the martyrdom, emphasizing heroism and reperforming of the Karbala Battle. From this point, Dowlatabadi's novel "desacralizes" what is determined to be sacred by Iranian politics (Moosavi, 2020).

This article discusses and does a close reading of the works by Daneshvar, Mehrjui, and Dowlatabadi together for arguing how the metaphor of sickness is a resistance against the suppressive state because sickness as a theme blurs the narrative. All three works share in common that they employ the theme of sickness to make social and political critiques in similar ways, although they were textually created in different eras such as pre and post-revolutionary periods. While Mehrjui's work is a movie, it is similar to the novels because it functions its critique through artistic creativity of a realistic depiction but diverges from reality in its contextual narrative. Moreover, these works are eligible to be analyzed together to support the argument of metaphors as a literary resistance because they are the leading narratives of their periods. Daneshvar's realist novel is a leading realist narrative for Iran's literature. At the same time, Dowlatabadi's

modern piece plays with the narrative with its heteroglossic account in a way similar to Mehrjui's movie which diverges from the conventional themes of *filmfarsi* of the time.

Literature, Articulations of Resistance and Making Subjectivity

In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Michel Foucault (1963) writes, “first task of the doctor... is political: the struggle against disease must begin with a war against bad government” (p.33). In *Sūvashūn*, metaphorically speaking, one can understand how the British doctor's rejection of examining the child in Iran is also a rejection of that child's existence as a subject because he is sick and curing him would not contribute to anything. The doctor's behavior reveals that she, as a doctor, is not politically fighting against the colonization of Iran, rather she is one of those who perpetrate the Iranian nation's so-called backwardness. While the knowledge of modernization challenged the Iranian nation during the Pahlavi reign, it was introduced to health discourses such as hygiene, race, and medicine. It is ironic that the Western values, which bring modernization to Iran, reject taking care of a child because he is racially segregated. We need to understand the failing modernization in Iran through the medical improvements of the era because they were very important for the region at that time.

In “From Jinns to Germs: A Genealogy of Pasteurian Islam”, Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi (2015) discusses that the modernization process during the Pahlavi reign was medicalized. When the Constitutional Revolution in Iran took place, one of the main debates was Iran's public health reformation. While modernization created urban spaces where women and men come together, Shi'a clerics defined modernization as “social ills, pains and corruption” (*bimari-ha-yi ijtimai'i*, *dard hā -ye ijtimai'i*, and *fisad-i ijtimai'i*) as Tavakoli-Targhi notes (Elahi, 2018, p.20). For that reason, Iranian intellectuals were perplexed by the metaphors of illness. Metaphors, for Iranian intellectuals, were useful for bypassing the “modern regimes of censorship” as “creative misdirection” according to Kam-

ran Talattof (2000), which is clearly stated in *The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature*.

Babak Elahi divides metaphors of illnesses in Iranian fiction into three categories to define the creative misdirection suggested by Talattof. The first category of metaphors he writes: "Colonial disease and its nationalist cures. Some writers deploy the metaphor as an (anti) colonial critique of Western imperialism, or an Islamic remedy to 'Western' corruption-the microbial metaphor of foreign infection" (Elahi, 2018, p.21). The second use of metaphor is to reflect on an existential crisis. Sadegh Hidayat's *Blind Owl (Boof-e Koor, 1936)* is an example of such a use of metaphor to define Iranians' existential condition. The third use of metaphor in Iranian literature is almost experimental because it is deconstructive, and the authors test its limits. Elahi's analysis of Forough Farrokhzad's short film *The House is Black (Khaneh Siah Ast, 1962)* indicates how the short film is an example of deconstructing the metaphor of illness. He asserts that Farrokhzad's short movie cannot be degraded to an allegory of oppressed Iranian society because it spatializes the illness at every level and rejects offering a solution, rather it reveals the state mechanisms which divide people into categories such as governable, classifiable, or not.

To discuss the uses of metaphor in Iranian literature and its importance for representation in a repressive atmosphere, Farzaneh Milani (1985) writes about Simin Daneshvar's use of metaphors created by the dialectical discourses:

In Daneshvar's fictive world, as in her society, a disturbing disjunction between public and private. Wall surrounding houses, an overabundance of keys both metaphorical and factual, chadors covering women, ritualistic modes of discourse, separate quarters within the house, and imposed silences, among others, all reinforce the separation for the private from the public. Perhaps this system of closing in space is a behavior that has evolved over centuries of living in a state of terror in an uncontrollably repressive environment (p.337).

