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## Simin Daneshvar's Savushun: Examining Gender Under Patriarchy

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Simin Daneshvar's *Savushun*: Examining Gender Under Patriarchy

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
English  
American Literature

by

Yasaman Jahed

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## Abstract

The author covers issues of gender and Iranian national identity as reflected in Iran's first published woman novelist, Simin Daneshvar. Her novel, *Savushun*, is the first novel to be published by an Iranian woman in 1969. The novel depicts Iran at the start of the country's governmental factions in 1941 when Reza Shah Pahlavi overthrew years of Iranian dynasty and established a monarchy. This thesis explores how the novel is a vital part of Iran's historical literature as well as essential to the present day discussion of gender and politics, especially for women within the patriarchal paradigm.

Iranian Women Writers, Islamic Feminism, Iranian Nationalism, Gender, Literary Subterfuge, Censorship.

## Introduction: Simin Daneshvar

In this thesis I explore the first novel of Simin Daneshvar, the first woman novelist to be published in Iran in 1969. While the patriarchal mandate of Sharia Law institutionalized in Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 is well-publicized and strongly influenced the Western conception of Persian culture, women in Iran have been subjugated and excluded from Iran's national identity from the start of Iran's move toward a nation-state. Women have been dominated by cultural and gender-based reasons and have been excluded from the public domains of work and government as well as subordinated to the roles of wife and mother.

This project intends to create a historical framework showing the emergence of Simin Daneshvar as a pioneer in Iranian women's literature who became a voice for Iranian women's rights between Mohammed Reza Shah's reign from 1941 through Ayatollah Khomeini's induction in 1979 to the current Islamic state. My intention is to analyze the novel *Savushun* as an example of how literary subterfuge works a strategy against the censorship that dominated Iran during this time. By examining *Zari* as an example of one woman's experience during these times of change, I will explore some of the themes of the novel to illustrate how Daneshvar's imagery, poetics, and settings criticize the instability of political unrest, the British colonial influence as a threat to Iranian nationalism and most importantly, the subjugation of women. I will argue how her literary techniques and writing work against censorship under pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary Iran as well as against the Iranian male dominated literary tradition and ultimately foster a voice for women. Lastly, in my conclusion I will argue how Daneshvar's influence can still be felt within the new ideology of Islamic feminism, and how she continues to combat current Islamic censorship through literary subterfuge.

As a pioneer of Iranian women's literary tradition, Simin Daneshvar has had an enormous influence on current Iranian woman writers. Although her novel, *Savushun*, shares political concerns with male writers of the pre-revolution Commitment Literary<sup>1</sup> tradition of the 1950s and 1960s under Mohammad Reza Shah's rule, it is the first time in Iran's literary history that a novel revolves around a woman's experience and provides a woman's perspective to the anti-monarchy and anti-Westernized establishment of Reza Shah's rule and the veiled British occupation of Iran in the 1940s. Rouhangiz Shiranpour expresses in her article, "Women's Rights, Writing and Education in Iran" (43) that the novel expresses women's experiences as different and separate than men's. Daneshvar provided a voice to women who were oppressed under Mohammed Reza Shah's reign and later, during Khomeini's reign, by fighting against both governments' censorship in her writing. She addressed women's inequality in the public and private spheres, not only through a feminist lens, but also a human rights lens. Shiranpour recognizes this point by saying that women were and are recognizing that the "struggle for democracy is not separate from women's struggles" (43). Women activists, like Daneshvar, recognize that achieving their rights is indivisible from politics, democracy, culture and gender roles in society. For her women's issues are not feminist experiences necessarily, but a human experience to be heard and have privileges similar to middle-class men's.

Daneshvar's first attempt to move away from the patriarchal literary styles of the pre-revolutionary period was to abandon the themes, styles, motifs, symbols and tones of the Commitment Literature literary tradition. Until the 1940s, Iranian literature was defined within a masculinist framework and only referred to poetry (which was the literal translation of literature from Farsi to English pre-twentieth century). After Mohammed Reza Shah abdicated the throne

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<sup>1</sup> Commitment Literature developed as a result of Iranian poets and writers coming together to address social and political concerns through their writing.

from his father, Reza Shah, in 1941, prose writing slowly began to make its way into the Iranian literary tradition, and, more importantly, allowed women writers entry to the literary canon.

During this time Commitment Literature, a “pervasive literary movement,” dedicated itself to defending the Iranian people and their causes against unfair social and political issues (Kamran Talatoff 4). During the Second World War, a group of intellectual writers such as Al-e Ahmad, Ashuri, Nader Ebrahimi, Bahram Bayza'i, Mohammad 'Ali Sepanlu, Kazemiyeh, Feraydun Mo'ezzi-Moqaddam, Esmā'il Nuri-Ala, and Hushang Vaziri, and most notably, Daneshvar, independently organized a unification of Iran's intelligentsia, known as the Writers' Association of Iran. They sought to define this new style of Commitment Literature, which became a protest against the nation's economic, social and political injustices, as well as a voice of the people during historic governmental change from one dictatorship to another between 1953-1979. However, this demand for expression brought censorship for writers.

Women writers were affected by this shift both as women as well as writers. As much as they participated in the activism of the Constitutional Revolution, they were still confined to the patriarchal values that oppressed them as women and as writers. Writers had become the voice of the people. They were the intelligentsia and the more educated class of society. In most cases they were part of the bourgeoisie class, which gave them access to wealth, education and publishing opportunities. These opportunities allowed them to be more involved in social and political arenas and therefore able to voice the concerns of the populace. However, during the Constitutional Revolution<sup>2</sup> women writers were faced with censorship for writing anti-political or anti-state narratives and during the Islamic Revolution they were condemned for not being in accordance with Islamic principles. Parvin Paidar defines the obstacle for women's emancipation

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<sup>2</sup> The Constitutional Revolution began in 1903 and continued on through Reza Shah's reign. It was an attempt to modernize Iran.



as “the male interest to preserve his privileges” (53). Men who had access to education, literary circles, and publication still controlled the implicit patriarchal literary aesthetic. They embraced Marxist ideals and tended to make these the focus of their cause and the basis for a critique of the government. The underlying challenges for women writers resulted from the rules that dictated what women could write about under the patriarchal literary canon and what they would be condemned by the patriarchal governmental censors. A repercussion of this dual oppression was that women writers had to create a way to write about women’s experience without sounding feminist, Westernized or anti-Islamic.

The Iranian government’s method of censorship against writers has been consistent despite the shift from Mohammad Reza Shah’s rule to the Islamic revolution. The two means of censorship were an organized governmental agency and a veiled violent attack against writers. Mohammad Reza Shah created the Ministry of Culture and Art’s Composition Bureau: an organization that placed guidelines on what was allowed to be written by writers. For example, the Ministry demanded that writers could not convey their own understanding of Iran’s history, but must write history in accordance with state ideology (Karimi-Hakkak Ahmad 204). Writers and publishers had to submit copies of all materials in consideration for publication to the Ministry. However, writers were kept in the dark about exactly what the guidelines were for publication. The Ministry never publically defined their criteria so as to keep writers unclear about what to submit, and ultimately, deter them from writing altogether. If the state’s control over writer’s work wasn’t effective, they used violent means to silence writers. At this time, Mohammad Reza Shah’s militant arm, the *SAVAK*, used force to either physically harm writers or kill them. Understandably, both methods of censorship had to be avoided cautiously by writers.

It was during this time that Commitment Literature began to develop as a result of politically inclined writers forming a collective voice against the dictatorial disorder. Commitment Literature changed the style, themes and tone of Iranian literature immensely. Writers no longer wanted to abide by traditional literary standards such as an emphasis on upper bourgeoisie characters, nationalistic glorification of Iran or shadowing political corruption, economic downfall and societal misfortunes. Rather, writers wanted to introduce stories and themes of oppression, social welfare, social injustice and political confusion. Hamid Dabashi defines it as, “a perceived notion of responsibility to supraliterary concerns, so that the artist enters the creative moment with the intention of conveying an idea, propagating an ideology, converting an audience, defending a cause, or mobilizing a mass” (150). Commitment Literature focused on particular thematic focuses, such as a criticism of Westernization, an expression of Iranian nationalism and/or a reaction to the loss of Iranian cultural roots, an opposition to the Pahlavi government and a concern with economic and social direction. Despite this literary change, it was men who were still at the foreground of defining what Iranian literature should be. Women were still trying to find a seat at the table.

Prerevolutionary women’s literature embraced the evasive literary techniques of Commitment Literature and focused on broader sociopolitical issues more than gender liberation. Human rights were more prevalent than women’s emancipation because women writers felt that through the deliverance of civil liberties, their gender concerns would also be answered. Since the emergence of the first women writers during the construction of the Writer’s Association<sup>3</sup>, women’s commitment to remain nationalistic in their writing must be indicated here, because, any ideals of Westernization were also rejected by the Association.

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<sup>3</sup> The Writer’s Association was founded in Iran in 1968. It was formed by a group of literate intelligencia that consisted of writers and poets who wanted to come together to publically address the social, political and economic concerns during Mohammad Reza Shah’s reign.

During this time feminism referred to the British and American first wave 19<sup>th</sup> c. movements? Clarify or the developing 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of the 1960s definitions that focused on fighting gender disparities such as women's place in the private and public domains. Rejecting the ideology of Western feminism, Iranian women writers remained true to the ideology of Commitment Literature to examine the problems of Iran and to persuade readers to employ change without Western influence. It was not until the Islamic upheaval in the late 1960s that women writers began to consider writing from a woman's perspective. In 1979 Khomeini falsely won women's support in abdicating Mohammad Reza Shah with promises of educational and work equality. Women realized that they would have to unite to finally distance themselves from any male standard and establish their own style of writing and direction. It was during this time that two shifts appeared in the female literary discourse: first, post-revolutionary Iranian writers began to use feminist dialogue and metaphors in their writing because they were fed up with "persistent male domination" (Talatoff, *The Power of Metaphor* 16); and secondly, the instilment of Sharia law mandated a woman's place as less both publically and privately than a man's position. Iran was officially an Islamic state, where all laws and judicial process was based on the patriarchal readings of the Koran. Sharia law made women writers realize the new censorship they faced was the Islamic patriarchal government. Women writers had to try to work in the context of these implicit regulations and still speak for women without any patriarchal intrusion in their style of writing.

