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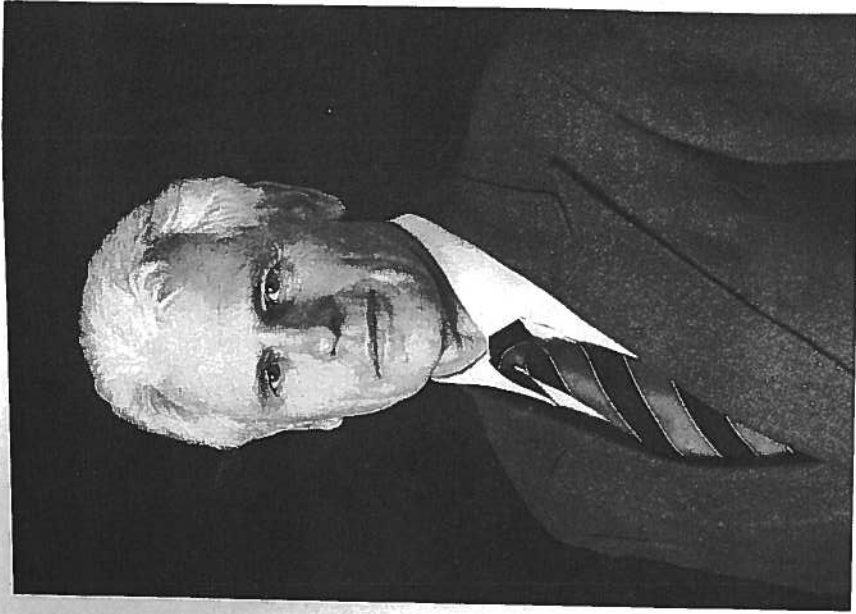
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Critical Encounters

*Essays on Persian Literature and Culture
in Honor of*

Peter J. Chelkowski

Edited by
Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami
and
M. R. Ghanoonparvar



Peter J. Chelkowski

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Publisher's Note

It has always been my conviction—ever since I established this press in 1980—to present a gift of some sort to those individuals and scholars who have dedicated their careers to the study of Iranian art, culture and civilization. The gifts I have chosen to present to them are not Persian rugs from Tabriz, *gaz* from Isfahan, saffron from Mashhad, or pistachios from Rafsanjan, but rather these festschrifts.

This is the fifth festschrift to be published by my press. The first volume in this series was released in 2000 and dedicated to Nikki R. Keddi; it was followed by three other volumes, dedicated respectively to Hafez F. Farmayan (2002), Hanns-Peter Schmidt (2003), and posthumously to Arthur Upham Pope and his wife and collaborator, Phyllis Ackerman (2005).

There are many other individuals who ought to be recognized for their life-long devotion to the field of Iranian studies and it is my promise to continue publishing these festschrifts when manuscripts become available.

A. K. Jabbari,
President & Founder
Mazda Publishers, Inc.

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Manifestations of Diversity and Alterity in the Persian Literary Idiom

Nasrin Rahimieh

The use of Persian has undergone many changes since the publication of Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh's famous story "Persian is Sugar" in 1921¹ and the era that embraced and advocated the use of simple, if not, pure Persian as the best medium for imparting modern Iranian sensibilities. The transfusions in the intervening decades might not at first glance appear as radical as those that marked the beginnings of modern Persian literature, but they have contributed to the shaping of a new literary scene now more than ever before dominated by women's voices and attuned to Iran's complex internal ethnic and linguistic diversities.

The recent chapters of modern Persian literature follow the same tradition of interrogating the intersections of the linguistic, the literary and the national that characterized what literary historians regard as the transition from the Classical to the modern. This historiography, as Mohammad Mehdi Khorrani has demonstrated, has overlooked significant continuities in tradition² and overestimated the role of Western influence. The types of questions that inspired the literati of a different era to arrive at a unique understanding of the function of mimesis in a modern social setting have continued to preoccupy Iranian writers of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Each generation's grappling with these issues has brought the literary system closer to identifying its internal contradictions and paradoxes, thus creat-

ing new confluences of reality and imagination and broadening the borders of the national imagination.