The dialectical discourse and its representation as private and public are similar to the relationship between the national and the foreigner. While Iran's modernization is made publicly and foreign,

its repressed voice is depicted through the houses with big gardens surrounded by the walls where family members come together to discuss their secret ideas. Or, the chadors that cover the bodies and their forced unveiling during the Shah regime are the dilemmas that Iranian modernization was going through during the time when Daneshvar wrote her novel. The private space, while becoming the barrier protecting the subjects such as Zari or Amir, can also be a prison where their mental unrests captivate their minds. In that sense, the metaphors denote the significations of the signs, words, spaces, and even temporality. Masht Hassan's turning into the cow, for instance, is a metaphorical resistance to alienation from what the character possesses as well because the poverty and lack of food turn him into an animal, the opposite of the human in the human/animal binary. However, industrialization and irrational over mechanization in the Iranian society created a counter-transformation because Masht Hassan's madness prevents him from turning into a machine. Moreover, he is a villager, and he does not exist for the state as Parvaneh or Amir do not exist because they produce only dissidence, not compliance with modernization or emerging Islamic intellectual discourse.

Turn of Allegories in Iranian Cinema: Psychosis, Fear of the Other, and the Animal

Dariush Mehrjui's movie *The Cow (Gav, 1969)* is an important example of Iranian cinema in terms of the themes of madness and thinking about the other. When the movie was revealed in 1969, it soon became a groundbreaking influence on the "New Wave Iranian cinema" (1960's and 70's) during the Pahlavi reign. Although it was banned because the movie was feared to contradict Iran's image of a wealthy and modern nation, in 1971, it won the international film critics' award at Venice Film Festival and brought international attention to Iranian cinema. Thanks to its international success, the movie opened the way of governmental support for the New Wave Iranian cinema. The characteristic of the New Wave in Iranian cinema was its emphasis on realism, ordinary people's and village lives unlike *film-*

farsi movies commercialized by the government to approve a modern and Westernized image of Iran, thus creating a counter-cinema movement in the prerevolutionary era. Thanks to its emphasis on ordinary people's lives, the movie was approved by Ayatollah Khomeini and became the forerunner of post-revolutionary Iranian cinema of the humanist genre. Despite its influence on pre and post-revolutionary movie genres, the movie resists any narrow categorization of a genre that limits its surreal story and meaning. For example, in *Masters and Masterpieces of Iranian Cinema*, Hamid Dabashi (2007) criticizes the interpretations of the movie as a political allegory directing at the Pahlavi regime and questions the universal and enduring themes in the movie through its poetic mediations of surrealist elements. However, the movie can be interpreted as a national allegory thanks to its analogical portrayal of the Iranian society, which suffered from poverty and injustice during the Pahlavi reign.

The movie tells the story of the farmer Masht Hassan who is extremely attached to his cow almost in a romantic manner. That cow is also the only source of milk for the village. However, when the cow unknowingly dies, Masht Hassan goes mad and finally believes himself to be his cow. The helpless villagers, who unquestioned presumptions and significations of human question refuse to see the changing grounds of their presumptions, cannot recognize the tragic mental collapse of Masht Hassan. Therefore, on the way to medical help as the final solution to cure him, Masht Hassan dies. The movie begins with a scene in which the village children bully a mentally disabled adult while the others laugh and make fun of the children's torture of that disabled man. This scene is an example of the dehumanization of the disabled because the children paint this man's face in black and physically violate him while making noises similar to an animal's. The scene almost resembles a circus where the animal is staged to entertain the spectator. In that sense, the movie blurs the boundary between human and animal by deconstructing the answer to what a human is. The answer to the human question becomes unclear in the movie's political, psychoanalytical, and philosophical reading especially when Masht Hassan believes himself to be his beloved, dead cow.

The theme of the other appears when the village is threatened by the Boluriha, a group of mysterious people coming out of the village and are not known to the people of the village. This unknown evil group steals from the village's resources such as food, animals, or water. The villagers fear from the Boluriha and perceive them as absolute evil. They paranoically watch for this evil coming to their village. Although the villagers tend to define the Boluriha as a dark force and inhuman being, the movie's scenes show that the Boluriha is nothing more than an armed group of people who plunder the villages. In a sense, the villagers define their existence through excluding, differentiating, and marginalizing the other people who are not from their village. Their definition of the other is through the fear of the other. For that reason, the movie represents an allegory of the Iranian society in the middle 20th century in which the country was devastated by famine and malnutrition, although the British imperialism and its supporters in the country enjoyed the sources almost wastefully.

