Diasporic Body-Memory Politics: Sexualized Public Gender-Role Surveillance in Post-Revolutionary and Post-War Iran

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By

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Abstract

The nationalist Islamization project has become one of the Iranian Islamic Republic's longest-standing goals, grounded in efforts to rule women's bodies, beginning right after the revolution in 1979. Islamization aims to eradicate secularizing approaches to gender socialization in Iranian society by regulating women's clothing and intimate-sexual relationships as a symbol of nationalism, building a substantive weapons arsenal, and making alternative international allies in resistance to western imperialisms. Under the banner of sacred values, Islamicist authorities stake their nationalist claims by surveilling and thereby invading and marking women's and girls' bodies and lives with their interpretations, interrogations, and controlled aspirations, leaving a residue of structured psycho-social affects and embodied memories.

Three diasporic Iranian women from the 1980s generation agreed to co-explore how the Islamicist government's male-dominated, female interrogative culture have affected their lives. Drawing upon collective memory work (CMW), the study examines specific co-selected surveillance practices that mark women and girls as vulnerable in Iran's public and private spaces. Participants engaged in five virtual, three-hour meetings over a period of six weeks, followed by collaborative work on written memories, before developing a collective biography in the form of a virtual ethnodrama. The Persian term, *toroma*, is used here to trace the unique normalization of interrogative gender surveillance and related forms of violence after the Islamic revolution and the subsequent Iran-Iraq war. The results demonstrate the willful production of an alienated female body, detached from its agency under hegemonic Islamicist practices of monitoring gender power markers and intimate relationships. The variable alignments between private patriarchal families and public governance approaches have produced an Islamicization of sexualities, with distorting complexities in social relations that pass *toromas* across generations in ways that can resurface in the diaspora.

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Dedication

To my dear partner, whose calm presence always assuages the pain of writing, making it sweeter for me. Thank you for the time you have dedicated to hearing me and sharing ideas about my projects. Faraz, thank you so much.

I also dedicate the final product of this thesis to all Iranian women for their great resiliency and agency, especially to my kind-hearted mother and my dearest sisters, who are distant by circumstance, but always living within me.

To Akram, Ladan, and Leila.

Table of Contents

Permission to Use i
Disclaimer ii
Abstract iii
Acknowledgments iv
Dedication v
Table of Contents vi
List of Tables x
List of Figures xi
Chapter 1 Sexualized Islamicization and Everyday Violence in Iranian Female Interrogative Culture 1
1.1 In lieu of Introduction: An Emotional Roller Coaster 1
1.2 Background 2
1.3 The Politics of Islamicizing Sexualization 4
1.3.1 The Islamic Revolution; Everyday life and New Techniques for Islamicizing Female Bodies 4
1.4 Dress Code: An Excuse for Establishing an Interrogative Culture 6
1.5 Traumatic Experiences through Intimate Relationships 9
1.6 Sexual Abstinence as a Source of Trauma 11
1.7 The Iran-Iraq War and Its Concomitant Traumas 12
1.8 Beyond the War's Memories and Trauma 13
1.8.1 The War's Visceral and Embodied Trauma 13
1.9 Study Objective and Research Questions 16
Chapter 2 Literature Review: Primary Approaches to Trauma and Resilience 17
2.1 Introduction 17
2.2 Trauma's Timeline and Background 17
2.3 Trauma in Psychoanalysis; Freud's Reading of Trauma 20
2.4 Trauma and Representation; a Caruthean Reading 22
2.5 Trauma, Silence, and Witnessing 24
2.6 Trauma and the Politics of Identification 26
2.7 Insidious Trauma 27
2.7.1 Normalization of Rhizomatic Violence and Ordinary Trauma in Everyday life 27
2.7.1 The Other and the Object of Fear 28

2.7.2 Kinetic Memories and the Embodiment of Daily Traumas 28
2.8 *Toroma*; Toward a Unique Definition of Iranian Trauma 29
2.9 Undoing Traumas/*Toromas*; Some Strategies for Redemption.. 30
2.9.1 Disidentification and Traumatized/*Toromozied* Subordinated Bodies........................ 30
2.9.2 Performative Body for Undoing Traumas/*Toromas* 31
2.9.3 The Theatre of the Oppressed; Reappropriation of Traumatized/*Toromatized* Lives.. 32
Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework: The Affective Turn and Critical Feminist Theory ... 33
3.1 Introduction 33
3.2 Affect Theory and its Roots 34
3-3 Affect and Feminism.. 36
3.4 Judith Butler; The Quandaries of Insect Taboo 38
3.5 Stranger Encounters; *Toromas* under Iranian Women's Skin... 40
3.6 Toward Critical Appreciation of Iranian Women's Resistances in Everyday Life at Home and Abroad 43
Chapter 4 Methodology: Collective Memory-Work and Collective Biography 46
4.1 Introduction 46
4.2 Collective Memory Work 48
4.3 Collective Memory Work; an Agenda for Practice.. 51
4.4 Collective Biography; Toward a Virtual-Ethnodrama 55
Chapter 5 Launching our Collective Memory Work Together 58
5.1 *Toroma*, Ethics, and Intersectionality 58
5.2 Reviving the Past; Exploring Embodied Memories with the Help of Memory Work 60
5.2.1 Prompted Discussion on the Shared Past.. 60
5.2.2 Dress Code— Ali's First Prompt... 60
5.2.3 Dress Code— Ali's Second Prompt... 61
5.2.4 Dress Code— Ali's Third Prompt 62
5.2.5 Dress Code— Sayeh's Prompt 62
5.2.6 Dress Code— Baran's Frist Prompt... 63
5.2.7 Dress Code— Baran's Second Prompt... 64
5.2.8 Intimate Relationship— Ali's Prompt... 66
5.2.9 Intimate Relationship— Sayeh's Prompt---Mountains and Waterfalls....................... 66
5.2.10 Intimate Relationship— Baran's Prompt.. 67
5.2.11 Sexual Abstinence— Ali's Prompt... 68

5.2.12 Sexual Abstinence— Sayeh's Prompts 69
5.2.13 Sexual Abstinence— Baran's First Prompt 69
5.2.14 Sexual Abstinence— Baran's Second Prompt 70
5.3 Some Shared Keywords 70
5.4 Our Shared Triggers for Writing Memory Scenes 71
5.5 Toward Writing Memory Scenes 71
5.5.1 Feedback on Writing Process 71
Chapter 6 Results: Memory Scenes on *Maqnāe* (the Scarf) 73
6.1 Introduction 73
6.2 Dress Code: *Maqnāe* (the Scarf) 74
6.2.1 Panopticon 74
6.2.2 A Photo of the Two 77
6.2.3 *Prim* 81
Chapter 7 Results: Intimate Relationships as a Site of *Shouresh* (Rebellion) 85
7.1 Introduction 85
7.2 Emancipation 85
7.3 Guard 88
7.4 Manifesto 92
Chapter 8 Results: Sexual Abstinence as a Site of *Naqes* (Incompleteness) 96
8.1 Introduction 96
8.2 Unsatisfied Desire 96
8.3 Dizziness 99
8.4 So Far… So Close 102
8.5 Distorting Complicities 105
Chapter 9 Discussion and Results: Collective Memories in the Diaspora: From Targeted Girls to Resilient Women 107
9.1 Scenes from a Collective Biography of *Toromatic* Memories: A Virtual Ethnodrama 107
Scene 1 108
Scene 2 114
Scene 3 116
Chapter 10 Final Thoughts; Toward an Emancipatory Diasporic Resilience 121
10.1 Conclusion 121
10.2 Undoing *Toromas* is a Process 124

10.3 Suggestions for Further Research 126
References.. 128
Appendices... 139

List of Tables

Table 4-1. Text-analysis: Adaptation Based on Frigga Haug's Model…………………………52

Table 4-2. Steps in Collective Memory Work………………………………………………53

Table 5-1. Shared Keywords for Dress Code, Intimate Relationship & Sexual Abstinence……71

Table 6-1. *Panopticon's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction……………………………149

Table 6-2. *A Photo of the Two's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction………………………150

Table 6-3. *Prim's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction……………………………………151

Table 7-1. *Emancipation's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction……………………………153

Table 7-2. *Guard's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction……………………………………154

Table 7-3. *Manifesto's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction………………………………156

Table 8-1. *Unsatisfied Desire's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction………………………157

Table 8-2. *Dizziness's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction………………………………159

Table 8-3. *So Far---So Close's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction………………………160

List of Figures

Figure 1-1. Gasht-e-Ershad in Tehran's Street……………………………………………………7

Figure 1-2. Female Police Training in Tehran ……………………………………………………7

Figure 1-3. Islamicist Police Interrogating Relationship in Tehran Highways ………………9

Figure 1-4. Islamicist Police Interrogating Relationship and Loose Hijab …………………9

Figure 1-5. Female Police in Post-revolutionary Iran ……………………………………………13

Figure 1-6. *Komiteh* Patrolling on Street in 1980s ………………………………………………15

Figure 2-1. Trauma Timeline…………………………………………………………………………19

Figure 5-1. Hijab-wearing Party or *Taklif* Party……………………………………………………64

Figure 5-2. The 1980s Women Manteaux Style……………………………………………………65

Figure 5-3. The *Chalus* Road…………………………………………………………………………68

Figure 5-4. The *Chalus* Road…………………………………………………………………………68

Chapter 1

Sexualized Islamicization and Everyday Violence in Iranian Female Interrogative Culture

1.1 In lieu of Introduction: An Emotional Roller Coaster

I remember the first day I arrived in Canada, in early August 2019. I stepped into Pearson Airport terminal in Toronto on a roller coaster of paradoxical feelings. I stood in the airport concourse with several pieces of baggage, full of excitement, ecstasy, fear, sadness, agony, joy, and surprise. I had achieved a childhood dream of studying abroad and I was enroute to my destination in Saskatchewan, where I would begin graduate studies. Simultaneously, there was the anguish of fearing my visa's rejection or any probability that might result in returning to my country, the Islamic Republic of Iran. My homeland, where I had been rooted my entire life, had become the primary origin of my apprehension. Perched on the edge of these intense feelings, I had no immediate resolution for the internal quandaries that emerged upon entry into my new diasporic subjectivity.

These deep-seated fears did not appear to me all at once. It seems that I got acclimatized to them during the years I had dwelt in my home country. Upon setting foot in Canada, I was suddenly frightened by an unknown stranger to whom I could not refer, whose elusive presence became increasingly disturbing. The memories that came flooding back in the airport were very confusing. The airport provided an apt container for my affective reorientation to past, present, and future relationships. With its regulated entry and exit, the feeling of simultaneously being included and excluded might, perhaps, have assisted me in leaving behind my past, and investing in my future. However, my past's dim and distant memories, also embedded in my embodied present, could potentially hinder me from achieving my goals. My "past [was] contemporaneous with the present it has[had] been, while the present, while acting, [was] also connected to the past and the future, the one in memory, the other in anticipation" (Grosz 2005, 111). Standing at the passport control desk, I was beaming at the visa officer, seeking to establish a trusting

relationship, to prevent the likelihood of my visa's rejection, as a very first step toward my future life.

This roller coaster of feelings, embodied in my shaky sensibility and sweaty hands, was obscured behind my fake happy face. Staring into the visa officer's eyes, I responded to any inquiries about my entry to Canada while tracing my own personal geography of affective subordination and escape. It did not matter if these were the official questions that every immigrant had to respond to; it seemed like an interrogative court to me. Somehow, questioning of any sort seemed to conjure the enduring and bitter memories that I was attempting to leave behind.

These memories derived from my lived experiences in my home country, where women encounter myriad bodily and sexual restrictions in their daily lives, under a theocratic political regime founded on their subordination. I had been internalizing these bodily restrictions for over thirty-five years before immigrating to Canada. What was overwhelming, however, was my embodied reactions to those revived memories in my new context, as if I were back home in Iran

1.2 Background

Born in 1985 in the Islamic Republic of Iran, I belong to the generation that spent their childhood in the early years after the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the subsequent Iran-Iraq War, the longest recent war in the Middle East. In 1979, a revolution upset the monarchy in Iran, and the clergy took control of the state. This "theocratic rule has fundamentally changed the worlds of everyone, [especially women], making everyday life more centered on Islam and establishing greater state monitoring and control over personal lives" (Abrahamian, 1982, as cited by Mahdavi. 2007). This era was also marked by Sharia law and Islamic hegemonic gender control, where women were required to cover up their bodies, not exposing them to any male's view. The "Islamization project" aimed to produce and reproduce Islamic subject-bodies, targeting women's bodies, in particular, for coercive control by monitoring their sexual or sexualized behaviours. Female bodies "became a major battleground in the Islamic republic, as seen in legislation and heavy punishment regulating Islamic dress and death sentences for 'sexual deviants.'" (445). Should women disobey this Islamic law in public, they could be sentenced as criminals.

This rigid control over female bodies and sexualities was linked to the Iran-Iraq war's "sacred" values. Shortly after the 1979 Revolution, "Iraq invaded Iran and ignited a destructive

eight-year war that resulted in a large number of casualties and adverse health conditions" (Behrouzan 2016, 21). Many civilians and veterans were traumatized. Just after the war broke out, the *hijab* "became a flag for the Islamic country, and the morality police (*Komiteh*[1]) was launched by the Islamic authorities to sweep away all non-religious behaviours like unveiling, drinking, and selling alcohol and illegitimate heterosexual relationships" (Sadeghi 2008, 254). The *hijab* became an emblem of the Islamicized country and a signature of the booming Islamic revolution. Marked as "sacred defence," the war provided an apt ground for the clergy's politics of piety, preaching on women's necessary modesty, under the chaotic conditions of war.