M. R. Ghanoonparvar uses the metaphor of a staircase to describe "the process and progress in the art of fiction writing in Iran since...it ... conveys the idea that each participant in this endeavor furthers the effort toward a goal from where the ones before him or her leave off."³ Drawing on this conceptualization of writers building on the legacy of their predecessors, I would like to examine how questions of national identity are now being mapped out on the terrain of language. I will focus my analysis on two prose texts, Zoya Pirzad's *Cheraghha ra man khamush mikonam* (*I will Turn off the Lights* 2000) and Parinush Sani's *Pedar-e an digari* (*The Father of the Other* 2004) against the backdrop of Jamalzadeh's "Persian is Sugar," his reflections on the role of language in the creation of a modern literary institution, and some of the articulations of national Iranian identity in the pre-revolutionary era. My reading of Pirzad's and Sani's novels will highlight the extent to which the language Jamalzadeh and his generation sought to align with a cohesive and modern nation is now being tested for its openness to inflections of gender and alterity.

As we see in the preface to *Once upon a Time*, Jamalzadeh envisioned linguistic and literary reform as a necessary step toward the creation of a new body politic and a modern nation endowed with educated and politically aware citizen:

Today Iran is behind on the road of literature compared to most of the countries of the world. In other countries literature has, in the course of time, gained variety; and thanks to this variety it has captured the soul of people from all walks of life, and has induced everybody, men and women, the rich and the poor from schoolboys to old men, to read; and it has thus caused spiritual development of citizens. But unfortunately in our Iran moving away from the norms set by the ancients has been regarded as a ruin of literature. Commonly the very substance of the Iranian political despotism, which is well-known the world over, dominates the matter of literature as well; that is to say when a writer holds his pen in his hand, his attention is directed solely to the group of the learned and the scholars, and takes no interest whatsoever in the others. He even ignores the many who are fairly literate and

can read and comprehend plain, uncomplicated writings quite well. In short, the writer does not subscribe to "literary democracy." There is no doubt that such an attitude is deplorable, particularly in a country like Iran, where the ignorance and benightedness of the populace is the obstacle to any kind of progress.⁴

Jamalzadeh's comparison of Iran to other nations is a product of his own position as a displaced Iranian who left Iran at the age of sixteen and lived the rest of his life in Europe. His position of extraterritoriality gives him, like other compatriots of his generation who traveled outside Iran and spent time in Europe, insights into ways of transforming Iran.

In Jamalzadeh's view renewal in Persian letters could best be achieved through reliance on narrative prose laced with "the precious jewels of ...fine sayings and exhilarating ideas" and the introduction of "new terms and expressions."⁵ In this intermingling of well-known Persian proverbs and new words we find the nexus of Jamalzadeh's approach to literary nationalism. His approach to reforming Persian literature is to graft modern literary expression onto Iranian sensibilities. This entails careful selection and preservation of aspects of Iranian cultural phenomena. Hence the recommendation in the Preface to his memoirs, *Sar o tah-e yek karbas*, written some thirty years after *Once Upon a Time* that "...it ought not be forgotten that attachment to old and indigenous manners and customs, which westerners call 'tradition,' is, if not among the requisites of civilization, at least counted among its prominent marks."⁶ He goes on to warn that his "countrymen have imitated foreigners excessively. They have gotten to a point where notwithstanding all the basic beauty in Persian language, they give their newborn children western names."⁷ Jamalzadeh's preoccupation with Persian language and his conviction that it could serve the dual purpose of preserving Iranian history and becoming the vehicle for the creation of a modern nation served as a paradigm for an entire generation of Iranian literati. Kamran Talatof refers to this phase of development in Persian literature as Persianism (*Parsigera'i*) and provides this description of its "immediate objectives": "To denounce the use of Arabic terminology; to work toward the purification of the Persian language through poetry; to promote a fictional language closer to common parlance instead of the con-

ventional style; to link ancient Iran to the present time and expunge centuries of Islamic dominance from the memory; and, finally, to promote modernity by creating new literary forms."⁸ For an illustration of some of these objectives I will now turn to Jamalzadeh's story, "Persian is Sugar."

The title alludes to Classical Persian poetry and the many poetic plays on the intrinsic splendor and eloquence of Persian. Jamalzadeh plays on this tradition to call into question the accessibility and expressiveness of the literary Persian of his times. The title also gestures toward a rich poetic heritage that despite its artfulness could gain currency and popularity through an oral tradition.