In *Allegory in Iranian Aesthetics of Poetry and Resistance*, Michelle Langford (2019) writes:

In typical allegorical fashion, *The Cow* tells a story that seems too simple to be taken only on a literal level. The film presents the story of a man, Masht Hassan (Ezzatollah Entezami), and his cow. On a literal level, the cow, being the only one in the village and therefore the source of milk appears as a sign of impoverishment. It has also been read as emblematic of Iran's dependence on oil as its main commodity (p.32).

In this context, the movie deals with many fears such as the fear from the intruder, the foreigner, or the foreign powers because of the fear of losing the cow and hiding it from the Boluriha when Masht Hassan leaves the village and entrusts the cow to the villagers hold a connotative relation between the milk and country's oil resources. Eventually, Masht Hassan finds out about the death of his cow when he comes back from his travel and learns that the villagers tried to hide the death of the cow from him. His mental collapse gets further meanings later. The metaphorical metamorphosis of Masht Hassan

reflects on animorphism, which means infusing humans with animal characteristics. Regarding this, the movie is a critique of what foreshadows the Iranian future and its economic and social impacts on the human condition.

As a movie based on the story *Azādārān-e Bayal* (*The Mourners of Bayal*, 1964) by Gholam-Hossein Saedi, it functions through the techniques that bypass the censorship of the Pahlavi monarchy. Saedi, one of the most important figures of Iranian literature, reflected on his disappointment with the Islamic Revolution in his narratives, and he died of alcohol consumption in 1985. Considering this, the movie politicizes the *psychotic realism* of Saedi's by visualizing his depression and mental collapse through the theme of human and animal. Unlike masters such as Forough Farrokhzad and Abbas Kiarostami's *actual realism* by zooming the camera on the subjects of the movie, as Hamid Dabashi (2012) asserts in *Corpus Anarchicum: Political Protest, Suicidal Violence, and the Making of the Posthuman Body*, Mehrjui's narrative follows the traces of what Theodor Adorno calls "subversion of the content by form" (p.169). By this term, Adorno addresses the form of writing in which the content mocks the form and vice versa. In other words, while the formal elements of the movie present a realistic depiction, the content diverges from the realistic depictions of social life in the movie because the textual reading of the movie suggests a metamorphosis of a human into an animal. According to this definition, Mehrjui emancipates from the hardened ideology of realism by blurring the boundary between the human and animal. The movie's subject becomes an embodied, creative protest against the movie's realistic depiction of the life subjects live through.

Mehrzad Boroujerdi's (1996) book *Iranian Intellectuals and the West* explains how Shah's failing modernism gave rise to clergy's emergence as *organic intellectuals* who hold strong local networks with ideas of politicization of Islam. However, Mehrjui resists to ossification of realism in Iranian movies with critical approaches and creative strategies. Mehrjui's artistic creativity and critical apparatus camouflage resistance in material reality, not within theoretical significations. Such a critical apparatus is observable in Mehrjui's

other masterpiece *Hamoun* (1989) which tells the story of a failing philosopher stuck between the fast-changing ideologies of Western liberalism and theocratic nationalism clashing with the economic, social, and political injustices in the society.

Westoxification or Occidentosis in Simin Daneshvar's *Sūvashūn*

This section relates to the relationship between the metaphor and illness as resistance to suppression. Daneshvar's novel *Sūvashūn* is an example of how the western influence on Iranian society leaves people sick physically and metaphorically. The novel's metaphorical narration of irrational westernization in Iranian society is a critique against foreign intervention and exploitation of Iranian resources because it scrutinizes the dynamics between the Iranian society and the foreign people in the country. While those foreigners benefit from the country's resources abundantly, Iranians are not even able to receive necessary health care systems. In this respect, through the idea of using both physical and mental sickness as means of representing the social and political unrest, the novel discovers the ways in which the narrative becomes a protest and critique.

