The Impact of the Modernity Discourse on Persian Fiction

Dissertation

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Abstract

Modern Persian literature has created a number of remarkable works that have had great influence on most middle class people in Iran. Further, it has had representation of individuals in a political context. Coming out of a political and discursive break in the late nineteenth century, modern literature began to adopt European genres, styles and techniques. Avoiding the traditional discourses, then, became one of the primary characteristics of modern Persian literature; as such, it became closely tied to political ideologies. Remarketing itself by the political agendas, modern literature in Iran hence became less an artistic source of expression and more as an interpretation of political situations. Moreover, engaging with the political discourse caused the literature to disconnect itself from old discourses, namely Islamism and nationalism, and from people with dissimilar beliefs.

Disconnectedness was already part of Iranian culture, politics, discourses and, therefore, literature. However, instead of helping society to create a meta-narrative that would embrace all discourses within one national image, modern literature produced more gaps. Historically, there had been three literary movements before the modernization process began in the late nineteenth century. Each of these movements had its own separate discourse and historiography, failing altogether to provide people
with one single image of a nation. Throughout the centuries, people of this land have called themselves Iranian; however, the image that they conjured from this word has never been the same. The various images have had social aspects as well that all together have created several layers of disconnectedness.

Modern literature, as the fourth movement, borrowed its discourse from Europeans. The historiography that it offered was also adopted from the European discourse of modernity. Unable to compromise with others, or to create an Iranian discourse of modernity, the modern movement eventually added yet another layer of disconnectedness.

By contradicting other narratives, modern literature reflects a new narrative identity that, by distorting the historical knowledge, tries to refigure the history of Iran through a so called universal history borrowed from Europeans. This narrative in every respect is speculative and without inquiry into the conditions of possibility. What is important here is the paradigm of universal time under the European historiography that refers back to the universe of narrative structure, or rather part of the universe that depicts ‘us’ – Iranians- as a backward country or culture.

The modern Persian narrative identity then is confused, because it denies the past and wants to refigure the future based on the European past. Narrative time, under this situation, could not match with historical time and old narrative identities, which were also broken in turn.
With disconnectedness and the broken narrative identity, modern Persian literature has created novels that have been written in a political framework with particular motifs. Some writers and critics have mentioned these problems; however they have rarely attempted to examine the discourses in which these works are formed. This dissertation attempts to analyze the problematic aspects of the discourse of modern Persian literature, and the disconnectedness that was added to Iranian culture by its influence.
Dedication

Dedicated to my family

And to the Memory of

Jazbieh Andalibi Abadan
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Field of Study

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# Table of Contents

**Chapter 1: Introduction** ........................................................................................................... 1  
General ........................................................................................................................................ 1  
Problem ........................................................................................................................................ 6  

**Chapter 2: Falling as an Oriental Empire and Rising as a Third World Country** .......... 30  
Problematic Characteristics of the Persian Modernity Discourse ......................................... 51  

**Chapter 3: The National Movement through Denationalization: A Historical Overview** .... 60  
Historical Background .................................................................................................................. 66  
Liminal Time and Space: Civil War ............................................................................................. 85  
Denationalization .......................................................................................................................... 91  

**Chapter 4: Power Vacuum** ...................................................................................................... 101  
Theory of Governmentality in the Islamic Sources ................................................................... 105  
Social Structure: Men of Sword, Men of Religion, and Men of Pen ......................................... 130  
Subj ectivity Crisis and Its Root in the Islamic Theory of Governmentality .............................. 149  
Conclusion ................................................................................................................................... 162  

**Chapter 5: The New Islamic Discourse and the Birth of the Modern Discourse** .......... 165  
Who Is an Intellectual? ................................................................................................................ 171  
Islamist Discourse ....................................................................................................................... 177  
Secularist Discourse .................................................................................................................... 190  
Characterization of the Discourses in a Comparative Method .................................................... 214  
Modernity Project: A Comparison between Europe and Iran .................................................... 224  

**Chapter 6: Literary Discourse: Abnormality as the Solutions** .......................................... 229  
The Birth of the New Intellectuals ............................................................................................... 235  
Disconnectedness in the Narrative Discourse ........................................................................... 241  
Heterotopias in the Iranian Culture ............................................................................................. 261  
Problem of Segmentation s .......................................................................................................... 273  
Modern Persian Fiction Is Used by Secularists ........................................................................... 275  
Language ...................................................................................................................................... 280  
Characterization and Plot ............................................................................................................ 299  
Power Relationship ..................................................................................................................... 304  
Concept of Time and Space in the Modern Fiction ...................................................................... 309  
Space ........................................................................................................................................... 309  

**Chapter 7: Conclusion** ............................................................................................................ 311
Sources of the Problems and Their Solutions ................................................................. 311
Five Major Motifs ........................................................................................................... 318

Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 330

Primary Sources: .......................................................................................................... 330
Secondary Sources: ...................................................................................................... 335
Chapter 1: Introduction

General

Modern Persian literature has created a number of remarkable works that have had great influence on most middle class people in Iran. Representing people’s thoughts and feelings thoroughly via an individualistic fashion, that was completely absent in pre-modernist literature affecting largely the representation of individuals in a historical and political context, which can be called contemporariness. Thus modern literature has experienced de-familiarization, predominant in the literary language and style. One of the best ways for Modern Persian literature to express the individual was through a mimicking of European genres, styles and techniques.

Modern literature came out of a hiatus that was created by political scenarios discursive turbulences in the late nineteenth century which continued throughout the twentieth century. Avoiding the traditional political system and discourses, then, became one of the primary characteristics of modern Persian literature; as such, it became closely tied to political ideologies. Because of its accidental close ties to political philosophy and thought it is difficult to imagine or interpret it outside of this paradigm. Re-marking itself by the political agendas, then, modern literature in Iran became less an artistic source of expression and more as an interpretation of the political climate, each literary work thus proposing one political ideology over another. Questioning it’s metamorphosis from its
apolitical to political existence and discerning this web of political clout will throw new light on understanding Modern Persian literature. An accidental engagement with the political discourse caused the literature to disconnect itself from old discourses, namely Islamism and other groups that had differing ideologies and interests. The modern styles and literature were usurped as tools in the hands of secularists and anti-traditionalists. Parallely, Islamists, and monarchists, before the 1979 Revolution, banned modern literature, especially the novels, as these were essentially antagonistic to their overall interests. Instead of unifying a society to create a meta-narrative that would embrace all discourses within one national image; the political literature produced a number of gaps that can be studied under the term disconnectedness.

Disconnectedness was already an undercurrent factor in Iranian culture, politics, and discourses and was adopted by literature. But instead of closing the gaps, modern literature contributed to the patina effect of widening this schism. Historically, there had been three literary movements before the modernization process began in the late nineteenth century. The first movement (10-12 centuries), which I refer to here as Iranian-ness, gave a voice to the pre-Islamic discourse and historiography under the Arabic-Turkic reigns. This historiography that was narrated in major works, such as the Šāhnāmeh, was in general different than the Islamic one. The future belonged to the Iranians, whereas Arabs, Turks and Romans were considered as part of the extrinsic other who were destroying their land.

The second movement, which was led by Sufism, had an entirely different discourse in which every individual was called to pave their personal path towards God.
The individualism that Sufism offered was essentially against the collective path to God; therefore it is right to say that it did not have its roots in historicism of any kind. This lack of historiography ultimately led Sufism to become an apolitical movement by the time the Turks were controlling Iran with their tribal forces.

The third literary movement is Shiism dating back to the 1500s, retaining one kind of Iranian-ness combined with an interpretation of Islam that was characteristically less literal and more ritualistic. The target for the new established dynasty, like other religious governments, was the mass. By avoiding elitism, it demeaned the canonized literary works and instead promoted all kinds of oral arts, such as storytelling in the tea houses and also in religious plays or the Ta’zieh. Nonetheless, it echoed a historiography akin to what Iranian-ness had before it, tracing all the way back to the Safavid kings in the 1500s who allowed storytellers to recite the Shāhnāmeh in the tea houses for a period of time. The intent of this particular historicism served to carry two purposes: to create a national image which distinguished Iranians from other Muslims in the Ottoman and Mogul Empires; and to draw a plot for the future in which Shiism, as the true Islam, could take control of the Islamic world if not the whole world.

Clearly, each of these movements had different discourses and historiographies, failing to provide people with one single image of a nation. Throughout the centuries, people of this land have called themselves Iranian; however, the image that they conjured from this word has never been the same. The different images with differing social aspects have contributed to the creation of several layers of disconnectedness.
Modern literature, as the fourth movement, borrowed its discourse from Europeans. The historiography that it offered was also imported from the European discourse of modernity. Unable to compromise with the traditionalists, or to create an Iranian discourse of modernity without the influence of Orientalist discourse, the modern movement in Iran wanted to replace the old historiographies with the European model. This did not solve the problem of identity, but further complicated it by creating more gaps and eventually accruing yet another patina of disconnectedness.

By contradicting other narratives, modern literature reflects a new narrative identity that distorts the historical knowledge and tries to refigure the history of Iran through a so called universal history that borrowed and imported from the Europeans. The concept of time in this narrative can be understood in the threefold realm of contemporariness, its predecessors, and successors. In the modern Persian fiction these three times are characterized by three types of figures respectively: Fathers representing tradition; ‘Us’, the modernist, representing the resistance against traditions; and ‘Us-future’ representing the result of conflicts between these forces. Modernization is the resultant fruit of this fight. It is important to reiterate the threefold concept of time as a simultaneous occurrence. This narrative in every respect is speculative and without inquiring into the conditions of possibility –or rather, “their conditions of significance,” as stated by Ricoeur. “These conditions, as Ricoeur (1988: 104) points out, are revealed if we relate the functioning of these connectors to the aporias of time.” The emphasis here is the paradigm of universal time, under the European historiography that refers back to the universe of narrative structure, or rather as part of the universe that depicts us as a
third world country or culture. Through this, the universal time, historical time and the local time are in conflict with each other. There is no interaction amongst these times; and time is reconfigured as a hetro-chronic condition in which tomorrow is projected as a modern day phenomenon.

The modern Persian narrative identity, which according to Ricoeur is a narrative through history, is confused. This confusion is present not only in modern literature as it denies the past and wants to reconfigure the future based on the European past; but is also confused in previous literary movements as well. Narrative time, under this situation, does not match with historical time. Narrative identity is broken because there is no continuum within history.

With disconnectedness and the broken narrative identity, modern Persian literature has produced novels that have been written within a political framework and motifs that are particular to this framework. These novels are written in this problematic frame because of the historical, social and literary climate at that time. Some writers and critics have briefly mentioned these problems; however they have rarely attempted to examine the discourses in which these works are formed. This dissertation is an attempt to shed light on this problematic framework. In the introduction I am going to tackle the problem from the writers’ perspectives. And in the following chapter, however, I will try to contextualize the problem in its historical, social and discursive aspects, and finally, certain forms, dichotomies, motifs and characterizations that are used in these works will be examined in the ensuing chapters.
Problem

Undoubtedly, modern Persian literature between 1870-1980 has created a number of noteworthy and interesting novels, such as Mushfiq Kāzemi’s *The Frightening Tehran* (Tehran Makhu, 1968), Hedāyat’s *Blind Owl* (1335), ‘Alavi’s *Her Eyes* (Cheshmhayash: 1989b [first publication: 1952]), Dānishvar’s *Savūshūn* (1363 [1984]) and Golshiri’s *Prince Ehtejāb* (Shāzdeh Ehtejāb 1368a [1989 or 1990]). In spite of censorship and political dictatorship, these modern writers fought for human rights, individualism, progress and emancipation through their novels. Nonetheless, modern Persian fiction has been ineffectual in depicting life in all its aspects, as it was unable to create a discourse larger than the prevailing political issues or to discuss them within the framework of a non-political discourse. Therefore, these works can be rendered incomplete, as they failed to depict a ‘real’ Iranian life, mentality, and thought in all dimensions with their artistic and polyphonic styles, and were unsuccessful in creating a dialogic atmosphere amongst the discourses. In addition, the political discourse by which these narratives were shaped was derived from the modernity trend and was poised against the Islamist and even the nationalistic trends. Under these circumstances, writers, in most cases, have sought to critique people through the lens of one particular ideological perspective: modernism. Characters, which were objectified through this ideology, then fell into a non-dialogical narrative, as described by Bakhtin (1981: 24). As such, dialogue with other novels or with their readers was absent. These stories have depicted life only in the context of the Iranian political discourses in which three issues were paradigmatic: anti-religiosity, anti-nationalism and pro-Europeanization. These works of fiction are still far
from being considered world-class literature as opposed to the classical Persian literature that was imbued with a range of comprehensive thoughts, topics and ideas.

From a literary perspective, these works cannot be considered as fully imaginative or creative as classical Persian literature, because they have been unable to contextualize man and his world in a larger system of thought that is beyond his political needs. Constrained by this political framework, these works only aimed to deal with the Iranian political issues within the scope of their limited context. Influenced by the ancient Iranian principle of dualism, the discursive set for these works have been based on political dichotomies as legitimate versus illegitimate, justice versus injustice, progress versus backwardness, and finally limelighted in the climax of the good-versus-evil dichotomy. These topics can be found in other systems of thought as well; however, there they are rather dealt with philosophically or artistically. Iranian fictional works on the other hand, instead of philosophizing or literalizing the concepts of freedom, individualism, modernism and national identity, have politicized them through the modernist discourse that was obviously formed by the political circumstances. Therefore, nearly all of these works have simply followed a set of dichotomist formulas determined by the paradigm of the Iranian discourse of modernity, which suffered deeply from the lack of sovereignty. These works, to some extent, imitated contemporary Western literary styles and genres as well. Their characterizations also follow a dichotomous style of portraying predominantly two types of people: the modern people with their European mentality and mannerisms, and the traditional ones with an anti-progressive mentality and ‘uncivilized manners.’ The creation of these characters is
based on certain political notions; thus their intent is to manifest those ideas, which, again, are politically divided into Europeanization as the only possible model for progress, versus tradition-religion as the main source and reason for backwardness. With a few exceptions, it is, then, difficult to find a real character in these works with actual feelings and thoughts. In other words, these writers, confined by their own belief system, were unable to explore other aspects and possibilities of their characters. For the most part, their characters are made to follow the political blueprint, prescribed by their creators in opposition to the characters’ real situations, feelings and thoughts. Their sole purpose was to manifest the writers’ political beliefs or ideologies within their narrative framework. These writers were in fact intellectuals with particular cultural and political affinities; and literature was merely a medium for them to reveal their message to the public. The meta-narrative in action had a view of past-present and future in which the dilapidated unwanted past-present must be abandoned in order to have a projective pleasant future. Thus, modern narrative genres are used to challenge the present, which has its roots in the past, while at the same time portraying the desired future in which people are culturally and politically aware of their own interests. Thus the literary arena has become the realm of intellectuals to manifest their cultural and political agendas. These intellectuals are attracted to the novel and short story as these genres allow them possibilities to exploit their causes. At the same time they are against the traditional genres such as anecdotes or romance, because these do not give them the opportunity to manifest their causes. In short, modern Persian fiction has put its horse behind the carriage.
Modern Persian literature, although political in nature had little artistic success inside or outside of the country, or even amongst other Persian speakers in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The lack of success necessitates an examination of the problematic elements of the modernist discourse. Intellectual writers and scholars have alluded to the problem and have delved to identify what has caused its failure. However, they have seldom tried to problematize the discourse itself. Instead they have addressed the failure again from the political perspective: ‘Why does the modern literature from Iran lack the status of a world-class literature?’ is a commonly posed question that is formulated to tackle the problem. It is obviously articulated in a misleading framework, because it again perceives the problem from a political view and outside of its discursive framework. The question has largely been asked by the literati, either those themselves involved in creating this literature or those who were intellectually modernists. Like its discourse, then, the modern literature has been exclusive in its circulation, only amongst the Iranian modernists and no one else. Writers and scholars have been preoccupied with this question for decades because, despite their expectations, the narrative discourse has hardly produced any extraordinary literary works in years. Related to this phenomenon, significant questions have been raised: ‘Why our modern literature has in general and the narrative genres in particular not been as popular as our classical literature outside of the country?’ Or ‘Why is modern Persian literature not recognized by the world?’ The final stage of the argument ends then with this question ‘is it us or is it just that the world does not know us?’
The responses to these questions have not been convincing at all; as these have been put forth by pro-modernist intellectuals with less critical inclination towards the function and the role of modernist discourse in Iran. Their analyses have hardly been able to scratch the surface, falling short of a real in-depth investigation. The literati’s explanation for the lack of recognition as a world-class literature has been largely ascribed to the following three reasons: the lack of a translation movement, political limitations, and the low readership in Iran. By and large the problem of modern Persian fiction is attributed to everything but the discourse itself. Other discourses, especially the Islamist trend, the ‘ignorance’ of the public and even the reluctance of translators to translate these works into other languages, have been blamed on; but pro-modernists have hardly mentioned the role of the modernity discourse or its intellectuals in that regard. Writers such as Shāmlu and Golshiri – who had literary as well as political weight – believed that the absence of translations was the main reason for the under-recognized status of Persian fiction in the world in general and in the West in particular. Consequently, these works have not been introduced well into the world. A question similar to the first one was asked to Shāmlu in two interviews in the late 1980s and early 1990s, during a period in Iran when censorship was bellowing its strength and publication was nearly non-existent during the Iraq-Iran war and immediately thereafter. Most of the novels that were written at this time were either banned by the government or did not find economic support for publication. Shāmlu, the most popular political poet of the time, had apparently read some of those unpublished works and claimed in his first interview that if these works had the chance to be published, the world would be
surprised and finally recognize the strength of Persian literature similar to a facet of Latin America literature of magic realism. In his second interview Shāmlu articulated his response with more poetic wording: “We can introduce our poetry and literature [modern poetry and novels] more proudly than we thought…. We should not think that our literature lacks a good quality. If our works are not presented to the world, maybe it has not been meticulously introduced to the world.” A few lines down he goes on to say, “do not take it so hard…. if our neighbor cannot see our beautiful vase it is not our problem, it is his” (Adineh 1993). Censorship seems to be completely amiss here. Some of the best pieces to which he refers to in his interviews were finally published and even translated into some European languages in the coming years; however, they hardly received any significant review outside of Iran, or even in Iran for that matter. Even then only Hedāyat’s Blind Owl (1930s) and Golshiri’s Prince Ehtejāb (1960s) were considered as the best Persian novels by the West.

In one of his interviews, Golshiri, a major novelist of that time, with the same perception saw bad translations as the main reason for the lack of recognition of Persian literature as world-class literature (Golshiri 1988). Doulatābādi, a realist novelist, in one of his talks in 1991 in North America, echoed the same argument and then called for Iranians with knowledge of other languages to introduce Persian literature to the world by way of their ‘good translations’ (Doulatābādi 1991). But despite the fact that even well-written translations of some praiseworthy works have not brought an in-depth recognition to Iranian literature outside of Iran, the idea of good translations as the only solution to this problem is still echoed by some writers and critics. This mentality led to
beliefs that the problem is with the world itself that, as a result of political disputes, it does not give attention to Persian modern literature. At the same time this mentality fails to consider the narrative discourse that is used by writers as the quintessential problem or even part of the problem.

A second group of thought finds systematic censorship and the Iranians’ lack of interest in reading as the main sources for this problem. Additionally by not supporting the writers and the translation movement, the government is also viewed as being part of the problem. But these statements are mostly vague, sidelining the role of censorship on the expression of creative, artistic individualistic works and the public component of banning them. The negative impact of censorship on publication is, however, more emphasized than the other facets. While the government is introduced as the only factor in censorship, some writers still believe that the government should be responsible for introducing the literary works to the world. They deem that, beyond the publishers’ efforts, the government must and should introduce all works in different book festivals and conferences held around the world. In an interview with Tabiān, a literary weblog, Siyāmak Golshiri, Golshiri’s nephew and a young writer, claims “governments of most countries spend a lot of money hiring good translators to translate their literary works into other languages. For instance, the South Korean government has founded translation agencies in the country to translate its literary works into other languages.” He goes on to say that “the goal of these agencies is to seek out good literary works, make contact with the authors and publishers, and make these works ready for translation”. “Then,” he adds, “the existence of such agencies is a need for us” (Moghimi, 2011). No sources are
mentioned, and it is unclear as to how the writer has found this information; he does not hesitate, however, to demand that his government forms such agencies. The title of this article is “Do not Write Only for Iranians”, which in itself suggests a solution to the recognition problem. The conclusion of the article, which echoes the title, demands close attention: “writers should create their works having in mind a worldwide audience, not solely an Iranian one”. In other words, beyond their response to the discursive issues in the Iranian cultural hemisphere, the writers should subscribe to what is important to the rest of the world, especially to the West. This solution could work if and only if the Iranian discourses were part of the larger parasol of discourses in the West, or if the Iranian social, cultural and political issues were to overlap with those. Even the most debated issues such as democracy and individualism are at different stages in Iran than in the West, as they are differently formulated in their perspective discourses. What is problematic is that the three main Iranian discourses basically differ from one another, and this is the root of disconnectedness amongst them, as I will further explore in the coming chapters.

Scholars such Karimi-Hakkak are also faced with this question in their interviews. Karimi-Hakkak in an interview with Radio Fardā tries to theorize it as a lack that intellectuals faced in the mid-nineteenth century. According to him, by having “an enduring relationship with the European countries intellectuals such as Ākhundzādeh, Mirzā Āqā Khān Kermāni, Nāzem al-Atebbā and Mirzā Malkam Khān realized that there were some differences between the Iranian literary legacy and the European counterparts. When these pioneers were reading French literature they asked themselves why they
[Iranians] do not have novels and plays in [their] literature.” Then he goes on to say “from that point on, a new effort was made to employ those expressions and semantic styles that were understandable by Europeans if the works were to be translated into their languages.” Simplistically, Iranian writers began to imitate the European literary styles, genres and traditions and respond to their, namely European, needs. Of course, those intellectuals were unable to distinguish the traditions from the creative techniques and styles, because, like most of their counterparts in today’s Iran, they were in adept in familiarizing themselves with Western literature historically and conceptually. Nonetheless, they wanted to replace the Iranian value system with another one, a substitution mechanism. The Western discourses were largely read out of their historical context in the West and had no familiar base in Iran. Karimi-Hakkak rightly divides the Iranians’ approaches towards Western literature into four periods. The first period was characterized by a self-criticism in which intellectuals sought to understand why their literature was not similar to the Western literature. In the second period the attempt was to utilize the literary elements and devices that would direct Persian literature on a similar course with the European tradition. The third period was the period of systematic imitation. The pioneers [of this period] were Eshqi, Lāhuti and Nimā in poetry and Jamālzādeh and Hedāyat in prose. In the last period, which took place after World War II, writers began to employ English and American literature, replacing French as the main literary model. Karimi-Hakkak then continues to say that there are two reasons for the Westerners’ lack of interest in Persian literature. He believes that “in every literary work there at least two qualities that are required in order to catch the attention of audiences
beyond national borders. First is the capacity to be consumed by the indigenous society; and by putting emphasis on the social and especially political issues, modern Iranian literature has happened to be successful in this capacity. That we [our writers] have been successful in this part... but by emphasizing on these issues we failed to create those qualities that are qualified among other peoples.” Although Karimi-Hakkak’s hypothesis does not open a whole space for further discussion, his reasoning is persuasive (Shorā-i Gostaresh-e Zabān 2008).

Clearly the literary achievements have not been profoundly remarkable; and now the Iranian literati are willing to talk about this overtly. For instance an editor of a collection of Hedāyat’s short stories writes: “The reason that ninety seven years after the first publication of Haji Bābā, translated by Mirzā Habib Isfahāni, and sixty nine years after the publication of Mohammad Hejāzi’s Zibā (Beauty, 1966) the form of the novel is still unreachable is a painful question [to ask]” This statement is made by a fairly young writer and critic, Jafar Modaress Sādeqi (2001:1), in his preface on a collection of Hedāyat’s short stories. He then adds, “The reason that Iranian story-writing [narrative genres] has not yet found its audience is troublesome. And I prefer not to ask these questions or to leave it like that [instead of making] general [shallow] and unsophisticated responses.” Obviously it is not just him that has made a blunt statement and he displays his frustration towards a literary tradition or rather formula of which he, through his novels, is a part. In response to the aforementioned remarks, other writers and critics have also expressed their frustrations openly or secretly.
The problem, then, is not simply the novelists, the translations or even the censorship. It is the Iranian secularist discourse that, by replacing the European historiography and value system with the Iranian one, has formulated the modern literary discourse. It is also the theoretical approach with which writers and scholars have attempted to tackle the problem out of its larger context or include only some of its elements. In other words, they believe that everything else is problematic but the modern discourse itself. The clash between the discourse of modernity, Islamism and nationalism is interpreted as a clash between freedom and despotic culture, not as a clash between two historiographies and value systems. The problem, then, is reduced to the literary issues.

If one wants to characterize the clash between these discourses in a few words, one could mention the problem of disconnectedness among these discourses at the historical, social, and cultural levels. Disconnectedness has led the issue to the point that the modern literary tradition has become an exclusive, and even monopolized, field for the secularists and those that are pro-Europeanization.

Answers to these questions then cannot be simple, but as seen in most cases writers and scholars failed to see the issues in the larger context of the modernity discourse in relation to other discourses. For them the root of the problem lies with just censorship or the absence of readership or good translations. There is no doubt that these factors are problematic too, especially related to the issue of censorship that, by creating a hostile environment for authors, has been costly to literature. But we cannot ignore the fact that these are the consequences of the larger problem in the discourse. There are some fundamental questions that should be addressed by means of the discourse;
questions that have not yet been raised or have been addressed in the wrong framework. Questions such as, why is it that modern Persian literature has been unable to create diverse works focusing on different aspects of life with polyphonic voices that transcend beyond the politicized debates? Another question as important as the first one is what makes narrative genres in Iran see the content from a political point of view. Or why is it that the Iranian discourse of modernity as the mother of modern narrative genres still wants to see the world through the basic dichotomy of modernity versus backwardness, and why by means of that, the narrative discourse has also produced the stories with the same dichotomous settings. In addition, both modernity and literary discourses principally limit themselves to these patterns and formulas, because the truth for them is not defined outside of these dichotomies.

The literati have hardly endeavored to deal with the issue in its discursive principles that were formed about a150 years ago by the first modernists (mutojadid) such as Ākhundzādeh, through a self-Orientalized attitude. Besides that, there has not been a serious effort to explain why the self-Orientalized discourse of modernity has had such a great influence on Persian literature since then. As far as we can see, the literati have no intention to delineate the issue as phenomena formed in certain historical circumstances in which the relationship between discourse, power and knowledge was broken or flatly disconnected. The reason for this is that the literati fails to acknowledge the discourse of modernity as part of the problem, being that, in a universal fashion it stood against the other discourses and allowed the clashes to emerge amongst them. On a literary level, the literati has not tried to shed light on why this literature, without
exception, is contextualized in the discourse of modernity with which it has tried to eliminate the Islamist and nationalist discursive forms.

Contextualizing the problem in its discursive framework, one does not need to reduce the problem into just one or two issues or even towards a crucial factor such as censorship. Also one does not have to be limited to just this perspective; because from a larger picture censorship can also be viewed as a part of the power-discursive problem in Iran. In other words, the questions to examine are why it is that this literature is formed through this discourse and no other discourses; or why it, in a roundabout way, is political, even in the apolitical works. And why it represents the most problematic aspects of the Iranian discourse of modernity, namely the process of elimination of its counterparts, accepting Europeanization as the only model of progress, and not being flexible in considering other indigenous historiographies as a possibility. And finally, what are the historical, cultural and social causes with which this discourse reduced itself into an ideology and as the only model for progress in Iran; and why is it that the modernists think everything and everybody else should be blamed but themselves, while at the same time, however, they are unable to explain their roles and weight in the political and cultural spheres.

Having a critical approach towards the discourse of modernity as a self-Orientalized narrative gives us the opportunity to understand the antagonistic relationship between the secularists and Islamists as the main influential cultural and political forces in Iran. The problematic issues among the discourses are two: the historiographical plot, or the model of sovereignty and progress; and the value system that was proposed by
each. In brief, every discourse has offered different historiographies and value systems for Iran’s future, which has its roots in the universal narratives. Islamists modified a new universal historicism and value system against the Western counterparts. This was not completely accepted by nationalists, who wanted to replace the value system with the pre-Islamic Iranian-ness. Modernists discredited all of these and instead wanted to replace them with the European value system and model of progress. Despite the powers and roots that Islamism and nationalism possessed, modernists aspired to Europeanize the country. In other words, instead of Persianizing the modernity project they wanted to Europeanize the modernity movement in Iran. That is why the modernists were against Islamism from the beginning and later when they became united during the constitutional movement; the same episode was repeated between them and the nationalists during the period within the two World Wars. By discrediting all other parties, modernists were also alienated, because all three trends’ historiographies and future plots had things to offer, and thus people could not reject one over the other. They in fact wanted and still want to have a blend of these three identifiable forces in politics and culture.

One of the attempts in this dissertation is to deal with these issues on the discursive level. To do so it is important to deal with the circumstances on both the historical and the socio-cultural axes along which the discourse is formed. The first step is to examine the structural and thematic consequences that have been created in the literary works. It is, however, important to mention that scholars such as Tavakoli-Targhi, Mehrzad Boroujerdi, Turaj Attabaki and even Ahmad Karmi Hakkak have dealt with the three discourses, especially the discourse of modernity, from their socio-
historical aspects without regard to the influences on literature. They indeed have created a valuable resource in this regard, but they have not shed light on modern fiction from the socio-historical aspect, although they have dipped their feet only minimally into the realm of literature.

We should note that, being unable to harmonize its relationships with power and knowledge, the discourse of modernity in Iran had no choice but to reduce itself into an ideology. A number of reasons can be mentioned for this reduction. Firstly, unlike the European modernity movements, this discourse could not intermingle with the native discourses of Islamism and nationalism. Secondly, having an indirect association with real power in Europe, the modernity movement considered itself as a dominant discourse, expecting others to give up their narratives once and for all. Thus, Iranian modernism wants to eliminate other discourses in order to re-instate its position in the culture. Thirdly, nationalism, for the modernists, was a political tool in the hands of statesmen and not a system of signification; therefore, modernists could not address the identity crisis at all. According to Bauman and Briggs (2003) modernity in European traditions was part of the nationalist movements, not the other way around. By accepting the European model of progress as the only historiographical plot for Iran, the modernist movement denied its past, particularly Shiism, as a major cultural system of signification and took the antagonistic approach to Shiism and nationalism. In other words, instead of Persianizing the process of modernization, the discourse of modernity has tried to Europeanize Iranian-ness through the processes of religious and national elimination. The discourse indeed could have had a deeper footprint in Iran, as it was one of the few
non-Western societies that had an early constitutional revolution in 1905-1911. By interactively helping nationalization replace universal Islamism with an aptly non-universal Islamism, it could have created more breathing room for itself. But under the Orientalist mentality and having replaced the Iranian-selfhood with the European-self, the modernist movement automatically shut down communication with the other discourses. This is what the Islamist discourse aimed for as well, thus the bridges between these narratives were destroyed and an inherent disconnectedness historically took form in another dimension. As a result of this remarkable act not only did the discourse reduce itself into the political ideology against others, but it also helped nationalism become marginalized against Islam. Marginalizing the national identity created more space for Islamism in the second half of the twentieth century.

By creating the ideology of progress, the discourse of modernity in Iran, as in other third world countries, has had a dual effect. On one hand it opens a window towards the West through which Iranians gaze upon themselves from the other’s perspective. On the other hand it took away the option from the Iranians of writing their own historiography and replaced it by the idea of European progress with only one possible path to adhere to. In addition, by supporting the Western values in lieu of the Perso-Islamic ones, it prevented Iranians from creating their new identity which should otherwise have been a blend of all three. As a result, the only presumable option that was left for the people of Iran was to follow the rigid path of European historiography step by step in order to modernize the country. Modernists optimistically thought that the West would help them to advance via this path and at the end let Iran gain backs its full
sovereignty. Disappointment led to the Islamists’ growth in the second half of the twentieth century that leads to seize of power, even though they were unable to step down from the universal historicism, to create a relative model of progress specific to Iran.

Backwardness and the lack of sovereignty were indeed the only real frameworks to delineate the truth for all the discursive trends, namely Islamists, nationalists and modernists. All three wanted to deal with these issues; but instead of internalizing the overarching dilemma as part of discursive discussions the two main trends of Islamism and secularism with their contradictory points rose against each other as political, cultural and literary adversaries. The discourse of modernity that expectedly would and should have become an overarching narrative found its new foe in the traditionalist discourses of Islamists and nationalists to different degrees. It is unclear as to why and how this came about in the early mid-nineteenth century, as both these --isms were unified under the same pretext, namely fighting against the established monarchism. All is known is that the animosity between these trends was present prior to this period, tracing all the way back to the era when the oriental works of Morrier and Malcom (History of Persia [Lambton 1980]) were published in the early 1800s.

The same pattern can be identified in the so-called modern literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at which point Persian modern fiction took European modern literature as the only model for literary tradition. Even though the Persian literary traditions did not completely disappear, they were marginalized and redeemed as the symbol of backwardness within the purview of the modern trend. In addition, the modern trend created two parallel traditions for the novel; however, those
with a nationalist tendency, or those that did not completely fall into the defined modern tradition, were alienated as well. For instance, the works of Hejāzi and Said Nafisi were generally criticized as non-realistic, overtly romantic or too nationalistic. The ideology of progress instead became a dominant factor in literature and man was basically defined through that. By changing the paradigm, self-traditions, cultures and beliefs became secondary to the nonnegotiable principle of progress. And as an anti-religious and anti-traditional trend, its aura became political, especially in the novels that were written in the period of 1920-1980. Early works were bold about these ideas; examples are Jamālzādeh’s Gholtashan Divān (1338 [1959]) and Hedāyat’s Ḥāji āqā (1344 [1965 or 1966]) or Al-Be’sat all-Islamieh (On the Rise of Islam, 1361 [1982]). Later novels have described their anti-Islamic / anti-tradition views indirectly or through the characterization of undesirable characters; nonetheless, it is omnipresent and readers can sense it immediately; some of Sā’e’di’s works, such as Panj Namāyeshnāmeh (Five Plays, 1966), or Golshiri’s In Ghafeleh (This Convoy, 1989) are the best examples of this. To discern this approach chronologically, one can say that in the first few decades modernist literature was entirely against Islam, and then, when it became leftist, it was against nationalism. The early works set the discursive tone for modern literature, despite the fact that pre-Constitutional fiction was not as artistic and literary as those produced between the revolutions. Thus, there is no choice but to cover all of the works here in the larger period of 1870-1980, from the early writers such as Ākhundzādeh, Mirzā Āqā Tabrizi, Tālebov and Marāqe to the contemporary writers such as Golshiri and Beizā’i. The reason for that is quite simple: all the literary works, simple or complicated, have
fallen discursively into the ideological paradigm of modernism by producing the same patterns, motifs and characterizations. Further, they all portrayed the same issues, such as religion, tradition and political nationalism, becoming an anathema. Needless to say, the narrative formula, motifs and settings of the early works were indeed formed mainly by the oriental discourse exhibited in works such as Morrier’s *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (*Haji Bābā of Isfahān*).

As a result, the literary discourse encompasses two main themes: anti-religious, or rather anti-Islamic sentiments, and anti-monarchism, which views the monarch as an illegal government. In the pre-Constitutional works ignorance, illiteracy and superstitious beliefs were deemed the main sources of backwardness. They were understood to be the result of the misinterpretation of Islam by religious leaders and the abuse of power by the monarch and his statesmen. In the post-Constitutional works the religion of Islam itself, and later Shiite culture, were defined as the main sources for ignorance and backwardness. These themes may overlap in the socialist realism that was largely dominant amongst the leftists, such as Bozorg Alavi, Ahmad Mahmud and even Sādeq Chubak, during 1930-1970s. Therefore, the literary discourse became completely political and it developed into a kind of backlash to what was characteristic in the classical literature. It is true that classical Persian literature was historically dominated by poetry, which, as Katouzian (2007: 1) puts it, “[h]ad served a greater variety of purposes than its European counterpart. Apart from lyrics, sonnets, epics and mythology, it encompassed mysticism, philosophy, religion, moralizing, panegyrics, history, fables and romances, elegy, satire, abuse, invective and obscenity. Yet, generally speaking, it
excluded social and political analysis and criticism.” Even though there is some truth to this statement, one cannot disregard the fact that religious beliefs back in the medieval period were part of the political debates as a means of legitimacy; therefore, the reflection of religious beliefs, particularly the marginalized and oppressed ones, should be considered as part of the political discourse in the medieval literature. Echoing this trajectory the prose stories or novels, such as Dārābnāmeh and Abu-Muslimnāmeh demonstrates a fight against illegitimate rulers as the main motif. Failing to see this genre as part of the classical literature, Katouzian (2007: 1-2) believes that “[p]rose was confined to formal administrative essays, historiography and chronicles, tales and anecdotes and occasionally – long meditations.” Then he states that “[t]here was no prose fiction, satire and drama of the kind which has been developing in Europe since seventeenth century.” The only outstanding works in prose, according to him, were Beihaci’s Tarikh (history) and Sa’di’s Golestan (a collection of short anecdotes and tales). By comparing the two light can be shed on the realization that modern fiction has been politically influenced by the old prose novels. Despite the fact that it tries to sever its cord from native literary traditions and simply imitate European traditions instead, the Persian modern narrative, as we shall see, has adopted the themes of old novels such as Abu-Muslimnāmeh and its political trend of continual conflict with the illegitimate rulers. However, the difference, in this regard, is the definition of political legitimacy in the modern works. For the old novels legitimacy had a religious framework. In the modern works, on the contrary, legitimacy is defined within the framework of politics and justice issues that have an anti-religious overview. Further investigation within the dissertation
proves that the concept of justice can arguably find its origins in pre-Islamic thought and literature as well, but the definition in modern Iran is not clear and tries to enmesh both the idea of social justice as well as the Iranian theory of justice found in classical literature.

Despite its effort to avoid the tradition, modern fiction is then thematically influenced by the old novels, and through that nearly all writers of this long period became political or had no choice but to view matters from this perspective; even apolitical writers such as Chubak and Sādeqi who deliberately avoided this resonate the political issues in their works. Chubak’s *Tangsir* (1342 [1963]) and *Sang-e Sabur* (1369c [1990]) and Sadeqi’s *Khāneh Ejārei* are the best examples of the so-called non-political stories. These works may not be anti-governmental or anti-monarchy per se; but they portray the economic and cultural poverties in the working and lower middle class families in order to direct their readers to seek the causes of this situation in the political system.

Overall, all of the writers of this period are anti-religious if they are not political, atheist, communist or socialist. They do not hesitate to show their fear of religious domination, nor is their secularism merely limited to the separation of church and state. Above that they deemed that religion in general and Islam in particular should be eliminated as a way of thinking or lifestyle. Because of this they were, or at least they appeared to be, generally anti-establishment. Thus, the anti-religious sentiments echo louder in these works than do anti-nationalist or anti-political sentiments. On the contrary all of them, having inherited their literary discourse from the early modernists,
highly admired the European way of life as the only path that would modernize the country individually and collectively regardless of cultural differences or even political discrepancies. This cultural value system, with its roots in Christianity, alongside its European historiography, suggested only one path to be paved, namely the route taken by the Western countries prior to Iran. Therefore, the major goal for these writers is to show Iranians the prestigious but rigid path to progress; at the same time they aim to expose the menace that the traditional thoughts and mentalities could create for this path, risking the country to be diverted from progress.

There are of course no easy answers to the aforementioned questions, but my attempt is to explain why the discourse of modernity amongst other historical and social circumstances is one of the fundamental causes for Iranian modern fiction’s inability to create a three-dimensional literature. This problem as, previously mentioned, is in fact historical in nature, although it is seldom put in this context. Literarily and artistically, the main problem is that these stories are not alive; they do not revolve around real characters. They are not a mirror of life as it is or as it could be; rather they illustrate life from their political viewpoint. Accordingly, they portray their view as the only possible approach towards the world, philosophy, culture and above all politics. Their discursive narrative is thus the reflection of the modernist ideology.

The fundamental problem is then the meta-narrative. A narrative that right from its beginnings, for the sake of its own success, used no other method, but to launch battles against its discursive opponents in all aspects of culture as well as literature. This is the same question that preoccupied Ale Ahmad’s mind in his famous book *Dar Khedmat o
Kheyānat-e Roshanfekrān (On the Service and Treason of Intellectuals). Unable to find an answer, he turns to an anti-Western nativism that seeks salvation through an Islamic movement. What he predicted some decades before the 1979 Revolution, but did not live long enough to see, was Iran’s inability to embrace the modernity discourse as well.

It is of course valid to ask why and under what circumstances Islamists also found this narrative dangerous for themselves. Or why it was that both, to some extent, found nationalism as a threat to their perspective discourses.

My dissertation, then, has two main parts. In the first part I will try to examine the problematic issues in the discourse of modernity in a historical context and from a socio-historical perspective. But because my knowledge in these fields is limited to what I have read I will just try to set up previous scholars’ thoughts on them rather than to adopt an analytical approach. This part consists of three chapters: First, a portrayal of the socio-political climate created by the rise and subsequent fall of an oriental empire emerging into a peripheral country. In the second chapter a historical light will be shed on the process of denationalization through the nineteenth century. In particular, this chapter is concerned with the nationalist movement alongside its literary expressions which began to form in the midst of losing territorial and social sovereignty. The third chapter considers the consequences of denationalization towards the end of the century. Specifically, it focuses on how the power vacuum that occurs around this time shatters the old universal discourse and through that creates the three aforementioned discourses.

In the second part I will deal with the modernity discourse as reflected in Persian fiction; here I will endeavor to examine the impact of major issues on the form, style and
literary devices in the stories. The residue of the discursive dichotomy in Iranian literature’s motifs and structures is the final step in this work. This section consists of two chapters. Chapter four is based on the characteristics of the new discourses according to their theoretical aspects. And the last chapter, which is the longest, examines the impact of modernist discourse in literary works both thematically and structurally. A short conclusion then ends the project raising a few new questions that might give the opportunity to reformulate the modern literary discourse under a different parasol.
Chapter 2: Falling as an Oriental Empire and Rising as a Third World Country

The modernity movement in Iran projected certain expectations and a model of progress that chronologically formed three phases: ‘time of hope’, ‘time of despair’ and ‘time of pessimism.’ The first phase which begins with Fath Ali Ākhundzādeh and ends with Mohammad Ali Jamālzādeh (1860-1930) can be characterized as ‘the time for hope.’ Pro-modernist intellectuals of this period tended to imagine Iran as an oriental empire that had declined; but through the modernity project, they hoped that it could regain its ancient glory and power and become a modern empire like its European counterparts. As Iranian intellectuals did not want to pay attention to any non-Western civilizations, the focus of comparison was largely on Iran, as a wretched empire, with the newly emerging empires of Europe. The comparison criteria thus were based on the political and military potential that empires could and should have. In time they concluded that Iran had become derailed sometime in the early nineteenth century while the European countries were gaining power through their military and scientific progress. They soon came to the conclusion that Iran had been unaware (‘bikhabar’) of the new sciences and military abilities and had gone into hibernation, or a coma as some intellectuals described it. In order to come out of this coma, according to these modernists, Iran had no choice but to acquire the new imported scientific and military
capabilities. Besides the role of European colonization, which was partially recognized as a force for backwardness, the religious beliefs and superstitions were identified as the dominant internal forces that hindered Iran from gaining back the scientific abilities that it once had. Because they blamed Islam for the fall of Iran, intellectuals were inclined to form a nostalgic mind-set towards Iran’s pre-Islamic times. Consequently their modernism had close ties to an imagined Iran without Islam. In addition, they defined modernism as a part of nationalism, not the other way around. Their solution was then very simple: replace the superstitious Islamic society in which some of them lived (the majority of the early intellectuals were raised or lived outside of Iran in the Caucasus, Turkey, India or Europe) with the imagined pre-Islamic one. Their form of nationalism revolved around the narrative of progress, and a subscription to this discourse of modernity deliberately alienated people as Muslims. Katouzian claims that “modernism and nationalism are twin sisters” in Iran. We can agree to this statement only for this early period as well as the next; later, however, when modernization found its sister dangerous to holding its ground in Iran, it denounced her as a reactionary political force.

The lost perspective to this assertion was the notion of nationalism as a system of cultural signification or rather a cultural language. Nationalism in the third period was equated with political ideology used by monarchs against people’s desires. As a result, the outcome of modernism on Iranian nationalism was deterministic, because it asked for an imagined Iran without Islam and without contemplating the possible chances that Islam might offer. Modernism was generally thought of as a model for restoring the once powerful pre-Islamic Iran. Ākhundzādeh as a pioneer of Iranian modernist thought
romanticized pre-Islamic society and government with little or no correlation to real history in which Persianized Islam, Shiism, had had a great role in the last four centuries. In order to demean his contemporary Iranian rulers and religious leaders he, in his *Maktubât* (letters by a fictitious Indian prince, kamal al-Dowleh, to an equally fictitious Iranian prince, Jalāl al-Dowleh), depicts the ancient Persians as such:

The people, living under the protection of [the ancient king emperor’s] rule enjoyed celestial blessings, and lived in comfort and dignity. There was neither poverty nor begging. The people were free in their own country and respected in foreign lands (1992: 16).

He believed that “no one was killed without the shah’s permission anywhere in this vast country and the shah’s advisors were all wise and well-intentioned people, and the shah ate at the same table with his subjects” (Katouzian 2007: 6). At the same time he supposes that Arabs were the ones that destroyed this glorious land with their religion:

Whither that glory, that power, that happiness. Naked and hungry Arabs have made you wretched for a thousand, two hundred and eighty years. The land is in ruins, the people are ignorant, unaware of world *civilization* [the French word in the original text], and deprived of the blessing of freedom, and the shah is a *despot* [sic]. The injustice of the *despot*, and the fanaticism of the *ulamā* [religious leaders) have resulted in the country’s weakness … Where have the Arabs themselves gone? At the moment there are no people in the world who are less human and more wretched than the Arabs. Why then did Islam not lead to *their* unhappiness? (Katouzian 2007: 20-32)
This perspective was echoed by all modernist writers, poets and political activists, both before and after the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911). In his book *Se Maktub* (Three Letters, 2000) Mirzā Āqā Khān Kermāni, a follower of Ākhundzādeh and a supporter of Babism and at the same time a close friend of Afghani, denounces the religious leaders for being as reckless as the political leaders. He believes these two groups of people are animals that should be leashed. He says:

… If just one volume of *Bahār al-Anvār* (a religious book written by the influential Shiite leader Molā Bāqer Majlesi) is published [translated] in any nation and [that nation] establishes these superstitions among them [its people], saving of that nation would be hard and difficult (Kermāni 1991: 188).

He then writes about the role of Arabs as the only source of Iranian backwardness:

The Arabs have not only invaded our religion and government but also our sweet language … Their destruction of our ancestor’s language is worse than our country’s ruin, for nothing is remaining from our once glorious nation, since nothing has remained from our beloved language (Kermāni 1991: 164; Kedourie-Haim 1980: 76).

The notion of language as the ‘house of nationality’ had been around since the tenth century and the *Sho’ubi* (nationalist) movement, which appears to have come about in response to the larger problem of subjection under the Arabs’ reign; nonetheless, what Kermāni claims about language echoes the *Bāzgasht* (return) movement’s agenda in the early nineteenth century in which purification of the language had become one of its
literary aspirations. Accordingly, Iranians not only suffered from military invasion, being forced to adopt the ‘creed of Arabism’ (ayin-e arabiyyat) and witness the burning of their ancient books, compelled to study, in an alien language, a ‘mixed-up Quran that has no beginning and no end’, but what’s more, they remained culturally removed, for all Persian studies were entirely neglected ever since (Kermāni 1991: 88). Elsewhere Kermāni adds:

For a thousand years Iranians were under the yoke of Arabs. They accepted Islam out of fear … They have to wake up from this nightmare and emancipate themselves from this yoke (264).

This anti-Arab feeling led him to gulp readily and accept some contemporary European racist theories (Bayat 1980: 77) as ‘scientific facts’. He goes even further to say that “one could therefore detect from among a crowd of Persians, Greeks, English, Ethiopians, Sudanese and Arabs the notion of who is civilized and who is primitive by their physical features such as the shape of the nose, the color of the skin and their blood.” Here Kermāni (1991: 39-40) implies that the first three nationalities are civilized whereas the last three are not. He openly blames Islam and its leaders (ulamā) as the destructive forces in the history of the Iranian nation and its culture:

This faith, which the Persians were forced to accept at the point of the Arab sword, today is still apparently accepted out of the fear of the ulamā’s weapon of curse and excommunication. That day scared of the sword, today scared of the pen (Kermāni 1991: 74).
According to him, the ignorant ulamā who established Shiism in order to consolidate the power of the Safavid dynasty were responsible for the harmful animosity that was subsequently aroused between the Sunnis and the Shiites, a rivalry that according to him will persist forever. Kermāni (1991: 21) strongly opposed some of the extremist Shiite practices and declared:

What is left of Islam is only a name empty and dried up. With utter sorrow I warn the ulamā that in a few years even the name of Muslims will be taken away from us, and we would then perish as a community.

Like other modernists of this period, Kermāni identifies himself as a Muslim, regardless of his anti-Islamic statements. His nationalism was also inspired by both poetic fire and prophetic fanaticism that together contributed to the unleashing of all passion, hatred and resentment accumulated through the years. Like Ākhundzādeh, as well as later writers and activists such as Mohammad Taghi Bahār, Taghi Raf’at, Adib al-Mamālek and Sādeq Hedāyat, Kermāni’s image of Iran did not correspond with reality. For all of these writers the Zoroastrian past was considered the zenith of Iran’s glory and power, “when neighboring kings bowed to her mighty emperors and her soldiers planted her banner in conquered lands” (Kermāni 1991: 21).

This is the message that Adib al-Mamālek (1860-1918) sends to his people in his famous poem. National Song, written in mosamat (a poetic genre). In order to show the glory of pre-Islam, Adib al-Mamālek, a revolutionary poet and activist from this period, praised the highly romanticized picture of ancient Iran in his poem. The mighty Persian
emperors, in this poem, are portrayed as jahāngīr (world conquerors), able to collect taxes and levies from other kings, all the while keeping their subjects rich, free and happy. He claims further that ancient Persians led a happy life under the reign of law and justice. Being ruled by the right government and the right religion, they felt secure and not at the mercy of their superiors (Āriyan-pour 1972: 139-41).

But today Iran, according to these writers, has moved towards an opposite path. For them the imagined past as compared to the actual (Islamic) past and present is akin to what light is to darkness. Mirzā Āqā Khān Kermāni (1991:15) lyrically describes it with full of anguish and nostalgia:

The name of Iran and Persians in Europe is now in ill repute. They take us for savages and wild beasts. Nobody has any respect for us … O, Iran! Where have all those kings, who adorned you with justice, equity, and munificence, who decorated you with pomp and splendor, gone? … A handful of naked, barefoot, hungry, savage Arabs have come and, for 1285 years, have plunged you into such misery and darkness.

Adib al-Mamālek, Hedāyat, the unknown author of 23 Years, which was published around the 1979 Revolution, and Shojā’ al-Din Shafā, echoed Kermāni in the same tone of anguish; the former in his poems, Hedāyat in his stories and the latter two in their essays. In fact, Kermāni is the one, amongst the so called enlightened-men, who sets the main narrative for post-Constitutional writers such as Mohammad Ali Jamālzādeh, known as the father of modern short story, and Sādeq Hedāyat known as the father of modern novel, with two elements of Iranian-ness: social justice and anti-Islamic
sentiment. To make a connection between the Arab invasion and contemporary Iran, all of these writers blamed the first, the *ulamā* as religious leaders who deliberately oppressed people with Islamic superstitions, and then the blood-thirsty despots who became tyrants by way of this Islamic culture. These elites essentially hoped to reconfigure Iran’s history in order to create a non-Islamic identity coupled with the modern image. The West and the modernity discourse obviously had an immense role in this situation. As Hunter (1992/1983: 9) states, the “harmony between Iran and Islam ended when Iran came into contact with the West at the beginning of the nineteenth century.” The West fundamentally changed the Iranian perspective once the nature of their relationship changed. For example, Ale Ahmad (1984: 42-43), a nativist, evaluates the relationship between Iran and the West throughout history and determines that Iran’s perspective towards the West was transformed at the point when the power shift occurred:

There is nothing extraordinary about the mutual relationship between Iran and the West]. It is intercourse with neighbors near and far. It is to seek to widen one’s humanity in other existential molds. What is strange is that, although until some three hundred years ago our westward regard had, as its sole aspect, motive, and cause, hatred, jealousy, and rivalry, these have since been replaced by rueful, worshipful longing … We had always felt jealousy or hatred toward the West. We competed with her. We fought for her verdant lands, busy ports, placid towns, and steady rainfall. All through those bygone times, we regarded ourselves as worthy of possessing such bounty and our own beliefs and customs as true. We called them unbelievers; we saw them as lost souls. If despite the
Sasanians’ fanatic Zoroastrianism we gave refuge to their scholars fleeing Alexandria and Constantinople, we evaluated these by our own criteria. At times we went so far as to declare open season on their lives and goods; thus we raided westward all we could … we have certainly met as two rivals. And what could be better?

But as to the power shift that happened some three hundred years ago he describes the change in the nature of this relationship as such:

We have forgotten the spirit of competition and come to feel in its place the spirit of helplessness, the spirit of worshipfulness. We no longer feel ourselves to be in the right and deserving. (They take the oil, because it is their right and because we cannot stop them; they manage our policies, because our hands are tied; they take away our freedom, because we’re unworthy of it.)

And because our lifestyle is defined by them now “[i]f we seek to evaluate some aspect of our lives, we do so by their criteria, as prescribed by their advisors and consultants. Thus do we study, thus do we gather statistics; thus do we conduct research. This makes sense insofar as science has universal methods: scientific methods that bear the imprint of no nationality” (43-44). For Ale Ahmad this shift came along with the anti-Islamic narrative. In fact it was associated with anti-nationalism and egalitarianism as well.

Three main elements of the narrative, which became dominant in contemporary literature, were: an anti-Islamic sentiment, a prevalent theme in all three periods; a nostalgia for a glorious, powerful past, which was dominant in the first two periods; and social justice, linked to Mazdak, the populist revolutionary who had challenged and
threatened the Sassanid authority. Mazdak, as viewed by Kermāni, wanted to establish a republican, egalitarian type of government in pre-Islamic Iran. These were the main demands that intellectuals made around the period of the constitutional movement. As a result of the leftist paradigm’s influence, Mazdakism was replaced in the third period by socialist notions of justice. Having fallen to the status of a third world country through the poverty and economic disputes with the West, the Persian theory of justice was substituted by the socialist ideal of justice first amongst the leftists and then the Islamists who finally came to power in 1979.