Also, once the Islamic revolution occurred in 1979, women writers worked within the Islamic ideology by employing philosophies of Islamic Feminism as another stratagem in achieving rights for women. Islamic feminism became an ideology devoid of Westernized notions of feminism, seeking to create equality for women in both the private and public sphere

under an Islamified jurisprudence and culture. Meaning that Islamic feminism differs from Western secular feminism because it seeks to achieve rights for Islamic women in the public and private domain except under an Islamic framework. Women would still be expected to uphold and give regards to the Islamified jurisprudence of Iranian culture over pursuing public executive roles. Ultimately, the goal of women writers was to use it as a platform from which to be heard. If they could use Islamic dialogue in their protests then their cause would have more validity in the eyes of this patriarchal society.

What these early 20<sup>th</sup>-century women writers faced and still endure today is the censorship of the state in the same two forms (legal and violent) that the writers of Commitment Literature faced during Mohammad Reza Shah's rule. Quickly after the Islamic Revolution the new Islamic government formed a governmental agency to monitor writers, The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, that gave itself legal rights to invade the public and private spheres of writers' lives. Writers had to again face the threat of physical harm, prison and/or ultimately death as punishment for speaking against the state. Women used the language and religious framework of Islamic feminism to bypass censors and create a dialogue for Iranian women and evade censors. Despite these obstacles, women writers still needed to express their experience relying on the political power of writing. Shiranpour expresses it best by saying, "literature is the most effective weapon that women have in order to mobilize themselves, spread their experiences and views and recognize their voices and their common identity" (16). In order for women to be part of the literary canon and equal members of Iran's society, and ultimately, to create a democracy for human rights, they needed to establish themselves as equal citizens rather than "others."

Literary subterfuge<sup>4</sup> became a pervasive literary technique in women's writing. Images, metaphors and allegory became indicative of women's experiences and perspectives. Commitment writers used this technique, but the images, metaphors and style were dictated by men. Daneshvar chose not to use these masculinist metaphors or images, rather she developed her own. She uses garden allegory, animal imagery and Iranian myths and fables are intended for women readers. Although Daneshvar helped to establish this literary movement, she chose to separate herself from her male peers and establish her own style, themes, symbols and motifs with a woman's experience in mind. In *Savushun*, the reader is led through Iran's political unrest from Zari's point of view during Reza Shah's reign. Zari becomes our reliable narrator as she observes and reflects on the political, cultural and human effects of national and post-colonial intrusions on the people of a nation. More importantly, Daneshvar positions Zari as a symbol of an every-woman, making her life a paradigm of a middle-class woman's experience as these national conflicts occur within and outside of her home.

Daneshvar uses Zari to illustrate the public and private sectors of a woman's experience during Iran's turmoil. Although she places Zari within a utopian garden surrounded by nationalistic symbols, the outside influences of both the British occupation and patriarchal conventions invade her home. When Zari leaves her home for volunteering endeavors with the prison and mental institution, she witnesses the effects of political and cultural injustices in the prisoners and the patients. This is Daneshvar's way of linking women's experience with the outcast population of society to show that women were defined by similar unfair standards. Zari's experiences as a wife and mother show the strained relationships between men and women and also between women of differing classes and backgrounds. These glimpses of the outer and

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<sup>4</sup> Literary subterfuge is when a writer uses metaphors and images that are explicitly referencing and underlying meaning; in other words, implying a message about social or political concerns.

inner worlds of a woman's experience suggest various ways a country's political climate affects women. The British occupation, the governmental tyranny of Reza Shah's reign and the male dominated private sectors of women's lives are explored in this novel. Although the novel reflects the historical era of Reza Shah's reign, Daneshvar's commentary on the injustices done toward women and the citizens of Iran can be applied to various stages of Iran's political unrest: first, Reza Shah's reign, then the abdication of Reza Shah by his son Mohammad Reza Shah, and last after the Islamic Revolution and the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty with the emergence of Sharia law in Iran. The novel's political and cultural themes, while specific to the context of 1940s Iran, are important to read in relation to the following decades.

Women were excluded throughout these revolutions and from the beginning of Iran's nation-building efforts. National identity has always been threatened in Iran whether it is by invading neighboring countries, like Greece or religious abdication, such as the introduction of Islam or a change in language and dialect. Ironically Iran's national identity and nationalism can be best defined as, "the participation of the nation's children (both male and female) in determining the future of the motherland," as Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi describes in his article, "From Patriotism to Matriotism: A Tropological Study of Iranian Nationalism, 1870-1909." National identity is what Iranian's refer to as *vatan*, or, community, meaning anyone is part of the identity who settles on the same land as their neighbor regardless of gender, ethnic background, class or education. This sense of cultural nationalism becomes apparent in the novel with the various types of characters Daneshvar introduces (such as the villager Kolu, different types of women, Khanom Fatemeh and Ezzatoddowleh and the men such as Khosrow, Yusof and Dr. Abdollah Khan, and how they are vital to Iran's national identity because ultimately they are all Iranians dealing with similar conflicts and tribulations.

Women were part of this *vatan* and were striving for recognition as equal citizens. But who would be their voice? Not the government, male writers or their male counterparts, but women writers who had to fight against two swords of censorship. Women writers became the voice for the one community condemned in every aspect of Iran's society. They were silenced and placed in domestic roles both in the home and in the public domain, regardless of class. Even though they were allowed to vote and participate in some positions in the public domain, such as secretarial work or nursing positions, they were not allowed to hold any positions that led them away from their domestic duties. They were not placed in positions where they would be influential in making legislative or governmental decisions, such as public offices or executive positions. Their roles as obedient mothers and wives took precedence over their rights as citizens.

Daneshvar chose to embody nationalistic Iranian themes, social issues and cultural beliefs such as political injustice, marriage, death, cultural boundaries class and gender roles, within the novel. She wants to use the dialogue of her government to work toward women's self-determination. If she had relied on Western feminist ideals, she would not have been taken seriously by the patriarchal standards of Mohammed Reza Shah's government or be able to trace her concerns for Iranian women and Iran's national identity in the current Islamic paradigm. It was her use of literary subterfuge that wards off censorship and prosecution. Farzaneh Milani, an expert on Daneshvar describes her writing and activism by saying, "Daneshvar's literary career was born under the burden of censorship" (329). Daneshvar is an expert of covert language because she has always had to deal with some form of it, whether from governmental censors or the patriarchal culture. Through her use of metaphor, tone, allegory and animal imagery she is

able to explore not just women's experience, but human rights in relation to political ideology and gender relations.

Daneshvar's writing not only paved the way for other Iranian women writers to be published, but established a new style where women writers could express a woman's experience without succumbing to governmental and cultural censorship, especially during the nation's current Islamification. Her influence can be seen in contemporary writers such as Shahrnush Parispur, who has adapted the image and allegory of the garden in her acclaimed novel, *Women Without Men*, or her social novel portraying women's roles after the Islamic Revolution, *Tuba and the Meaning of Night*. Daneshvar's importance as a woman writing within a terror-based state and sanctioned censorship is significant because she uses literary subterfuge despite transitions of governmental change. This literary style has become a prominent style in Iranian women's literary tradition. She breaks with a masculinity literary paradigm to voice women's experience rather than subscribe to the styles and themes men had written about such as political upheaval from a male perspective and protagonist. By doing so she explores the complex social and political negotiations occurring among Iran and Iranian women in her writing.

### Attacking Gender and Protecting Iranian Nationalism Through Literary Subterfuge

Daneshvar expresses the continual problems Iran has faced with political rule and gender biases through literary subterfuge. Her ideological representation of the garden as a utopian space, specifically for women, isolated from the chaos outside of its walls becomes a significant setting for women's space, Reza Shah's monarchical rule and the British occupation. Within that garden she uses animal imagery to explore her themes of relationships, marriage, death, isolation and exclusion. Although *Savushun* is a complex text, I will focus on the major metaphors related



to the garden in relation to the public and private spheres of women's experience: Zari's home and garden. I will look at the paradox of the garden as a space for women to be both confined and controlled while men are absent.

Although Daneshvar uses similar techniques of the Commitment Literature tradition like garden allegory, animal imagery and metaphors, her meanings are in line with women's experience. The garden represents women's situation privately and publically under political and cultural patriarchy. Throughout the novel, I read the garden as a private space for Iranian women that is constantly being encroached upon by Reza Shah's rule, the British occupation and the various men who enter that space. Because of her responsibilities in the home Zari must deal with outside political conflicts that disrupt and affect her domestic and family life. Sadly, when her husband returns home or is present, she succumbs to the social constraints of her gender and her power within the garden is taken away.

Daneshvar utilizes her technique of literary subterfuge to hide her ideological messages. For example, under the Commitment Literature literary tradition, Daneshvar's literary techniques can be viewed as a political demonstration, but under post-revolutionary tradition, they could be seen as a call for democracy under an imperial dictatorship and colonial influence and in the present Islamic discourse signifies women under Islamic censorship. Her use of the garden is gauged by the political climate in these transitional periods.

Although Daneshvar uses her own style, she still remains true to the Persian literary classics that influence her writing. The influence of secular and nationalistic poets such as Hafez and Rumi were always present in traditional and political literature post and pre-Reza Shah's dictatorship. One of the most prevalent allegories used by Hafez and Rumi has been the garden. Both of the previously mentioned poets used the garden as an allegory for a paradise centered on

human activities and how the external world either influences its inhabitants' identities or how the garden becomes part of the external conflicts. Usually, the gardens are inhabited by kings and reflect the internal conflicts these leaders undergo. Ultimately the gardens become, what Julie Scott Meisami calls in her article, "Allegorical Gardens in the Persian Poetic Tradition: Nezami, Rumi and Hafez," a "world-garden" (245), meaning the leaders become responsible for the growth of their internal gardens that cannot be isolated from the external gates that protect them. Meisami contends that using metaphors of cultivation within the garden allegory places responsibility on the "topic that man's deeds on this earth are as seeds that he plants and he shall reap that which he sows; of the harvest of the world's garden" (250). By using garden allegory Daneshvar places responsibility on the individuals responsible for their own space.