In *Occidentosis: A Plague From the West*, Jalal Al-i Ahmad (1984) defines Iran's struggle for westernization as an illness similar to cholera or a plague because it sickens everybody in family and society like a plague. He writes:

Occidentosis has two poles or extremes-two ends of one continuum. One pole is the Occident, by which I mean all Europe, Soviet Russia, and North America, the developed and industrialized nations that can use machines to turn raw materials into more complex forms that can be marketed as goods. These raw materials are not only iron ore and oil, or gut, cotton and gum tragacanth; they are also myths, dogmas, music, and the higher worlds. The other pole is Asia and Africa, or the backward, developing or nonindustrial nations that have been made into consumers of Western goods (Al-i Ahmad, 1984, 27).

Occidentosis is the condition of *gharbzadagi* which can be translated as admiration for the West and its values. Al-i Ahmad's

critique of westernization is that the development of the Iranian nation is always considered to be westward. He criticizes society for behaving like the Westerners, dressing like them, or coding the good and the bad according to the rules they rule out. Moreover, mechanization and industrialization leave people in a situation which he calls *māshīn-zadegī* or *mechanosis* (p.122). He uses this term to describe the mechanization of society as a problem of Western civilizations. In his social and anti-colonialist critique, Al-i Ahmad renders Iran's suffering to a set of diagnoses such as an infection from the inside, metaphorical tuberculosis, and cholera. According to him, Iran's existential restlessness is because of the intruders that exploit the economic sources and beliefs and lifestyles. Daneshvar's employment of this theme is that she indicates the symptoms of mechanosis in Iranian society. For example, Yusef and his brother become enemies for political and economic reasons, which Zari believes to result from Western influence on Iranian society.

The use of illness trope is prevalent in Simin Daneshvar's novel *Sūvashūn* (translated as *A Persian Requiem* and published in 1969). In the novel, Daneshvar, one of the most eminent figures of Iranian literature, offers an experience of Iran's modernization process, however, this process is a troubled one because it is failing due to social and economic injustices that the country is going through. The novel depicts Iran in a setting occupied by the Allied Forces in World War II when a typhus outbreak devastated the country, and people suffered from famine. The peasants and the emerging bourgeoisie were mostly affected by the outbreak while the occupying forces, especially the British, enjoyed the sources wastefully such as oil and food. The novel begins with waste in the wedding house and the stress on the waste of food continues to be a subject matter of the novel:

Groups of guests filed into the marriage room just to admire the bread. Zari Khanom and Yusef Khan also managed to see it close up. The minute Yusef set eyes on it, he blurted out loud: 'Those fools! Licking the boots that kick them! And to waste so much at time like this...' (Daneshvar, 1969, p.12).

Zari does not only get anxious about losing her mind. She is also worried because those deprived of sufficient food supplies would lose their minds. For instance, when Zari recalls her conversations with the leftish teacher, Fotuhi, who favors communism for a just society in Iran. At the same time, she is perplexed by what Abolqasem Khan, the brother of Yusef, told her about the backwardness of the Iranian nation and that it is impossible to cure the people with national remedies, rather a western intrusion is necessary for the cure of the country. Regarding the sociopolitical polarization of the characters, the novel fictionalizes historical documentation of an epidemic and its relation to mental illnesses, women's pregnancy, and in the protagonist's case, fear and anxiety.

Zari, the protagonist, is a chronic mourner from the beginning of the narrative. Her story begins with her loss of emerald earrings gifted to her by her mother-in-law when she goes to the wedding ceremony of the governor of the city, Shiraz. She is asked to lend her earrings to the bride; however, she is not given them back. Later, she mourns for the horse of her son which is forcibly taken from him to be gifted to the governor's daughter, for that small kid brought to the farm because he lost his parents because of tuberculosis, and lastly, for the death of her husband who the enemies of him kill because he rejects to sell crops to the British army. Although Zari is the protagonist, her existence and voice are there to observe the sufferings of the others while she neglects her sufferings and falls sick at the end.

Daneshvar's realist narrative is told from a social and political perspective. Her husband, Yusef, opposes the Allied Forces, but when Zari finds out she is pregnant with the fourth child, she gets more cautious and tries to persuade her husband to give up on his resistance. Because she is extremely concerned with her children, Zari gets more paranoid throughout the novel. She, in a sense, gets hypochondriac because she suffers from the fear of mental corruption. Zari's case is a metaphorical representative of the Iranian intellectuals who hold sociopolitical hypochondria because when Zari gets acquainted with the physically sick people, her anxieties dissolve. As the wife of a rich landowner, she realizes that her situation is never worse than those people suffering from tuberculosis or typhoid.