"Persian is Sugar" is a first-person narrative which tells the story of a return journey from Europe to the shores of the Caspian Sea. The backdrop of the story is the period following the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) and the ensuing turmoil that marked Iran's transition from an absolutist monarchy to a representative form of government. In the story, the political upheaval manifests itself in the customs office exercising arbitrary power. As a result, the unnamed narrator and two other travelers are thrown in a dark and forbidding jail. Soon a local man, named Ramazan, joins them in the cell. Terrified and unable to fathom the reasons for his arrest, Ramazan attempts to strike up a conversation with the first person he notices in the cell. This happens to be a Muslim clergyman who speaks a Persian so heavily interlaced with Arabic as to be incomprehensible to the distressed Ramazan. The second man to whom Ramazan turns for solace, who has been all along immersed in a French novel, speaks his own brand of incomprehensible Persian interspersed with French words. This is how he addresses the terrified Ramazan: "My dear friend and compatriot! Why have they put us here? I too, however much I excavate my head, find *absolument* nothing, nothing *positif*, nothing *négalif*. *Absolument*! Is it not very *comique* that they take me, a young licentiate from the best family, for a ... a ... *criminel* and treat me as they would a parvenu? But this is not surprising from a thousand-year *despotisme* and the lawlessness (*sic*) and *arbitraire* that are its fruits."⁹ His bizarre turns of phrase notwithstanding the traveler gives voice to the principles of equality and democracy espoused by Jamalzadeh and his generation. It is the language in

which these principles are articulated which comes in for ridicule.

Observing these exchanges is the narrator, ironically taken for a foreigner, who unlike the other two cellmates speaks a simple Persian readily understood by Ramazan. When a distraught Ramazan finally turns to him, he says: "dear boy, how do you figure me for a foreigner? To hell with all the foreigners! I'm Iranian and a brother Muslim. Why have you gone to pieces? ... As soon as Ramazan saw that I really and truly understood the vernacular and that I was even speaking honest-to-God Persian with him, he grabbed my hand and kissed it as if there were no tomorrow."¹⁰ It is interesting to note how speaking an "undiluted" Persian can facilitate this scene of bonding between Ramazan and the narrator. Recognizing a fellow Iranian releases Ramazan from anxiety into spontaneous expressions of joy, erasing the differences in class and education that separate him from the narrator. The narrator's willingness to suspend all other categories of difference opens up a space in which language becomes the primary locus of communal/national identification. Over against them stand the troubled Iranian subjects who don a false French or Arab identity.

This emphasis on the distinctness of Iranians was to become much more heavily racialized under the reign of the Pahlavi monarchs who recuperated a long-standing glorification of the ancient Persians believed to have been descendants of Aryans.¹¹ In "Persian is Sugar" Iranian identity is posited against both the Arab and the European other. While being Muslim is part and parcel of that identity, not being Arab is equally central to it. Here we see the outlines of what Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi has referred to as the "emergence of a schizoprenic view of history and the formation of schizoprenic social subjects who were conscious of their belonging to two diverse and often antagonist times and cultural heritages."¹² The two heritages cited here refer to the ancient pre-Islamic and Islamic Iranian civilizations. Tavakoli-Targhi argues that modern Iranian history charts the nation's shuttling between these two polar opposites.

How the modern Iranian nation was to engage with its Islamic heritage is glossed over in "Persian is Sugar." But it emerges as a source of concern in another story, *Bilâh dig bilâh choghondar*, translated in the collection *Once upon a Time as*

"What's Sauce for the Goose." Here women's treatment under the tenets of Islam comes in for critique. The following description of Iran, attributed to a foreign visitor, uses defamiliarization as a means of drawing attention to the absence of women from public life:

But one strange thing about this country is that, apparently, there are absolutely no women in it. You see little girls, four or five years old, in the alleyways but never any women. Not matter how much I thought about this I could never figure it out. I had heard that a "city of women" existed somewhere in the world where there were no men, but I've never heard of a "city of men." ... Another thing that is very strange about Iran is that a substantial part of the people, about half the population of the country wrap themselves from head to foot in black sacks, not even leaving space to breathe. And that's how they go about the alleyways, in that black sack. These people are never allowed to speak and have no right to enter a teahouse or any other place. Their baths are also separate and, at public gatherings like passion plays and mourning-fests, they have their own viewing sections.¹³