Also, her dedication to the legacy of classical Iranian literature pre-Islamic influence is what drives her to incorporate animal imagery. Most Iranian literary techniques used pre-Islamic Revolution came from either Persian classical literature, like the *Shahnameh*, or from Iranian folklore, like her use of bird imagery. These all come from a period in Iran's history called the Sassanid period between 224-651 prior to the Arab invasion and the introduction of Islam. During this time Iranians believed in Zoroastrianism, which was a religion particular to Iran, based on the basic belief between good and evil. Persians were also trying to resuscitate Iranian traditions and obliterate external cultural influence. One of the main images she uses in relation to women's experiences is the horse. Horses dominate Sassanid depictions and Sassanid rulers were always shown on their horses. Without a horse the kings would not be fit to rule. Daneshvar adapts this imagery from the classical period using Zoroastrian symbols to continue her criticism of colonial invasion and gender restrictions. She uses the horse to represent the conflicts and restraints women face under patriarchy and political strife without explicitly conveying this

message in her writing. By using these devices she is able to make her claims without being condemned for them.

What influence or responsibility did women have within and outside of the garden if they were limited by the social constructs of their gender? Raia Prokhovnik argues in her article, “Public and Private Citizenship: From Gender Invisibility to Feminist Inclusiveness” that women do not need to be liberated from the private realm in order to take part in the public realm; rather, women already undertake responsibilities of citizenship in both the public and private realms (84), meaning that because women maintain specific roles within their private spaces they are citizens within the Iranian national identity. They are part of the *vatan* and part of the Iranian soil that comes to represent what is Iranian nationalism and identity.

#### The Garden Allegory Representing Iranian Women’s Private and Public Space

At the beginning of the novel, the home is portrayed as a utopian representation of a nonpolitical Iran. Zari describes the home by saying,

Oh yes. This is my city, and I love every inch of it-its hills in the back, its veranda that runs all around the house, the streams on both sides of the patio, those two elm trees at the edge of the garden, its sour –orange grove which you planted with your own hands, that ‘seven-graft’ tree to which you yourself added one graft every year, the distillery next door with its mounds of flowers and herbs every season, flowers and herbs whose very names make you happy... (41)

Her home represents a nationalistic image of Iran by encompassing natural images indicative to Iranian cultivation identity, such as elm trees, sour-orange groves, herbs and orange blossoms. First she establishes Zari as the leader of her home by calling her home a city. She attributes

apolitical Iranian images of nature and cultivation of what Zari, as a leader of this setting, loves. Daneshvar subscribes to Rumi's garden allegory by showing the inhabitant of the garden as blind to the outside world. Meisami says the ruler's vision in Rumi's garden is "limited" (248) to the sublime imagery of the garden and is therefore unaware of the outside disruptions. This outlook makes the garden contained and ignorant of external threats creating a false sense of purity. This foreshadows doom because ultimately the patron of the garden will have to face the outside world, which Zari does later in the novel.

Daneshvar progresses to include images of grafting trees and a distillery that carries in the scents of the outside world into her city. The distillery is placed outside the garden, yet it grows flowers and herbs that carry their scents into Zari's garden. This image and personification hints at the external world seeping into Zari's world and a slight awareness of the external happenings, even if they are romanticized, creating a consciousness of something beyond Zari's private quarters. Zari appears to be aware of her situation within this falsified utopia despite its pastoral beauty.

Zari tries to assert herself in her home, yet it is still a prison. Zari even calls it a prison when she thinks, "...in this summer of disease, famine, war and her own pregnancy... she was a prisoner in her house" (Daneshvar 248). Milani contends that the private sector of Iranian women's lives is like a prison by saying, "...these private, sacred precincts both protect and imprison. The barriers that separate the private from the public take on an internal dimension. The sophisticated mechanisms which shield the inner self from exposure and intrusions also amputate and silence part of the self" (338). Milani's meaning is that when women are confined to the barriers or restrictions within the private spheres of their lives they are removed from the responsibilities of the outside or public sphere leaving them excluded. This becomes more

apparent as the men who come to represent the external political as well as the cultural patriarchal influences enter her home.

The home represents an environment in line with Iranian identity and how the external political pressures invade or threaten it. For example, Daneshvar presents one character that is always spoken of but hardly seen, Haji Mohammad Reza, as “pacing by the garden gate” (45). Haji Mohammad Reza is also described as the “dyer” presenting an image of a person who manipulates natural fabric with false color. Firstly, an Iranian reader can relate the name of Mohammad Reza to the political leader of Daneshvar’s time Mohammad Reza Shah. She also replaces the “Shah” in his name, an imperial title, with Haji, a religious term affiliated to male Muslims who make religious pilgrimages to Mecca. She gives him the profession of “dyer” as a metaphor for what Mohammad Reza Shah was doing to Iran: manipulating the natural fabric of its culture with false ideology and promises during the White Revolution.<sup>5</sup> Also, by turning the character into a religiously affiliated figure, Daneshvar is able to allude to the Islamic ideals or government that was slowly taking form during her time. Islamists were also patriarchal individuals who wanted to manipulate the natural fabric of Iranian nationalism and society with Islamic morality. His pacing represents his impatience to enter Zari’s private sector, or rather, the Iranian home. His gender and political affiliation threaten the garden, and ultimately Zari’s position within and outside of the home.

As the novel progresses and the outside world enters Zari’s private space, (such as the various representations of political ideology by various characters during the novel’s setting) and the image of her garden begins to deteriorate, she seems to lose hope for the beauty of her isolated city. At one point Yusof’s political alliances such as Mr. Fotuhi and Malek Sohrab and

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<sup>5</sup> The White Revolution was launched in 1963 by Mohammad Reza Shah to modernize Iran through a series of reforms and establish Iran as a global and industrial power.

Malek Rostam enter the garden. At this point Zari's role immediately transforms to wife and mother from the leader of her little city. Before this we only see Zari within her relationship to Yusof, but here we see her revert to the roles her gender dictates. She is not allowed to participate in the male circle to discuss the political situation of Iran. Instead, Yusof asks his wife to check on the guest, prepare the hookah and bring them tea. While she makes the hookah for Yusof she thinks to herself, "Coward or courageous, with her kind of life and upbringing, it would be impossible for her to engage in anything that would disrupt the normal flow of life" (Daneshvar 203). Zari's tone changes from one of strength and confidence to submissive resignation of wife and mother. Here Daneshvar shows that as the outside world enters the private sector of a woman's life, her power and confidence are taken away. She feels reconciled to her conditions even within her own quarters. Prokhovnik writes in her article that although gender equality can be achieved by involving women in "formal political process" or "activity" (86), it cannot when the standards of the private/public dichotomy have historically been defined by men (87). Zari's validity as an Iranian citizen is taken away from her once she is devoid of political recognition as well as devalued as an individual in the home. For example, in chapter 16 when Yusof's peers sit and speak of what actions they must take, Daneshvar's language for Zari changes and she begins to list Zari's actions rather than her involvement in the discussions. Zari is shown bringing food, drinks, hookah and cleaning up after the band of men. She is excluded from the action of the plot even though she is present physically. This is a situation that is prevalent in an Islamic Iran where women are still devalued within the home and left out of executive positions in the public sphere, therefore, valued less as involved citizens.

## Trees and Bird Imagery as Zari's Experience with the British, Monarchy and Patriarchy

Zari's connection with trees and plants is part of the pastoral landscape and the notion of a romanticized Iran/garden that she is trying to preserve. Yet, Daneshvar suggests through the imagery that the private aspect of women's lives will eventually be vulnerable to some sort of intrusion, either by their own surrender to gender restrictions as dictated within the home, or determined outside of the home by external influences. Rather than being blind to these conditions, women should be cultivators of their own gardens in creating their own place in it. However, it is her images of sparrows and crows that further foreshadow the invasion of government and the masses. She says the birds come into her city like it is their own, and that she does not like the sparrows because they are careless with the eggs they hatch in the nests they build on ledges or treetops. Daneshvar writes,

...the sparrows, starlings, and crows that consider our home their own. But the sparrows make me angry. They build their nests on the ledge of the sash window or on the treetops. Their eggs fall onto the ground and break all the time. They are so careless. (41)

Daneshvar uses the metaphor of crows to portray governmental intrusions. Crows represent deception in ancient Persian literary tradition and are depicted as strategic and clever animals. The birds coming into her city connect Zari's experience with the outside world invading her private garden. Like the British who are deceptively trying to gain access to Iran's resources by visiting, rather than completely colonizing, Iran, the crows sit and wait when they may enter Zari's garden. Even Mohammad Haji looks like the crows dressed in dark fabrics wavering along the walls of the garden waiting to enter. The crows threaten the sparrows who also wait in seclusion amongst the trees.

The sparrows represent the Iranian people, and how they are careless in trying to nurture or grow their various ideologies on the verges of treetops or ledges. In ancient Persian folklore, sparrows represented the nomadic village of Kok-Kolu<sup>6</sup>, which foreshadows Kolu entering Zari's home. (I will explore this theme later in the thesis). By using the image of sparrows breaking their eggs (a piece of themselves they hope to give birth to and grow) carelessly, she shows how their ideals die at the hands of their own carelessness by not being organized or unified in their nationalistic pursuits. This becomes evident once the men pour into Zari's home, and with them their political affiliations. Yusof's Marxist ideals, her son's Communist aspirations influenced by Mr. Fotuhi, and Malek Rostam and Malek Sohrab who represent the groups that are outside of governmental control because of their ties to nomadic culture intrude on Zari's garden,

It seemed to have lost its freshness; dust had settled on all the trees, their leaves had burned and turned yellow. For a moment, she thought the trees were stunned and staring at her. Then she saw that the trees were trembling, shaking their heads, and soon after settled down. They were preparing to go to sleep, she thought. But the sparrows on the top branches are awake and are bickering at each other like old women in a public bath. (248)

The transformation of the garden is personified in the image of the sparrows as bickering old women suggesting the men in discussion are represented by the bird imagery. The garden takes on an emotional connection with Zari, rather than an ethereal one, humanizing the garden like Rumi and Hafez have done. Daneshvar feminizes the men as women birds, crossing the boundaries of gender through animal imagery.