Although burgeoning Islamic regulations and the war's "sacred" values targeted mature women, it affected little girls born in this epoch profoundly, since they were expected to become the "complete Muslim women" of the future. In order to be a " 'good' [/complete] Muslim woman, women were taught how to dress accordingly, how to behave around men, and what to do to avoid sin" (Abdmolaie 2013). Thus, families and schools demanded chastity and purity, striving to train "good girls" to become the "complete Muslim woman." Many adult women left the country, narrating their post-revolutionary traumas in the diaspora (Naghibi 2009, Moghissi 1999 and 2006, Talebi 2011). However, my generation, who spent their girlhoods under strict Islamic regulations, accrued traumatic embodied memories under the rigid discipline of the "new" Islamic regime. The age at which one experiences trauma, or finds themselves in a position to engage consciously with it, will affect the extent and quality of their capacity to do the necessary hermeneutic work to begin healing, whether through oral, written, creative, or performative articulation.

After graduating with a degree in cultural studies more than a decade ago, I decided to pursue women's and gender studies (WGST) in order to reflect on the untold narratives of marginalized Iranian women. Deep down, I knew that the fear I had encountered at the airport was not simply a personal matter, but was also inextricably bound up with having been raised in an Islamicist interrogative culture, affecting those who have no chance of escape most profoundly. These lived experiences informed the early shape of my thesis. The Islamic Republic's surveillance, body

[1] The Islamic Revolution Committee, known as *Komiteh* has a law enforcement role in Iran. *Komiteh* forces were accountable for enforcing Islamic regulations and moral standards on social behaviors beginning the revolution. This localized state political apparatus was reformatted to foster other organizations with the same functions, in more recent years. Throughout the literature, the term *Gasht-e-Ershad* is used to refer to this structurally empowered version of morality police, which has much more power than the typical, less formalized conservative political pressure groups referred to as the morality police in the West.

control, and invasive interrogations of women's and girls' bodies and sexualities could not have affected me, solely; rather, they reflected collective traumas that may remain unresolved for many in my generation. Accepted by the WGST program at the University of Saskatchewan, I decided to explore whether other diasporic Iranian women had carried their traumatic memories abroad.

Trauma, in this sense, is defined as "an encounter with something so terrifying or shocking that it plunges those who experience it into a world of uncertainty and fear" (Hutchison 2016, 38). This "terrifying something," however, can also accrue through the imposed precarities of everyday life. Despite Iranian women's resistance, the Islamic Republic's policies were ubiquitous, especially when we were harassed for trivial activities deemed inappropriate in an Islamic patriarchal society. My aim in this chapter is to examine the coercive insertion of bodily fears into Iranian women's lives, specifically via the launch and ongoing operations of the morality police, targeting women's sexual relationships, dress code, and bodily activities such as dancing, playing sports, or engaging in any activities that might draw male attention. Focusing on the internalization of fear and its power to trigger traumatic memories in diverse geo-political contexts, I seek to shed light on how Iranian women and girls have been othered by these coercive forces, have been reduced to symbols of male power in the name of homeland security.

1.3 The Politics of Islamicizing Sexualization

1.3.1 The Islamic Revolution; Everyday life and New Techniques for Islamicizing Female Bodies

Prior to the revolution, and in the aftermath of World War II, Iran was a playground for the Allied forces, influenced both by US policies and interventions on the one hand, and by Britain, Russia, and Germany on the other. The dictatorship of Reza Shah (1925-1941), the first king of the Pahlavi dynasty, practiced mere obedience to Western governments and their disregard for the fledgling Iranian parliament after the constitutional revolution. This led to his ouster from the country and handing over the Pahlavi government to his educated son, Mohammad Reza Shah in 1941. This "occupation, the abdication of Reza Shah, and new economic and social problems created by war, [led to] growing instability and unrest" (Keddie and Richard 2003, 133). Thus, the Shah, working as a mediator, decided to facilitate what he and his supporters considered a greater balance among the practices of the society, the nation, and the

international allies. He showed “a growing interest in modernizing Iran’s economy and society and in making the country Western in character, [culture] and military [strength]” (134). However, the westernization of society was not to the liking of the national-religious forces, the radical left, nor the clergy, who still had a profound effect on the people’s lives.

The resulting Islamic revolution “had distinctive features, especially the leading role of clerics” (240), as galvanized in February 1979 by Rohullah Khomeini, a prominent Islamic leader who united different factions in revolt. As Afary (2009) argues, “once the regime attained some degree of authority, it established a new judicial discourse on sexuality, with the underlying theme of granting more power over women’s sexuality and reproductive functions” (264). The new Islamic government attempted to erase any signs of the westernized Pahlavi dynasty, including those affecting women's activities. The clerics “tried to eliminate certain techniques of the body such as sports, particularly for women. Modern contact sports such as ‘volleyball came to be considered transgressive because women’s bodies were exposed’” (270). Hence, the Iranian Islamization project aligned its long-term outcomes with the extent to which the Republic could rule women’s bodies and sexualities, as signifiers of regime change.

At the time of the 1979 Revolution, as Batmanghelichi (2020) points out, institutions of the “embryonic government, such as the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, began devising policies on which the state's ideals of Muslim women, as pious, modest, and self-sacrificing mothers and wives became socially, [nationally], religiously and legally enforced” (7). This enforcement mobilized an agenda to retrain the women of subsequent generations. Thus, the Islamic culture triggered discourses of power through which Iranian female bodies and sexualities were to be constructed as signs of its success. Under the rubric of the “ideal” Muslim woman, the Islamic regime dichotomized women's lives, propagating differential treatments for “Western dolls” (Zahedi 2008) versus “ideal Muslim women.”

This was not the first time women’s bodies and sexualities became a battleground through the establishment of sexualized codes of conduct in Iran. The ways “Iranian women’s sexuality and femininity came to be regulated and desired in the Islamic Republic bore striking similarities to how they came to be reformed, disciplined, and conceptualized during the Pahlavi years” (Batmanghelichi 2020, 15), when women were summarily unveiled, with or without consent. Their westernization, then, was symbolic of the modernized nation; during the revolutionary period, the incoming Islamic authority tied women’s moral character to the veil, symbolizing

national Muslim identity through female chastity (Zahedi 2008). Women were symbols of the nation in both regimes.

The "Islamization project," thus, produced a feminine subject who knew in advance that unless they were being modest and docile, they could be thoroughly monitored and interrogated, even by random strangers. This repetitive interrogation of women's bodies, movements, and sexualities remained a critical resource for establishing fear as foundational to femininity and for scrutinizing and measuring obedience to the larger Islamization project. Under the name of Islam and Sharia law, continuous micro and macro aggressions stirred up greater violence and terror in women's quotidian lives. By micro aggressions, I mean simple expressions of verbal denigration or scathing glances and the like. When I write of macro aggressions, I am referring to larger practises of discrimination such as a direct physical altercation, or more structurally imposed barriers such job or housing discrimination and the like. The Islamic Republican authorities, as Yaghoobi (2012) points out, "rebuil[t] a gender apartheid society, through the introduction of [a] dress code and segregation of public spaces" (71). Called the "eyes and ears" of the Islamic Republic, *Basiji and Pasdaran* (the Islamic guardians) were two surveillance forces that attacked and disciplined the domestic population after the revolution (Afary 2009). They "spied on the general population, prowling around schools and factories to enforce the *hijab* regulations, often arresting youth for improper clothing and conduct" (266). Furthermore, the authorities had other strategies to create a network of staunch allies among women. They encouraged middle-class women to be politically engaged in attacking poorer women's personal lives, interrogating their ways of dressing, the legitimacies of their relationships, and their sexualities. In short, the regime, like many before and since, began colonizing women's bodies through insidious, infectious, and invasive use of hierarchized access to inflicting traumas on subordinates as a tool of alignment with the new hegemonic power in daily life.

1.4 Dress Code: An Excuse for Establishing an Interrogative Culture

The Islamic Republic of Iran used strident criticism of the Pahlavi's modernization policies, which had garnered "the emotional resistance of religious leaders and their traditionalist followers" (Yasini et al., 2018, 103). This resistance eventually led to a systematic dress code for Iranian women whereby they must cover their heads and bodies, not exposing them to the view of any men outside their private homes.

Figure 1-1. Gasht-e-Ershad1 in Tehran's Streets- No date or specific location, see ref for link

Figure 1-2. Female Police Training in Tehran- No date or specific location, see ref for link

By July 1981, the "hijab and chador had come to represent the political and ideological hegemony of the Islamist state. Those who worked for the state were often required to wear the all-enveloping black chador, the state's preferred dress code. All others had to observe a more modified form of hijab" (Afary 2009, 270). Women's bodies and hijab were monitored by the female morality police, also known as Sisters of Zainab, even for minor violations (270). They could be dragged by female vigilantes into the offices of the Center for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and interrogated about why their clothing and hair were exposed to the public (271). This surveillance of body and hair was extended to any activity that could lead to sexualized attraction. If a woman wore makeup and did anything that "enhanced their physical appearance, namely bright nail polish or formfitting clothes" (279), they could be arrested,[2] during the early years of the Islamic revolution and, indeed, afterward. Overall, these surveillance technologies were derived from a sexualizing ideology that blames the female body for its purported effects, because it supposedly "stirs both desirable and undesirable emotions in men, and therefore, must be appropriately managed, threatened, hidden, controlled and in certain cases reformed" (Batmanghelichi 2020, 2).

Wearing a hijab or *chador* remains a cardinal rule, presenting an impeccable example of Spivak's term for the interpretive silencing of the "subaltern," by repeatedly reducing them to signs. "Although the term 'subaltern' conventionally denotes an inferior military rank, it is more

[2] Women are still sent to a police station in Iran, for minor dress code infractions, where they are temporarily detained until their families can provide state-approved clothing. The nature of these arrests has changed over the years. In today's police stations, legal cases are filed for and against the women and their faces are photographed as criminals. They have no access to food while detained, nor have they privacy. The whole scene is a "theatre of power" to intimidate the arrested person and to permit access women's bodies. Sometimes, the Islamicist forces arbitrarily charge them with cash crimes, requiring payment of fines.

generally used as a name for a general attribute of subordination in South Asian society, often expressed in terms of gender and caste" (Ross 2010, 385). For Spivak, "repression functions well as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, affirmation of non-existence, and consequently, states that there is nothing to say, to see and to know" (Spivak 1994, 102), in this case, as women and girls become living evidence of the revolution in Iran.

Not unlike western marketing and advertising practices of representing women's bodies as severed and isolated fragments, which ultimately works to dehumanize and distort the female subject and her autonomy, in Iran, women's hair has been a core feature of Islamicist attention. Islamic control mechanisms "sexualized, theologized, and politicized female hair" (Zahedi 2008), intimidating those who do not comply with its concealment. Women who resisted "veiling, or the new hijab were subjected to harassment, violence, and imprisonment" (259). Vigilantes, along with the "morality police," commonly referred to as the *Komiteh*, reported violations of the modesty code and violators were fined or punished with penalties ranging from seventy-four lashes to two years imprisonment (260). Women who did not follow dress code rules, "had acid thrown on their bare faces and skin by the regime's supporters, knowing that they could get away without punishment" (Abdemolaei 2013).

Beyond these micro aggressive acts, which include acrimonious exchanges that often send mixed messages to those who disagree with Islamicist ideologies, the Islamic Republic perpetrated a structural system of violence in the education of women and girls. The most "intensive socio-religious education begins from the tender age of nine, advising female students to internalize appropriate Islamic womanhood" (Zahedi 2008). Little girls were expected to avoid interacting with men, "keeping their eyes down, restricting their voices. They would have to stand in a queue to get their nails monitored by their teachers to assure none of them were wearing nail polish" (128). If they plucked their eyebrows or dyed their hair in high school, punishment "would be expulsion from school until the natural hair colour or eyebrow grew back" (129). These particular techniques were used to instill a sense of "moral panic, sin and fear" (130) in young girls' minds. These policing strategies triggered an array of responses among women, in both public spaces and within their families.

Women often felt more secure in their individual gender expressions if supported by their families. Girls from more affluent families or with supportive parents were advised to hide their dyed hair and plucked eyebrows, and not to argue with their school principal and teachers. Some

were told to deny having western videotapes, cassettes, or fashion magazines, such as *Burda* at home. Only a few families stood ready to protect their girls, however. Most believed that girls should follow school rules to avoid trouble. By dichotomizing the public-school milieu and the private sphere, the Islamic regime fostered an array of contradictions in families, forcing girls to have two faces, sometimes hiding other hardships perpetrated within their own families, owing to the foundational sexualization that grounds such regimes. Many families reproduced the Islamic agenda's normalized violence and interrogation of women's lives, and assured male guardians that they were supported by law in treating women brutally.

1.5 Traumatic Experiences through Intimate Relationships

By interrogating intimate ties in public spaces, the Islamic Republic traumatized couples unable to prove their legitimate relationships. Just after the revolution, the "abstract notions of cultural assault (*tahajom-e farhanig)*, and interaction between men and women, keep popping back into the public arena as needed for statements or re-statement of Iran's Islamic identity" (Farhi 2006, 2). Islamicist advocates and the morality police (*Komiteh*) were deputized to interrogate anyone they deemed subordinate, without showing police identification documents.

Figure 1-3. Islamicist Police Interrogating Relationship in Tehran Highways- No date or specific location, see ref for link

Figure 1-4. Islamicist Police Interrogating Relationship and Loose Hijab- No date or specific location, see ref for link

Young men and women were asked about their relationship status on the street, striking terror into their hearts if their relationship was deemed to be improperly enacted outside of marriage. Under Sharia, "heterosocial interaction between unmarried or unrelated men and women are forbidden and punishable by lashing and imprisonment" (Mahdavi 2007, 447). Young women who had any form of extramarital sex could be punished. If a man and a woman had an affair outside of marriage, they could be sentenced for an illicit affair, punishable by death by stoning. The morality police patrolled the streets of Iran "looking for people who violated these Islamic

moral values to arrest and punish them" (Basmanji 2005, cited in Mahdavi 2007, 447). These policies played a pivotal role in suppressing any emotional expression or affection between men and women. It "sometimes led to the arrest of engaged or married couples" (Afary 2009, 279). Marriage was the only social institution through which people could express sexual feelings.