The modernizing attempts of the nation eventually opened up new spheres to women and made room for women's education and participation in public life. But as Afsaneh Najmabadi and other feminist historians have pointed out the desegregation of women went hand in hand with an obligatory heterosexist logic that endowed women with the dual responsibility of raising and educating new Iranian citizens and becoming the guardians of the nation's spiritual core. This is not to say that Iranian women did not attain certain rights, but their image remained closely linked with the guardians and educators of the nation.¹⁴ We see reflections of this double imperative in the deeply ingrained concept of self-sacrificing mother and wife in modern Persian literature. But even more vexing than the image of model female citizen became an imperative to save the inner core of the nation, read as female, from corrupting external influences. Nowhere is this gendering of the nation more evident than in Jalal Al-e Ahmad's famous treatise, *Gharbzadegi* (Translated as Westitis or Plagued by the West).

For Al-e Ahmad and his generation of committed writers, who were descendants of Jamalzadeh's era, literature was a means to an end. Like the generation of writers before him, Al-e Ahmad believed in reforming Iranian society, but unlike Jamalzadeh he maintained that the reforms had gone awry, robbing Iran of a distinct identity. If Jamalzadeh argued for progress and adaptation of European norms to Iranian customs, Al-e Ahmad called for a return to an Iranian identity anchored in Muslim spirituality.

In a passage reminiscent of Edwards Said's seminal work, *Orientalism*, Al-e Ahmad writes: "... the west-stricken man can only recognize himself through the writings of western orientalists. He has single-handedly turned himself into an object to be placed on the microscope of Orientalism, and he relies only on what the orientalist sees there, rather than what he really is or feels or see or experiences himself. This has to be the ugliest symptom of westitis."¹⁵ Al-e Ahmad extends the metaphor of the disease to a feminization of the nation: "The west-stricken man is a gigolo. He is effeminate. He is always primping; always making sure of his appearance. He has even been known to pluck his eyebrows!"¹⁶ This passage lays bare the gendered nature of Iranian discourses of nationalism which recognized the Orientalist underpinnings of imperialist ventures in Iran, but could not discern their own conflation of national independence and male virility. As Meyda Yeğenoğlu has demonstrated in *Colonial Fantasies*, this slippage is itself a symptom of the Orientalization of the Orient. She argues that the opposition between the Orient and the West led to an attempt to fend off the material domination of the West led to a search for an untouchable spiritual domain which in turn "has been mapped onto the gender question."¹⁷

In Al-e Ahmad's treatise we observe the very reproduction and reinforcement of the division between the Iranian and his Western counterpart. The Iranian subject, identified as male, has lost touch with his own authenticity and the further he moves from this "true" self, the more feminized he becomes. The solution Al-e Ahmad and other intellectuals of his generation suggested was to reclaim Iranian authenticity. For Al-e Ahmad, this authenticity is closely linked with Islam – a point underlined in the last sentences of his treatise: "Therefore I will end by purifying my pen with this verse from the Qur'an: The hour of resur-

rection drew near and the moon was rent in twain."¹⁸ This return to tradition and the process of purification aimed at recovering national and cultural authenticity replicates the dynamics Tavakoli-Targhi identifies in the "schizophrenic subjects" who either disavow their Islamic heritage or fully embrace Islam. Remarkably both poles of identification necessitate re-articulations of what constitutes "pure" identity. The exclusionary practices inherent in both iterations of national identity have been problematized recently in fictional works which question the very emphasis on purification, be it of the pen, the tongue, or the soul. For an illustration of this turn away from purity and simplicity of linguistic, literary and cultural heritage I will turn to the analysis of the novels by Pirzad and Sani'i.

I will Turn off the Lights is the story of an Armenian-Iranian family told from the first-person perspective of the female protagonist, Klaris. The setting of the story is an oil company compound in the city of Abadan, in southern Iran, in the pre-revolutionary era. Abadan became the site of one of the most gruesome events before the revolution. It was there that many people perished in a cinema set on fire while the exit doors had been locked. The burning of the cinema was blamed on many political forces, among them the religious opposition which saw movie going as a symptom of westitis. The Abadan of Pirzad's story is years away from these fateful events. It is a city associated with the oil boom and foreign presence.

Klaris's life revolves around her chores and taking care of her twin daughters, teenage son, and her husband. While Klaris is embroiled in her daily chores, like other Iranians of his class and generation, her husband, Artush, takes part in leftist anti-government activities. These revolutionary ambitions notwithstanding, Artush remains aloof at home. Each night, just before he leaves for bed, he asks Klaris: "Will you turn off the lights?" to which she responds: "Yes, I will turn off the lights." In this phrase is summed up the cycle of her daily life and the tedium of her chores.