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<sup>6</sup> Kok-Kolu is a nomadic tribal territory in Iran, much like the type of city Kolu comes from.



The garden becomes a place of creation and life, not only in nature but in ideas, like the conflicting political tensions the men are bringing into her home. Zari sees the trees as “stunned” and “trembling” “shaking their heads” as if they are disapproving of the men’s actions.

Daneshvar’s image makes a statement on whether or not men’s political talks do much more than sound like senseless bickering. If the garden is meant to be a utopian Iran full of nationalistic natural images and a place that is being intruded upon by the outside political tensions of men’s false ideologies, then the garden remains not just a prison for women, but for those invested in the liberation of Iran. Like the sparrows who are careless with their eggs, the men’s discussions are also fruitless because they are only discussing rather than taking action.

Before the men entered Zari’s home, the garden thrived and was lavish with life. Once the political ideologies enter the home, the garden appears to be dying. Zari feels a connection with trees that are now dying. The trees connect to the novel’s title, *Savushun*. “Savushun” in Farsi means mourning, and relates to the hero of the classic Persian story *Shahnameh*, Siyavash, who was betrayed by his stepmother while trying to bring peace and political stability to Iran. When he was killed, the people of Iran mourned his loss on a day they named “Savushun,” and then for weeks after. Toward the end of the novel, Zari hears the story of Siyavash in relation to the people of the upper village who leave their homes every year to go to a “Hair Tree” where they cut their braided hair and tie it to the tree marked for Siyavash in honor of their husbands, sons and brothers who died because of the political tensions in Iran during the time of the novel. The tree as a symbol also comes up in *Shanameh* various times and implies survival, continuing bloodlines, and fate determination in Iranian literary tradition. Zari feels a connection with the trees because they are the ones deteriorating, not the birds. The birds, like the men, are free to

leave the garden while the trees are rooted in the ground and are affected by their environment, just like Zari.

The garden is where Zari's outer and inner worlds collide causing an imbalance to her individuality. The effects of the political schisms are invading her home as well as the demeaning patriarchal roles assigned to women. Daneshvar presents Zari as a leader of her home and as an intelligent individual by citing her education in the British school system and describing her observations of the incidents around her with honesty, yet her confinement to the home and garden force her into oppressive gender roles for women's domesticity.

#### Classical Representations of the Horse Metaphor as Strength, Nationalism and Perseverance

Daneshvar's dedication to the legacy of classical Iranian literature is what drives her to incorporate animal imagery. Most Iranian literary techniques used pre-Islamic Revolution came from either Persian classical literature, like the *Shahnameh*, or from Iranian folklore, like the bird imagery mentioned earlier. These all come from a period in Iran's history called the Sassanid period between 224-651 prior to the Arab invasion and the introduction of Islam. During this time Iranians believed in Zoroastrianism<sup>7</sup>, One image that was prevalent from this period was the horse. Horses were shown to dominate Sassanid depictions and Sassanid rulers were always shown on their horses. Without a horse the kings would not be fit to rule. Daneshvar takes from this classical idea and uses it to continue her criticism of colonial invasion and gender restrictions.

The symbol of the horse comes up various times in the novel. First, when the family's horse Sahar is taken away by the governor for his daughter, then in the story that was told on the

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<sup>7</sup> Zoroastrianism is religion/philosophy founded during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE in Ancient Persia based on the prophet Zoroaster.

night of Sahar's birth and finally when Yusof's body is taken out of the garden into the city for proper burial. These three significant moments relate to colonialism and gender: first, when Sahar is taken away due to the British influence and how it enters Zari's home and life; then, when Yusof tells the story about horses as an allegory of the political unrest and a criticism of colonial influence and finally, when Yusof's body is carried out of the garden on a horse. These three moments embody Sassanid depictions of kings and the theme of foreshadowed death are used in these three moments to further relate to gender relations and colonial invasion.

One central moment where the external governmental pressures enter the home is when the governor wants Zari's son's beloved horse, Sahar, for his daughter. The novel begins with a foreshadowing of this event at the governor's daughter's wedding where Zari is tricked into lending her invaluable emerald jewelry to the daughter, only to find out later that the daughter takes the jewels as her own. This theme of colonialism as theft begins the novel during a joyous marital ceremony. The pressures of British colonialism and the government's compliance with the veiled occupation invade Zari's world from the beginning of the novel. The next item the governor wants to claim is personal to Zari and her family-- the family pet, Sahar. Zari feels helpless and knows she has to give the horse away, especially since Yusof is away. Her power as a leader in her home is also usurped by the British colonial presence. Even though the British were not explicitly colonizing Iran and were allowed to enter Iran by Reza Shah as visitors, they still had power over Iranian citizens. Zari responds to this by saying, "The whole city has become like the Mordestan District" (Daneshvar 76). Mordestan District refers to the grave site district. Mordestan in Farsi translates to the "dead ones," which begins the foreshadowing and implication of both the death of Yusof as well as a symbolic death to idealistic goals and Iranian nationalism at the hands of colonialism. If they are able to enter homes and take precious

belongings from the citizens of Iran, they are able to delude Iran into becoming another one of their colonies through their continued influence.

Eventually Zari gives Sahar away because she does not have the power to fight against the British or have Yusof there to intervene. When Sahar is given over to the governor's servant the narrator says, "Zari felt as if the garden had lost all its luster" (Daneshvar 97). A piece of the family's identity and Zari's life has been removed from her home leaving Zari feeling the effects of British colonization.

At one point Zari's family discusses a story about horses that was told on the night Sahar was born and Yusof retells the story,

The stallions are in a very large circle with their backs to the center and their faces to the field. The mare who is giving birth, is in the middle, surrounded by the stallions-the stallions are embarrassed to look because when a mare gives birth, the colt comes out of some very, very bad part of her body...the horses are standing like that so the mare won't worry, otherwise she will be afraid that some wild animals might attack her foal. (45)

The image of the mare giving birth is feminine in nature, and the male horses are described as stallions rather than horses making the gender distinction between the horses evident. Also, the mare under the stallions' watch is indicative of her being falsely protected by the patriarchy in this situation. Daneshvar has the stallions facing away in the story to protect the birth of the colt. They appear uninvolved because they are not witnessing or aiding the birth, rather just present physically. Various interpretations can be seen here. First, the story infers the idea of lineage by using horses as the subjects of the tale. Like the kings of the Sassanid dynasty who were seen as strong leaders only when their horses were with them, this idea of Iranian nationalism and

strength is seen in the story. Also the story shows the importance of birth as a process that should be protected. The birth of the colt in this context is like the birth of an idea and the stallions are like the people who should protect the birth from the wild animals, or the government, that is threatening to dispose of the process. Not only is she showing the image of the horse as a symbol of Iranian nationalism, but the birth is a metaphor for protecting Iranian lineage against the threats of an outside force.

Sahar also becomes part of Daneshvar's gender commentary. Even though Daneshvar calls Sahar "he" Sahar is a female name in Iranian culture making the horse part of the gender conflict in the story because of her displacement in the home. Sahar is taken away, but then brought back in the end by Khosrow. Once the horse is given away, Zari feels, "the garden had lost all its luster" (Daneshvar 97). However, when the horse escapes the governor's home with the governor's daughter on her back, ready to throw the daughter from a cliff, Zari's son, Khosrow, comes to Sahar and calms the mare down. He then mounts Sahar and gallops "toward the garden," (Daneshvar 156) placing the horse back in the confines of the garden, as well as back in the home. Although the horse is a powerful image, Sahar's power is taken away first by colonial threat then by a patriarchal figure, Khosrow, who places Sahar back in a servitude role.

Daneshvar is careful in the way she weaves this scene into her narrative, yet her Iranian audience understands that she is commenting on women's experience with the image of home as both a safe haven and a prison from which Sahar is never really free. The image of Khosrow mounting the horse and taking control of it infers this idea of male control because he is taking the horse away from another woman in the story, the governor's daughter, so he may return it back to the confines of the garden. Then he is the one that leads the horse back to the garden, or rather the home. The metaphor draws attention to the fact that the horse is controlled by a man

and placed back in the home to be protected, but also to be confined. The start of the next chapter shows Yusof harnessing Sahar and the horse being referred to as a “mare” (Daneshvar 157) rather than Sahar. Only Zari acknowledges Sahar by the horse's name. Sahar loses its identity by losing its name, the same way women do when they become just “mother” or “wife.”

When Yusof is killed and Zari is preparing the funeral processions, she watches how Sahar and the other horses are ready to carry Yusof's body out of the garden and into the town for proper burial. Zari observes,

The saddle on the mare was covered with a black cloth, and Yusof's hat was on the horn of the saddle with his gun slung around the mare's neck. A white sheet spotted with mauve ink to make it look like a blood-stained shroud was on Sahar. When the mare saw the corpse, she pricked up her ears and thumped her hooves on the ground so hard it sounded like drums. Zari felt that she was pounding on her heart. And she neighed twice. It seemed as if tears flowed out of the mare's eyes onto her nose; her nostrils flared. (298)

Daneshvar foreshadows this theme of death throughout the novel and ties the story of the horse with the death of her husband. In the last scene Sahar carries Yusof out of the garden. Yusof's hat hangs on the horn of the saddle, while his gun is slung around the mare's neck, symbolizing the end of his actions. It is implied that Yusof is killed for his political activism and the image of his hat hung up reveals the end of his political quests.

Like the earlier story of the birth of a colt, here the mare is female and Yusof's gun hangs around the horse's neck. Daneshvar provides two possible commentaries. One, Yusof's control over Zari and his home is represented by the gun hanging on the mare's neck to continue control over her; and secondly, in context of the political turmoil, his death does not conclude his

political activism, because his hat and gun proceed out of the home along with the horse. The horse carries Yusof's body out of the garden glorifying an image that his message is being carried out of the garden into the city. Yusof's death becomes symbolic in the novel for the ramifications of idealism. The mare's reaction is extreme and her need for immediate reaction stems from a female perspective that men seem to bring only death and chaos. However, Zari enters the political paradigm when she takes up Yusof's cause once the riots break out. She sees how the police react and pledges to continue his political cause, except she calls for action rather than discussion. His political beliefs seem to be transferred to her and she realizes that the only way to bring social change is to take action.