It should be noted that there was not a sharp distinction between these two periods, but consistent with its characteristics, the second period began and ended with Sādeq Hedāyat who flourished as a modern novelist and critic in 1930s and 1940s. His works in fact enunciate the characteristics of both periods and in some ways even the third one. This phase was marked by a certain characteristic ‘despair’ that separated it from the previous one; because in this period the modernists, having witnessed the acts of superpowers, realized that the glorious empire of the past was lost forever and that what had been molded out of its ashes was relegated as an entirely peripheral country, no longer at the center of the world. Additionally it was so economically and politically impoverished that without any sovereignty it was unable to get back on its feet to match European civilization and progress. In other words, the recognition of the harsh reality rendered intellectuals in this period to abandon the idea of a restoration of ancient Persia, or at the least to deem it as an unreachable goal under the existing conditions. Indeed such political realities as World War I, the secret partition of Iran in accordance with the
1907 treaty between Russia and British, and later World War II, made it evident that Iran’s sovereign rights were wholly disregarded. At the same time political events such as the 1919 coup d'état happened against the people’s will. Sandra Mackey (1996: 162) explains how foreign influence affected Iran’s independence: “When a country cannot manage its own affairs, and cannot keep order amongst its own affairs, and cannot keep order among its own people, it has already lost its independence; and in that sense Persia has long ceased to be an independent state.” Furthermore, by the end of World War I in 1918, Iran was in a state of complete social, political, and economic apathy.

Such events brought intellectuals to finally realize that ‘the fallen empire’ is not eventually rising back as a powerful modern one, not even as a modern country with full sovereignty; instead it is demoted to the ‘periphery or third world country’ in which people have to fight hopelessly for their everyday living and freedoms. The shattered image of a glorious Iran as a trap resonated with everybody. Haunted by this image, intellectuals could not resolve themselves to accept the present reality; because Iran, they believed, with its rich literature and culture, was still believed to be at the center of the world or one of the centers at the least. Unable to give up the idea of universalism or to integrate the modern discourse with an overarching nationalism, they opted to replace their cultural centralism with the Europeanist culture unquestionably. As with the legendary Seyāvash of classical Persian literature, who portrayed and confined himself as the ideal image, was unable to see the beginnings of this disaster, and with the modernist intellectuals’ idealism that led them to lose their basis with reality; examined the situation only from a romantic viewpoint. Two decades later in the 1960s, when the
fever of nationalism had passed Ale Ahmad expressed this mentality in *Gharbzadegi* (Occidentosis) and *Dar Khedmat o Khyānat-e Roshanfekrān*. As pointed out earlier, he believed that “we [Iranians] were well-off until three centuries ago … We had our lifestyle and they (Europeans) had their own … we were powerful enough to defend ourselves … but things changed in the eighteenth century when we were left behind due to our ignorance, while they progressed” (Ale Ahmad 1357a [1978], vol. 1: 43). The national sentiment is hidden in this passage; however, he dismisses nationalism as “a game played by intellectuals to fill their leisure times.” Amongst the three discourses, he takes Islamist and modernist trends seriously, while nationalism to him is a pretentious game for diverting the interests of intellectuals. He goes further on to identify three ‘intellectual games’: the Zoroastrian game, the Ferdowsi game, and finally the Kasravi game (Kasravi was an anti-Shiite writer who was assassinated by a religious fundamentalist) (vol. 2: 156). The central theme among these is, as he explains, an abhorrence of Islam (vol. 1: 158).

This disheartened realization, which has best been depicted in Hedāyat’s *Haji Āqā* (written in 1942), gave the secularists no other option but to abandon the concept of modernization as part of the nationalist process. The novella of *Haji Āqā* is literarily weak, but it is written with a direct language as the time when Reza Shah abdicated the throne and was sent out of the country by the Allies. The invasion of Iran by the Allies, in 1941, was a major turning point for Iranians. Censorship during this time was very relaxed. As a result, Hedāyat wrote his novella without any fear. As such, the story represents the spirit of the time more freely and directly, particularly as it characterizes
the intellectuals’ concerns, namely corruption, economic and cultural poverties and desperation. Hope had been replaced by despair; so that the author did not care much about being politically correct. Without any hesitation, he expressed his hatred towards the old colonialists, the British and Russians, and their puppet leader in Iran, Reza Shah; meanwhile sympathizing with their rival, Germany, as the rising hopes for the colonized countries.

Separation of nationalism and modernism was a firm consequence of the new reality. This new separation is seen as a reactionary force on par with Islamism. Separation of nationalism and modernism evidently had its severance in the literati as well. By marginalizing the nationalists, and the Islamists, the intellectuals began to convince themselves that working on classical Persian literature and culture is a move back into the past and towards tradition, an inconsequential activity only valuable to nationalism. Considering it as an anathema, they concluded that nationalism is not a harbinger of modernization. The heated debate regarding Sa’di, the hitherto untouchable and most revered hero of classical Persian literature, illustrates the separation of these discourses between WWI and WWII (Āriyan-pour 1972: 220) whilst nationalism had become a prejudiced tool in the hands of the regime. This debate took place between Mohammad Taghi Bahār, a revolutionary but old-fashioned poet and scholar in the academic journal of Dāneshkadeh, and Taghi Raf’at, a modernist revolutionary and the editor of Āzādiyestān. Of course, both writers still viewed pre-Islamic Iran to be the best or rather the most pure part of Iranian culture. Reality, however, brought the latter to believe that classical literature as a source for nationalism was a reactionary force that
would halt the movement of modernization in the country. Similarly, Hedāyat never gave up believing that the pre-Islamic period was the best part of Iranian culture and simultaneously the Islamic era contributing to the deterioration of the culture. Hedāyat’s Parvin dokhtar-e Sāsān (Parvin daughter of Sāsān, 1963) and Sāyah Rawshan (Chiaroscuri, 1342b [1963]) and his translations of Pahlavi texts such as Zand va Homān Yasn (1944) and Kārnāmeh Ardestir-e Pāpakān (The Book of the Deeds of Ardashir [son of] Papakan, 1943) reflect his tendency towards a celebration of ancient Iran; an parallel on the other hand novels such as ‘Alavieh Khānum (1342a [1963]), and Al-Be’tha al-islāmieh show his anti-Islamic attitude. Under his influence, Bozorg ‘Alavi and Sādeq Chubak wrote stories that were essentially anti-Islamic statements rather than fiction; for instance, the two short stories of ‘Alavi, published in Chamenān (2537 [1978 or 1979]), or Wooden Hours and Last Light (1369a [1990]) written by Chubak, were contextually similar to Kermāni’s Se Maktub. In this regard, this period can be seen as an exploration of liminal time and space between the periods in which a blend of both ideas is used in the literary debates and works. Not having given up on nationalism all together, Hedāyat simply became bitter about contemporary Iran. The country became more like a dystopia to him, but unfortunately not an imaginary one. The similarities between Kermāni’s essays and Hedāyat’s so-called realist stories are poignant. What the former has described as an actual Iran in his political debates has jumped to life in Hedāyat’s stories. Despite his belief in a return to Zoroastrian culture as part of the solution, in his realist stories his proclivity of creating an environment that engendered a painful fallback towards a backward country was being echoed much more strongly than
the nationalistic sentiments. The deep gap between the glorious past and disgraced present was unable to be cemented by a clear, hopeful future. The presupposition was no longer valid and in order to create a hopeful future there was no other choice but to imagine it through a European historicism. We should not overlook the fact that Hedāyat was from an affluent aristocratic family, holding important positions of power during the Qajar and the Pahlavi periods. With a large inheritance, and being from an affluent family, he did not work for the majority of his life, and was not a commoner. Therefore, his descriptions of the poor people, all of whom were characterized as superstitious charlatans, thieves and even murderers, were more than simple exaggerations, and quite removed from reality. In his stories, all Iranians are described as such, whereas the superiorly cultured characters are by and large French or European, an influence that can be traced back to his formative years as a college student in France.

In the third period the severance between nationalism and modernism was finalized. The Tudeh party and its Marxist Leninist ideology had a great role in this process. As a pro-Soviet organization in Iran, the Tudeh party, that was founded by a group of leftist intellectuals during WWII, defined nationalism as a danger to the internationalism as part of brother parties. By promoting and supporting European-style literature, in particular the socialist realist works from Russia, the internationalist ideology introduced nationalism as on par with Islam, an oppressive tool in the hands of governments. This sentiment of anti-nationalism was bought mainly by the ethnic groups, who were culturally more disconnected from ancient Iran and from Persian literature. Islamism was then defined as a permissible base for superstitious beliefs, and
early modernism identified itself with nationalism as well as Europeanization. In the third period nationalism was extricated out of the picture. It, thus, did not leave any other choice for the people but to identify themselves separately through their ethnicities, Islam, nationalism or modernism. Reduced to the ideologies, these discourses were not able to morph with other discourses or interact with every aspect of culture anymore. At best we may find intellectuals who define themselves within the purview of these. Modernists, like Islamists, deemed that these sources of identity were fragmented and were unable to produce a single consolidated discourse, and a unification of discourses would halt the process of modernization and progress in Iran. As a result, the discourse of modernity irreducibly became an ideology. This ideology as a new source of identity picked two extremes of ethnicity and modernity and omitted the religious and nationalist discourses as simply reactionary forces against the European model of progress. This is a trend that can be seen in present day Iran as a pervasive and powerful force amongst the intellectuals and the literati. Religion in general and Islam-Shiism in particular were strongly condemned as negative forces. They were considered to be opiates against modernization. Nationalism and classical literature can also defined as poisonous to modernization, albeit a mild poison, that with its potency, nevertheless could deceive the path to modernization.

By alienating these two major sources of nationalism, the modernity movement failed to implement its political and even cultural standing in Iranian society. In addition, the alienation led to unexpected results for the secularists, within Iran including rest of the world because, as we bear witness to the later events in the second half of the
the Islamist trend had an exponential boost and finally seized power during the 1979 Revolution (Boroujerdi 1996: 89). By leaning on nationalism and the governmental support, secularists turned the modernity project into a paradigmatic discourse in the first half of the twentieth century. But by alienating the Islamists and common believers in the post-Constitutional movement, the modernist trend incurred heavy losses to the Islamist forces, an omnipotent force. By defining the second segment of traditional identity, nationalism was seen as an additional threat to the Europeanization process in the second half of the century. Thus the modernist movement began to lose steam as a dominant power in the discursive narratives. This of course could not materialize as the West was fuelling propaganda against the threat of communism, and this eventually aided the Islamists to gain back power within the political platform. Under the power of Mohammad Reza Shah’s rule in the last twenty years (1960-1979), the government was attempting to modernize the country economically; Islamist trends operated under the radar and finally overthrew the secularist government in Iran. This political disconnectedness, triggered by the historical disconnectedness, amongst these forces deepened the schism through the years and has apparently had a great impact on the national identity, which was already in dire straits. Integration of these trends could have harbored different trajectories, and as a result the individual rights could enmesh with national interests and thus Iranian historicism would and could help define a unique model of progress for Iran. Then, these trends would not have to clash or disregard each other in order to get into the corridors of power.
The reflection of this disconnectedness was depicted in literature in general and in the narrative genres in particular. In the first period activists were the principle authors; and literature became a political tool for them. So without hesitation they depicted Islamic superstition as the force against progress, while the return to the past, i.e., ancient Iran was optimistically admired as a means to cast out religious superstition and ignorance (bikhabarī). In other words, the dystopia of present Iran was continuously compared to a utopian ancient Iran imbued with a potential to become modernized. Retrieving the glory of the past allowed for the representation of progress that resonated similarities to the progress in Europe. Ākhundzādeh depicted his optimism of this progress in his simple plays, stories as well as in his essays Illustrated in Setāregān-e Farib-khordeh (The Deceived Stars), the first Iranian novel based on this pretext. This novel resonates the recurring myth of mir-e Noruzi to portray the good king who, like the ancient Iranian kings, was just and even ‘socialist’ in some ways, versus the bad king; the dictator. The revolutionaries during the constitutional movement believed that a cultural revolution should precede the political revolution; that would enable a change in the belief system of the people. The revolutionary literature of this time, on behalf of the secularists, focused on the comparison of the backward people with the motojādid (modernists, in their view), foreshadowing the political issues. The main goal for the literati was to educate the people about their backwardness and focus on the rising European progress. Thus literature was used as a medium for pursuing their goals.

In the post-Constitutional period, nationalism, hinged on the language, that represented the anxiety towards an identity crisis by writers such as Jamālzādeh. These
writers feverishly worked to convince their readers that the unity of the nation under the parasol of the ancient Persian language could redeem the country. National borders and the idea of Iranian-ness were externally threatened and they believed that Persian, both a literary and a court language of the eastern part of the Islamic world, was the only redeeming agent. The cultural power that Iranians once had was reduced to the language itself. The optimism expressed by the pre-revolutionary writers had disappeared for the post-Constitutional ones, and these writers felt that the political and cultural borders were dangerously shrinking; as such, the ‘house of language’ idea appeared as the only possible way to keep the nation together exhibited in Jamālzādeh’s “Farsi Shekar Ast” (1985). Sandra Mackey (1996: 59) explains the role of language in distinguishing cultural differences between Persians and Arabs, which was part of the debate: “In the rise of new Persian and the corresponding decline in the use of classical Arabic, the cultural incompatibility of the Iranians and the Arabs manifested itself.” In other words, “language became a medium for Iranians to distinguish their sense of identity from Arabs” (Shahideh 2004: 23). This garnered effort to separate Iranian identity, of course, can be traced back to as early as the tenth century, in works such as *The Shāhnāmeh*. However, in the present day, this conceited effort emerged as a result of a disconnectedness that was already brewing between the real power, namely the Islamic Empire that produced a foreign value system and culture as the new system of signification, and the discourse of Iranian-ness which was in a state of decline. In the last two centuries there has been a reoccurrence of the same phenomenon, but the significant difference was that Europe usurped the Islamic identity.
By Hedāyat’s time, a sense of pessimism was a driver of the narrative discourse, abandoning the hope that was once exhibited by the modernists. The discourse, from that point on, put forth a kind of despair that was fashionably echoed in all types of works, even in comic pieces. Here, as before, it was the ignorant religious people or the delusional political leaders who were blamed for this sense of hopelessness. All the while, writers were preoccupied by ‘Iranian-ness’ as the only positive source for identity. This third period was marked by anti-governmental sentiments, mild atheism, and non-nationalist statements reflective in literature. The idea of an alternative ancient Iran was no longer an option; and intellectuals and writers in this period negated its importance with mockery and dismissive-ness.

We have seen a pattern in which modern literature continuously divested itself from local beliefs and thoughts and finally monopolized the modern genre of the novel. This monopolization emerged as the modernists launched a war against other ideologies in their works. At the same time, Islamists, who dotingly stuck to the classical and oral genres, not only were disinterested in using the genre of novels, but believed that it was a tool used by the West as part of its cultural attack on the East. There has also been a trend towards apolitical novels in sync with the so-called modernist trend, producing novels such as San’atizādeh’s Shams and Toqrā (1910s) and Mushfiq Kāzemī’s The Frightening Tehran (written in 1920s); however these works were largely dismissed as non-modern works. Some of these were, in fact, exceptional in terms of literary technique, especially The Frightening Tehran, which combined old Persian techniques with modern ones. It contains real life characters, similar to other modern novels, with
their quotidian problems and experiences; but it uses the framework of the romantic genre, with a format parallel to the epic novel *One Thousand and One Nights*. Integrating these familiar styles and techniques, these works were then, and are even today in Iran, very popular amongst the majority of Iranians, regardless of the negative criticism and chiding that they have received from the intellectuals. This type of apolitical novel has, in fact, been a bestseller in Iran for some time with maximum readership than the so called modernist works, but were never recognized as a serious contribution to the literary works by the modernists. Some of these works, such as *Tehran-e Makhuf* with its great structure and political theme, were written some time before Jamālzādeh’s *Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud* (Once Upon a Time, 1985) or Hedāyat’s *Blind owl*; but because of having a different narrative discourse, they have been marginalized by all modernists. Despite containing the most important characteristics of the modern novel, namely individualism, the use of polyphonic voices, and contemporariness, these works, and later works written by writers such as Hejāzi’s *Zibā*, have never been recognized as modern novels. The main reason, it could be said, was that the writers’ ideologies were askew and did not fit with the mainstream modernist model.

The same attitude was given towards Ale Ahmad when he began to criticize modernist intellectuals and forced to bring the Islamists and even nationalists to be a part of the equation. The residue of this mentality can still be found within Iranian modernism, even though the modernists are now completely marginalized by the Islamic government. As mentioned earlier, there is no doubt that other trends, especially the Islamist trend, were also responsible for this disconnectedness and monopolization, but
this blaming game does not help us understand the situation. The valid question that needs to be put forth is how this disconnectedness comes into fruition within politics, culture and literature simultaneously. This is one of the hitherto unexamined questions that this dissertation intends to address; at the least I will try to deconstruct the situation in order to shed light on the dark sides of the debates.

**Problematic Characteristics of the Persian Modernity Discourse**

The Persian discourse of modernity is not complete, because it simply denies or belittles the roles of religion and nationalism in the indigenous and homogenous discourse. To begin with, it lacks a double plot concerning the past and future, because as it sees it, the past steered the Iranians towards a wrong path and the future severs its ties with the past and breaks away from it. Unlike the modernity project in European countries, wherein they sought to reconfigure their pasts to define their new identities, the goal of Iranian modernity is not concerned with this reconfiguration of the past in order to define its modern identity and to project an imagined future. Instead it wants to get rid of the Iranian past and the actual present to build a European centric future. In addition, because the present is eventually part of the past, every reform and change begins ‘after today.’ Because of that intellectuals are mostly preoccupied with the big breaks in politics, culture, and religion as well as in literature. Firstly, this has created a mindset that, instead of working on the democratic institutions that foster gradual changes in society, this mindset fosters an environment of hiatuses and breaks in the aforementioned arenas. Secondly, history is not what the intellectuals possess but has
been replaced by a desire for what Europeans have had in their history. Therefore, there is no real historiography in Iran under the modernity project. Literary modernity in Iran is in fact both against the Islamic and the nationalist historiographies. It does not want to assimilate, absorb or reconfigure these ideologies and associates a sense of shame with this lineage. The only pro-active thing that literature envisions is to refute their achievements in history and their essential roles in nation building. For this reason the discourse of modernity deepens the problem of disconnectedness which was already a part of Iranian culture since the advent of Islam. So as a growing narrative it intends to belittle other narratives.

Each narrative, as Ricoeur says, has four major elements of which the final one is the ‘act to understand’ the situation in relation to reality. This act of understanding in narrative is similar to the concept of being an agent in sociological and cultural theories. Without the ability to act for understanding a narrative can be rendered incomplete. It is in fact incomplete because there is no concept of a ‘will to power.’ Because of its lack of interest in understanding other forces, this discourse of modernity in Iran has failed to discover other agents in society or use them for its causes. This mentality is echoed within Islamic trends, who do not consider other forces as agents either and therefore, they too have failed to understand their historical roles. Although only a few times the history of contemporary Iran has borne witness to the coming together of the Islamists and the secular modernists, who have worked together and as a result, were able to show their agencies fully, exhibited during the Constitutional Revolution, the National Oil movement and the 1979 Revolution. Nonetheless, the limelight is on the modernists who
fail to understand the root of the problem and do not seek to modernize the country as an empowering process; they merely want to modernize it in an emulating fashion, mimicking the Europeans, in order to become a European society. Elsewhere Ricoeur (1995: 373) says: “[t]he past is no longer, future is not yet, and the present is not forever.” This notion, similar to Khayyam’s concept of time, suggests that the role of discursive narrative is most likely to understand the relation between agency and future. Change, accordingly, always happens in the future; however, it is understood as a resultant of the past. Willing to erase or change the past in a selective way, Iranian modernists believed that the future could be changed as wanted without an understanding of the past. The gap between an understanding of the past and an imagined future cannot be bridged without the agency of the people. There is no arguing about this statement, “historiography borrows from imagination in order to evoke the events of the past” (Ricoeur 1995: 373); thus the future can change only if the change mirrors the reconfigured past. But the problem firstly is with the sequential step in which the discourse tries to define the roots of the problem and accordingly find the solutions to it. The second problem is that modernists lack a modernity project; they, instead, have simply been waiting for a major break, which, in their minds is a deep rooted revolution to allow the country to enter into the phase of modernism.

The notion of modernization in Iranian discourses as mentioned earlier has been simplified, as secularists were unable to reconfigure the past by an assimilation of religious and nationalist identities. The first and foremost solution that was proposed is centralized around the public’s mentality towards their religion, culture and tradition. In
order to modernize, the solution proposed that people need to change their mannerisms and cultures, namely get rid of their traditions and act and think like Europeans. In other words, the secularists wanted to decontextualize the nation from its past without its role in the present situation and then to recontextualize it with an unfamiliar European past without any regard to Europe’s role in colonization. What can be derived here is that the secularists wanted to replace the existing religion and culture entirely instead of having an updated modern interpretation of them. The act of understanding here has nothing to do with the fact that Iran historically became part of ‘the colonized countries,’ controlled by the superpowers economically, politically and even culturally. The Islamist trend in this respect has had a more realistic grasp than the secularists, as at the least there has been an understanding by the Islamists that agency can be fulfilled in a historical and social context. Although it was far from reality, their formula for regaining the sovereignty was to reclaim political and military power. Therefore they were able to identify the problem in an international context. The secularists, however, had a romantic idea about progress, as they did not want to see the role of the West in shaping Iran. The former’s emphasis is on the external agencies, while the latter emphasizes the internal issues. Rarely did the two cooperate and were unable to consider both external and internal factors in their debates. For this reason, secularists see modernization through the process of emancipation, believing that it occurs just by changing the people’s mentality toward their actual life. Each trend perceives only one segment of reality. The Islamists know that power is the only source for full sovereignty, but they cannot find the real source, namely the people and their will to change, for producing it. Mistakenly, the
Islamists see the real power in religion; not in the people’s belief in it or in any other belief systems.

The secularists believe that modernity is a social condition that is free from military or even social power. Iranian intellectuals essentially fantasize about this kind of modernity giving little or no room for national interests in their discussions of the formula of progress. Instead, the intellectuals believed that replacing Iranian cultures and religions is the easiest and fastest solution to the problem of backwardness. In other words, secularists are pursuing an expedient exit out of the problem, albeit the most unrealistic one.

Not bearing in mind all sides of the problem, the narrative of modernity, then, deliberately ignores the fact that colonialists and imperialists have had a major role in this situation, also ignoring the fact that Orientalism has had a great impact on the discourse as well. In addition, the discourse was unable to rise into a grand narrative as it did in the West where there was a reconfiguration in the role of religion, nationality and other cultural aspects of society from a scientific perspective. In essence, the discourse has not been able to make a connection between power, knowledge and discourse. The source of power and knowledge is the West that does not necessarily work towards the Iranians’ interests. In other words, the secularist trend just identifies with the problems, and tries to resolve the problem in a simplistic manner. For instance, it blames Iranian literature for not being considered a world class literature because of a lack of good translations, or because the translators cannot translate the western books into fluent Persian, therefore it blames the language; also exemplified by the debates that Ashuri (2011) has had on
Persian language when compared to the European ones. He believes that Persian is a backward language not ready to convey the modern concepts, as it is heavily influenced by Arabic or its script is not Latin based, or that poetic and rhetoric techniques have been dominant. Adding to this, he is unable to see the role of oriental discourse in his approach. What can be deciphered here is that Iranian secularists are ashamed of their culture and tradition in different degrees on one hand and on the other they revere European culture as superior to them. For example, Nikfar (2009), a young Philosopher, in an interview with Zamāneh, recently claimed that Iranians do not understand democracy as no one has introduced them to the Dutch philosopher Baruch de Spinoza. During an interview with Nikfar, it was revealed that he had no knowledge of the translation of Spinoza’s works into Persian and that his famous work on ethics had been reviewed by a number of Iranian writers.

Conceived in one womb, modern Persian intellectualism and literature emphasize disconnectedness or a break as the only way out of the present or an actual situation; deducing that the unity between art and life is completely absent and can hardly be found in the stories. In addition that could be one of the reasons as to why Persian modern fiction has been pre-dominantly political, with no semblance to beauty and with a dogged pursuit of trying to replace Iran with a western society. Its political view point is ideological according to either secularist, nationalist or even religious perspectives. This creates a distinction between intellectuals and people, as Ale Ahmad sees the intellectuals’ problems as very individualistic. He portrays them as occidentotic “… a man totally without belief or conviction, to such an extent that he [the occidentotic
intellectual] not only believes in nothing, but also does not actively disbelieve in anything.” To him, “the occidentotic has no character” but “hangs on the words and handouts of the West.” He goes on to say that the occidentotic “has nothing to do with what goes on in our world, in this corner of the East” (Ale Ahmad 1984: 96-7). Despite Ale Ahmad’s statement, the intellectuals do care about ‘this corner of the East’ and its people; he, nevertheless, deems that this world is doomed to be replaced with a western society, that, even with its colonial interests, is a positive force in this doomed destiny; instead, his people with their religious and nationalist beliefs are helping the reactionary forces, thus they have to be changed. As a result, it is his discourse that through this one dimensional perspective has turned into an ideology. The problem is that those who revere others not only want to limit the space to other trends, but also believe that the other trends are the root of the problem and by Europeanizing the people they are in a state of utter alienation. Ale Ahmad here comes close to Fanon’s theory of othering; but he, from the opposite perspective, criticizes the West as the only source of the problem. His nativism, on the contrary does not give space to the intellectuals as well. To clarify, the discourse of modernity is not a meta-narrative; thus it is not able to create other discourses without destroying the idea of locality.

From the discursive aspect, Persian modernity is too limited. It believes in freedom, but only for the so called progressive people. It also believes that literature is very important but narrows it down to just the Western’s and the western style literature. It fights for free expression, but chides the Islamists for reaching out to the people. Similarly, it believes that women are the owners of their bodies creating a discourse on
this subject. At the same time however, it cannot extend this freedom to men, as men are understood as the oppressors, extending this double standard as a way of disposing rights for the non-modernists as well. Discourse, then, limits itself to certain areas and certain topics. An excellent example of this double standardness is the issue of homosexuality, in the early twentieth century when the West considered it a disgraceful part of cultures such as the Iranian and Indian, it was condemned by the modernists. The third gender was considered as the worst aspect of Iranian culture; whereas now it supports homosexuality and blames traditional culture for being conservative.

The impact of the discourse of modernity has also been direct on literature; by analyzing Persian stories there can be a better understanding of either social conditions in Iran, or the modern literature can be better understood from a socio-historical perspective. To sum up, from this perspective classical Persian literature and philosophy, except for a few works, are considered as traditional and as obstacles to progress. Iranian secularism does not want to glorify the past from a nationalistic perspective or project the future in the light of nationhood. Persian modern fiction, like its discursive narrative, is certainly not unique, but it sees Iran in a unique way. Novels, in this approach, imitated a modernist discourse that indeed was very limited and utilized limited motifs and themes. Their characters were mostly not the representations of the individuals or their interests, or the dreams and capacities of the real people; instead they were the representations of metaphors of modern thoughts and interests pitted against the so called backwardness and ignorance. In Persian criticism these characters have been named as types (tip) that represent two fundamental thoughts or beliefs in the discourse. In the early works, which
were more simplistic, the conflict between the *types* is more vivid; whereas the later works incorporated live characters rather than *types*. Nonetheless, the protagonist/antagonist pattern is also political for them and the protagonists are always those who belonged to opposition parties, whereas the antagonists are always those who were with or for the government, religious leaders and even pre-Islamic Iran, although the last is not really demonized.
Chapter 3: The National Movement through Denationalization: A Historical Overview

One way to study the impact of the modernity discourse on Iranian intellectuals and the reflection of this discourse in modern Persian fiction is to see both fiction and discourse through the nationalistic narrative. The use of such a framework enables the examination of a discursive narrative in a historical context. European nationalism, like modernism, is basically a double plot narrative; the first plot concerns the past and the second concerns the future. The first plot describes how we were morally, politically and culturally in the past; the second one describes how we should be from this point on. In other words, the nationalist narrative is about what we were and what we should be. Alongside this temporal perspective, nationalism also defines us versus them geopolitically, delineating friends versus enemies (Schmitt, 1976: 53-8). This aspect of nationalism divides us from others based on the images and feelings we have about ourselves and others, whether negative or positive. More so, in the capitalist era, nationalism and modernism have formed together; modernism, as we can see in Europe, has in fact been shaped through national movements. In addition, modernism and colonialism are inseparable from each other in third world countries. Because of this, there is no way to study a third world country such as Iran without considering all of these aspects: the double plot narrative that is the refigured history, the construction of
self and other, the inter-relationship of nationalism and modernism in a capitalist-colonialist era.

Modernism in the European countries had a similar pattern in that it tried to refigure the past critically and determine the future based on the national interest. So, modernism was twin sister of nationalism in those countries. In Iran, however, modernism had a critical view on Islam without seeing it as a system of cultural signification; so that without any effort to refigure it from the modernist point of view it just wanted to replace it with a European model of progress for future. In the first period between 1850-1940 nationalism, separated from Islam, was considered as part of the modernity project in Iran. During this time refiguring the past was based on pre-Islamic nationalistic ideas and the determination of the future was based on Europeanization. Unable to merge the Islamic culture with Iranian-ness, the past became two separate entities, one to eliminate and the other to revive, tasks far from reality. So considering the past as an obstacle to the modernity project and for its future became the first step for a separation of modernism and nationalism as two projects with some contradictory factors in Iran.

There is a tendency among the Iranian nationalists to read the feeling of nationhood as the ideological apparatus of state power, as a utopian inversion or as the national-popular sentiment without religion; but, as Homi Bhabha (1990: 1-2) suggests, nationalism comes into being “as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social life rather than the discipline of social polity emphasizes this instability of knowledge.” When seen as a system of cultural signification, more than as a form of
identity, nationalism is a discursive narrative with a particular image, whose root is a religion or, in more modern times, a system of beliefs, and its apparatus vehicle is the kingship dynasty or a power figure as is described by Agamben (2005). It is from a belief system that historicism is derived, helping a nation to define its past the way it wants and at the same time to determine its future through the meaningful goals that have been formed in that narrative.

The totalization of national culture relies on a wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meaning and symbols associated with national life. This is basically a total language that can be understood by anyone within a given cultural boundary and within certain geographical and historical borders. It is a three-dimensional picture of the self. However, a national narrative is not always clear nor does it have a single system of signification, language or a single set of goals; in modern Iran it has least three sets of goals, namely Islamist, nationalist and modernist. In his famous *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson, expresses the nation’s ambivalent emergence with great clarity:

The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness … [few] things were (are) suited to this end better than the idea of nation. If nation states are widely considered to be ‘new’ and ‘historical’, the nation states to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past and … glide into a limitless future. What I am proposing is that Nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that
preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being (Anderson, 1991, p. 19).

The same can be said about the Iranian national discourse: Iranian history, like any history, has always been half-made because it is always in the process of being made. At the same time the meanings of historical events are partially ambivalent because these events are constantly in the act of composing and decomposing the image of the nation. National consciousness is part of identity, but it does not necessarily unite the imagined community. In the case of Iran, the imagined community is divided into positive images and negative images, or what Foucault has defined as heterochronic and heterotopias with actual time and space and ideal time and space (Foucault 1986: 22-27). This will be discussed in chapter four. For now it is enough to mention that in contemporary Iran the source of positive images and acts is the West; whereas the source of negative images and acts is Iran, that is, the self. One reason for that is the way nationalism is defined or rather self-Orientalized in the discourse of modernity as a political tool against the process of progress. Therefore the idea of who Iranians were, are and will be (the national discourse) is different from the idea that indeed we are Iranians (the national consciousness). Therefore, national discourse, as Fanon points out, is different from national consciousness (Fanon, 1967a, p. 199). National discourse should consist of the two major elements of value system, based on religion, and political system, based on the national interests, plus the idea for the future, which in the modern era is the concept of progress.
Although Iranian culture has acted as a system of signification with its dominant narrative of historicism and has created the national consciousness that has been a part of Iranian identity from antiquity to the modern era, this consciousness has not always been accompanied by the structure of a nation state. Within Iran, there are basically two different theories on nationalism. The first is that Iranian nationalism has its roots in pre-Islamic identity and in anti-Islamic movements such as Sho’ubieh. The other is that nationalism is a modern concept formed around the Constitutional Revolution (1900-11) through the process of nation building. Most studies of Iranian nationalism have focused on the early Islamic epoch or on the late nineteenth century. Other than the work of Katherine Babayan, little attention has been given to the Safavid period (1501-1722) in which, after ten centuries, the ruling class began to use the national consciousness to establish a country named Iran that was different from other Islamic States. More so, the role of language has been overlooked by scholars more interested in politics despite the fact that the language of the national narrative has been altered throughout history; although in that case the discourse is not seen through its language. Thus, Iranian culture as a system of signification is divided into three discourses with three different goals. The so called nationalists do not want to see Islam as part of national identity. The Islamists on the contrary ignore pre-Islamic Iranian or non-Shiite literature, the Shāhnāmeh and Sufi (mystic) traditions, all together. And modernists do not see either of these traditions as modern systems of cultural signification and therefore as forces for progress. All three branches want to modernize the country, but their ways or model of progress are plotted with different goals and ideas.
But in the last four hundred years, Iran has gone through different historical situations. In the 1500s a political opportunity allowed Iran to build a nation-state based on a national discourse merged with a religious discourse. Nationalism tried to consolidate the religious discourse with nationalism. Shiism was the result of this, in which Islam was persianized and Iranian-ness found its religious side as well. Later in the nineteenth century, under the colonial powers Iran experienced a kind of denationalization through which the old national discourse was profoundly altered by a modern discourse that was borrowed from the West. Under this situation a new intellectualism, with a tendency towards the West, was born. This intellectual movement began to demonize religion as well as some parts of the national-literary discourse. For Iran, this was the first time that the ideology of progress was used to demonize the self and elevate the European discourse with its value system as that of cultural superiors. What I call denationalization in this text is the emergence of these discourses and the political power vacuum which occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. The combination of these created the modern disconnectedness that has had a direct impact on Persian modern fiction. We will come back to this in chapter five.

Before characterizing the discourses in modern Iran, it is necessary to put Iran in its historical situation. In this chapter we will try to depict the national discourse through its historical background. In the first section the cultural and historical situation of the Safavid era will be described in order to show the new national narrative that formed in this time. In the second section the process of denationalization will be discussed in order to show both the power and the discursive vacuums that were conceived through
the lack of sovereignty and cultural hegemony in the late nineteenth century. The focus here is on discourse. Power and structure will be discussed in the following chapter. This chapter outlines the historical circumstances which formed the intellectual discourse and the major elements of modernity that were used to shape the narrative discourse of Persian literature.

**Historical Background**

In Europe, nationalism and modernity were twin sisters and developed almost simultaneously. In the Middle East, however, the two developed at different times, at different paces and under differing conditions. Like their European counterparts, medieval Islamic states—Iran among them—gained their legitimacy through religion (the theory will be discussed in the next chapter): Islamic universalism was the core of political paradigms and of the cultural value system and the people, regardless of ethnic identities or languages, were recognized as the *Umma*, the people of Islam. Centralism was working together with regionalism. Baghdad was the center of Islam, but regions were ruled by the small dynasties appointed by Caliphs. He might also use them against each other, as was the case for most of Iranian provinces which were ruled by Iranian dynasts such as the Buyids, Safāīds and Samānids in the early centuries and later by slave soldiers (*mamluk*) such as Gaznavids and Saljuks. The caliphates’ policy was to use Turkic soldiers against the local peoples or dynasts. By the decline of the caliphate’s power (1258) different Turkic tribes began to invade and ruled over different parts of the Islamic lands as well as Iran. Nonetheless, Islamic universalism was still the only source
to legitimize these rulers. The first major break with Islamic universalism occurred in the thirteenth century through the Mongol invasion of central Asia, Iran and the western part of India. As a result of this invasion, the Caliphate, which legitimized all the local political dynasties throughout the Islamic lands under the mainstream religious school of laws, was taken apart. After the invasion of Baghdad by Hallāku in 1258, Mo’tasem o bellāh, the last Caliph, was killed and his son was sent to Mongolia in order to prevent Muslims from bringing him back to power. The Egyptian Sultan, who was a mamluk, proclaimed himself as the legitimate caliph. Although he was only accepted as caliph in Egypt, this remained among the Egyptian Sultans for the next three centuries, until 1517 when Egypt was invaded by Sultan Saleem I, the Ottoman Emperor. By taking Egypt, Sultan Saleem proclaimed himself as the successor of the caliphate; later the Ottomans used this source of legitimacy against the Iranian Shiite kings. Islamic universalism gradually decayed from the time of the Caliphate’s destruction into the 1500s, and along with it the legitimacy of the landowning systems of the local political powers. Three major dynastic sovereignties and a handful of scattered local rulers emerged out of the remains of the religious system. The Ottoman Empire, the most powerful and aggressive one of the three, proclaimed itself as the successor of the caliphate. It stretched from Anatolia to Eastern Europe on one hand and North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula on the other hand. Thus it controlled the most important religious cities such as Mecca and Medina. In addition the Ottomans were Sunnis; this is why its Sultans believed that they were the legitimate rulers of the entire Islamic world. The Mogul Empire, which ruled over the eastern parts of the Islamic world, was also Sunni; so it derived its legitimacy
from Mecca directly and from the Ottomans indirectly. Iran which had emerged between these two powers as an independent state had no choice but to look for legitimacy through Persianized Islam (Shiism), because the Ottomans did not recognize any other Islamic states. As a result, the Islamic universal world order broke down politically and religiously; although the Ottoman and Mogul Empires did not accept that fact at all and used Islamic universalism against the new state of Iran, which had found another source for its legitimacy. Ibn Khaldun’s *Moghadama*, written a century after the Mongol invasion, was a direct reaction to this collapse. In his theory of ‘asabia (group feeling) he emphasizes that the tribal lifestyle could save the Islamic empire more affectionately than the city dwelling lifestyle. Nonetheless, we should not forget that the conquerors were also tribal. So it was not a matter of lifestyle, because Islam was still used to legitimize the rulers, as happened later in the Ottoman and Mogul Empires.

After the emergence of the Mogul and Ottoman Empires, Iran rose as an empire in the 1500s. This was around the time that European nationalism was intensifying out of the Christian universal system; but for a number of reasons these empires took different paths in the following centuries. In Europe, as Ziegler describes, the process of nation formation was like a ‘political constellation.’ In the middle ages, the power of the papacy and the empire, which embodied feudalism, was the institutional core of the ‘political constellation.’ Gradually, Christian universalism, which had legitimized the feudal system, receded in the face of dynastic sovereignty, which legitimized the kingdom, the new ‘political constellation’ (quoted in Bassam 1990: 30). Hans Kohn came to a similar conclusion asserting that “its [the Universalist world order of the middle ages] breakdown
during the Renaissance encouraged the formation of states, although ‘étatism, not nationalism, emerged from the disintegration of medieval universalism.” It is in this concept that Engels sees “kingship as a progressive force in the early modern period, the institution which was to make national unity possible: ‘it symbolized order among disorder, the emergent nation in contrast to the fragmentation of rebellious vassal state’. Under kingship, the capitalist mode of production had already begun to develop” (quoted in Bassam 1990: 30). It was under these circumstances and based on the national interests that, instead of the ‘religious other’, the ‘political other’ was created in Europe.

A similar process can be found in the Islamic Empires of the fifteenth century onward. The downfall of the Abbasids (750-1258) encouraged the Mamluks, the former slave soldiers of the caliphate, to return to feudal relationships. This development, as Becker describes, was similar to those in the West, but further progress was ultimately different in the East (quoted in Bassam 1990: 76). The Ottoman Empire, for instance, did not turn away from religious universalism as it still had no choice but to use mainstream Islam as part of its ideology. In addition to what was mentioned earlier the main reasons had to do with political demography: The Ottomans had expanded to control entirely the Arabic-speaking areas of Asia and North Africa (except Morocco), as well as most of South-Eastern Europe. Fifty percent of the Ottoman populations were non-Muslims and the Muslim populations were not homogenous or unified. Arabs were involved in agriculture, whereas Turks, who lived in tribal systems, made up the martial forces. As a military-feudal cast, the ruling Turks tended to leave trade and commerce to European traders and non-Muslim ethnic minorities. As a result, the ‘religious others’, internally
and externally, were significant factors in the Ottoman ideology; and, thus, the unification of all Muslims under the universal Islam was an essential narrative for the political strategy in that empire.

The Mogul Empire was in a similar situation, because the majority of the people in its lands were Hindu. Like the Ottomans, the internal infidels and the external enemies of the Mogul Empire had nearly the same religions and identities. For the Ottoman Empire, the majority of internal infidels belonged to the Orthodox Churches and its external enemies in the Western lands were mostly Catholic and later Protestant. For the Mogul Empire, the majority of its subjects were Hindu, as were its external enemies. Because of this political geography, universal Islam played an important role in the Mogul ideology as well. Nevertheless, both considered Iran as an illegitimate state. It is worth adding that Iran as an external enemy for both Empires was not a serious threat to either the Ottomans or the Moguls; whereas the Ottomans (and later the Moguls) were a real threat to Iranian kingship. On the other hand, Iran during this time had no choice but to have a good relationship with the Mogul Empire, because, like the Ottomans, they were using mainstream Islam, the Sunni school of laws, against Iranian Shiism in order to expand their territory. Because of this geopolitical situation, the Ottoman Empire had no choice but to identify itself under the notion of Islamic universalism for a longer period of time; it is indeed in the 1920s, after the collapse of the Empire, that nationalism began to play an important role in modern Turkey as well as in the newly split Arab states. On the other hand, the British conquest of India prevented the Mogul Empire from arriving at this situation.
Iran, unlike the Mogul or Ottoman Empires, was surrounded by Muslim states and peoples. Iran did not have a direct contact with non-Muslim countries and peoples until early in the nineteenth century. Therefore, the concepts of other or interstate relationships and even the theory of *jihad* were different for her. In order to reunite the whole country under an indigenous culture, Iran needed to separate itself from universal Islam and create a new ideological identity for itself in order to legitimize its existence among the other Muslim states. In other words, it had to replace the religious other with a political other with which it could separate itself from the neighboring Muslim states before so called infidels. Accepting Shiism as an official religion was a major step for Iran toward drawing a distinctive line between itself and other Sunni states. In order to do that, Iran amalgamated an ancient Iranian ideology, combining justice and millennial theories with Islamic beliefs in order to reconstruct an identity which had been culturally shaped centuries prior to this time. Shiism, thus, claimed to become an important cultural factor rather than a religion. It needed a kingship system then to form a fully cultural identity. After Islam, Iran used the dominant religion to reform its cultural system, but this process was different from what we see in the other Islamic lands: In Egypt, for instance, Islam became the only source to produce its identity and that is why Egypt did not create its own (Egyptian) literature. In Iran, however, Islam merged with culture and so did not remain the single source of Iranian identity. *Shāhnāmeh*, for instance, had already been accepted as an Islamic-Iranian work. It was under this situation that Iran, unlike the other Muslim states, created a new ‘political other’ with a heavy stain of religion on it. The ideology that could create an imagined community, and at the same
time could define its political other, however, was limited (Anderson 1991: 5-7). First of all, this ideology defined the other as Sunni Muslims, who had close relations with Iranian Sunnis. Second, the rulers of Iran had to use Iranian identity in order to distinguish themselves from these neighbors because they, like the rulers of the Ottoman or Mogul Empires, were also a Turkish military-feudal cast and, in fact, were cousins of the Turkish dynasty in the Ottoman Empire, the Uzbeks in central Asia and even the Moguls of India. On the contrary, the Ottoman Empire, the Uzbeks in central Asia and the Moguls of India, had no choice but to deny the religious authority of the Safavid dynasty in Iran in order to have religious legitimacy. This situation created a paradox for the Safavid rulers to which we will return later.

It is important to note that during the Abbasid Empire, the local rulers were clients (mamluks) of the Abbasids so that the Turkish ruling class attained their legitimacy from the Caliphs in Baghdad. As such they never dissolved into the local cultures in Iran, India, and Arabic lands and they maintained their dominant positions even after they turned into the military-feudal casts of these societies. Thus, there were always various sorts of political conflicts as well as cultural clashes between the Turkish casts and the local peoples in these regions. These conflicts had an especially long tradition in the Iranian cultural sphere. After the collapse of the Abbasids, this problem became more complicated, particularly in Iran and India because, like a double-edged sword, these dynasties had outside enemies who were of the same ethnicity as the inside subjects.

The Safavids had to balance themselves between these two Empires. That is why they legitimized their sovereignty through both the house of Ali, the fourth Caliph and
the first Imam in the Shiite sect based on the *imamate* theory, as well as the pre-Islamic dynasty of the Sassanids based on the *justice* theory. To create an Iranian-Shiite discursive narrative Shah Ismail (1501-1524), the founder of the Safavid dynasty, and his descendents promoted the recitation of the *Shahnāmeh* everywhere, while banning the *Abu-Muslinnāmeh* from being recited in the coffee shops (See: Babayan 1993). The *Abu-Muslinnāmeh* was banned because the story was about replacing the Umayyad Caliph, Marvān, with the Abbasids, whose legitimate line came down to the Ottomans. The *Shāhnāmeh*, on the other hand, was being promoted in the 1500s because it could help the Safavids make a link between messianic expectation in Shiism and legitimacy through Iranian-ness. Furthermore, the Safavids supported an amalgamation of the messianic narratives promoted by Shiites, Zoroastrians and such social movements as Noghtaviān and Sarbedāran. Shah Ismail went even further to claim that he was the ‘helper’ of the messiah, who was said to come a thousand years after the last Iranian dynasty (the Sassanids) in order to revive Iranian sovereignty (Babayan 1993). Through this tactic he pushed Noghtaviān and Sarbedāran out of the social arena and, at the same time, created a national island in the heart of the Islamic lands by reunifying the country under the pre-Islamic name of ‘Iran’. Thus the concept of a modern nation was present because both the existing religious identity and the royal dynasty had the potential to form the image with which people, under the messianic narrative derived their narrative as a nation. Iran for that matter is the first Islamic state that created her nationhood; while the Ottomans and Moguls were still defining themselves through the concept of *Umma* (people of Islam) versus infidels.
As in European nationalism, in order to define its own oneness, Iran needed to create an ideological other and a political image. Iran was also in the historical position to create this political other that defined Iranian-ness in the 1500s and 1600s. But, as mentioned, racial and ethnic problems beneath the political structure prevented the pairing of national identity with the national interest. In addition, the Sunni majority, as the religious hereditary of the caliphate, did not permit Iranians define their political other outside of the religious context. The religious ‘righteousness’ essentially gave the Ottomans and Moguls the right to try to overthrow the Safavids as non-Muslim rulers. The Fatvā that MirVais obtained from the Sunni clergies of Mecca exhibits this mentality. By obtaining this Fatvā he engaged the people of Kandahar to conduct a war against the Safavid king, Shah Sultan Hussein, and finally to overthrow him (Krosinski, 1386 [2001]). The power structure, descended from Abbasid policies toward non-Arab nations such as Iran, exacerbated the problem of subjugation. To understand the problem, let’s go back to the previous historical period and examine subjugation in the Abbasid era and later under the reign of the Turkish dynasties ruling different parts of Iran.

After Islam the power structure and the concept of subject changed entirely in the Iranian hemisphere. Before Islam, for a long period of time, power and subject as well as the cosmologies, religions, and the Iranian ideology were homogeneous and indigenous. Political power and the subjects both had the same self-image and identified themselves as Iranians; at the same time the other was a foreigner outside of the empire’s borders whose image was identical to religious evil. In other words, there was a universal
discourse for the destined history (historicism) as well as the territorial boundaries. Subjects, under this system, did not have the same social justice, reimbursement or power that the ruling class had; but they historically shared the same destiny, as they cosmologically and religiously had the same place in the other world. This indigenous selfhood had also created a homogenous literature in post-Islamic Iran that became dominant for at least the first two centuries after writers began to write in Persian (10th and 11th). After the rise of Islam this indigenous ideology was shattered, first by the Islamic discourse that became a paradigm for religion, and second by the non-Iranian power structure that lasted for centuries. The hybrid system that created the sub-period of Perso-Islamic ones civilizations in the first four centuries, attempted to resolve the problem; however, later and by the establishment of Turko-Mongol dynasties, this new self-image was shattered again. Under both systems the external other not only became part of the internal self-image, but also turned into the military-ruling cast. This was akin to a colonizing process in which the foreign military cast gradually became the citizens of the country, completely disconnected from their original land and yet, despite this disconnect, maintained its tribal identity as well as its dominance in military and political power.

This condition created a complicated political structure with disengaged ideologies and a state-controlled landowning system. Under this system the *mamluks*, who were essentially tribesmen whose social role centered on waging war, controlled the military and the royal legitimacy – in the first period by being appointed by the Caliphs, and after the collapse of the caliphate by gaining it with their swords. Iranians, however,
were in general agrarians, traders or, in the best case, administrators. They were an unarmed and marginalized majority. They could not hope to obtain political or military power for that matter, or to regain their economical and political positions within society. True power belonged to the Turkish rulers or kings because, through the prevailing religious beliefs, they were the representatives of God on earth and the owners of all lands in their kingdoms. This landowning system was called *toul-dāri* or *iqtā’*, under the Turkish dynasties, and *suorghāl* under the Mongols (see: Lambton 1953). The Safavids restored their political power using the same system. The military-feudal cast owned all the land, leasing it in the form of fiefs to the Ghizelbāsh (knights), upon whom the Safavid army was originally based, to governors or to the heads of the other tribes. The Ghizelbāsh in turn leased each share to the farmers or the county rulers. In return, the Ghizelbāsh had to supply troops for the military undertakings of the kingdom. Thus, within this system the king, and under him, the military commanders, had the ultimate power.

The definition of the exotic *other* as well as the self-image was wholly problematic, because people were disconnected on political, social and even cultural levels. In addition, the ideological homogeneity had disintegrated as well, because the tradition of the *Shāhnāmeh* as well as the Sufi tradition had become disconnected from the new Shiite tradition that was forming its new literature, art and rituals. Nationalism could not replace Islamic universalism with a new grand narrative, as it did in Europe with the modernist discourse (this will be discussed in detail in the next chapter). As previously explained, although the ideology of progress had become part of the Iranian
discourse by the late nineteenth century, modernization was promoted along with
denationalization and thus had different consequences than in the West. That will be
returned to later. There were a number of reasons for this situation; the most important
ones, however, were the lack of a capitalist mode of production and the lack of what
Foucault has depicted in terms of ‘the entrepreneurial self’, alongside civil wars in the
eighteenth century, a problematic power structure, disconnectedness and encirclement by
colonial powers.

Because of all this, the concept of nationalism in the new Iran did not merge with
the concept of a ‘fatherland’ as it did in Europe. In Europe in the Middle Ages, as
Bassam points out, ‘patria’ meant ‘the City of God’; Augustine used ‘patria’ in the sense
of heaven, which for him was the ‘fatherland’ of all Christians. “In fifteenth century,” he
continues, “the word ‘patrie’ (and the adjective ‘patriote’) was introduced into the
French language, and humanists like Étienne Dolet and Rabelais were already using
‘patrie’ in the sense of ‘fatherland’” (Bassam 1990: 29). Although the word ‘vatan’ or
‘meehan’ in the medieval period has never been associated with the concept of a
fatherland in Iran, it does not mean that Iranians were not patriotic or that they were
unprepared to fight for their ‘vatan’; but it does mean that, due to their different
definitions of self-image, their cause for fighting was not essentially nationalistic.
Indeed, saving the fatherland or fighting for its imagined borders have been more
romantic and less rationalistic because the geographical borders of this ‘meehan’ have
never been matched up with the political or religious borders. It is difficult to say what
the meaning of ‘vatan’ was by the time Afghans attacked the capital city, Isfahan, with
only about eight thousands tribesmen; while fifty kilometers away the Lors, with a twenty
thousand tribal force, did nothing. They did not help because the Safavid kings had
pushed them out of the tribal federation. “The modern nation,” Renan says, “is therefore
a historical result brought about by a series of convergent facts” (Renan 1996: 45). For
Iran, however, this series of convergent facts did not occur at once or even at the right
times; hence there has never been a large-scale solidarity, as Renan points out, that is
“constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and those that
one is prepared to make in the future” (53). The idea that a feeling of nationhood could
exist without large scale solidarity is a matter that deserves further contemplation, and
Anderson’s concept of an ‘imagined community’ can be of used in approaching this
problem.

Anderson believes that ‘nation-ness’ as well as nationalism are cultural artifacts of
a particular kind. He argues that this imagined political community is based on four
factors: imagination, limitation, sovereignty, and community. Among these terms
*limitation* needs to be defined. Limitation for Anderson is close to the term ‘othering’ as
used by other thinkers. “The nation,” as he points out, “is imagined as *limited* because
even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite,
if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (Anderson 1991: 7). Nationalism,
overall, does not have roots in political ideologies, but in two large cultural systems: the
religious community and the dynastic realm. These two systems create the national
consciousness and the simultaneity of past and future (6-7). Thus, “nationalism,” Gellner
(1965: 169) argues, “is not the awaking of nations to self-consciousness; it invents
nations where they do not exist.” Iranian nationalism had both factors in that era, but its imagined oneness was not formed for two reasons: first, due to the fragmented society and the disconnected culture that they were experiencing (see chapter four) the internal distrust and the subjectivity problem prevented the creation of the imagined community; second, in the nineteenth century colonization alongside denationalization reversed the process and deepened the disconnectedness. A major factor here was decentralization; because despite the existence of a central government, the country was being controlled by the Russians and the British through their soft powers as well as through the negative ones. In addition, the discourse that was created by Safavids began to be shattered by the imported universal European discourse. Later this process of denationalization finally created a political and cultural environment in which the imported modernity discourse gave birth to the new intellectuals who more or less did not care for nationalism, or if they did it was defined under the European value system that they had borrowed. But first, let us examine what the causes of the distrust that initiated this process of denationalization were during the Safavid period.