The novel's critical engagement with imperialism in the country reveals the injustices that people suffer. For example, when Zari takes a little child with typhoid to the closest Missionary Hospital, the British doctor Khanom Hakim refuses to examine the child because the hospital is only for foreign soldiers and officers. The same doctor is also the one who operated Zari's cesarean births. Zari remembers how insensitively the doctor behaved when they talked about cancer. While Zari talks about her mother's death from cancer, Khanom Hakim makes a comment on Europe and Hitler likening him to cancer. This moment is ironic because the doctor does not take the responsibility of examining and helping a child who is about to die, but she criticizes Hitler for sickening Europe. It is also interesting that the same doctor makes a rich woman give birth while she refuses to examine the child who has nobody to take care of him. The analogy between Hitler and cancer in the novel also tells about the hypocrisy of the intellectuals who refuse to take a step towards bringing equality and justice to society. The doctor, in this regard, becomes the hypocritical intellectual because she refuses to take the responsibility to cure the child but complains about the political problems in the world. The analogy between Hitler and cancer in the novel also tells about the hypocrisy of the intellectuals who refuse to take a step towards bringing equality and justice to society. The scene depicts the hierarchy even among those who are sick because those chosen to live are privileged while receiving medical treatment.

War, Trauma, and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in *The Colonel* by Mahmoud Dowlatabadi

After discussing the metaphor of sickness as a critique of imperialism, we need to understand how it also contributes to the critique of oppressive governments. As examples from pre and post-revolutionary periods, Daneshvar and Dowlatabadi's novels both use the theme of sickness as a societal reaction rising against oppression. The reason for analyzing the two novels from different eras is to indicate how the theme of sickness is a timeless theme to discuss societal unrest. The artistic employment of the theme sickness carries

a strategic value for the literary creations in the examples from the novels discussed because the metaphorical use of the theme enables the authors to create a censor-free work, especially for those authors such as Dowlatabadi, whose ideas were thought to be dangerous by the newly established government, therefore needed to be censored.

Mahmoud Dowlatabadi is one of the prominent figures of contemporary Iranian literature after the Islamic revolution in 1979. He elaborates on poverty, violence, and injustice to dispossessed groups in his works. During his stay in Tehran after the revolution, he was criticized by diaspora-based authors from Iran. However, when he was detected by the SAVAK police, Shah's secret police, he was told by the police that "the young people who carry his books turn into be provocative and revolutionary". The novel discusses a period shortly after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran under the control of revolutionaries. *The Colonel (Zaval-e Kolonel, 2011)* was first published in Germany and later in the US and UK. The novel is a representation of the revolution in the sense that it embeds unavoidability of violence, sorrow, and mourning for the lost ones because the revolution occurred in a violent environment according to the depictions in the novel.

Moreover, the violence is not only political but also a part of the smallest social groups such as families, which is revealed in the novel when the father kills his wife in an honor killing. The introductory remarks by the translator of the book Tom Patterdale tell us about the title of the book. Patterdale writes that the colonel was the nickname for Mohammad-Taqi Khan Pesyan, a commander trained in Europe during the Shah's reign (p.11). And the father is called colonel as well because he is a retired guard of the Shah. What is more, he names his martyr son after Mohammad-Taqi Khan Pesyan.

The novel's main characters are the father, who is nameless and only called colonel by the people, the dead daughter Parvaneh who is 14 years old and killed for committing crimes against the new state of the Islamic republic. The sons are Amir who is brutally tortured by the Shah's regime and is not able to go out for years and making plans of suicide, and finally, the other older daughter Farzaneh who is married to a violent husband, Qorbani who is making fun of the

colonel and the martyred son who falls dead during the Iran-Iraq war. The narrative begins with a father who has to bury his dead daughter's tortured body at night without any funeral ceremony because she is a political criminal during the early times of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The heteroglossia in the novel is dominant with the diverse utterances of the characters who talk their minds to the reader. The narrative changes the voices from the father to his son, from past to present. The antagonist in the novel is neither the father nor the son, rather the antagonist changes and the viewpoints in the novel shift between the father and the other characters. Although the omniscient narrator makes the reader aware of every aspect of characters in the novel, the theme of sickness creatively appears to reconstruct the whole narrative because the multiple viewpoints reflect the mental instability of the characters. For example, the chapters change the narrators heard when the narration changes from the father's to the son's memories.