In order to bypass the governmental censors, Daneshvar employs the horse as a subtle symbol weaved throughout the novel that connects men, women and the theme of death and survival. Daneshvar uses the horse as a tool to guide her critique of the threat to Iranian culture and of external enemies continual disruption of Iranian nationalism. She suggests the need for women's participation in the emancipation of Iran and for themselves from patriarchal and colonial influences.

### Zari's Position under External and Internal Patriarchy and How it Defines her Identity

During Reza Shah's reign, because women were not working outside of the home, most of their external endeavors were charity or volunteer work. In the novel, Yusof tries to dissuade Zari from leaving the home by curtailing her work by saying, "What is the use of all this charitable work? The whole thing is rotten from the core.' But no matter how hard she thought, she didn't know what she could do to fix things" (Daneshvar 122). Although Zari feels reluctant

at times to do the work, because of its emotional affects on her, she still craves it because she finds herself away from the confines of the garden and home and in a dominant position amongst the patients as well. Within the garden Zari appears to be alone or lonely, a theme that comes up with Zari and her relationships with the men and women of the novel. However, she experiences a connection with the female mental patients because they have been abandoned by the male heirs of their families. Zari recognizes that the injustice of their situation lies in accordance with state control over women by deeming them mentally insane.

Two instances when Zari removes herself physically from the garden and her home are when she volunteers at the mental hospital and the prison. She feels it is her vow of charity to bring magazines, cigarettes and food to the patients and prisoners, even though it depresses her to see the marginalized citizens confined to state-run institutions. Like women, these people were either abandoned by their families to the mental asylums or wrongfully placed in the prisons. In this section I will look at Zari's position outside of the home within the mental hospital since it is the place Zari appears most frequently outside of her home. I will also examine the idea of women in relation to mental illness concerning Miss Fotuhi and Zari after Yusof's and how Zari feels a bond with the women who have been abandoned for their emotional ailments.

Zari's connection to the women at the mental hospital positions also manifests itself in her relationships with other characters in the novel. Zari's identity is threatened and explored as she deals with the various prominent men and women in her life. I will look at how Zari's relationship with her husband and son represent the patriarchal figures in her life, while Dr. Abdollah Khan represents a more open-minded man within this society because of his education, philosophy and poetry. I will then look at Zari's relationship with the two prominent women figures in the novel, Khanom Fatemeh and Ezzatoddowleh. Each of these women represent two



various generations and developments for women in Iran. Khanom Fatemeh comes to signify the older traditional sect of women who sought their freedom and independence by leaving Iran for Karbala. Ezzatoddowleh shows how a woman can be a part of the political and public discourse if she sacrifices her loyalty toward her peers for a position with the patriarchal governmental rule. Yet, at the end of the novel all three women bond together and sympathize with each other when Zari loses Yusof and enters the new community of widows, which Khanom Fatemeh and Ezzatoddowleh are a part of. Through her relationships with other characters Zari tries to make sense of her identity both as an Iranian and as a woman.

#### Women Confined to State Institutions

Parin Dossa touches on the correlation between women, mental health and cultural barriers in her article, "Narrative Mediation of Conventional and New 'Mental Health' Paradigms: Reading the Stories of Immigrant Iranian Women." Dossa says, "The absence of social arenas that allow individuals to fight for their rights as well as spheres of activities and relationships where their presence is acknowledged and their contribution has an impact on emotional well-being" (345). This holds true for women in the novel confined to the mental institution, especially Miss Fotuhi, who becomes the end result of this oppression. She is not married and succumbs to the pressures of her gender. Her brother Mr. Fotuhi puts her into the institution because of her emotional well-being. She has been subjugated to her station based on her exclusion from the social/public arena her brother has vast access to as a man. He maintains his freedom as an involved citizen, while she festers in the institution and begins to lose her mental stability at the hands of another patriarchal institution.

Another factor Dossa attributes to women's emotional well-being is the social construct of motherhood. The pressures of motherhood, the physical and emotional effects of childbirth, and women's exclusion from the public sphere create "tension" (Dossa 348) in women's emotional well-being. Although Miss Fotuhi does not experience childbirth, her role as an excluded woman by her brother who confines her to her own prison at the institution creates her imbalance. Zari relates to this tension because she endures each of these three factors. She is left out of the public sphere because she is a mother, has gone through childbirth, and is pregnant. The only factor separating her from Miss Fotuhi's situation is a man deeming her insane. The only time she comes close to facing Miss Fotuhi's fate is when Yusof dies and the other males of the household, specifically, Khan Kaka, try to imply that because Zari is emotionally traumatized by Yusof's death that she must be must be crazy. Incidentally, Dr. Abdollah Khan, the only formally educated man in the novel underscores Dossa's point that anyone going through an emotional situation like Zari's would be behaving as she is. This brief tense moment shows the fine thread that separates Zari's situation from Miss Fotuhi's even though both women share in the same fates of womanhood.

The women patients inside the institution reflect the dismal fates women can be subjected to at the hands of their environments. For example Miss Fotuhi pleads with Zari to have her brother, Mr. Fotuhi, the leftist party leader, come and rescue her from the asylum and take her to an imaginary garden he speaks of. Khosrow alludes to the garden Mr. Fotuhi describes by saying, "Mr. Fotuhi says, when the society is set straight, then nobody will go crazy and every place will become a garden" (Daneshvar 139). From the context of his sister's condition and his unwillingness to visit her, his promised garden to his sister is one of confinement and repression because he has already restricted her to the asylum and left her. His sole focus is political

change, yet his insensitivity toward his sister conveys how men engaged in ideological pursuits disregard women's experience, especially in situations where women have been legally defined as having the same intellectual value as a mental patient. Here, Miss Fotuhi becomes the least valuable civilian by this society's definition, and the one person we feel the most sympathy for by witnessing the injustice of her situation.

Zari recognizes this injustice during her visits. When Mr. Fotuhi comes to visit his sister on a rare occasion, he asks to speak to Zari. Zari thinks it will be about his sister, but he begins to discuss the politics of a nation. Zari immediately cuts him off and says, "You are not concerned about friends and allies. You're not even concerned about your own sister" (Daneshvar 225). Zari finds her confidence and voice outside of her home and is able to voice an opinion here, excluding her from the same restrictions Miss Fotuhi has endured at the hands of Mr. Fotuhi. Mr. Fotuhi simply replies to Zari, "My sister's madness is a malady of our society" (Daneshvar 225) evading his responsibility for his sister's demise. Is Zari's criticism of Mr. Fotuhi's attempts to subjugate his sister in order to pursue his own political endeavors correct? Or is Mr. Fotuhi correct that literal madness comes from the pressures of Iranian society? Daneshvar addresses this idea by questioning whether it is more noble and nationalistic to be concerned with political pursuits or be concern for the individuals in your own family despite gender.

Zari continues to see the other patients and finds herself with Miss Masihadam, another patient who has gone mad due to patriarchal control. She tells Zari the story of her marriage and her child's death at birth, reaffirming Dossa's idea that childbirth leads to emotional stress. Miss Masihadam appears to be mad and yet she says, "They think I've gone crazy. But I'm not crazy. I'm just very, very depressed" (Daneshvar 228). This theme of depression, more specifically of post-partum depression, now appears, making one question whether women are led into madness

because their emotional psychology is misunderstood. Even Dr. Abdollah Khan comes to Zari after her visit and asks, ““Did she say a lot of nonsense?”” and Zari replies, “On the contrary, she made a lot of sense” (Daneshvar 229). As a woman Zari understands Miss Masihadam’s situation because she has been through childbirth and feels camaraderie with what women experience. Especially since Zari is dealing with the internal conflict of being pregnant and whether or not she wants an abortion. This is another instance where the fine line between Miss Masihadam and Zari’s situation is delicate.

The last scene inside the asylum is when Miss Masihadam tells Zari, ““Only death is true. All else is lies” (Daneshvar 229). Death becomes the ultimate and most reliable outcome to every situation in the novel. Death is inevitable, and despite gender or political conditions, death will come for every character in the book. More importantly, this reinforces Daneshvar’s theme of loneliness, or the idea that every individual will die alone. Death is singular, definite and every citizen dies in a solitary state without politics, gender or other labels that serve no other purpose but to bring resistance rather than define a person’s outcome. Toward the end of the novel, Dr. Abdollah Khan tells Zari that Miss Fotuhi has died, and Zari feels relieved. She realizes that death also brings a peace and release from the confines Miss Fotuhi was restricted to as a woman, the same way Zari finds some peace when she is released from the confines of marriage when Yusof dies.

Although she appears in a position superior to the patients, Zari understands that these women share the same feelings and emotions that come from womanhood that Zari does. When Zari questions her own sanity, she asks Dr. Abdollah Khan whether she is going mad and he responds, “No dear...It’s fear. Many have it. I said it is infectious” (Daneshvar 298). Women all live under the veil of fear within their homes, their hearts and their society. Within the home as

well as outside of the home, they become pawns easily discarded and displaced based on gender. Women could be defined as insane or incapable of having the same mental ability as men making them easy pawn to men's power. Despite gender and cultural restrictions, death is the fate for every individual despite political endeavors, societal restrictions and cultural injustices.

### Zari and the Men in her Life

Zari's relationships with her husband Yusof and her son Khosrow within the home and her relationship with Dr. Abdollah Khan from the mental hospital delves into the development of her identity. Within her home she acts submissive to her husband and son's political endeavors and tries to play the role of wife and mother well, yet outside of the home she asserts herself with Khan Kaka and Dr. Abdollah Khan. The only times she does not is when they enter her home and she must sustain her subordinate position. Each of these relationships help to shape the pressures gender exemplifies for Iranian society.