Streets are a part of the public sphere, "a domain of social life where public opinion can be formed" (Habermas 1991). They are "spaces of discourse organized by discourse" (Warner 2002). Here, I borrow Hannah Arendt's term "space of appearance" (Arendt 1958, 198) to show how Iranian city streets became a site of female subjugation and vulnerability. Arendt maintains that politics requires a space of appearance, "where I appear to others as others appear to me" (198). However, Butler suggests that "for politics to take place, the body must appear. I appear to others, and they appear to me, which means that some space between us allows each to appear" (Butler 2011). This relationship between bodies, however, can be politicized. In this vein, the public sphere, including the streets of Iran, especially for women, are doubly politicized.

The intimidated female body became a pivot for the Islamic Republic. Women were targeted in public spaces, where Islamic forces could access and manipulate them. With the establishment of the Islamic state, the "Public spaces transformed to the main stage for the religious authorities to define the ethical, religious codes of conduct and appearance" (456). Streets became the main domain where hand-in-hand lovers could be caught. My dim memory of being arrested by police while holding hands is a telling example. We, as two twelve-year-olds, were sent to the police station, where we claimed that we were engaged and would get married soon. My partner was released soon as a man, while my father's permission and confirmation of a legitimate relationship was required for my release.

Restrictions also altered familial relationships. Women's customs, bodily activities, and sexual relationships were under strict surveillance within households. Soon the "state and ordinary men gained immense authority over women's sexual and reproductive capacities; fathers, grandfathers, and paternal uncles (as male guardians) had extensive guardianship power over female relatives" (281). Once the revolution finished and the war broke out, many women realized that their parents and husbands took advantage of the pervasive new misogynist and patriarchal laws available to them (283). Although some less dominating religious families remained in urban areas, most in the rural and less populated cities closely monitored women's bodies and relationships as a way to exert control in chaotic situations. Many families were

obsessively concerned about women's virginity and chastity, instilling a sense of deep-rooted fear and vulnerability in women's lives.

1.6 Sexual Abstinence as a Source of Trauma

Sexual abstinence, and specifically, women's virginity (*Bakeregi*), is the linchpin of a decent Iranian family with female offspring. Many families treat women's bodies as an object of possession and protection. Young girls routinely hear, "You will be beheaded should I hear of any sexual relationships," especially from their fathers and other male guardians. This focus on decency, however, is confined to women as "the majority of Iranian men believe that men are allowed to have a premarital relationship" (Sadeghi 2006, 255). With whom they might have such premarital relations remains a mystery under such a regime. "From childhood, young girls are socialized about the importance of virginity in their lives" (Sharifi 2018, 64). Girls also internalize how to "live with their virginal bodies by limiting physical activities considered inappropriate for young unmarried women" (65), such as jumping, riding bicycles. or any sharp movements that might impact the hymens of young girls. Before reaching puberty, young girls learn that men may threaten their virginity so they are not allowed any relationships with males. The fear of being punished, of losing the virginal body, or having any relationship with boys and men outside of the family affects Iranian women's lives in multiple ways. It permeates young girls' sense of self, their psychic and physical well being, their occupation of and movement through public space, as well as their overall relationships with their bodies, ultimately framing their entire notion of sexualities in a context of threat, which haunts their adulthood.

The severity of this fear among Iranian women is so great that some of them commit suicide or are killed by male family members over suspected loss of their virginity. Some women's documented stories reveal their predicaments in their traditional and patriarchal families. For example, one woman stated that she has had no sexual relationships for fear of confronting her family's entrenched belief about protecting women's virginity (*Bidarzani)*. She emphasizes her great fear of communicating with her male colleagues, insisting that her mother has threatened her for having work relationships. Other women have repeatedly pointed out fears instilled by their religious teachers. In high school, young girls are taught moral codes. The teachers suggest that they could get pregnant by merely thinking about sexual relationships. These educators also regale them with stories about the horrific fates of girls in hell who had premarital sexual

relationships (*Bidarzani*), instilling fears of sin and shame. This socio-cultural taboo on premarital sexual relationships is intertwined with conceptions of *ghiyrat* and *nāmūs* (honour) for their family (Kaivanara 2016).

Much of "Islamic law seeks to legislate social, sexual, and familial behaviours through the language of morality and ideas of *maharam va na-mahram*, referring to those who are potential marriage partners (mahram) and those who are not (na-mahram)" (Mahdavi 2007, 447). Such state rhetorics "have been discussed in religious spaces, public gatherings (at mosques) and private settings such as the home" (447). While some urban families attempt to protect their offspring against these strict regulations, educating them in a non-religious milieu, such girls remain trapped in the ideological codes instilled by school authorities. They may be overwhelmed by the inconsistencies between their families' approaches and those of educational systems. At stake is always the state's rhetoric as "a tool in organizing gender relations" (Talattof 2011, 232) around a prevailing heteronormative sexuality that does not allow for any other sexual relationships or possibilities, other than a traditional marriage. These processes normalize coercive violence such that fear and resiliency are mutually constituted through multi-sited invasions and restrictions, etched on women's memories through embodied experiences of marked subordination.

1.7 The Iran-Iraq War and Its Concomitant Traumas

The Islamic Revolution was not the only realm available for embedding traumatic memories in everyday Iranian women's lives. The eight-year Iran-Iraq war also played a role. In September 1980, "Saddam Hussein attacked Iran, hoping for a quick victory. This caused a patriotic fervour across the whole country, as hundreds of thousands of Iranians mobilized in defence of the nation" (Afary 2009, 265). This war expedited the harsh implementation of strict gender regimentation by Khomeini, as the supreme leader, and his staunch Islamist allies (266). Post-war Iran is marked not only by collateral damage or ruined buildings. Radical Islamicist forces such as *Basiji* and *Pasdaran* attacked women and families who were seen as not committed to state Islamic values. Consequently, many militant women, who had battled for their rights at the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, faced even more violence after the outbreak of the war. The "state encouraged women to participate only on an 'ideological' level by providing support as the mothers and wives of those fighting in the war of *Holy Defense*" (Haghgou 2014, 19). Dissident

women who disagreed with this ideology could be degraded and punished in public and in private.

Figure 1-5. Female Police in Post-revolutionary Iran - No date or specific location, see ref for link

The Iran-Iraq war perpetuated a culture of war wounds and mourning in people's daily lives. Children were required to forget living, joy, and happiness, as a result. In the cities, “the locale from which volunteers were sent to war and stations for the mobilization of *Basiji* forces, the broadcast of war chants from state-controlled radio, television and loudspeakers, the ‘narrative of conquest’ (*Revayat-e Fath*) produced by a cultural foundation of the same name, and ceremonies held for the funeral of war martyrs, together reflected the encroachment of the values of the war front into the daily life of all Iranians” (Farhi 2006, 4). While men were supposed to devote themselves as veterans, “women were expected to be at the service of the country, performing their tasks as loyal wives and mothers” (Sadeghi 2008, 252). The state’s policy “put pressure on women, limited their access to contraception and, in fact, encouraged bigger families” (Sharifi 2018, 35). In this war culture young women were required to defend and perform the “sacred values” for which the men were battling on the war front, such as binary gender, male supremacy, and nationalism.

1.8 Beyond the War’s Memories and Trauma

1.8.1 The War’s Visceral and Embodied Trauma

In his seminal article, *Fear (The Spectrum Said)*, Brian Massumi (2015) describes a colour-coded terror alert system after 9/11 that normalized insecurity in people’s everyday lives (171) in

the United States. In this ranked system for signalling danger, “green was ‘low;’ blue, ‘guarded;’ yellow, ‘high;’ orange, ‘elevated;’ and red, ‘severe’” (171). As Massumi states, the United States oscillated between the red warning end of the spectrum and tranquil blue-green in the new life afterward. That is, people got accustomed to “insecurity as the new normal” (171) through an alert system that modulated their fears. For the 1980s Iranian generation (*daheh-ye shast*), the siren was akin to the American colour-coded alert system. There were “wartime announcements of missile attacks, urging them to seek shelter, are a distinct relic— ‘Attention! Attention! The siren you are about to hear, is the sign of a red state of danger. It indicates that an air strike will imminently take place. Please leave your place of work and seek Shelters’” (Behrouzan 2016, 104).

Precarity was exacerbated during the years of the cultural revolution. To this end, “the ongoing hostage taking of the US embassy in Tehran was happening” (Haghgou 2014, 13). “Cultural Revolution mass killings of political prisoners, the suppression of women and national minorities” (14) were facts of life. In fact, “Khomeini’s regime was fighting for control and legitimacy on the home front” (15), and in so doing, executed a further 8000 political dissidents (mainly leftists) over eight years. Hence, the Islamic Revolution dichotomized the nation into “modern-western” and “traditional-Islamic” (15), striving to eliminate non-religious people and political opponents through atrocities that touched the lives of many Iranian families and communities.

The 1980s generation “viscerally experienced the racing hearts [when] running down to basements” (Behrouzan 2016, 104). Moreover, they endured the “turning-off *(khāmushi*) culture,” where electricity outages resulting from bombardments forced them to stay in their dim basements, in silence. Children’s television programs (i.e., Sara Crewe, Fat and Slim, Chobin, Uncle Scrooge etc.) were full of sadness, fear, and mourning. Most of the cartoons in this epoch were about female orphans searching for their parents, families living in poverty, or fictional creatures that instilled a sense of fear and grief in children’s minds.

Women often remained silent about their troubled memories, as required by the regime. For Iranian children of the 1980s, Behrouzan (2020) argues, “much of collective memory is shaped, by their childhood experience of double-binds and internalized anxieties in the face of not only war conditions, but also contradictory obligations, moral policing, ideological imperatives (in school), educational paradigms, the media, and the public sphere” (132). She also asserts that the

recurring dreams of this generation involve airplanes crashing into their house, sirens, explosions, mourning, racing hearts, and sweating, in addition to the anxieties caused by recalling the constant surveillance of the morality police (133). The 1980s interviewees in Behrouzan's *Ruptures, and Their Afterlife*, consistently mention "being arrested for a loose headscarf, memories of mourning ceremonies in school or even the more seemingly trivial double-bind of following pious teachings in school while knowing, for instance, that one's parents' possession of alcohol or music cassettes at home could have dire consequences" (134). While not all those born in the 1980s have the same traumatic memories, due to diverse social, political, and economic locations, some common features can still be found.

Figure 1-6. Komiteh Patrolling on Street in 1980s, No date or specific location, see ref for link

Together, the Islamic Revolution and pervasive wartime ideologies launched two primary forms of state rhetoric designed to dominate female behaviours and sexual relationships. Binary gender roles influenced relationships between family members. Even the non-religious knew of the threats faced by daughters and wives, and erred toward monitoring women's behaviors, choices, and sexualities. Schools, particularly, were conscripted as Islamic Republican allies, where the principals, educators, and even some students surveilled girls' bodies and imagined sexual desires. This surveillance pro-actively preached the state's expectation of a pious, modest, and docile woman, who does not engage in sexual relationships. It haunted women's lives with internalized vigilance for any trivial sexual expression, by instilling feelings such as "fear," "sin," and "shame." My thesis examines these overdetermined interpretations and interrogations of girls' and women's bodies and sexualities.

1.9 Study Objective and Research Questions

Although Iranian women have always been noble warriors, before and after the Islamic revolution, this continuous surveillance has affected many, both in the public sphere and within their families. I intend to engage an affective critical feminist theoretical framework to understand how mobilizing embodied fear became a technique of the Iranian government, how that remains a feminist issue, and how diasporic women experience the recontextualization of their memories in their new Canadian contexts. Since I do not have any direct access to women in Iran, I will focus on the Canadian context, through collaborative memory work with a small group of diasporic Iranian women. My research questions are:

- How have Iranian women's lives, bodies and sexualities been affected by the imposition of the Islamic Republic's sexualized policies in their daily lives in Iran? How do these memories resurface in the diaspora?
- How have diasporic women dis/identified with/from their traumas? What might healing look like for them in the context of geographic migration?
- How do their diasporic healing processes affect their relationships with women and men back home in Iran?

Chapter 2

Literature Review: Primary Approaches to Trauma and Resilience

2.1 Introduction

In the west, the emergence of the concept of trauma seems inextricably bound up with the advent of modernity's shocks. As a somatic response (chest pain, anxiety, tunnel vision, and nightmares), trauma was traceable among veterans who encountered the horrors of war in the 19th century. Technological advances also exposed people to an increasing array of traumatic events, such as railroad accidents. Although trauma's definition has shifted through various controversies, here, it is defined as a condition whereby "embodied agency" is interrupted, such that an individual struggles to integrate or cope with an experience of threat to life or bodily integrity. Through my literature review, I will discuss why trauma, when applied as a general concept, must acknowledge the social, cultural, and political conditions unfolding in particular localities and chronologies. Because this chapter considers the unique conditions framing contemporary Iranian women's traumatic memories, I will introduce the term, *toroma*, from Farsi, to explore how experiences of the 1980s generation in Iran reflect overdetermined interpretations and interrogations of the bodies and behaviours and sexualities of women and girls.