While the father struggles with the dead body of his child, we find him in despair and grief for his other children, one of whom is tortured terribly during the Shah's regime, thus living his life at home almost like an exile who the people do not see for years and the other died in the war against Iraq. As readers, we confront the grief and mourning of each character through the stream of their consciousness and the revival of their traumatic memories. All the motifs such as mud, rain, darkness, violence, insanity, and chaos feature the environment of Iran in the 1980s. The characters are failing revolutionaries on the verge of madness because of their silent mourning. For instance, Amir's self-isolation is his mourning for not being able to follow his ideas. They cannot even own their mourning privately because the right to mourn over the dead body belongs to the public as the dead one is a martyr. Mourning, in a sense, becomes the exile of the failing subjects in the novel because the mourners lose their perception of time and space to the degree of losing their rationality because they are entrapped in a life dependent on the pains of the past traumas. Those mourners like Amir who exiled themselves by giving up their lives prefer to isolate themselves and not be seen by others, almost to the degree of being forgotten be-

cause they feel degraded and unsuccessful. The novel resolves into no solution at the end, which suggests the paradoxical atmosphere of the mourning. The more the characters mourn, the more they fail and get far from reality. The shift between their voices can be read as a literary technique of representing the indescribability of grief in the written narrative. The novel experiments on the different ways of representing grief and mourning through the characters' coping style with the grief such as choosing to be invisible, staying silent, or talking about one's grief. What is common for the mourners is that grief exiles them from their souls and deprives them of their sense of reality.

Judith Butler (2004) explains our vulnerability as a result of our existence as intersubjective beings. Because we are dependent on each other, we are affected by the loss of others who are important to us. According to Butler, mourning results from one's feeling missing because of the unexpected and sudden loss that one has no control over (p.22). To overcome mourning and grief does not mean to forget what is lost (p.28). Mourning for somebody or something is also mourning for the sudden change of one's self because one is not the old one before the loss. Therefore, our loss of what is fundamental to ourselves is the main motivation behind the grief. By our nature, we are vulnerable because we are always subjected to the gaze of the other. We cannot preempt the violence against us because it is sudden and unexpected at the beginning. If we become aware of our vulnerability, we might come up with nonviolent solutions. In terms of vulnerability, we have to keep in mind that certain lives are more vulnerable when compared to others, thus increasing the probability of violence amongst the groups (p.20). The later parts of Butler's writing differ from the first parts of her writing in the sense that from a psychoanalytical reading of mourning, she shifts to political critique of the division of the Third and First world countries. She does not believe in such a conception and asserts that our vulnerabilities are international somehow.

Father's initial thoughts about the death of his daughter is political in the sense that he is aware she is degraded: "The colonel was aware that, by giving a coffin and an ambulance, they had shown

him some respect, but he also noticed that the driver could not care less and was driving as if he was delivering meat to the butcher's" (Dowlatabadi, 2011, p.25). The dead body is Parvaneh is degraded to flesh and is not grievable in the regime's eyes. And by not giving her a proper funeral ceremony, the state uses its function of *necropolitics*. According to Achille Mbembe, necropolitics is the politics of how death works. Elaborating on Foucault's definition of biopower, which is the power that defines who has the right to live or die, Mbembe articulates the state's power over the death of the subjects and the power it gains over their dead bodies (2003). The novel's indication of the state's functioning of necropolitics is that Parvaneh is dehumanized in this way and her resistance is wiped out as well as her dignity through her death. We have to keep in mind that Parvaneh is not given a proper tomb, and the state orders her tomb to be unmarked. From this perspective, her existence is not only silenced, rather she is regarded as having never existed and resisted the new regime. To understand better, Butler's question can help: "What is the relation between the violence by which these ungrievable lives were lost and the prohibition on their public grievability?" (2004, 36). The relation is that their depriving a subject of her grievability is denying her voice.