Zari's son and husband become part of the ideological pressures. Her son becomes enthralled with Mr. Fotuhi, who represents political upheavals and tries to preach for an egalitarian state; however, in his personal life he is oppressive and patriarchal. Zari's husband Yusof becomes an archetype for the Marxist idealist of this period. Many Iranians like Yusof felt that the British were polluting Iranian nationalism and Iranians wanted to sustain Iran's culture. Russia was also trying to infiltrate Iran and take advantage of the country's resources, such as oil, and one way they saw they could do this was to influence people by spreading Marxism to the factions of people opposed to Reza Shah. Yusof represents one of these people. When Yusof invites in the outside world into the home, Zari is confined to her role as mother and wife. The patriarchal influences enter her home and remove her as the leader of her city. She is asked to

bring refreshments and food for the guests, but not contribute any opinion to these meetings, instead, “She was there to put the salt shaker in front of them, fill their glasses, or put the chicken gizzards on Majid’s plate...” (Daneshvar 206). When she attempts to say anything, she is shooed away like a fly on the wall. She lingers and tries to listen to the men speak about their political plans, and realizes the dire results of their plans.

During these discussions at her home, Zari realizes she is powerless. She says,

If only the world were in the hands of women, Zari thought. Women give birth. They are creators, and they know the value of their creation, the value of endurance, patience, monotony and being unable to do anything for oneself. Perhaps because men have never been creators, they’ll take any risk to create something. If the world were in the hands of women, how could there be wars?  
(204)

Zari recognizes the error of the men’s methods is with their approach. Daneshvar also connects the idea of the garden, women and creation in Zari’s perspective. The garden is feminine in nature as a place of creation, whether botanical or biological, and ultimately the garden not only represents the women’s condition, but specifically Zari. She also knows because men cannot be creators like women or possess the same traits, they also cannot understand or value qualities that a leader should have. Men only know war, and women want to avoid that repercussion because they distinguish it as detrimental to their own people. Zari ends her observation of the group of men by saying, “They know it is useless, but to prove their existence, their manhood, and courage, and for their children not to later spit on their graves, with their own free hands, they dig...bite my tongue” (Daneshvar 207). Like the crows and sparrows in her garden, she sees the

quest of these idealists as fatal. Their motivation is not betterment of the Iranian people, but an act of self-gratification with grave endings.

Zari's relationship with Yusof is interesting because despite his affection for her, he still treats her like a pretty object he possesses. The only time she is able to assert herself within the home is when Yusof is not there, and when he is there he cuddles her like a child. He becomes the catalyst that lets in the outside world without the consent of Zari or an understanding how his political actions could affect their family. For example, he lets in the leftist and Marxist group of men (Mr. Fotuhi, Malek Sohrab and Malek Rostam) as well as Kolu, the orphaned child of a villager he shoots. Zari, not Yusof, is the one affected by these intrusions, because she must protect her children from them. In particular she must shield Khosrow who becomes enamored with Mr. Fotuhi's political agenda and propaganda. Furthermore, she is expected to care for, Kolu, a child who is not hers. The responsibility of these intrusions falls in Zari's hands, not Yusof who technically is the head of the household.

Zari describes how she met Yusof while she was in school and he charmed her with his intellect and wit, yet he also fell in love with her for her intelligence. This places Zari on an equal scholarly plane with Yusof, yet her intellectual value becomes diminished once she weds. At one point Zari has a conversation with her husband and son regarding fear and women. She says to Khosrow, "Yes dear. In your opinion and that of your father and teacher, I am a coward, a weakling. I am always afraid that something might happen to one of you. I can't bear the thought. But I too... when I was a girl, I, too, was brave in my own way" (Daneshvar 141). Zari's comment suggests that a woman prior to marriage still has individuality and strength. As a person she is able to make her own decisions, yet the instant she becomes married and comes under her husband's roof, she loses that courage and individuality and fear sets in weakening her.

This also implies that the institution of marriage casts women as secondary citizens. Zari concedes this by saying to Yusof (who asks her why should she have changed and not be brave anymore), “If I want to stand up to anyone, I must first stand up to you and then what a war of nerves will begin. Do you want to hear more truths? Then listen. It is you who have taken my courage away. I have put up with you for long that it has become a habit with me” (Daneshvar 142). Although she is honest here, she recognizes that it has become a habit to be compliant with Yusof. She will always be secondary to his power within the household. Yusof becomes enraged and Zari defends herself by saying she wants an abortion. Daneshvar shows how abortion is a tool to assert power for a woman. Before Sharia law, Iranian women could have abortions by their own choice, giving them a sliver of power over their own bodies and choices. It is the one decision Zari has complete control over without any patriarchal or political intrusion.

The conversation continues and Zari asks Yusof, “What should I do to become courageous?” (Daneshvar 143). Yusof responds, “First, when you are afraid to do something, if you are in the right, do it in spite of your fear, my cute kitten!” Zari asks an intelligent question, and Yusof demeans her position and intellect by calling her a cute kitten. Zari lashes out and responds, “I am a human being” (Daneshvar 143). The dialogue here shows how Yusof continues to degrade Zari despite her attempts at having an open discussion with him. When Yusof has discussions with the men there is a feeling of camaraderie and respect, but he has disregard with Zari. Zari bursts into tears and threatens to do the only thing she can: get an abortion. Instead of recognizing the frustration in his wife’s disposition, Yusof treats her like a child. Even within relationships there is an imbalance between human beings. Despite the fact Yusof loves Zari, he still defines her by her gender and the roles she is expected to endure. Even within a marriage, a husband and wife must be equal as human beings, rather than imbalanced by



roles. Perhaps by creating a balance within marriage, fear disappears and women can assert their individuality.

One male figure that appears to take time to understand and interpret women's experiences with clarity and philosophy is Dr. Abdollah Khan. He appears as the only male confidant Zari connects with. After Yusof is killed, he recites Hafez to her, reminding her that he is part of the poetry groups that had gathered during Reza Shah's time. They were a group of men and women who approached political and cultural inconsistencies of Iran through poetry and art. Daneshvar slips in a nod to the artist as an intellectual voice for the nation by making Dr. Abdollah Khan a logical character. Also, Zari confides in him after Yusof's death when she feels she is going mad and seeks his advice. As the other men in Zari's world wait to hear whether she has gone insane, the doctor replies to them, "If you ask me, your sister-in-law has done more than well to be able to stand on her feet. Her anxiety and distress are quite natural. This is no laughing matter. Those of you around her, just leave her alone" (Daneshvar 289). Zari finds peace and understanding with Yusof's death and the death of his political mission. She is practically released from her position as wife and mother, and it takes an intelligent character, a poet and doctor, a man of science and art, to speak sense and logic in this chaotic moment.

When the doctor tells her that Miss Masihadam has been released from the hospital and will be well, Zari feels "like a bird released from its cage" (Daneshvar 289) and "she knew she could be afraid of no one and nothing in the world" (Daneshvar 289). As much as she loved Yusof, his death and his influence over her home come to an end and liberate her from her marriage. At the end of the scene Zari and the doctor walk toward the garden gate together. This scene is presented as a way to imply that marriage is detrimental to a woman's identity or courage. It also shows that an educated man is able to give Zari a form of liberation and labeling

her grief natural. Zari's relationship with the men in her life delves into how marriage and position can be oppressive to a woman's identity. However, at the same time the reader wonders if Zari would have ended up like Miss Masihadam if Dr. Abdollah Khan had not come to her defense against the other men. Perhaps the only way that Zari can experience liberation is at the hands of another male figure. Ultimately it is Zari's gender that prevents her from becoming liberated or form a sense of identity separate from her family and husband.

### Women's Relationships Establishing Women's Position

How women relate to other women becomes a prominent issue within the novel. In the novel, Zari's relationships with the various women in her life are tense. Besides her interaction with the women at the mental institution, it is Zari's relationships with Ezzatoddowleh and Khanom Fatemeh that show other types of women present during Reza Shah's rule, and ultimately the differing ideals each of these two women types represent. Khanom Fatemeh represents the traditional group of women who wanted to leave the turmoil of modern Iran and flee to the holy city of Karbala. Ezzatoddowleh represents the group of women who had betrayed their own people and banded with the government to seek out individuals against the government. These women betrayed their own countrymen in order to survive and establish their own freedom and power in this moment of disorder. The women in the novel become stratified because of the allegiances they make to oppressive regimes whether it is related to colonialism, nationalism, and/or patriarchy. However, at the end of the novel all three women bond over the next trial in a woman's life: widowhood.

Khanom Fatemeh represents the ideals of classical traditions in Iran. She is part of a generation who wished to rid themselves of the political tensions and escape to Karbala, a holy

city commemorated by the Battle of Karbala.<sup>8</sup> This group of women sought emancipation and sanctuary in Karbala once they rid themselves of Iran's conflicts. Zari's relationship with Khanom Fatemeh is interesting because although the two women care about each other, Khanom Fatemeh still acts as a continual nuisance while Zari tries to maintain her household and the events occurring outside the home. Khanom Fatemeh simply whines and continually threatens to leave for Karbala. She makes her decree to leave Iran early in the novel when she says, "I'll drop everything and leave this place... Then I'll be free. I'll be neither oppressor nor oppressed. It won't be my country, and I won't be so heartbroken. Oh, Imam Hoseyn, summon this lonely slave to yourself!" (Daneshvar 77). Ironically Khanom Fatemeh believes that her salvation will come in her release from Iran and her return to a society where the essence of patriarchy was bred. The Battle of Karbala was over the rightful heir in line in the succession of the Islamic faith. According to their doctrine women are strictly seen as lesser than a man. Yet Khanom Fatemeh feels that her release from oppression and Zari's household is in the city of Karbala. Many women of her generation saw Karbala as the utopian society because they would be part of a community of people who were there to be part of one higher ideal, which was a service to Imam Hoseyn (or Husain ibn Ali). They believed that their religious beliefs would unite them despite gender differences. This turns out to be false once we hear Khanom Fatemeh's story about her own mother.