The concept of trust in both feudal society and industrial society could describe the embedded problem in the Safavid political structure. Trust in the pre-industrial societies was vested in individuals, clans, tribes and extended family and therefore was limited to the local communities. Government too was a major source of trust in this society, but through religious authority, not through the financial system as it is in capitalist society. Safavid society was caught between two systems that could not provide a situation for this transformation as it happened in Europe. The main reasons
for this were the structural limitations within society as well as the political culture. There are three symbolic tokens, as Giddens (1990: 23) explains, that could show the oneness of a nation-state or vice versa: money, power and language. In terms of money the limitation was so deep that the political system and financial trust could not merge at all. The role of money could boldly define the social structure as well as the mode of production. Giddens (1990: 21) describes it with the term “disembedding” of the social systems that for him means “the ‘lifting out’ of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space.” He claims there are two types of disembedding in the modern societies: symbolic tokens, and expert systems. The former means “the media of interchange which can be passed around…” Thus, money, power and language are symbolic tokens.

Money, as a disembedding mechanism in the modern period, is nothing but credit or debt and totally depends on trust that is fundamentally different from its mechanism in the feudal society in which money was always implanted with its value and upon which in fact the government depended. Gold and silver (the money implanted with its value) had a large role in the pre-industrial societies. In fact, the states were dependent on gold and silver both politically and militarily; whereas coins did not depend on any state to retain their values or their international or national functions. Paper money, as we can see in Giddens’s work, is nothing but circulating media (1990: 23) whose value is completely dependent on its nation-state. Thus, without having trust from its government it would be nothing but paper. The Iranian banking system, which is a representation of
nation-state, did not have a national system until the 1920s; before that it was basically run by the Russians and the British, under different systems and money.

Power and language are other symbolic tokens of trust that in feudal societies such as Iran were dependent on religious discourse; whereas in the national-modern discourse as it is in capitalist societies they are dependent on the nation-state. Therefore, both depend on trust too, which is not “vested in individuals but in abstract capacities” of modern institutions. As a result trust is a form of faith, which depends on the knowledge base.

But trust, as mentioned, had political limitations in the Safavid period down to the Qajar period. First, as with any feudal society the value of money had to be implanted, because the nation-state could not create trust between itself and the people. Second, it could not have a trustful relationship with its people based on a national language or a nation-state power. In industrial society, the system of trust was expanded into the national-state level and was vested in abstract systems. This transformation did not occur either in the Safavid era or later under the Qajars. According to Giddens (1990: 26) all disembedding mechanisms, both symbolic tokens and expert systems, depend upon trust. Trust is therefore involved in a fundamental way with the institutions of modernity, namely in abstract capacities. Simmer, as Giddens quoted, specifically noted and analyzed the ties between money and trust. He links trust in “monetary transactions to public confidence in the issuing government.” Accordingly trust exists when we believe in someone or some principle. “Trust,” Giddens (1990: 27) concludes, “in short, is … a form of faith, in which the confidence vested in probable outcomes expresses a
commitment to something rather than just a cognitive understanding.” In the nation-state, trust, in which the knowledge of experts is integrated, influences many aspects of what we do in a continuous way.

Iran in the Safavid era, however, could not reach to the nation-state level of trust at all – not even to the level of trust that had been vested in the Islamic Empire. As mentioned earlier, the military-feudal cast was one of the major causes for this. It did not allow the nation-ness to form under one national language or one homogeneous power. Dis-harmonization occurred on three levels: between the royal dynasty and the people, between the dynasty and its military force, and finally between the Shiite and Sunni sects – at this level the dynasty was with the majority, but had no choice except to alienate the Sunni minorities who economically were tribesmen like them and not city dwellers like the Persians. Separation of the Sunni tribes such as Sheibanis in Central Asia or Lors in the south was costly to the Safavids, because militaristically they became weak throughout the 1700s. The Safavids, as Turkish speakers, could not trust people who had different ethnicities, languages, and cultures; not even Shiism could create a universal discourse among them. They, hence, had no choice but to create an island made of the Turkish army, the Ghizelbāsh, around themselves. The language of the court and army were Turkish and all the forces from top to bottom were in the hands of Turks. According to the Cambridge History of Iran “in day-to-day affairs, the language chiefly used at the Safavid court and by the great military and political officers, as well as the religious dignitaries, was Turkish, not Persian; and the last class of persons wrote their religious works mainly in Arabic. Those who wrote in Persian were either lacking in
proper tuition in this tongue, or wrote outside Iran and hence at a distance from centers where Persian was the accepted vernacular, endued with that vitality and susceptibility to skill in its use which a language can have only in places where it truly belongs” (Jackson and Lockhart 1986: 950).”

This was a barrier between the different branches of the government as well as between the government and the people, as the administrative branch was traditionally in the hands of Iranians. This situation created gaps that overall alienated people with different ethnic groups, religions and languages. At the same time, however, the king’s tribe could not trust the Ghizelbāsh, which was a confederacy of the Turkish tribes, since they were always a potential rival for the Safavid kings; that is why Shah ‘Abbās the First (1587–1629) decided to scatter and relocate the tribes. This process ultimately weakened Iran in the following centuries. Furthermore, the Ghizelbāsh were a threat to the kingship because based on the ‘group feeling’ they could unify with other Turkish kingships such as the Ottomans, the long-time enemy of the Safavids, or the Uzbeks and Moguls. The influence of the Ottomans on this army always caused a great deal of concern for the Safavids, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. In fact it might have been the main reason for the creation of an Armenian Guard around Shah Abbās I, in order to protect the kingship from the Ghizelbāsh. The Safavid Kings, therefore, were not only unable to create a nation-state level of trust, but, on the contrary, they isolated their court from all governmental branches and institutions as well as the tribes and people. The distrust was indeed so deep that, as we know, Shah Abbās, frightened of their efforts to seize power, rendered his own sons blind; and the last Safavid kings grew
up and lived in the isolated harems among women. They were so disconnected that they could not even understand the imminent threat from the Afghan’s tribes who had just obtained the Sunni clerics’ *fatwā* against the Shiite Safavid rulers. It was, therefore, natural that under this situation neither power, nor language, or money became nationalized. Furthermore, it was natural that there could not be found any strong national-universal discourse, as it developed in Europe through the modernity project, diverted from the Islamic universalism. Cultural homogeneity could resolve the subjectivity problem down the road; however, the chance to make a melting pot was missed and the Safavid rulers, followed by the Qajars, used segregating policies that in fact deepened the problem.

The Safavids did not have the appetite for expansion as other Islamic empires did. There was no interest in expanding like the classical empires or like the modern nationalist countries. In contrast, the Safavids were always in a defensive mode since neither was Shiism able to rise to a universal level nor were they able to divert it to a nationalist narrative in which a new universal discourse could be formed. Indeed, the Safavid golden era was doomed to destruction, because by the last decades of their sovereignty the geopolitical situation in neighboring countries was being changed by colonial forces. The geopolitics of the region, combined with the lack of a nationalist discourse or trust, consequently led Iran to the decades of civil wars among the various ethnic groups and tribesmen, followed by the wars with the European superpowers in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Safavid dynasty was simply ready to collapse by the time the Afghan tribesmen besieged, and sacked Isfahan. According to contemporary
historians and travelers such as Krosinski, just about eight thousand Afghans surrounded the capital city for more than two months and the city’s defenders and people, who essentially had no military skills, died without any real, serious fight. According to Krosinski, the Lor tribes that inhabited near the capital city could easily have defeated the Afghans with a twenty thousand tribal force, but because of the conflict they had with the court they did not do anything. Consequently, Shah Sultan Hussein (1694–1722) stepped down and handed power to the Afghans without a fight (On this see: Āṣaf 1978; Shāmlui 1969; and Krosinski 1386 [2001]).

**Liminal Time and Space: Civil War**

The decline of the Safavid state historically began more or less after the reign of Shah Abbās I, who died in 1626. Until then the Safavids had to fight only with their perennial enemies, the Ottomans and Uzbeks, but as the seventeenth century progressed Iran had to contend with the rise of two more neighbors: The Russian Empire and the Mogul Empire. Trade routes between the East and West had shifted away from Iran, causing a loss of commerce and trade. Shah Abbās had made a conversion to a slave-based military, which, while expedient in the short term, in the long term was ineffective against enemies such as the Mogul dynasty of India in the East that had expanded into Afghanistan at the expense of Iranian control, taking Qandahar; or later, the Russian Muscovy which had deposed two western Asian khanates of the Golden Horde and expanded its influence into the Caucasus Mountains and Central Asia (Mottahedeh 1985: 204).
Except for Shah Abbās II, the Safavid rulers after Abbās the First were ineffectual. The end of Abbās II’s reign, 1666, marked the beginning of the end of the Safavid dynasty. Despite falling revenues, military threats, and the lack of trust, later kings had lavish and disconnected lifestyles. Shah Sultan Hussein in particular was known for his love of wine and his lack of interest in governance.

As Mottahedeh depicts the Safavids, the country was repeatedly raided on its frontiers – Kerman by Baloch tribesmen in 1698, Khorāsān by Afghans in 1717, and in Mesopotamia constantly by peninsula Arabs. Shah Sultan Hussein tried to forcibly convert his Afghan subjects in eastern Iran from Sunni to the Shiite sect of Islam. In response, a Ghilzai Pashtu chieftain named MirVais Khan began a rebellion against the Georgian governor, Gurgin Khan, of Kandahar and defeated the Safavid army. Later, in 1722 an Afghan army led by Mir Wais’ son Mahmud marched across eastern Iran, besieged and sacked Isfahan. Mahmud then proclaimed himself ‘Shah’ of Persia (Krosinski 1386 [2001]).

The Afghans rode roughshod over their conquered territory for a dozen years but were prevented from making further gains by Nader Shah (1736–47), a former slave who had risen to military leadership within the Afshār tribe in Khorāsān, a vassal state of the Safavids. Nader Shah defeated the Afghans in the Battle of Dāmghān, 1729 and drove them out of Iran by 1730s. In 1738, Nader Shah re-conquered Eastern Iran, starting with Qandahar; in the same year he occupied Ghazni, Kabul and Lahore, later conquering as far east as Delhi, without fortifying his Persian base and while exhausting his army’s strength. He had effective control under Shah Tahmāsp II and then ruled as regent of the
infant Abbās III until 1736 when he had himself crowned Shah (Cambridge History of Iran Vol.7, p.59). Immediately after Nader Shah’s assassination in 1747, the Safavids were re-appointed as shahs of Iran in order to lend legitimacy to the nascent Zand dynasty. The brief puppet regime of Ismail III ended in 1760 when Karim Khan felt strong enough to take, in name as well as in actuality, power over the country and officially end the Safavid dynasty (Mottahedeh 1985: 205).

Karim Khan, like his precursor, was at war with different tribes. He gained control of the central and southern parts of Iran. In order to add legitimacy to his claim, he placed the infant Shah Ismail III, the grandson of the last Safavid king, on the throne in 1757. But soon enough Karim Khan managed to eliminate the puppet king and in 1760, founded his own dynasty. By this time he had defeated all his rivals and controlled all of Iran except Khorāsān, in the northeast, and the Qajars who controlled Astarabad in the south-eastern part of the Caspian Sea. His foreign campaigns against Azad Khan in Azerbaijan and against the Ottomans in Mesopotamia brought Azerbaijan and the province of Basra under his control. Yet he could not defeat his arch-enemy, Mohammad Hassan Khan Qajar, the chief of the Ghovanloo Qajars. The latter was finally defeated by Karim Khan and his sons, and Agha Mohammad Khan and Husseingholi Khan, were brought to Shiraz as hostages. But Agha Mohammad Khan was the one who in the end defeated the Zands and rose to power in 1779.

The Qajars, who were military commanders in the Safavid period, came to power with the backing of Turkish tribal forces, while using educated Persians in their bureaucracy (Keddie 1971: 4). According to Lapidus, the Qajar armies were composed
of a small Turcoman bodyguards and Georgian slaves, and by 1794, Agha Mohammad Khan had eliminated all his rivals, including Lotf ‘Ali Khan, the last of the Zand dynasty, and had re-established Iranian control over the territories in the Caucasus (Lapidus 2002: 469). In 1796 he was formally crowned as king. Agha Mohammad Khan was assassinated in 1797 in Shusha, the capital of the Karabakh khanate, and was succeeded by his nephew, Fath ‘Ali Shah Qajar.

By the time Fath ‘Ali Shah ascended to power the geopolitical situation had changed entirely and the two European superpowers had become Iran’s neighbors, Russia from north and Britain from east and south – and the Ottoman Empire in west. In other words, Iran was totally surrounded by these three powers, which at that time were controlling the trade routes and commerce. The Ottomans were no longer an imminent threat to Iran as they themselves were also engaged with Russians and other European nations in their borders. But the threats from the Russians and British, for a number of reasons, were beyond imminent because, first, these two were controlling the trade routes and second, they had industrialized armies. In contrast, Iran, exhausted from the long civil wars, was economically, militarily and politically broke. In addition, the national and Islamic discourses were not able to aid the Qajars in uniting their people against the foreign threats. It was under this situation that the first direct war between Iran and a European modern army was conducted.

In 1803, as Fisher (1991: 145-6) describes it, under Fath ‘Ali Shah, the “Qajars set out to fight against the Russian Empire, in what was known as the Russo-Persian War of 1804-1813, due to concerns about the Russian expansion into the Caucasus which was an
Iranian domain, even though some of the Khanates of the Caucasus were considered independent or semi-independent by the time of the Russian expansion in the nineteenth century.” During this war Iran lost all lands beyond the Aras River that were still regarded as Iranian dependencies. As Fisher (1991: 145-6) explains:

Naturally, it was those Khanates located closest to the province of Azerbaijan which most frequently experienced attempts to re-impose Iranian suzerainty … The effectiveness of these somewhat haphazard assertions of suzerainty depended on the ability of a particular Shah to make his will felt, and the determination of the local khans to evade obligations they regarded as onerous.

This period marked the first major economic and military encroachments on Iranian interests during the colonial era. The Qajar army suffered a major military defeat in the war and under the terms of the Treaty of Golestān in 1813, Iran recognized the Russian annexation of Georgia and most of the Caucasus region (1991: 146).

The second Russo-Persian War of the late 1820s ended even more disastrously for Qajar Iran, with the temporary occupation of Tabriz and the signing of the Treaty of Turkmenchāy in 1828, acknowledging Russian sovereignty over the entire South Caucasus and the area north of the Aras River. This treaty increased the Russian influence over the Iranian rulers. The Fath ‘Ali Shah's reign saw increased diplomatic contact with the West and the beginning of intense European diplomatic rivalries over Iran. His grandson Mohammad Shah, who succeeded him in 1834, fell under Russian influence and made two unsuccessful attempts to capture Herat. When Mohammad Shah
died in 1848 the succession passed to his son Nasser al-Din, who proved to be the ablest and most successful of the Qajar sovereigns.

During Fath ‘Ali Shah’s and Mohammad Shah’s reigns, a sort of national discourse began to form, though it was prematurely transferred into a literary imitation. It was defined under a literary movement called Bāzgasht (which means return), in which poets and writers began to write in Khorāsāni style – the first literary style in 10th-12th centuries and obviously an Iranian discourse - especially in the style of the Shāhnāme, in order to demonize the new foreign enemy that was threatening Iran from the north. The Shahanshāhnāme written by Sabā was a simple imitation of Ferdowski’s Shāhnāme in which Fath ‘Ali Shah was pictured as a conqueror who defeated his enemies (Āriyanpour 1972: 20, 29-90). Qā’āni, who imitated Sa’di’s Golestan – in the Iraqi style, launched a religious campaign by writing poems in which the martyr Imam Hussein was praised. Both of these efforts show that Fath ‘Ali Shah wanted to create a religious-nationalist discourse based on Shiism and Iranian-ness, as the Safavids had done in the sixteenth century, in order to get support from his people against the foreign threats. But it did not deepen, as the common people were not involved at all. This will be discussed from its theoretical aspects in next chapter.

At the same time such religious movements as Sheikhi and later Bābi and Baha‘i were formed under the messianic discourse. These movements, having a sort of grassroots connection, pretty soon became heresies of Shiism. Sufism was another mystic movement that profoundly shaped this era, especially during Mohammad Shah’s reign, since he and his prime minister, Mirzā Aghāsi, were both Sufis. The combination
of Sufism and Babism in fact worked to shake the power of the Qajars, who had little control over their territories and even over their courts (see: Nātegh 1984).

As has been illustrated, the wars among the warlords who divided into northern and southern feudal tribes and, later, the wars with Russia and the British, led Iran into an economic-political crisis which in turn created an identity crisis. The identity crisis formed and later deepened further with the lack of a national discourse. Iranians as a nation needed some kind of simultaneity in order to have an imagined community. However, not only was the national situation deteriorating, but at the same time foreign influences, now becoming part of the internal equation, were racing against it too. It was in fact under these conditions that denationalization began in Iran and finally turned Iran into a semi-colonial country in the second half of the nineteenth century.

**Denationalization**

By the late nineteenth century, the slogan *Iran is asleep* was so popular that it could be found in almost any political and cultural debates in Iran. This message, however, was not formulated in the same way as by modernists in Europe, because for the European modernists modernity was a project by which the modern society would come out of its old, irrational traditions. An overall picture of Iran’s historical situation through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could help us to understand the slogan better. While the dust of civil war and later the Russian wars were settling, the Persian cultural power and boundaries were also shrinking, especially in India, Central Asia and Afghanistan. However, Iranians did not begin to wake up to the situation until about fifty
years later when the denationalizing process was nearly complete and the universal discourse was shattered. The lack of historicism and a national discourse had created a political-cultural gap. According to some of the Iranian intellectuals such as Ādamīyyat it was only at this time that Iranians woke up from a long deep sleep.

In a suitable environment a sovereign nation under feudalism could be led to a capitalist mode of production based on a nationalist discourse, as happened in the European countries; but conditions in mid-nineteenth century Iran, similar to those in some other non-European countries, conversely moved toward denationalization in terms of power and discourse. The major problem was that dominating and interfering superpowers, in order to control the country, forced the decentralization process to occur. The interference of superpowers enhanced the internal situation, as we shall see. At the macro level the Russians and the British began to decentralize the governmental branches in order to take control in the north and the south, respectively. It seems this was part of a political and military scenario for colonizing Iran as had been done in India or Central Asia. The cultural reflection of that was an Orientalist discourse that will be discussed in chapter four and five.

The denationalizing process began in fact to take place during Nasser al-Din Shah’s reign (1850-96). By the time he came to power Iran again was burning in a religious war. Babists were fighting with the governmental forces in several provinces, especially in Fars, Astarabad and Azerbaijan. Babism had been formed based on a messianic discourse that somehow was against the illegitimate ruler, in the same way that Shiism and other religious movements had become strong social and political forces in
the last two centuries. But there was an important difference here; Shiism was part of the political power at this time, and therefore it not only had to oppress the new movement forcefully, but at the same time it had to disarm it discursively. As a result, the Shiite government did not use the messianic narrative in its nationalist discourse in the way that the Safavids had. Hence, historicism as a political discourse became a dangerous tool in the hands of common people and had to be wiped out throughout the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah.

When Mirzā Taghi Khān, Amir Kabir, became the first prime minister of young Nasser al-Din Shah he set two goals for his government: to defeat the Babist movement and to modernize the economy in order to save the nearly bankrupt country. The ideological war that he conducted against the Babists in fact became part of the propaganda narrative used by all Qajar administrations and their historians against the Baha’is. By alienating Baha’is, however, the Qajar rulers lost the historicity narrative with which their legitimacy could have been vested and at the same time could have been used against the external others. By the end of Nasser al-Din Shah’s reign this policy had also alienated the Shiite classes. This was at least one of the reasons that they became part of the revolutionary movement in 1907-1911.

Modernization of the military was a solution that ‘Abbās Mirzā, the crown prince of Fath ‘Ali Shah, had undertaken to achieve back in the early 1830s in order to overcome the military weakness; however his early death terminated the project for a long time. The meddling of the superpowers put an end to it as well and thus anti-European sentiments became a part of the Iranian dream, especially for those who were
in power. With the same goal of modernizing the military in mind, Amir Kabir, looked to industrialization as the possible and peaceful way to revive the project, initiating important reforms in virtually all sectors of society during his two and a half years in the administration. Government expenditure was slashed and a distinction was made between the private and public purses. The instruments of the central administration were overhauled and Amir Kabir assumed responsibility for all areas of the bureaucracy. Foreign interference in Iran's domestic affairs was cut and foreign trade was encouraged. Public works such as the revitalizing of the bazaar in Tehran were undertaken. Amir Kabir issued an announcement banning complex and excessively formal writing in government documents; the beginning of a modern Persian prose style dates back to this time (see: Ādamiiyat 1977).

One of the greatest achievements of Amir Kabir, says Ādamiiyat, was the building of Dār al-Fonūn, the first non-religious modern university in Iran. Dār al-Fonūn was established for the purpose of training a new cadre of administrators and acquainting them with Western techniques. Amir Kabir ordered the school to be built on the outskirts of the city so that it could be expanded as needed. He hired French and Russian instructors as well as Persians to teach subjects as varied as language, medicine, law, geography, history, economics, and engineering.

Despite his efforts, as had happened earlier with Abbās Mirzā’s ambitions of a modernized military, neither could the establishment of Dār al-Fonūn industrialize the country, nor did the financial reforms work. There were a number of reasons for this: first, success could not occur because this was only an isolated project irrelevant to the
mode of production, the political-social structure, or the landowning system. Second, it did not create any national or modern discourse that could produce an Iranian oneness through which the country could find its way to reform. The modernity project that Amir Kabir wanted to start needed indeed a capitalist mode of production as well as a universal discourse in which the modern subjugation and national consciousness could be defined. Sovereignty under a national political system, national language and imagined community were needed to create that national consciousness; these were the factors that Iran needed potentially in order to create an indigenous national discourse. But why did this not happen? What other factors worked against this governmental process?

The first major factor was the lack of historicism. The governmental military and reforms, which are considered the first phase of modernity in Iran, began without any grassroots discourse. As mentioned earlier the religious movements in the first half of the nineteenth century derived out of the ancient messianic discourse; these movements were obliterated by the legitimacy discourse of the official religion. Defeat of these movements produced a vacuumed environment in political and, more importantly, cultural discourses. The lack of historicism basically meant there was no clearly planned future, a notion that has been rare in Iranian culture.

The second group of factors was caused by the lack of political sovereignty and increased by the colonizers’ domination and interference. Decentralization began with economic monopoly, and then political interference through the embassies, leading to the establishment of the Russians’ (Kazakhs) military force in northern Iran and the British military force in the south and east. Supporting the warlords and tribesmen, especially in
the border provinces, against the central government was another policy that both the Russians and British pursued. The next steps were the decentralization of border control and the financial system. Each of these superpowers established their own controlling system at the borders (Atabaki 2007) and finally they established their own bank as well as their own currency. By the end of the nineteenth century, when Iran had become a semi-colonized country, the British Royal Bank (Bank-e Shāhanshāhi) and the Russian Bank (Bank-e Esteqrāzi) essentially divided the country into two economical systems. The circulation of their currencies was the next step that both colonizers took immediately before the Constitutional Revolution. The central government basically had no control over any of these political, financial and social institutions. The 1907 and 1915 treaties, which divided up the country into north and south between the Russians and the British, were going to finalize the colonizing process; however, the Constitutional Revolution and WWI put an end to it.

In addition to this, the decaying landowning system (toyul system) had collapsed through these decades, leading to the development of private landownership. Through this process the king who was the owner of almost all lands, lost his legitimate ground because the Vālis (provincial rulers), tribal heads and the religious leaders started to possess leases and endowed lands as private ones. The private landowners began to harvest industrial seeds such as cotton and opium in place of other crops. They in fact were more responsive to the British or Russian markets than to their people’s needs. The famine of 1870-71 is the best example illustrating the country in these circumstances. The famine killed nearly half a million people and forced another one million to migrate
to the Russian territories; whereas the price of cotton became lower than ever in the southern ports. While the Civil War in America raised the price of cotton in Manchester, Iranian farmers who had cultivated cotton instead of other crops had to sell it below that price (see: Pâldâman 1988; and Ādamiiyat 1983).

The denationalization of Iran was indeed a war between Russia and Britain. The lack of political sovereignty combined with the lack of nationalism and historicism created a cultural vacuum in which the social and cultural fabric disintegrated so badly that the country became profoundly damaged in many respects in the coming years. Politically and economically Iran was reduced to a country completely dependent on its colonizers. In terms of a national discourse, images of the self that consisted of several distinct yet inter-relevant layers were completely dispersed.

It was in these circumstances that the Iranian gaze turned toward the West. Encounters with the West during this time ended a period of relative isolation and made Iranian reformers, notably those who were associated with the royal court, realize the need to modernize the political, economical and military structures. Disappointed by governmental and religious reforms, new secular movements turned toward the West to find a way out of the deteriorating situation. Some scholars such as Gheissari (1998: 3) believe that “the major obstacle to reform has generally been identified as the arbitrary and autocratic structure of the state, which, benefiting from occasional sanctions by traditionalist ulama (clerics), was resistant to change.” But the major obstacle was indeed denationalization, through which not only Western influence continued to grow but, with it, Iranians lost their national image and discourse. Without this discourse the
modernity discourse could not help Iranians reestablish their sovereignty and indigenous discourse. Development, without having a national consciousness or changing the mode of production, is almost impossible. National consciousness had been a starting platform for all of the European countries as well as the USA; because they needed the unified fields, as Anderson explains, to create a secular universal discourse. The unity between power, desire and interest, as Deleuze wrote, is a basic condition for such a process (Spivak, quoted in Morton 2003: 30). Iran cannot be an exception to this. Anderson (1991: 37-45) believes that “national consciousness could form in three distinct ways: creating the unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above spoken vernaculars; a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build the idea of the nation; and third, creation of language-power.” He then argues “the development of print-as-commodity is the key to the generation of wholly new ideas of simultaneity.” Iran had potential to create a language-power through Persian, as it indeed did choose this language over others for communication above the spoken vernaculars and even the language of religion, Arabic, or the language of power, Turkish. Furthermore, it had a religious discourse and a national image in order to create its national identity through a secular discourse, as it did in the Safavid period in a more simplistic way. But the subjectivity problem, the dispersed power structure, and the social division that normally comes with modernity as well as the colonized discourse under Western influences, paved a different path for Iran.

As a semi-colonized country with a sporadic social structure, the government was not able to create national bases of trust, an important requirement for having a nation-
wide economy, sovereignty, culture, and grand narrative. Without a nation-wide trust neither of these factors could help a country to modernize itself through a national discourse. Again, the system of trust is based on three elements: money, sovereignty and language. Except for the last one, which was somehow accepted because of its cultural and literary hegemony, Iran had lost these to the dominant powers; language has also internally been in trouble, because, besides the discursive disconnectedness throughout history, the fragmented societies under different languages and modes of production made it hard for the language to be accepted by the ethnic groups. This was not particular to Iran as the phenomenon is widely found in all of the colonized and semi-colonized countries. Modernism in European countries never took the same path: the national discourse and the modernity project in England were different than in Germany. It is interesting that we can see the different paths in the philosophers’ thoughts. Although the classical political philosophers have characterized this phenomenon differently, we can still see it clearly. As Bassam points out the philosophers showed it “either by trying to trace back the origins of modern states to differences of climate or geography (Montesquieu) or to language communities (Bacon, Herder and Fichte), or to what is made out to be a common history and culture, or even to the ‘Will of God’ (Burke, Mazzini)” (Bassam 1990: 29). However, the paths are different, because every nation defines its selfhood through different system of cultural signification and value system. Thus, we should not expect the same path for Iran either; because the system of cultural signification and value system were also different in Iran. In Iran, however, modernity came with the adopted European value system as part of the universal
discourse. Hence, Iranian intellectualism was born with the mentality of a single path for progress because the colonial or rather Oriental discourse had already paved this path for it under the ideology of progress.
Chapter 4: Power Vacuum

The events leading up to the late mid-nineteenth century, gradually created a power vacuum that led to a shift of power between the Iranian government and the western superpowers without a total failure of the state. As a result, Iranian security was menaced and the sovereign was neither able to rule inside the governmental system nor to exercise his power throughout the country. The divided social structure accelerated the process of the collapse of the state in all aspects. These limitations created the issue of identity/subjectivity related to the weakness of sovereignty on one hand and on the other hand, to the social, cultural and political changes that Iran was undergoing. Deleuze states that “sovereignty only rules over what it is capable of interiorizing” (Deleuze, Gilles, Félix Guattari, and Brian Massumi. 2002: 445) and in nineteenth century Iran the weakened rulers were not able to deal with the people who were adopting new values and attitudes that the rulers/ government had not interiorized. There were indeed two parties in what Agamben terms “states of exception” outside of the governmental jurisdiction that did not let the sovereigns exercise their power: the colonial powers and the religious institutions.

The superpowers as the states of exceptions had a great impact on the denationalizing process happening in the late nineteenth century Iran through which the sovereign, gradually, had to share his power with the internal Shiite institutions on one
hand and Russia and Britain on the other hand. The denationalizing process also impacted the Iranian universal discourse, which gradually disappeared throughout this century. In its stead, two new trends were shaped, that of Islamist discourse and modernist discourse. Following this, the control mechanisms began to alter from the mid-nineteenth century onward in favor of the superpowers inside the country. The superpowers, dominantly, began to take control through the mechanism of military (negative power) and institutions such as customs and telegraph, which were part of soft power system. According to their policies the process of decentralization was indeed the first necessary step in denationalization, which marked the beginning of colonization. Meanwhile, the denationalization process transferred the controlling mechanisms from the traditional institutes, partially, to the hands of Shiite clerics as an internal force; gaining power through this process the Shiite institution added anti-Western sentiments to an older theory of governmentality. With the term ‘denationalization’ that I use here I am trying to define a historical period of Iran in which not only the country lost its sovereignty to the superpowers, but also through that process lost the national grand-narrative that had been formed once under the Iranian-ness-Shiism. As Foucault (1977b: 93) maintained “there can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association.” This is what we can see in this period in Iran in which losing political and economical independency led the country to lose its traditional and at the same time national discourses that had been formed and embedded in culture and religion. Instead the country created two dominant discourses which in their main outlines were some kinds of
reaction or response to the West as the new hegemonic force in the region. These two discourses will be discussed in the next chapter.

The power of the central government was corroded by soft and negative power exercised by the Russians and the British. Traditionally the Iranian governments had relied on the martial tribes, but the Qajar rulers had begun to weaken these forces out of fear of their tribal rivals. The Qajar rulers began to practice the principle of divide ET imperia and lost their military forces as well in the early nineteenth century (Tapper 1991: 518). In the second half of the century, the sovereignty totally lost its army through the establishment of foreign armies in the north and south. Thus controlling of the borders finally fell into the hands of the superpowers (Atabaki 2007: 36; Cambridge, p. 590-1). By the end of the century the blockage of all railway projects, which were described as ‘sterilizing’ by British, gave control of the roads in their territories to the Russians and the British. Consequently Russians began to build roads for themselves in the north while British used the rivers in the south west of the country and steam boats in the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea (Tapper 595). The superpowers also took control of duties, border quarantines and even the tax system. Meanwhile the central government, which had the impact of a shadow on the country, was losing its control as well as its legitimacy. Losing control of security space and territorial space government just kept its control on the body, which is third space according to Foucault (2004), especially through punishment. Because of that the relationship between the monarch and people went from worse to worst.
The denationalization process in Iran finally entered into the Oriental discursive project. The cultural part of denationalization began with the shattering of the universalism of the Islamic-Iranian discourse and its replacement with the discourses of secularism and an Islamic discourse paired with the anti-Western sentiments/movements. Although secularism and Islamism had different goals, both caused several social movements designed to take back sovereignty and revolutionize society, culture and even literature. However, before we talk about these discourses in the next chapter, we need to study three problematic factors closely in order to understand their roles in the literary discourse. These are: (1) the notion of legitimacy based on the Islamic theories which played a major role in nineteenth century Iran (2) the power system which operated mainly through three different social structures with three different modes of production and governing mechanisms and (3) the conflict between the greats part of the nation and the foreign states as well as the central government that had become their puppet. Through the denationalization process in the second half of the nineteenth century, these internal factors created a cultural discourse in which new discourses, in the dawn of the Constitutional Revolution in the 1900s, were born. By the existence of new discourses the second phase of modernity began in Iran. In this phase, unlike the first one, the emphasis was mainly on culture, value systems and literature; whereas in the first phase what was important was regaining the military and economical powers.

A study of the power structure from both the Shiite theoretical perspective as well as the social-demographical perspective is necessary for comprehending the process of denationalization in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thus the first section of
this chapter will use a historical perspective to shed light on the problem of the relationship between Islamic theory, legitimacy and governmentality followed by a discussion of the power structure and its social fragmentations in the second section. Both will help us to understand the problem of power and subjectivity as a psychosocial problem that effected Iranian relationships within the caliphate system and with her neighbors. A focus on the subjectivity crisis in the third section will bridge into a larger discussion of the modern discourses as presented through Persian novels written in the twentieth century.

Theory of Governmentality in the Islamic Sources

Prior to denationalization there was a major problematic issue in the theory of governmentality in Iran which had a great role in the dispute between the Qajar rulers, and Pahlavi as well as Islamists and secularists. This problem concerns the concept of legitimacy in Islamic philosophy. Second to the problem of legitimacy was a social-power structure problem. Thirdly was the conflicts between the sources of power, namely the sovereign and the foreigners on one hand, and, on the other hand the internal conflicts between the holders of political power and Shiite clerics as well as intellectuals, which were intertwined with the problem of legitimacy. It is almost impossible to comprehend the root of the problems and their reflections in literature without any historical approach. Although she has discussed it from a different perspective, Lambton (1993: 145) has responded to the same problems in her studies:
It is … impossible to understand the attitude of the Persian people to social change in the nineteenth century or towards the government and political change without consideration first of the Shiite doctrine towards the holders of political power and secondly of the intrusion of the Great Powers into Persia.

The problems she refers to here still play major roles in the political and literary discourses in Iran. To comprehend the process of denationalization in the second half of the nineteenth century it is necessary to study the power structure from both the Shiite theoretical perspective as well as the social-demographical perspective. And both will help us to understand the problem of power and subjectivity in modern Persian novels written in the twentieth century.

Within this quote, Lambton touches upon the theoretical aspects of governing in Iran, which may be divided into two categories: mainstream traditional Islamic theory and the modern doctrines divisible into two sub-categories- intellectual-nationalist discourse and intellectual-Islamist discourse. Among all these, Islamic theory takes a special place in Iranian discourses by molding the concept of governmentality in both discourses. As Lambton has articulated, political philosophy in the Islamic sources has had three main formulations: The first is that formulated by jurists, which, according to Schacht (1955: 71-2), is in some measure an expression of a religious ideal in opposition to practice. This formulation is based on the scattered verses of the Koran dealing with political thought and the tradition of the prophet. The second is a formulation put forward by administrators and writers of manuals of conduct for rulers and governors, the Mirrors of princes which can be traced back to Sasanian traditions of kingship. This
formulation emphasizes the divine right of kings, and is concerned with practice rather than theory of government (Lambton 1980: 405). The basis for this theory is just governance rather than right religion. In chapter five we shall see how the intellectuals discourse aptly adopted this notion and used it against the religious discourse. The third theory is the formulation of philosophers, which owes much to Greek philosophy as well as the Shiite theory of government that identifies the philosopher-king with the Imam. Its basis is righteousness and knowledge rather than right religion or justice. “All set forth,” Rosenthal (1948: xxii) says, “the divine nature of ultimate sovereignty and presupposed the existence of a state within which the earthly life of the community ran its course, and whose function was to guarantee the maintenance of Islam, the application of the Shari’a, and the defense of orthodoxy against heresy.” All of these theories tended to concentrate on the position of the ruler as a legitimate or illegitimate ruler. Thus the study of the traditional Islamic theory is crucial as it was the only source which could legitimize the kingship systems and non-religious governments in the Islamic lands as existing alongside the Islamic discourse and because it was the only source for defining the roles of individuals toward legitimate or illegitimate governments.

“All political theories,” says Lambton (1980, I: 404), “in Islam start from the assumption that Islamic government existed by virtue of a divine contact based on the Shari’a. None, therefore, asks the question why the state exists.” Thus there was hardly a distinction between state and society, or between Mosque and state. Lambton adds “there was no doctrine of the temporal end which alone belonged to the state and the eternal end which belonged to and was the prerogative of the Church (Mosque).” Thus,
the theory of governmentality was always seen as part of Islamic historicism and the
duties that rulers had towards history. The only distinction in this doctrine was Muslim
versus non-Muslim, religious versus non-religious. These distinctions, as part of the
Islamic discourse, still have an effect on the Iranian government, society, and its literature
that has intentionally represented this problem in a political fashion.

According to Lambton the problem of *who guards the guards* (*quis custodiet
custodes*) did not arise in Islamic theories. In the Islamic theory power and its sources
belong to God; but on earth, this power is delegated to the mortals in different grades.
Under this formula various grades of power were inevitably recognized, although in each
case the power was delegated. Having recognized God as the only source of power, then
the Sunnis as well as Shiites agree that His prophet, Muhammad, has the most perfect
power on the earth. Following Muhammad came the first four caliphs’, according to
Sunnis, and Imam, according to Shiites beneath Muhammad and caliph or Imam, then
came the power of sultans for Sunnis and that of kings for Shiites. On this Lambton
quotes Sangalaji, who was a major Shiite cleric of nineteenth century:

“[t]he most perfect and complete power was the power of God with regard to
creation in its eternity. Secondly there was the power of prophet, Muhammad,
which derived from the first power; thirdly there was the power of caliphs and
imams which derived from that of Muhammad, and fourthly the power of
governors, *qādhīs* (judges) and other officials which derived from that of the
caliphs and imams” (Lambton 1980, II: 125).
According to this Muslims, even Shiites, always differentiated the first four Caliphs (Rāshedins) from the Omayyad and Abbasids Caliphs who were, in Sunni sects, one degree lesser than them, or imams for Shiite and Isma’ili who were just one degree lesser than Muhammad. In the first decades of Islam Rāshedins, the successors of Mohammad who were called the Caliphate al-Allah, were legitimated because their relation to the state had a metaphysical and religious basis. For them Religion was not separated from politics, or politics from morals and the community was significantly indigenously Muslim. Through the expansion of the Muslim conquests from the year 657 onwards, the role of caliphs as well as the Islamic social and demographical patterns changed. The Caliphs after the Rāshedins were no longer accepted as the Caliphate al-Allah who succeeded the prophet, because they were seen as the secondary protectors of Islam. This was caused by the first Islamic civil war (fitna, 656–661 AD), which separated the political role of Caliphs from the religious one; and also by the fact that the Islamic Empire, had changed demographically to include communities of different races and varying religious, cultural and social backgrounds. The Islamic lands, thus, could no longer be conceived of as religiously homogeneous and pure. Peoples with different backgrounds could not be considered as umma that recognized the only legitimate people under the Islamic law. As soon as the distinction of religious and non-religious became an internal issue, the position and definition of the caliph was altered as well. He was no longer considered the divine caliph, who led the umma politically and religiously. By the time of fitna, the legitimacy of the caliph as a religious leader (imamate) was questionable. As we know Shiites believe that ‘Ali and his sons as the religious imams
were the real successors of Muhammad. Based on that they consider all Caliphs – even the first three *Caliphate al-Allah* – one degree lesser than the ‘Ali and his successors. This is the first and maybe the most important factor that differentiates the legitimacy system among Shiites.

Caliphs during the Omayyad and Abbasid dynasties had a political role to guarantee the maintenance of Islam, the application of the *Shari’a*, and the defense of orthodoxy against heresy. At the same time the theory of *imamate* supposed that the divine nature of ultimate sovereignty on the earth was in the authority of *Imam* and not the caliph. Based on the *imamate* theory people can disobey the caliph, but they cannot disobey God or his divine representative on the earth (*Imam*). Historically the *imamate* theory was very popular in Iran, because it could assist Iranians to restore the pre-Islamic kingship system allowing most of the religious and even nationalist revolts to be shaped under this notion. Later, when Turkish tribes began to reign in Iran, the *imamate* theory became the base of protection for Iranians against the power of the tribes. The *imamate* theory was also promoted by the Safavids in order to keep their independency against Ottomans who claimed that they were the legitimate Sultans, and even Caliphs, after the reign of Abbasids. Finally it was the *imamate* theory that let Shiite leaders in the nineteenth century lead people against the Qajar rulers as well as the West. We will refer to this part again in the third section of this chapter.

Through the decline of the Abbasid Empire and establishment of local Islamic states, especially in the eastern lands, the divine right of caliph was finally undermined by the Iranian extreme theory of the divine right of kings (sultans). The new formulation of
an ideal of Islamic government was needed for appointing rulers. Lambton (1980: 411) writes “Islam knew no theory of an international society of states. The ideal was a universal society, between the members of which perpetual peace was assumed, and pending the establishment of this, relations with the outside world were governed by the theory of jihad.” Accordingly there has been always one legitimate representative of God on the earth whom other governors, Islamic or non-Islamic ones, should obey. The legitimacy problem and jihad theory among Shiites and Sunnis is rooted to this notion. Thus, in order to legitimize the sultan’s authority, his relationship to God had to be defined. As a country caught between two Islamic empires, Iran, however, had no choice but to revise this notion in order to keep her independence. The theory of Jihad could not work for Iranians because they were mainly Muslims and, second, unlike Ottomans and Moguls whose populations were mostly non-Muslims, Iran was surrounded by other Islamic states. Faded the role of jihad through the Persian theory of kingship combined with Islamic jurisprudence and imamate theory there was no way but to recognize the legitimacy of the sultans under the conduct of the shadow of God on earth. This notion, albeit, can be traced back to the early Iranian movements. For instance, as Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (d. 759) discusses the authority of Caliph, he states that kingship is based on (i) religion, (ii) the will to power, or (iii) personal desire and that “the purpose of rule is twofold: to achieve stability and to contribute to the splendor of the ruler” (Lambton 1980: 409). As we can see the theory of jihad is kept minimal in Ibn al-Muqaffa’s account or philosophers and statesmen such as Ghazâli and Nezâm al-Mulch who saw the others in a different context and based on that tried to juxtapose the theory of justice with
the Islamic doctrine. The reflection of this notion is presented in the Persian religious epics that were formed or written in this time. Despite their genre, others in these epics are not infidels from non-Islamic lands, but rather they are the unjust rulers who have illegitimately taken the throne. Abu-Muslimnāmeh was the prototype for this genre, one that was very popular among Iranians with different religious backgrounds, for centuries. Having no use for this legend anymore the first three Safavid kings in 1500, who had to encounter foreign enemies, prohibited the storytellers from telling the story in tea houses. Instead they promoted the Shāhnāmeh which dealt with the political other (Babayan 1993).

At the height of its power (15th-17th c.) and during the weakness of Ilkhanids and Aq-qounlo (the Black Sheep) in Iran, the Ottoman Empire gained the authority to declare them as the Sultan and even Caliph as Sultan Saleem proclaimed. It also gave them authority over distant overseas lands through declarations of allegiance to the Ottoman Sultan and Caliph. From the ideological war between the Ottomans and the Turkish-Iranian kings prior to the establishment of the Shiite state of Safavid in Iran emerged a new formulation which was theorized in the concept of imamate, let Iranians establish their own state; this was the new universal discourse, mentioned in last chapter, formed under the new Iran in the Safavid era. Shiites who after fitna had separated the imamate from caliphate and believed that caliphs were not the legitimate representatives of God on the earth, used both justice and imam-king theory to legitimize the new dynasty in Iran. The Ithna ‘ashari historicism later helped the Safavid kings to present themselves as the shadow of God and representatives of Mahdi, the messiah, who would come to bring
justice and legitimate government to all peoples. It was their need for legitimacy that made Shiism the official religion and for its construction as a ‘versus Sunni.’

The differentiation of the caliph’s, imam’s and sultan’s relations to people and God was historically and politically fixed, but as it deepened through the centuries it created more contradictory problems rather than conveying the solutions. The basis of the political structure was the umma and communities bonded to one another by Islam. The Mongol invasion of the eastern part of Islamic empire intensified the problem for Muslims. Whereas the Islamic states were established; there was no theory, except jihad, to elaborate the relationships between these states. Unable to avoid this theory, the Safavid rulers turned it into an epical discourse under the ancient notion of Iranian-ness.

A century or so before them when the Islamic lands were divided under the horses’ hooves of Mongols and Tamorids, Ibn Khaldun depicted the problem as a social dichotomy. He thought that the sedentary people, with their luxuries and pleasures let the Islamic government get off the track; whereas, in his belief, the Bedouins, who were the most natural groups in the world and more disposed to courage, and who had lost their political power to that luxury, were not able to save the empire. Nevertheless, with the ‘group feeling’ (‘asabia) that was very strong among them they could reestablish the leadership within their tribes. Accordingly, they, through the group feeling, can have both House (beit) and Nobility. First Ibn Khaldun (1958: 103-4) criticizes Abu l-Walid b. Rushed (Averroes) where he states that “Prestige belongs to people who are ancient settlers in a town.” Ibn Khaldun then adds “I should like to know how long residence in a town can help (anyone to gain prestige), if he does not belong to a group that makes
him feared and causes others to obey him.” Stating that “this is because … only those who share in a group feeling have basic and true nobility.” Ibn Khaldun believes that the authority over different peoples happens when “the one group feeling overpowers the others.” He concludes that:

Each group feeling maintains its sway over its own domain and people, as is the case with tribes and nations all over the earth. However, if the one group feeling overpowers the other and makes it subservient to itself, the two group feelings enter into close contact, and the (defeated) group feeling gives added power to the (victorious) group feeling, which, as a result, sets its goal of superiority and domination higher than before. In this way, it goes on until the power of that particular group feeling equals the power of the ruling dynasty.…

The power of (a given group feeling) may reach its peak when the ruling dynasty has not yet reached senility. (This stage) may coincide with the stage at which (the ruling dynasty) needs to have recourse to the people who represent the various group feelings (in order to master the situation). In such a case, the ruling dynasty includes (the people who enjoy the powerful group feeling) among those of its clients (mavāli) whom it uses for the execution of its various projects. This, then, means (the formation of) another royal authority, inferior to that of the controlling royal authority. This was the case with the Turks under the Abbasids (Ibn Khaldun 1958: 108).

Ibn Khaldun lived in a very bad time after the Islamic Empire had been destroyed. About a century before him, Mongols swept through the eastern Islamic lands and ended the Abbasid Empire. A few years before his death Baghdad fell again to Tamerlane.
Because of this situation, he was completely disconnected from the rest of Islamic lands in the east. His limited sources indicate that he had no access to recent books. As a result, his theory, overall, was based on his observations. As a good observer he formulized the relationship between God and the individual Muslim under the theory of group feeling. Then, as we saw, he formulized the relationship between the states based on overpowering group feeling. It is obvious that the Islamic universal discourse did not function in his time at all and he had to reformulate it under the tribal notion of group feeling. Furthermore, he also observed a vacuum of power in the western lands of the former Islamic Empire. Nevertheless, he formulized the power relationship at both the micro-level and macro-level under the aforementioned notion. On the micro level the group feeling makes the relationship between God and man directly and without any middle institution or person. This relationship is similar to what Foucault has defined as the pastoral power. At the same time he used the same notion to explain the prospect of wars and conflicts between the tribes and dynasties. Here the group feeling functions above the individual level and is based on the power relations between the tribes and states. Again he uses the concept of jihad to formulize this relationship, which is indeed different from its original meaning in Islamic theory. Jihad from his perspective is not necessarily a religious war between umma and non-Muslims. Rather, it is a war for gaining more power; the concept that could be considered as what Foucault defines under the imperial power.

Muqaddamah was not received well by the Safavid rulers but was embraced by Ottomans who needed its theory of jihad to define their relations with their non-Muslim
subjects as well as the non-Muslim foreigners. Genealogically traced back to the second caliph, ‘Osmān, Ottomans tried to establish themselves as the legitimate sultans of the entire Islamic lands and states. The Safavids did not want to accept this and exploited the imamate theory of Shiite in order to dispute it.

As mentioned above Muslim thinkers disregarded the question of power in most cases. Instead they tried to describe the various grades of power that were recognized by the major sects such as Sunni and Shiite. The hierarchy that Sangalaji formulated shows that the rulers in general and after 1500s in particular, except for Ottomans, were looking for a theory of obedience rather than one of legitimacy. The theory of obedience was employed, especially by Shiite thinkers, to solve the contradictory problems raised under the legitimacy problem. The Ottomans, on the other hand, used both the Ibn Khaldun’s theory of group feeling as well as the theory of legitimacy under the caliphate in order to legitimize their government. Lasting until the end of the empire in 1918, the Ottomans’ claim of legitimacy played a great role in their relationships with the other Islamic states in general and Iran in particular. This dispute, which was an obstacle for the Islamic states to unite against the European powers, has also been reflected in the Afghani’s works.

As we can see Sangalaji’s ranking describes the old traditional pyramid of power system. By the time the Safavids came to power the conflict existed between Iran and the Ottomans as two Islamic states; however the situations of both states in the 1900s had so profoundly deteriorated that neither of them was able to claim itself as the only legitimate government of Islam. In order to restore their powers both Ottomans and Iranians had to
encounter the European powers and not each other. The Ottomans who had been halted right beneath the walls of Vienna in 1680s were now defending their territories against the Europeans on three frontiers: Europe, Africa and Middle East. At the same time peoples of the empire, who were fifty percent non-Muslims, were undermining its legitimacy.

The Qajar rulers had even more serious problems. The colonizers were already in their territories; people were questioning the legitimacy of Qajar rulers whom the religious institutions had not recognized as legitimate kings for a long time and who had turned against them. The only Shiite cleric that declared Fath ‘Ali Shah as a legitimate king was Kāshef al-Ghitā’ in 1820-30s in the midst of the defensive war against the Russians (Lambton 1993: 148).

The religious establishment in the Qajar time was slightly different from that in the Safavid era. The Qajar rulers, unlike Safavids, overall did not have ties with the religious leaders. Because they needed to be tied to Shiite institutions in 1500s, Safavids first created a religious position, called sadr, which quickly became the most powerful job after the king. The sadr position was more powerful than the traditional qādhi position under the Abbasids. By creating this position Safavids got help from the Shiite clerics being recognized as the legitimate kings. At the same time, the Safavid kings used the Iranian-Shiite historicism to have people’s support against their arch enemy, the Ottomans. By the end of 1500s, when Shah ‘Abbās was in power, the Shiite clerics became so powerful that the king decided to reduce their powers. But this did not happen until the time of Shah Safi. From his time onward in order to reduce the sadr’s power
Shah Safi replaced his position with *Sheikh al-Islam* a position in between *sadr* and *qādhi*. But the *Sheikh al-Islams* were still powerful enough to legitimize the king or to go against him.

By the time Qajars came to power, Shiite historicism became a direct threat to the Qajar kings. As mentioned in the previous chapter, according to Shiite historicism the unjust king was considered illegitimate and had to be overthrown by a just imam-king. Some religious movements, especially in the early Qajar period, used this doctrine to revolt against the official establishment. It is noticeable that almost all of the religious movements in the rural and urban areas that were shaped under the messianic expectation in the mid-nineteenth century turned into revolts against the central government. The major ones were the Sheikhi and Baha’i religious movements in the first half of the nineteenth century that both used messianic discourse against both the Shiite establishment and Qajar rulers.

The Qajar rulers, like their predecessors, regarded themselves as directly appointed by God. They claimed that they held power on behalf of the hidden imam; thus the ruler was the divinely appointed head of the state and was identical with the state as had been the case for the former rulers. But this statement was an assumption that was hardly acknowledged by the Shiite clerics. As Lambton points out Fath ‘Ali Shah (1797-1834) was the only ruler that enjoyed the support of the clerics. In his statement dated 1214 (1880) he claims that:

“Since the day when, in accordance with the decree of the Judge of the empire of predestination and the Ruler of the region of ‘He gives the Kingdom to
whom He wills’, upon Whom the creation of the world and the lives of all the children of men depend, the reins of the affairs of men were placed in our capable hands and our knowledgeable grasp and He gave glory and adornment to our princely person of blessed attributes through the sultanate and the caliphate, and the rulership of the world, we also, in thanks for this gift, … commanded that, each one of our royal servants… should have a high and fitting office…” (Lambton 1980, III: 143)

But unlike the above statement, the problem of legitimacy for the Qajar rulers was more serious than that of any ruler before them. Four major factors that had great impact on the history of Iran in the last century should be mentioned here.

First, although the Afshārs, Zands, and eventually Qajars were more secular than Safavids they also represented themselves as the Shadow of God upon earth and received His glory through the ‘sultanate and the caliphate.’ Shiite historicism, which was a foreseen future based on the leadership of an occulted Imam, was not, forcefully or directly, used against the rulers. Rather, it was used against the social situation which was worsening day by day. Shiite historicism projected a better life under the justice of the hidden Imam, and as subjects of this Imam, the people were not fully the ruler’s subordinates. This concept gave room for resistance and disobedience to the religious leaders and people who had hard lives under the Qajar rulers. We will get back to this in the third section of this chapter.

Second, although Sheik al-Islam, in comparison to the Safavid time, had less power at this time, the Shiite clerics as part of opposition became more powerful.
Shiism, historically, has been in opposition to the official institutes, except for a few times. “The fact that none of the Shiite imams, with exception of ‘Ali, the first Imam, had held political power and that during the occultation (ghaibat) all government was regarded as ‘unjust,’ limited the operation of these laws” (Avery 1991: 462). Shiite clerics just for a century or so in the early Safavid time enjoyed being tied to political power; nonetheless they did not loss their correlation with the people either. Being opposed to the rulers had indeed made the Shiite clerics more influential in the nineteenth century when the country was on the verge of collapse. One of the most important factors mentioned by a number of scholars contributing to the increased independence of the religious institution was the fact that the great Shiite centers of Najaf and Karbala were situated outside the Iranian borders. This situation let the religious classes turn people into political crowds in the late nineteenth century through the “Reji Movement” and, become crucial to the movements for Constitutional Revolution as well as other movements in the twentieth century. Hence, the Qajar kings were not able to control or even threaten the clerics. Like the Safavids they did not tolerate the independency of the religious classes and wanted to get away from the theocratic state. But as the administration became weakened and religious classes became more discontented, a gap between the ideal and the actual situation widened. As in the late Safavid period, again there appeared a gap among the religious classes, between those who maintained that the ideal should be achieved and those who were prepared to serve the state even though it was unrighteous. This dilemma has been a fatal factor in both the secularist and Islamist discourses, because neither of them ever wanted to compromise the ideal with actuality.
Noticeably, the Islamic theory of governmentality has been self-contradictory from the beginning, because it holds that God is the only source for legislation. However, under the semi-colonized condition, unable to recognize the real source of power, the Islamic theory of government gave power to the Shiite clerics against the weak kings and, enabled rulers to confront religious leaders in the Constitutional Revolution and other movements in more recent times.