2.2 Trauma's Timeline and Background

The term "Trauma" emerged in the 1860s as a western concept used to describe a "psychological injury emanating from an external event" (*Encyclopedia.com*) featuring the "incapacity of the victim to recall the event that precipitated it, coupled with a simultaneous sensation of its recurrence in the present (*Encyclopedia.com*). "Trauma neurosis" was also defined as arising from a "severe shock of a mechanical nature, railway collision or other accident in which danger to life was involved" (Freud 1959). Trauma also reflects "emotional conditions resulting from catastrophic injuries" (History and Theoretical Foundation of Trauma,

2021), including but not limited to traumatic memories and "responses" of those who had been sexually abused or exposed to a horrendous event. This vantage point paved the way for pathologizing trauma and remained trauma's prominent approach over the next century. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as the United States' dominant definition of trauma, was thus defined as an "overwhelming event that produces certain kinds of symptoms in the patient" (Cvetkovich 2003, 19). Trauma's definition experienced a tumultuous expansion in the 1960s and 1970s, as the dramatic emphasis of news media made worldwide traumas more readily available in public consciousness (Vertava Health).[3] These decades were marked by daily reports of wartime casualties, anti-war protests, political assassinations, the fight for women's rights, as well as civil and farm workers' movements (History and Theoretical Foundation of Trauma 2021). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) became more commonly recognized. In the 21st century, trauma is not so much seen as an extraordinarily shocking event but rather, as an inescapable structuring force, through predictable and endless shocking events. Well-known examples include but are not limited to " mass shootings, 9/11, wars in Afghanistan, and Iran-Iraq, anthrax, genocide, and Ebola, affected some directly and many indirectly through an endless news cycle" (History and Theoretical Foundation of Trauma, 2021).

Rather than a "fixed understanding of what trauma and/or violence looks like" (Rajiva 2014, 203), the ubiquitous nature of today's trauma demands contextualization within its specific localities and chronologies. In the context of Iranian society, as an integral corollary to being fearful, Iranian women's lives are still affected by a so-called "sudden" attack that has lasted for many years. Iranian women born in the 1980s generation, in particular, have lived with a set of everyday shocks that have made them less powerful and present as citizens. The timeline infographic I have developed below, based on "History and Theoretical Foundation of Trauma" (2021), outlines this phenomenon in more detail.

[3] It's estimated by the World Health Organization that approximately 3.6 percent of people worldwide are suffering from PTSD.

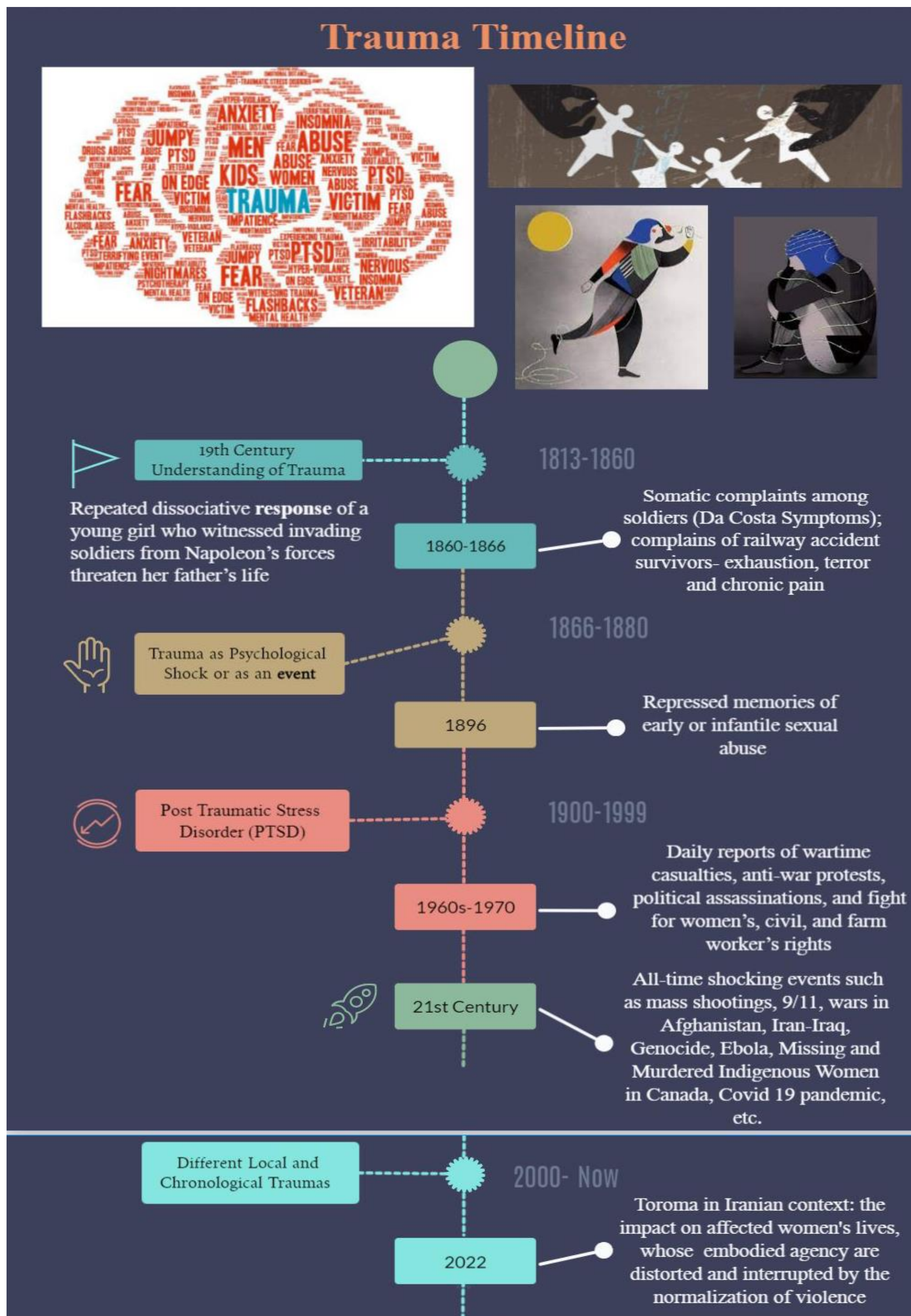

Figure 2-1. Trauma Timeline

There is a body of scholarship developed among Iranian women concerning everyday disrespect and sexual abuse (Hajizadeh and Mirghafourvand 2021, Modarres, Afrasiabi, Rahnama and Montazeri 2012). However, there is still a tendency to medicalize trauma in these

works, using pathologizing psychological lenses. Because trauma is interwoven within specific social, political, and sexual contexts, it is more than an individual pathology. It is the living trace of coercive, oppressive systems. In the Iranian context, the Islamization project needed a territory upon which to (re)construct an Islamic national identity. Women's bodies and sexualities had been used to establish a national agenda before, but there is no local archive delineating how the Islamization project set out to regulate women's lives, while silencing their collective accounts of that experience. Iranian scholars have written about their post-revolutionary traumas in the diaspora (Naghibi 2009, Moghissi 1999 and 2006, Talebi 2016). In addition to these accounts, there are some publicly available examples of artistic works, such as the illustrations in *Persepolis*, a graphic novel and subsequent film, written and directed by Marjane Satrapi. Media of expression for engaging personal and collective traumas are broad and can range from oral to textual to visual to performative. This scholarship, however, does not often address what it means to grow up under the Islamic state, nor the persistence of its effects, on site and in the diaspora. Indeed, the lack of literature on Iranian girls' and women's experiences is yet another political aspect of the complex nature of gendered trauma in the Iranian context.

These traumas, however, have permeated my generation, collectively. Despite the personal nature of trauma, I intend to concentrate on approaches that trace "collective experiences and memories in response to the systematized culturally, politically, and gendered violence toward [Iranian women's everyday lives]" (Cvetkovich 2003, 18). I want to understand whether the return of my "policed body" at the sight of an authoritative uniform at the Toronto airport is individual or collective, in my new geography. By reviewing three primary approaches to trauma below, I attempt to analyze the political nature of Iranian women's experiences, in order to mobilize a specific deployment of the term, *toroma* at the end of this chapter.

2.3 Trauma in Psychoanalysis; Freud's Reading of Trauma

In his seminal study, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1959) associates trauma with the peculiar and sometimes uncanny ways catastrophic events seem to repeat themselves. He attributes trauma to concomitant emotions such as fear, fright, and apprehension, which intrude on an individual's defenses. Freud indicates that "any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield" (Vance 1984, 242-50 as cited in Cvetkovich 2003, 53) are experienced as traumatic, invoking the death drive. Freudian theory

rests upon a "model of trauma that imagines an extreme experience that challenges language limits and even ruptures meaning altogether" (Mambrol 2018) often marked by physical symptoms "and in some extreme cases psychic dissociation" (Trauma Encylopedia.com). These symptoms reflect feelings that are difficult to express, rendering the suffering almost unrepresentable.

Thus, trauma is not defined simply as an "event" or "experience" in the Freudian framework, but as a rupture of meaning, which includes both individuals and collective historical traumas. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud (1939) adapts his theories on "latency" and "repetition" in individual cases, to reflect on Jewish cultural psychology and history. If Jewish traumatic memories are rooted in the murder of Moses/the Father, Freud argues for an overarching, delayed, and latent trauma that returns repeatedly, haunting and repressing their daily lives. Although controversial, this Freudian reading can be applied to traumatic events affecting those born in Iran in the 1980s in two ways. Given that both "latency" and "repetition" are directly related to loss, the rise of the Islamicist forces, can itself be seen to result from historical trauma, under the pressures of the former political regime. Women were forced to unveil to please modernist authorities in the past; those who engaged in oppressive power and vindictive behaviour after the revolution, also chose to regulate women's bodies. For Iranian girls born in the 1980s, schoolteachers' regular monitoring of clothing, sexuality, emotions, and unexpected behavior represents an historical trauma that could return after a latency period, in a vicious cycle of sexualized violence, perpetrated not only by men, but by women, whose own cultural defenses had been breached.

In *Studies in Hysteria* (1985), Freud and Breuer suggest that "traumatic hysteria develops from a repressed, earliest experience of sexual assault" (Mambrol 2018), an event "not traumatic in itself but only in its remembrance" (Mambrol 2018). A Freudian reading posits that one is unable to expunge a past event harboured within the unconscious. Yet, this very inability triggers dissociation, returning that event to the individual's present consciousness in intrusive ways. Consequently, the event's remembrance is more traumatic than the event itself, because of its power to intrude, even when one is far from the time and space of the original event. Today, various healing practices are used to assist traumatized people with their intrusive memories, including but not limited to: cultural, religious, or spiritual practices and ceremonies, talk therapy, artistic or mindfulness practises, and group therapy.

Although Freud alludes to the collective nature of trauma, "who gets afraid of whom or what the relationship between the subject or the object of fear is" (Ahmed 2004, 63) is quite variable. In Iran, Islamicist forces applied religious dogma as political leverage to intimidate women and thus, reproduce ideal national Muslims, through gender oppression. As Muñoz argues, Freudian readings of trauma are "so invested in symptoms" (Muñoz 2009, 124) that they remain indifferent to how diversely positioned individuals and groups are socially feared, traumatized, and affected. My research considers how political projects can use embodiment to shift not only individual but collective memories of traumas endured in the course of everyday lives.

2.4 Trauma and Representation; a Caruthean Reading

A more diversified body of research on trauma concerning language, representation, meaning, silence, and witnessing emerged from the 1990s onward (Caruth 1995 and 1996, Hodgkin and Radstone 2003, Di-Capua 2015, Schwab 2016, Stevens 2016, Wertheimer, Casper 2016, and Hirshberger 2018). By the beginning of the 21st century, the world was in a constant state of crisis, as if pathological definitions and limiting trauma to the realm of mere psychology no longer seemed sufficient. Likewise, the rates and reach of trauma have been so exacerbated by the pluralizing scales upon which it can occur that people have begun to need better explanations. Recent scholars engage trauma as an incident or experience that ruptures consciousness, hindering direct linguistic representation and thus "provoking a crisis of meaning" (Hirshberger 2018, 1). Similar to Freud's, this body of theory defines trauma as an unassimilated event that shatters identity and remains outside normal memory and narrative representation.

Contrary to Freud's insights about latency in shared narratives of trauma, this theory centers on its irrepresentability in language and narrative. That is, trauma is embedded in either individual or collective silence and witnessing processes. Although such an unknown experience may never be narrated clearly, it acts like a nodule in consciousness that causes wounds in the self, meaning one might recall the traumatic event, but not fully grasp its nature.

Irrepresentability, as well as unspeakablity, are two critical components in this reading of trauma. As heir of the Caruthian perspective, this model remains contingent upon an external event, affecting individual and/or collective memory and, therefore, the capacity to comprehend its meaning. Cathy Caruth (1996), as a precursor of this tradition, states that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual past, but rather in the way that its

very unassimilated nature— the way it was precisely not known in the first instance— returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). The phantom nature of trauma inflicts pain on the psyche, which may also produce bodily symptoms, like my sweaty palms in the airport. Criticizing the "clinical definition of trauma as PTSD, which includes a list of symptoms (hyperarousal, numbing and repetition), [Caruth thus focuses on] the event that produces trauma" (Cvetkovich 2003, 18) in a way that is complex, because it is timeless.

Caruth's viewpoint on trauma (1995, 1996) consists of three prominent features. First, she argues that there is a "series of painful events to which [individuals] are subjected, and which seem to be entirely 'outside' their wish or control" (2). This wish or control, however, equates with the individual's "normal" consciousness, which has not processed the painful event's meaning in a normal linguistic structure. Then, the painful event, which is not necessarily a violent one, is preserved beyond the limits of one's understanding in a timeless and wordless state, continuing to cause pain to the psyche in an unknowing fashion. Trauma that "has not yet been fully known" (1996, 6) is not "yet fully owned" (7) and is not "prior to knowledge or a matter of intelligence" (1995, 153) remains an unknown matter that returns to haunt the mind. Significant as this vantage point might seem, it still posits trauma as individuated. Caruth's explanation suggests that marginalized groups, webbed by diverse class, racial, sexual, and religious discrimination, may endure multi-faceted rather than singular unknown traumas.

Contrary to Freud, who believed in productive post-traumatic narratives, Caruth states that traumatic experiences are not normal, cannot simply be narrated (1996, 7), "and therefore [become] unclaimed" (Di-capua 2015, 11). This abnormal state of trauma may emanate from very common traumatic experiences, used by the social order to target particular groups. The social order, in fact, nourishes this commonplace trauma, paving the way for perpetrators – not only to traumatize specific groups, but also to claim these "normal" traumas as a new "reality." Thus, even though traumatic experiences are unclaimed by many voiceless individuals and particular groups, they can be claimed by perpetrators as evidence of their success.