The monotony of Klaris's life is interrupted at the beginning of the novel by the arrival of a new family in a nearby unit in the same complex where Klaris and her family live. The newcomers are anything but ordinary. The family consists of a man, Emil Simunian, his mother, Mrs. Simunian, and his daughter, Emily.

Mrs. Simunian is a mysterious and eccentric woman who speaks of her days of glamour and travel across the globe.

Being allowed glimpses into Mrs. Simunian's past, a love affair she was forced to conceal because of her family's disapproval, Klaris begins to re-examine her own life. Reflecting on her existence in light of Mrs. Simunian's past, she suddenly sees the isolation of living in a compound cut off from the rest of Abadan. On a bus ride into the city, Klaris sees what she had not seen before: the contrast between the compound, its order and artificiality, and the disorder and the untidiness of life in other neighborhoods.

The scenes that describe her journeys outside the compound end in a meeting with Emil and her husband's secretary, whom she has discovered is dedicated to advocating the rights of women. Stepping outside the shell of her life, Klaris comes face to face with her own malaise. Simple questions she had never allowed herself to ask suddenly rise to the surface. Her husband's secretary, Ms. Nurallahi, puzzles her by asking about the annual commemoration of the Armenian genocide on April 24th. Klaris cannot grasp why someone who could not understand Armenian would want to attend the event. Ms. Nurallahi reminds her about the parliamentary elections. As she ends her conversations Klaris ruminates: "I didn't know that parliamentary elections were approaching. I had heard some things about women's suffrage. I thought like most Armenians I act as if I don't live in this country. I was embarrassed."¹⁹ If Ms. Nurallahi makes Klaris question her isolation as an Armenian, Mrs. Simunian reminds her of infinite mobility. These women introduce chaos into a well ordered life and make her long to move beyond the walls of the residential compound.

On one level we witness the questioning of the orderly and unexamined patterns of the protagonist's life. The regimented life of a housewife and mother is thrown into a not-so-unwelcome disarray. We see women, like Mrs. Simunian and Mrs. Nurallahi, stepping outside the expected and prescribed gender roles. Klaris' encounter with these women prompts her to question the division of labor which limits her to safeguarding the domestic spaces while her husband and his peers plot the revolution. Yet she does not step into the role of the rebel or

revolutionary, categories which require a critical re-examination in light of the nation's recent history.

On another level, what we witness is the troubling of the categories of national identity and belonging. Staring at a map of Iran, for instance, Klaris wonders: "I didn't know where and how to begin. I looked at the map of Iran hanging on the wall above the bed. I encircled a lake with my gaze and came closer to read its name and learned that it was called Bakhtagan... I wondered why, not ever having seen any cities in Armenia, I can identify them on the map but still don't know the names of Iranian lakes."²⁰ Klaris' detachment from a sense of territorial recognition and belonging and her aloofness from the social and political events taking place around her do not place her outside the boundaries of the nation. Instead it suggests multiple vectors of affiliation and undercuts the demand for subscribing to a unitary and unified national subject position.

This novel is populated by Iranians who have very little in common with the characters of Jamalzadeh's stories. They cannot respond to the call of the nation with the declaration: "I'm Iranian and a brother Muslim." The brothers and sisters of this novel are Armenians who share a history with their Muslim counterparts, but they also carry with them memories of more distant territories and times. As we follow Klaris during her foray into town, we walk inside an Armenian church, listen to the Lord's prayer in Persian, watch her cross herself, and exit to only come face to face with an Arab Iranian on the street. Klaris does not speak to her Arab compatriot, but if she had she would have had to rely on Persian, a language they both speak as Iranian citizens, but not the only language they use in their daily lives.