Third, because the Qajar rulers lost their home land, Georgia, to the Russians in the early 1820s the Qajars were barely able to maintain their superiority over other martial tribes that had been defeated and later became united against foreigners and internal opponents in the late eighteenth century. Unable to rule, the Qajar rulers began to scatter the federative tribes such as Lors and Kurds in order to immobilize their martial forces. Without a national army this policy at the end made the central government weaker and put the national security in danger against the European powers. We will get back to this in detail in the second section of this chapter.

In addition and after some centuries, Iranians began to have a direct connection with non-Muslims or rather the Westerners for the first time. The Qajars were the first rulers who inevitably had to deal with the infidels based on the *jihad* theory, but they failed from the Islamic point of view. As mentioned before the *jihad* theory did not have a great role in the governmental policies because Iran was located between Islamic states. Up to this time the *jihad* theory was partially applied against the other Islamic sects by Iranians; whereas for Ottomans or Moguls it was the only theory employed against non-Muslims and non-Sunnis. When defeated by Russians and then the British in the first
half of the nineteenth century, the Qajar rulers did not employ the *jihad* theory against them nor did they mobilize the people under this theory either out of the fear of religious institutions or of tribal rivals. Lacking the power to maintain the country’s security, the Qajars had to lean on these same powers that defeated them in order to keep their thrones. These policies finally made the Shiite leaders and people as well to define the Qajar, and later the Pahlavi, rulers as the colonizers’ and imperialists’ puppets.

Besides the religious theory, the ancient Iranian theory of justice which was presented in the mirrors of princes could not provide a narrative of legitimacy for the Qajar kings. As much as Fath ‘Ali Shah wanted to mobilize people through it against the Russians during the war, the theory, reflected through a literary movement called *Bāzgašt* (return), was used against the Qajars in the end. The *Shahanshāhnāmeh*, a cartoonish version of the *Shahnāmeh*, was supposed to depict the king as the war hero against the foreign enemy; however, it did not receive any serious response in literary circles. The justice theory became more powerful by the end of the nineteen century when the intellectuals employed it against the worthless government. Based on the theory a just ruler is the one who cultivates prosperity; the tyrant on the other hand is the one who destroys the economy. Justice theory has a deep root in Iranian culture and mythology. Zoroastrian historicism as well as Shiite historicism is based on it. Justice theory also had great influence on the formation of the social classes in pre-Islamic times. For instance, in the Zoroastrian theory society was divided into four classes: priests, warriors, husbandmen, and artisans. The *Shāhnāmeh* has discussed this division vividly. The class division was considered as a justice system, because it cultivated prosperity. As Zaehner
(1961: 284) points out, this division of society was largely accepted by the medieval Islamic Persian theory of state in which the duty of the ruler was seen largely to be the preservation of a “due equipoise” which was to be achieved by keeping each individual in his proper place. However, this division conflicted with the social structure that emerged from tenth century A.D. onward with the strengthening of the Turkish mamluks, in which the warrior class or the men of sword in general was basically replaced by the Turkish tribal men.

The Qajar rulers were considered as unrighteous, unjust and impious, and their rule was seen as a tyranny to which God had subjected the people as punishment. According to Fraser who traveled through northeast Iran in 1821-1822, the Qajar rulers treated the people like a conquered nation. Their only concern was extracting the greatest possible amount of money (quoted in Avery 1991: 199). The rulers’ attitude as well as the people’s, among whom the theory of justice was very popular, let the religious classes unite with the secularists in the wake of the Constitutional Revelation in order to reestablish a ‘just,’ if not Islamic government.

The legitimacy issue for the sovereign began to worsen by the time Nassir al-Din Shah came to power (1850-1896). Not only did the people not trust men of power, they also did not trust religious people or (later) intellectuals if they had connection with the government whatsoever. As a result the religious classes began to avoid any relationship with the government and even the king. Mirzā Malkam Khan, writing about the middle of the nineteenth century confirms this statement. He states that the religious officials such as Sheikh ul-Islam “studiously avoid any open connexion with men in power; even
the appearances of such an intercourse would lose them the respect and confidence of the people, who were jealous of their independence and integrity” (Malcom, *History of Persia*, quoted in Lambton 1980, II: 144). Weakening of the tribes through this time under the governmental and economical policies shifted power to the discontented city dwellers that as Shiites and Persian speakers disobeyed the central government. The separation of the religious institution from the government began to problematize the subjectivity crisis, because the mojtahids’ power was increasing and the people preferably obeyed them instead. By the second half of the century religious institutions no longer included political institutions, even in theory. Lambton (1980, II: 144) believes that this process “became to a greater extent than formerly the refuge and protector of the people against the arbitrary power of government.” Malcom states that the religious classes:

… including the priests who officiate in the offices of religion, and those who expound the law as laid down in the Koran and the books of traditions, are deemed by the defenseless part of the community the principal shield between them and the absolute authority of their monarch. The superiors of this class are free from those personal apprehensions to which almost all others are subject (quoted in Lambton 1980, II: 144).

He also notes that the power of the mojtahids increased during this time. Unlike sadrs in early Safavid era, the mojtahids “filled no office, received no appointment, and had no specific duties” but they [were] accepted, “from their superior learning, piety and virtue, by the silent but unanimous suffrage of their protectors against their rulers, and
they receive a respect and duty which lead the proudest kings to join the popular voice, and to pretend, if they do not feel, a veneration for them” (quoted in Lambton 1980, II: 314).

Abandoning the concept of the non-religious ruler, the intellectuals, and even the religious classes, employed the theory of mirrors of princes to contextualize the relationship between the king and people under the concept of justice, which was seen as social justice. The theory of justice became a popular notion among both secularists and Islamists, because, for intellectuals, it was more about the ruler’s duties and less about his legitimacy. But the basis of the conception of justice for the Islamists, according to Lambton, was keeping the covenant which God had freely made with His servants, and this meant submission and worship (Lambton, 1980, IV, 93). Under this notion the good ruler is likened to a shepherd. Abu Yusuf, one of the early Shiaite scholars, explains that the ruler who has been divinely appointed is like a shepherd who will be answerable to God for his actions and the flock entrusted to him (Ketāb ul-Kharāj, 1933, Bulg, pp. 1-3; quoted in Lambton 1980, IV: 93). Echoes of the theme of the ruler as the shepherd of his people are heard in medieval theories. For the Safavid Shiites, however, this concept was weakened by the theory of the shadow of God upon earth, which was patriarchal rather than autocratic. Two social factors made the Safavids cross this bridge: first, as was described in the third chapter, the situation of Iran between the Sunni empires of Ottoman and Mogul that made a concept of the universal Islamism be modified by Shiism; second, it was the social structure in which the nomadic patriarchal power replaced the concept of Caliphate. We will discuss the second factor in the next section.
The theory of the rulers as shepherds turned into the theory of the shadow of God upon earth, as a patriarchal power, based on three major theories in the medieval Iran: the administrative handbooks such as Nezām ul-Mulk’s *Siyāsat-nāmeh*, mirrors of princes such as Ghābus’s *Ghābus-nāmeh* and the philosophical works such as Tusi’s *Akhlāq-e Nasserī* (see Lambton 1980: I 421-2). The mirrors of princes, as an Iranian theory, hold a place between the jurists and philosophers. It generally emphasizes the functions of the rulers rather than ‘ilm, or religious virtue. Jurists were primarily concerned with the art of government; whereas the philosophers discussed rather the theory or principles of government. Mirrors, on the one hand, write against what and who will weaken the state; and on the other hand, they held up the ideal ruler, partly, perhaps, in implicit protest against the failure to achieve that ideal. The *Shāhnāmeh*, as a literary work, depicts the idea in a formulaic fashion. A king makes a mistake so that consequently people stop supporting him. As soon as this separation has occurred a demonic king attacks the country, then a just king rises up and frees the country. The very same formula was used by Sabā in the *Shahanshāhnāmeh* to depict Fath ‘Ali Shah as the rescuer.

The concept of justice became popular in the 1900s, because, first, the country was economically and socially on the verge of collapse and people believed that a just king, even one who was not religious, could change the country’s course; second, the intellectuals saw it as the main reason for the powerful Iranian governments prior to Islam. The concept also helped them to make a connection between the justice formula in the ancient theory and the concept of social justice in modern thought especially with
socialism in Marxist in twentieth century. Consequently, the notion of justice became one of the main themes in the novels that we will talk about it in chapters five and six.

Ghazâli, Najm ud-Din Râzi and Hussein Vâ`iz Kâshâni as Islamic philosophers compared the ruler to a shepherd; nonetheless they also used the theory of mirrors to define the relationship between the administration and people. The mirrors for princes led these theorists in general to “urge the need for the ruler’s power to be effective” and the jurists, in particular, to recommend “just obedience to an unjust ruler” (Lambton 1980, IV: 95). Theoretically, Râzi accepts that the rule of an unrighteous ruler is preferable to the rule of a virtuous ruler if the interests of peace so demand (Jâm`i al-Olum, B. M. or 2972, quoted in Lambton 1980, IV: 95). Ākhundzâdeh used the same concept against the Qajar king in his famous book Maktubât. First he states “those nations, even in Europe, … that still follow the superstitious beliefs are declining; whereas other European countries such as England, France and USA that have freed themselves from these beliefs have progressed” (Ākhundzâdeh 1992: V). Then in the following chapter he claims that “unlike pre-Islamic Iran in which people were prosperous… because of their kings, … today, Iran is backward … the land is ruined and its people are ignorant … and all of these things have happened … because its kings do not know about progress in the world … they are arrogant and greedy and believe lies and superstitions” (1992: 16-20).

The Sasanian theory of royalty was concerned with the orderly and just government of the world and a king who was the representative of Ahurâ Mazdâ upon earth. This is parallel with the ruler as the Shadow of God upon earth in the Safavid
period. According to Ibn al-Muqaffā’, whose translations from Pahlavi to Arabic introduced the theory to the Arab world, obedience was due to the just sultan (Ibn al-Muqaffā’, 1960, p. 22; quoted in Lambton 1980, IV: 98). Ibn Balkhi, in the Fārs-nāme (tenth century), echoes the same notion. He states that sultan is appointed by God and ideally endowed with justice and knowledge (Ibn Balkhi 1995: 60). Nezām ul-Mulk, one of the most influential statesmen in tenth century A. D., echoed the concept this way: “kingship remains with the unbeliever but not with injustice” (Nezām ul-Mulk IV: 104, original source). It is interesting that this echo continues in various opposition parties in today Iran. Shiite philosophers such as Nasir al-Din Tusi and Vā’iz Kāshefi have also elaborated the concept this way: “the overthrow of the rule of justice would lead ultimately to the overthrow of the kingdom” (Lambton 1980, IV: 104).

“He (the king),” says Nezām ul-Mulk, “should follow the ancient custom and canons of kingship and not institute evil practices or give his agreement to the taking of life unjustly. It was his duty to overlook the actions of tax collectors and their transactions, to know the income and expenditure of the kingdom, to amass wealth and treasure for the support of the kingdom and the repelling of harm from enemies, but not so to live that he would be accused of miserliness or profligacy…” (Nezām ul-Mulk. 209-10; Lambton 1980, IV: 104). To elaborate the same notion in a religious way Ghazāli attributes to the prophet the saying “the justice of one day of a just sultan is more excellent than the worship of sixty years.” He goes on to say that “the person most beloved of God is a just sultan and the person most despised a tyrannical sultan” (Ghazāli. 9; Lambton 1980, IV: 104).
The Qajar rulers were not only considered illegitimate from the point of view of the theory of justice, but they were also seen as kings who were unable to restore the dignity of the kingship. It was from this perspective that both religious leaders and intellectuals used the theory to prove that the Qajar rulers were illegitimate. In order to do that they, however, had to contextualize the mirrors of princes differently. Justice was basically defined from the social perspective, which was completely different from its definition in Nezām ul-Mulk’s or Ghazāli’s works. Mirzā Aghāsi, minister of Mohammad Shah (1834-1848), still defined the concept of justice as it was for Nezām ul-Mulk or Ghazāli. However, the definition of the term fundamentally changed half a century later. For Mirzā Aghāsi justice was equal to Ghazāli’s formulation in which the duty of the statesmen was basically the creation of more jobs for peasants in order to collect more taxes which in turn gives better opportunity to the king to have a better army to defend his kingdom. However, in the wake of the Revolution the intellectuals and even the religious activists formulized it from the social and even economical perspective. They considered it a theory which made the people able to get rid of rulers who were not just or westernized. In the light of this the king’s duty was to give the same rights and opportunities to everybody (everybody being privileged people such as the landowners, clerics, and businessmen). However, as Lambton points out, the theory did not see the king as subject to law; therefore he remained a monarch on the top of the hierarchy. Whereas the Islamist theory wanted the king to be subject to Islamic law; it created an ideal position for the Imam above the monarch at the very top of the hierarchy.
This concept let the Islamists to create the *Supreme Leader* position after the 1979 Revolution.

**Social Structure: Men of Sword, Men of Religion, and Men of Pen.**

The social structure of nineteenth century Iran added to the pressure on a country going through the denationalization process. It is possible to examine the demographical, economical, political and cultural impacts of the social structure through both the mode of production and the theory of power and space. However, the theory of power and space offers a chance to trace the discursive presentation of the problem, which is very important for a critical look at the convergence of social discourse with the discourse of Iranian literature. It is noticeable that the problem of power structure in Iran has hardly been touched by scholars in terms of space or the mechanism of power. Foucault, however, offers the concept of space and the concept of an order system as points of analysis. I will talk about the space and power in a second. Although the social structure in Iran was different from that of Europe, Foucault’s theory could be adapted here in order to address that. Study of the order system in Iran verifies that the concept of subject as a discursive phenomenon is not necessarily universal and, therefore, it needs to be seen in its historical circumstances. There is of course no attempt here in this dissertation to define the historical subject from Marx’s point of view or to conclude that the mode of production ultimately determines the social formation; but, as Spivak describes, there is also no determination to “problematize the subject to the question of how the third-world (and in this case Iranian) subject is represented within Western
discourse” (Spivak, 2010: 271). To avoid this problem, we need to contextualize the subject in his own discourse and his own social structure. In the first section, my challenge was to depict the notion of governmentality from the Islamic perspective in which the networks of power/desire/interest were reduced to a narrative by the end of the nineteenth century. In this section I will try to represent the subject in his social structure in order to show that the subjectivity problem, and its theoretical problem, had its structural problem as well. The theory of Deleuze and Guattari on power/desire/interest could be counterproductive as Spivak points out, but it can also help to understand the absence of relation between these factors in a fragmented society like that of Iran.

For Foucault power is exercised in three different spaces: territory, population and individuals. Accordingly, “sovereignty is exercised within the borders of a territory, discipline is exercised on the bodies of individuals, and security is exercised over a whole population” (Foucault 2004: 11). This holds true in Iran too, but there are some differences here in comparison to European societies in which the agencies were not sharply separated from each other and therefore the spaces of territory and population had a close tie. In Iran sovereignty used to be exercised through the martial tribes, which by themselves had their own territories as well as internal autonomy; whereas the agrarians and city dwellers, separated from the tribes, were controlled by the tribal forces from outside and governmental agencies from inside; thus discipline involved the spatial divisions with the different treatments by the sovereign. Under these circumstances the sovereign had to use different kinds of discipline in different spaces in order to exercise his power over different branches of society. In other words, the apparatuses of security
involved different mechanisms in the three branches and the subjugation system had different levels and ranks in these spaces namely territory, population and individual body. In chapter five we will see that this problem turned into a *heterotopic* problem in the twentieth century in which the ideal space becomes a space completely out of the Iranian cultural and physical territory.

Iranians understood and still understand politics through revolt. This orientation towards revolt indicates a structural gap between power, desire and interest in the Iranian mentality. Common interests between the government and subject could, of course, fill the gaps; however, these did not arise in nineteenth century Iran, because the people’s spaces and lifestyles were not simply divided into three by their mode of productions; moreover, people lived in different communities namely tribes, villages and cities separated by the modes of production, classes, languages, and in some cases religions. Under these divisions men of power were divided by the modes of productions. Tribal men, who were generally Turkish, were exclusively men of the sword. Men of religion were in general from the urban and rural areas. However, the upper class religious leaders had ties with governmental elements, whereas low rank religious people, who mostly lived in the small towns and villages, had problematic relationships with officials. Men of the pen were mostly from the major cities or to some extant raised and trained by the upper class landlords, princes or headmen; for instance Amir Kabir, the first prime minister of Nasser al-Din Shah (1848-1851), was trained by and worked for Qā’im Maqām, the prime minister of Mohammad Shah, as a servant for a long time. As a result, the link between the government and subjects was deeply and widely problematic both
theoretically and pragmatically. To begin with, we need to recognize that Iranian society never has been a homogenous nation. There have always been different peoples with different backgrounds living in this land. The geographical borders of the land were also subject to change by different political and military forces. In addition to that the fragmented society created three kinds of subjects in medieval Iran. It is of course impossible to figure out how this happened, but we can show the problematic issue here. In order to do so we need first to explain these three separated societies; later we can focus on the problem of subjectivity, which has a heavy presence in Persian modern literature, either in the light of governmentality or national identity. Thus let us put aside the problem of subjectivity for a while and focus on the structures at the macro level.

As mentioned above the traditional power structure in Iran was basically formed and operated with three separated spaces, namely the nomadic system, the agrarian system and urbanized artisans and administrators. Traditionally, these three spaces, completely separated from each other by modes of production and social structures, had created different Iranian images for their peoples. Not only the modes of production, languages and lifestyles were different among each community, the social functions and duties were also different from each other. Nomads in general were pastoral as well as being the main source of manpower for the military. They were organized by the central court to fight against foreign enemies and used to overpower the people in rural and urban areas. Villagers were generally agrarian and providers of the agricultural products. Living far from landlords and administrators, they were apolitical and non-militarized people who had the least role in the political movements in the twentieth century (or the
nineteenth, for that matter). Nevertheless, they have formed some of the religious revolts throughout history, especially the Sheikhi, Bābi and Baha’i movements of the nineteenth century. Cities were the center for craftsmanship, trades, and commerce; added to which, landlords, high rank religious and government officials lived in the cities far from their peasants. Because of that, peoples in these three branches had little contact with each other and had little knowledge about each other’s dialect, language, and culture or even religions. The distance among the tribes were greater and deeper, because they had different languages such as Turkish, Kurdish and Lori, racial backgrounds (Turkmen) and religions. Most of the tribes were Sunni, except for the Turkish tribes in Azerbaijan and Lors in the south; whereas Shiism was the religion of most people in the cities and villages.

Accordingly, the system of power had different structures in these communities; likewise, the representations of self as well as the imagined community were different in these different spaces, because the government had to use the social and body control mechanisms differently in these spaces; for instance the body principles, either punishment or sexual control was exercised in a relaxed manner in the tribal areas; whereas it was very harsh for the villagers. More importantly, political power was exercised through different structures in each of them. Every space, isolated from the others, had a different power system in which the head of that branch, appointed by the king, had a direct connection with the court; thus, even each tribe, based on its military power, would be treated differently. Although the power structure in the cities was more complicated, the nomads had more power than any other branches. There were a number
of political and historical reasons for this. First of all, at least from tenth century onward, the dynasties were unexceptionally from the powerful tribes, which normally seized the crown with their military ascendancy against the other parties as well as the other opponent tribes. Second they were the only section of society that had militaristic power; hence they could and did use it against the other parts or other tribes. The monopolized army allowed them ascendency over others to establish a monopolized political system that kept power in their hands for more than a thousand years. Depending on their power, they had different statuses with different ranges of power from complete independence to internal autonomy.

Tribal power created a dual function for the tribes: on the national level, with their inter-tribal relations, tribes were considered the army of the king, sustaining security against foreign threats as well as against rebellious crowds in the cities and villages. Kings were obviously from the powerful and dominant tribes. The most powerful tribes were the Turkish ones, which dominated power in Iran for centuries. The Qajars, like the previous dynasties, were also from powerful Turkmen-Turkish clans located in the northwest region of the country, though the biggest part of the tribe was originally located in Georgia. In the early nineteenth century, after having lost the tribal homeland to the Russians, the Qajar rulers lost their tribal support in foreign and internal conflicts. Separation from their homeland was a vital factor for their principle of divides ET imperia; later we will see the effect of this policy on demographical patterns in the wake of the Constitutional Revolution.
But before discussing the situation under the later Qajars, it would be useful to examine the role and effect of tribalism in nineteenth century Iranian politics. According to *The Cambridge History of Iran* this system essentially was only “a slight variation on the general pattern of Iranian politics since the eleventh century, when large-scale invasions of nomadic Turkish tribes that accompanied the Seljuk incursions, and the spread of the quasi-feudal *iqtā’* system strengthened the regional power of tribal and other military leaders and weakened the strength of central governments” (Avery 1991: 174). The confusion of tribalism with the military organization let the Turkish tribes monopolize power for centuries. Between the eleventh and nineteenth centuries, government of varied powers from Seljuk, Mongol, Safavid and Qajar rulers not only monopolized the military power and *iqtā’* system, but also maintained certain similarities that characterized the whole of this period. The status of the nomadic tribes is one of these characters, which accordingly ranged from almost total independence to a degree of internal autonomy. According to Avery (1991: 174):

> Tribes managed not only their own internal affairs, subject generally to tribute and pro-forma confirmation of tribal leaders by the rulers, but also frequently ruled over villagers who inhabited territories in their regions. Beyond this internal autonomy, the tribes constituted the most effective fighting forces in Iran during most of this long period – their mastery of horsemanship and of the latest weapons giving them a decisive advantage over the city population, whom the Shahs generally showed little inclination to train.
All of the important Iranian dynasties from the Seljuks to the Qajars were either tribal in origin or relied on tribal backing in taking power. In the early nineteenth century, nomadic tribes were estimated to form one third to one half of the Iranian population (Issawi 1971: 20). Based on Issawi’s account Avery estimates that at the end of the century the tribal population was “generally one quarter, but since the Iranian population was supposed to have doubled in the interim, from about five million to about ten million persons, the absolute number of tribes’ people probably remained stationary” (Avery 1991: 174). As Tapper (1991: 174) points out the impact of this large, semi-autonomous, and influential tribal grouping on Iranian life and politics has not yet been given the theoretical consideration it deserves. More importantly, it shed a light on the subjectivity problem as well as the discursive problem that shape during the late nineteenth century and has been represented in the novels vividly.

There are a few detailed studies on tribalism or social organization of individual tribes in Iran; but what is available is mostly concerned with matters such as taxation, military contingents and disturbances, as well as the major tribal groups, numbers of tribes, tribesmen and leaders. These are not enough for studying the concept of subject among the tribes and for comparing that with the other sections of people. Furthermore it is hard to study their oral literature or the impact of Shiite historicism on them. But there are sufficient sources for studying the tribes’ relationships with the central government and other sections of the society, and these are very useful for our study.

The concept of tribe is a notoriously vague one and it is defined by a wide range of different criteria. The tribal groups commonly comprised several levels of
organization, from the camp to the confederation. Thus, the concept of subjectivity did not even have an exact definition among tribes. Language barriers, race and different backgrounds were very important factors too. Tapper (1991: 507) explains:

they (tribes) varied in the degree to which other activities (cultivation, hunting, gathering, raiding and trade) were practiced; that a common basic feature of tribal organization was a combination of notions of egalitarianism, individualism, independence and primary loyalty to paternal kinsmen; and that groups so based, under conditions of comparatively dense population and political autonomy, evolved larger, frequently militaristic confederations, while under conditions of strong government control they developed very deferent “feudalistic” class structures.

Overall, tribes were one of the perpetual problems of government of Iran for centuries. “One aspect of Persian history,” Lambton describes, “is that of a struggle between the tribal elements and non-tribal elements, a struggle which has continued in a modified form down to the present day” (Lambton; Atabaki 2007: 6). Like various Persian dynasties Qajars came to power on tribal support. The Qajar government, in its early years, was not a highly centralized or uniform kingdom. The Turkish tribes of the north had helped them to rise to power against the Lori tribes in the south and because of that they had an autonomous power inside their territories. Throughout this time the central government relied on tribal support and its military levies. But in the second half of the century there was an increase in centralization, which led to a conflict between the tribes, especially non-Turkish tribes, and the Qajar rulers.
Qajars pursued different policies with tribes in order to maintain them and at the same time to use their military forces in their conflicts with foreign powers and internal revolts. The usual policy was to allow the tribes to have customary control inside their districts as long as they stayed within certain bounds defined by the government. Keeping members of the chief families as hostages, establishing marriage alliances between chiefly and royal families were another ways to control the tribal leaders. After the Iran-Russian war, when the Qajar’s tribal lands were taken by Russians, Fath ‘Ali Shah attempted to break the power of the tribes and extend governmental control in the tribal areas by replacing the hereditary chiefs with local governors, and also by developing disciplined and non-tribal troops in the army. This policy was also pursued by the forced settlement of nomadic elements after the Constitutional Revolution. However, the government was not able to follow this policy evenly, and had to recognize the power of certain tribes such as Bakhtiāris. Governmentality, thus, had the innate problems that basically weakened the central government and kept the power system operating with simple techniques based on the straightness or weakness of the rulers. Lack of governmental institutions basically problematized either the notion of subjectivity or the governing mechanisms. The division of the nation into different segments with a single mode of production was the direct result of this problem.

By military and administrative reforms and repopulation of border provinces with tribes, Shah ‘Abbās back in 1600s had tried to replace the Ghizelbāšh cavalry with the non-tribal regular troops on a large scale (Tapper 1991: 508); unable to redistribute the tribes, the Qajar rulers did not continue his policy of resettling the tribes in new areas.
The tribes were commonly classified by language group or supposed ethnic affiliations. Barth believes these criteria were often inconsistent, misleading and little relevant to socio-political realities (ibid: 509). But not only language and ethnic identity were relevant, in addition, their religious sects were also important factors for tribal divisions and locations. To have a better picture, it is worth mentioning that with the exception of the Lori and Turkish tribes, all tribes were Sunni. Although these criteria (religions and languages) were fluid, they basically played a great role in the concept of subjectivity and governmentality.

The tribal system was a major threat to the stability of the state, especially during the Qajar period when foreign powers were interfering in Iranian affairs. Because of this the Qajar rulers used different policies in order to divide them one way or another. Besides the wide network of marriages, Fath ‘Ali Shah began to practice the principle of divide et impera and also to appoint officers (ilkhāni or ilbegi) over the more important tribal groups (Tapper 1991: 518). Breaking up some of the tribes and relocating some others were also practiced in order to decrease the threat of the larger tribes. The policy of forced immigration to the metropolitan area was also continued under later rulers (Lambton 1953: 140-2).

As a result, there was a general decline in the nomads’ importance by the end of nineteenth century. The peaceful cause was probably the growth of urban population, especially among the non-Turkic tribal groups alongside the economic system. These policies, however, had two contradictory results. On one hand they gradually brought to an end “the Qajars’ own military endeavors on the frontiers,” and hence “limited their
ability to provide the tribal militia with a legitimate source of plunder” (Tapper 1991: 519). Consequently they needed to lean on the Russian and British forces in order to control the country. Unable to exercise sovereignty they had to leave the territorial space to be controlled by the Russians and British. At the same time, the policy was helpful for creating a nationwide economy and power system later. By the end of the nineteenth century Iran was partially in the hands of Kazaks and British forces in the separated regions of north and south. Her independence, however, remained just because these two powers were not able to eliminate each other’s influence in the country. During the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah the power of many other tribal leaders was further weakened (Tapper 1991: 520) and in many areas the nomadic elements were settled in an increasing number. In the advance of the Constitutional Revolution, the population of the urban areas was noticeably increased and the process of settling, except that of Shāhsavans in Azerbaijan, changed the socio-political situation in the country.

The Constitutional Revolution was the end of denationalization and the process of detribalization was an important factor for the revolution. Soon after 1900, through detribalization ethnic and tribal identities were losing their importance in general and instead a national consciousness and anti-Western sentiment via religious-intellectual discourses increased. The cultural results of this situation are noticeable, especially in establishing the urban population as the revolutionary force in place of the nomadic military force, and the development of a new national identity. We will get back to these in the next chapter.
Nonetheless, the conflict between the government and the nomadic forces remained during the first half of the twentieth century. The conduct of the administrations, especially Reza Shah’s administration, in some tribal areas served rather to highlight its evils, and this has been depicted in a number of novels and short stories of that time, ‘Alavi’s *Gileh-Mard* (1377 [1998]) and Dānishvar’s *Savūshūn* are best examples of this kind. The sociological aspect of this conflict is also reflected in the subjectivity crisis. Tapper (1991: 533) draws a historical pattern for the decline and fall of tribal powers in Iran in which we can follow the relation between the tribal men, the men of the sword, and the central government as well as the nation as the imagined community. According to Tapper, the tribal dynasties, at both national and regional levels, appear to pass through four phases of development: (1) phase of expansion; (2) establishment phase; (3) phase of decay; and (4) replacement. The Qajar dynasty, however, had a very short expansion and a long decay. Furthermore, unlike previous dynasties, instead of being replaced by another tribal force it was replaced by an administration that was held by the revolutionary urban people. This was a crucial change that had a long process but a rapid result. In addition, the religious institutions that had united the Ghizelbāsh tribes under the Safavids turned against the Qajars who had lost their tribal force as well as the religious and national discourses.

The Safavids were able to integrate the ‘group feeling’ with the religious historicism which had roots in the Iranian discourse of ‘justice.’ This enabled them to revive absolute sovereignty under a Shiite-Iranian identity and not just a religious one. Both Nader Shah and Karim Khān used the Safavid puppet shahs to help legitimate their
authority. Unable to use these elements together, Qajars, on the contrary, used them against each other. The conflicts among these elements can describe the discursive struggle among the religious and intellectual thinkers during the late nineteenth century and throughout the whole twentieth century in Iran. As it turned out, ‘group feeling’ in the second half of the twentieth century turned into ethnic sentiments versus national and religious sentiments; especially when the settlement process occurred among the major tribes such as Shāhsavans, Kurds and Bakhtiāris. Therefore the identity and the technology of the self, which were fluid notions in most of the nineteenth century, in the next century became rigid, divided notions that were not able to consolidate the ethnic groups at all.

The role of the urban population in the Revolution is also understandable under these circumstances. Lack of tribal or a central military made the Qajar rulers puppets of foreign powers, and gave more power to the urban population who were able to act as a crowd on the streets. Despite the decline of tribal power, Bakhtiāris, who were a non-Turkish tribal confederation in central Iran, had a great role in the Constitutional Revolution and even later in the twentieth century political system. Bakhtiāris, as a considerable military force, did not want to seize power for just themselves and they in fact joined the new administrations which were led by landlords such as Kāzem Khān Rashti.

The second branch of the society was the villagers who lived in the rural areas. The villagers, who were predominantly agrarian, were ruled by the heads (kadkhudā) appointed directly by the landlord, the governmental officials or the head (Khān) of the
powerful tribe in the region. Neither the landlords nor any governmental officials, beside the *kadkhudā*, lived or had offices in the villages. Furthermore, there was no police force in the villages. The religious persons who lived in the village also had a minimal connection with their high ranking leaders in the major cities.

The *kadkhudās* were the middle-men between the provincial government, tribe, and, through that, the central government. Direct contact between the heads and government rarely occurred. The tax collectors, being the main representatives of the government, appeared with a few policemen in every village only around the harvest seasons to collect taxes, which were hardly ever spent in the village. In addition the landlords’ representatives would go to the villages to collect royalties and so forth. In the case of riots against the landlords or tax collectors, the government typically would exploit the neighboring tribes to put out the flames. In times of famine and drought, however, tribes often illegally attacked villages and even cities, looting them for food or money. This became especially common in the 1850s and thereafter, due to the combined collapse of the landowning system and the occurrence of famine nearly every other year.

Religious people were the only non-agrarian people who might live among the villagers; they took care of the villagers’ religious needs and governmental businesses. These leaders, neither government employees nor having direct ties to the religious hierarchy, would run a variety of businesses through the small religious schools (*maktab*). They were very influential and often acted as double agents; on one hand they were on the side of the tax collectors and the police and, at the same time, they sympathized with
the people opposing the landowners, the courts and their officials. This is the contradictory role that Shiite religious representatives always had throughout history.

As a result one could say that the villagers as agents had the least effect on the political affairs in Iran, except through riots and religious movements; nonetheless, they were mostly Shiites and Persian-speakers, and through oral literature and religion were able to have a close connection with the Shiite-Iranian discourses. As an apolitical and non-military people, they have been always ignored by other sectors of the society. As with the tribes, the space separation between the villagers and their landlords and governmental officials had created an artificial egalitarianism that in general alienated them from the rest of the society.

The third branch was the city spaces. The power structure in the cities was obviously more complicated and worked through peculiar organizations. The city dwellers lived relatively closer to the national government and under a more complicated governmental structure. Besides the administrative branch, which was comparatively simpler than the European counter-equivalents, there were especial organizations through which people were governed or created power. The Bāzār, the centre of this system and the heart of the economy, had at least 120 guilds (Atabaki 2004: 65). Each guild had one head and all the guilds together were represented by one head, who maintained a close relationship with the court. The main executive powers in the cities were the court, the bāzār, and the clergy. The bāzār and the religious leaders kept their own police force (luti) that secured the neighborhoods and businesses. The forces kept by the court were used essentially to control people when they were acting as a crowd.
To depict the problem of decentralization more precisely it is necessary to touch upon the taxation and financial systems and their effect on the governing system as well. To begin with it is important to mention that the central bureaucracy, throughout the Qajar period, was limited overall to just collecting taxes and customs duties. Religious institutions at the same time collected five percent or so of peoples’ revenue, which was called *khoms* and *zakāt*. Documents show that these taxes were mostly collected in the rural and urban area; but there is not enough evidence concerning the tribes. There is a possibility that tribes did not have to pay taxes. This is in fact a topic that has been hardly touched by any scholars (Tapper 1991: p. 535). The Qajar land system, according to Lambton (1991: 459), was inherited from the Safavids; but it was molded by local custom, the theory of *Shari‘a*, and finally the interests of superpowers. The urban life and extensive commerce that had developed under the Safavids had been severely damaged by the disorders and lack of governmentality. “Agriculture suffered from the general recession of the eighteenth century and was probably also adversely affected by the population which occurred in some parts of the country at the time of the Afghan invasion and in the latter years of Nadir Shah” (Lambton 1991: 459). The taxation system had one advantage though and that was ready cash in advance for the shah or the governors, but it had the far greater disadvantage, “from the viewpoint of production and prosperity, of encouraging the officials to rise as much as they could in taxes. As the century advanced, more and more merchants purchased land and they, along with some traditional landlords, began to use their lands increasingly for export crops like cotton and opium” (Gilbar quoted in Lambton 1991: 460). Most lands throughout Qajar times were
owned by men who never worked on or even saw the lands, but who received rents from the peasants. On the other hand, the villagers and the city dwellers were separated from the tribes, although they were dominantly ruled by the tribes.

Despite the existence of a central government power, was not centralized with nationalized institutions and policing systems and Qajars gave little attention to the creation of a modern military force which might protect them from both external attack and internal revolt, or to economical development. As such, the Iranian nationality and selfness were hardly represented under one single image. From the 1850s onward, foreign power elements complicated this scenario, although their presence had severe impacts on the Iranian politics at the end. In the wake of the 1905 Revolution the tribal military had dissipated almost entirely and the foreign armies remained the major military and policing organizations in Iran. In terms of space, by the end of the nineteenth century these forces furthered the distance or gap between the people-king and the foreign powers. This gap, categorized under ‘security’ by Foucault, caused the imagined community to undergo several alterations; the distance between the real power and the subjects became greater. The central government proved that it was unable to defend the sovereign land; thus people, feeling they had become stateless while at the same time subject to a pretend-sovereign, experienced a profound loss of their actual image of national identity. Lack of communications between different segments of society impeded the movement of goods and accentuated regional isolation. Exiled in their own country, they were experiencing a complete ‘bare life,’ as Agamben describes it, and alienation in their homeland. Subjectivity, already compromised through the landowning
crisis, was now worsened since people realized that the sovereign could not protect them from others. The distinctions between other and self became blurred, because there was not narrative to contextualize it. In addition, it profoundly depended on the Western definition of self. The Western other, who had the real power and value system in hand, began to guide Iranians in defining their selfness through their own version of the modernity discourse in which the reactionary government and the traditional way of life were interpreted as the real other to the people. Reversely, the Western other, at least part of it, was represented as the new self image with which the intellectuals identified or rather separated themselves from the ‘ignorant’ people. Islamists, on the other hand, introduced the Western other as the only threat to the whole system, while at the same time they were not able to present a universal self either, because self for the Islamists did not fully cover all aspects of Iranian-ness. With two definitions of self it was impossible to create a universal discourse.

Due to geopolitical factors in the nineteenth century, the power vacuum placed the country on the verge of breakdown. As a result the monarchs had to lean on either Russians or British in order to control the unrest of the population. By the end of the nineteenth century the southern tribes, namely Bakhtiāris, Lors and Arabs, began not only to undermine the king’s authority, but to fight with him as well. The landowning system was also on the verge of collapse and, in addition, trade routes began to be totally controlled by the colonizers.

The process of nation building that occurred in the reign of Reza Shah in the first half of twentieth century forcefully solved most of these problems and brought the social
disconnection to its minimum; nonetheless, the cultural residue of disconnectedness remained in the Iranian psyche. In addition it finds its new form in the discursive fights between the modernists and Islamists.

**Subjectivity Crisis and Its Root in the Islamic Theory of Governmentality**

Ever since the invasion of Iran by Arabs the notion of the *self* has presented a problem, and has been a locus for posing questions of legitimacy. In fact the questions of legitimacy and subjectivity have always been tied together in Iranian-Islamic philosophies as well as theology and Sufi literature. *Shari’a* defined both legitimacy and subjectivity under the obedience doctrine, which was part of the governmental theory. Sufi literature saw both through the relationships between *self* and God. Epic literature depicts them via historical-millennial duties that everybody had in regards to creating goodness. Despite the varieties of discourses on legitimacy and subjectivity available, we will examine the Sufi and *Shari’a* discourses closely as these two were dominant in Iran from the tenth century onward.

For the Sufis there was a question of personhood, or personal identity, which was mostly reflected in the mystic philosophy and literature. Here, the *self* was seen as an animated soul. This idea of *self* as substance or form, which can be traced back to Plato’s thought of personhood, seemed dependent upon a unity that can act as a source of consciousness and basis for self knowledge. The notion of subject in this context was based on the mystic statement of “know yourself” in order to know your God. Thus the notion of the *self* reached both *self* and *other* or as Ricoeur (1988: 335) puts ‘oneself as an
other.’ Self was other and other was self, because there was no mystical distinction between these two. According to Rumi, who unlike other poets opens his Masnavi with a poem on a self that had been separated from the source of selfness, self can only be formed in unity with the divine being- separation between these two is the end of personhood. According to Sufi philosophy, “knowing yourself” can be a source of wisdom and a good life, so long as it is involved with the process of killing the desires, which are the demonic part of human beings. It is through this process that man can purify himself and open his soul to the source of knowledge and wisdom that comes from God. Thus the mystic notion of subject, which was dominant for centuries, avoids talk about governmentality and everyday life on the earth. In addition there was no concept of nationhood in this thought, because self had no collective identity related to the material sovereignty. The agency of self then was limited to the mystic exploration for God.

On the other hand, there was a question of personhood in terms of obedience. This idea of a self was related to the Shari’a philosophy. Man in this thought is depicted as having a physical body and as existing in a political space. Thus man is the source of obedience to God; he is His representative on earth and the temporal sovereign of earth (in service of God’s wishes). Man here would be a subaltern to both systems of religion and politics. As we already read, in Sangalaji’s categorization of power, God is the source of all kinds of power on earth. Therefore man has no choice but to obey Him in all circumstances and His prophet, who is the source of power on the earth. Man’s duty is then nothing but obeying him as well. Caliphs, and Imams in the Shiite theology, are
one level below. Thus people should obey them on both political and religious levels; however Imams and caliphs should obey the prophet and God on both dimensions; here Imams are subject to God and His prophet, but are above the head of the states. The concept of *taqlid* in Shiism is created through this theory to give options to people to choose their own religious leaders versus the governmental laws. Man should follow an *āyat ul-Allāh* in regards to his religious duties and tasks, deferring to his religious leader in light of a conflict between the religious duties and the governmental tasks. The fourth level was Shahs in Shiism, or Sultans in Sunni system. People do not have to obey the shah in regards to religious duties, but so far as a shah is not acting against Islam, the people have to obey his political decisions. The subject had a collective identity in this thought. This subject was firstly defined as *Umma*, the nation of Islam, and then through a group feeling (*‘asabia*) that formed a state around tribal power. However, in the Safavid time Shiism-tribalism (as *umma* and *‘asabia*) and Iranian-ness, were set up in the literature and merged together creating a new Iranian identity. Nonetheless the idea of the *self* here is totally related to duties and tasks either in a political or religious dimension.

According to the jurists such as Al-Shafi’i and Kāshef al-ghīṭū, the *Shari’a* recognizes rights of property as that of individual possessions, expressed in the phrase *alnās musallatun ‘alā amwālihim* (الناس مسلطون علا اموالهم) (men are in control of their possessions), and of communal possessions, derived from conquest (Lambton 1991: 459). Although Kāshef al-ghīṭū states that “no one has any power over the property of another” and “the property of a Muslim, and not only the property of Muslim, but all property,
such as the lawful property of an infidel, is sacred and immune” (460), this statements come under dispute in light of the construction of *self*. Theoretically both Muslim and non-Muslim, are considered *umma* and under the state of Islam. Thus the Ottomans, who were legitimate Sultans according to Sunni jurists, could use the second law against the Iranian Shiite dynasties; as MirVais mobilized Afghani-Sunni tribes against the Safavid kings. Second the *iqtā’* as a landowning system, in which the right of property was preserved for the king, was used by the Qajar rulers in order to secure their power against their rivals. As a result, the concept of citizenship by no means could be defined or materialized by any theory and the notion of personhood was merely channeled through the duties, tasks and political obedience rather than social or political rights, because Muslims, Sunni or Shiite, were both *umma* and Ottomans could legitimately claim rights over the same property.

It was indeed after the decline of the caliphate system and the collapse of the Islamic Empire in the thirteenth century that the ‘problem of subjectivity’ turned into a kind of crisis in the Islamic states in general and Iran in particular. According to the Shiite thinkers, especially those in nineteenth century Iran, “I” as a common person was not the source of consciousness, knowledge and ethics, which all were indeed coming from the divine being. “I” also was not the representation of the divine being. What then was “I” according to the Shiite philosophy, or Sunni thought for that matter? “I” was not a *self* as we know it in modern thought. “I” was, back then, a network of ‘duties,’ ‘responsibilities’ and ‘privileges’ under a reigning monarch. This notion of *self* also did not prefigure the modern ‘citizen rights,’ which as a concept would be found in pre-
Islamic Iran and the Shāhnāme as well. The Self without the political image could only exercise the pursuit of ‘well being’ religiously and obedience politically. The conflict between the Iranian “I”, who had a duty to fight for good and justice, and the Islamic “I”, whose duty was being a good Muslim on one hand and Mystic “I” that had to sublimate himself to God deepened the subjectivity crisis toward the end of nineteenth century.

Due to the lack of political and social image, the self needed no social space. Mosques were the only places that people could gather, but besides their religious function, these spaces were too small to be considered as political institutions - schools and other social spaces were also limited in major cities and among classes/castes, therefore, they were not representation of the self in a crowd at all. By the end of nineteenth century, the urban population was growing compared to the nomadic population that was declining and the ratio between the two changed in favor of the city dwellers causing the problem of subjectivity to enter into a new era. Needing to represent himself, self found the crowd as a powerful entity to pursuit his social and political interests. It was under these circumstances that the rebellious crowd of the early nineteenth century such as Babists turned into the political crowd by the end of that century and began to use the mosques, streets and even the foreign embassies as political spaces.

“I,” under this situation, became the source of political knowledge and consciousness that gave human subjectivity a concrete and practical aim. The impact of Descartes on this notion is unquestionable, since Iranian intellectuals were already familiar with his thoughts (Vahdat 2002: 2-10), but the interpretation and the
actualization were different. Not only was “I” a source of consciousness and representation for Descartes and Kant as well, but “I” was also a source of all knowledge, actions and ethics. Despite acceptance of “I” as the source for political knowledge, “I” did not become a source of ethics or consciousness, since, according to Islam, God was the only source for these. What the Iranian political movement achieved was nothing less than the shattering of the authority of monarch and even mainstream Islam, because “I” still was not considered as the source for political knowledge. This shattering did not result in the loss of the transcendental position of monarch or religious institutions. Philosophy of subject (obedience in Shiite thought) still referred to the political (or civic) domain of a reigning monarch. Thus, instead of rights, people still had duties, responsibilities and privileges characterized by their relationships with the state and religious institutions.

The gap between subject and government had other dimensions too. One was the relation between subject and truth in universal discourse and in new discursive trends. Foucault observed that in the Western cultures ‘know yourself’ (gnothi) took precedence over ‘care of the self’ (epimeleia heaton) in the pre-modern time (Foucault 2005: p. 30). A similar attitude can be found in the Islamic-Iranian thought, but with a different source of agency. Whereas in Plato’s thought knowledge is other that man has to obtain in order to get close to God as a source of power, in Sufi and Islamic thought the act of “knowing yourself” depends upon God’s will.

Foucault examines the causes for the elimination of care for the self in modern philosophy beginning with Descartes’ insistence on self-knowledge and the structure of
the cogito. ‘Care of the self’ in Shiite and Sufi philosophies means purification of the soul rather than the body. Pedagogy did not play a strong and central role in these discourses, because knowledge is obtained through Gnostic rituals. In the Sufi sects pedagogy is involved with ritualistic prayers and journeys for purification of the soul. In the Shiite discourse pedagogy was more or less related to theology; therefore while clerics had to study the religious literature and history, the common people needed no pedagogy at all. Instead they were trained by their fathers and patriarchs to continue doing what their fathers and forefathers were doing. In regards to truth, the subject had only to follow the exact religious instructions in order to cleanse the soul and body and create more room for God, who would bring some degree of truth to the person based on the person’s capability. On his discussion on the subject and truth Foucault writes:

Let’s us call ‘pedagogical,’ if you like, the transmission of a truth whose function it is to endow any subject whatsoever with aptitudes, capabilities, knowledge and so on, that he did not possess before and that he should possess at the end of the pedagogical relationships (quoted in Besley & Peters 2007: 4).

Pedagogy in Islamic tradition had little to do with truth, because what a subject does for a living only helps him to survive in a given society; it does not necessarily help him to acquire the truth, which was a gift endowed by God to the virtuous. That is why religious philosophy and theology, which are dominantly about the Truth, were considered the only true sciences ('elm) in Islamic thought. In the light of this notion the technology of purifying the self was also considered part of Islamic philosophy. Without having the privilege of knowing the truth, the subject then could not emancipate itself or
objectify the rulers under the law. The Platonic-Shiite concept of right has formed under the notion of the ‘privilege of knowing.’ Subjects cannot be equal under the Islamic discourse, because those who acquired the Truth have a right to make decisions for the common people and to run the state. Going back to the theory of governing and obedience, people had no right to run their political or religious affairs without the help of clerics.

Nonetheless, the notion of the self belongs to the whole culture and not just a religion; therefore it can really only be understood in relation to a culture, including all values, social relations and practices. These practices and relations change and are constituted very differently in different historical eras and different discourses. It is under this notion that the theory of justice reveals its cultural role in political and literary movements. The conflict between the religious notion of self and the duties of self in the justice theory has been always problematic from the advent of Islam. Most of the early revolts were in fact spread through this language and these revolts, in their turn, created a different mentality around the concept of self and subjectivity. The justice theory that formed around the kings’ duties also gave people the right to rise up against unjust rulers. It was in this context that the modern discourse came to define the relationships between the subject and king on one hand and knowledge and truth on the other. This right, mostly embedded in the literature, also changed the role of self as an emancipator in the wake of the Constitutional Revolution. From that point on, the question of “who is an Iranian as a modern man?” became part of the modernity discourses. Despite those
religious leaders who tried to avoid it, this question also weighed heavily on the religious discourse.

The ‘culture of self’ in Iran has remained problematic up to now because there has been no clear philosophical, literary or historical discourse on the self, no union between Islamist and intellectual thoughts on the care of the self, nor the formation of a new notion of subjectivity as human will towards the objectification of nature and utilitarianism, especially as ‘the entrepreneurial self’ that Foucault depicts (Besley & Peters 2007: 5). It goes without saying that there is no such thing as universal necessities when it comes to human nature; there is no theory that we can advance which is valid for all ages and across all cultures. What I meant here is that without creating an ‘Iranian entrepreneurial self’ the notion of subjectivity was forced to swing between religious, nationalist and modernist concepts. In other words, self has been fragmented and therefore, both modern discourses as well as the literary discourses characteristically became a collection of contradictory elements in their theories or against each other. For instance, while the neoliberal educational policy, that according to Foucault characterizes the entrepreneurial self, has gradually become paradigmatic, the construction of governmentality still characterized the self based on the religious concept. Thus, whereas Iranians began to conceive of themselves as an entrepreneurial self, they still were governed as beings whose identities were defined through social obligations.

Neither the intellectual nor Islamic discourses dealt with the questions such as ‘what is the truth’ in relationship to the historical situation of Iran because the source of the truth for the Islamists was God and therefore there was no need to explore it from a
human perspective and source of the truth for modernists was the West. Seeing themselves separated from the source of science and technology, the problem for Islamists, then, was obtaining the power and technology that the West had gained in the recent centuries and yet they saw no direct relations between discourse, knowledge and power or between subject as an agency and his right to find the truth for himself, which is directly tied to power and knowledge. For that it was only enough to unite the Muslims again under one government and to study science and technologies out of the discourse of subjectivity and his modern ability as an agent.

Back to one of the founder of this discourse, Afghāni, a major political thinker and activist whose personal discourse had a lasting influence on the nativists and anti-imperialists, expressed this mentality in some of his works clearly. Afghani (1968a: 104; Vahdat 2002: 57) writes:

A science is needed to be the comprehensive soul for all the sciences, so that it can preserve their existence, apply each of them in its proper place, and become the cause of progress of each one of those sciences. [Such a science is] philosophy because its subject universal … If a community did not have philosophy, and all the individuals of that community were learned in the sciences with particular subjects, those sciences could not last in that community for a century … that community without the spirit of philosophy could not deduce conclusions from these sciences. The Ottoman government and the Khedive of Egypt have opened up schools for the teaching of the new
What is important here is that Afghani grounded his conceptualization of philosophy in the idea of reasoning. For him, the father of knowledge was reasoning and truth existed where there was reasoning (Afghani 1968a: 107). He could be right if he had considered philosophy as discourse; however, for him philosophy, and not discourse, is only a tool that could be used to understand an autonomous Truth given by God.

Unlike Afghani, intellectuals associated the Truth, with capital T, with the sciences that the West possessed. Subjects were the ones who were able to learn these sciences; however, they were not defined as self-willing as Hegel defined them. Unaware of the historical situation that the Iranians as subjects lived in, these intellectuals wanted to bring the truth to Iran through modernity. The term ‘historical ontology of ourselves,’ as Foucault employs it, was meaningless to the intellectuals.

In his investigation on the formation of ourselves through the history of thought, Foucault focuses on three sets of relationships: (1) those concerning truth as an obligation, (2) relationship to ourselves, (3) relationship between us and others (quoted in Besley & Peters 2007: 6). Islamists such as Afghani only focused on the third relation; that is the relationship between us and others. The relationship to ourselves was based on the relationship between God and the pious as defined in Islam and accordingly people were divided into two groups: Muslims and non-Muslims. Non-Muslims who were one kind of other who were symbolized by the West; therefore, the West for Islamists was nothing but a threat that all of a sudden possessed science and military power. On the
other hand, intellectuals focused on a truth whose source was the West, causing a change in the relationship between self and other. Although the other had been symbolized by the West, it became part of the self for intellectuals who valued the West as a source of truth.

It is worth focusing on Foucault’s work momentarily, because it firmly anchors the self in a notion of culture. In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* he writes:

I think we can say that from the Hellenistic and Roman period we see a real development of the ‘culture’ of the self. I don’t want to use the word culture in a sense that is too loose and I will say that we can speak of culture on a number of conditions. First, when there is a set of values with a minimum degree of coordination, subordination, and hierarchy. We can speak of culture when a second condition is satisfied, which is that these values are given both as universal but also as only accessible to a few. A third condition for being able to speak of culture is that a number of precise and regular forms of conduct are necessary for individuals to be able to reach these values. Even more than this, effort and sacrifice is required. In short, to have access to these values you must be able to devote your life to them. Finally, the fourth condition for being able to talk about culture is that access to these values is conditional upon more or less regular techniques and procedures that have been developed, validated, transmitted, and taught, and that are also associated with a whole set of notions, concepts, and theories etcetera: with a field of knowledge (*savoir*) (Foucault 2005: 238).

As previously mentioned, there are no universal necessities in human nature for Foucault, only differences in the technologies through which the subject is created or by
which s/he creates himself or herself. Furthermore, Foucault accepts the relationship between subjectivity and technology of self-formation; although he gives it a historical cast (Besley & Peters 2007: 7). ‘Truth games’ relates to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves. He mentions four major types of technologies, ‘each a matrix of practical reason’:

(1) Technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of signs systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (Foucault 1988b: 17-18)

Although the notion of self remained problematic and Persian modern discourses have not created a culture based on autonomous selves, the notion of self is basically ideological even when it is raised in a political discourse. Lack of the concept of autonomous self, especially in Islamist discourse, makes considering people as political tools.
Conclusion

Both Islamic and intellectual discursive trends attempted to achieve a balance between the various organs of government and even to create a true separation between the political and religious institutions. However, a number of different factors did not allow them to solve the problematic issues listed below. The first was the social system in Iran which as a nation was separated into three societies, which through separation, created different images of nation and selfhood. The second factor was that power had never been created equally by the different sections of society and consequently could not be exercised similarly. The third factor was that the conception of governmentality upon which the medieval theory had rested led inescapably to despotism because of the absence of a dualism between ‘church’ and state and because of an assumption of perfection or perfectibility in the ruler, As Lambton nicely puts it “it had no answer to the problem of quis custodiet custodies.” In theory the ruler was subject to the Shari’a, but in practice no means were contrived to enforce his subjection, and so it remained largely theoretical. The doctrine which was accepted was closely akin to Ceasaro-papism (Lambton 1980 III: 146). The contrast between the new discourses and the medieval theory of government, however, did not help Iranians to achieve a body of law through which the ruler and the people were equally subjected. The reason for that goes back to the conflict between the Western value system, adopted by secular rulers of twentieth century, and Islamic value system embedded into the culture. Marriage system and the women’s roles and rights as the most problematic issues are good examples here. In the West separation of church and state could happen because this separation was just on the
level of political administration and institutions. On the cultural level, Christianity still had a great role. For instance, separation of church and state did not end up with the changing of marriage system. In Iran, however, separation of mosque and state needed fundamental changes in culture, especially when it comes to Islamic system of marriage. The changes were needed, because the Islamic value system, according to modernists, had to be replaced by the Western value system. Most of the disputes have happened around the role of women. Had these reforms happened in religion and culture first, separation of mosque and state would find a deeper root in the society.