The abnormal memory and traumatic wounds in Caruth's theory are "tied up with the trauma of others" (8). In other words, history and trauma seem to have something in common. That is, individual traumas, as well as collective historical events, are ultimately never known directly "but only through an interrupted referentiality that points to the meaning of the past only as a type of reproduction or performance" (1996, 11). In this sense, both intense personal trauma and

extreme historical events affect consciousness precisely because they cannot be represented in a language. By the same token, Caruth outlines a reciprocal relationship between traumatized persons and larger histories where “the traumatized carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (1995, 5). This impossible history for Iranian women of my generation reflects promising futures that were lost under the shadow of cumulative fear and insidious traumas, such that they have been unable to live their lives fully.

Although Caruth criticizes Freud's investment in trauma symptoms, she eventually falls into the trap of referential determinism or “structural unknowability” (Cvetkovich 2003, 18). Moreover, Caruth believes that trauma interferes with “normal” consciousness and memory, while it is unclear “what normal is” (Whertheimer and Casper 2016, 3) and how one should distinguish it from abnormal. If normal is defined as constituting or not deviating from a norm, rule, procedure, or principle *(Merriam Webster, online)*, who defines normality is significant. Iranian women of the 1980s were being subjected to a new normal not so different from the modernization practices that preceded it, in targeting women as symbols of the regime. It triggered an irrepresentability that arose from a new political regime. If silence happens “in the wake of violence and specifically the relationship among violence, trauma, memory and language” (Schwab 2016, 112), silence and its witnessing become two integral pillars in unpacking traumatizing processes.

2.5 Trauma, Silence, and Witnessing

Silence is conceptually and emotionally eloquent when the body is in pain. As Werthmeimer and Casper (2016) point out, the subject may be voiceless, unable to articulate their experience or who they have become after trauma. Into that silence “is poured a host of meanings and expectations, including perhaps most painfully, the imperative to speak and to act” (11). That is, “the spaces in and through which subjectivities are formed may be disruptions constituted by a temporary absence of words such silence [and this] is a biopolitics work of trauma itself” (11). In this sense, trauma’s capability in imposing this silence resonates with Stevens’ point that “trauma is as trauma does” (Stevens 2016, 20). Either voluntarily or involuntarily, traumatic silence speaks. Iranian women’s bodies could not be safely represented in any way inconsistent with the prevailing ideology, neither in publications, nor in their own dialogues. However, the silence will

be broken once the subjects reappropriate their voice or are capable of retrieving their lost power to change the situation.

Whether concerning an individual or a social phenomenon, trauma has at its heart the problem of witness testimony and memory (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003). It may even encompass a process through which children witness parental traumas. For instance, "children who witness parental trauma become avid readers of silence and memory traces hidden in a face that is contorted with pain, frozen in grief, a forced smile that does not feel quite right, and the apparently unmotivated flare-up of rage, or chronic depression" (Schwab 2016, 114). For example, if children notice that their mother has come to hate their father in silence for the abuses he has learned to commit due to the Islamicist revolution, they will absorb her trauma and his violence into their gender identity formations. Moreover, witnessing terror can collectively strike a nation, among those who are continuously "overwhelmed by their intense feelings of extreme fear—, frequently, fear of death, terror, powerlessness and total hopelessness—" (Wirth 2004, 37). For example, Schwab (2016) points out the terror among female political prisoners who witnessed their cellmates brutally tortured. Among Iranian female inmates, she notes how a female political prisoner's child had been utterly silenced due to witnessing her mother's torture. Schwab mentions that this child's story can encapsulate "encrypting trauma, embodying it in the voice of sounds" (117), or silence. This silence, however, carries the muffled voices of those who heard and witnessed that violence.

This process of witnessing resonates with Laub's (1995) three distinct levels of testimony. Regarding the Holocaust experience, he considers "the level of being a witness to oneself within the experience, to the testimonies of others, and finally to the process of witnessing itself" (61). These interwoven levels of witnessing are crucial to my understanding of Iranian women's trauma as not being witnessed as a catastrophe. Every woman who disagreed with her new Islamicist identity witnessed her own trauma within the new norms, but often in isolation or only within resistant groups. The norms seemed to prevail.

There is a complex relationship among trauma, hi[story], and the politics of identification. Some scholars consider how trauma can be related to specific bodies and identities (Antze and Brown 1995, Lambeck 1996, Zimberoff and Hartman 1998, Cvetkovich 2003). Criticizing pathologization, they emphasize how traumatic events can alter one's perceptions over time in

specific cultures and locations—in my research, a hegemonic regime that targeted some bodies for exclusion from hegemonic power, imposing a 'cultural pathology' on an entire generation.

2.6 Trauma and the Politics of Identification

Although trauma may be unrepresentable, in the context of identity politics, traumatic memories may not necessarily cause pathological symptoms, but can still threaten an individual's identity. In her seminal book *Archive of Feelings*, Ann Cvetkovich (2003) points out that "when trauma becomes too exclusively psychologized or medicalized, the exploration, which is one of cultural theory's contributions to trauma studies, is lost" (18). Cvetkovich criticizes Freud's universalization of trauma as rooted in pathology. Instead, she ties the traumatic experience to an individual's social, political, and geographical location. She connects politics, emotion, and affective experiences, showing how political and emotional interplay generates trauma's roots (3). Cvetkovich traces non-pathologized and politically embedded traumas through lesbian culture, namely sexual acts, butch-femme discourse, queer, and transnational publics, and even among diasporic migrants (3-4). She wishes to avoid cataloguing trauma's definitions under the "rubric of war, genocide, or Holocaust [or any other] extreme discourses of trauma" (3). Instead, her focus is on how excluded identities can be traumatized within a politically dominant culture.

Though she considers PTSD crucial in trauma studies, Cvetkovich criticizes the dominance of psychoanalysis and psychiatry in trauma's definitions. To her, socio-cultural traumas have been subordinated to Freudian interpretations of patients' repressive memories and clinical PTSD diagnoses (17). In *An Archive of Feelings* (2003), she emphasizes lesbian and queer traumas as excluded from the ACT UP movement's archive. She focuses on how their participation in this movement was likely to be forgotten by privileged, white gay men. Her stance positions traumatic experiences at the crossroads of affective understanding, the spectrum of sexual and gendered identities, and how archives, and consequently, mainstream history, are written.

In Cvetkovich's view, "Caruth's influential definition of trauma as 'unclaimed experience' shifts attention away from the specificity of the traumatic event to structural unknowability" (19). That means, no matter what the subject's position would be, trauma can cause the same result for everyone, the inability to express negative experiences. For Cvetkovich, this claim is something of an epistemological challenge, depleting trauma of its political and social roots and import. Cvetkovich argues that this political neutrality, abstractness, and universality exists in both

Caruth's and Freud's formulations about trauma because they focus on "catastrophic event rather than on everyday trauma" (19). Cvetkovich, however, remains committed to understanding everyday violence and insidious trauma, which impact a sense of belonging within the society. In post-revolutionary Iran, women who did not perform as a "complete Muslim woman," were disregarded as members of the mainstream public.

2.7 Insidious Trauma

2.7.1 Normalization of Rhizomatic Violence and Ordinary Trauma in Everyday life

Recognition of insidious trauma is primarily a result of feminist scholars' efforts. Borrowing Herman's notion of "complex post-traumatic stress disorder" and Brown's articulation of 'insidious trauma,' Cvetkovich elucidates how defining trauma as an everyday phenomenon is primarily derived from an intersectional gendered approach. For example, she states the "effects of repeated abuse, such as those suffered by children in violent families" (33), are among the daily practices and impacts of trauma. Also, she deploys Brown's concept of insidious trauma to describe how "the everyday experiences of sexism [can] add to the effects of more punctual traumatic experiences, such as rape" (33). Thus, to her, trauma is a continuous and insidious phenomenon through which marginalized subjects experience targeted violence in their lives.

Women often encounter forms of "oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit" (Brown 1995, 107), over time. For instance, Brown states that daily life "for all women living in a culture where there is a high base rate of sexual assault and where such behavior is considered normal and erotic by men, as it is in North American culture, is an exposure to insidious trauma" (107). These repetitive and "cumulative experiences of oppression, violence, and femicide can be labelled as insidious trauma" (Zimberoff and Hartman 1998, 45). In this sense, insidious trauma becomes part of women's subject formation and bespeaks of how "everyday lives are structured by fear of violence and victimization" (Rajiva 2014, 189).

The banality of everyday violence, as interwoven with multilayered power structures, imposes trauma triggers on women's lives. Thus, traumatic incidents "work their way into the everyday lives of marginalized subjects, creating the conditions for the formation of a subject who views violence or the possibility of violence as a 'normal' part of its reality"(197). This normalization of violence has characteristics that are both "mundane and perhaps more fundamental [as] hidden

or secret violence out of which images of people are shaped, the experience of groups is coerced, and agency itself is engendered" (Kleinman 2000, 239). Insidious violence, then, includes microaggressions, "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership" (Wing Sue, 2007, 271). This type of cumulative harassment interferes with one's capacity to engage the unfolding of a life, without psycho-social interruption.

2.7.1 The Other and the Object of Fear

Imposed ideologies vary based on socio-political components in cultural contexts. In *The Affective Politics of Fear* (2004), Sara Ahmed argues that fear "announces itself through and on the bodies of those who are transformed into its subjects [and] objects" (62), by "establishing others as fearsome insofar as they threaten to take the self in" (64). This fear informs experiences of past, present, and future, often through "anticipation of hurt or injury" by others (65), with embodied responses such as sweating, or a racing heart. Ahmed concludes that feminists understand fear as a "structural and mediated [process], rather than an immediate bodily response to an objective danger" (69), bound up with "the politics of mobility," where "the threat is shaped by the authority of narratives about what is and is not threatening, and about who are and are not the appropriate object" (70). In this sense, what women should or should not be afraid of, and the policing of remembering or forgetting the object of fear, are often at the disposal of others. What I experienced at Pearson airport is a telling example of my kinetic memory. The sight of police at the airport reminded me of my policed body in the interrogative culture I had left behind. Whether that threat was real or not, it affected my embodied responses and revived my traumatic memories.

2.7.2 Kinetic Memories and the Embodiment of Daily Traumas

Traumatic memories position the self as caught between its roles as subject and object of memory, between the telling and the told (Lambek 2016). On the one hand, one who has undergone the violence of a traumatic experience is the subject of that memory. On the other hand, as its object, they are trapped with their bitter memories, whether or not they have continuous recall. In this vein, one's past is perpetually "embedded in the present" (Clough 2007, 14) through memory. This embedded past can always conjure those insidious traumas in the

present moments. Once the insidious traumas come alive, the individual's reflection upon their memories and a degree of agency and managing the affected body are required, to navigate present conditions even as the past is activated (To & Trivelli 2015).

Sheets-Johnstone (2003) points out the unique position of kinesthesia and our bodily reactions. Unlike other bodies' faculties, "we cannot shut out our kinaesthetically felt bodies as we can shut out vision by closing our eyes; [that is], our primordial animation is with us from the beginning to the end of our lives" (71). This immanent experience creates a "distinctive kinetic dynamic in virtue of its spatio-temporal-energic qualities" (73), inscribed in our bodies' patterns of movements. Sheets-Johnstone concludes that if there is no dualism between body and mind, we should address "body memory" as more than an object or reflex of the body, by allowing "the past to enter actively into the very present in which our remembering is taking place" (91), without underestimating the "mnemonic importance of the body" (Narváez 2013, 9) and its immediate environs as triggering presences.

2.8 *Toroma*; Toward a Unique Definition of Iranian Trauma

A body of research insists on the collective features of trauma (Hirschberger 2018, Alexander et al. 2004, and Cvetkovich 2003). Collective trauma, in this sense, is as devastating for groups as it is for individuals. It "constitutes a cataclysmic event that affects direct victims and society as a whole" (Hirshberger 2018, 3). It can, however, work "its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with trauma" (Alexander 2004, 4). In addition, collective traumas are contingent upon different localities and chronologies, meaning they do not affect individuals in different contexts the same. A psychological injury can vary, based on different temporalities, localities, and interpretive systems.

As discussed in chapter one, the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war ruptured Iranians' daily psychic lives. In her ground-breaking ethnographic study, *Prozak Diaries*, Behrouzan (2020) delineates the resulting effects on the 1980s generation in Iran. Defining the nuanced differences between trauma, *toroma* (Persian usage), and rupture, Behrouzan elaborates on the complexity and multilayered historical conditions of post-revolutionary and post-war Iran. Social ruptures, for her, "are intersubjectively interpreted, negotiated, legitimated, and reconstructed, ultimately informing generational demarcations" (139), demonstrating how "history is 'lived'

infusing itself in the present, in the afterlife of the past ruptures" (Behrouzan 2016, 126). While trauma is construed as harmful, "ruptures can be culturally generative, creating new socialities and communities" (139). Children born in the 1980s called themselves the "*Nasle-Soukhteh*"or the *Burned Generation*, and felt belonging in relation to that designation. The depression and dysphoria shaping the collective memories of the1980s generation (*dahe-ye shasti- hā*) delineates the *toromatic* pressures of the war and its Islamization projects. These social and embodied *toromas* trained women to understand their bodies and sexualities through the apparatuses of a "regime of fear." Given its intersectional, socially situated, and embodied nature, I define *toroma* as the impact on an affected social group, through the bodies of its individuals, whose agency is distorted and interrupted by the violence of overdetermined interpretations.