In fact, Klaris and her family conduct their lives in Armenian. Remarkably the novel allows us to forget that the exchanges we are reading about in Persian actually took place in Armenian and are translated into Persian. The narrator periodically reminds us through connotations of the Armenian words that would have been used. There are reminders of another type. For instance, the narrator comments on a British woman, who despite having spent many years in Iran, "spoke Persian worse than us Armenians."²¹ The books and poems alluded to in the novel are written in Armenian and are part of a literary heritage unknown to many

of Pirzad's Muslim compatriots. Pirzad translates for us from that Armenian heritage with such mastery and subtlety that we cannot separate the reality of her Armenian characters from the fabric of Iranian culture. Reading *I will Turn off the Lights* is an exercise in self-translation, as much on the part of the author Zoya Pirzad as on the part of her non-Armenian Iranian compatriots who will realize that Iranian life is experienced in many other tongues and that their national identity is not delimited by Persian and Islam.

Pirzad's novel makes it possible to imagine reading and conversing across Iran's multiple languages, religions, and ethnicities not in an attempt to construct a unified national identity but rather to abandon the project of purification and unification of the nation. The dream of a linguistically, racially, and religiously disciplined Iran is what Pirzad's novel extinguishtes.

The opening up of the national language to new forms of alterity takes a different turn in Sani'i's novel, *Pedar-e an digari*. The novel is narrated in alternating voices of a mother and her son. The story is that of a family of four, whose youngest son, Shahab, also one of the narrators, does not speak and is shunned as slow witted. Shahab's mother is the only member of the family who continues to cling to the hope that her son will lead a normal life. The alternating chapters capture, on the one hand, the mother's attempt at saving her son from other children's taunts and his own father's neglect and, on the other, Shahab's own struggle with structures of kinship, language, and social order.

The chapters narrated by Shahab reveal how he realizes at an early age that the members of the family treat him as "other." As he watches his relatives speak about him and his "slowness" he concludes: "Lucky them, they are a family. I have been forgotten. I felt myself distant from and shunned by them, and I understood that I am not of them."²² He retreats into an inner world and conversations with imaginary friends, while his brother, Arash, becomes a model student and the source of their father's joy and pride. In contrast, because of his inability to speak, Shahab cannot be enrolled in school. Sensing his father's shame, Shahab never accepts his father and refers to him as the other's father, hence the title of the novel.

Shahab's relationship to language is equally problematic. For instance, he does not initially realize that the word "kheng" is not a term of endearment or flattery: "At first I thought being slow witted was good. I used to like it when they called me *kheng* because everyone uttered it joy."²³ When Shahab recognizes that the label is derogatory and marks him as a failure, he shows his rage but refuses to speak. Apart from this type of alienation from language, Shahab awakens early to the possibility of different means of communication. Akram, the woman who helps his mother with the chores, for example, speaks to him in a language he does not understand: "...when she felt good she would speak to me, but in a language only she knew. She would refer to objects, whose names I was just beginning to learn by different names. I would become confused... She would speak the same language to our neighbor. Sometimes she would bring along her daughter. On those occasions their language was the primary language of the house."²⁴ The narrator does not name the language. Instead the reader is left to decipher that the language in question is Azari. By refusing to name things and to speak in language he has begun to grasp as that of his family, Shahab maintains his opposition to the father's imperatives.

Read in light of Julia Kristeva's theories of subjectivity, Shahab's difficulties with language become a reflection of a vexed relationship with the "paternal, patriarchally regulated" Symbolic order, and his transgressions and fits of violence incursions of the "maternally defined semiotic."²⁵ In terms of Kristeva's articulations of the semiotic and the Symbolic, Shahab's refusal to utter words and to participate in the social norms acts as a prolongation of his disidentification with the Symbolic:

The maternally defined semiotic is the prop or support of, as well as the site for, the disruptive transgression of the paternal, patriarchally regulated Symbolic. It remains completely contained by the Symbolic, and is manifested in the 'physicality' or 'materiality' of textual production; it is a materiality that, like the primary processes or the repressed, threatens to return, disrupting signifying conventions. The semiotic must be renounced and transcended in order for the pre-oedipal child to acquire a stable social or Symbolic position as a unified (masculine or

feminine) subject. But this subsumption of the semiotic in the Symbolic is never complete or finalized.²⁶

Shahab's character is mapped onto an apparent refusal to renounce the semiotic as a precondition of a stable and unified subject.

All along Shahab remains attached to his mother, and it is his maternal grandmother who eases him into speech. Interestingly the conversations between Shahab and his grandmother, his first entry into language, remain a secret between them. Even after Shahab begins to speak, attends school, and enters the social order, his position as subject is precariously linked to identification with his father and the social demands he associates with the law of the father. He becomes an artist and quickly learns to step outside the norms to produce his own unique art.