In terms of national identity and the problem of subjectivity in the twentieth century Iranian-ness was historically layered with three trends. The first trend was the nationalist discourse, rooted in a pre-Islamic image of Iran and fundamentally defined by the national epic. The second notion has been formed in the Safavid time, when the combination of the first notion and the Shiite notion of self created a new Iranian identity. This identity refers to a nationwide self who holds a certain religion that leads him to heaven. The third notion of Iranian-ness was added to the rest in the wake of Constitutional Revolution. Through this process the modernity aspect of self led Iranians to define themselves through the notion of emancipation. This notion of the self gave rise to the intellectual movement.

The impact of this process on literature is also traceable, especially as the use of technologies of power and self played an important role in building the new concept of self. Technologies of symbols have also been used to form a self that has no goal but to fight for justice. This type of self-formation became very common in the novels before
the 1979 Revolution. Self, thus, in the Persian stories lives for a goal. The idea has formed in the discourse, and has been projected by the writers.
Chapter 5: The New Islamic Discourse and the Birth of the Modern Discourse

The later part of nineteenth century and beginning of twentieth century was the end of an era and the beginning of a new one for Iranians. Suffering from military defeats at the hands of Russians and British forces, Iranian society had gone through significant political as well as socio-economic transformation. Creating or modifying the discourses needed to explain the situation and at the same time help society to get back its sovereignty was inevitable. These historical and discursive changes were kinds of sharp distinctions from the past which came to be considered as an obstacle to the modernization. This movement can be seen as a great divide between past and present, tradition and modernity; a deep distinction in economy, politics, culture and literature. Nonetheless, the great divide was in nature different than what we see in the modernity projects occurred in the Western countries. The Great Divide in Europe, theoretically and technically, was a distinction from the past in terms of scientific language versus rhetorical language (Britain and France) or nature versus tradition (Germany) (Bendix 1997: 27-44; Bauman & Briggs 2003: Introduction). In addition, modernity as both an intellectual and a political project has had a long history of differentiating, excluding and dominating the non-Western parts of the world. The Othering of non-Western people by Europeans played a major role in their great divide. It is true that the dichotomizing
technique of differentiation between “us” and “them” is an important component of any organized system of political thought, but, as Edward Said (1978:2) articulates it, Orientalism is “a body of knowledge and system of representation, which succeeded in portraying the Orient as modern Europe’s silent ‘civilizational other.’ The line that was drawn somewhere between Greece and Turkey in order to separate Orient and Occident was not so much a fact of nature but an invention of European ‘imaginative geography.’”

Additionally we should keep in mind that colonialism can no longer be considered a minor period in the history of modernity, especially between 1880-1920 when about eighty five per cent of the world was controlled by the colonizers. Early modern Europe defined its own modernity in opposition to the colonial “primitive” living in the “state of nature.” “Colonialism was represented, as in John Locke’s Second Treatise for example, as beneficial to the colonized “primitive” who will gain the benefits of civilization and Christianity” (quoted in Hulme 1994). Other-ed non-Western peoples had three degrees: Among the countries of the Orient, China represented the ultimate exotic other. India was the next candidate for other-ness and the Muslim world was the third candidate for serving Europe’s need of a typical other. “Until the eighteenth century,” Boroujerdi says, “Islam was viewed as a perversion of Christianity and the Muslim world as the province of the Antichrist. With the coming of the rationalist and humanist philosophy of the Enlightenment, the Islamic world came to be perceived as the embodiment of all that was recently left behind in Europe: an all-encompassing religion, political despotism, cultural stagnation, scientific ignorance, superstition, and so on” (Boroujerdi 1996: 7). Muslims in general were only occupying a ‘discourse space.’ They served as Rousseau’s ideal
type of the “noble savage” and as Montesquieu’s fictitious travelers to Paris in *Letters peranes*. The former viewed them nostalgically as the representatives of a bygone age in harmony with nature, whereas the latter used them as a symbolic mouthpiece for his criticism of European life at that time. In both cases they served as the metaphorical reflections of the occidental self upon itself (Boroujerdi 1996: 7-8). As Said says “‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’ are man-made, [t]herefore as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West” (Said 1978: 4-5). Accordingly, the West is a reality with its history and discourses; whereas Orientalism is just a narrative that does not correspond much with reality. In brief, modernization in Europe historically recontextualized its past and geographically defined the Orient as other.

However, this process could not happen in the period in which Iran was a semi-colonized country, which had lost her full sovereignty on one hand and was not a source of scientific production on the other hand. In other words, modernization occurred in Iran while the distinctions between power, knowledge and discourse were deepening day by day. The discourses that modified or were created in these circumstances were naturally not able to recontextualize the past or present under national and religious notions, without regard to Europe as the source of modernity. Lack of full sovereignty could not create any independent discourses. This is what we can see in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of Iran. As a semi-colonized country Iran had to recontextualize her past though the othering process in which the other-West had replaced the great image of self, while self began to carry the negative image of other. Under these
circumstances, it had a historical and a geographical break from its past and present at the same time and its past was considered the main cause for its present day ignorance and superstition; geographically it was considered an unpleasant place in comparison to Europe. In other words, the othering process here took a different path with which in general, the self became other and other became self. This break that was defined under dichotomist terms such as modern/backward depicted the ordinary Iranians as the internal other. There is no doubt that the othering process happens in every society, but through retraction of Iran’s sovereignty, Iran, was going through colonial subjugation and lacked a process of reciprocal othering in which others, such as the Europeans, could be objectified. Said puts it nicely. Rather than say that other societies do not intentionally study other societies or this is a desire that only Westerners have, Said claims that there is a universal tendency to fabricate self/other dichotomies among all cultures or states, but what the West has done is objectify the others in order to subjectify them politically, economically and even culturally (Said 1978: 328). This happened in modern Iran and through that Iranians created two main discourses that in a reversed perspective saw themselves through the eyes of the West as an object; however, despite the perspective of these discourses neither of them considered Iranians as objects to the dominant western powers. This problem created a kind of schizophrenic (schizoid) culture that we will talk about later under the Foucault’s term heterotopias. The process can be seen as a part of Orientalist project in both instances, and in one, as an answer to that. However, both let Iranian intellectuals and political elites lay claim to, recapture and finally hand their ‘true’ and ‘authentic’ identity to the West. Thus, modernization in Iran was actually formed
through a painful process of othering the self on one hand and praising the European-other as a new image for self on the other hand. This process had two main results: First of all, it created secularists, intellectuals and political elites who saw the history of Europe as the only path to modernization. They wholly embraced the idea of othering self through the discourse of Orientalism. Secondly, it increased the popularity of Orientalism in reverse among some politicians, Islamist intellectuals in general and even a handful of secularists who changed the terms of discourse so that the West, and not the natives, was defined as other. The Occidentalism became part and parcel of the ubiquitous presence and seductive lure of Islamist discourse. Later secularists such as Ale Ahmad and Shari’ati embraced post colonial theory, especially nativism under the influence of Fanon. They incriminated the colonizers but also criticized Iranians for having internalized the ‘others’ depiction of them as ‘inferiors.’

Modernization - if we accept it was a project run by the elites and intellectuals in Iran was a phoenix – the resurrection of old discourses – that came out of a power vacuum and lack of a body of knowledge. As a result it was not able to create independent discourse(s) emerging out of the major factors such as nationhood (Iranian-ness) and religion (Shiite traditions) as Anderson argues; or without any influence from, or reaction to, the West. Two dominant discourses that formed or emerged out of the old grand-discourse, namely the Islamist trend and the secularist trend - deprived of knowledge and separated from institutional power - were basically responses to the West. Aside from those there were also two minor discourses: nationalism and nativism. The nationalist discourse on one hand merges with the Islamist trend and in a way gave life to
a kind of nativism a few decades before the 1979 Revolution, and on the other hand it had a secular arm that in its turn merged with the secularist trend which opted to take the European path of modernization. Far from reality, these discourses had no direct relation to the internal power, nor were they representative of political systems in Iran. They were instead heavily influenced by European narratives of modernity which were established, consolidated and implemented with production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of those discourses.

Unable to refigure or recontextualize the past, to change the inter-state relationship with the superpowers or to define the new self linked with the new other, these discourses formed a contradictory and paradoxical relationship. The Islamist discourse with its anti-occidental sentiments believed that the secularist discourse was the product of the West; therefore not a “true” discourse, whereas the secularists saw the Islamist discourse as a reactionary narrative that halted the modernizing process. Additionally, because the self was invariably linked with the Europeans as the new other, neither discourse was in a position to create and maintain the independent modern Iranian identity as an entity of its own. Instead, both discourses as two contradictory extremes began to represent Occidentialism as an answer to Orientalism or vice versa. Related to our project here it should be mentioned that most Persian modern novelists have had a secular background; whereas almost none of the Islamists ever used this genre to promote their agendas as the secularists did. In addition, most modern Persian writers have depicted these narratives in a dichotomist fashion in their novels, and we will talk about this in next chapter. In order to have that discussion later, we need to analyze the
characteristics of both discourses in some detail here; but before that and in order to specify the characters of the Islamist and secularist discourses, we need to examine the term ‘intellectual’ in Iran, because there is a debate about it in which not every political activist or writer accepts the definition or is accepted as an intellectual.

Who Is an Intellectual?

It is not an easy task to define an intellectual in a way that is satisfactory to most people. The task is doubly hard in a politically charged society like Iran. There is a gap between the idea and the function of intellectual in such a society. In other words, the severance of power, knowledge and discourse manifests itself here in powerless ideas. Iranian intellectuals have been more inspired by the “uncharted possibilities of the future than by the realities of present” (Boroujerdi 1996: 22), because their agency has been very minor. Political disputes in Iran have had an important role in shaping their psyche, but intellectuals’ narrations of legitimate political power and their expectations have also pushed them toward idealism as well. Intellectuals’ narrations of Iranian’s past and present history and their interpretation of Western culture have made them live and plan for tomorrow rather than today. For them, today is indeed part of a past that has no impact on their thoughts except for being a time that should be replaced by a better tomorrow. Unable to create a homogenous pattern of identity, nationhood and nation-state relationship the intellectuals actually expanded the gap between the ‘space of experience’ and the ‘horizon of expectation.’ Repressed under the dictatorship and
deprived of a normal and productive academic and intellectual life, they had little experience to share and yet their political expectations were very high.

Under the influence of French thinkers and writers such as Voltaire and Montesquieu or Roman Rolland and Emile Zola, Iranians used the term intellectual to refer to thinkers that advocated social equivalency, that led the country to gain back its power or that incorporated modern sciences, literature and thoughts. At the same time, this definition alienated religious thinkers and activists from the category of intellectual. The secularist’s rigid definition of intellectualism had an overall reverse impact on their role in society because it separated them from other segments of society especially from religious activists and thinkers. If we want to include the clerics as part of the traditional intelligentsia in Iran we need indeed to use a more elastic definition of intellectual. There is no doubt that a “substantial fraction of the philosophical, literary, and intellectual stock of Iran throughout the ages has resulted from the cumulative efforts of men of religion” (Boroujerdi 1996: 24). Nonetheless, most secularist groups, especially the left wing parties, have not considered them as intellectuals at all. It was with this problematic issue in mind that Ale Ahmad, one of the secularists in 1960s, crossed the line to maintain that clerics were also intellectuals. He believed that clerics and secularists who are fighting for the same cause, namely against colonization, should be considered intellectuals. Fighting against imperialism was the major factor, if not the only cause, in his definition of the intellectuals. Ale Ahmad first defined the intellectuals in a broad sense claiming anybody who works with his brain rather than his hands was an intellectual; he then limited his definition saying, more specifically, that those who thought or wrote against
the colonizers and their puppets in power should be considered intellectuals (see: Ale Ahmad 1357a [1978]: 32).

Ale Ahmad, who was also a novelist and by the end of his life tried to reconcile the Islamists and secularist under the nativist theory, in his *Dar Khedmat o khianat rowshanfekran* (written in 1967 before his death, however published ten years later in 1978), divides the intellectuals into two groups: traditional and westernized. The traditionalists, accordingly, were divided into two groups—militants and men of religion. Not familiar with a post-structural approach, he tried to explain two discourses through the categorization of intellectuals based on the same cause of fighting against the colonizers as well as their ‘mentality’ within society. With this definition he considered the anti-imperialist clerics intellectual; but at the same time he excluded number of secularists, political activists and writers who were working with the government or who had a positive attitude toward the West. He was not against modernity or progress, but he was against the Eurocentric definition of modernity that had been at the center of a historical re-contextualization of contemporary Iran. This was in a sense a byproduct of Occidental rationalism that was promoted by nativism in the post colonial era as well as the political Islamists in Iran.

Ale Ahmad was one of the first thinkers who tried to articulate nativism in Iran and based on that he defined the intellectualism as an anti-imperialist fighter; yet, he was not the first person who actually employed the idea of a ‘third way.’ His teacher and co-founder of the Socialist party (Neeru-i sevvom [the third force]), Maleki, had written about the ‘rāh-e sevvom’ (the third way) as the only possible way to liberate the third
world countries in a number of his works. He believed that emancipation will be established through political independency from the West (Capitalism) and East (Communism). Ale Ahmad believed that Maleki articulated the idea in 1940s some time before Nehru and Tito. Nonetheless, Maleki still did not consider the Islamists as part of his ‘third way’ of emancipation. As Ale Ahmad claims, in one of their arguments Maleki accused him of becoming religious. Ale Ahmad however believed that unity of both wings of intellectuals could not only free Iran, but also modernize it. In a diagram he depicts the success that their unity brought to Iran in the certain times and at the same time the failure that their dissent created in other times. Despite the fact that both movements ended in coups, the harmonized acts of secularists and Islamists during the Constitutional Revolution and National Oil Movement (1940s) were the best example for his claim. The 1979 Revolution is another example of a movement in which secularists and Islamists worked together for a short period of time right before final stage in which Islamists took control.

Ale Ahmad then raised a legitimate question that in fact should have been asked a long time before him. Why and how did secularists come up with the idea that Islam was the major, if not the only, obstacle for modernization? How did they get the idea that Islam was a superstitious religion? To be more specific how did an intellectual writer such as Ākhundzādeh realize that Islam was the major reason for backwardness? While, in his time, it was the monarchist system that was losing its political and military power to the colonizers. It is also fair to ask why the Islamists, in a broad sense, thought that secularists were in general the agents of the colonizers, and why Islamists thought they
wanted to replace Islamic culture with the European one. These questions become more important when we realize that Iranian intellectuals, Islamist or secularist, unlike their counterparts in India, Egypt, Ottoman (Turkey) and other neighboring countries were not bilingual and had a belated acquaintance with Western philosophy and literature. Furthermore, much of what they knew about the European school of thoughts was transmitted to them through Indian, Arabic or Turkish translations.

We should also notice that the discourse of the European man versus the backward Iranian one has had a special, somewhat different, impact on Iran as well as on the other Islamic countries. The root of this impact can be traced to the historic conflict between the Christian and Islamic worlds. On top of the backward/modern motif, as Ale Ahmad (1357a [1978]) and Joubin (2000) point out, there was the anti-Islamic rhetoric that was used by the revolutionary French writers. In the first case, Muslims were demonized; whereas in the second case their religion was depicted as superstitious and backward. Joubin believes that the French writers used Islam instead of Christianity deliberately in order to avoid the direct conflict with the church institutions in France.

There were also other writers who had tried to conceptualize intellectualism in Iran based on the intellectuals’ ideologies; as there are some scholars who have used this division afterward. This division has been widely accepted by most scholars who have had their educations here in the West. For instance, Boroujerdi, a sociologist and professor, has used the same pattern in *Iranian Intellectuals and the West* in recent years. First he tries to define the meaning and function of the ‘intellectuals’ in modern Iran, and then he presents them through this categorization in detail. Although he uses Ale
Ahmad’s division, he ultimately divides them into the dominant discourses which again were Islamist and secularist. In order to divide the intellectuals as well as the statesmen, writers such as Tavakoli-Targhi and Atabaki consider the discursive differences first, but the result is still the same. These divisions for Boroujerdi and Tavakoli-Targhi are to see Iranians through the eyes of Europeans as the other, or Europeans through the eyes of Iranian as the new self or rather as a ‘self to be.’ Most of these approaches, however, end up saying almost the same thing about these two discourses that were shaped in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

In any case, intellectual, by default, has been considered as a person who is mentally and academically against -injustice in his society, or abroad- which has been imposed by the government or the colonizer. This can be the most basic definition that has been mostly argued by the Iranian intellectuals, though not everybody agrees upon it. A number of factors throw a person out of the category of intellectual. Working for the government or a western companies/ institutions is one of those. This could be considered a common eliminating factor for both wings. Ale Ahmad, for instance, believed that those bureaucrats or engineers who work for the government cannot be considered intellectuals. Being religious is another factor that some of the secularists saw and still see as an exclusion factor against the religious activists. For the secularists, especially the leftists before the 1979 Revolution religions in general and Islam in particular had no capability to revise their traditional thoughts.
Lack of sovereignty as well as the concept of European *other* as a powerful and civilized image has surly imprinted certain principles in both discourses. In the next two sections we will contend the characteristics of both discourses in detail.

**Islamist Discourse**

As we saw in the last chapter, Persianized Islam, namely Shiism, has been always politicized, as it was the dominant discourse for a certain period of time. The platform of the clerical forces in pre-modern Iran was fundamentally based on the theory of legitimacy which was part of the *imamate* theory. Caliphs, sultans and kings were not generally legitimate, because they did not obey the Shiite imams who were accordingly the true descendent of the Prophet. Although Imam Jafar al-Sadeq (700-765), the sixth imam, separated the imamate from political rule and impressed upon his followers not to conflate faith with politics, Shiism in all of its history has been in opposition to the political establishments, except for the Safavid time. This has created epic works such as *Abu-Muslimnāmeh* or *Mokhtārnāmeh* in which the *other* is the infidel king, caliph or ruler. This narrative has had a great role in shaping the religious discourse during the Safavid period and later during the denationalization period. Shiite clerics enjoyed being in power during the Safavid era; but they lost the high offices afterward and again become an opposition force in Iranian culture. This time, however, was greatly different. As mentioned, before the *other* was mainly a ruler who did not obey the so-called ‘true Islam’ and the spiritual leadership of the clergy as the representative of hidden Imam, but in the Qajar period another *other* came into the picture as well. In other words, before,
the religious discourse was used to promulgate the other-ness of the ruler through the *imamate* theory, whereas in the nineteenth century and onward the foreign *other* was added to this equation. The religious discourse, hence, had to modify its narrative in order to become an *ideology par excellence* capable of granting identity and legitimacy against the colonizers and integrating and mobilizing the masses for their purposes. Except by the military forces, the new superpowers were not capable of controlling the country from outside and had to rely on internal people and institutions. This made the politicized Shiite, in turn, promulgate the other-ness of state, the West, and the secularists as its agents. Furthermore, the Shiite narrative considered the secularists a threat to the religion, the clergy system and even the religious intellectuals. There were two reasons for this. First secularists, especially those who were working for the government, were seen as the political and cultural agents of the colonizers; second they promulgated a new discourse which was challenging the clerical platforms. Nonetheless, the following advantages gave the religious classes more ascendancy compared to the secularists: they offered “financial independence from the state; they had strong networks and were capable orators and liturgists. In addition they controlled the legal centers of mobilization (mosques … and religious foundations) and had numerous religious occasions; historical/mythical figures; bazaar support” to mobilize people (Boroujerdi 1996: 77-8). In addition, they traditionally had a larger audience in comparison to the secularists, especially in the rural areas. The grand narrative of progress that was modeled by the secularists after a perceived European narrative created a genre of historiography in which the struggle between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ was rendered.
This grand narrative was considered as a threat to the Shiite historiography, because they saw it as the main frontier in the cultural that in general was concerned with agency. For instance, the fight for the women’s rights that was promoted by the secularists since Constitutional Revolution and could change the role of agency in society was considered as a cultural weapon in the hands of colonizers. Inability to compromise the religious narrative with modernity left little room for ideas, or institutions of progress which could function as a bridge between the local and the global, tradition and change.

It is true that there was cooperation between the secularists and the religious leaders in the Constitutional Revolution. As Ale Ahmad (1357a [1978]: 35) puts it “intellectuals offered the ideas and men of the religion offered their institutional power.” And accordingly that was why the Constitutional Revolution succeeded. Many Iranian historians have offered various explanations concerning the history of the constitutional movement in Iran, but a few of them agree with Ale Ahmad. Mortazā Rāvandi, for instance, emphasizes the modern reform, arguing that the movement was the fruit of the thinkers’ efforts that were familiar with the European civilization. He writes:

[F]orm the time of Nasser al-din Shah, some Iranian thinkers, who were familiar with European civilization and culture, were active in Iran and abroad in awakening the Iranian people to the struggle against oppression and dictatorship (Rāvandi 1975: 535-6).

Faridun Ādamiyat, another Iranian historian who has contributed more than any other contemporary Iranian historian to studies of the constitutional movement, offered a different narrative about the roots of the movement. He believed that the constitutional
movement was only a chapter in the history of the encounter of ancient societies of the East with the new civilization of the West (Ādamiyat 1992: 2). Then he continues:

In her quest for modern social and intellectual transformation in the constitutional movement, Iran underwent numerous historical raptures: the inauguration of reforms in the period of Abbas Mirzā; the period of comprehensive reform in the time of Mirzā Taghi Khan; the pursuit of progress or historical development; the time of tajadud (modernity) and the movement or time of Sepahsālar, these experiences formed the genesis of ideology of constitutional movement (Ādamiyat, 1973: 13; see also: Mirsepassi 2000: 58).

As we can see these secular historians hardly mention the contribution that the religious organizations and leaders made before or during the movement in a positive fashion. It is true that the idea of reform and legal government had come from Europe, but we should not forget that the colonizing force was also behind the idea and it created a negative image as well which were depicted by most in the religious narrative. The constitutional movement was about the legal reform as well as the land reform (eradication of central landowning system) but in a profound way there was a push for Iranians from different school of thoughts to regain their sovereignty. This was indeed the common cause for both political wings. The religious activists were not completely against the European culture and civilizations- they also wanted to get military techniques and sciences from Europe too. In addition we should not ignore the weight of the religious discourse and its followers in any political or cultural movement in the last hundred years.
The weight and the influence of religious discourse has been examined in many ways, but one way to depict it is through the publication of scholarly books in a given time, especially in the second half of the twentieth century when the governmental support of the secularists was very low. For instance, in 1958 the monthly periodical *Dars-ha’i az Maktab-e Eslam* began to be published in Qom supervised by a famous cleric, Ayatollah Mohmmad-Kazem Shari’atmadari. This journal whose purpose, according to its first issue, was to present an alternative to the ethical corruption, irreligiosity, and the spirit of materialism falling over Muslim society, soon found its appropriate place in the Iranian intellectual scene (Boroujerdi 1996: 87-90). According to a study done by Tehranian, by the late 1970s this journal was sold at the rate of fifty thousand copies per month compared to a mere circulation of three thousand for *Sokhan*, Iran’s best-known literary and secular magazine since World War II (Tehranian 1980: 21). According to a bibliography of philosophical works published in Iran in 1975-76, more than 154 works (83 books and 71 articles) were written on Islamic topics compared to 48 works (30 books and 18 articles) dealing with modern philosophers’ views on social and literary subjects (Eftekharzadeh 1977: 11-49, 103013; quoted in Boroujerdi 1996: 89). These statistics could help us have a better view on the influence of the Islamist discourse compared to the secularist one that even in the peak of its popularity in the first half of twentieth century had little impact on Iranian society. Moreover, it helps us to understand why the modern novels in general had little influence on the lay people.

Islamist discourse was a pioneer in terms of *self* and *other* for the secularist one in many ways. Much of the intellectual and scientific heritage of Iran has developed within
the Islamic life of religious schools and seminaries. The Islamist discourse was the first to articulate the Orient/Occident dichotomy in early nineteenth century (see Sangalaji 2000: chapter 3 and 4). In addition, it has produced an enormous body of literature on Islamic views on economic and politics. But surprisingly it has hardly touched the field of modern literature in the last century. One reason for that is its traditional approach toward literature. As we may see Shiism in both Safavid and Qajar periods was the source for oral literature such as pardeh-khani and Ta’zieh (the passion play), which offered it influential power over the mass. Furthermore, it prohibited people from reading the modern literature. Ideologically, the secularists’ products were promulgated as tools in the hands of colonizers who want to destroy Islam. In a way Islamists not only let the secularists have a monopoly in this field, but also banned literary products throughout these decades. This trend was continued after the 1979 Revolution as well. The Islamic government first began to push the secular writers out of this field by oppressing them, censoring and banning their works, while they supported the so called Islamic cinema, because, again, it could have the same impact as the oral literature had. But in recent years it has begun to support and promote religious novelists in order to squeeze out the secular writers. Nonetheless, the so-called modern literature is still in the hands of secularists. Furthermore they in fact use it as a tool or vehicle to promote the secularist discourse. Prior to the Revolution, the Pahlavi shahs tried to break the clergy’s monopolistic hold over instructional domains by setting up modern, secularized, and state-supported counterparts, but this policy was not helpful for a number of reasons (Boroujerdi 1996: 85-90). First, because of the conflict that the regime itself had with the
secularists. The dominant wing of this movement was particularly against the British policies toward Iran and its puppets in power. Second, the religious institutions were still powerful and the Shah could not reduce their popular power. Third, in order to control the people, the government needed to work with the religious classes. As a result, it was the secular movement that was without any real support from the people and thus became a victim of the shahs’ policies. And as a result the religious movement took advantage of it.

Since the earliest time when the secular writers began to criticize the monarchical and colonized system in Iran the Islamists waged several simultaneous ideological battles against them. At first the Islamists saw themselves in competition with an increasingly vibrant secular movement. Soon they realized that the secularists had begun to monopolize the literary arena as an advocating tool. In addition to that the Islamists felt that the powerful state-machinery was becoming increasingly skeptical of its citizens’ religious predilections. Surprisingly, the Islamists also found the lay religious intellectuals alongside the nationalists as threats to their agendas. In their battles against these groups the clerical class reinforced the general cultural inclination and religious convictions of the greater masses. According to Boroujerdi, the social conservatism, male chauvinism, conspiratorial mindset, and patriarchal orientation of the society at large served as a fertile ground for the clerical summons (Boroujerdi 1996: 94). Mirsepassi depicts this from a different perspective. He deems that the rise of political Islam was the result of the socio-historical processes that he addresses in the following details: (1) the formation of an autocratic state in post-1953 Iran, which successfully
destroyed the already fragile democratic secular political institutions (political parties, unions, and Parliaments) in Iranian society; (2) the social and psychological alienation experienced by Iranians as a reaction to the processes of ‘modernization’ in the 1960s and 1970s. This led to the formation of a new type of ideology which utilized Islamic symbols and ideals to provide a new and yet familiar meaning to the subjectivity of Iranians. This new ideology had a very powerful populist appeal, and associated itself with ideas of community, social justice, and involvement. (3) The transformation of the Shiite hierarchy and the construction of a new Islamic ideology which evolved into a viable political alternative to the ruling regime, and was able to lure a broad segment of Iranian society (Mirsepassi 2000: 65-6). These processes are treated as the critical factors in the buildup of contradictions that in turn resulted in the political and discursive hegemony of political Islam in post-revolutionary Iran.

The main characteristics of the Islamist discourse could help us to understand its role and weight in the Iranian politics and culture. First and foremost we should pay attention to two keys characteristics, which have an effect on all modern discourses and had different meanings in the pre-colonial time. These issues are related to the theory of governmentality and interstates relationship. As mentioned in chapter three Islam never had a political policy towards the non-Muslim societies except the theory jihad which was formed under the universal discourse of Islam as the only true religion. In Shiism which has always been in opposition to mainstream Islam this theory merged with the theory of legitimacy. As a result, the policy of fighting against the infidels that was the main policy of the Ottomans and Moguls turned into a fight against the internal ruler who
is supported by a foreign power. In the light of this theory the global hegemony of the West was never accepted by the Iranian Islamists. It means that Islam for them is still the only universal discourse. Besides its international impact this mentality has created problematic relationships with the secular modernists, nationalists and even the lay Islamist intellectuals. The clerical class not only does not see these trends as its natural allies, it considers them as enemies that are united with the colonial powers. We will get to that in the next section.

Second, the Islamists saw the West as a direct threat to Islam and Islamic lands. We should bear in mind that the jihad theory has been seen from a specific perspective in the Iranian Shiism. Not having a direct contact with non-Muslims, the jihad theory has been diverted into a special sub-genre in the Persian literature in which jihad against the infidel ruler is the main motif. Culturally this narrative has been embedded with the political discourses as well. Abu-Muslimnāmeh could be considered as the prototype here. All of the Shiite epics as well as the other Islamic sects’ epics are shaped according to this motif, as the martyrdom of Imam Hussein has been mythicized around this theme. The hero is a true ‘Ali worshiper who is raised to fight against the unjust caliph, king or a local ruler who just happens to be a moshrek (the untrue Muslim). All three elements of governmentality, which were justice, obedience to God and His prophet, and legitimacy of just Imam, are ingrained in these stories. The literary devices or motifs of such a jihad against the unjust ruler who drinks alcohol and insult ‘Ali, the first Imam, and his family expose the duty of the true Muslim. In the wake of the Constitution Revolution this literary genre, under the influence of Imam Hussein’s tragedy and its theatrical form
(Ta’zieh) and poetic lamentations (noheh), became popular again; however, the setting, ideology and concept of agency were used in a less Islamic sense and more secular and nationalistic way. The integration of justice theory and Marxism later created a new dominant style in novels in which the unjust figures are depicted symbolically in works such as Cheshmhayash (Her Eyes), Gileh Mard and later in the Red Stone and so forth represented the Marxism theory through an ancient theory of justice and jihad. We will talk about this in detail in next chapter.

There are three more characteristics that depict Islamist discourse in a better light. The first one which represents another aspect of the universal issue explains why Islamists, either in Iran or elsewhere, do not tolerate national movements. Islamists did not want to accept the term Islamic nations, because with the nationhood, umma would be divided and thus the Islamic power of good will be weakened. Jamal Al-din Asadabadi, better known as Afghani (1838-1897), the most influential Islamist thinker and activist who has articulated the Islamist discourse, in one of his analytical debates tries to explain this in a most sharply expressed essay entitled “The Truth about the Neicheri Sect and Explanation of the ‘Neicheris’.”¹ In this essay, Afghani depicts a picture of an anti-imperialist collective subject, possessing political and military power incarnated in an Islamic nation that could stand up to western hegemony. According to Vahdat (2003: 133), he identified the concept of ‘social solidarity’ as the linchpin of this collective

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¹ Neicheris were the follower of Sir Ahmad Khan (1817-1897) of India and the term ‘neicheri’ was derived from the English word ‘nature,’ which Afghani used as a generic term representing unorthodox views and atheism. See: Keddie 1968.
subject, which the West through its ‘agents’ such as Sir Ahmad Khan were trying to subvert. Apparently drawing on Ibn Khaldun’s parallel concept of asabia (which could be translated as solidarity), Afghani’s concept of social solidarity explained the longevity of civilizations and nations in terms of sets of beliefs which bonded the members of a society together and protected that society. What made social solidarity possible in Afghani’s analysis was religious faith and specifically faith in a Transcendental Deity who would in the next world mete out reward and punishment as recompense to individual believers’ deeds while living on earth (Afghani 1968d: 167; Keddie 1968).

From a Foucauldian perspective, Afghani’s solidarity was derived from the collectivist notion of agency. He writes:

> And since, because of these opinions, each of them [people corrupted by disbelief] believed that there is no life but this one, the quality of egoism [in French translation] overcome them. The quality of egoism consists of self-love to the point that if a personal profit requires a man having that quality to let the whole world be harmed, he would not renounce that profit but would consent to the harm of everyone in the world (Afghani 1968d: 151; Keddie 1968).

The second factor here is tradition, in terms of religion. Islamists deemed that the religious traditions are very important. They in fact saw them as a castle’s walls that protect its residents. While the Islamic traditions are important, cultural or national traditions are accordingly considered as acting against their ideology. Lack of interest in literary works, especially modern ones, is part of this. It can be called “modes of inattention”- purposefully ignoring, because they are unimportant. The development of
secularism along with the appearance of a ‘colonial discourse’ reinforced this dichotomous mind-set. Islamists believed that there can be a true representation of anything and it is embedded first in the faith and then in the language which carries that truth; thus language, and literature for that matter, like the legal system should be controlled or used to represent that Truth with a capital ‘T’.

Finally, despite the fact that the cultural and legal modernization were always out of the question and have been seen as weapons in the hands of imperialists, Islamists have eagerly accepted scientific and militaristic modernization as a way for Islam to get back on its feet again. Afghani’s discourse represents this dual encounter with modernity in two different forms. In reality, he created two discourses, first on solidarity as mentioned above and second on enlightenment. In the second one, which is a critical discourse, he develops a statement on science that is worth looking deeply into. He states that “[t]here was, is and will be no rule in the world but science” (Afghani 1968a: 102; Keddie 1968). By science however he means a philosophy that he considered universal. A few pages later in the same essay he qualified his statement by saying that:

A science is needed to be the comprehensive soul for all the sciences, so that it can preserve their existence, apply each of them in its proper place, and become the cause of progress of each one of those sciences. The science that has the position of a comprehensive soul and the rank of a preserving force is the science of falsafeh or philosophy, because its subject is universal. It is philosophy that shows man the human prerequisites. It shows the sciences what is necessary. It employs each of the sciences in its proper place. If a
Community did not have philosophy, and all the individuals of that community were learned in the sciences with particular subjects, those sciences could not last in that community for a century… that community without the spirit of philosophy could not deduce conclusions from these sciences. The Ottoman government and the Khedive of Egypt have opened up schools for the teaching of the new science for a period of sixty years and until now they have not received any benefits from those sciences (Afghani 1968a: 104).

To understand the meaning of philosophy in Afghani’s works we may replace it with the concept of discourse in linguistic and sociology. He in fact conceptualizes philosophy in the idea of reasoning and critical argumentation since “the father and mother of knowledge [elm] is reasoning [borhan] and reasoning is neither Aristotle nor Galileo. The truth is where there is reasoning …” (Afghani 1968a: 107). He first argued in favor of the centrality of critical thought:

Philosophy is the escape from the narrowness of animal sense impression into the wide area of human perception. It is the removal of darkness of bestial illusion with the light of natural intelligence; the transformation of blindness and lack of insight into clear-sightedness and insight (Afghani 1968b: 110).

He then discusses the role of Islam in preparing the pre-Islamic ‘ignorant’ Arabs to embrace the philosophical tradition developed by the civilized nations.

In sum, in that Precious Book [The Quran] with solid verse, He planted the roots of philosophical sciences into purified souls, and opened the road for man to become man. When the Arab people came to believe in that Precious Book
they were transferred from the sphere of ignorance to knowledge, from blindness to vision, from savagery to civilization, and from nomadism to settlement. They understood their needs for intellectual and spiritual accomplishment and for gaining a living (Afghani 1968b: 114).

These ideas later developed, Afghani argued, and Arabs realized their inferiority compared to their subjects, i.e. the Christians, Jews, and Persians, until with their help, they translated the philosophical sciences from Persian, Syriac, and Greek into Arabic. “Hence it became clear that their Precious Book was the first teacher of philosophy to the Muslims” (Afghani 1968b: 114).

The influence of Afghani on the Islamist discourse is traceable in the central theme of the constitutional movement which was the concept of a new science, perceived as the only genuine form of human knowledge, by nature both objective and progressive. The constitutionalists believed science to be chiefly responsible for the social, economic and moral superiority of the West (Mirsepassi 2000: 62). Nevertheless, Islamists, during and after the Constitutional Revolution, viewed the modern science as existing in opposition to the old science (religious knowledge) and as the only valid means of reasoning and human judgment. We will discuss this further in the next section. Let us now examine the secularist trend and then compare both discourses in detail.

**Secularist Discourse**

Iranian politics, since the mid-nineteenth century, have been a battleground between modernity and tradition, with Islam always in the latter camp. Secularism was
the emergence of a spectrum of nationalist discourses that appeared in two literary movements, *Bāzgasht* (1830s) and *historical novels* (1860s) in opposition to the Islamic discourse(s). *Bāzgasht* did not directly oppose the Islamic discourse. What it did was retrieving the nationalistic thought embedded with Khorāsāni style in order to mobilize the people against the foreign threat. Through that, it raised the concept of Iranian-ness that did not completely accommodate with the Islamic discourse of *Umma*. This movement latter led to the movement of language purification that had seen Arabic language as the main cause for destroying the Persian language and therefore the Iranian-ness. Progress and civilization (*taraghi va tamaddun*) have been the central terms of modernity; whereas Islamic traditions and superstitions (beliefs) were marked as the reactionary force that had held back Iran since the invasion of Arabs. In addition, in any trends, modernization and modernity discourse in Iran have been mostly involved with a kind of ‘Eurology.’ In the beginning this ‘Eurology’ appeared in the works of Iranian voyagers’ who visited Europe as official delegations or students. In early travelogues, written in the first decades of the nineteenth century, people of Europe, particularly the British and the French, were depicted in their ethical and educational characteristics; whereas the later works under the influence of European delegations who visited Iran during that time started to have a comparative look between the society and culture of Iran and those of Europe (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 44-51). Since then the comparative method between Europe and Iran became the major part of the secularist narrative of modernity in Iran. Following that, education, the purification of language, women’s rights, and social manners developed into the main themes in this narrative:
Ākhundzādeh’s writings (1812-1878) wanted to change the writing system (Arabic base script) and the literary tradition towards one that used European genres such as the novel and the play as part of the modernity movement. Recovering pre-Islamic culture and religion(s) also went hand to hand with purification of language, but this was only supported by the hard core nationalists. It is, however, interesting that most of the battle between the Islamists and secularists has been indeed shaped around the traditions as well as the technology of sex. In a broader sense the technology of sex, self and power, in Foucault’s terms, were defined as ‘European’ and ‘Western’ as they were refracted and remade.

With the exception of the Islamist intellectuals, who were not obviously secularists in terms of separation of state and church, there were at least four trends in the modernity spectrum: state modernists, nationalists, nativists and Marxists – almost a hundred per cent of the contemporary novelists and writers have come out of these trends, especially the Marxist trend which was a paradigm for the last three four decades before the 1979 Revolution. Within this spectrum, state modernists’ and Marxists’ notion of Iranian modernity took Europe as their model of progress and civilization. For those state modernists who were able to walk in the corridors of power, as well as for the Marxist groups that were not in power, Islamists were considered obstacles to the modernity movement. European modernism, culture, tradition and history became the reference points for Marxists and state modernists/secularists, because they essentially thought that true history was the history of Europe. By replacing Iranian historiography as narrated by the Iranianized Shiites, the European historiography formulated in the
Hegelian tradition became the dominant social formation. As Dāvar, one of the modernist statesmen once pointed out “the history of Europe is our future” (quoted in Vahdat 2003: 34). State secularists generally believed in economic modernization; whereas leftists thought that this transformation would happen though a class struggles. State secularists were supporters of Reza Shah’s cultural, military and economical reforms. The tie between political power and the state secularist’s discourse helped Pahlavis to run the country for more than half a century from 1924 to the 1979 Revolution.

The state modernization was mostly a paradigm during the reign of Reza Shah (1924-1941) by the belief in the separation of state and religion. The new monarch, who was crowned in 1924, established the state policy of secularism that made any public display or expression of religious faith illegal, including the wearing of the headscarf and veil (hijab) by women and wearing of facial hair by men (with the exception of the mustache). Public religious festivals (such as Muharram and Ashura) and celebrations were banned, Islamic clergy were forbidden to preach in public and mosque activities were heavily restricted and regulated. Establishment of the national army and central government was followed by a nation building process that was considerably similar to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s policies in Turkey (Atabaki 2007). Though criticized by the religious traditionalists and viewed as authoritarian by foreign observers, the monarch's goals were intended to secularize Iran through economic modernization and to eliminate the influence of the Shiite clergy upon government and the society. However, his strict policies created a deep backlash that appeared later when he was exiled by the British.
The first instance of Islamic extremism appeared in 1940s in the assassination of outspoken historian and writer Ahmad Kasravi by Muslim fighters, of whom Navvab Safavi is the most notorious.

The other trends within the spectrum, however, formed gradually a few decades earlier and then became the influential trends in the twentieth century. During this period new activists and writers who were more nationalist, pro-Western, secular and less religious began to propagate their ideas in political and literary genres such as the essay, novels or poetry. It was around the time of the Constitutional Revolution that political poetry and essays dominated the journals and newspapers. Most of the scholars and historians have considered this phenomenon the beginning of the formation of the modernity discourse in Iran. In fact, in many ways the pre-constitutional time can be considered a turning point in Iran’s intellectual history. As pointed out earlier, during this time religious activists and writers began to articulate their new relationship as the umma to the other-West. At the same time, the secularist discourse became dominant in the field of literature and political criticism. The dichotomous setting of Occidental versus Oriental that the religious thinkers formulated was also used by the secularist to contextualize the reasons for Iran’s backwardness. As the number of intellectual writers increased, newspaper publishing, both in Iran and abroad, expanded accordingly. These newspapers, which were in fact periodicals, reflected the ideas and thoughts of the new intellectual elites who differentiated themselves from the religious elites through their definition of the West as a builder of modern Iran rather than the destroyer of the
traditions. The discourse that formed by these elites projected a new future based on what they had seen or heard from Europe, especially England and France.

Although it has not necessarily been positive, European modernity has had a great impact on Iranian society, culture, politics and literature. As pointed out in the last chapter modernity, unlike in Europe, was not a project originally created or formed by Iranian elites and secular intellectuals in Iran. It came to Iran through elites and intellectuals who had studied the modernist theories in Europe, mostly indirectly through Indian and Ottoman sources. For instance, Ākhundzādeh, who lived in the Caucasus for most of his life, wanted to have some kind of political and cultural reforms based on what he had seen there; Mirzā Āqā Khān Kermāni, a political activist and writer who lived just briefly in Istanbul, was influenced by “second hand” information about modernity. Mirzā Malkam Khan was an Iranian official who lived in London for number of years, but there were a number of officials and students who traveled to or lived in Europe prior to him. Most of them went to Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. During this time Iranian knowledge of Europe increased in sophistication, but they mostly viewed people of Europe based on their observations rather than through an analytical approach. For instance, Mirzā Abu-Talib (1752-1806) mostly described his observation of people in England and other European countries. For example, he viewed ‘self-respect’ (izzerat-e nafs) as the first virtue of the English, particularly the elite and for that he just gazed upon (at) people (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 44-6). Although he provides priceless information for Iranian readers, he was not able to go beneath the skin of society or to have an analytical approach. The only person, among the Iranian enlightenment-men, who lived in London
for years in the late nineteenth century English society, was Mirzā Malkam Khan (1833-1908), an Armenian-Iranian politician whose official job was in the Iranian embassy in Britain. He was considered as one of the Iranian enlightened-men who constituted modernity and scientific rationality as the horizon of expectation for the Iranian passage to modernity. He is also one of the writers who viewed Islam as a reactionary force. He, in one of his articles, writes “the example of the prophet of Arabia and the character of some of the fundamental tenets of his faith” as the most prominent factors “in retarding the progress of civilization among those who have adopted his faith.” These “retarding” factors explained why “every country inhabited by Mahomedans” never “attained a state of improvement which can be compared with that enjoyed by almost all those nations who form the present commonwealth of Europe.” He concluded that “[t]he history of Persia, from the Arabian conquest to the present day may be adduced as a proof of the truth of these observations: and while the causes, by which the effects have been produced, continue to operate, no material change in the condition of that empire can be expected.” Malkam wondered whether “the future destiny of this kingdom” could be altered with “the recent approximation of a great European power” or Islamists keep it backward (Malkam, respectively 2: 622, 2: 623, and 2: 624; quoted in Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 3-6).

Lack of sovereignty and knowledge did not let these elites or anybody else for that matter remake or develop a modernist narrative based on the Iranian nationhood, religion and historiography. In addition, with the global hegemony of the West the dichotomous binary of tradition versus modernity became an ever more significant
component of an Iranian national historiography venerating progress, development and
growth (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 4-7). Nonetheless, the discourse that was formed by the
enlightenment-men was not exactly apt to the Iran’s conditions. It was indeed formed by
the secularists who projected a new future based on what they had seen in Europe, or read
directly or indirectly from English and French writers. In other words, modernization for
them was a formula or rather a solution based on the European historicism that should
change the course of history, culture and literature in Iran. Because of these situations,
not only did the discourse of modernity neither help the society go back to the golden age
of the Safavids nor become a democratic industrialized country, it also made the society
more vulnerable to colonizing powers.

According to Tavakoli-Targhi (2001: 7), viewing modernity as a belated
reduplication of ‘Western models,’ historians of Iran often invent a periodization that is
analogous to standard European historical accounts. Recognizing Descartes’ *Discours
sur la Methode* and Newton’s *Principia* as two founding texts of modern thought in
Europe, Iranian historians have the same expectation for the Persian rendering of those
texts. In a modularized periodization of the Iranian ‘discovery of the West’ and the
‘dissemination of European new learning,’ Mangol Bayat, a historian of Qajar Iran,
writes that a Persian translation of Rene Descartes’ *Discourse* was commissioned by
Arthur Gobineau and published in 1862 (Bayat 1991: 36; quoted ins Tavakoli-Targhi
2001: 7). Referring to I’tizad al-Saltaneh’s *Falak al-Sa’adah* (1861), she adds that only
one year earlier Isaac Newton and the idea of heliocentricity had been “introduced to the
Iranian public” (Bayat 1991: 37). This periodization is similarly used by other historians
such as Faridun Ādamiyat, Elie Kedourī, Nikki Keddie, Jamshid Bihnam, and Alireza Manafzadeh (Kedouri 1966: 44-5; Keddie 1972: 197-9; Bihnam 1996: 32-4; Manafzadeh 1991: 98-108). But what is not considered in these accounts is the almost zero impact of these texts on Iranian society as well as the menace felt by clerical class at that time (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001).

Nationalists such as Mohammad Moghadam (1909-1996) and Kasravi (1890-1945), who opted to recover the pre-Islamic culture and religion, like Malkam, were also anti-Islam and wanted to reconstitute the Iranian past combined with modernity and scientific rationality as the horizon of expectation for the Iranian passage to future. Purification of language through elimination of Arabic loanwords and having a Latin based script and even the modernization of literature, namely replacement of traditional rhetoric and genres with the European traditions, were also part of their expectations; however, most of them such as Mohammad Taghi Bahār or Perviz Khanlari were against changing the Arabic script to a Latin based writing system. Although they wanted to refigure the history in order to get rid of Islam and clerical class; they did not contextualize the history of Iran based on the European horizon as the elites and leftists tried to do it.

The third trend was the leftist discourse which became a paradigm versus Islamist discourse from 1930s and onward. Leftists were dominantly Marxist-Leninist supported by other communist states of the time, especially the former Soviet Union and China. In their discourse, the government and its western supporters, Britain first and USA later, became the internal other. While they were against the political hegemony of these
powers and their puppets, the leftists believed that European modernization was the only path for progress and civilization for non-Western countries. Embracing European culture, they thought the major step for the modern transformation was replacing religious and cultural traditions with an atheist culture and the literature of the West. The leftists felt that Iran’s historical abnormality went hand in hand with traditionalism, and thus made the transformation harder. The only solution then, was the conquest of the political establishment in order to pave the way for cultural and social modernization. As is customary with every society, social upheavals such as revolutions were considered the major steps for correcting the historical path to progress. In the end, the leftists’ takes on the major movements in Iran fell into a single reading: they were the pre-steps for society for the final revolution which will be led by the leftists against the hegemony of the West and at of the same time of the religious traditions and beliefs.

The historiography that leftists offered was based on historical materialism through which unreal periodizations were invented for Iranian history in order to explain the problem of abnormality. Iranian history, accordingly, was bordered with great divides modeled by the European history in which, for instance, Asian feudalism, once argued by Marx, was considered as a variant of European feudalism and thus the Asian despotism, power centrality and structure emerged out it. Consequently, it did not create space for Renascence and enlightenment that were the first, crucial steps toward capitalism, modernity and communism. They reasoned that historical abnormality did not allow Iran to correctly undergo modernism, because it apparently missed a number of crucial historical steps and at the same time had to divert its path in order to go through
the progressive path. Believing that European history was the only way for progress, the leftists basically rejected other possible ways for progress suggested by other trends. Marxism had a great influence on literary movements as well, and most of the novelists, poets and scholars in the twentieth century were, at least at some point in their lives, leftists or those whose minds were altered by the ideology of progress that leftists had formulized. In the next chapter we shall see how the derived form of the theory of the great divide and European progress shaped the modern literati in Iran and how Persian literary theory explained the abnormal genres or styles in Persian literature in order to prove why Iranian culture and literature has been so different from its European counterparts. The same argument has been made about theocratic philosophy (shari’a) versus the European secularist philosophy. Had our ancestors separated shari’a from philosophy as the Greek did, we would have had a modern society instead of theocratic culture and state. In the post-soviet era this hypostasis was embraced by most intellectuals who were leftist before and now considered themselves as modernists. Moreover, we will examine the new literary genres that were indeed formed through imitations. It was not just leftists who contextualized Iranian history through the invented periodization or abnormal causes; other secularist trends have done this too- the only difference was the definition of other.

Iranian nativism as the fourth trend was mostly shaped in the 1950s-1970s. Other-ness vis-à-vis the West for this group was different than other-ness for the other trends. Whereas, for the second and third trends, other-ness vis-à-vis the state was more immediate, concrete, dangerous and well defined; for nativists it was more distant,
abstract, and vague. Bounded by two types of other-ness, nativists came to distinguish the Iranian anti-traditionalist regime as an extension of a larger entity called the West. This made them get closer to the religious trend. The influence of post colonial theory on Iranian nativism has been also obvious, especially on Jalāl Ale Ahmad (1923-1969) who was Iran’s most well-known antiestablishment intellectual and social critic of the 1950s and 1960s. Ale Ahmad published a polemical monograph entitled Gharbzadegi (Weststruckness or Occidentosis according to its English translations). This work gave birth to a discourse of the same name which was the Iranian articulation of nativism. Ale Ahmad, who was born into a religious family, broke with religion and joined the rank of Marxist Tudeh Party in his twenty. In 1947, however, he and a number of other intellectuals, led by Khalil Maleki, separated from the Tudeh Party. In 1952, during the Oil Nationalization campaign he and Maleki founded a new part named Neeru-i Sevvom (Third Way) whose platform was against the domination of the West and East (the communist world).

Ale Ahmad formulated the concept of Gharbzadegi as a contaminating social problem. He viewed Westoxication from two angles: the ‘“accident from without’ and the ‘environment rendered susceptible to it’ represented, respectively, the foreign and domestic dimensions of the sense of other-ness” (Boroujerdi 1996: 68). He formulated his basic concern in the following terms:

We have been unable to preserve our own historico-cultural character in the face of the machine and its fateful onslaught. Rather, we have been routed. We have been unable to take a considered stand in a face of this contemporary
monster. So long as we do not comprehend the real essence, basis, and philosophy of Western civilization, only aping the west outwardly and formally (by consuming its machines), we shall be like the ass going about in a lion’s skin (Ale Ahmad 1984: 31).

In a methodical analogy he, then, deliberately emphasized intellectual awareness. Grounding his discussion in the familiar dichotomy of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ and ‘East’ versus ‘West,’ Ale Ahmad depicts himself as “an Easterner with his feet planted firmly in tradition …” (Boroujerdi 1996: 68). In a comparative approach he writes: “As the West stood, we sat down. As the West awoke in an industrial resurrection, we passed into the slumber of the seven sleepers” (Ale Ahmad 1984: 58). But the West has its cultural hegemony through the intellectual elements in Iran who are looking to the West as an alternative. He criticized these intellectuals as the agents most responsible for creating an environment susceptible to Western ingress and domination (Boroujerdi 1996: 69).

So far as I can see, all these homegrown Montesquieu of ours fell off the same side of the roof…. They all had an instinctive feeling that our ancient society and tradition could not withstand the onslaught of Western technology. They all went astray in opting for ‘adaptation of European civilization without Iranian adaptation,’ but in addition to this vague and unproven remedy, each sought a different cure. One thumped the tub for foreign embassies; another believed one must, in imitation of the West, revive ancient tradition through a religious ‘reform’ like Luther’s; a third called for Islamic unity in an age when the Ottomans’ ignominy was being trumpeted about the world with slaughter of the Armenians and the Kurds (Ale Ahmad 1984: 58).
There were also two other leading post-World war II Iranian intellectuals, namely Seyyed Fakhroddin Shadman and Ahmad Fardid, who articulated some of the most philosophically consequential ideas on the discourse of Gharbzadegi. Through his *Westoxication*, Ale Ahmad who was a communist in his 20s and a socialist in his 30s tried to unite the seculars and religious leaders against the West as the common enemy of modern Iran. In his view of the West, Ale Ahmad regarded science and technology, the essence of Western civilization, as the instruments of human mastery.

Fardid, who was appointed professor of modern philosophy, also crossed the line after the 1979 Revolution to have a hybrid interpretation of the Shiite messianic expectation and modern historiography. Famous as so called oral philosopher, Fardid (1974) introduced Iranian intellectuals to German philosophy. With a twist to the Orient/Occident dichotomy he maintained that the historical destiny of the contemporary world is the destiny of the Occident (Boroujerdi 1996: 63-4). He echoed what Ale Ahmad said earlier:

> In my view, the present age throughout the world is the age of civilizational traditions and not cultural memoirs. All Islamic countries and indeed all oriental nations, without exception, are situated in a phase of history in which, contrary to their western counterparts, they can no longer be in possession of their own historical trust. This is due to the fact that since the eighteen century, Western culture has metamorphosed into the historical tradition or civilization (Fardid 1974: 19; quoted in Boroujerdi 1996: 64).
He maintained that the Orient, representing the essence of the holy books and divine revelation, had been concealed under a variety of occidental mantles (Boroujerdi 1996: 64). Besides these thinkers, Ali Shari’ati, who was born into a religious family, as a lay religious intellectual articulated the Ale Ahmad’s Gharbzadegi from the religious perspective in order to rekindle a Shiite interpretation of Occidentalism.