The dehumanization and humiliation of the subjects do not end with Parvaneh's burial, but the public executions of those who come up against the regime continue on different groups in the country. What is contradictory is that public grieving is not allowed, but the public performance of torture and punishment is ritualized. The text offers a scene in which a prisoner is sentenced to death:

The clear intention was to humiliate him. Unseen hand kept pushing his dangling body this way and that, so that it was lit from all sides by the glare of the spotlights. His naked body was just a bag of skin and bones, indicating that he had spent his youth locked up in damp and stinking jail cells. It was hard to see why the authorities were so insistent on publicly disgracing and torturing this man, as the performance did nothing to stop his mother weeping and crying incessantly in Azeri: 'Men evledimi tanimirem, bu menim evledim deyir. Onu mene görsetin!' (Dowlatabadi, 2011, p.213).

Mother's grief is public, and she expresses her pain with lamentations. Unlike Parvaneh's father, the prisoner's mother is made to mourn in public so that her situation would be a menace for those who would think of resisting. As it can be observed through the examples, grief and mourning are personal reactions to traumatic events and the reactions might differ depending on the personality of the mourner. In that sense, there is no single way of one's responding to pain.

Grief appears in other forms as well. For example, the father blames himself for the death of his kids. He mourns for himself as a failing father who caused his children's death.

A young mind hungers for new ideas and, as a father, I had no right to respond to that perfectly reasonable need. What else keeps a nation alive? So why should I blame myself? What else could I have done? Should I have lied to them? I admit, yes, that sometimes I held the truth back from them and sometimes I inculcated things into them... But who can tell what they would have found out on their own? After all, nobody can pull the wool over the eyes of the young. No, I've got nothing to be ashamed of, and I should not allow myself to think that I've let my sons down in any way. Why should such an idea have ever entered my head? My sons, my sons, what have we come to that we have to regret having done the most reasonable thing one could have done? (Dowlatabadi, 2011, p.15).

Father's grief is so intense that he unconsciously tries to find ways to free himself from the sense of guilt of causing his children's death. As such, mourning for the lost ones does not mean forgetting; rather, remembering and letting the past haunt the present. The father mourns for knowing the unavoidability of the pain and helplessness. Although he thinks he does the right thing for his kids, he is aware of the upcoming violence if he teaches them to resist and follow their ideas no matter what waits for them. The already and always existing violence lets them no escape, and that is exactly what the father mourns for. His grief is doubled when he feels guilt for killing his wife for saving his honor. He thinks that the death of his kids is a punishment for killing his wife. In that sense, his mourning is a self-punishment as well.

The father does not only mourn for himself, but he also mourns for the young generations who are failing revolutionaries:

The young were all trying to find themselves in the revolution, trying to give some meaning to their lives. Revolution gave them a thrill and kept their adrenaline going. They were riding a wave of excitement, like a dove that flies higher and higher to reach the sun, until it burns up – that's the acme of truth for youth! The revolution carried my children off and I have no idea at what point any of them got burned or may be still burning, for that matter. We should feel sorry for our immediate neighbors, our fellow townsmen and fellow countrymen, if any of their young men should come back from the edge of immolation only half-burned, if they descend from that height only to discover that the truth, they have found is nothing but specious doctrine and bogus ideology... Then this glowing, molten wreck turns into a stream of raging fire... (Dowlatabadi, 2011, p.6).

The father explains that the revolutionaries found nothing but violence at the end of their efforts, reflecting on their self-blaming and finding out the vainness of burning their futures for their ideological ideas. Hamid Dabashi (2016) writes in *Iran: the Rebirth of a Nation* that many revolutionaries blamed themselves for bringing cruelty upon the Iranian nation. He writes, "Today leading Islamist revolutionaries, many of them in jail or exile, are coming forward and publicly apologizing for what they have done in bringing this calamity upon their own people" (p.120). Subjects' failing to find the meaning in revolution drags them into long-lasting mourning. Amir, for example, the son who is tortured by the shah's police and never goes out since then, loses his sense of rationality and shifts between sanity and madness.

When he is alone, Amir questions his existence and finds no meaning in existence,

I don't exist, I am nobody's child, I belong nowhere. I exist only to deny myself. My final trick will be to choose the manner and time of my own death, so that the others will have to take to their graves their wish to kill me. This is the only way that I can take my revenge on the horror that has engulfed us (Dowlatabadi, 2011, p.114).