The novel's penultimate chapter ends with a reconciliation scene in which Shahab's father celebrates along with him a prize he receives for his art. However, the melodramatic scene of the father and the son embracing is undercut by the next chapter which marks Shahab's twentieth birthday. When Shahab is asked to identify the man holding him in a picture, he responds: "This man? He is Arash's father."²⁷ This unwillingness to identify the man in the picture as "my father" unsettles the assumption that the family structure has been normalized. The novel ends with an affirmation of a persistent malaise at the very core of the family unit and, by extension, the patterns of socialization. The young Shahab's intuitive grasp of this malaise is what prevents him from entering the order of language and its codifications of gender and identity.

What Sani'i's novel, Pirzad's, and Jamalzadeh's short story have in common is their engagement with the function of language in the articulation and formation of the Iranian national subject. The need for a unified and simple mode of communication, as thematized in "Persian is Sugar," lays bare both a generational and historically specific preoccupation with national independence. Pirzad's handling of Persian and her focus on Armenian-Iranians whose sense of belonging to the nation exceeds the parameters of language and religion calls for an expansion of the concept of the nation. The Otherness captured in Pirzad's novel is internalized within Persian in Sani'i's work. A child's anxieties about speaking Persian and becoming part of

familial, social, and national patterns of identification reveal the erosion of the naturalization of Persian as expressive of the multiplicity of individual realities that make up the nation. If speaking Persian was the salve needed to calm the nerves of the disenfranchised character of Jamalzadeh's story, refusing to speak Persian is the only means the character of Sami's novel has to find peace. He would rather speak to imaginary characters than engage in real conversations which will force him into rejecting the intuitive and the imaginative in favor of disciplining his mind to become a model young Iranian man.

Sami's and Pirzad's treatment of the role of language in the constitution of normative national identity allow us to reflect back on an earlier moment in literary nationalism. This is far from saying that the contradictions inherent in the early twentieth-century discourses of Iranian nationalism have been resolved or that gender and alterity have gained equal valence in the definition of the nation. But these new representations of the nation, while demonstrating certain continuities in Persian literary history, also betray less anxiety about disciplining and purifying the nation.

¹ In his overview of Jamalzadeh's works, Heshmat Moayyad indicates that "Persian Is Sugar" ... is not dated but was probably written in 1929; it first appeared in *Kava* (January 1921), in *Once Upon a Time: Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud*, trans. Heshmat Moayyad and Paul Sprachman, New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1985, p.9.

² *Modern Reflections of Classical Traditions in Persian Fiction*, Lewiston: The Mellon Press, 2003, Studies in Comparative Literature 54.

³ *Reading Chubak*, Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2005, p. 117.

⁴ Cited from Haideh Daragahi's translation of Jamalzadeh's Preface in her "The Shaping of Modern Persian Short Story: Jamalzadeh's 'Preface' to *Yeki Bud, Yeki Nabud*" in *Critical Perspectives on Modern Persian Literature*, ed. Thomas M. Ricks Washington DC: Three Continents Press, 1984, p. 110.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Sayyed Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, *Isfahan is Half the World: Memories of a Persian Boyhood*, trans. W. L. Heston, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983, p.6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸ *The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000, p. 25.

⁹ *Once Upon a Time*, p. 39.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.41.

¹¹ In *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography*, Oxford: Palgrave, 200, St. Anthony's Series, Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi traces the glorification of pre-Islamic Iran to Mongol India and demonstrates that it predates the nineteenth century.

¹² *Refashioning Iran*, p. 95.

¹³ *Once Upon a Time*, pp.96-97.

¹⁴ See "Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran" in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, ed. Lila Abu-Lughod Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998: 91-125.

¹⁵ *Plagued by the West (Gharbzadegi)*, trans. Paul Sprachman, Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1982, Bibliotheca Persica, Modern Persian Literature Series 4, p.73.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁷ *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 124.

¹⁸ *Plagued by the West*, p. 111.

¹⁹ Tehran: *Nashr-e markaz*, 2002, p. 110. All translations from the original Persian are my own.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²² *Pedar-e an digari*. Tehran: Ruzbehan, 2004, p. 25. All translations from the original Persian are my own.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.

²⁵ "Julia Kristeva" in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*. Ed. Elizabeth Wright. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p. 194.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-96.

²⁷ *Pedar-e an digari*, P. 289.