The secularist discourse in all trends, with some exceptions for nativism, had five major characteristics: First and foremost, it believed that true history was the history of Europe (West). Iranian history was considered abnormal because it did not go through the normal path vis-à-vis the history of Europe. Nonetheless, the causes and reasons for abnormality have had different forms and definitions from one trend to another. For the state secularists and non-leftist modernists the lack of secular philosophy, which made the society understand the notion of separation of state and church, was the main reason. They, therefore, blamed Islamic philosophy and its major figures such as Ghazāli for creating a theocratic philosophy. Ākhundzādeh in his major essays entitled Maktubāt argued that a kind of Islamic Protestantism against the religious establishment could help the people get rid of the religious power and superstitions that have formed around it. Based on the same argument, contemporary scholars such as Aramesh Dousdar and Mohammad Reza Nikfar believe that the domination of religion in Iranian culture, defined as religious habituality (din-khu’i) by Dousdar, is the only cause for not having democracy in Iran. Although they believed in historical materialism, leftists, as well, saw the cause of backwardness in religion in general and Islam in particular. Ale Ahmad however under the influence of Heidegger thought that the machine was the main reason
for all problems that Iranian society has had. He believed that unawareness (bikhabari) resulted because knowledge and science (a Western entity) embodied in machines (the materialistic result of that knowledge science) had entered Iranian society without the presence of a mechanism that could allow people to relate to it. Because ‘machine’ was not invented in Iran, he argued, the society was not capable of accepting the culture that was associated with it. In any case, the history of Iran was abnormal to him as well and needed to be corrected through a cultural movement.

Second, secularists arguably believed and still believe that modern identity was more important than national identity. The process of westernizing the Iranian culture in the greater part of the twentieth century has been fueled by this mentality. Leftists, particularly the extremists, more than any other trend have depicted Iran’s revolutionary movements through this dichotomy. According to them nationalism was as dangerous as religion, because as another kind of tradition it has halted Iran from becoming a modernized society, thus it should be avoided accordingly. The dominant religious trends have also seen nationalism as a treat to Islam. They believed that Iranian-ness could outweigh Islam and its religious establishment. Overall, nationalism has been problematic to those trends that believed in a kind of universalism or those that believed every society has to go through an identical history, whether Islam or modernity. The dichotomy appeared beneath this notion has had a great role in shaping modern Persian literature that we will talk about in the next chapter in detail.

The third characteristic is kind of offspring of the second one. Both leftists and Islamists have described nationalism as poison. The root for this problem can be traced
back to the concept of nationalism among the nineteenth century intellectuals on the one hand and Reza Shah’s modernization policies against the religious class and leftist party on the other hand. Nationalism for the nineteenth century intellectuals such as Farhad Mirzā and Mankeji and poets such as Yaghma was part of the language purification, which was mostly generated against the Arabization of language and customs (Āriyan-pour 1972: 22-3). Later it turned into the pro-Zoroastrianism or pre-Islamic Iranophilia if you will, versus Arabic culture and civilization that had imposed Islam and Islamic traditions on us. During that time nationalism was praised as a positive and real force against the customs and superstitions that halted modernization. Adib al-Mamālek, a revolutionary preacher and poet, wrote a poem a few years before the Constitutional Revolution in which ancient Iran was compared to retarded present day Iran. He first praised ancient Iran as a powerful civilization that brought glory and prosperity for its people and then criticized the poor Iran that had lost its sovereignty and civilization to colonizers and traditions respectively. This type of nationalism, however, created a backlash among the Islamists as well as the leftists during the Reza Shah’ modernization time, when nationalism was used against the religious class and leftist discourse at the same time. In order to push the religious establishment out of power, Reza Shah lunched an anti-Islamic dress code and legal system in Iran. To support his policy he had to build a bridge between the Iranian past (without Islam) and his modernity project that supported the central government and military. In other words, he decided to launch a modernity project without Islam, the major rival to a secular state. National discourse that had strong roots in Iranian culture was there in political and literary literature ready
to collaborate on nation building and his modernity project. The nationalist discourse through the language purification and Iranianization of religion tried to marginalize the Islamic traditions and establishment. It seemingly worked for a short period of time; however, it simultaneously alienated the ethnic groups, religious people and those secularists who were against the superpowers’ influence in the country. Finally, the backlash deepened the gap so much so that not only was nationalism seen as a negative force against religion and socialism, but it was also considered an oppressive force and a discourse directed against ethnic groups and minorities. In order to support ethnics’ rights ethnic parties and organizations depicted nationalism as poison. Separation of national identity from religious and modern identities is the most problematic issue in the recent history of Iran and has its reflections in every discursive discussion. Since the Constitutional Revolution almost every ruler and political rival has seen the other trends as the only threat to the country and, thus, has tried to outlaw them from the political arena.

Fourth, the anti-nationalism did not stop the secularists from blaming the tradition, especially the Islamic tradition, as the major factor for Iran’s backwardness. It, hence, should be replaced by modernity. Here, secularists in both wings, namely statesmen and leftists, believed that traditions of any type take society away from modernism. Iranian culture underwent a break from its past during the Constitutional Revolution and onward, based on this belief. This break in some aspects of culture was deeper than in others. For instance, all traditional dress codes after Reza Shah’s secularism were replaced with the European ones, especially among men. Women’s
traditional outfits were also changed, only the veil which has a strong Islamic root remained the same. Cultural gender definitions also vanished through the first decades of the twentieth century (see: Najmabadi 2005). In terms of space the break is so deep that we shall devote a section to it in the next chapter. We can indeed consider this as the great break which profoundly separated the Iranian present from its past, although it did not lead the country through a real modern project either.

Reflection of the great break is clearly seen in the literary traditions. Secularist discourse in general used literature as its major tool, second to political literature, to propagate its agendas, discursive issues and so forth. To do so, it created a discursive narrative that we will examine in next chapter. Overall it believed that traditional literature is not only a base for modern literature, but also that it worked against modern literature and therefore should be avoided.

Finally, the common characteristics between the Islamist and intellectual trends should be mentioned. First, both see the political world and the international relationship via the greatness of Iranian in the past, pre-Islamic time for the secular intellectuals and Islamic era and the Iranian roles in it for the Islamists. Second, both want to restore the old/ancient Iranian power. This in fact is valid even for leftists; thus, the notion of nationality limits their view in a way. Third, despite the fact both want to restore Iranian power nationality does not play an important role in their discourses. In the next section we will study the rest of the common and uncommon characteristics in these discourses as each relates to the other.
The second character is the most important one in all discourses. It indeed should be studied from the perspective of agency related to the notion of historiography, either in religious historicism, ideology of progress, or material history. It is also embedded in the culture. Elwell-Sutton (1978: 35) has characterized it in its paradoxical relationship:

An extreme individualism contrasts with a readiness to accept authority. A tendency to zealotry and fanaticism, especially in religious matters, struggles with negativism and positivity, with acceptance of fate and concealment of one’s real feelings. Iranians have an intense interest in the new and exotic, coupled with a marked capacity for learning and absorbing; but they are also skeptics, with a strong sense of humor and distrust of pretension and pomposity. They are famed for their politeness, hospitality, and ta’arof (courtesy phrases); they can also be obstinate, sensitive to criticism, and touchy where their dignity is concerned. They can be hard-working and efficient when they choose, and their readiness to delay and procrastinate is proverbial. There is a deep, underlying patriotism coupled with a suspicion of alien influences, but this does not prevent some from succumbing to the blandishments of foreign interests.

What the author describes as extreme individualism is indeed part of the political self-realization that reveals itself in the rebellious crowd, or in anti-establish movements during these years.

In any case, agency is the boldest, and also the most positive character, in the Iranian old or modern discourses, because it defines the framework of self-rule and
political participation. According to Aristotle, the highest form of human self-realization is political participation (quoted in Butler 2000: 124) and apparently the contemporary Iranians have reached to this point; because the concept of legal ruler through the imamate and justice theories was the first manifestation of political participation in the Shiite theology and political debates. Besides the literary manifestation of this desire in the epics, the religious movements, particularly in the first half of nineteenth century, were the turning point for the notion of agency in which religious self-realization turned into political self-realization. The Tobacco Protest (1890-1) could be marked as the fundamental turning point for modern Iran, because, by diverting the religious discourse, it became the first political self-realization of its kind in pre-constitutional era. The Tobacco Protest was a revolt, led by Mirzā Hassan Shirazi an influential cleric, against the tobacco concession granted by the Nasser al-Din Shah to Great Britain. The protest climaxed in a widely-obeyed December 1891 fatwa against tobacco use supposedly issued by Shirazi. The boycott was one of the first times the Iranian religious elite succeeded in forcing the government to retreat from a policy, and was seen as a demonstration that “the Shii ulama [clerics] were Iran's first line of defense” against colonialism (Nasr 2006: 117). It was during this boycott that Iranians realized the great role of the crowd as a political factor. It could basically turn upside down the power structure and top-down relationship, at least for the time people were on the streets exhibiting their desires for self-rule. Political self-realization was thus conceptualized through the functionality of the crowd as a space-body in which individuals could restore or exercise their agencies.
The crowd in the Tobacco Protest had two types of function: as a body that occupied the public space temporarily and as a body of act that boycotted the treaty. In both cases it formulated two fundamental yet simple ways through which people could exercise or restore their agencies. More than a decade later in the wake of Constitutional Revolution, Iranians inverted the power relationship with their government in public spaces; first in the religious spaces, then on the streets, and finally in the British embassy as a source of power that could help them against the monarch. From that point on the act of self-realization in Iran channeled the individuals’ social-political desires through a crowd that was able to take over power or channel it into the different path. The establishment of Majles (parliament) was the first democratic institution that represented the will of crowd and that of individuals for self-ruling. A year and eight months later, when Mohammad Ali Shah shut down the Majles forcefully, people again poured into Tehran’s main squares for a few days. While Tehranians were pushed back to their houses by Kazakh forces led by the Russian general Liyakov, resentments in the other cities, especially Tabriz, escalated and finally turned into street wars in Tabriz. From this point on the street war became another crucial element of inverting the top-down power relationship. Although the strike was an important tool during the National Oil Movement (1945-8), the crowd remained the fatal tool in the hands of Iranians for manifesting their political self-realization and desires. These political and social tools helped Iranians through three major movements as well as a few minor ones in the twentieth century; nonetheless, they were not able to establish strong democratic institutions beyond the parliament. The fact that people were not able to establish basic
democratic institutions in their communities, could be at least one fundamental reason for a deepened democratic society not developing in Iran due to a lack of political trust, either between political establishments and people or between people and the religious classes.

Self-rule and political participation should theoretically hinge on the individual, but in Iran they have always been in tension. Islamic political thought has supported the notion of agency in a limited fashion, because according to theology God was above the law. Agency of individuals or crowd for Islamists begins with the discourse of disobedience to illegitimate rulers and ends with enforcing religious laws or replacing that leader with a religious figure instead. Agency in terms of establishing distributive justice in a social democratic framework has been out of the question for them. It has been the same with both state secular activists and leftists too, because they also believed that they were the only righteous people entitled to hold power. Self-realization was allowed as long as it helped these legitimate leaders seize political power. It is true that with the Constitutional Revolution agency hinged on the power of the crowd and underwent different experiences because during this time crowd was not just a representative of religious wills. The crowd was the representative of new notion of citizenship; however, it was accepted limitedly by both secular and religious leaders. More importantly because of secularist demands it was the clerical class that had to compromise, or to hide their requests behind the will of crowds that were asking for political reform rather than anything else. The conflict between people and the religious-governmental establishment lies right here. While people’s and intellectuals’ preferences
were to fight for their causes in a social-democratic framework, such as acquiring of full sovereignty against foreigners, reformation of the landowning system, creating a body of law above the monarchial system, and accepting the new notion of agency based on the new definition of citizenship, by contrast clerics required them for protesting only against the illegitimate rulers or in order to restore the Shiite establishments.

Hypothetically, the social-democratic framework of distributive justice hinges on the state’s role in channeling, blocking, and regulating the effects of the economy; the deliberative and decision-making procedures of the state – legislative, bureaucratic, and juridical – are the site of a kind of endless contestation over liberal and civic imperatives pursued by various social movements, interest groups, alliances, trade unions, and mass parties. Modern democracy requires these three interlocking but conflicting frameworks: the liberal, the civic-humanist, and the social-democratic. Citizenship, we might say, is the highest form of subjectivity because within it and from it stems all forms of human freedom (Butler 2000: 124). However, the notions of crowd and agency remained rather simplistic since the Constitutional Revolution; because, all discourses have theorized the notion of agency as the crowd with one task only: taking political power from the monarchs and handing it to the religious or secular elites. Lambton mentions that constitutionalists were not able to create a body of law which was above everybody (see chapter 3 for this argument). The same argument is valid for every movement after that, because both trends believed that social reforms could only happen when they are in power. The notion of agency has not deepened due to such limitations in these discourses; nevertheless it is the most effective element in both trends.
Characterization of the Discourses in a Comparative Method

Modernization was not a dilemma for the western European countries because in their paths of progress, they did not have to escape from their past, partially or totally. They just had to refigured or recontextualize it, for the aforementioned reasons. It was, however, different for Iran. First of all, the present for Iranians was not as pleasant and prosperous as the past. Secondly, the lack of sovereignty did not allow Iranians to change the present the way they wanted to, or to recontextualize their past through the notion of progress as a new plot. In order to have an independent and meaningful discourse to state needs to be sovereign enough to exercise its power in all spaces, namely security, population and individual (see chapter three for this). It also needs to create a body of knowledge independently. In that case the society is able to create a homogenous discourse that is based on national, religious identities as well as the desire for progress. Unable to create an independent and meaningful discourse(s), Iranians had to borrow most of the fundamental rudiments of their discourses from the West. Knowledge, power and discourse, as Foucault describes, are the three points of a triangle that should work together in order to objectify the reality in a social system. Separation of these essentials generates a number of crises in all aspects of a culture, especially in the political system, cultural phenomena and language. It is obvious that a third-world country such as Iran under the influence of superpowers not only has not been able to exercise its power, especially in the security and population levels-spaces, it was also unable to create a healthy and meaningful discourse for running its affairs. For Iran the source of power and knowledge have been far, and out of its hands located in the West;
therefore, instead of having a modern-complete discourse dependent on the religion-
nation-agency it had no choice but to create discourses that represent some kinds of
desire for better life in the future and at the same time respond to the West as the main
source for power and knowledge and even discourses. For controlling its people under
these circumstances the political entity has no choice but to exercise power on the second
and third spaces, which are population and body. Therefore, instead of fighting against
the foreign threats, the military has mostly been designed to control the domestic threats
to the government negatively in terms of population as political crowd or to control the
body negatively by punishing individuals or controlling their lives through sexual
matters. That is why the sexual and disciplinary are the most important parts of the
Islamist discourse. At the same time the Islamists accuse the secularists of being helpful
to the West with the reforms that they support in the traditional sexual discourse and legal
system. As a result, it is impossible to have an autonomous discourse or an ability to
avoid the West for its resourcefulness. For this reason all new discourses that have been
formed in Iran have found one major task for themselves to an extent, to objectify the
new reality of Iran in the light of European powers and resourcefulness as a new good-
other replaced by once evil-other. Down the road the differences between these
discourses have produced gaps not only between the discourses but also inside them. The
Islamist trend sought to retrieve the past in order to restore its power against the internal
illegal sovereign and his infidel west and east. The intellectual trend on the contrary
aspired to imitate the European model step by step in order to restore a modern country in
the future. Through her modernization, Iran, unlike European countries, entered into a
liminal space, a space between her unpleasant present and the pleasant imagined time in the past-present space in the West.

It was thus from the ashes of this situation that the new Iran with all of its problems was born and from the ashes of the universal Shiite-Iranian discourse, which had been shattered by the end of nineteenth century, the aforementioned discourses were shaped: the Islamist, secularist and nationalists. And later the first two became dominant and finally made the third one dissolved in them. Unable to create an autonomous discourse, the nationalist discourse basically divided into two; the religious nationalists merge with the Islamist discourse and the secular ones became part of the intellectualist trend. Nativism also had no choice but to dissolve in either modernists or Islamists.

The discrepancies among these trends were significant and as mentioned earlier they problematized the relationships between power, knowledge and historical and social realities. Thus, behind the common and uncommon aforementioned factors there are a number of discursive issues being reflected in the culture in general and literature in particular. Among these similarities, the most significant and deterministic factor was the definition of the refigured other formed under the modern image of the West; though the definition of other was not similar for these trends at all. The common perceptions of the West among these trends could be characterized under the keywords such as power, progress, science, technology, and prosperity; but under the distinctive theories there were different approaches toward these. The first immediate demand as mentioned before was the restoration of political power on the internal and international levels. Associated with the Safavid golden era, the greatness of ancient Iran was in the Iranian
collective memory and everybody wanted to have that back, though not every politician brought it up.

The second common request was for a powerful military. Again all trends wanted to have an organized army to secure the borders and have an upper hand to deal with the neighbors as well as the superpowers. Shah ‘Abbās wanted to reform the military in 1610s in order to weaken the nomadic arm forces and also to kick out the Portuguese from the Persian Gulf, but the weakness of the country became more obvious after the Russian-Iran wars in 1810s and 1820s. After the military defeat by Russia in 1823, Iranians realized Iran’s profound military and industrial weaknesses. It was under this situation that Prince ‘Abbās Mirzā (1789-1833), the son of the second Qajar king Fath ‘Ali Shah, became one of the first pioneers in this process of westernization. However, his only response to the problem was to strengthen Iran’s military with newly developed weapons. To him and to other statesmen that was the only way to solve the problem. Iran also began to have a close relationship with France, the enemy of the British and Russians alike in order to get better weapons. Nonetheless, Iran was unable to get either a military factory or modern weapons from France or any other country and the security problem remains the same until now.

The lack of a body of knowledge as mentioned exhibits another aspect of the problem, because this lack did not let Iran obtain the new sciences or technologies. Accordingly, the third common factor was gaining the modern sciences and technologies from the West. Presupposing that technology and science create power, both trends blamed the government for not trying to have a better plan to obtain them. Two decades
after ‘Abbās Mirzā’s attempt, the prime minister of Nasser al-Din Shah, Amir Kabir (1807-1852), tried to reform the financial system in order to establish new industries. Although unsuccessful in achieving his goal, Amir Kabir continued this process by founding the “Dār al-Fonūn” (The House of Technologies) Institute, which served the purpose of reforming the Iranian education system and training the administrative leaders, as well as imposing controls on financial matters.

But none of these efforts were successful. As a result the gap between the discursive trends grew beyond these common characteristics and every trend began to have its own definitions of power, science, and militaristic power through which they were basically influenced by their definitions of the West as other and modernism as the path to the future. Above all both began to hold each other responsible for political defeats. Secularists believe that the Islamists have halted the process of modernization by imposing traditions on the people; Islamists on the other hand have blamed the seculars for the West’s cultural influences in Iran, which is described as cultural attacks against the Islam. Ale Ahmad rightly raised a question that no one tried to address directly as of yet: how did these two trends begin to see each other as arch-enemies? To make it more clear one could ask under what circumstances, way before the Constitutional Revolution, religion in general and Islam in particular became the arch-enemy of modernization? And in a broader sense what made the early intellectuals think that traditions were the only reason for backwardness?

For the Islamists, modernism was equal to colonization, because modern technologies and sciences had been used militarily and politically by the Westerners
as new ways and techniques to subjugate the Muslims in general and Iran in particular. The West for them was nothing but the source of threats to the Islamic states. In general, Islamists thought that not only they had lost their major Islamic lands such as India, Egypt and North Africa to the West, but also they had lost the unity of Islam to them as well. It was partially true; but not the only truth as they described. Accordingly, in order to restore the Islamic power and *shari’a* law, the Islamist trend defined the West as the enemy of *umma* and religion. Above that, Islamists thought that as soon as they took the Islamic lands the Europeans were going to use the old technique of subjugation, which was the forceful conversion to the Christianity. Scared of losing the cultural battle to the West, Islamists began to see the West as only an enemy, nothing less or more. Therefore, the Occidentalism, being completely against anything from the West, became the significant characteristic of their discourse.

Astonished by the progress of the West, secular-nationalists, on the contrary, were looking for the internal reasons for the Iran’s backwardness as they analyzed the progress of the West as an internal phenomenon disconnected from its relationship to the East. Witness to the whole process of denationalization and at the same time the rise of the western powers made secularists conclude that the main, if not the only, reason for the Iran’s backwardness was the central government which, due to its ‘ignorance,’ was not able to train the new scientists and engineers. Secularists, like Islamists, did not see the government and the Shah for that matter as an operating machine which had to work with the dominant discourse, system of knowledge, agency, mode of production, and interstates relationships in order to run the country. For them the government and the
head figure were able to get rid of ignorance and to modernize the country if they were not ignorant, not greedy and loved the people. They did not see the tied relationships among discourse, power and knowledge, seculars blamed the government. But again another aspect of Ale Ahmad’s question is valid to be asked here: how was the concept of ignorance formed by the elites? And how has this trend found its way into literary discourse? And how was ignorance, prior to the Constitutional Revolution, seen as an emergence of superstitions by secularists such as Maraghei, Tālebov or religious-nationalists such as Adib al-Mamālek, and Ruhi or clerics such as Seyyed Jamāl Va’ez and Behbahānī? Regardless of historical, political, and cultural conditions they simply blame the king and his government for what had happened during the denationalization. The superpowers were also there to blame; however, the strong words were mostly used against the ignorance of governmental elements. It was in this context that they began to believe that the head of the government personally was responsible for backwardness, because he was the only one who was above the law and at the same time powerful enough to achieve this goal, if he wanted to. Ale Ahmad argues that the notions of ignorance, backwardness, and Islam as the anti-modernist religion had found their ways to Iran through writers such as Montesquieu and James Morrier.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century when the problem of backwardness entered into the intellectual realm and became a subject of intellectual debates, both trends focused on administrational reforms. Disappointed by their corrupt government and king, intellectuals, religious, non-religious or nationalist, tried to find solutions for the growing problem of backwardness through governmental reforms. But, according to
the secular discourse, the king was not able to achieve the goal, because from the historical perspective Islam was the main obstacle for him to understand and solve the problem. Thus separation of religion and state became the main goal for the secularists, as they had gotten the idea through the European thinkers; but it would not happen as long as the head of the state was above the law. Furthermore, the Islamists had to refute that, because in that case if religion and state were separated they would lose their power as well. Meanwhile, non-religious intellectuals, some of whom were statesmen, came up with different solutions. Statesmen such as Amin al-Duleh (1896-1898), the second prime minister of Mozafar al-Din Shah, during his chancellorship tried to formulate some laws to address this problem and put them into effect; nonetheless he wasn’t successful either, and had to leave office.

Some of the intellectuals later came to the conclusion that Iran had no choice but to become westernized in order to overcome her backwardness. Intellectuals such as Mirzā Āqā Khān, Tālebov and Malkam Khān or later Dāvar proceeded to examine the issue from various social, cultural and political angles. From the political point of view, they demanded the establishment of a constitutional government alongside a European legal system, and thus they supported the constitutional movement. From the sociocultural perspective, the problem of backwardness was perceived to be the result of illiteracy and irrationality, which were considered to be the cause of superstitious beliefs. Accordingly, literacy was the sign of modernity, and orality, to the contrary, was seen as the cause of illiteracy and therefore, equal to backwardness. By literacy, however, they meant the ability to understand European culture and literature. Under this notion, they
saw, as some such as contemporary philosophers Doustār and Nikfar still see, the old fashioned writers, the religious philosophers and so on as ignorant or in best case the traditionalists whose time was passed. From this perspective, they in general drew a distinctive line between the modern man, who was pro-Western and acted and thought like a European, and the ignorant one, who was a traditionalist or anti-reformist.

Seeing the West as the only source and model for modernization made the secularists simply copy the Belgium constitution. But unlike the European modernization in which the national elements were very important, Iranian intellectuals thought that the Iranian traditions should be outweighed by European culture and literature as the only social culture for modernization or at least be refigured by that. Thus, not only did they pay little attention to Iranian-ness and Iranian culture as important sources and elements for producing cultural and political power and its language, but on the contrary they generally thought that they were obstacles, like religion, to modernization. The most problematic approach here was their assumption about nationhood without any internal or historical rudiments such as Iranian culture or religion. If we want to summarize the discourses in terms of their major characteristics, we could see both discursive trends through two fundamental terms: Occidentalism and self-Orientalism. The Islamist discourse could be characterized by its Occidentalism and the secularist discourse by its self-Orientalizing fashion.

The opposing definitions of other by these trends, which had roots in the problem of subjectivity, led them to create these two discourses with several contradictory notions about the future. For the Islamist, other, like before, had a negative image and self still
kept its positive image. However, there was a difference with the old universal discourse in which the Muslim self was powerful and the infidel other was militarily weak. In the new Islamist discourse the division of Muslim and infidel was still valid; but under the new reality, the other had become more powerful than the Muslims in general and Shiites in particular and self was under cultural, economical and military attacks. The West threatened Muslims and their religion on the bio-power level as well; and that was, according to Islamists, more serious than any other threats; because by exercising power on the individual body and changing the sexual discourse and relations between women and men, not only would the state lose its power, but above that the religious institutions would also lose their ground. The Islamists interpreted this threat as a cultural attack which was aiming the heart of the Islam. Yet, the other had very important things to offer to Islamic societies such as science and military technology and techniques. But, they basically were only able to see the negative side of the West, which was as a threat to sovereignty, religion and even the native culture.

Secularists, conversely, had the opposite perception from the self and other. For them, who had originally been derived out of nineteenth-century nationalism, the Europe was the only base for modernity. Departing from Iranian-ness or Shiite historiography, they began to naturalize ‘the nation’ under Eurocentric historiographies as the original model of modernity. Under this notion the other, i.e. the West, not any other nation or culture, was seen positively; at the same time, the self that was depicted as a traditionalist became somewhat negative. The idea of the West as a unique place, according to Hall, was produced by Europe’s contact and self-comparison with other, non-Western,
societies (Hall, Stuart, The West and the Rest: 221, quoted in Tavakoli-Targhi 2001: 2). The Iranian intellectuals adopted this idea through a few books such as Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* (Persian Letters, 1721), and *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (1824) or *The History of Persia* written by James Morrier and John Malkam respectively in which the Iranians in general were depicted as uneducated, superstitious, and non-ethical people.

**Modernity Project: A Comparison between Europe and Iran**

In the West, modernity had not happened all at once or out of the cultural and political boundaries; while for Iran it happened out of its boundaries; thus it had to import it. As Bauman and Briggs point out, the modernity project took a particular path in every Western country. Moreover, in order to establish its own nationhood and identity, every Western country had to canonize a characteristic element from its past (Bauman and Briggs 2003: 21). They examine two intellectual projects of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in which the pursuit of knowledge in history and poetry provided the frames of reference. These were two lines of inquiry, in which discursive forms and practices served as diagnostic features in the definition of modernity. The first one was antiquarianism and the second one was philology (ibid: 70). Both of these projects traced back to Bacon’s thought of the break that separates the old and the new science as well as his classification of knowledge; nevertheless for him, as for Locke, the rupture was between nature or natural science and society. To change the past Locke focused primarily on creating ideologies and practices that positively modeled the shapes that
modernity should assume. Language then was the mediation between these two. Accordingly, the rhetorical part of language was close to nature and femininity, and the goal was to replace it by logic, which was universal and above language. It seems that in order to achieve modernity, these philosophers created and pursued an ideal image. But this ideal image was not a religious one, nor was it sent by a divine entity. Medieval people used to symbolize everything, because they thought things were there because God wanted them to be there. Because of that they were constantly looking for the reasons behind these things. Under the notion of natural sciences, however, the early modernists believed themselves to be the reason for the existence of things. They had to be there because they were part of the system. By avoiding rhetoric, they sought to get rid of such symbolism. According to every religion or mythical system of thought, symbols had different meanings; by replacing the rhetoric with natural science and its system, logic, Bacon and Locke created a universal system. This created a rupture with the past, but at the same time it shaped a discursive context, which gave opportunity to modernists to decontextualize and recontextualize history, society and the aim of life on the earth.

Having this notion in mind, the German philosopher, Herder, had a slightly different approach to modernity. Language has had a central role for most of the modernists, not however for its function as a medium or an instrument with which human beings communicate with, but more importantly as a re-shaper of the national identity that apparently was very important for the modernists. It was the case for philosophers such as Bacon or later Wood and Blair as it was crucial for Herder. In both cases, Blair
and Herder, the poetic aspect of the language becomes important, because for Blair it is the way with which the cultural aspect of the antiquarian societies through their manners can be reconstructed. For Herder it goes farther, because he tries to locate man in nature through language. In *On the Origin of Language*, Herder states “while still an animal, man already has language” (Herder, V of M: 160). But as he develops upon this assertion, this is the “language of feeling;” whereas the true human language, for him, is clearly different than this. The reason for that as he follows are the specific human capacities. He terms these capacities *Besonnenhiet* – reflection – which is “entire disposition (nature) of man’s forces that encompasses “the total economy of his sensuous and cognitive, or his cognitive and volitional nature” (ibid: 166).

According to this passage it seems that Herder saw language as the only instrument for reasoning and cognitive process. He deemed man in the state of reflection with which he gets full freedom of action. Accordingly under this situation man has invented language (ibid: 167). This reflection by nature is “doubly reflexive”: “a consciousness of one’s own consciousness is inherently bound up with a striving for dialogue with others. Language, thought, and communication are all rooted in *Besonnenhiet* (reflection).”

For Herder language is the mirror of progress. “The oldest language is no more than …the dictionary of nature;” “verbs develop prior to nouns … because things are named initially for the actions;” and “primitive languages are characterized by the abundant synonymy because they have not yet developed general categories which require the capacity for abstraction…” he concludes “man is a creature of language”
(ibid: 168). And all derives from the human power of reflection. By the same token, he is a creature of the herd (society). So his language is natural, essential, and necessary to him” (Herder, V of M: 169) and different from Bacon’s logic.

Modernity in Iran, however, formed out of its political, cultural and linguistic boundaries. In addition the clash between the Islamists and secularists did not allow a homogenous historiography to be created. Neither of the aforementioned factors in European projects of modernity can be found in the Iranian one; and if they do, they are just simple imitations of the European ones. To begin with, Bacon’s notion of language purification turned into replacing Arabic loanwords with the coined Persian ones or later turned into the problem of a writing system without any real scientific background; whereas for Bacon replacing rhetoric by logic means replacing the religious symbolic system with a natural system. So that was not directly against religion but rather against the system of objectification. The problem of identity in German and Scottish discourses that let them refigure their nationality based on folk tales and Gaelic epic respectively, in the Iranian process of modernity turned into a big break form Persian classical literature and accepting the European literature as the only valid model for modernization. And above all, instead of refiguring the Persian history in order to define the modern identity and citizenship, the way it had happened in the European modernization, history was refigured based on the European history. Scottish and Germans, for a period of time, were the other side of modernist discourse, as it is the case today for the third-world countries. Herder’s Germany was the other side of modernity as it was for Blair’s Scotland. They had to fight in order to maintain their national identities, which were
threatened by British and French. However, latter, especially in case of Germany, when these countries went the other side and became part of European- self, if you will, or cosmopolitaned concept of modernity their attitudes were changed. The hybridity of Herder’s discourse of nationality and Locke’s language purification in the Grimms’ discourse is the best example here (Bauman & Briggs 2003: 197-8). Adopting the modern concepts such as the ideology of progress, purification of the language and reinventing the modern traditions versus the old Iranian ones that under the concept of rapture had to go did not leave any choice but internal and external clashes inevitable. The internal clashes demonstrated themselves in the constant fight between the Islamists and secularists that have had a great impact of Iranian political and cultural life. The external clash, as was mentioned, created a kind of cultural schizophrenia in which even time and space became alienated. It was under this situation that the intellectualism was born and it formed the modern literary discourse.
Chapter 6: Literary Discourse: Abnormality as the Solutions

Iranian modern discursive narrative basically used the discourse of modernity to create the modern fictional genre. From the opposite perspective, one could say that the discourse of modernity having no other options began to use the literary genre to narrate itself or to give its message to lay people, as the hardcore modernists claimed. Either way literary genres became a kind of monopolized territory of the secularist movement in Iran. It is of course wrong to think that it was monopolized just by them, because the Islamist trend traditionally was not originally interested in using literature for its agendas. The significance of the ritualistic genres such as religious theaters, festivals and oral narration made the religious Shiite leaders not pay attention to the formal literature that was basically used only by the elites and literate people. Islamists traditionally found the theatrical genres such as Ta’zieh or rituals such as Sofreh more powerful and effective than the written tradition. They narrated their historiography orally or theatrically through two main narratives of Imam Hussein whose story is about suffering and Imam Mahdi whose narrative is to represent the imagined future. Because of this they did not see any use for the fictional genres. Sufis also hardly showed any interest in these genres, because they employed certain literary genres to cover their main motifs of love (Rabe’eh Advieh is the representative of this love), suffering (Hallaj) and unity with God (Simorq). Traditionally, they used the fictional genres such as hekayat (the moral tale), qeseh (the
religious tale) and āsheqāneh (the mystic romances) to exploit their mysticism, but they hardly employed the new fictional genres such as novel and short story to send out their mystic messages. The old genres were apparently enough for their causes.

The Iranian trend of literature known as the Khorāsāni style with its canonized text Shāhnāmeh also stopped creating new works a long time before the movement of modernity in Iran. Whereas epic was the dominant genre in antiquity and medieval times, the novel became the dominant genre in modern society. Bakhtin (1981: 3-40) points out four characteristics for epics in comparison to novels which are worth mentioning here: epic narrative depicts the past in a hierarchical fashion, thus history is directly or indirectly part of it; these narratives are in general about the dominant norms or the meta-narrative; despite individual life, epics concentrate on the fathers’ traditions, therefore they are not polyphonic; and finally their main motif is ‘self’ versus ‘other.’ Novels on the contrary revolve around individual lives in the present time, so contemporarity and experience rather than tradition are the main characteristics of novels. Novels are also polyphonic because the individual experiences and expressions form the main motifs in this genre. The epic genre was not able to create more works in contemporary Iran, because Iran’s sovereignty was generally declining and under that situation it was not able to produce epical narrative based on the concept of self and other. Therefore, the epic genre with its rich tradition in Iran could not help the modern fiction. As mentioned above the interpretation of the epical stories was not available either, because in the othering narrative other had taken the self image and vice versa.
Under these circumstances, it is only natural that the genre would be unable to create new works.

Although it had a rich literary tradition on its hands, modernity in Iran decided to revitalize its agendas, which were mainly political, through a simplistic literary style. Avoiding rich rhetorical traditions and language and employing colloquial language with very simple techniques became the trend among the modern writers. “Farsi Shekar Ast” written by Jamālzādeh (1892-1997) is, according to most critics, the first short story that was written in modern style. It was first published in Kāveh in 1922 in Berlin. It was again published in a collection titled Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud. The main motif of the story is the problem of dealing with the language which was Persian. Jamālzādeh in the preface to the book spends time explaining modern problems, such as the insufficiency of Persian as a language of science and narrative, and the nonsensical words and terms that are used in it. In order to solve the problems he suggests employing a simplistic version of the language in order to make it more understandable for ordinary people. His approach is the linguistic style that he uses in his stories, especially the aforementioned one. Jamālzādeh belonged to the second generation of monaver al-fekr(s) (intellectuals) who formed the famous group of “Berliners” two decades after the Constitutional Revolution. This group was mainly interested in Persian literature and history. Mohammad Ghazvini, the famous literary researcher was also one of them. All of them had lived in Europe and had been familiarized with modern ideas especially with those of the enlightenment era. The backwardness of the country had become obvious to them; saving Iran in terms of modernization had become their main goal and they wanted to build a bridge between
‘the modern European civilization’ and their ‘traditional old Asian’ society. They, like the earlier generation, thought that the language was the most problematic thing in the process of modernization. While getting rid of rhetoric was the main goal for Bacon in order to have a language based on logic, simplicity for the Iranian intellectuals was associated with purification and progress. Arabic loanwords were to be replaced by Persian as the first choice or European words as the last choice. Persian writers could have also taken the idea of simple language in terms of storytelling from the philosophy of Herder; however, under the weight of literary tradition they thought that simplification should be associated with getting rid of the classical rhetoric and Arabic loanwords. They believed that colloquial language was able to make more effectual communication with lay people. It was also considered the only way to teach people modern ideas in the European style schools. Simplicity was then the only way to send the clear short message of modernity and civilization to an old traditional society.

Europe had gone through this experience as well, after all the intellectuals were inspired by their European counterparts in the first place; however, in the case of Europe, the language had been involved with the process of complication/development in the sciences and concepts; therefore language was codified in order to address the complicated ideas. In terms of narrative, Western literature has indeed created complicated plots and narrative devices related to sciences of the time. For instance, in the nineteen century, when steam engine was created, novels also began to use the complicated plots that their pieces worked together like the engine. At the same time the social agendas were in foregrounds and the individuals were mostly depicted in their
social network. The notion of different time and parallel time also led to the creation of complicated plots in this century and complicated narrative modes later. Brooks (1984: 5) puts it this way: “Western societies appear to have felt an extraordinary need or desire for plots, whether in fiction, history, philosophy, or any of the social sciences, which in fact largely came into being with the Enlightenment and Romanticism.” By the time Freud began to see the brain as an engine, novels also began to pick up his psychological model or narrative to describe the individuals from his/her point of view. Individualism then became into the foreground and social system depicted in its background. Plot from this perspective is not a fixed structure, “but rather a structuring operation peculiar to those messages that are developed through temporal succession, the instrumental logic of a specific mode of human understanding” (Brooks 1984: 10). Iranian society, however, had no chance to experience or absorb these directly. Iranian writers and intellectuals encountered with these things indirectly and through the new literary styles and schools with less direct connections with the culture that had been the cradle to these movements; therefore plot for them reduced into a single political narrative. It was direct language rather than a simplified one that the Western traditions were focusing on; whereas for us it was simple language in terms of less words and less codified terms; although Qā’em Maqām, prime minister of Mohammad Shah tried to use a direct language in his Letters (Monsha’āt). It is interesting that to know the yāveh (nonsensical) language as Ashuri (2009) defines was only a trend in the administrative cables and letters not in any other genres. For instance, in the nineteenth century when the first modern works were being formed under the notion of simple language we also witnessed the popular legend of
Amir Arsalan that had been formed with a simple language and by the popular culture, or San’atizādeh’s historical novel Shams o Toqrā that demonstrates this characteristic. Instead of defining it through the concept of polyphony, which is an important characteristic of novels, intellectuals then were looking for simple language and a simple plot, because they thought that these stories were written to address the problem of backwardness for lay people. The notion of simple language and a simple plot, that confined itself to addressing the problem of backwardness and at the same time, was suggesting the simple solutions set the narrative discourse for long time. This, as a plot for modernity, attracted most of the contemporary writers and thinkers. This narrative still defines the chief ideas of modernity in Iran.

In this chapter, which will be the lengthiest one, we need then to explore the modern discursive narrative, which was directly formed by the secular/intellectual discourse in order to study fiction structurally and find the reasons for formulaic trends that are created by the writers to deal with the problem of backwardness in Iranian culture and Persian literature. This chapter is divided into many sections under the notion of three spaces- a traditional past, an imagined future and a meaningless present- as part of the modernist historiography presented by the secularists. I will explore a number of social issues such as schizophrenic culture, heterotopias, the notion of the crowd, and disconnectedness related to the discourse, before illustrating these notions in literary trends. Related to the lack of sovereignty and indigenous discourse, these phenomena are merely demonstrated in the fiction. Moreover, we will examine the new literary genres that were indeed formed through imitation. It was not just leftists who contextualized
Iranian history through an invented periodization or abnormal causes; other secularist trends have done this too- the only difference was the definition of the *other*.

**The Birth of the New Intellectuals**

Intellectualism was theoretically discussed in the previous chapters; here it will be examined from a literary and historical perspective. Modern Persian novels are almost exclusively by secular/intellectuals; thus, Iranian intellectualism is the bedrock of modern Persian literature. Intellectualism came out of a vacuum that was created by the lack of both a plot for the future and a single image of the past.

The intellectual movement in the early time, which was called the enlightenment and became a popular discourse around the time of the Constitutional Revolution, saw religion, and by that it referred to Islam, as the single most important cause of backwardness. Nevertheless, it could not totally tolerate nationalism as well, even though the nationalist discourse, in its arguments, also wanted a progressive modern Iran. This position was completely contradictory, because modern intellectuals wanted to have a modern society with cultured and educated (meaning European culture and education) people, but they did not see it associated with the unified image of Iran. Iran, for most of them, was the place in which backwardness occurred and not the place where a nation-state could be formed under the nationalist discourse. The same discourse can be found about the Iranian people, who were on one hand seen as ignorant, irrational and uncultured, the root causes for the growth of superstitious sentiments and thoughts, and on the other hand were subject to change, because emancipation could only happen in
this way. The early intellectuals were in fact nationalists without being nationalists. These contradictory assumptions about the national identity and people became a major source for schizophrenic attitudes that could not bring the three trends together. However, it is worth mentioning that the only common element that was formed around this time was accepting Farsi as a national language, as a house for nationhood (Jamālzādeh 1339a: 1). As Anderson (1991: 45) points out the “various nationalisms of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe each rested on a clearly definable nationality, that is, a linguistically and culturally cohesive group which had developed organically over the centuries alongside the gradual growth of the ‘industrial’ mode of production. In contrast, nationalism in colonial countries was apparently not based on nationality.”

In the case of Iran there was a sense of unification in both linguistic and cultural cohesiveness, however without a single narrative plot or plan for the future. Modernists just wanted to have a developed country like Western countries without any relating traditions to the Iranian culture or religions. The last assertion, in contrast to the others, later created a schizophrenic culture, in which the other, as Fanon describes it, became a high esteemed model to imitate; at the same time the self became the source for shame. The country at this time was within two systems of significations, a cohesive social and cultural knowledge from the past that was shattered in that century and one that was in process of invention, which was the starting point for a modern emergence of the nation. Renan argues that the non-nationalist principle of the modern nation is represented in the will to nationhood – not in the identities of race, language, or territory (Bhabha, 1990: 19). This could be the case for the Iranian nationalist movement; but the modernist
discourse, despite its eagerness to have a developed country though ashamed of the past, did not base its arguments on Iranian-ness at all. In other words, as Emerson states, there were nationalists, but no nations, in the post-colonial states; nations in the ‘Third World’ are still ‘in the making’ (Bassam 1990: 45). In the case of Iran, the Western-educated intellectuals were the ones who carried ideas of a modern nation, without willing to have a nationalist discourse.

The philosophical origins of colonial nationalism lie in the West. But the ideology of modernization in Iran did not fulfill its mission in the long run. This means that in practice the model was irrelevant, because those elites believed that modernization was primarily equivalent to industrialization and industrialization could occur only if people became educated. Here, the project could not proceed at all because intellectuals were just little more than optimists working to have a modern society in the fairly far future. At the same time, however, and because of the politico-historical situation, they believed that Iran was not going in the right direction. Then it is fair to ask what the role of Iran’s particular historical situation was that led intellectuals to this conclusion.

Ākhundzādeh, the first Iranian intellectual, so to speak, described it this way: it was “the era when Iran, in its confrontation with Western military (Russian-Iran wars) and then Western civilization realized its own bikhabari and ‘aqabmāndegi (ignorance and backwardness)” (Ākhundzādeh 1992: 3). He then raises a question: how did Iran become backward? To be more precise, why was Iran left behind? The reason for Ākhundzādeh was to be found in superstitious beliefs that had crept into the Persian religion and into Muslim practices. Thus, for him, the only way out of the situation was
by reforming Islam in order to eliminate the superstitious aspects. But, neither the reason nor the solutions were real or valid; because, first, they were just concentrating on one element, aspect or rather one internal cultural reason. Second, to find the solution the intellectuals simply relied on one part of the modernist discourse in Europe. They were constantly comparing Iran with the European major powers without checking the real factors behind the socio-economic situation in Iran. Third, they never compared themselves to the neighboring countries, for instance to the Ottomans, Egyptians, Indians or even to Azerbaijan which only half a century earlier had been separated from Iran by the Russians. They were in similar situations, but the Iranian enlightenment movement did not want to learn from them. For these reasons, the solutions that they offered were very idealistic and at the same time isolated and far from reality. Their solution instead set out a kind of over-simplified national discourse that was discussed by officials as well as the common people in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Acculturation theory, like modernization theory, lays stress on the fact that the western-educated colonial intellectual is the carrier of nationalism. In this theory, however, the issue of modernization is only marginal. Based on this theory, Behrendt distinguishes two models. “The first, the ‘passive-imitative acculturation,’ is an ‘unreserved passive adaptation to a culture felt to be superior’ which remains largely superficial and ‘cannot in fact dislodge the values and norms of the indigenous culture which have been instilled since childhood’.” In contrast, the ‘active-syncretic acculturation’ consists of ‘the selection and active application of suitable extraneous cultural elements … taking into consideration their relevance to the needs and potential
of the developing country, together with those autochthonous cultural elements that are still effective and viable” (Bassam 1990: 48).

Iranian intellectuals followed both the ‘passive-imitative acculturation’ and the ‘active-syncretic.’ Early intellectuals such as Ākhundzādeh and Maraghei were passive. They wanted to modernize the country through the irrational and unrealistic method of wholly adopting European culture from A to Z. Ākhundzādeh’s criticism of every aspect of Iranian life and culture relies on a simple formula: give up whatever is Iranian and adopt whatever is European. His belief in this formula was so deep that he even criticized Iran, for instance, for having never had the study of geography, literary criticism or science – a notion that Iranian history proves to be wrong. Reform for him was nothing but replacing what we had with the superior culture of Europe. His criticism of the Persian alphabet is a very famous example. In his critique he first begins with the assumption that the country is backward because people are illiterate, and the reason for this is the unreadable characters, in terms of dots, shape and symmetry. Thus the Persian alphabet itself was problematic and inferior to English. Ākhundzādeh’s solution was very drastic: “we have to replace it with a European alphabet” (Ākhundzādeh, quoted in Āriyan-pour 1998: 342-5).

In another instance he sees the root of backwardness being the ignorance and superstitious state of the Iranian people. He sees this problem entirely outside of its historical and cultural perspective and simply compares his people to those of European countries. As a result the people of Iran were ‘marginal peoples’ to him and in contradistinction to those in the West, who were ‘nuclear peoples’ (Bassam 1990: 49).
Ākhundzādeh basically alienated his people because of their roots to the national and religious traditions; meanwhile, he wanted a modern country with educated people who should be like Europeans. Othering his people and at the same time depicting the European other as the superior image was the path to modernization for some of these intellectuals. “They are,” as Bassam (1990: 49) points out about colonial countries, “at one and the same time nationalists and opponents of everything autochthonous. The nationally conscious and the nationalists in developing countries are not bearers of an independent cultural heritage, but those who are most influenced by ideas borrowed from the West.” According to Behrendt, intellectuals who spoke and acted in the name, and in the interest of the nation, were probably the most alienated, that is, westernized, and they are most deeply hostile to rational social structures (quoted in Bassam 1990: 49).

Why then did they think this way? Fanon (1965: 3) explains them in this fashion: “in contrast to the situation in Europe, where nationalities grew organically within the womb of feudalism, nationalities in the colonies – or semi-colony in case of Iran – have developed in the course of revolutionary struggles against the colonial system.”

The second group of intellectuals followed the ‘active-syncretic-acculturation’ mode. This group in fact was closer to the nationalist group, because they believed that the only way to come out of their backwardness was the hybridization of Iranian culture and European technologies and sciences. At the same time they were very close to the first group on their anti-religious attitudes. They were in danger of losing their Iranian identity, but at the same time and in order to restore this identity, they alleged that losing the Islamic identity is the only way to pave the road for modernity.
Incidentally these groups came together in the Constitutional Revolution for a short period of time, because the religious group as well as the nationalist one could in fact mobilize people with great efficiency. From that point on, these discourses have been turned into the ideological beliefs that, without any compromise, have been fighting for political power throughout the last hundred years or so.

**Disconnectedness in the Narrative Discourse**

In order to understand the process through which Persian modern fiction became political and anti-Islamic/religious, we need first to understand the direct correlation in this literature, between the modernity discourse in Iran and the process of nation building that occurred after the Constitutional Revolution. We need also to know the cultural reasons for disconnectedness. In other words, we must understand why there is no correlation between history, time, identity and writers’ capacity to act in Iran. We understand that the harmony between Iran and Islam ended by the time that Iran came into contact with the Europeans and around the time that it was experiencing denationalization and powerlessness. After the Constitutional Revolution and during the renationalization in Reza Shah’s reign two discourses were formed as two counterparts, one was all for Islam and its glory time and another one was about the future, the time Iran would become modern. During that time the discourse of modernity in general and Marxism in particular was dominant; however, later in 1950s and after the American coup d'état Islamic discourse began to be gradually empowered; while the secularists kept their dominance in the realm of literature.
It is, hence, important to see how modern Persian literature, under the influence of modernity, was purposely disconnected from its past. In chapter three we mentioned the theory of Deleuze and Guattari on power/desire/interest which helped us to understand the absence of relation between these factors in a fragmented society like Iran. We also mentioned that Iran traditionally, was divided into urban, rural and tribal societies and through the language barriers it created cultural and literary separation between the city, village and tribes. As Mohammad Mehryār (Interview: 10/10/2010), an observer from the early twentieth century, describes in his interview “the largest community that people used to live in was mahaleh (the neighborhood).” Divided into mahalehs, cities were fragmentally run by the local religious leaders and officials. Each mahaleh had its own policing system and was run through a local economy. It was the same for the villages and tribes. Social trust, thus, was invested in that small community and people’s image of themselves as an Iranian was dominantly confined to their neighborhoods. The concept of Iranian-ness which was with everybody was then a romantic image of an ancient empire that was hardly connected to the real community that people lived in. The term bikhabari (ignorant) that was coined during the constitutional movement was a reflection of this disconnectedness. Under these circumstances it was then common to see that every city and even mahaleh had its own dialect of the Persian language. Even more, their rituals and traditions differed from those of other communities, which are still the case in some areas, especially among the Sunnis. In a broader sense there was also a distinction between formal language(s), religions and even cultures from colloquial languages and folk cultures consecutively.
We can see this fragmentation in the literature as well. From a historical aspect, three literary trends of *Khorāsāni*, *Araqi* and *Hendi* styles, which appeared chronologically from tenth century onward and will be examined later in details, illustrate another aspect of this disconnection. Furthermore, the Shiite rituals such as the male ritual of Ta’zieh and Dasteh or women’s ritual of Sofreh and Rozeh that have hardly been depicted in the highbrow literary traditions represent another aspect of the disconnection. The conflict between nationalism and religious beliefs carries us back to the problem of identity in which selfhood was hardly defined or even understood. “Oneself as another,” as Ricoeur (1992: 3) describes, “suggests from the outset that selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other.” There have been so many layers within Iranians’ sense of self that it is hard for us to become interconnected with each other.

The discourse of modernity and modern literature as a counter-discourse to the Islamic trend has created the last dimension of the disconnectedness. The conflict between the beliefs combined with the historical and cultural aspects of disconnectedness makes it hard to see the sense of identity in the modern literary discourse. The meta-narrative revolves around the idea of being-modern versus not-being-ignorant. It is hard to find the sense of modern Iranian-ness interconnected to its past, to its experiences and its old narrative. Unable to reinterpret the past through its modern selfhood, the modernity discourse just adds another layer to the complicated selfhood without offering any capability to act. Experiences, relationships, and actions speak of our identity. The fundamental function of narrative, according to Ricoeur, is to “construct the durable
properties of a character,” what he calls ‘narrative identity’ (Brokmeier 1997: 180). We understand ourselves through the way the “narrative emplots the identity of character” (Ricoeur 1992: 147). The dialectic of sameness and selfhood that is contained in the notion of narrative identity is another way of understanding ourselves. Selfhood, according to Ricoeur (1992: 168), is “the relation of ownership (or belonging) between the person and his or her thoughts.” Sameness, on the other hand, is “a concept of relation and a relation of relations” (116). But self in the Iranian sense of identity portrays as a crisis within selfhood, because it is disconnected from the sense of ownership as our openness towards new interpretations of experiences in the past. Although it has the sense of ownership as our openness towards the changes in the future; it still portrays as a crisis within selfhood here as well, because these changes correspond to the adopted European historiography rather than our direct experiences.

Narrative identity is constructed around language as the medium for conceptualization, time as the medium for translating our experiences into realities, and selfhood in the mirror of the other. Interpretation and reinterpretation of past experiences lets us create new stories which speak of our past, present, and future. According to Ricoeur, lack of continuity among the three main connectors (calendar time, the sequence of generations, and the trace) creates disconnectedness. Related to Iran Shahideh (2004: 47) believes that lack of continuity “between Lived Time and Cosmic Time is one of the primary reasons for Iranians’ disconnectedness.” The first connection is the notion of calendar time which is originated from a mythical time referred to the beginning of a reign. The second connector is the sequence of generations, and the third one is “the idea
of the trace—particularly archives and documents. Iranian history demonstrates that because of continuous change in the historical background, represented in different discursive literatures, the main point of reference (the beginning of a reign) and other two connectors (the sequence of generations and trace) is almost impossible to remember. It is interesting to know that there are a number of calendars related to different historiographies that are used by Iranians for different proposes, Hejri lunar calendar for the religious holidays, Hejri solar calendar as the official calendar and the old Iranian holidays such as Nowruz, and the Western calendar for ancient and worldwide history.

One’s understanding of self is related to one’s understanding of another (Shahideh 2004: 48), but if it is associated with a sense of continuity. It is through our relationship with one another in these levels that we can understand the past, experience the present and imagine the future. It is through this process that one can act as an agent.

However, the modern narrative discourse suffers from disconnectedness that was formed in the old narratives. The modern narrative is also one dimensional, because what it wants is a future that is imagined by someone else. Not only is the past not worth reinterpretation, according to some modernists, it also has a negative role for our present time. It is the main cause for the unpleasant present that we live in now. What then is left to talk about? The future, because it is in the realm of imagination; it is ahead of progress/revolution which is the only thing that is permanent. But it is not based on our direct experience in our present time. Most of the modern Iranian stories revolve around two notions of characters: the modern one and the ignorant one. These two characters have gotten complicated through the years; nevertheless, they still spring from the notion
of *tajadud* (modernity) which shaped the first version of the narrative in pre-1909 Revolution.