2.9 Undoing Traumas/*Toromas*; Some Strategies for Redemption

2.9.1 Disidentification and Traumatized/*Toromotized* Subordinated Bodies

José Esteban Muñoz (1999 and 2009) argues that subordinated subjects may disidentify as both "within and outside" of a dominant culture. To him, disidentification refers to the survival strategies that minoritized queer subjects practice to "negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship"(Muñoz 1999, 4). However, "performing disidentification," as Muñoz points out, means "a disidentifying subject works to hold on to [those identifying objects] and invest them with new life" (12). I suggest that disidentification is an effective technique for those who have experienced both insidious and acute traumas, as a way to affectively reposition those experiences, in community.

Disidentification is about cultural, material, and psychic survival (161). It is also about managing and negotiating historical traumas and systemic violence (162). Marginalized subjects call for a "reconstructed identity policy" (164) that encompasses a "self-actualization process" where the subject responds creatively to those ideologies that have destroyed its subjectivity and embodiments. It also allows the "subject of identity to contest the interpellations of dominant ideology" (168). Muñoz points out "counterpublicity" as a modality of disidentification and an "act of tactical misrecognition that serves against the effect of dominant publicity" (169). It assists those marginalized and invisible bodies to become visible, challenging the dominant culture that traumatized them. Counterpublics, however, are "not magically realized through

disidentifications, but are suggested, rehearsed, [performed] and articulated" (179). They enable traumatized survivors to imagine a potential future, reappropriating their traumatized lives and distorted agency, for their own purposes, by demonstrating that the imposed violence was itself founded on a fiction. As Butler remarks, "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler 2006, 25). I would argue that there is no way to perform these expressions in community, except through our bodies. My research explores whether diasporic members of the 1980s generation of women *toromotized* by Islamicist forces in Iran can perform our genders, and reappropriate our interrupted agency by seeking to shape our own counter-communities.

2.9.2 Performative Body for Undoing Traumas/*Toromas*

Performativity, as Butler (1988) shows, is a "stylized repetition of acts, always reiteration of a set of norms" (519). It becomes at once a "cultural convention, value and signifier that is inscribed on the body, performed through the body, to mark identities" (Madison and Hamera 2006, xviii). However, performativity has the capacity of establishing alternative ways of being and acting. This capacity is outlined by Peggy Phelan (1997) in her influential book *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*. She argues that some practices, such as performance, enable individuals to articulate their losses and bodily wounds to a public prepared to engage them. To her, there is a vexed relationship between subjectivity and death, the body, its wounds, and how they disappear. Once one passes away, they become the object of loss. Efforts to mentally recreate the disappeared body are demanding. Yet some "substantial possibilities can be made from the outline left after the body has disappeared" (3). Phelan examines the ways performance practices help performers and audiences to grasp what has been missed, thus making the invisible wounds visible. I am intrigued by the idea of how Iranian women's *toromotized* bodies are both the subject and the object of loss of life. They have lived a distorted life, deprived them of vital sexual and emotional potentials, enduring a bodily disappearance within their embodied presences. Therefore, I am interested in performance as a site of engagement with shared traumatic experiences.

Using Freudian and Lacanian theory to describe the working of trauma, death, and mourning, Phelan connects the psyche to the social and political features of life. To her, psychoanalysis gives the subject a temporal narrative. By retrieving lost pieces of the past or self, the subject will

release their corporeal symptoms. Performance, likewise, gives the body another temporal system of expression that may also relieve trauma/*toroma*, by precipitating an informed audience. Dancing, or any activity in which the body is engaged, may assist. Even 'small performances' such as walking freely, or choosing garments, without fear of being policed may help dislodge painfully embodied memories.

2.9.3 The Theatre of the Oppressed; Reappropriation of Traumatized/*Toromatized* Lives

Everyday life can be a stage where traumatized people reinvent their bodies, performing their identities alternatively. In this sense, life itself is a theatre where there are both leading, subordinated, active, and passive roles. These affective roles, however, are not eternal but rather temporal and spatial. Drawing upon a Marxist approach to the theatre, Augusto Boal (2008) examines this transition through a type of forum theatre for oppressed people. In order to change society, all should be protagonists to transform the barrier between actors and spectators. Empathy, as an emotional tie that affects both characters and spectators, can move from one body to another, to alter the power structures within and around their bodies, as they are “changed from a witness into protagonist” (102).

In Boal Theatre, there are a series of exercises by which one gets to know their body, "its limitations, possibilities, social distortions and the possibilities of rehabilitation" (102). Through a practice of self-expression, one begins to “abandon other, more common and habitual forms of expression” (103). Commencing these new practices, the oppressed will undertake theatre as “a living and present language, not as a finished product displaying images of past” (102). This conscious process of becoming in the present can help to re-appropriate the trapped energies confined within the suppressed and continuous memories of oppressed lives. Thus, the articulation of diasporic experience offers a new stage upon which to rehearse and challenge the norms embedded in the insidious *toromas* and any relational complicities with the oppressors who caused them to fear their bodies and sexualities, in the first place.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework: The Affective Turn and Critical Feminist Theory

3.1 Introduction

My definition of *toroma* begins at the level of the impacted individual. Because political Islam is (re)constructing national identities, subjectivities, and sexualities around the control of female bodies, the Persian term *toroma* traces the processes of normative violence and interrogative culture that problematizes and interrupts the agency of Iranian women's embodiments. *Toroma*, in this sense, uses an affect theory lens. Affect theory, as a hallmark of new materialisms in feminist studies, delineates how "the emotional" as an expression of "the embodied," has gained greater prominence in unpacking social and political issues. Feminist scholars have been long concerned about the relationships between affect, embodiment, and power (Cvetkovich 2003, Koivunen 2010, Greyser 2012, Hemmings 2012, Pedwell and Whitehead 2012, Chamberlain 2017, Åhäll 2018, Hickey-Moody and Willcox 2020, Atkinson 2013), exploring how diverse and evolving standpoints illuminate relationships among people, bodies, sexualities, power systems and affect.

In this chapter, I will apply affect theory as a crucial domain for tracing the lived effects of gendered power relations among participating diasporic Iranian women. Judith Butler (2004), in "quandaries of the incest taboo," explores the power dynamics of normative kinship arrangements. In an Islamic society, where heterosexuality is treated as the sole form of legitimate sexual relationship, the experiences of individuals with other sexual orientations or gender identities are erased, producing distorting complicities with prevailing discourses. Through an applied reading of Sara Ahmed's (2000) accounts of "Strange Encounters," I will show how Iranian women have been conditioned to see and fear themselves as 'the other' under the Islamic Republic's constant surveillance, and how those who migrate carry those fears into the diaspora. Finally, I will discuss Asef Bayat's (2007) critical term "incremental encroachment"

and Iranian women's everyday resistance to patriarchal structures and the benefits of recalling their agency, by collectively remembering, naming, and examining their sexualization processes.

3.2 Affect Theory and its Roots

According to *Merriam Webster*, affect is a transitive verb about the capacity "to produce an effect upon someone or something" (*Merriam Webster,* online). As a noun, however, it is defined "a set of observable manifestations of an experienced emotion" *(Merriam Webster,* online) that go through the body. It is the "action of a stimulus that can produce a response or reaction" *(Merriam Webster,* online). During the late 20th and early 21st centuries, an array of social and cultural theorists attempted to delineate affect as an experiential indicator of hegemonic power systems. Chamberlain suggests that feelings and their "concomitant 'mobility' are inextricably linked, and can move subjects" (Chamberlain 2017, 75) within particular domains of power. It also refers to the augmentation or diminution of embodied capacities of the "other" (Clough 2007). A person can act on their own and others embodied capacities and in turn, can be acted upon (Seigworth and Gregg 2010), providing an explanation how *toromas* are created and enacted within, between and among human bodies.

As a theoretical paradigm, the turn to affect emphasizes embodiment, exploring how people are moved by their feelings (Wetherell 2012). According to Spinoza's main work, *Ethica* (1977/1985), affect is marked by three main vectors: (1) a relational ontology; (2) a constitutive interplay of affecting and being affected; and (3) a dynamic and polycentric understanding of power (Slaby and Scheve 2019). These three thematic routes follow affect theory across diverse terrains. Within a relational ontology, the subject is produced by dispersed and dynamic affective flows and emotions that "never spring from within a body but are produced through a circulating relationality between and among bodies" (Robinson and Kutner 2019). Emotions circulating between bodies inspire Spinoza's two notions: affecio (affection) affectus (affect). While affection encompasses all relations among entities, Spinoza uses affect to designate those affects that either increase or diminish the body's powers (Slaby and Scheve 2019).

Reymond Williams also analyzes how feelings are relationally structured. In his seminal article, *Structure of Feelings*, Williams (1977) argues that all consciousness is social and "its processes occur not only between, [but also] within the relationship and the related" (130). Social forms are thus constructed when social consciousness is actively moved in "real relationships"

(130) from one body to another. This distinction illustrates that the "structures of feelings" or "what is actually being lived" are beyond formally held and systematic beliefs, having "affective elements of consciousness and relationships" (132), that render feelings and thoughts reciprocal. This reciprocity of affect and thoughts can also be applied to how fear and anxiety, as normal responses to trauma/*toroma* (Rothbaum 2022), can be relationally and socially embodied.

Iranian women's *toromas* have been bodily, relationally, and socially shaped within a spectrum of inequitable relationships in the Islamic Republic, grounded in fear. Brian Massumi (2002) defines "affect in terms of bodily autonomic responses, which are in excess of the conscious state of perception" (Massumi 2002, 208-209). From Massumi's viewpoint, affect is not synonymous with feelings or emotions but equates with perception in motion, operating on bodies independently, in encounters with the world. Massumi positions affective perception through virtual relations with other bodies. This relationality is traceable through the relationship between our tactile faculty and internal "visceral sensibility," such that "the muscles and ligaments register as conditions of movement what the skin internalizes as qualities" (59). Once the embodied subject encounters intense affect, this visceral sensitivity will be manifested on the skin.

My dim memory of a policed body, one that could constantly be interrogated, manifested itself in my sweaty hands and dry throat at the sight of the police officer at the Canadian airport, a lived jeopardy manifesting on my skin. This intensity, according to Massumi, is also relational, and can be affected by encounters with other bodies in diverse political contexts. This political and virtually embodied context for diasporic Iranian women is the Islamic society, where women's bodies have undergone an array of negative affects.

In contrast, Seigworth sees affect as a body's constant, intensive variation (on a scale of increase to diminution) in its capacity for acting (Seigworth 2011). Here again, embodied movements from one place to another can impact and shape affect. However, Seigworth uses the notion of reciprocity to reflect on "*Potencia*" or a "*Polycentric*" understanding of power. *Potentia* is "the individual's specific susceptibility to affections by others as much as it is its power to affect others through one's acts or one's sheer presence" (Slaby and Scheve 2019, 32). To put it simply, when we encounter another's body, we can be actively or passively engaged, and/or be acted upon by them. Thus, the body is always evolving; it is an unfinished entity that is webbed "in its relations" (Seigworth and Gregg 2010) by other affective, affected and affecting bodies.

Thus, as Foucault would argue, the flows of power that have been moving between Islamicist forces and Iranian women and other sexual, ethnic, and religious minorities, have been generative of *toromas*, state power, resistances, and resiliencies.

This means that although the Islamicists' power has created numerous barriers for women, potential capacities for acting have formed within these relationalities that enable a resilient energy on "standby" to act. I define this "standby power," as a process through which compressed negative feelings fuel resilient power to act against adverse effects and affects. In this sense, women who did not identify with the Islamicist forces have developed "standby power," a generative and/or cumulative power acquired within the circulation of sedimented violence, waiting to be actualized.

Gilles Deleuze (1988) describes this capacity in terms of its "lived transition." To him, sadness, as a negative passion, involves a diminution of power to act, as opposed to joy, which increases that capacity. Once bodies encounter other bodies, the positive and negative affects will also be transited, enabling or disabling individuals to act or be acted upon. A spectrum of feelings or the melodic line of diverse affects, however, prevents falling into binary logics, because sometimes "not acting" is the best action under the circumstances. This melodic line of continuously varied affects involves both mind and body: "an action in the mind is necessarily an action in the body, and what is a passion in the body is necessarily a passion in the mind" (Deleuze 1988, 18). Any embodied action may be good, bad, or mixed. The production of Islamicized sexualities circulated among religious and non-religious women's bodies on the one hand and Islamicized allies, such as schoolteachers, *Komiteh* (moral police), and female police officers, on the other, has distorted all Iranian sexual identities and orientations.

3-3 Affect and Feminism

Affect engages both human and non-human bodies and spaces (Åhäll 2018), resulting in an intricate network of "politics of emotion [operating] through gender norms" (Åhäll 2018, 41). A feminist reading of affect thus considers how women's feelings are structured, how their bodies and sexualities are affected through the politics of emotions, and the effects of these politics on their bodies. Feminist theorists have explored the role of affect in both oppression and political transformations (Pedwell and Whitehead 2012, Stewart 2007). For many, emotions are "most productively understood not as affective lenses on 'truth' or 'reality,' but rather as one important

embodied circuit through which power is felt, imagined, mediated, negotiated and/or contested" (120). Thus, feminist theorists are concerned about 'affective solidarity' and 'knowing as a process that shapes how our feelings move from individual experience to collective feminist capacities (Hemmings 2012, Koivunen 2010). My own interest in understanding Iranian women's individual and collective *toromatic* memories engages this model of knowing. I want to understand whether other women of my generation have developed strategies to (dis)identify with the fears promoted by coercive Islamic orthodoxies.

Feminist scholars have sought a new critical vocabulary for questioning and "conceptualizing the subject of feminism as embodied, located and relational" (Koivunen 2010, 8). In fact, feminist new materialisms account for the agency of the body and the ways it is entangled with, in, and through its environments. (Hickey-Moody and Willcox 2020). Many feminist theorists in the realm of affect theory interrogate "how bodies inherit and are affected by things that often cannot be described" (1). The body, to them, is transparently a raced, classed, and gendered entity, yet affected by carrying "stories that remain unknown" (11). These unknown stories, in addition to their affiliations with 'ugly feelings' such as fear, hopelessness, and anxiety, can affect the body (Ngai 2004). The "bodily affects of years of fear, violence, and war can stay in cells, and our bodies remember them" (22). That is, the subjects of feminisms are never divorced from "how we feel, whom we relate to, and how the histories [and stories] of emotion" (Greyser 2012) shape us. Thus, for feminism, contagious affects shape the dynamic encounters between bodies within networks of power relations (Liljeström and Paasonen, 2010), framing both *toromas* and standby power.