Torture ruins the body and one's belief in herself, ideas, or self-respect. As obvious in Amir's case, the torture he had to go under makes him lose his confidence as a human and will for living, that's why he plots suicidal thoughts. The body's openness to violence makes the subjectivity open to existential pains as well. Hamid Dabashi sees this kind of mourning as an opportunity for freedom and pushes towards taking action for emancipation. He asserts that a self-resurrection is always possible from the ruins because the tortured body becomes the collective symbol of the nation who is tortured and, in the end, the state's legitimacy is ruined when it tortures the nation. Judith Butler makes a similar argument when she suggests mourning is a step into one's regaining of subjectivity and compensating for one's lost sound (p.44). In other words, mourning is not a surrender but a search for being who we are before the trauma. Although the novel offers no resolution or ending to the characters' stories, it ends with a man wandering in the streets, playing setar and telling poems. The father switches on the lights of the whole house, and the story ends. The dark environment of the house is enlightened for the first time while the novel ends, stressing that the ends might be the new beginnings and there is still hope despite everything.

In *The Colonel*, myths, stories, memories, narratives come together and create internarrative subjects whose consciousness replaces each other, so it becomes difficult for the reader to follow who is speaking in the narrative. Those characters carry something in common which is their grief. With its powerful and vivid description of the thoughts and emotions, the novel becomes a sentimentally influencing one. It desacralizes the ideologies that drive the people into madness. When the father confesses that he sacrificed his son for the war, he deconstructs the sacredness of martyrdom, a long-existing belief in Shi'ism, the preeminent belief in Iran.

Moreover, this belief gets the right to mourn from the hands of the mourner. When the father attends his son's funeral, he cannot cry or revolt because his son's grief is no longer his grief. The state sacralizes the son's body, and it is given the symbolic meanings of self-sacrifice and heroism. If the father mourns for the son publicly,

it would be confusing for the public because martyrdom is something to celebrate, not to mourn for in their beliefs. Mourning for the martyr is public in Iran because it is a long tradition of mourning for Imam Hussein and Karbala, therefore mourning has different meanings for the society. While it symbolizes the self-blaming and punishment of people who left Imam Hussein in Karbala, it is, on the other hand, a belief for being rewarded in the future as compensation for the pains. There is a clear separation of acts of mourning at this point. One is the self-punishment and state's mythologization of future rewards, thus public, the other is personal and resisting state's dictates.

Conclusion

Authors discussed in this article deconstruct the oppressive forces censoring ideologies by their creative employment of metaphor as a literary technique. Subjectivities in the narratives are parts of Iranian culture, which is coded and decoded by words and metaphors. That's why literature is a tool for making subjectivities. Iranian intellectual discourse closely engages itself with this process of making metaphors, making subjectivities, and voicing their minds. Making metaphors of illness tells a lot about the history of Iranian society and its troubled modernity. Mehrjui's movie evokes the reality of poverty and famine in the Iranian villages through the theme of madness. Simin Daneshvar's novel critiques unequal and injustice-making modernization inflicted upon the Iranian by the Westerner forces. Finally, Mahmoud Dowlatabadi's literary techniques of representing the failing revolution or violence are depictions of the post-revolutionary Iran where the use of metaphor is still consistent. However, Dowlatabadi's representation of post-trauma and traumatic memory deconstructs the theme of martyrdom. As a common theme in the works discussed in this article, sickness is a metaphorical tool of criticism for the unrests in Iranian society.

The criticism towards Western modernism, intellectual hypocrisy, and state oppression is narrated thanks to this metaphor of sickness, which is revealed both by physical and mental symptoms.

While making conclusionary remarks, Elahi's analysis of sickness as a metaphor is useful to remember. He writes that the metaphor of sickness disentangles the political implications to the degree that Iranian society gets entangled with the "metaphoricity of sickness". By this term, he means that The images of sickness metaphor bombard Iranian society. A further implication of the sickness metaphor would be religious leader Khamenei's comparison of political unrest to a vaccination of *fitna* by which microbes infect people. The final point offers a further research question in which the representation of sickness as a metaphor becomes a struggle over identity, representation, and political critiques. Farrokhzad's short movie, for example, depicts sickness as a double-sided metaphorical implication. Firstly, when the sick are degraded to the inmates who are confined to inhumane treatment and secondly, the government's cure for them, isolating and vanishing them from society. This example emphasizes the importance of using sickness as a metaphor because it has the potential to be used for extending the representational limits of literature and encompassing the critiques of society through the political lens.

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