It is not then strange if we see that the Islamic and modernist discourses considered themselves as antagonists to each other. The disconnectedness between these narratives has been historical in the first place and political in second. We could also interpret this phenomenon as disconnectedness between the narrative, power and knowledge. The disconnection between the narrative discourse, knowledge and power is albeit a modern phenomenon in Iran, yet they were built on the traditionally fragmented traditions. Furthermore, the Western discourse has become the reference points for both Islamist and secularist trends. Not only do writers refer to Western discourses but they also define themselves through its power and knowledge in order to exploit Iranians’ ideas and thought. To define the truth, for instance, they have to respond in fact first to the Western power and then to the Iranian one. The reason for this is that they perceived the West to be a real source of power and knowledge. The feeling of powerlessness has made Iranians think that truth, authenticity, and even reality are shaped by Westerners or at least need to be checked by them first. In other words, the process of objectification should happen first in Western discourses, power and knowledge system in order to become an acceptable fact in the Iranian discourses. This is what Said calls self-Orientalization. This process even creates validity for Islamic thoughts and discussions. The notion of truth and reality as well as its reference points, supposedly, should be different for the Islamists in comparison to the secularists. The historiography should be also different for a Shiite Muslim in comparison to an Iranian modernist/atheist who
believes the path of progress is just those steps that Europe had taken before. As Shayegan (1992: 33) explains “a Shiite Muslim lives in anticipation of the Coming of the Imam who is to save the world… His entire consciousness is adjusted to blank off reality and discern what seems to be essential on the other side of it.” But this reality now is undermined by the Westerners, who based on their absolute military power, are fully sovereign and through their political, economical and cultural hegemonies they have created some kind of universal discourse for both the Westerners and non-Westerners. In this discourse the non-Westerners are always objectified others. Continuity and normal progress, through the centuries, have made the Western reality coherent and connected to its past; whereas this reality is hard to understand or objectify in Iran, because its powerlessness makes it unable to create a consistent grand narrative. The meanings of the realities thus are differentiated in Iran as a third world country. It is true that Iranians, like other non-Western countries want to see reality through Western lenses. But this is problematic too, because they cannot detach themselves as subject from themselves as object. This twisted objectivity has of course outweighed the Shiite reality; however, it, at the same time, cannot grasp the new meaning in the western context either. Under the secularist discourse, there is no other choice but to contextualize reality from the European perspective, yet the meaning cannot be fully contemplated through that process because the context and the reality on the ground do not match. Although the modernity discourse has helped non-Western Iranians to contemplate reality in the Western discourse, it is still hard for them to fully view the reality from that perspective. While the discourse of modernity helps an Iranian to depict himself from a European
perspective – and it is very useful to observe self from the other’s point of view – but at the same time it depicts him objectively and not dominantly from a full sovereign culture. This approach makes him look at himself as a backward man objected to the Western power. It also makes him discard his traditions or contextualizes them from the Western perspective through an alienating process.

The problem, thus, rises right here: Iranians in this comparison consider their traditions as the problems of their backwardness. This is of course more common among the secularist; but in a way it is seen among the Islamists and ordinary people as well. As mentioned, modernity is the source of authenticity for all trends, although they behave differently toward it. Secularists use it to prove that the Islamist discourse is wrong and cannot understand the modern reality. Furthermore, it is in their eyes the main cause for Iranian backwardness. Islamists use it to prove that the West is one source of truth and authenticity and through it the truth of Islam is revealed. The idea of ‘Islam as the pioneer in the scientific innovations and discoveries’ has always been part of the modern Islamist narrative in order to demonstrate that the modern truth is nothing but what was formulated in the Quran centuries ago. There were a number of Islamist scientists such as Mehdi Bazargan – the first prime minister after the 1979 Revolution – who have tried to prove that the scientific discoveries and inventions were mentioned in the Quran or other Islamic accounts long time before the time that Europeans discovered them again. The reason he uses this narrative is the power of modern truth that is correlated with the discourse of modernity. Some of the nationalists have also gone through this path claiming that a number of the scientific discoveries and inventions were done by Iranians.
way before modern era. It is true that every civilization has had its contribution in the human history and Iranians have also their contributions; but the problem is the approach or the narrative in which the validity of the Western discourse is accepted through a twisted way. Unable to objectify reality in their discourses, they just try to use the authenticity of the West to prove that they were among the first civilizations to find that truth.

Also Islamists think oppositely, but their approach is not really far from what Fanon describes. He states that “[t]here is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to black men. There is another fact: Black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect” (Fanon 1967a: 10). The Islamists of course reject the first part of the statement or rather mock the Westerners for such a claim; however, trapped by the second part of the statement they unconsciously try to prove to the white man that they are scientifically have found the same truth. In other words, they say what Fanon says about man’s tragedy:

Man's tragedy, Nietzsche said, is that he was once a child. . . . However painful it may be for me to accept this conclusion, I am obliged to state it: For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white (1967a: 10).

A few pages later he points out “a Negro who is driven to discover the meaning of black identity. White civilization and European culture have forced an existential deviation on the Negro. I shall demonstrate elsewhere that what is often called the black soul is white man's artifact” (Fanon 1967a: 14). Not exactly similar to the concept of
Negro in Fanon’s works Islamists, that are familiar with this text, by proving their truth through the Islamic sciences, have failed to identify their acts, which is nothing but finding themselves in a Western discourse.

Secularists on the other hand belittle these efforts, because the only source of authenticity for them is the West. Historically, these discoveries have developed in different parts of the world and Muslims and Iranians have their contributions as well, but what is important here is this approach through which Iranians try to define their identity based on the Western reality and truthfulness. They objectify themselves with a discourse in which they are already other. In other words, the problematic other is he who tries to solve the problem by finding his otherness. But the process is not the process of self-consciousness in the Hegelian sense at all, because the object here cannot find his way to become an agent or a person capable of action. This dilemma has created a range of problems, especially among the modernists who have deliberately exiled themselves in their homeland because they wanted to have their distance from the internal others. The bitterness of this attitude is right there in the literary works. The gap between reality and discourse is in many areas, especially language which we will get to a later section. This problem has created the disconnectedness that has occurred in Iranian culture and literature under a discourse whose main themes are these disagreements between the Islamist and secularist trends.

Albeit, some kind of disconnectedness has been part of the modernity project in Europe too. The distinction between past and present, tradition and modernity defined as a Great Divide by number of scholars is the root of disconnectedness. Max Muller who
has a number of works on Iran, Andrew Lang, R. R. Marrett, and Wilhelm Schmidt all believed that pre-modern literature, philosophy and myths – especially those that were created outside of the Western boundaries – were severed from the modern literature and classification of knowledge (Street 1984: 19). For instance, two intellectual projects of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the pursuit of knowledge in history and poetry, present the same approach in Europe. It seems that in order to achieve modernity, Bacon and Locke created and pursued an ideal image which disconnected them from the past in order to contextualize it again through a scientific approach. This approach towards nature created a universality that challenged other discourses in non-Western cultures.

Beside this universality that stopped them from recontextualizing their history, another part of the problem for Iranian modernists was the past; therefore getting rid it, instead of recontextualizing it, became their main project. Regarding science, the distinction was between the Iranian experiences of classified knowledge that were thought wrong – because it led Iranians to the unpleasant present – and that of European experiences which led them to the modern era. Therefore the modern sciences which are considered the base for a body of knowledge could only be created in the West; by the same token, it is impossible to create them in third world countries such as Iran because it cannot be the source of truth independently. As a result, the distinction between the modern and medieval meanings was considered as one of the logical results of modernization vis-à-vis the Western civilization. The separation, and interconnection in terms of the European project of modernity, can be interpreted in a dialectical fashion.
between historiography and imagination too. Ricoeur describes this project in comparison between history and narrative:

Historiography borrows from imagination in order to evoke the events of the past, whereas narrative fiction borrows from the historical relation to the traces in telling its story as if it had taken place in the past. Thus human time – narrated time – originates from the close interaction between the historicization of narrative fiction and the fictionalization of narrative history (Ricoeur 1995: 373).

The distinction in European modernity was, first of all, historical; second of all, modernity was able to close the gap by reinventing traditions, because of a circular interplay between their modern narratives and time. The circular interplay between their being-in-the-world and their relation with others makes them identify their self in different interpretations. This is the process of self-consciousness that Hegel describes. Based on this notion Gadamer (1976: 50) explains the process of understanding. He goes on to say that “understanding too cannot be grasped as a simple activity of the consciousness that understands, but is itself a mode of the event of being.” Understanding is an event experienced by man through the circular interplay.

But rupture has been the result of the modernity project in Iran, because it was produced in a historical situation in which every piece of the literary narrative was going to be broken in the Iranian cultural sphere in the last two centuries. The Iranian Great Divide has been both historical and geographical, because the circular interplay between the grand narrative of modernity and traditional historiography as well as the time
duration was lost somewhere down the road. The absence of full sovereignty and a body of knowledge did not let Iranians experience or identify their being-in-the-world during the denationalization or later renationalization time. In other words, selfhood ceased to identify different layers of self through the reflection of others. The confusion between self and other caused the narrative identity crisis, because the Iranian-being-in-the-world now tries to define the otherness not because it wanted to understand the sense of Iranian-ness but for abandoning this self for so called the Western other that Iranians believed was superior to them. The problem, however, persevered with the new image of the other that was becoming self. This new image in most cases has denied other layers of self so deeply that the circular interplay between time and narrative was also broken, or in the best case stopped functioning well. In addition to that, traditions as the different historical layers of self are considered as the major roots for backwardness and ignorance; thus the reinventing the traditions seems to be the reproduction of ignorance. The disconnection with the traditions here considered being associated with the disconnection from the present Iran.

This is the approach we will find in most stories. Furthermore, the disconnection from the literary tradition is measured as the first condition for becoming a modern writer or reader for that matter. Therefore, the modernity project did take another path in Iran because the European discourse of modernity and literature here appeared as the bridges between that distasteful past and this unpleasant present of Iran, between the universal Islamic discourse and the universal modern discourses and literary trends in the West. The Western discourse is there right between them to prove or reject the thoughts,
narrative, identity, and oneself as another. It is there to make Iranians understand themselves and their capacity to act in present (modern time) through interpretation and reinterpretation of their historical events, and their imagination and hope for the future. But understanding alone has no meaning if it is not communicated, experienced or interpreted as experience/action. This seems to be the problem here, because when there is no direct experience between knowledge, power and narrative the reality will be misunderstood or twisted. Narrative has a crucial role here to make that understanding possible, because it is through this that the circular interplay between time and being, time and mimesis as Ricoeur calls is it, completed and allow man to contemplate the meaning of events as the new reality or, in the case of Iran, to get out of the crisis of meaning.

The crucial role of narrative is to connect the pre-understanding which is history with the new cognitive meaning in the realm of the poetic in the literary work that creates the new meaning or understanding. Narrative genre can be used here to describe the three stages of *mimesis* as Ricoeur articulates them: “I shall distinguish at least three senses of this term *mimesis*: a reference back to the familiar pre-understanding we have of the order of action; an entry into the realm of poetic composition; and finally a new configuration by means of this poetic refiguring of the pre-understood order of action” (Ricoeur 1984, xi). Later in another work he describes the three stages of *mimesis* in more details. He goes on saying:

The relation between three stages of *mimesis*: mimesis consisting of the pre-understanding of the world and of action.; mimesis, which is the construction
of the plot itself by arranging signs and sentences into a narrative; and mimesis, which in H. –G. Gadamer’s words is the ‘application’ (Avendung) of the plot, and thereby the revelation and transformation of reality into a world in which the spectator, or reader, can live after having his or her emotions ‘purified’ by the catharsis of the entire poetic process (Ricoeur 1995, 373).

In short, the past is memory, history and traditions: mimesis$_1$; imagination that creates our future is the second mimesis$_2$; and finally, the interplay between mimesis$_1$ and mimesis$_2$ that creates the present (mimesis$_3$). In other words, mimesis is created through emplotment and configuration. But because of the existence of the European discourse of modernity in between, the Persian narrative discourse is in a liminal space, in a space out of spaces, somewhere between past and present. The actual space/time that it depicts is from past/present; whereas the ideal space/time is the imagined future placed somewhere in Europe. It is in this space that three disconnectedness(s) can be pinned down in the different stages of mimesis. The first disconnectedness is in the first stage right between pre-understanding of the world and the one’s action. Pre-understanding of the world in today’s Iran does not communicate with the modern understanding, the medieval understanding, or our action toward these understandings. For aforesaid reasons Iranians cannot consolidate the pre-understanding of the world which belongs to the Islamist trend and the new understanding of the world which tones their actions. Without time, narrative has no structure and history is defined and measured through the relationship between narrative and time. But the Persian modern narrative is not keen to make this connection. It is similar to other discourses in a historical situation; however, it does not
want to recognize how Persian history and language influences it. The reflection of this disconnectedness in the narrative discourse is reflected in the enmity between the Islamic trends and Iranian modernity.

The second gap appears in the construction of plot. Modernity and traditionalism have turned into signs and symbols embedded into the plot as good – the understandable modern man who is the future-self – and bad – the ignorant traditionalist who is the past-self. These two layers of selfhood are, according to the discourse, paradoxical. They cannot live together or be able to make a compromised meaning. Because of this setting all plots are set out to discard the bad, ignorant characters as backward actors which prevent the country from getting to its modern future.

The third disconnection can be interpreted as the readers’ or spectators’ expectations from the genre. As we can see in most of the stories, writers are replying to a popular expectation which is in the discourse. The emotions and actions are arranged to respond to that expectation as well. But the absence of communication between writer and reader is noticeable too, because their expectations are not necessarily matched with the discursive expectations. Writers’ responses are in general to the politicized ideal future. They prevent the past as a dystopia to that utopian society; whereas peoples’ present experiences do not let them disconnect from the past. Connection between these two times helps them understand their-being-in-the-world emotionally. Emotions channeled through this discourse also make them connect their reality to the imagined future. By borrowing its historiography from Europe, the Iranian realities for intellectuals are used to validate by European criteria of truthfulness and not by reality on
the ground. Lack of direct relation between history and imagination here and between reality on the ground and imagined reality is the consequence of this disconnectedness. Under these circumstances the Iranian writers are in exile whether they live in Iran or abroad.

The Iranian narrative discourse is abnormal, because it does not create new meaning or understanding by all means and through experiences. Instead it simply juxtaposes the imagined future with the traditional past in a paradoxical fashion and without any direct connection to reality to send the message that was created beforehand with the very first stories. As was discussed in the last chapter, the natural habitat for the imagination is Iran; whereas the historical plot that is formed on it is located out of its border. Therefore the interactions between ‘historicization of narrative’ and the ‘fictionalization of narrative of history’ are not normal, indigenous or homogenous. Supposedly, fiction is a common place in which tradition is constantly modernized and modernity is constantly traditionalized; but because the process of demonization in Persian fiction has been disrupted by demonizing the traditions, religions and native culture, the process of modernization of traditions has been interrupted and traditions have become narratives without an end. And, to an extent, this modernity is not able to change history either. As a result the gap between Persian modern fiction and European historicism is filled with the political discourse in which the ‘will to become European’ as an imagined future is adapted to rationalize the discourse.

Having the political narrative hinged between past and imagined future has also created the problem of objectification in Persian novels, especially toward historicization.
There are, as mentioned, two kinds of objectified reality in Persian fiction: the native process of objectification of reality in which backwardness is illustrated as the obstacle to the future, and the imagined reality borrowed from the European historiography in which the wishful future of Iran is depicted. The gap between these two realities, however, does not let literary discourse make any connection to its historical roots in Iran directly or through other discourses. It also does not give a basis to define the present. A meaningful present, hence, is replaced by a political reality. From the Foucauldian perspective one could say that there is disconnectedness between discourse and knowledge as there is between discourse and power. So much so that the concept of backwardness and the ideology of progress have remained the main theme in modern Persian fiction since the beginning as the discourse has not been able to close the gap between past, present and future.

In addition, because the discourse has been shaped around the revolutionary time and with a certain demand for change, the stories, like some other poetry, represent some kind of anarchical mentality, in which every aspect of life and literature is questioned and at the same time is subject to change. We can see a similar progression in the early twentieth century of the West, when the old style of governmentality was questioned by people and the political crisis was leading to the wars. Through this crisis, Westerners reached the point that they finally got rid of the traditional/monarchical governmentality and replaced it with a democratic or socialized system instead. The political and social reform had its impact on literature and art as well. The new discourse elaborated the reforms in the new artistic styles and expressions. The reflection of the crisis can be
found in the arts and literature through a kind of anarchism. Atonal music, Dadaism in literature, and pre-Cubism period in painting were the cultural reflections of that that marked the period in an a-aesthetic fashion. But Europe ended the crisis fast and by establishing democratic and modern institutions, literature and arts also recreated new aesthetic traditions.

Iran while was also hugely influenced by the literary movement in Europe went through this a-aesthetic period; but because of the disconnection between power, discourse and knowledge anarchism proceeded to remain part of the narrative of modernity; as undermining every aspect of traditional life became part of the narrative as well. Different historical conditions had different results too. Not only did monarchism bring the country to a dead-end, but also the discourse and its narrative remained anarchical. Lack of political philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was also effective. In the absence of a political philosophy, literature was used to elaborate the philosophical thoughts in narrative. Overall, literature experienced some kind of atonality in which every aspect of literary device and style was challenged or replaced by those of European styles, especially by French symbolism while had a great influence on Persian poetry. We hardly see a reinvention of tradition in this literature; instead, writers are just eager to mock it and at the same time imitate any new poetical and rhetorical changes that happened in Western literature. In short, the Persian literature lost its independence through this period by becoming a reflection of the Western literary traditions.
This phenomenon, however, did not happen simultaneously in every segment of art and literature. Modern discourse developed itself in literature more than anywhere else. The communication between fictional discourse and other arts was barely made. What appeared in poetry before the 1909 revolution is found in fiction some two decades later and in other arts some five to seven decades later. Stylistically, poetry followed the longer meters with obvious political themes and after the 1909 revolution it just imitated the French symbolism; whereas fiction first followed certain characteristics of James Morrier’s *Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*. After World War I certain characteristics of socialist realism from the Russian revolutionary literature, which became famous in Iran as *arabiyyat-e moto’ahed* (the committed literature). Direct imitation of western literature and arts was greater than the changes in the discourse. Again, every segment of art and literature responded to those movements in Europe without first digesting it through Iranian discourses. Three problems, then, can be perceived here: accepting the dominance of Western historiography and literary movement and responding to them directly; lack of communication between the Iranian discourses and literary movements as well as other branches of arts; and finally, entering into the anarchist milieu and later nihilism without being able to move on to a more harmonized aesthetic phase. The Socialist Realism between 1930-60 became dominant because it was deemed necessary by the leftists; so necessary that without it Persian literature would have remained stuck in the same way.

It is true that modernity had certain impacts on the secular discourse in Iran and through that on literature in general and Persian fiction in particular. Its impact in fact is
more obvious and dominant in literature than political discourses or any other discourses, especially in the early twentieth century when philosophical and social discourses hardly existed out of the literary genre. Not having another medium to express its goal, the secularist trend found literature the only possible place to send its message. To sum up, one can make a short list that helps us to understand the impact that modernity has had on the stories. First and foremost is the ‘ideology of progress’ formed under the European historiography. Second was Bacon’s language of purification that was preoccupied with the purification of the language from Arabic loanwords. Thirdly, it was the anti-superstitious traditions in general and Islamic discourse in particular that was taken from the French writers and revolutionaries such as Montesquieu and Voltaire. Anti-nationalism has also been part of this trend at least among the leftists who were preferably internationalist. And finally, the anarchical or anti-establishment trend either toward the religious or political establishments. Anti-political establishment was a common theme among the leftists and Islamists during the major social movements, especially pre-revolutions. One can explore these trends in three spaces: political, religious and language. In other words, these three spaces are used by the writers to show their anti-establishment sentiments.

**Heterotopias in the Iranian Culture**

The cultural and psychological results of anti-Western sentiment on one hand, and seeing the West as a superior culture on the other hand caused a historical shift in Iranians’ perspective in which they as a nation, unable to maintain their sovereignty,
entered into a schizophrenic state. The birth of intellectualism was correlated by the
cultural schizophrenia with two major characterizations of self-Orientalism and
refiguring the history with a plot structure that was borrowed from the European
historiography. This plot was mainly shaped by the ideology of progress which became a
paradigmatic theme in the Persian fiction as well.

The Iranian cultural and political issues that have been labeled as cultural
schizophrenia by an Iranian philosopher, Daryush Shayegan (1992), created a dual space
for Iranians. Cultural schizophrenia has illustrated itself in both boundaries of time and
space. In terms of time, modern historiography overshadowed the old historicism and
Iranian began to deal with time in a heterochronic fashion as Foucault defines. Through
this conflict Iranian historicism appeared as a superstitious narrative that only ignorant
and traditional people believed it. The notion of progress can be found in both trends;
although Islamists have interpreted this as part of colonial interests toward the Islamic
countries. For intellectuals, Iran was considered a place that had been left behind and her
history stopped progressing some time around sixteen AC.; around the time that the
renaissance began in the West. So much so for both, that Iran as an actual space became
an unfavorable place that should to be changed. On the contrary the better space, which
used to be heaven as a utopian space, became the West. Heaven was still the ultimate
utopian place in the psyche of the people; however, its description was gradually
conformed to the West as an actual space on the earth.

In one of his short easies Foucault used a term which can be used to describe the
schizophrenic thoughts and behaviors in terms of space in Iranian discourses. His term is
heterotopias, a dual space which depicted both actual and ideal spaces. The juxtaposition between the actual and ideal spaces should be in the epoch of simultaneity, but, as he describes it in the sixth principle, in the modern world the spaces between the colonizers and colonized countries function as two extreme poles. As for non-Western countries such as Iran the distinction between the extreme poles creates a ‘space of illusion that exposes every real space.’ Another role of this is ‘to create a space that is other, another real space.’ We, according to Foucault (1986: 22-7) are in the epoch of simultaneity: “we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed.” In Iran the epoch of side-by-side has a number of dimensions. There is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias. But the heterotopias obviously take quite varied forms and perhaps no one absolutely universal form of heterotopias could be found. In the case of Iran, heterotopias were first shaped in both literary and political discourses simultaneously and they were classed in two main categories of utopias and dystopias. The present and the Islamic past are considered as the actual unpleasant spaces; the dystopian ones. Pre-Islamic Iran and the West are the ideal spaces, the imagined future that everyone wants to pursue. However, the new utopias averted from the religious ones represented as a real space namely the West which became the historical goal for Iranians to pursue. Foucault, in contrast to utopias as the imaginary and even sacred places in which human societies are depicted in perfect forms, explores heterotopias as alternative real spaces which are limited, imperfect and messy. As existing loci beyond the everyday space of experience, heterotopias “are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites,
all other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contrasted and inverted” (ibid). These loci of alterity served the function of creating “a space of illusion that exposes every real space … a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged [as] ours is messy, ill-constructed, and jumbled.” Calling the later type ‘compensatory heterotopias,’ Foucault then speculated that “on the level of the general organization of terrestrial space” colonies and in a broader sense the non-Western countries as peripheral cultures might have “functioned somewhat in this manner.” “This latter type,” Foucault points out, “would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner” (ibid).

Heterotopias in Iran are representations of two fundamental clashes: a clash between the medieval concept of sacred and forbidden spaces such as mosques, private part of the houses (andaruni) or harems with the ordinary spaces such as public part of the houses (biruni) and the public spaces; and the modern clash which has formed with the imaginary depictions that society has had about Western societies as the perfect spaces as well as the modern forbidden spaces such as universities that because of political disputes have been always closed to ordinary people.

It was by the end of the nineteenth century that Iran entered into the modern heterotopias. From that point on, Iranian society as an actual space was considered ill-constructed and messy; whereas the West by all means was seen as a utopian space. As the last layer of disconnectedness, the distinction between these two was conceptualized around this time and for the first time it appeared in the public debates, poetry and
fictional works through the constitutional movement. Comparing between West and Iran became the main theme of the revolutionary works of this period. Marāqei’s travel book (quoted in Parsinejad 2002), Tālebof’s Āzādī va siyāsat (1357 [1978]), and Jamālzādeh’s short stories exhibit this theme clearly. During that time, however, it was the Iranian utopian space which first projected sanctuary onto Western space. People who were protesting against the government and its policies took refuge first in the mosques, which were traditionally part of the sacred/forbidden spaces that police or officials could not enter in order to take out or arrest the criminals, rebellions and political oppositions. Under this notion, mosques were considered sanctuaries for those who were pursuing political freedom or justice. But as soon as the police attacked these places in the first steps of revolution protesters replace it with a modern space that had direct relation with the real power namely the British embassy that its government was supporting the movement against the Russian puppet monarch at that time. By taking refuge in the British embassy in Tehran the protesters basically turned the place into a new sanctuary. It could not have happened if the British had not been associated with the new ideal space. Unable to conflict with a superpower and break the new sanctuary, the government, however, lost its control over people. As a result the political move by the protesters fundamentally changed the concept of sanctuary. Sa’edi (1936-1985), a playwright and novelist, has embraced the idea of sanctuary after this event. In Panj Namāyesh (Five Plays) he used a local shrine as a forbidden space to praise this traditional concept as a new political tool in the hands of revolutionaries. One of the plays revolves around the revolutionary secular characters that escape from guards and
take refuge in a shrine. To show the government’s hypocrisy, the policemen raid the shrine to capture the revolutionaries. But they find nobody. The religious people, who also took part in revolution, thought of it as a miracle. By showing the way out of the shrine through the ‘sacred’ tomb in the second part of the play, Sa’edi ridicules their belief as a superstitious thought. Had the event not happened in the British embassy in the first place, Sa’edi would not have utilized it at all. Later, however, the United Kingdom as a perfect space was projected upon the traditional forbidden spaces and turned into the supporter of democracy in Iran. On the contrary Russia, a western country that supported the monarch during the constitutional movement, was dismissed from the ideal space at least among the non-leftists.

The heterotopias in this sense were not so much about the reality of these spaces, which was true in a way; as it was about the replacing of the traditional or rather Iranian historicism with Western historicism in which progress as a model creates a plot and Iranians had no choice but to follow this pattern step by step. Modern historians such as Ādamiyat and writers such as Ākhundzādeh and Hedāyat, inherited historiographical traditions from writers such as John Malkam and James Morrier directly or indirectly, did create a plot structure with the dominant themes of ‘decline’ and ‘disintegration’ which were typified as the age of ignorance (bikhabari and jahl), stagnation, and despotism. The plot structure can be articulated under the discourse of Orientalism. In fact one may say that the idea of modernity/backwardness could be originally created by colonization in the first place, because several decades before Ākhundzādeh’s plays and stories in 1860s and 1870s as well as the constitutional movement this dichotomy appeared in
Western writers such as Morrier and Malkam. But it is fair to say that, overall, it was the colonized superiority of the West towards the Eastern societies that structured the schizophrenic culture and the plot of ignorant versus modern. E. M. Foster in his famous novel *A Passage to India* (1924) challenges the British superiority over the Indians. The story revolves around four characters: an Indian doctor, his British friend, a British man and woman. During a trip the British woman accuses the doctor of attempting to assault her. The doctor’s trial, aftermath, bring out all the racial tensions and prejudices between indigenous Indians and the British colonists who rule India. By using the theme of local doctor/magician as charlatan in an opposite fashion, Foster in this novel criticizes the paradigm oriental stereotype in which colonized people are depicted as the ignorant, and uncivilized.

This attitude was indeed magnified in the early novels such as *Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* or historical books such as *The History of Persia*, which were thematically about the backwardness of Iran and were written in the early nineteenth century by aforementioned European writers. The former was translated in the 1880’s by Mirzâ Habib Isfahâni in a very fluent colloquial Persian that set a language norm among later writers/political activists. The story depicts an array of superstitious, uncivilized, lazy characters who don’t have real jobs and don’t want to have any either. The main character is an ignorant man, but according to his own claim, people think of him as a doctor and magician. The function of the book is to stereotype Iranians as a backward people who need European help in order to overcome their backwardness and become a modern country. The story is told to a westerner in Istanbul by an educated Iranian
official to describe his own people’s ignorance. It is interesting to know that the translator was one of the activists during the constitutional movement. And it’s not a coincidence that at that time writers such as Mirzā Habib himself, who is thought to be the probable translator of the book, were the ones who raised the problem of backwardness.

These narratives could not be meaningful and relevant without forming in the spaces. The West as the ideal space has been still there in the post-colonial India, although it has been fading in the recent years. The West as an ideal space in Iran, on the contrary, has been overblown in the aftermath of the 1979 Revolution. In the aforementioned works also, the Iranian spaces were basically depicted as messy and retarded as heterotopias of crisis; whereas the West was depicted as the ideal space. The contrast between the actual space and ideal space has grown during the years. By depicting the contrast between these spaces, Persian novels became an important tool projecting the modern historicism and concept of progress.

The same much utilized colonial narrative can be found in India and Arabic Egypt. According to Tavakoli-Targhi (2001: 4), Mogul and late Ottoman historiographies had the plot structures similar to this. Indeed, their historiographical narratives had been formed some time before Iranian historiography. And in all cases the narrative was represented in the actual spaces versus the ideal spaces.

It was, thus, under this narrative that the heterotopias formed in the late nineteenth century Iran. Disconnected from the medieval notion of sacred space, Iranians under modern historiography began to replace heaven – and in a hierarchical fashion spaces
such as sacred sanctuaries and even gardens as part of the divine space – with a utopian space namely Europe and later the United States. Both of these traditional and modern ideal spaces were outside of their real borders; nevertheless, the former was pious and sacred and the latter, on the contrary, was real. Added to which, it was accessible through the ideology of progress with which Iran basically had to follow European historiography step by step. Abandoning the traditional sacred spaces, secularists, who were also losing ground to the religious narrative throughout the 1979 Revolution, began to seek their individual freedom in the real West. Immigration of innumerable writers and activists to the West in the aftermath of the 1979 Revolution has made the ideal space more accessible to people in terms of experienced narrative. As the victim of oppression, these writers now experience a freedom that had once been narrated in their stories. However, the gap between this reality and the actual time and space on the ground has gotten increasingly wider through time. The actual space as the counter-site to this is now painted in darker colors and that reality again is trapped in narratives that cannot have direct experiences in both spaces at the same time.

Backed to the actual space in Iran there were also real places such as private space and public space or cultural space which were, as Foucault (ibid) points out, “something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, [were] simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.” It is interesting that we see some traditional spaces were first replaced by the modern ones in the texts. For instance, replacing of the modern bars by the traditional pubs that had been depicted in Hafez (kharābāt) or early fiction such as
Hedāyat’s *Dāshākol* (1970) (*araq-foroshi*) first occurred in literature and its marginalized community in the reign of Reza Shah, and then it happened in reality. The same process can be found in domestic’s architecture. The modern houses as part of modernization process were first portrayed in literary narratives as well as in cinematic narratives, and then became reality. We can find this process in the other areas such as clothing and personal spaces as well. The dichotomous mockery toward the traditional clothing versus the European ones has also been used as a literary technique to demean the ignorance and anti-freedom mentality. The caricaturist picture of the backward characters in a mocking fashion is especially pictured in the early stories such as Jamālzādeh’s *Yeki bud Yeki Nabud* and Hedāyat’s *Alavieh khoum* in order to divide these notions.

Juxtaposition of these places with the Western utopia made Iranians culturally schizophrenic. Whatever they had was inadequate, imperfect and not acceptable; whereas whatever the Europeans offered was highly perfect. Trust in the government, as a fundamental institute for a modern society, was not restored throughout the twentieth century for a number of reasons, especially, because either Islamists or modernists were not able to build trust in such a disconnected culture. Ale Ahmad believed that the West had systematically pumped the idea of two dichotomous spaces into the country. Not fully depicted by reality, we have to consider other elements as well. For instance, modernity in Iran as a major project has not been able to change the society and restore the sovereignty at all; and unable to do so, thus, it turned into a utopia.

To understand the problem we need to mention that here are two kinds of heterotopias: the classical heterotopias in which utopian and forbidden spaces were
dominantly religious and the modern heterotopias in which utopian and forbidden spaces have become cultural and political respectively. The conflict between these two heterotopias is also noticeable especially in narratives that deliberately define them as tradition versus modernism.

Both types are symbolically depicted in stories to portray the actual and ideal spaces. Apart from heaven, the classical utopian and forbidden spaces have in general fallen into the new actual spaces which are not pleasant. In addition, there are also new forbidden spaces which represent political oppression and pressures. For instance, the universities are considered as modern forbidden places, because the government does not let the non-students – except the students of that college - enter into that space. These spaces are considered as part of the ideal space, because the government does not let people have access to them without permission. Trying to make peace between academia and religion, the Islamic government after the 1979 Revolution began to hold the Friday prayer in the University of Tehran. However, the university remained closed to the people for the rest of the week and after the Cultural Revolution in the early 1980s this gesture seemed like an attack on the secularist spaces. Spaces as such have become problematic in the cultural conflicts; and the fictional narratives show that the modern forbidden spaces are largely political and thus are symbolized by a single highly charged space called ‘prison’. Prison in this context is considered by all means as the ‘real university’ where the political prisoners find a real chance to educate themselves, or learn new languages and even read banned texts such as Marxist literature that was hard to find anywhere else. Prison in this way is a strange concept to the Western audiences,
The overlap of the classical utopia with modern forbidden spaces shows other aspects of such heterotopias too. Through the overlapping spaces the literary narrative projects that religion and traditions are roots for the political reactionary. As a highly political charged narrative, literary discourse has also aimed at the illegitimate governments and religious discourses at the same time. It considered both as the roots of backwardness. Intellectuals, who were basically for modern Iran, were the audiences and at the same time producers of the narrative and its literary products. They were also the promoters of the discourse in the modern spaces such as modern cafes and pubs versus the traditional coffee houses and bars (kharābāt and ‘araq-foroshi). Traditions were generally representatives of the old classical spaces, genres, and so forth. They were ultimately a representation of the old time which was part of the Islamic discourse. Here time and space integrated into each other and become one concept. The dichotomous fashion between tradition and modernism created absurd images in the literature. Tradition, in this narrative, means religion, old house, old furniture, old fashion of haircut and so forth. It also means a time when the religion is dominant and people do not want to change and embrace the new lifestyle. It has also gone so far as to say that the traditionalists who were equal to Muslims do not care about their personal hygiene and their beards are the nest of all kinds of germs. Through this narrative the body is turned into a space which inwardly and outwardly depicts the dichotomy.

The early stories were more focused on the personal appearances rather than any other spaces. Characters through their outfits used to codify the dichotomy. For instance, there were no real spaces in the Ākhundzādeh’s stories or Dehkhodā’s Charand
*o Parand* – though they are not short stories in a real sense – except the characters’ appearances. A backward person was basically an illiterate man who does not know about his hygiene or illnesses. This man has unquestionable belief in Islam, superstitions and traditional medicine and so forth and his outfit tells everything prior to anything else. In the stories, he is basically recognized first from his outfits, beard and haircut and then his behavior. In *Farsi Shekar Ast* characters are in general shown as illiterate and obedient to what the *mullah* and the officials say. On the other hand the main character, who is a literate modern man, is completely similar to a European. His outfit is the first thing that is introduced to the readers. His appearance is indeed a message sent to everyone. His language is another aspect that shows the big gap between him and the ignorant characters. In later works the differences have become more settled. Listening the classical European music or acting like a Western intellectual distinct the modern man from the traditionalist. In most cases the narrator, who is in most cases an intellectual, judges people from his intellectual point of view.

**Problem of Segmentations**

Modern Persian literature started with a few projects. These projects by nature were the political issues that intellectuals and elites wanted to address or naively solve. These issues as discussed in previous chapters defined the framework of Iranian fiction. But it is important to mention the way these issues were dealt with. The secularists did not have any organization or traditional base or narrative to use as tools. Because of that they had to create a new medium for themselves. This medium was literature, for a
number of reasons. First and foremost, literature as a medium against the political entities or dominant beliefs has had a long tradition in Iranian history. Second, it has been used by different sects of society to address different issues throughout the history. Three main branches of literature illustrate the relation between the socio-political discourses and literature. Literature had been used for national, mystical and religious proposes; the noticeable differences, however, is the little homogeneity between these branches, especially between the Shiite tradition and other two. The Persian branch with its canonized text, *Shāhnāmeh* had been used to promote Iranian-ness and nationalism. At some points in history it is used against the other discourses which were dominantly Islamic. For instance, in the early Safavid era, this text was used against the *Abu-Muslimnāmeh* which was popular among the *Shiite-gholāts*. The Safavid kings banned *Abu-Muslimnāmeh* from being recited in tea houses, because it accepted the caliphate of Abbasids through whom Ottomans earned their legitimacy (see: Babayan 1993). As their adversaries Safavids replaced the text with the *Shāhnāmeh* which supported an Iranian dynasty against the Arabic or Turkish rulers. That is why the *Shāhnāmeh* became a popular text during Shah Tahmasb’s reign. The significance of his name is also noticeable which is against all odd in the Islamic tradition it is an Iranian, not Arabic, name, unlike the names of other kings before and after him. Sufism is also used against the mainstream Islam as well as the Iranian discourse. Shiite literature that is recent in comparison is also used against the others, especially during the second half of the Safavid era as well as the Qajars.
Modern Persian discourse, thus, knowing about these traditions began to form its
genres, the discursive narratives and devices in order to send out its message, which has
been dominantly anti establishment in both religious and political entities. In order to do
this, it needed to create its own language, discourses and rhetorical devices. It is under
this notion that language became the most important element of this ingredient. Because
language is able to represent what is called modernism in this respect it is part of the new
spaces that had to encounter with the traditional ones; and it also needed to accommodate
itself to the new needs in literary genre.

**Modern Persian Fiction Is Used by Secularists**

Persian novels have illustrated many aspects of modern Iran in their literary
styles, devices and discourse. So much so that they reflect many aspects of cultural and
social conditions, especially the power relationship, language, time and space concepts of
modernity as well as literary styles. Nonetheless, Persian fiction has had a limited
audience. So far we have tried to address this problem from religious, historical and
political perspectives. Here I’d like to shed light on it from the literary point of view, one
which has had deep roots in history.

We earlier discussed the way that the Iranian society had been traditionally
fragmented; this is also true about its literature which, in spite of stylish dominance, has
also flourished in three separated trends that have had minimal discursive influence on
each other. This fragmentation, apparently, has had a major role in modern literature,
that is again detached from the other literary trends as well as the political trends. The
only difference, however, is in the monopolistic role of this literature. Before, other trends used to have a parallel existence at least among their audiences; in the modern era, however, the Islamic trend, at least for the period that we are dealing with has no interest in using literature as a political tool. Therefore, modern literature has monopolistically become a political tool in the hands of secular intellectuals.

Traditionally, Persian literature has had three divided roots or if you will it has had three literary discourses; we touched on this briefly earlier, here we will examine it in detail. According to Mohammad Taghi Bahār (1982: 69) pre-modern Persian literature had three styles: *Khorāsāni*, *Araqi* and *Hindi*. He coined these terms about eighty years ago for the first time, but the division of these styles has been implicitly embedded in earlier works. So, the terms were accepted by the scholars as soon as Bahār published his work. *Khorāsāni* (eastern part of Iran), the first style which followed the Iranian roots, basically promoted the idea of Iranian-ness in the epic genre, especially the *Shāhnāmeh*, as well as in some romances such as *Vis o Ramin, Khosrow o Shirin* and so forth. The so called *Khorāsāni* style traditionally imitated pre-Islamic trends, ideology, discourse, motifs, literary images and language – modified albeit by the mainstream Islamic laws and marriage system. The second trend which formed after this was that of mystical literature, which flourished from tenth century onward. It is called *Iraqi* (western part of Iran), and ideologically it promoted the Sufism. Sufi literature was basically created its own genres and literary styles in which some of the *Khorāsāni* themes, techniques and motifs were also utilized or developed. Although it changed the discursive narrative, Sufi love stories also used the prototypical romance genre that flourished in the *Khorāsāni*
style. Language and rhetoric are the best place that illustrates the differences. In Khorāsāni style the epical language, related to nature, is very important, because of that the phonetic patterns are most likely in a way to accentuate the rhythm of fight. Fluidity of the language, thus, is different, or as some scholars such as Kadekani put, is wavy. In Iraqi style, however, language is more fluid and less reflective of nature; instead it is more toned to the feeling of the author. An example makes our discussion clearer. The phrase man-e beisāmāne sargardān is considered Khorāsāni, whereas this phase in Iraqi would be formed this way: man-e sargardān-e beisāmān. The meter in both cases is the same, but what make them different are the consequences of the consonants and vowels. In the first phrase the word beisāmān begins with b and followed by ei sound and then s. To pronounce these we have to start from b which is a voiced labio, then go back in order to pronounce ie and s which are mid and fractive consecutively. Last letter of the word is n which is again a labio-dental followed by an s which is again a mid-fractive. This pattern makes it hard to pronounce; whereas in the second phrase pattern is much easier to pronounce. There is an anecdote about Ferdowsi who came to Sa’di’s dream criticizing his meter. As we know Sa’di’s Bustān is also in Motaqāreb, the meter that Ferdowsi has used in the Shāhnāmeh; however, Sa’di has used it in a non-epical fashion. Ferdowsi criticizes this line from Sa’di: “Khodā kashti ānjā keh khāhad barad /// vagar nākhodā jāmeh az ham darad.”1 Saying that the line is nice and to make it more epical you should change it into this: “barad keshti ānjā keh khāhad khodāi /// vagar jāmeh az

1 خدا کشته آنجا که خواهد برد /// وگر ناخدا جامه از هم درد
ham darad nākhodāi.”¹ By changing the order of the words, Ferdowsi turns it into an epical rhythm. Images are also different; while in Khorāsāni style images are more naturalistic in Iraqi style they are more expressionist. The third trend was Hindi style which was not a religious literature so to speak; however, it was close to the Shiite oral literature (noheh [lamentation] and the Passion play Ta’zieh) which were flourished predominantly in Safavid and Qajar times. This trend, unlike the others, was leaned heavily on oral tradition as well as on the ritualistic traditions; that is why it depicted everyday experiences in a simpler language. Nevertheless, the images in this style were more complicated and ambiguous. Although it has used the formats, motifs, forms and even topoi of the Iranian epical genre, the main other of the epical works of this time was dominantly the untrue believer who rules over the Islamic lands. Abu-Musliμnāmeh set the prototypal version for these works that were mostly in prose and told in the coffee shops in Persian or Turkish. Formed in the north west of Iran (Azerbaijan and east of Turkey), Kuroghli is a Turkish epic that represents this religious dichotomy as did other works of this time. Later in the Qajar time, this tradition turned into the early historical novels such as Kurosh-e Kabir.

The interesting thing was that these literary productions were basically consumed by different sections of society. To be exact, the Iranian trend and its canonized text the Shāhnāmeh used to be read by the elites and literate people mostly in the cities. Its theatrical genre (naghāli) was preserved and told among the artisans and working class in the coffee shops in urban and rural areas. Sufi literature was also popular among the

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¹ برد كشتي آنجا كه خواهد خداي // وگر جامه از هم درد ناخداي
elites, artisans and small businessmen. Shiite literature, which chiefly revolved around the martyrdom of Hussein, was dominantly popular in the rural areas. Shiite literature was mainly produced by the ordinary people, although during the Safavid and Qajar time poets and writers such as Yaqmā also helped them in producing the lamentations and lyrics. The Passion play Ta’zieh, which became very popular during the Qajar time, says Bahrām Beza’i, represents the conflict between the epical language (among the Ashqiā, the demonic characters of the play) and the lamentation language (among the Oliā, the followers of Imam Hussein) in a small scale (Jahed 2001). According to him, the languages of Oliā, the good people, and Ashqiā, the bad people, were differentiated according to the first and third traditions. While the Oliās lament for their Imam, the Ashghiās recite their part in the Shāhnāmeh fashion.

The bedrock of the written tradition was originally pre-Islamic literature. But in different times different styles were popular among the people. Nonetheless, those works have been more popular that were vigorously modified by the Islamic laws and regulations. That is why the Vis o Ramin which largely ignored the Islamic system of marriage compared with other works was marginalized for many centuries. So was Manuchehri’s and Khāghāni’s poetry which dominantly reflected Zoroastrian thoughts and motifs.

Shiite literature was also marginalized, because it was only used in the religious rituals and ceremonies; nevertheless, it depicted the major living myth of Imam Husain’s death which is the most known story in the Shiite world. Although it has not created any canonical text, Shiism has been so discursively powerful that it has basically turned this
historical event into a myth similar to the ancient story of Seyāvash or Zarir in the Zoroastrian traditions, or as reinterpreted the ancient messianic story of Soshiant into the Shiite story of the Mahdi. The Sufi literature (Iraqi style), however, was dominant during the medieval time sometime after the Khorāsāni and before Hindi in the Safavid time. After that it was also used mostly by the elite, either religious or nationalists, as well as by Sufi followers. Bāzgasht was a minor style in the early Qajar period, about a century before the modernist movement, through which writers tried to restore the Khorāsāni style again. But in the absence of a considerable discourse it soon evaporated.

The disconnectedness among the literary traditions remained a pattern in the modern era as well. Here again we observe that the different segments of society ideologically avoided consumption of all types of literature. Novels that have mostly portrayed the political aspects of the modern Iran reflect this pattern in their ideology too. The main themes that are reflected in the novels are the most problematic issues such as power relations, disconnected time and space, heterotopias, and language. The distinction of past and future is the main part of intellectual discussions represented in the literary styles, language, and motifs.

**Language**

There are at least three kinds of space which interact with each other in a story. The most obvious one is the physical space, the artwork as a material object or physical event in the space/time range it inhabits. Like any physical terrain, the physical space of
an artwork can be measured, touched, or in the case of drama, walked through. A second kind of ‘space’, to extend the metaphor, is the story’s meaning space that could be depicted in a context of actual space versus ideal space. This complex dimension has to do with what the work represents or expresses in terms of conceptual significance and symbolic structure. The meaning space in a story such as Gile-mard, by ‘Alavi, is the motif set, characters, and actions represented in harsh weather and an old dark tea house – e.g., the relationship between policemen as the repressors and Gile-mard as the victim of corrupted system – it is in this context and space that poverty will be portrayed. The distinction between the religious and traditional woman as an ignorant person and the narrator as a modern man in Hedāyat’s Alavieh Khānum metaphorically and stereotypically represents the actual space of Iran in whole. As the authors of Ritual Art and Knowledge explain “when we speak of meaning space, we are viewing artworks as ‘maps’ rather than as additions to the territory, that is, as articulate sign systems semantically linked to the world in a variety of ways” (Williams and Boyd 1993: 16).

The third kind of space that Williams and Boyd called virtual space is a term that has been borrowed from optics as well as aesthetics (Williams and Boyd 1993: 17). This space is more difficult to talk about and may easily be overlooked. It refers to a complex and heterogeneous set of interrelated features. For instance, in the last scene of Gile-mard, in which Gile-mard is killed by Baluch, is a case in point. At this level, we use ‘space’ in part metaphorically, in which a separate time/space is created which we experience as virtually real in its own right. We will experience the scene as real action in the present. It is perceived as actual behavior though technically it is counterfeit.
Language in every narrative is employed to draw a map for last two spaces. It also, through literary codified devices, conveys feeling or helps the readers to be inspired by them.

Language, and the writing system for that matter, can be considered as spaces in which heterotopias occur. In this respect, language is a space separated from its historical background and ready to depart. Language, thus, is a space in which understanding occurs through the unity of external dominant culture with the internal feelings and experiences. Understanding, which basically happens in language, is a process of unity through which the three domains of human culture – science, art, and life – imbue in the individual person who, as Bakhtin (1990: 1) states, “integrates them into his own unity.” He defines this unity as an answer to his life. Bakhtin continues saying that:

Only the unity of answerability, I have to answer with my own life for what I have experienced and understood in art, so that everything I have experienced and understood would not remain ineffectual in my life. But answerability entails guilt, or liability to blame. It is not only mutual answerability that are and life must assume, but also mutual liability to blame…. The individual must become answerable through and through: all of his constituent moments must not only fit next to each other in a temporal sequence of his life, but must also interpenetrate each other in the unity of guilt and answerability (Bakhtin 1990: 1-2).

Language in this respect take a place somewhere between the past (what the culture offers us collectively) and the future (what we will cognitively understand).
through the experience of reading in the present time. It is, hence, a space for imbuing the collective knowledge with the individual experiences through the feelings. As Herda (1999: 4) makes clear, “[t]he language we speak holds our history, and an investigation into our language reveals a story that we could never hear simply by being a participant-observer or by having people fill out a survey.” Gadamer (1976: xix) defines the ‘concept of understanding’ as a ‘fusion of horizons.’ It provides a ‘picture of what happens in every transmission of meaning’… a text speaks differently as its meaning finds “concretization in a new hermeneutical situation and the interpreter for his part finds his own horizons altered by his appropriation of what the text says.” Understanding happens under the umbrella of a discourse. Without discourse, understanding will be halted, because the fusion of horizons or unity of past and future will not happen. Language is an event, a happening. It is through this process that we first separate from pre-understanding. It then makes us move through the experience of understanding. From this perspective language is a meaning space in which the point of departure occurs.

Every literary stylistic language also shows both a process of unity and departure. Continuity and originality in language are very important, because without them we are not able to communicate or understand. But literary language experiences the process of departure through the ‘deviation from norm’ in which the new meanings are formed. The deviation from norms provides us new texts in the new meaning space which is the language. But what is important to perceive is that language cannot derive from the norms out of a vacuum. It needs a platform which is the language itself as the history
preserver. Said (1978: 16) states that “there is no such thing as a merely given, or simply available, starting point: beginnings have to be made for each project in such a way as to enable what follows from them.” This statement is completely valid about the languages too. There is no such thing as beginning in the language as a meaning space, unless something stops it to transmit. Language, however, can be a beginning for derivation from norm or a departure from a meaning that is not new anymore. In this case, the new meaning space distinguishes itself from what there was before.

This is more valid for narrative language than anything else, because language in the narrative genres has dual functions. On the one hand, it is a space in which the whole event occurs and on the other hand it is a place in which the author’s understanding is experienced by the reader and through that s/he cognitively and emotionally creates a personal meaning which could be completely or slightly different than the original one. Language then is an event occurred right in itself. Continuity will be halted there through creating an empty space in which the reader begins to fill it with his/her emotions/experiences through the new beginning.

Nevertheless, the reader is not really free to have any emotion or experience that s/he wants, because every genre conventionally creates certain emotions or lets the reader experience certain type of emotions and meanings. This continuity of such maintains the literary contract between the writer and his reader that is originally preserved in the given genre. This agreement always reveals the author’s response or answer to the genre’s expectations that readers have learned to expect. By codifying these expectations in certain verbal or narrative structures, language implants them in its literary styles and
passes them on through generations. This is what Ricoeur calls “consisting of the pre-understanding of the world.”

However, what we can see in modern Persian fiction is not quite the same. Here we are the witness of a disturbed departure from the traditional genres in modern narrative genres. The modern narrative has deliberately disconnected its language and literary styles and techniques from the past in order to create a new meaning space that it needed to show the dichotomy of traditional past and imagined future in it. This looks more like a rupture rather than a deviation from the norms. Its goal is not to reinterpret or even divert the old discourses, but is to confront them. Adjoining classical literature with the problem of backwardness as a trend had made modern writers mentally ready for cutting the cord completely instead of employing European literary forms for expressing themselves. Colloquial language was an option for them to use instead of the literary language which had partially become archaic. But every village and city has its particular accent, so it was hard to choose one as the dominant one. The Tehran accent, then, was chosen as the ‘formal colloquial language’ by early writers such as Hedāyat and Jamālzādeh who used it mixed with the Isfahāni accent or Chubak who mixed it with the southern accent. Still it was problematic, because it was also necessary the distinction between the villagers and the city dwellers. One solution was inventing a colloquial language. By inventing such a language mixed of different villages’ accents, writers such as Sa’di, Khalaj or Doulatābādi, who needed a rural version of the language in their works, resolved the problem to some extent. But this language had no root in any tradition; besides that it was not spoken by anyone in any real situation. So the language
itself became problematic. For early writers such as Jamālzādeh and Hedāyat the Tehranian accent was the only alternative, even in *The Blind Owl* in which mythological narratives were used to show the difference between glorified pre-Islamic culture and the present/Islamic culture. In this novella Hedāyat uses some archetypal stories out of the original languages, namely Avestaic, Pahlavi or even early Persian, which could be the language of the *Shāhnāmeh* or even *Tarikh-e Bal’ami*. The vernacular languages were of course alive, fresh and connected with everyday life. From this respect, it was capable of invigorating the capacity of genre and allowing the writers to connect their stories with ongoing life. But not using formal and traditional language at the same time limited their works in terms of audience. Also this language was not understood by everybody, everywhere in the country, or by all Persian speakers in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. For the people who lived in the remote areas whose mother tongues or accents were different or Persian speakers of other countries this language was not completely understood. Traditionally, everybody was familiar with two kinds of Persian, the formal and his own dialect. People understood formal Persian through their educations and literature and they communicated with the government or other Persian speakers in other parts of the country through that. This is still the case with all Persian speakers inside and outside Iran. The colloquial languages were also used for everyday life in the given areas or cities. The goal of using the colloquial language was, from the beginning, to make the stories available to illiterate and literate people. To make his case, Ākhundzādeh claimed that the majority of people were illiterate and not able to read the formal literature. And that was why writers should have used the colloquial language. He, like other monaver
al-fekrs, believed that literacy was the key for progress and a major step for getting rid of the backwardness. Accordingly one of the writers’ tasks was educating people. It seems that some writers confused the simplified language with the vernacular. Simplified language, that once became the key to this problem in the nineteenth century by writers such as Yaqmā and Neshāt Isfahāni, later was replaced with the Tehrani accent by Dehkhodā, Jamālzādeh, Hedāyat and so forth. Because of this choice, the new narrative language, limited to one accent, not only could not help getting rid of illiteracy, it, moreover, become another obstacle among the segmented culture and traditions.

It is important to mention that most of these writers used to define the problem of language in terms of political matters. Jamālzādeh (1339a: 1-2), who had very little contact with Iran and learned Persian on his own in Switzerland, believed that ‘the essence of the political despotism’ is also ‘seen in the Persian literature.’ His preoccupation with the use of language as a tool against the political dictatorship made him to use the Dickensian style of writing, including repetitions, piling up of adjectives, and using popular phrases. He deemed that with his colloquial style he could make literature move away from the ‘literary despotism.’ In the preface to his major work *Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud* (Once Upon a Time), published in 1921 in Berlin, he deals with social and political conditions; interwoven with that he also uses an open mockery of religious fanaticism. Jamālzādeh’s simple and colloquial style, combined with a measured humor, enhanced the impact of his writings, making his stories such as *Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud* and *Farsi Shekar Ast* (Persian is Sugar) even more compelling; nevertheless, he does not use
it to portray the life as it is but to offer a solution to the political situation. In his preface he manifests:

Today Iran in literature is left behind the most of the countries in the world. Literature in other countries has been diverged and because of that it has engrossed all social classes. For that everybody – women or man, rich or poor, child or elderly – are eager to read which has been the cause of progress in those countries. But, unfortunately, in our Iran diverting the traditional literature (shiveh pishiniān) is seen as an obliterating force. This mentality that is originally roots in the essence of Iranian political despotism that is famous in the world is also seen in the literature (Jamālzādeh 1339a: 1).