Khanom Fatemeh's story about her mother's quest to Karbala is ironic because her mother meets a dire end. Her mother also left her husband and family and fled to Karbala with

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<sup>8</sup> The Battle of Karbala took place on October 10, 680 in Karbala, or present day Iraq. One side of the battle was a group of supporters of Muhammad's grandson Husain ibn Ali, and on the other was a military detachment from the forces of Yazid I, the Umayyad caliph, who ibn Ali refused to recognize as caliph. Ibn Ali and his supporters were killed during the battle. The people who died are regarded as martyrs by Shiite Muslims, and the battle has a central place in Shiite history and comes up in Iranian literature.

the same notion that she would be saved once she arrived. But once she arrived she realized that Karbala was like any other city and she did not have the money to survive. She eventually took a position as a maid in a women's household to survive. When Khanom Fatemeh goes to see her mother on her deathbed she finds the woman in a small room on a plank bed without any amenities or care from the woman she was working for. Even outside of Iran and within the sanctity of an Islamic city women are inferior. With this personal and firsthand knowledge Khanom Fatemeh still does not realize that her end could be just as dismal. She clings to the traditions she is familiar with in order to have hope.

Only at the end of the novel does she refrain from talking about Karbala any further and stays by Zari's side once Yusof is killed. She realizes her patriotism and loyalty needs to be for her family. In this moment Khanom Fatemeh's personal endeavors become familial because she vows to stay with Zari who is affected the most by the political discord. Her desire to address her own personal wants is overshadowed by her need to stay close to Zari and support her now. Perhaps now that the patriarch of the home has perished, Khanom Fatemeh might reclaim freedom there because Zari becomes head of household. Her salvation comes via Yusof's end.

Ezzatoddowleh represents the women who abandoned Iranian nationalism to take positions within the government as spies reporting on potential terrorists of the state. These groups were the idealists, Socialists and Communists such as Mr. Fotuhi and Yusof. Zari and everyone in the city are aware of Ezzatoddowleh's nature and refer to her as a "serpent" and her appearance is always described as dark and unwelcoming. Even Khan Kaka, Yusof's brother, who is partial to the government and the British says of Ezzatoddowleh early in the novel, "Do you know what Ezzatoddowleh is like? She is there from dawn to dusk, plotting against everybody in the city. She's become a wheeler-dealer" (Daneshvar 73). Ezzatoddowleh is

established as a cohort of the government who is against her own people. Her sense of patriotism is shattered by her affiliations with the government. She is set apart from the rest of her community early in the novel. She is a complex character because she establishes herself within the public sphere, even though she is a woman and is outcaste not just for being a woman but someone who goes against the rest of the community.

We are introduced to Ezzatoddowleh when she asks Zari to come and meet her at her home. Zari is suspicious of her intentions but goes out of politeness and a fear of what Ezzatoddowleh is capable of since she is known to be cavorting with the governmental officials. Once she arrives and they speak, Zari realizes Ezzatoddowleh wants Zari's help in getting her daughter, who is in prison for smuggling arms, to confess to her crimes and be released from prison. Zari refuses to help Ezzatodoowleh, which establishes hostility between the two women. Since women were not part of the political discourse, their political actions were established on a more personal and intimate level, mostly, with one another within their homes. Because they supported their sons and husbands in their political endeavors, how they related to one another carried over into these relations. Since Ezzatoddowleh is secretly making her way into the political arena, Zari refuses to side with Ezzatoddowleh not only in her personal doings, but in her affiliation with a governmental insider. We see a schism between political attachments to Reza Shah, the British and Socialist ideals through the social discourse of women interacting with one another.

Eventually Ezzatoddowleh does publically enter the political situation when she begins to work for the Women's Association to inspect homes and women's prisons. The headline for her commendation reads,

Her Excellency Khanom Ezzatoddowleh, a charitable and benevolent lady, was assigned by the Women's Association to inspect the houses in the Mordestan District as well as the women's prison. Under her supervision, all the houses in the above-mentioned district have been cleaned and disinfected. Also, this gracious lady magnanimously paid out of her own pocket the fines for a woman prisoner, who, out of ignorance, had engaged in illegal means of making a living. Her ladyship was instrumental in obtaining freedom for this infirm and shelterless woman. The Office of the Governor General of Fars commends this humanitarian and benevolent lady. (Daneshvar 247)

Ezzatoddowleh uses her money and position not only to free her daughter, which the commendation alludes to, but she is working with the government to inspect homes in the Mordestan District in order to seek out individuals against the government. She removes herself from her peers and her community, yet as a woman she establishes herself as a citizen by taking part in a public office and becoming part of a national movement. Ezzatoddowleh may be an enemy to Zari and others socially, but she is a progressive because she has taken control of her position as a woman in this patriarchal society and involves herself in the public sphere. Firoozeh Kashani Sabet argues in her article "Patriotic Womanhood: The Culture of Feminism in Modern Iran, 1900-1941" that women did not break away from domesticity, but they did try to venture beyond what to establish their patriotism and freedom: "...patriotic womanhood allowed women to remain loyal to the homeland by combining familial obligations with civic ones" (39). Women like Ezzatoddowleh were patriotic and involved because, although they remained in their roles within the private sphere, they ventured out to be part of the public field. Ezzatoddowleh goes

beyond her role, and although she is treacherous and set apart from her community for her deception, she is still one female character who establishes some sort of liberation for herself.

The only point of convergence for all three women comes after Yusof's death. Ezzatoddowleh comes to see Zari and tries to find fault with Zari's depressive state. Zari feels that Ezzatoddowleh is trying to claim Zari is insane because of her behavior; however, in the end Ezzatoddowleh simply pays her respects and as she leaves Zari's home she says to Zari, "Well, at least he's left you enough to raise your children respectably" (Daneshvar 253). Widowhood presented a type of liberation from the institution of marriage and a new kind of life for Iranian women. When a husband passed, social and financial privileges were bestowed to a woman. First, all his financial belongings went to his wife so she may take care of their children. Like Ezzatoddowleh who gained her wealth after her husband's death, Zari would inherit and have control over the wealth of her own family. She could be like Ezzatoddowleh and gain independence through her financial freedom and use it to be something other than wife and mother. The one drawback was that if the husband had an adult son or brother, that male could force a woman out of her home so he may take ownership. So the threat of male dominance would always be there despite of her financial liberation.

This idea of widowhood as a status of respect is forged with the women's relationship. A woman would attain more respect and social acceptance because she had entered into the role and position as mother and wife. The difference between a married woman becoming a widow and an unmarried woman gaining liberation and recognition is that the married woman accepted these roles, while the unmarried woman has gone against it (like Miss Fotuhi, who is forced into an insane asylum for her resistance to marriage). The slightest divergence from this role could be detrimental to a woman's position and a threat to her liberation. For a woman to be fully

liberated from male dominance she would have to be married, establish her identity as mother and wife and then wait for widowhood. A drastic sacrifice for personal liberation.

Khanom Fatemeh and Ezzatoddowleh find their connection to Zari as a woman in this bond. Their camaraderie as women in a tragic moment connects them through their roles as women and as widows. Zari joins them in their widowhood. At Yusof's funeral the women sit separately from the men to mourn and Zari lays on the floor listening to the women tell stories and for the first time since Yusof's death finds peace amongst the group of women. Even though all three women represent three different types of women and stages within women's lives, they connect on their trials as woman entering widowhood as well as in their understanding that there will always be a threat to their security.

### Other Excluded Populations from Iran's National Identity

During Reza Shah's reign many of the nomadic tribes outside of the industrialized cities were left out of the political and social discourses. The reasons for this were most of the Iranian nomads were neither formally educated nor settled in one area and owning land. Like women, they were dismissed from being part of the national identity and being part of the public arena. The nomadic tribal culture consisted of being part of a flock or cult. They banded together to preserve their own traditions and beliefs that transcended beyond Iranian patriotism and religious influences of both Zoroastrianism and Islam. Their primary interest was their livelihoods and their education was based on pastoral survival.

In the novel Yusof brings Kolu into the home. He has killed Kolu's father and removes the child from his tribal setting and forces him into the urban setting. Many metropolitan citizens



look down on nomads as uncivilized groups and exclude them from the city culture. This distinction is apparent early in the novel when Khan Kaka expresses his view of them by saying, "...what use are food supplies to tribesmen? What use do they have for thistle huts? For as long as the world has turned, they have been satisfied with acorns, wild almonds and pistachios. What do they need a house for? Black tents are more than enough" (Daneshvar 75). The same kind of disregard for the validity of women as part of the Iranian national identity is applied to nomads as part of this outcast community. Much like Iranian women, nomads are ignored for their lack of education and position within the cities.

Kolu comes to represent this notion of the other as he is pushed into the city and Zari's home. Zari is the only person who sympathizes with his situation and she pleads to return home to his family. She tries to aide his transformation and integration into city life, but as hard as she tries Kolu resists. He eventually falls sick and is taken out of Zari's home and to the local hospital where he bonds with the Christians who run the hospital due to their stories of a shepard boy like Kolu. Despite his minor connection he continues to long for his home and his family. Philip C. Salzman discusses this resistance to change in his article "National Integration of the Tribes in Modern Iran" by pointing out that the tribal community was always reluctant to change and to adopt new ways of life. At the end of the novel he becomes part of the political upheaval, except he is used as a scapegoat for Yusof's death. When Yusof finally agrees to take him home and is killed during the journey, the government officials claim Kolu or Kolu's uncle killed Yusof with a slingshot. When Zari confirms that Kolu never took his slingshot with him because he was too excited to get home we realize that Yusof's death was a political assassination. Kolu becomes a ploy because he is seen as weaker and insignificant within this circumstance. He is

not educated nor has any power to stand up against these forces. Like the women in the novel, Kolu is also powerless for his position within any political or social influence.

When Kolu is brought into Zari's home Zari says to Yusof, "It's too soon for him to be taken out of his environment. No matter how good we are to him, it will be of no use" (Daneshvar 150). Yusof disregards Zari's warning and claims that once Kolu gets a taste of a comfortable life he will adjust, except he never does. Kolu begins to deteriorate and instead of integrating into the new urban community and culture, he adapts to a Christian one. Still Kolu pleads to be taken back to his village and when Zari sees that Yusof is resistant to this she begins to try to help the boy adapt to his new environment. Yusof simply says to Kolu, "...you will become civilized" (Daneshvar 157) as though Kolu is somehow uncivilized and that Yusof's urban ideals of civility have to be applied to Kolu now that he is physically within the city. Although Yusof is an idealist and socialist, he is still a patriarch. The same way he demeans Zari as a cute creature and disregards her intellect and ability, he also disregards Kolu as a human being with free will and identity. Kolu is an Iranian because he has been born and bred on Iranian soil, yet Yusof disregards him making Yusof a hypocrite in his own idealistic political pursuits.