The living body is also construed as a whole entity by affective feminist scholars, with implications for "feminist critiques, as it tends to disavow a binarized logic of thinking being at the origins of patriarchal systems of domination from its very inception" (Golańska 2017, 36). For feminist affect theorists, life is not "constructed of bits of matter but rather from processes involving dynamic material movements" (150). These movements include many different forces that "enact materiality itself" (Grosz 2010, 103). Materiality, in this sense, equates to lively, processual, and transformative lives, including individuals' bodies in their relations to the human and non-human environments. From a new materialist viewpoint, a body is never defined in terms of what it is, but "rather it is conceived in terms of what it becomes, or more precisely, of what it is potentially capable of doing" (Golańska 2017, 147) in relation to other bodies. This

capability is vital in analyzing women's situations in Iran because they have also become or not become who they are or could be via the network of different affects and power relations they negotiate. Their inability to fully actualize their desires hinges upon the multilayered power structures that oppress, distort, and disrupt their bodily agencies, to this day. Given Iranian society's established and systemic construction of sexual relationships as taboo, many young girls from the 1980s generation could not realize their autonomous sexual capacities. Since my first question in this research engages how Iranian women's bodies and sexualities have been affected by the imposition of the Islamic Republic's sexualized policies, I will use feminist approaches to clarify the impacts of these policies.

3.4 Judith Butler: Quandaries of Insect Taboo

In her seminal book, *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler (1993) criticizes the textualization of the body. She asks, "If everything is a text, what about violence and bodily injury? Does anything matter for poststructuralism?" (Butler 1993, 28) By calling poststructuralist ideas about the body into question, Butler considers whether the body's materiality is a surface that is excluded from the process of social construction. She argues for "a 'matrix of power,' where femininity is associated with the materiality of the womb and hence a problem of reproduction" (Butler 1993, 28). The problem of reproduction forces Butler to track down the history of matter in the history of western thought. She refers to Aristotle, who considers "matter as potentiality and form as actuality, [such that] women are said to contribute the matter and men the form" (31). By tracing this binary distinction of matter from form, Butler points out ingrained attitudes about matter (Materia) in her account of matrices of power. She claims that matter has been equated with the "nourishment for infants," whereas form has been considered the origin of thoughts and reason (32). This dichotomous relationship between matter and form, however, reveals not only a patriarchal distinction between the body and subjectivity but the discursive limits of sex and sexualities as well. This reductive discursive limit renders the body's materiality synonymous with gender, a standpoint Butler disagrees with. She criticizes Foucault's viewpoint on the body, where the body "gains meaning within discourse only in the context of power relations [and where] sexuality is a historically specific organization of power, discourse, bodies, and affectivity" (Butler 1990, 92). Materiality and thus the body, to Butler, remain a "site at which a certain drama of sexual difference plays itself out" (Butler 1993: 49). Thus, there is no prior body

on which power codes are inscribed; instead, the body is a scene on which people perform and construct their sexual identities related to social, political, and gender structures. This means that gender, for Butler, is a process that can take different directions at any time throughout a subject's everyday performances across a life span.

Although there is no prior body on which power relations are inscribed, the Islamic Republic's sexual policies compel women to perform their gender and sexualities in a narrowly prescribed way. The female body's materiality is considered synonymous with her gender in Islamicist ideology. Given that femininity is associated with the materiality of the womb and consequently reproduction, women's bodies are seen as a source of sexual attraction by many Islamicists, supposedly sparking unruly sexual desires among devout men. Pious men are thus empowered to project accountabilities for their own desires and behaviors onto women, even to behave violently toward them, because they are erroneously constructed as the origin of sin, shame, and indecency for devout men through a "feminization of sin." This juxtaposition of sin and femininity denies agency to both men and women, who can never be independent of each other. This rationale provides an excuse for Islamicist authorities to equate sex and gender, propelling women into performances of modesty and compliant modes of decency, legitimizing marriage as the only normative sexual relationship, and considering other forms of sexual relationships taboo.

Butler (2004) argues that the "persistence of the incest taboo [is a] part of the differentiation process that paves the way toward adult sexuality" (Butler 2004, 154). Although the incest taboo names a 'repulsive, and unthinkable' desire, it cements heterosexuality as a unique form of relationship. This unthinkability provides cover for the incestuous pedophile, and projects that desire onto non-heteronormative sexualities, even though all evidence points to extremely high rates of hetero pedophiles. Butler concludes that a more meaningful spectrum of all-inclusive kinship systems is required to respond to everyone's sexual desires. Likewise, Islamicist sexual policies invest in marriage as the sole normative kinship/relationship, excluding other forms of sexual exchanges as taboo. Islamicists have established sexual policies when men and women construed as Shiite "Brothers" and "Sisters" can exchange their sexual desires through marriage. As Butler argues, the incestuous impulse is built right into the prevailing rhetorics and their logics. This purported desexualization of relationships has consequences. First, any relationship outside legitimated heterosexual marriage is targeted for intimidation and punishment by Islamicists. Second, it oversexualizes all relationships, using sexual abstinence and other

constraints to render any sexual object super compelling. Members of my generation could be expelled from school if they brought a photo of a western singer deemed sexually attractive. Schoolteachers would inspect our backpacks to find anything forbidden (such as photos, cassettes, lipsticks, nail polish, etc.) and interrogate them. This intimidating mechanism trained compliance with coercive policies through strict enforcement of surveillance of body-related minutia. As Azadeh Kian (2021) outlines, such policies produced and reproduced "sacred masculinity" as well as "chaste and modest femininity" to be coupled in defense of the whole nation. Still, Butler's analysis works differently in the Iranian context, where feminization of sin projects a sense of being "other" for women and other minoritized genders and sexualities.

3.5 Stranger Encounters; *Toromas* under Iranian Women's Skin

Iranian women have been forced by these troubling distortions and coercions to perceive both themselves and their accusers as 'others' within their own bodies. Sara Ahmed (2000) portrays the "stranger" as one who "is produced, not as that which we fail to recognize, but as that which we have already recognized as 'a stranger'" (Ahmed 2000, 3). Inquiring who the stranger is, she argues that strangers are produced within a process of encounters with others. Each such encounter makes the stranger feel they do not belong in the other's place, leading to self-identification as the "one out of place" (Ahmed 2007, 260). This "out-of-placeness" makes them embody an internalized otherness beneath their skins. Ahmed, who is particularly interested in how the emotions are embodied and structured, explains this out-of-placeness as how "worlds are oriented, which makes some bodies in place and others out of place" (260). Similarly, the Islamic Republic's sexual policies have been structured within Iranian women's bodies, through surveillance experiences, leaving them fearful, othered, and *toromotized.* These sexual policies and surveillance technologies have targeted Iranian women's bodily memories and produced them as strangers in their homeland and to themselves.

Strangeness is associated with living in a particular body; a body that may separate "us" from "them," and "allow the demarcation of spaces of belonging" (Ahmed 2000, 3). However, this separation between "us" and "them" functions by "giving [each other] face, form" (3) and body, as strangers. Ahmed emphasizes these encounters, stating that meetings with 'an-other' carry more weight than internal identities. That is, "encounters involve, not only the surprise of being faced by another who cannot be located in the present, but they also involve conflict" (8). Going

through multiple encounters and facing others, bodies get a shape, and become "de-formed" or "re-formed," by prevailing ideas of strangeness and strangers.

Similar to Butler, Ahmed argues that temporal and spatial bodies become marked by perceived differences. These differences are embodied as recognizable belongings, including but not limited to class, gender, race, age, ethnicity, and religion. However, Ahmed highlights how some body parts, such as skin, demonstrate how the differentiation process happens. Skin to her "allows us to consider how boundary-formation, the marking out of lines of a body, involves an affectivity which already crosses the line" (44). Therefore, skin is not a mere sensory stimulus, nor is it the edge of our bodies, but rather a surface upon which emotions about "the other" are manifested and structured.

Differentiated bodies are not two independent terrains but are, rather, intermingled. Ahmed's critical concept of "inter-embodiment" shows how emotions circulate among adjacent but not separate bodies. Body politics, in fact, determine which body is included and which one is excluded in any normative frame. Yet, inter-embodiment, as a site of differentiation, enables subjects to carry many bodies that "would not be structurally equivalent and are in a relation of asymmetry of potential violence" (48). This inter-embodiment is paramount for my research scope, particularly in terms of how I, as an Iranian woman, carry the affective and projected body of the Islamic republic's forces into the diaspora.

Many Iranian women's bodies are othered and targeted by the Islamic Republic's sexual policies, which make some women strangers to others. That is, non-religious women's bodies are identified as not wearing enough to be a "complete Muslim woman," compared to religious women's bodies that are modest, covered, and ideal from an Islamicist viewpoint. As a result of this dichotomy, two types of female bodies are created within the Islamic Republic's sexual discourses, where ideal feminine bodies are fully covered and not to be exposed to any *Namahram* (potential men to get married), unlike bodies that are partially covered or open to such relationships.

Even though conventional and religious families constrained women's bodies before the 1979 Islamic revolution, the Islamic Republic's hegemonic coercions benefitted religious women as exemplars and leaders. Borrowing Islamicist terminologies, religious women have been able to oppress non- or moderately religious women on the street, for breaking Islamicist rules. I have witnessed many women wearing chadors calling a woman with a loose hijab a prostitute on the

street. For these reasons, I believe that women became “an-other” to one another through the reification of Islamicist discourses about bodies and sexualities. Those religious women who were oppressed by the former political regime, acquired an opportunity to elevate their own status by making a boundary between “themselves” and those they perceived to be non-religious women, while non-religious women have individually and collectively resisted their surveillance. Although these women are strangers who belong to different terrains and lifestyles, the patriarchal ideology that permeates their bodies has wider significance than women’s mutual disputations.

As a woman caught by Iranian moral police many times, I argue that Iranian women have embodied a fear of themselves as ‘the other’ beneath their skins under the Islamic Republic's constant surveillance. Skin, as Ahmed states, is a surface where emotions concerning “the other” are projected and exhibited. Female skin, however, is not even allowed to appear in public spaces in Iran. It seems to be at once the object and the subject of political surveillance. As an object, it is subjected to police surveillance, while each woman is subordinated to their own internalized monitoring for fear of being summarily interrogated, too often with dangerous and violent consequences. Iranian female skin, similar to their hair, is constructed by the regime as an appropriate surface to be politically policed. *Komiteh,* or the morality police, catch those women whose skin, especially their ankles[4] or arms, are exposed. The intensity of this policing has changed over time and become more radical. This marginalization of the living body remains a source of antagonism and fear in their bodies, a fear coupled with a towering rage that permeates “beneath their skin,” in ways that are intrinsically transported into different geographies, via their embodied memories, sustained and suppressed. In this sense, Ahmed’s key term ‘inter-embodiment’ can be applied to diasporic Iranian women with precision. Moving to another cultural setting does not mean expunging the stored *toromatic* memories, and the shadow of Islamicist rules instantly; rather these experiences are healed through recollecting together in the context of wider horizons for possible inter-embodiments and subjectivities.

[4] It is believed in many Islamic *Hadis* (narratives by Islamic prophets and other religious leaders) that women’s bare ankles seduce men, and therefore, they are not allowed to expose their ankles to any man’s view except their family members. Women of my generation faced many strict rules about not wearing cropped pants under their manteau. They could be caught by the morality police and sent to the police station if they wore them. As young girls, we heard a rumor about how a bare ankle would be punished. Had we been caught wearing cropped pants, our ankles would have been placed in a bag of cockroaches.

Iranian women might also be recognized as strangers in diasporic contexts, without the observer noticing or understanding that their lives have been profoundly affected by multilayered powers elsewhere, or how conventional thoughts arising from the power relations familiar to the observer are framing the Iranian woman as "strange." Thus, it seems they are othered and remain diasporic strangers in two ways; on one hand, in their homeland, encountering religious forces that have invaded their bodily autonomy on the streets and in their homes, while on the other hand, in diasporic settings, by the perceptions of local citizens, and the experience of being seen not to belong to the new land. The diasporic Iranian woman's body can summon into the present, without warning, memories of past experiences of the Islamicist regime, but even in encounters with new people and places, she can remain othered, via exposures to local regimes and their relational geopolitical realities. Healing processes for and resistance to both of these imposed viewpoints are required.

3.6 Toward Critical Appreciation of Iranian Women's Resistances in Everyday Life at Home and Abroad

Iranian women who do not identify with Islamicist rules may be resistant to the Islamic Republic's sexual policies and constant surveillance, but that resistance, takes shape under unique conditions. As Nilüfer Göle (2004) argues about the context of Turkey, a country with some historic commonalities in power structures, the Islamicization of life distinguishes gendered power relations in the Middle East, where "gender identities and political ideologies and religion intersect with so many configurations of everyday power relations between sexes" (Göle 2004, 5). Women's agency, Islam, and gender issues remain controversial subjects in the Middle East, in part because they are structured as opposing western hegemonic forces.