The rupture occurs in the language with two immediate impacts in both style and genre. Stylistically writers decided to not use the traditional rhetoric and poetic languages that had being employed in either highbrow or lowbrow texts for centuries. Using a colloquial style instead helped them to portray political issues, and this was very useful in representing people’s experiences and emotions towards them; but, at the same time, it lost the codified experiences, emotions and meanings that had been preserved in the formal language for centuries. Therefore, a gap was created right there between the pre-understanding or collective knowledge and the new understanding that was represented through people’s talk. This break was not deep, and actually could be useful, as has been the case for Hedāyat’s, Jamālzādeh’s works or in recent works such as Mahmud’s stories. But the second break made this ‘derivation from the norms’ more indistinct and less productive.
The second break occurred in the genre and through the ‘derivation from the readers’ expectations.’ Narrative as the large systems of understanding helps us to attain our desires through the expectations that are embedded in it. Desire as narrative motor and desire as the act of telling are in close interrelation with these expectations. The novel as a dominant genre in the modern world has shaped certain expectations in the Western culture. Writers’ responses to these expectations were of course different in different epochs. Benjamin says “only the end can finally determine meaning” (McKeon 2000: 94). Many narrative analysts have shared this notion that the end writes the beginning and shapes the middle; Vladimir Propp, for instance, and Frank Kermode and Jean-Paul Sartre. Narrative, Brookes (1984: 22) advances the argument, in fact proceeds ‘in reverse’ or as Sartre puts it in respect to autobiographical narration in Les Mots, “in order to tell his story in terms of the meaning it would acquire only at the end, I ‘became my own obituary.’” And this end is formed by the expectations or the desires that the readers have.

There are different theories about the literary response to man’s expectations. An Orientalist theory believes that, as Said (1985:14) mentions, “political imperialism governs an entire field of study, imagination, and scholarly institutions.” There is also an assumption that literature, as Brooks (1984: 37) claims, responds to the new scientific expectations and discoveries or in a broader sense to certain historiographical plots. He believes that plots respond to human desires. This theory is somehow close to an Indian literary theory. An Indian classical theory believes that literary genres are formed around certain emotions and two ‘outcome feelings’ of happiness and grief are the main basis for
the triumph/comedy on one hand and defeat/tragedy on the other hand. Therefore every literary genre at the end should provoke one of these emotions (Hogan 2003: 93). Hatto points out that “epic moments are highly charged narrative ganglia…epic moments, in addition to being great poetry are mnemonic elements of epic of an order altogether superior to that of ‘themes’ of ‘formulae’, now so well discussed: and that they will therefore mark or help to mark the structures of epics” (Auty and Hatto 1980: 5). Whatever mark, or help to mark, the structures of genres are the readers’ expectations that are needed to be answered by the writer. These thoughts are theoretically different but they share a common or a central notion about the genre which is the certain expectation that the readers have from the certain genre.

In any case, modern Persian narrative is not an exception to either of these considerations. It also has to respond to certain expectations, although they were not indigenously raised by people and in fact are implemented by the discourse of modernity. Therefore, the expectations are political rather than anything else. Passion of meaning that Barthes writes about in an early essay (“Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative”) is to form the plot as a key component; but in this case it limits itself to just a political theme of progress versus backwardness or the human examples of that narrative. The distance between the expectation and the readers’ emotional prospects portrays the problem. In other words, modern novels are formed to be sensitive to the political affairs in Iran and also to react or retort to the superiority of the West. Absence of historical background for the discourse makes it look as though it has come out of nowhere. This is another layer of disconnectedness that makes the Persian novels separated from other
literary genres. It also separated itself from ordinary readers by not paying attention to the emotional outcome of the stories.

There are some writers such as Golshiri and Doulatābādi who moved away from the ordinary language and tried to use a hybrid language in their novels. Their experiences of the language in these works have been so successful that recent works are linguistically far away from the early works of Jamālzādeh and Hedāyat. Iranian critics still praised this major point of departure, but at the same time they have failed to recognize this turn around in the recent works. They also have failed to see the consequences of the linguistic rupture related to the lack of non-political desires in the genre that all in all have become a serious reason for not recognizing the modern novels in the other cultures.

Modern novels have problem addressing precise expectations. They simply respond to the political agendas of their times. Therefore, their usage is limited to the certain time when those agendas were important to people. Jamālzādeh’s works show that his major concern was language and Iranian-ness as a modern identity. He, like other writers of his time, was responding to the political fear of powerlessness and the danger of geographical partitions. The cultural borders, like the geographical borders, had been under the attack of different nations of the region. Intellectuals related that to the political powerlessness and cultural backwardness. But the noticeable thing is that this fear was mainly represented in the language, because Jamālzādeh, like other intellectuals, used to think of language as the house of nationhood. Meskub (1989: 30-5) in his book nationhood and Language (Meliyat and zabān) puts a historical perspective
The Persian language is defined as the national border of Iran by number of writers. This was not a new concept to them at all. Ferdowsi has also had this concern in his mind and crystallized that in an iconic line: “Ajam zendeh kardam bedin Parsi.” The persistence of this notion throughout history is interesting, especially when we see that other elements of nationality have been compromised over and over by different invasions. However, the difference for Jamālzādeh and his colleagues was the concept of self and other. By confusing these two, illiterate people whose language had inspired these writers were also those who were being mocked by them. Hedāyat is the best example of this confusion. None of the writers used colloquial language better than Hedāyat, specifically in terms of representing the people’s religious mentality. Having said that we should also mention that use of the colloquial language contradicts the purposes that these writers had in their minds. It is interesting to see that these people and of whose mouths these words were coming are those who are depicted in his works as charlatans, the most corrupted and uncultured people. The purpose of using the colloquial style was to show the people’s ignorance to them. In other words, the political discursive expectations that are depicted in the stories do not exactly correspond to the people’s expectations in different parts of their lives.

The rupture between old and modern Persian in the stories then is in fact utilized to differentiate the meaning spaces, to show the dichotomy between the traditional literary styles and modern European styles. The endeavor is to manifest the gap, and language is the main device to show that, so it is the best device to represent heterotopias. It is true, but the way this process is articulated is in a way upside down. Everyday
language is an important device for modern novels, because it delivers the individual experiences and voices. Individualism and individual experiences always represent themselves in the present time and everyday language is there to represent it. The languages of works such as the *Shāhnāmeh* that hardly depict real people are high quality performances of the language far away from the real one. However, the Iranian writers, from the beginning, thought of it as something against the traditional style that had a long heavy influence on all literary genres.

This attitude towards language has been part of modernization project from the mid-nineteenth century. Language reform in fact began in the 1830s as part of the literary movement, *Bāzgasht*. Qā’em Maqām, the prime minister of Mohammad Shah, was one of the first people who started to write in a much simpler language. He was against so called ‘artificial prose’ (*nasr-e masnu*) which was used by the administrators and was full of jargon. His letter’s which have been published under the title *Monsha’āt*, later became a model for so called progressive writers such as Amir Nezām Grusi, Neshāt and Yaqmā. However, his style at that time was addressing a necessity in the administrative communication system. During that time two folk legends were circulating among people and at the same time were being developed by them: *Amir Arsalān-e Nāmdār* and the story of *Farokh Laqā*. These folktales were basically told in a direct language close to everyday language. It is interesting that the stories’ language was very close to the language style in *Samak Ayār or Dārābnāmeh* which were formed centuries prior to them. Qā’em Maqām’s movement was hardly influenced by any European style or thought and if it was this was not because of the discourse of
modernity. Later, in the second half of the century this movement, in its second phase, began to get rid of Arabic loanwords as a purifying process. The so-called purification of the language had a nationalistic impulse behind it; however, it could have been influenced by European ideas. Yaqmā, one of the influential poets of this time, began to use Persian words deliberately, and to encourage elites as well as his son to follow his style (Āriyan-pour 1972: 113-15). Farhād Mirzā, a Qajar prince, wrote his book with just Persian words, and wherever he could not find one he used a mid-Persian word instead or just coined one for it. But the purification was not accepted by all revolutionaries. In a critical article on this book, Mirzā Aqā Khan Kermāni blamed Jalāl al-Din Mirzā’s style and ridiculed him by saying “what is the use of this book when people cannot read it” (Ayeneh-i Sekandari, quoted in Ādamiyat 1992: 235). The third phase of language reform, which developed after the 1909 Revolution, by all means became part of the modernity movement. In this phase getting rid of the Arabic words was delineated as a political goal and therefore part of the modernity movement; nonetheless, the third phase should be marked as one of the simplification rather than purification because through Jamālzādeh’s and Hedāyat’s stories a simple and vulgar style was offered as the only alternative to the ‘artificial prose.’ We cannot of course ignore the influence of nation building in the modern Turkey in which language purification and replacing the Arabic script with the Roman one were considered as the important steps towards modernism. Secularists, statesmen or leftists, believed that through the process of simplification language will find the capacity to express the modern concepts and thoughts. To a further extent, they began to believe that changing the Arabic alphabets would also make
this process faster. This had been albeit part of the debates from the beginning, because Ākhundzādeh in the mid-nineteenth century had blamed the Arabic script as the main source of illiteracy. During Reza Shah’s reign this movement was very powerful at the time when Turkey replaced its alphabet with the Roman base script; but the long written tradition in Persian was a serious obstacle to this happening in Iran. After that reforming the alphabet became a serious trend among the modernists; particularly after the 1979 Revolution when Islamists came to power, however the reforms have been aimless, individualistic and without any real support.

Language and alphabets in the second half of the twentieth century became a space to manifest the discontent of the intellectuals towards the dictatorship. In a sense it is not a literary movement anymore, because now intellectuals by using the so called Persian characters instead of the Arabic ones or writing the prefixes, suffixes and infixes separately or with a half space try to exhibit their political ideology against the government in any kind of text. We may need to codify the script, as we need to develop the Persian vocabulary in a systematic way; the intellectuals’ goal is also to systematize the script. However this does not happen by professional changes in the script or without the governmental support. Having two or more systems of codification in fact desystematizes the script. The script system has not collapsed yet, but by occupying the intellectuals’ minds it has become a new virtual space for objection. Some interpret it as a nationalistic movement. Partially this is true, but beyond that it is a political movement against the Islamic government lead by modernists who are not really nationalists and care even less about the national heritage. For them, and especially for those who live in
exile, certain reforms in the writing or alphabetical are a way to protest. To make this clearer some examples are useful. Now, among the intellectuals, a certain way of writing exhibits their difference from the Islamic writers in general. Under oppression, the intellectuals send these kinds of codified signs to show who is who to people and at the same time draw a line between themselves and the Islamists. For instance, the preposition beh, which has three grammatical functions in Persian, should be connected to the next word with half space. But not all writers know that just the prefix beh that makes adverb out of noun or adjective should be written that way and the preposition beh should be written separately with a full space in between and the prefix beh which comes between two verbs should be connected to the second verb. So by confusing the three behs they unknowingly replace one problem with another. Another example is the new rule of writing comparative or superlative suffixes among them. Accordingly, these suffixes should not be connected to the words. There is no scientific or linguistic argument behind these changes and most of them are just used without any real explanation. Writing otherwise is a political sign rather than anything else.

Language in modernity discourse is considered a space in which intellectuals can express themselves or protest against the oppression. It is peculiar at first glance to see the language as political space, but there is actually a very good reason for this. Not having any political establishment or any way to express their opinions under the dictatorship and religious dogmatic hegemony, intellectuals found literature as a space to express themselves. They thought it was the traditional literary styles that did not let them express themselves freely. The literary language and reform that occurred around
the Constitutional Revolution let them open up a political space inside the language. A simpler literary language and styles made them able to talk about two major problems as well as the solutions that they offered. Censorship and governmental censorship in particular, on the contrary, closed off this opportunity for them. Not having a linguistic space to express themselves, they then began to use these codified signs as limited symbols to send out their intellectual messages.

The religious trend also tried to show their different tendency toward the language as well. For them, language was a space in which they could keep the traditions alive. They, albeit, have always used the language with heavy religious terms and at the same time, simple logic in order to control their followers’ minds or represent their religious roots through the language. No need to mention that the religious language that was mostly used in their rituals was fairly simple and effective. Religious language consists of two different literatures, one for the philosophical thoughts and one for the narratives and rituals.

Hoping to avoid the Islamic traditions, intellectuals began to seek for the new coined words for the European equivalent terms. Also using French and later English terms became very popular among the intellectuals. This way they were sending a kind of between-line messages to their readers, which in general reflected an over-arch meta-narrative of modernity. This movement in general has helped the language to become more effective and direct, but it has not helped overcome the problem of disconnectedness.
Overall, the fictional language between the two revolutions was symbolic. The main reason for that was oppression. This language was codified with the usage of certain terms, expressions, symbols and metaphors that professional readers, meaning middle class people familiar with politics, as well as the censorship officers knew. Interpretations were also conducted in the political narrative. As soon as a person understands this narrative could read the stories or guessed why the intellectual’s language was so symbolic, namely vague, ambiguous and indirect. Although they had hard time to understand the texts, the readers were satisfied with their interpretations which were generally anti-Shah policies.

This symbolism, or symbolic reading that had become part of the middle class habit, was different from French symbolism between 1890s-1940s. There is no doubt that French symbolism had a great influence on Persian modern literature, but it was mainly on poetry and especially ‘the New Poem (she’r-e no) and its founder Nimā. Although it began with French symbolism, the modern poetry, however, created a codified language for itself under oppression. Through the years the poetic language of poets such as Shāmlu and Akhavān got so complicated and vague that only people who knew the discursive narrative were able to understand it. Political poets such as Kasrāei tried to use a non-symbolic language in their poems in order to catch the attention of the working class people; however, the clarity of their messages did not easily go through the censorship system. To sum up, language as an intellectual device represented two things in the fiction: the ideology of progress and anti establishment sentiments.
Symbolism found in the stories is completely different from the symbolism in poetry. In a sense the fiction’s language was less symbolic. Fiction basically could illustrate the political or traditional issues with different devices such as characterization, plot and motifs. In the next section we will talk about the characterization and plot.

**Characterization and Plot**

Another way of looking at the issue of disconnectedness and the meaning crisis is by studying the new meta-plot and characterization reference to classical plots and characterizations. Classical literature is not reducible to just two plots alone, but to two plots plus set myths. And set myths have some significant implications for our understanding of old and new historiographies. Specifically, the distinction from set myths that has proven most important for semantics is that between the set itself and the new plots. A set here is any collection of individual interpretations. A historiographical concept is a criterion for forming that set. We may apply these ideas directly to any plot.

Classical Persian literature in any branch has formed around a single narrative historiography, which revolves around two main motifs of suffering and messianic expectation. These two basically fell into two major genres of tragedy and epic consecutively. Comedy, the third genre mentioned by Aristotle, is also found in Iranian culture; however, as a performance art it was considered as a lowbrow genre and because of that all of its subgenre such as *Ruhowzi, Siābāzi* and so forth – except a few of them – were not recorded at all. Epic, which was considered as history, has had a long written tradition; whereas tragedy has been recorded in both written as well as the theatrical
traditions. The plot of suffering generally deals with man’s task on the earth. The messianic expectation plot deals with man’s expectations from God(s). In pre-Islamic the two main stories of Seyāvash/Zarir and Kei Khosrow/Zoroaster represent these motifs consecutively. Apparently, Seyāvash/Zarir story has ritualistic versions as well. As archetypal stories Seyāvash and Kei Khosrow shaped a large part of the Shāhnāmeh. Hallaj in Sufi tradition is the one who suffers; however there is no any story under the motif of messianic expectation in this school of thought. This is understandable, because in the Sufi thought ending is individual rather than collective. Every person has its own way of unity with God and it is his task to find his especial way. In fact, the two motifs of suffering and messianic expectation have been combined in the most the Sufi stories. These two motifs also shape the Shiite historiography with the two stories of Imam Hussein’s suffering and the Mahdi’s coming. But Shiism has concentrated more on the ritualistic forms and less on the written versions of these stories. Like Sufism, the emphasis in Shiism is also on the story of suffering; this is why this story has written versions as well as the theatrical and ritualistic versions. The story of Mahdi is also there as important as the suffering one. The only difference is that Mahdi’s narrative is written only in the religious literature and his birthday celebration is completely ritualistic. We should mention that the concepts of suffering and expectation are not the same in these traditions either. To understand the meaning behind each of these traditions we need to study them in their context.

These two narrative plots draw out religious intentions, the archetypal activities and the structuring operations that lead the readers to the designated historiography. The
readers’ expectations are then envisaged (or represented) through the characters’ desires to act. Archetypal characters such as Seyāvash/Hussein or Khosrow/Soshiant/Mahdi are double-sided. From the reader’s point of view they respond to the historical expectation and which the discursive narrative they fulfill the desires they as the ideal men have. Expectations/desires could also define the man’s agency in the certain historical conditions. Plots and characters cannot be formed out of discourse and if they do, they are not able to make sense or if they do, the meaning will be thin. Brooks who sees narrative as a system of understanding continues to say that plot is the principal ordering force:

Narrative is one of the large categories or systems of understanding that we use in our negotiation with reality, specifically, in the case of narrative, with the problem of temporality: man’s time-boundness, his consciousness of existence within the limits of morality. And plot is the principal ordering force of those meanings that we try to wrest from human temporality (Brooks 1984: XI).

In order to do this, plot needs to form its characters in a way that suit with the determined end. End, according to Benjamin, is the most deterministic part of the narrative, because it relates to the expectation/desire that the reader has brought from outside world.

In regard to modern Persian fiction what we see in terms of plot and characterization is slightly different. First and foremost, the new fictional world is different from the traditional ones because its historiography is different or is intended to
be different, as we established that before. It is seeking for another ideal end, which is provided by the European narrative and is not exactly what everybody in Iran wants or imagines. It has indeed been at war with the old end. According to the new narrative the messianic end is rather superstitious. As a result, it cannot be interested in the traditional narrative plots at all, especially the two main ones according to new reality. Second, with the new historiography it had to define the Iranian man’s task towards the history. It needed to institute the role of him towards a new world and towards his power or rather his powerlessness. This is the new realization that led the meta-narrative to form the main characters.

The meta-narrative plot that we can delineate here then has one over-arching characteristic: typifying the characters based on the tradition versus modernism. The dichotomous trend of the narrative delineates all aspect of the stories. We can actually reduce the dichotomy into a basic motif of *tajadud* (modernity) versus *jahl* (ignorant), and in next section we will examine these in detail. In regard to plot and characterization, despite using the main motifs of suffering and even messianic expectation in later works, modern fiction has hardly challenged the definition of these phenomena in Iranian culture; because it, from the beginning, had rejected the traditional literature entirely. These motifs were deeply tattooed in the Iranian culture and it is impossible to root them out the way the modern discourse wanted to do. Instead of rejection, the modern discourse could redefine the concepts in through new narrative. In that case, it could create an over-arching narrative that somehow was able to reconcile between the adversarial discourses.
The modern plots, especially the early ones, are in general simple and limited to the aforementioned dichotomy without any redefining of the traditional motifs or plots. Again, most of the stories depict an unfair life of a character who suffers for being a *farangi* (European) and having a modern lifestyle in the traditional family, relatives or society, or a traditionalist who tries to prove his righteousness and because of that other people suffer. The negotiation between desires and reality then is limited. As an examples we can mention Ākhundzādeh’s *Vakil-e morāfe’* or Moqadam’s *Jafar Khān az farang bar migardad*, for later works we could mention Golshiri’s *Christin and kid* (2536a [1977 or 1978]) or Ma’rufi’s *Samfoni-e Mordegān* (2002) that was written some ten years after the 1979 Revolution.

By typifying the characters into two main groups of modernist and traditionalist basically the stories become a medium for explaining a discourse, not to depict it through the fictional style. Through these types writers differed the good and evil in a modern setting. The terms good and evil, or us and them, are here inappropriate, because they mostly re-narrated through the modernity discourse in which *self* and *other* with a dichotomous concept are confused. Neither of the characterizations is based on a complete image based on Iranian-religious and modernity in combine. Mostly each character has one of these layers. It is of course wrong to generalize it this way here, because we can find a few characters such as the narrator of *The Blind owl* or Ostād Mākān in Alavi’s *Cheshmhayash* (Her Eyes) that have two layers of these three, but it is almost impossible to find a character consisting of all layers. In other words, they are mostly one dimensional. The characters are generally dependent on a definition that the
writer had from modernity or tradition. Under this notion Iranians were also typified as two groups, traditional and modernist. Traditional people were associated with the traditional language, attitudes, and beliefs and beyond that ignorance. Therefore, they ought to be changed. It was the modern writer’s task to change them or to convince them to move away from their traditions and become a modern person. This is the only imagined way to pave the road for modernization. The modern people, on the contrary, were those who are in the right path. Therefore, they are right about most things. This is the righteous attitude that is introduced by the modernists. So much so, that the modernist types in the stories are mostly utilized as teachers, intellectuals, writers, activists or lawyers who are always critical of the old system or fighting for the change and they are never wrong. They are examples for the lay people. In other words, they are there to let people find their ways to modernism, which in general was pretty much one way already defined by the intellectuals.

Other, on the contrary, had a paradoxical image. On the one hand, it was a modern man, one who knew his rights and loved his freedom more than anything else. On the other hand, it was a European or American who in spite of his knowledge and passion for democracy supported his government that was colonizer or imperialist. This was the part that intellectuals did not understand.

**Power Relationship**

In terms of power literary discourse deals with two classical theories as well as establishments: the religious ones and the political ones. The main motifs are actually
formed under the theory of power in which issues such as justice was borrowed from old Persian theory in the epics, and legitimacy was borrowed from the Shiite discourse. Early literary works mainly dealt with the superstitious related to the religion as well as the political issues. However, the political issues were generally about the powerlessness and its ramifications such as corruption and unprincipled statesmen. Jamālzādeh’s and Hedāyat’s works are the best example for illustrating these issues in the post Constitutional Revolution period. Related to characterization, it is worth mentioning that Haji, a religious type, that depicts the negative sides of the Iranian culture, influenced by Shiism and Islam, was the most common character among the early writers. Writers through this character tried to represent the actual space. The typical character has a double life; one is a show for people and one which is true. He is a pretentious person who fools naïve people. Naïve people believe in him as a religious person who has good deeds, but the writer’s task is to reveal his dark side to them. Haji in Hedāyat’s Haji Āqā is a person who is rich and trustworthy in the eyes of people. However through the story, written from the third person point of view, Hedāyat reveals his dark side to his readers. Revealing is the principal ordering force in these stories, which is basically a around a simple plot. The most common characteristics of this negative type can be reduced into a few words of illiterate, ignorant, dirty, hypocrite, charlatan, briber, liar, and pretender.

The second type is a counter-character who has all of the positive characteristics plus knowledge about the real world which is Europe and its values. He is also a man who in most cases is an honest person who loves an ideal Iran. He hates present day Iran in which all of these negative are in progress.
With ‘Alavi (1004-1997) who was the first socialist realist, this trend shifted to a new phase, in which the government’s illegitimacy, anti-labor policies as well as its pro-imperialism became the centre of the discursive narrative. Through this ideology, the working class like intellectuals became the hero of the stories. Still their ignorance was caused by Islam; but because statesmen for their own interests, have used religious to deceive working class people. So the naïve character was replaced by the pretentious statesman or someone close to him who pursued his policies in a peripheral environment. Hedāyat, who used to depict the ignorant types in his early works such as Alavieh Khānum and Tup-b Morvāry, created someone like Hāji in the Hāji Āqā as a person with both characteristics. This novella was written during World War II around the time that Oil National Movement began, depicted Hāji as a rootless man who had no aristocratic background. He had become rich by his charlatanism in the Qajar time, but during Reza Shah’s reign he had turned into an influential man who could interfere in affairs of state and even run the country through his people. His character is a fusion of the old naïve man with the rootless merchant and an Iranian politician who belongs to the English secret society of Missionaries. In terms of literary value, this novella is not really comparable with his major work The Blind Owl which had been written a decade earlier; but it manifests the new shift in the intellectual thoughts from Jamālzādeh’s Farsi Shekar Ast in which one dichotomy was between the ignorant man and the farangi one. It was also a bridge between that work and the Marxist narrative of backwardness that was represented in ‘Alavi’s Cheshmhayash a decade later. As we will see later, these political shifts created these typical characters and relative motifs in order to actively shape our
experiences as naïve readers. In other words, the only thing that did not change was the audience of these novels who were considered one way or another naïve. Speaking reductively, with our nuance, one might say that on one hand these works tended toward a thematic of the secular desired and on the other toward an experience of consuming. It might be possible to trace a kind of progressive thought in them; however, it is buried under fixed plots, characterizations and motifs that had little to do with the reality. From a literary perspective, characterization was hardly inspired by real people in real situations; because both people and the situations were predefined by the discourse. The writers’ of these works constantly want to teach us what they discovered about backward Iran in comparison to the West. They constantly warn us about the threat of religion. They want us to change and become one of them; but not through the experience of reading their stories or even an analytical dialogue, especially in the early works. There is not even a dialogical argument between the characters. The bad guy’s private life and his devious intentions are just revealed, and the good, who could be a writer, teacher, poet or a political activist, simply makes his statement which is against the bad guy. *The Hāji Āqā* is mostly about the Hāji’s duplicitous acts revealed by a statement uttered by a poet toward the end. Even names in the early works are representative of their characters. Hāji is a typical name for a character who is religious, but at the same time stingy, cheap and all of the aforesaid things. Sari’ al-Lahn (out spoken) is the name of the poet in this story.

Plots by the socialist realists got complicated especially in 1950s and onward. Nonetheless, they still revolved around the same dichotomies, motifs and characters.
Characters had become more alive, but they were still political, intellectuals or their counterparts. The ultimate situation of plots in the stories repeatedly suggests an approach to the initial solution of Ākhundzādeh: to have a modern country we need to get rid of religion and its backward culture. Golshiri’s *Prince Ehtejāb* (Sized Ehtejāb), which is considered as one the best contemporary novels, is written on a stream of consciousness. The story is about a decadence aristocrat, who in the last minutes of his life reviews his past. In a long flashback which chiefly implies the inappropriateness of monarchy and feudalism for Iran, he depicts the decline of his family. Characterization and plot of the novel is very similar to Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s “The Tale of Night. 672” (Lang 2007) except for one difference, while Hofmannsthal’s emphasis is on the narcissistic attitude of his character, Golshiri focuses on the social relationship. In other words, unlike his style, in which the character’s mind is in foreground and social relationships are in background seen from his point of view, Golshiri, like a realist writer, brings the social and political problems in foreground and from this point he puts his character through a verdict. Although the story happens in the nineteenth century and his main character is from a Qajar aristocratic family, shortly after the production of the feature film based on the novel, Golshiri was incarcerated for nearly six months. This reveals the political implication of his novel, because his intention and aim was not just against the land owning system, the signifier of the feudalism, but at the same time against capitalism. He was against the universal modern, capitalism, as described by Roland Barthes in *S/Z*, and for future socialism instead.
Concept of Time and Space in the Modern Fiction

The concept of time in modern novels is mainly formed around the concept of modernism versus traditions. Thus, time here is divided into the old time, which means pre-modern Iran and the future as a time in which an ideal system will be established. Although these works mostly suggest that Iranian political and cultural narratives and establishments have not been modernized yet, they see a break, a deep break, between the past and the ideal future. This break has not been realized yet; therefore it is a frozen moment on the threshold of future, represented in the liminal space, this frozen moment

Space

Space has always been a very significant factor and device in the modern stories. For instance, in Jamālzādeh’s *Farsi Shekar Ast* the dichotomy of modernism and traditionalism represents itself first in the space. The narrator, who has come back from free Europe, on the border of Iran is arrested and put in jail because the customs officer is not able to read his documents. In jail, which is the representation of Iran, people from different groups and classes are put under one roof. There is a cleric (*mullah*) among them who tries to demean people because their language is everyday Persian, not a mixture of Persian and Arabic. The *mullah*, however, does not like the narrator’s outfits and language at all, because he feels a sense of threat from him. So he tries to turn everybody against him. Interestingly, nobody speaks proper Persian. In terms of space, the clash is very obvious. The ideal space (Europe) represents the harmonious understanding space in which civilized people have a peaceful relationship with each
other. Whereas, the actual space presents the chaos that is going on in the country; it also symbolizes the people who are wondered around, because the officers – the symbolization of the Iranian government – are worse than anybody else. People want to cheat each other and the officials do this to lay people.

In Chubak’s *Sang-e Sabur* the dichotomy between the old and new is symbolized in a rental house. The house and its poor tenets depict the struggle that people in general have in their everyday lives. But at the same time space is the representatives of traditional relationships that do not let people understand the real source of their problems. Like other novels, there is a poor teacher (an intellectual) who lives in one of the rooms. This man is depressed and unable to function well, because of other tenets’ irrational behavior. There is also an old paralyzed woman living in the hallway. She symbolizes the old Iran, the traditional culture that should die in order to have a rebirth.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

Sources of the Problems and Their Solutions

Ākhundzādeh is considered as the first enlightened individual and modern Persian story and play writer. Swietochowski (1995: 27-28) portrays him this way:

In his glorification of the pre-Islamic greatness of Iran, before it was destroyed at the hands of the “hungry, naked and savage Arabs,” Akhundzadeh (Ākhundzadeh) was one of the forerunners of modern Iranian nationalism, and of its militant manifestations at that. Nor was he devoid of anti-Ottoman sentiments, and in his spirit of the age-long Iranian Ottoman confrontation he ventured into his writing on the victory of Shah Abbas I over the Turks at Baghdad. Akhundzadeh is counted as one of the founders of modern Iranian literature, and his formative influence is visible in such major Persian-language writers as Malkum (Malkam) Khan, Mirzā Agha Khan and Mirzā Abd ul-Rahim Talibof. All of them were advocates of reforms in Iran. If Akhundzadeh had no doubt that his spiritual homeland was Iran, Azerbaijan was the land he grew up and whose language was his native tongue. His lyrical poetry was written in Persian, but his work that carry messages of social importance as written in the language of the people of his native land, Turki.
With no indication of split-personality, he combined larger Iranian identity with Azerbaijani - he used the term vatan (fatherland) in reference to both.”

He was also a political writer who wrote several essays on modernity versus backwardness and ignorance. Since him, most Persian fiction has been constructed around one motif, which can be called ‘revealing ignorance’ or ‘modernity versus backwardness.’ This motif, which is based on the dichotomy, has had a direct relationship to the discourse of Modernity/Backwardness, as do the solutions that have been offered. In fact, it arises from a specific interpretation of this discourse. The discourse, in its main outline, has always been an attempt to find the answers to two questions: in comparison to the Europeans, and the perception of the fact that we became backward, what is or was the main cause for this? And finally, how can we get out of this situation and become a modern country? The answers to these questions have periodically been different, although the formula that has shaped these debates has not changed at all.

At the same time, intellectuals such as Mirzā Aga Khān Kermāni, Tālebov and Malkam Khān proceeded to examine the issue from various social, cultural and political angles, yet the formula was still the same. From the socio-cultural perspective, the problem of backwardness was perceived to be the result of illiteracy and irrationality, which were considered to be the cause of superstitious beliefs. Accordingly, literacy was the sign of modernity and orality, on the other hand, was seen as the cause of illiteracy and thus, equal to backwardness. By literacy they meant the ability to read and understand European culture and literature. Under this notion, they saw, as some still
see, the old fashioned writers, the religious philosophers and so on as ignorant. From this perspective, they in general drew a distinctive line between the modern man, who was pro-Western and acted and thought like a European, and the ignorant one, who was a traditionalist and an anti-reformist.

These intellectuals thought that the superstitious beliefs were solely stemming from Islam. Ākhundzādeh was actually the first intellectual who discussed social reforms in terms of an Islamic Protestantism. Living in Russia or Europe for a period of their lives these intellectuals, especially Ākhundzādeh, they began to formulize the narrative discourse in a self-oriental approach.

Re-examining the concept of culture and religion was one way to discuss the issue. Enlightening the public about the progressive establishment of the West through the arts and media was the other. In 1859 Ākhundzādeh published his short novel *The Deceived Stars* (Setāregān-e Farib-khordeh 1991). In this novel he laid the formulation of ‘revealing ignorance.’ By his comedies and dramas Ākhundzādeh also established a very simple kind of realism in which charlatanism and superstitions are revealed and reform is praised.

However, a closer look at the meaning of these words reveals, that in this case, reform is a particular solution to the problem of backwardness. In other words reform is the means by which the end goal of the establishment of a civilized culture and a modern society is achieved. It is only in the context of this civilized culture in a modern society that people can gain freedom and prosperity. An important question that was directed to the intellectuals was the question of people’s agency in determining their own interests.
Ākhundzādeh’s, and others’, response was that the people were entrapped in their superstitious beliefs and uncivilized lifestyles and, thus, were unable to recognize and decide what was best for them.

As a result they came up with the idea of revealing to people their own ignorance, superstitious beliefs and uncivilized culture, on the one hand, and educating them about the civilized cultures and societies of the West on the other hand. And this became the main goal for literature. How did they come up with this idea or solution? We already established that the notion of modernity as well as its function altered in Iran. For instance, the break from tradition became just a break from the dominant religion, Islam. There seem to be three different backgrounds:

One goes back to the traditional role of Persian literature as a dispenser of advice in order to show the way to enlightenment and salvation. There was never any sort of analytical discourse present in such works, at least not until the last decades of the nineteenth century. And the characters through whom the message of the story was set were mostly exemplary. Intellectuals had traditionally always known how to use literature as a device to enlighten people or give them advice. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, another literary movement appeared. This movement, influenced by French revolutionary writers and thinkers, particularly by Rousseau, was a counter discourse to the former because it sought for the ‘real Iranian identity’ through the oral and colloquial tradition, in the way that Herder saw the oral tradition in Germany. This movement was especially popular among the Iranian Turks as well as the Northern Azerbaijanis, who like Germans among their European communities, did not
have a written tradition in the Islamic world. This point in fact leads us to the second background here and to the role of Iranian Turks in the Constitutional Revolution.

The second one goes back to progressive movements in Northern Azerbaijan, whose partition from Iran took place in the 1813 by way of the Russians, and to the modernization movement in the Ottoman Empire and later on that of the Young Turks on one hand, and, on the other hand, to their oral traditions versus the written traditions in Arabic lands, Iran or Ottoman territories. Turks ruled over most of the Islamic world for centuries, but they largely used and promoted the Arabic and Persian religious and literary/written traditions instead of their own oral traditions. Hence, because of the oral traditions, they embedded the whole discourse of modernity/backwardness in a popular character name Mullah Nasr al-Din (John in Arabic and Shojā in Turkish), especially in Northern Azerbaijan which had a close relationship with the Russian revolutionaries. This character is a shared production of the Islamic world; but as far as the evidence shows, Iranians didn’t use him in the political context – at least, not before the constitutional movement – and in the way he revealed the political ignorance of the people. He was a dual character, a ‘wise fool’ at the same time, who characterizes people’s stupidity and their smartness simultaneously. He was so popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that one of the major revolutionary newspapers in the Constitutional Revolution was named after him. Since Ākhundzādeh and Tālebov were originally Turks and the influence of Mullah Nasr al-Din on them, in that context, was natural, we see a replica of his character in both Ākhundzādeh’s and Tālebof’s works, such as *Tamsilāt* (1356 [1978]) and *Ketāb-e Ahmed* (1946 [1967 or 1968]).
Throughout enlightened-men’s narrative, it is perhaps most notably the image of educated man that hovers as the sign of a hope and is at the same time interdicted by the traditions. This idea which always suggests the beginning is the idea that presupposes the end. The idea of an educated man has been inherited from the so call modern narratives (six dramas and a novel) written by Ākhundzādeh or by Mirzā Āqā Tabrizi’s plays which in their turn were inspired by Morrier’s idea of a backward Iranian. The end is problematic in these narratives, because it is determined by the main motif of revealing ignorance and not by the characters’ interactions. It is true that “narrative is a state of temptation to over-sameness” (Brooks 1984: 109). Narratives are eager to respond to certain temptations. It is the same with these narratives, with one difference however; the shadow of the imagined future overwhelmingly determines the plots. These works all offer a single model for understanding their use of plots and their relation to plot as a model of understanding. The enlightened-men’s common sense of plot derived from aforementioned sources, including no doubt the stories of our childhood. Most of all, however, it has been molded by the Oriental narrative tradition that, in history, philosophy, and a host of other fields as well as literature, conceived certain kinds of knowledge and truth to be inherently narrative and understandable only by way of sequence, in a temporal unfolding.

By the early twentieth century the notion of backwardness and the Oriental narrative entered into a new phase in which Islam was introduced as the main reason for backwardness. Colloquialism became a trend with which Islam was ridiculed. This notion coincided with the nationalist movement. For the revival movement the only way
to the imagined future was by going back to pre-Islamic times; whereas the colloquial movement, if you will, saw the past, either the Islamic or Iranian traditions, as an obstacle to the progressive movement, namely to adopting European culture. The sharp distinction between the heritage and colloquial traditions among the traditionalists and modern intellectuals, since the mid nineteenth century, has been almost like the way Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995: 369) describes it in her essay. The gap between them grew deeper in the twentieth century, even among themselves. There are four sharply divided groups in today’s Iran: leftists and pro-Westerners on one side and nationalists and Islamists on the other side. In terms of literary narrative the leftists, pro-Westerners and nationalists are close, although the old distinction is still there beneath everything, even in the poetic devices in every line of the literary production. Here again archaic language versus the colloquial indicates the line, which takes us back to the theory of the Great Divide, literacy versus orality, but of course in a completely reverse fashion. There could be a process like the one Franz Fanon has conceptualized. He describes “folklore as a stage to pass through in the creation of a post-colonial national culture. He delineates this sequence: first, native intellectuals embrace the colonial legacy; then, they valorize native traditions; finally, they reject both in an effort to create a new national culture” (Fanon 1967b: 6-48). There is no doubt that the modern novelists, who are dominantly leftists or as they claim now, modernists, depict Iranian culture in general through the Western lenses. The domination of the motif of ‘revealing ignorance’ proves this claim. Nevertheless, as Fanon says, it is now in the third stage, that of creating a new national culture, which in the last fifty years has merged with a strong literary tradition. It is
especially obvious among recent writers who believe the roots of backwardness to be in the traditional culture, rather than anything else.

Hence, the third background can be seen under the discourse of Orientalism. Again the idea of modernity/backwardness could be originally created by the colonization in the first place. Iranians, overall, have seen it as the attitude of the West towards the Eastern cultures and societies.

Accordingly, we find three solutions in order to get out of backwardness and become a modern society: First, reform in Islam, which was raised in the first phase of the movement. Second, replacing Islam by Zoroastrianism, in the second phase and especially after the Constitutional Revolution (1909-1911) and finally, dropping the whole culture altogether, including the religion, and adopting a completely Western culture, science, and even mythology and so on. There is, however, one exception; no one has yet suggested replacing Islam with Christianity. The reason for that could be the enlightenment in Europe.

**Five Major Motifs**

To sum up, one has to say that the discourse of modernity has determined the structures and motifs of the stories in certain ways. To examine and categorize them structurally, we can begin with the motifs, because they illustrate two sides of the stories: discourse and plot. Furthermore, the main motifs are the best tool to categorize the stories, because the plots and narrative devices are actually determined by the motifs, which by themselves, are determined by the paradigm of the discourse.
Motifs are the links between the discourse and the narrative plots, characterizations, styles and techniques on one hand, and, on the other hand, they are the links between the discourse and reality. Thus if something sounds real in these stories, it is because of these discursive motifs. The discourse objectifies the events or relationships in a way that we found in the stories. In other words, motifs help the writers to narrativize the discourse in order to reflect the reality the way they believe.

In the stories these motifs, as the symbolic representative of the discourse, form the plots the way that at the end the results conclude the rhetoric of the discourse. Also it characterizes the personas in two shades of black and white of pro-modernism and anti-modernism. Pro-modernists, with the defined images that they have, are protagonists. On the contrast, there are the antagonists with certain characteristics that are common in one thing and that is they are all one way or another anti-modernist and therefore anti-progress. Motifs show the root of the problem, and this is mainly the problem of backwardness. Then, they address it in a dichotomous fashion. Solutions are also the same. These solutions are also coming from the discourse directly. Therefore, the settings of the stories have little effect on them. In fact, it is the solutions that shape the stories and not the qualities and abilities of the characters or events.

The relation between the motifs and the solutions is obvious. For instance, the first motif is somehow formulated through the dichotomy of educator versus ignorant based on the main dichotomy of the discourse which is modernism versus backwardness. Thus, the solutions are having more educated and less ignorant people. Discourse for this problem offers certain solutions, such as changing the alphabet, raised by Ākhundzādeh,
and purifying the language, suggested by a number of writers and intellectuals. But these will happen when we become able to get rid of people’s ignorance. For that the solution is to put aside religious superstitions, because they are the obstacle to the learning the modern sciences, literature and so forth.

In order to narrativize the discourse in the stories writers usually form their stories based on two opposite types of characters. One, which was mentioned earlier, is educated, rational, and westernized; and the other is exactly the opposite: uneducated, traditional, and superstitious. Some of these stories were just about one character, either educated or ignorant. The author’s purpose was simply to show or reveal the idiotic things that the superstitious character does to him, his family and others. The main goal of authors, in these stories, is to show the necessity of reforming religion and culture.

Pre-Constitutional Revolution, writers, who were just a few, built their stories around these two typical characters. Ākhundzādeh, with his short novel and six plays, set the tone for his successors. He also defined the solutions as the way out of backwardness. Based on the main motif of modernity (progress) versus backwardness the first motif can be rendered as modern man versus ignorance.

After the Constitutional Revolution, different responses to the discourse brought about four more motifs alongside the central one. Ignorance was and still is the main reason for backwardness in these four motifs, but the causes and therefore the solutions are defined differently. For example, in the second motif the nationalistic elements of the discourse, from the early revival movement, bring another argument into the picture. Here we see that the cause of ignorance is not superstitious beliefs but Islam itself.
Jamālzādeh and Hedāyat set the examples for this period. Jamālzādeh was mostly preoccupied with the problem of language as the main source for identity. It was after The Treaty of Saint Petersburg of 1907 between the British Empire and the Russian Empire in which Persia (Iran) was divided into three zones: a British zone in the south, a Russian zone in the north, and a narrow neutral zone serving as buffer in between. Petrified of partition, Iranians began to define their identity through their literature seen as the center of their glorious past. Defined as the house of nationality, Persian language became the stronghold for promoting nationalism. Jamālzādeh’s response to this movement is directly reflected in the short story of Farsi Shekar Ast. Nevertheless, he has stories such as “Sheikh o Fahesheh” which precept Islam and its leaders as the main obstacle to modernism as well as nationalism. According to these stories, the religious leaders, Sheikh in the aforementioned story, are charlatans who fool the people with their tendency towards superstitions in order to keep their powers. Hedāyat’s preoccupation was Islamic culture versus pre-Islamic Zoroastrianism and modern Europeanism. His center of attention was religion itself as the reactionary force that holds back the process of ‘getting rid of Islam’ as a main part of the modernization in Iran. In the third and fourth motifs, both derived from the central one, we find religion as the cause of backwardness. In this case religion doesn’t just refer to Islam, but also includes other religions. These motifs can be seen in Marx’s famous notion of religions as the opium of the people.

The second motif was shaped after the First World War. At this time, the Iranian identity crisis takes a large place in the discourse. As a result, the motif now shifts from
reforming culture and religion to replacing them with their ancient Persian equivalents. Under this discourse, some intellectuals and writers, following Hedāyat, started to blame Islam for the problem of backwardness. They deemed getting rid of Islam was not just the best solution but also the only solution to the problem. Their solutions, however, were divided into two groups: replacing Islam by the ancient religion of Zoroastrianism, and replacing it by the western culture and literature.

Hedāyat shows the backwardness of Islam and Arabic culture in books such as Mr. Hāji (Hāji Āgā), On Islamic Rising (Fi-Be’sat al-Islāmieh), and The Pearl Ball (Top-e Morvāry). Meanwhile he glorifies pre-Islamic civilization, culture and even religion in works like Parvin the Daughter of Sāsān (Parvin Dokhtar-e Sāsān), Non-Iranians (Aniran) and so forth. Also in the Blind Owl, his famous work, Hedāyat deals with the same motif, with the only difference that he problematizes the issue and tries to see other causes. Hedāyat does not promote European progress directly; instead he shows its impact through his European characters (protagonists) especially women. His stories take place either in Iran or France. Iranian characters, especially women, are superstitious, unethical and pretentious. They are all fighting with the poverty in which they live because of their lack of education and culture. Sexually, they just follow their instinct. Some of them are murderers and like lower class men, women are tyrant, but at the same time subordinate. In some stories, Hedāyat goes so far that his characters turned into animals rather than human beings. The dehumanized characters are so dominant that they do not give space to real humanized characters at all. Short stories such as “The women who had lost her husband” and “The last pilgrim” (Safār-e Akherat) are the best
examples of this. French characters, on the contrary, are decent, human and civilized. The writer, by his anti-Islamic sentiments, dehumanizes the women not as subaltern subjects, but as disgusting people who are not worthy of being human; whereas, his French characters, who are mainly women, are completely human from a romantic perspective. In one word, Hedāyat’s Iranian antagonists are the fabrication of Islam. In this period love stories and romantic poetry were also published, but mainstream literature didn’t take them seriously.

After the Second World War the central motif takes another dimension. Marxism, which was the paradigm of the ideology at that time, considered the ignorance problem in terms of class theory. Self and other for most of the Marxists and other leftists of those decades were confused terms. For the pro-Moscow Marxists other was the Iranian government, and nationalist sentiments, as well as the US, whereas for the moderate Socialists such as Ale Ahmad other was, under the influence of Fanon, the West and East. There were also the right-wing modernists tied with the pro-American government of the time that saw the common people of Iran as the other; but their literary productions did not follow the discourse in the main principals. For this reason, their works did not affect main stream readers in Iran at all.

According to the leftists in general the working class was not aware of its own interests because the upper class, especially those in power, didn’t allow this. As was mentioned, at this stage the enemy was not considered to be just religion or culture. The focus was instead shifted to colonialism and imperialism along with the domestic upper class. Therefore the struggle was perceived to be between the upper class and its foreign
supporters on one hand and the working class on the other hand. Bozorg ‘Alavi was the first writer who used this perception in stories such as “Gilāni Man” (Gileh Mard) and Her Eyes (Cheshmhayash), although earlier there were some stories such as The frightening Tehran (Tehran-e Makhuf) that vaguely showed a sense of class. ‘Alavi, who was the most prominent writer in this group, formulated this structure for the future writers. The main dichotomy in the “Gilāni Man” is between a rebellious serf and two local policemen (gendarmes). Both gendarmes are corrupted; however, one of them was a rebel from Baluchistan. He had also fought against the central government while it was overthrowing the regional warlords. For these people the gun is the only tool for their independency.

Because of forceful centralization, tribal peoples had taken to their guns and begun to fight against the central government which was seen as a threat to their lifestyles and autonomous tribalism. Baluch had been one of these people, who in order to keep his gun, changed his outfit with a police uniform and became a gendarme. He was a rebel that had killed solders and now he is a policeman who kills the rebel. The police uniform that creates a fake identity gives him an opportunity to kill people legally. This makes him fight with Gileh Mard who, as the writer emphasizes, has come also from the working class. These two men have become each other’s archenemy, because of Baluch’s fake identity. It is fine if we see the story from the social class theory, because this has been the writer’s intention as well. The fake identity is the main obstacle for unification of the working class, farmers and even the labor activists. The story is well written, and the message is also clear. Nonetheless, the formula is still the same: the
central government is to blame for people’s fake identity and ignorance. Ignorance, according to the leftists of this era, had three roots: religion, nationalism and social class struggle. The poor people such as Gileh Mard and Baluch are the victims of all three. And if Baluch kills Gileh Mard, it is because his uniform has created an opportunity to indulge his greed.

The *Cheshmhayash* is about one of an enlightened artist who suffers from the statesmen’s corruption and greed on one hand, and, people’s ignorance and their cultural poverty on the other hand. In any case, the leftist artist is the victim of these ill-relationships and ill-natures.

Social realism had a big influence on the motif, and writers like Ahmed Mahmud, Doulatābādi, Sā’edi, even Ale Ahmed and Dānishvar, among others have utilized this form of the motif. In their stories, people fight for their economical and social rights, which are defined through class theory. But their ignorance is also their Achilles heel.

From the 60’s onward, a fourth motif was derived from the third one. This motif was based on the same theory, but it has one big difference from the third one. In the third motif, we mostly see three sorts of characters: an activist or intellectual, a character from the working class, and an upper class character. The main theme is to reveal the poverty of the working class, and the money and the power that the upper class character has stolen from them. At the same time the character from the intellectual or working class is an activist, who shares the political views of the writer. By educating himself, then he emancipates himself from the *band-e jahl* (strands of ignorance). The activist tries to reveal who the real exploiters of the working class are, and how one must engage
in a struggle against them. Sa’di in *The Mourners of the Bayal* (‘Azādārān-e Bayal) or *Parvārbandān* uses this set, as Ebrāhim Golastān in *The Secrets of Jeni Valley Treasure* (Asrrār-e ganj-e dareh-i jeni, 1974) uses idiocy as the main motif. People in general are uneducated, religious and therefore ignorant. They want to fight against corrupted exploiters, but they do not know how. The exploiters have no clear faces. They always in the background, from a distance, and without any clear faces. Their brutality and tyranny frighten people to death. Their presence, however, is more in the people’s talks. The informed (educated) intellectuals, who are among the people, know the exploiters and try to educate people about their rights and class interests as well as their anti-class enemies.

Because of censorship the themes became more dramatic, more complicated, and more metaphorical. And as a result the fourth motif was derived from the third one. The forth motif deals with only two types of characters: an activist or an intellectual, and a Sāvāki, or a member of Shah’s police or agent. And the theme is the fight or struggle between these two, in stories such as Golshiri’s *The Red Tie* (Keravāt-e sorkh 2536b [1977 or 1978]), and the revelation of the criminal acts of the regime against intellectuals in novels such as Baraheni’s *The Song of the Slain* (Āvāz-e Koshtegān, 1362 [1983]). In contrast to the third motif there is no working class character in this fourth version. In terms of genre, the fourth one tended to be narrated in a tragic manner; whereas the third one was more epical and optimistic in tone. Here the author has changed his position vis-à-vis the reader of the story. The most influential novels of this period are written by the pioneer writers such as Ale Ahmad (in his early works), Dānishvar, Sa’di, Golshiri,
Baraheni, Mirsādeqi and Mahmud were on the border between the third and forth motifs. Even Bahrām Sādeqi, in some of his short stories shows his tendency toward the paradigm of the discourse.

After the 1979 revolution new issues, such as the legal system and women’s rights brought out other aspects of the motif as well as a modification of the discourse. Although the motif was still the same, it had incorporated new issues such as women’s rights and the legal system. For example, the women’s rights movement has also been significant in the development of some works. In these works writers are concerned with the condition of women under Islamic law, and the rights they should have. But again we see works that were formed by the motifs mentioned above. Novels, like Tobā and the Meaning of the Night (1992), Women Without Men (1998) by Shahnush Pārsipur, or Steeled Heart (Del-e Fullād, 1990) by Moniro Ravanipour, and even movies like Milāni’s Two Women (Do zan, 1998) are formed with the fourth, second and first motifs, but with a small difference; for example, in the Two Women, men are ignorant and women want to educate themselves. The motif here is combined with the wide-spread motif of ‘you write or you are killed.’ This motif is derived from A Thousand and One Nights, as articulated by Todorov (1977: 110-130) and based on central character, Shahrzād (Scheherazade), which became popular in the 1980’s and 90’s (Slyomovics 2005: 148).

Examining these works, we see the central motif is transformed into these new arenas. As a result, traditional and patriarchal culture was regarded as the cause of ignorance and backwardness. Opposing this traditional culture, iconoclasts adopted an “intellectual culture”, which was a combination of some elements of Western and Persian cultures.
For example, the struggle between traditionalists and iconoclasts is apparent in works such as *The Symphony of Death* (Symphony-e Mordegān) or *The Year of the Rebel* (Sal-e Balvā, 1992) by Abbas Ma’rufi or *Tobā and the meaning of the night*. Even though they take place in the early medieval period, screenplays such as Beizā’i’s *Toumār-e Sheikh Sharing* (1368 [1989 or 1990]) and *Pardeh-ie Ne’i* (1992), are based on this conflict.

In conclusion, all one can say is that although ‘revealing ignorance’ as a theme does still exist, some writers are seeking other possibilities in new discourses, such as in new definitions of law and women’s rights. However, the central motif of ‘revealing ignorance,’ or other derived motifs are still used to address new issues in a simple way. In fact, we are on the borderline of two eras, with two different types of attitudes towards the discourse and the motifs.

As stated before, alongside writers who used the motifs mentioned above, we see some works that are different. Beizā’i’s *Death of the King* (Margi-e Yazdegerd, 1980 [published in 1997]), which deals with two opposite interpretations of the law, by the upper class on one hand and the working class on the other hand, is a work that does not use any of those motifs mentioned before. There is no definition for ignorance or backwardness as a theme or character in Beizā’i’s work. Characters are smart and know what they do. They plan and set things together to get out of crises. Even though at the end of the play, the Arabs come and ruin everything, and there seems to be a return to the second motif, the Arab invasion is not a crucial theme and can be easily removed from the play.
There is also a short story by Golshiri, named “This Convoy” (that deals with Islamic law and its consequences in the society. In this story, he shifts the discourse into a new direction. Not only does he treat the discourse of human law versus God’s law, he also makes it problematic. Āyeneh-hāi Dardār is another of Golshiri’s works which is formed differently. In this work, the main motif is the opposite interpretation of the origin of the story of Adam and Eve, and how Eve was created from Adam’s rib. Golshiri, in this novella, puts the woman back in her real position, as the one who gives birth to the man, and not vice versa. Another motif, which is used in this work, is the motif of “story or death” mentioned above. To politicize the motif Golshiri added a new dimension to it. He equated death with silence, and storytelling with narrating the situation of intellectuals and activists to the coming generations.
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330

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331


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336


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