Kolu eventually falls ill and Zari is there to care for him since Yusof is always away. When Zari calls the missionary hospital to take Kolu they tell her that all the beds are taken and are "exclusively for the foreign officers and soldiers" (Daneshvar 160). Immediately Zari and her household attendants begin to treat Kolu at home. They use natural remedies and herbs invoking a classical and traditional Iranian image of how patients were treated prior to industrialization and colonization in Iran. In a sense Kolu's remedies are invocative of his tribalism. However, the

home remedies are not enough to cure Kolu completely, and eventually with the help of Khan Kaka he is admitted to the missionary hospital.

The biggest change for Kolu comes when he leaves the hospital and returns to Zari's home with a cross around his neck and declares himself a Christian. The British influence is seen here because they persuade the boy with a story about a shepherd boy who is also taken away from his home. Kolu's is not educated and the missionary nurses capitalize on it by convincing him to wear the cross and declare himself a Christian even though he does not realize what either of these symbols mean. In Zari's home he is forced to be civilized by Yusof, while outside of the home he is influenced by the British colonization and made a Christian. Both spheres control Kolu because of his lack of education and knowledge about what either worlds indicate or mean. Still he asks to return home and does not adapt well to either environment because of his own loyalty to his tribesman and community.

In a sense Kolu is the most loyal to his own sense of identity out of all the characters because he does not give into any philosophy or ideology or culture easily; he still longs for his own culture and traditions within his village. Eventually Yusof agrees to take Kolu home and Zari observes as Kolu leaves, "The poor boy thought if he only got out of the garden, no matter where he went, he would be closer to his village" (Daneshvar 244). Kolu like Khanom Fatemeh, Sahar and Zari feels a need to leave the confinement of the garden because like the women, the garden represents a form of oppression. Kolu's oppression comes to an end when he is allowed to leave. When he leaves he takes with him crosses as "gifts" for his family thinking they are just tokens not a relic representative of a religious ideology. Still though, the colonization of the city leaves with Kolu and the pressures of the city and government carries to the tribal culture, threatening to contaminate the purity of their tribal identity.

When Yusof is killed Kolu becomes a scapegoat for Yusof's death. At first they claim that Kolu killed Yusof with a slingshot then claim that Kolu admits that his uncle shot Yusof, however Zari knows it is all "nonsense" (Daneshvar 254). She knows that it would have been impossible for Kolu to shoot Yusof because he did not have his slingshot. She also knows that Kolu's uncle could not have shoot Yusof because Yusof and Kolu were riding through a different city than where Kolu was from. He is the easiest scapegoat because he is the most silenced due to his exclusion from any form of citizenship. Zari recognizes this when she says, "None of us has ever accepted him as a child of the family, Zari thought. Not even me. Not even the children's aunt" (Daneshvar 244). Although his experience is similar to women's, Zari recognizes that even she and her aunt as women overlooked Kolu. They may share in their oppressive situations, but Zari disregards Kolu for his status as a nomad, his lack of education and his exclusion from the upper and middle-classed societies.

As an outsider to the events that occur within the city, Kolu is the most excluded and disfranchised member of his society. His patriotism is directed toward his clansman because with them he is equal even though he is considered Iranian by heritage. His cultural affiliation is for the community of the nomadic tribe he belongs to where he is recognized as a citizen.

## Conclusion: Iranian Writers in the Current Islamic Paradigm

So what now for Iranian women writers? In 1979 the Islamic Revolution was led by a majority of the population that was exhausted with the Pahlavi Monarchy. The demonstrators (comprised of Socialists, Communists, working-class men and women, and poor villagers) felt that the government was neglecting its working class population and lower caste people. They felt they were devoid of proper living conditions, jobs, education and food while the monarchy

was spending millions of dollars on frivolous public exploitations such as royal ceremonies, art and music programs and rebuilding the royal palace. The demonstrators rioted and walked the streets for over a year before the monarchy fell and the Ayatollah Khomeini along with his band of Muslim clerics took over the country in 1979. One of the first decrees was for the public decency of women as regarded in the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an. Also, the country's jurisprudence, or Sharia, was dictated by the words of the Qur'an. Women's rights to property, child custody, travel and material ownership was also forbidden unless she had written and verbal permission from her husband or eldest male member of her family. Women could not hold executive positions that would require them to make decisions because they were legally defined as weak and aloof. Women of all classes, including Daneshvar, who supported the Ayatollah's promise for change, were outraged at having their basic human rights taken away by the new laws. The government was using this decree as a means of Islamization of gender relations. They inflicted patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an to rationalize their impairment of women's rights.

This governmental shift swayed Iranian women writers to move away from their pre-revolutionary sociopolitical themes, styles and language into a blatant feminist context. The new Islamic laws continued to coerce women in their public and private lives. Women were still defined by their roles as chaste wives and good mothers, except now the question of their rights to their bodies and sexuality was also under patriarchal control as dictated by Sharia law. At first Iranian women tried using secular feminist ideology to appeal to the state regarding their situation. "Employing Islamic modernist discourse, secular feminists tried with little success to reform Muslim personal status codes or family law," (Badran 13) as theorist Margot Badran observes. The Iranian government saw secular feminism as a Western idea and condemned and

arrested anyone who related or encouraged Western ideals to the paradigm. Iranian women writers realized they had to work within the system to achieve equality for all Iranian women. Theorist Fereshteh Ahmadi observes, “Islamic feminists use methods and tools of linguistics, history, literary criticism, sociology, anthropology” (Ahmadi 37) to incorporate a feminist discourse within an Islamic model. It was at this time that an Islamic feminist theory began to take form and serve as a tool for writers and women to use in their opposition to the state’s new laws and condemnations. I cite Miriam Cooke’s definition of Islamic feminism in relation to Iranian feminists, as women who are not necessarily Muslim, rather their “worldview is best labeled as Islamic, situated somewhere on the continuum between a cultural identity that coexist easily with secularism and occasional ritualistic (Muslim) observances” (151).

This brought a change in themes, characterization and figurative language in women’s writing. Women writers began to become more feminist in their approach. Kamran Talatoff says in his article, “Iranian Women’s Literature: From Pre- Revolutionary Social Discourse to Post Revolutionary Feminism,” “These writings combine feminist consciousness based on experience, feminist politics, and strands of thoughts informed by Western feminism” (543). Literature continued to be an important tool for self-expression because women were still censored and confined publically and privately from the male paradigm, except now women writers began to attack the Islamification of Iran. Women writers went up in numbers and began to band together despite class or economic backgrounds. The themes of Commitment Literature changed from social awareness to all aspects of women’s social and private lives such as women’s economic dependency on men, women’s lives of the present and past, patriarchy, disapproval of marriage and feminist politics. Also, a rise in women’s bodies and sexuality in relation to virginity and abuse became a leading theme in women’s writing post-revolution.

Talatoff outlines this change by saying that there was a shift in form, style, symbols, metaphors and language from the pre-revolutionary social realism. Feminist terminology began to take form.

Daneshvar also took part in this shift within her own writing. Her post-revolutionary works deal with feminist themes such as men abusing women, the treatment of women and the opposition to traditional marriage. She began to confront women's issues explicitly rather than dealing with the self within a political context. Her work focused on women's maltreatment, such as in her recent works, *The Quenched Fire*, *The Playhouse* and *A City Like Paradise*. In *Savushun*, Zari's hardly had a voice because she was concerned with the consequences of her actions, as Daneshvar refers to. However, now, her female protagonists firmly attach the inconsistencies of their private and public lives under Islamic jurisprudence.

Modern Iranian female writers who continue to disagree with the state's maltreatment of women have used this opportunity to depict the Islamified nation and the feminist response in their writing. The position of women is now more strongly linked to the political state of Iran because of the legal ramifications of women's actions both privately and publicly. For female writers, these legal sanctions on women also work their way into their written works, because the government is able to not only censor them as writers, but the themes, languages and plots they write about as women. If their work is politically in tune with Islamic ideals, yet romantic or improper in the eyes of the Ministry of Guidance, they can be persecuted. However, education, writing and expressing women's experiences in their writing is the best method women writers have in expressing their sufferings, points of view and identity.

The literary shift between the pre-revolutionary writing and post-revolutionary writing lies with the Islamic Revolution. Daneshvar paved a small path during Mohammad Reza Shah's

reign only to find new censorship under the Islamic theocracy of the revolution. However, now, women writers are writing more than before, because they have had a chance to be educated and involved regardless of class, education or economical background. The themes and stories they are writing are now specific to women's experience. No longer are they purely political, but women writers are looking at how Iranian women experience these political changes. What is her experience? What is her identity? The themes and styles become feminist. As Talattof says, "Their female protagonists tend to exemplify the political nature of the self, care for their historical sisters, promote womanhood, and express awareness of the political issues surrounding the female body and sexuality" (The Politics of Writing in Iran 141). He goes on to say that these authors break away from the dominant pre-revolutionary writing styles, figures and metaphors in their language to distinguish them from the male writers and themes of that period.

Daneshvar leads this trend. If it was not for her work in pre-revolutionary Iran, and her willingness to break away from the Commitment Literature styles, themes and techniques, other women writers would not have a model of a woman writing to look to. Her use of the garden as allegory for women's experience and her presentation of a woman narrator, allowed other women writers to also write for a women's perspective. Without Daneshvar there to set a standard of women's experiences, other women writers might not have been able to write with the same sense of awareness. She does not just speak on women's experience within and outside the home, but how the political conditions of these times are male influenced and dominated, displacing women outside of their walls. This is also a reflection on her experience as a woman writer, trying to gain credibility within a male literary tradition and culture. Even though Daneshvar has made these advances, today women writers are still working toward a time for



women's emancipation and human liberation within a male framework, but through their own voice and experience.

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