The Iranian women's movement has been formulated as a social non-movement. According to Asef Bayat (2007), social non-movements constitute "non-collective actors" engaged in "collective actions" to articulate shared interests for the marginalized and subordinated, i.e., women, urban poor demographics, students, and youth. From Bayat's vantage point, while social movements are "organized, sustained, a self-conscious challenge to existing authorities" (20) in many cultural contexts, non-movements tend to be action-oriented and driven by non-ideological factors, under the repressive political regimes that confront them. He states that in the case of women's rights, the "authoritarian Islamic regime impose forced veiling, gender segregation, widespread surveillance" (Bayat 2003, 161), making women's resistance and agency operate

differently than in other social contexts. Iranian women, Bayat continues, "resis[t] these policies not so much by deliberately organized campaigns, but largely through mundane daily practices in public domains, such as working, participation in sports, studying" (161), or showing interest in embodied activities, such as dance or protest on streets. These modes of agency also resonate with Saba Mahmood's term 'modality of action,' when she highlights Muslim women's responses to the patriarchal reading of Islam in Cairo. She emphasizes how Ciaron women "perform, inhabit and experience" (Mahmood 2005, 22) religious norms differently from men's condemnations via oppressive Islamicist ideologies. Iranian women's struggles with everyday forms of violence lie at the root of imposed religious inscriptions, requiring unique, situated practices of resistance and resilience.

Bayat organizes Iranian women's resistant practices under three rubrics: 'everyday forms of resistance,' 'incremental encroachment,' and mobilizing the 'power of presence.' With 'everyday forms of resistance,' Bayat remarks that "Iranian women's activism embodies an aggregate of dispersed collective sentiments, claim-making, and everyday practices involved in diverse gender issues, chiefly, the assertation of women's individualities" (170). To him, collective identities were formed less in women's "distinct institutions than in (controlled) public spaces: workplaces, universities, bus stops, rationing lines, shopping markets, neighborhoods, informal gatherings, and mosques" (170). These sporadic resistant practices echo my own experiences in public Iranian spaces including one heated confrontation at a bus stop between those identified as *bad-hijab* women, by a woman who wore a chador. It reminds me of a friend who was interrogated by a religious woman, simply because she unveiled herself in the segregated, women-allocated seats on the bus. Although the woman interrogated my friend in a quiet voice, it sparked a serious confrontation among other women that escalated into a physical fight. This fight was serious enough that one woman asked the bus driver to stop the bus in order to let her go. The divisive nature of women's responses to daily interrogation might seem an everyday application of resistance. Yet, those who were seething with rage could strike out against "others" like themselves.

According to Bayat's argument, these mundane forms of everyday resistance bring about an 'incremental encroachment' on women's 'power of presence' into the spaces created by patriarchal structures. Bayat describes 'incremental encroachment' as collective resistant activities and "processes that contribute to tilting gender power relations in public and in

households" (171). These minute collective activities gradually alter the prevailing power structures, especially where organized activism is impeded. He also defines the power of presence as ability[ies] to assert collective will in spite of all odds, by circumventing constraints, utilizing what exists, and discovering new spaces of freedom to make oneself heard, seen, and felt" (172). Thus, Bayat suggests that Iranian women's pervasive imposed public in/visibility and their wilful power of presence will ultimately change the power structures and relations in the long run.

Although Iranian women might benefit from their "power of presence" and their collective incremental encroachments, there are stored *toromas* that their bodies have borne since the establishment of the Islamic Republic. In my opinion, these *toromas*, which have affected women's bodies and disrupted their agencies will not be healed just by their presence in public. Women need active processes where they can remember collectively how their bodies have been trained, treated, and simultaneously de and over-sexualized through the normalization of gendered violence. These *toromas*, which have traveled with them into their processes of encounter with new diasporic geographies, can only be healed together. It is through this togetherness and by sharing our experiences with men and women back home in Iran, that we can begin to undo our *toromas*. By undoing our *toromas* there is hope to reappropriate our distorted bodily agencies and actively perform and reinvent them in revised relational conditions.

Chapter 4

Methodology: Collective Memory-Work and Collective Biography

4.1 Introduction

Deploying an Iranian-centered approach to *toromatic* memory is a hallmark of this thesis. Therefore, I employ collective memory work (CMW) and co-develop a collective biography with participants as my methodology. The practice involves writing personal memories into stories, while working collectively in counter-hegemonic discursive engagements with the techniques and technologies of oppression, as members of Iran's growing diaspora/s. As demonstrated by collective memory work project pioneers, Frigga Haug et al. (1987), this methodology can help reveal how women have been socialized through the sexualization of the female body (13). Drawing on Frigga Haug's memory-work project, Susanne Gannon and Bronwyn Davis (2006) use collective biography and writing memories as mechanisms through which subjects can remember their pasts. Reworking those memories in concert helps them to understand more deeply each individual's "entangled agencies" (5) in the present.

Likewise, I am adopting these two methodologies to uncover the larger processes whereby diasporic Iranian women's bodies have been segmented and appropriated to symbolize the Islamic Republic's regime, via targeted sexual policies and their resulting experiences of resurfacing *toromatic* memories, like mine in the airport. Throughout the preceding chapters, I have attempted to unpack the politics of Islamicization of sexualities, the pivotal impact of gender-role surveillance, and how these have affected women's lives in Iran and beyond. I wish to examine how women who do not identify with the Islamicists' ideologies recall gender-role surveillance and how those memories play out when they find themselves living in different geographies and chronologies. Having experienced and discussed with others similar ghostlike *toromatic* memories of the Islamic Republic and the long shadow of its totalitarian interrogations, I wish to understand more fully how diasporic survivors may assist one another in growing our resilience in our new lives. Given the strong connection among body-memory, "affected bodies,"

"interrupted agency," and "problematic embodiments," which are the linchpins of my definition of *toroma*, I believe collective memory work and collective biography are the most effective methods that can be applied in contexts where the specificities of gendered Iranian experiences are relatively unknown.

Furthermore, I aim to demonstrate how this project's constellation of applied theories permeates the choice of methods. With its aggregate nature, Collective Memory Work assists me in tracing the relationality of oppressive techniques and survival strategies, the operations of *toromatic* memories in an affected and affecting body, and the circulation of alternative visions of power in personal and collective memories. Writing collective intersubjective-embodied memories can help me and my participants reveal whether the sense of being "other," as discussed in chapter three, has been carried into our diasporic experiences. Perhaps, as Iranian diasporic women, together, we may find how to disentangle those *toromas* in another setting, time, and place.

Because Haug's memory work traces the processes whereby women's bodies become sexualized within the structures of power and the relations they have lived, I plan to provide a space in which to unpack the structures of feeling constructed through the Islamic Republic's sexualizing policies. A collective approach to individual and shared memory writing can help expose how fears cultivated in relation to sexualization are not simply a personal issue, but a feminist one. Finally, this linkage between women's bodies, sexualities, and memories is an apt ground for producing feminist knowledge about *toromas,* through an examination of the politics of dis/identification as they unfold among participants' memories, responses, and practices.

In this chapter, I explain how these two methodologies interact to address my research questions, reiterated here, as follows:

1) How have specific Iranian women's lives, bodies and sexualities been affected by the imposition of the Islamic Republic's sexualized policies in their daily lives in Iran? How do these memories resurface in the diaspora?
2) How have specific diasporic Iranian women dis/identified with/from their traumas? What might healing look like for them in the context of geographic migration?
3) How do their diasporic healing processes affect their relationships with women and men back home in Iran?

Ethical approval to conduct this research was obtained through the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board under the supervision of Dr. Marie Lovrod from Women's, Gender, and Sexualities Studies.

4.2 Collective Memory Work

Frigga Haug and her colleagues (1987) established collective memory work to unravel gender socialization processes, whereby women would choose a theme connecting with the ways specific body parts (i.e., legs, hair, stomach, height, etc.) and experiences (such as walking on the street or managing their households) have been appropriated by larger symbolic systems of power. By calling on members of the group to write down their first presenting memories of a "past event that focuses on this physical feature and its valences" (14), a collective memory work group begins to disentangle the ways their own agency has been infested with prevailing projections that have shaped their lives and choices. Through narrating the stories of such embodied memories from targeted women's perspectives, feminists investigate how they have become gendered through their socialization processes. Haug et al. (1987) describe these processes in their seminal book, *Female Sexualization*, claiming that the conflation of living bodies with power symbolics creates sexualit[ies], which are "a form of socialization [informing how] women have learned to behave in a 'feminine' way" (25). Drawing upon this vantage point, they question the ways they have become "women in the social sense [and their] female bodies [have become] a socio-biological unity" (30) in the political sphere. They also criticize mainstream social science research about socialization processes within which women's experiences of agency and processes of interference are neglected and simply categorized as normative within limited gender roles. To them, these categorizations are problematic because women are too easily subcategorized as wives, schoolgirls, and family members. They argue that these subcategorizations and the emotions ascribed to women, such as love and happiness about being a mother or wife, wilfully ignore their social capacities and agencies, in complicity with prevailing power structures. As such, women are not "simply stamped with the imprint of their given social relations but acquiesce in them and unconsciously participate in their formation" (25). This so-called acquiescence is pivotal in the scope of my thesis. Prevailing power relations are not only internalized unconsciously but are stored in bodies that encounter coercive power relations in public and in private spaces in Iran. These *toromas* seek redress over the life course.

Unconsciously assimilated forms of power relations produce multiple embodied memory deposits in different social contexts. I would argue that the Islamicist forces' fundamental aim was to socialize women's sexualities through the "Islamization project" to become committed wives and mothers, similar to what Haug and her colleagues proposed in developing their methodology. If the cumulative fear of interrogative culture has been integral to Iranian women's sexualization, as outlined in my opening chapters, then uncovering how those implanted residual embodied experiences resurface in diasporic spaces is vital to deconstructing the coercive relationship between oppressive state policies and the lives of diasporic girls and women.

By using collective memory work, Haug et al. (1987) seek to plumb embodied stories for the affective sediments that "consolidate the relation of power within which feminists have been able to operate" (17) for social change. They explore how "language" plays a vital role in these complex power relations. To them, fossilized power relations are constructed by language and also within domains of negative affects such as unhappiness and, more importantly, fear and silence. However, collective memory work, wherein "subject and object of the research are one and the same person" (35), might assist in raising awareness about the unconscious processes of sexualization, their discursive applications, and related embodied forms of resistance. Language is often at the core of the unconscious processes that gain power over individuals when others speak it. These symbolic aggressions, however, are not the only components that eclipse individual agency, because individuals often play complicit roles, in contexts where diverse survival imperatives hinge on their choices. Haug and her colleagues use 'subjectification' to explain this reciprocal relationship of people in negotiation with powerful coercions. "Subjectification" "is a process by which individuals work themselves into social structures, they themselves do not consciously determine, but to which they subordinate themselves" (59). This means that individuals reproduce the power structure, without even knowing.

Haug and other feminists argue that collective memory work involves recreating the distorted process of knowing on the ground that connects women to their feelings and "some knowledge of the way they work [themselves] into the social world" (71). Similarly, I deploy collective memory work in this fashion, observing how Iranian women have sustained the fear imposed on our bodies, in order to survive our socialization processes in entangled ways that were sometimes complicit and sometimes resistant, storing the resulting distortions of ourselves and our futures as embodied memories, sometimes hidden from immediate consciousness. For example, many

Iranian women have heard, "if you have a sexual relationship with your beloved in a context I do not approve of, I will kill you." The juxtaposition of death and sexuality, primarily pronounced by male guardians, has consistently affected women, and other sexualized minorities, in ways that interfere with sexual relationships. In the case of women, the disproportionate unofficial rates (Pars 2021) of "honour-killing" and femicide prove that their fear is wholly justified. The fact that women can be killed for sexual assault as well, increases the sense of mortal danger. Thus, many women in the 1980s generation learned to interpret sexual relationships as frightening and dangerous rather than pleasurable, as both a discursive and material matter. It is vital to recall how the Islamicists' sexual rhetoric constructed women's bodies as modest, by mortal and moral necessity, and how we, as Iranian women, subordinated ourselves to their interpellations. Choice was summarily removed from our sexual development. By supporting our efforts to re-articulate those experiences, collective memory work enables our subjective capacities to be activated as social interveners, perhaps for the first time, or maybe once more, as we come to understand the contexts of our respective survival choices and complicities.

Another focal point of this feminist methodology is "memory work's integral contribution is the collective analysis of experience[s], which means during the very process of research, experience[s] are not approached as being an individual's possession, but as socio-politically produced" (Vlachou 2016, 118). Within the process of recalling the past, as embedded in the present, memory workers are invited to situate their experiences within the histories they have undergone. It is of paramount importance to understand how women's common feelings have diversely intersected with their class status, ethnicity, sexual orientations, ableism, and the degree of their religiosity in the Iranian context. Women frequently "realize the power [has] appeared in memories from early childhood up to their adulthood, but the quality of this power changes" (Crawford et al., 1992, 37), intersecting with their varied social locations. This intersectional reading of multiple interwoven experiences, where each woman's experiences matter, assists me in taking small steps toward "micro-historiographies," an approach to the small-scale and everyday life experiences framed by the prevailing conditions of a given historical epoch. Overall, mainstream historiography aims at generalizing events, making them available to all individuals who experienced them. Micro-historiography, however, disagrees with this generalization, which "do[es] not hold up when tested against the concrete reality of the small-scale life [that mainstream historiography] claim[s] to explain" (Magnusson 2022). The

application of this critical encounter of embodied memory with prevailing histories traces singular experiences and each woman's complicities with and resistances to the 1980s Islamicists' sexual policies, within a conversation about collective histories. Thus, by mobilizing collective memory work, Iranian women, can both decentralize and reclaim our living bodies, building bonds of understanding in sharing our situated memories of inter-related *toromas*.

In *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1977) highlights language's fundamental role as a "mode of operation" in being-in-the-world. Focusing on the "experience of alienation of historical consciousness," Gadamer (1977) explores the unique task of "understanding all the witnesses of a past time, out of the spirit of our own present life" (5). He describes this understanding as "a dialogic, practical, situated activity" *(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* online), which aligns well with collective memory work.

4.3 Collective Memory Work; an Agenda for Practice

From beginning to end, collective memory work is set in the "lived reality" of the present and its relationship to assemblages associated with a past event or events. However, the "notion of memory as [an] individual's recollection of a past event, which is clear, fixed, and related to a certain temporality, is challenged" (Vlachou 2016, 120) in CMW's processes. The way memory is conceptualized "speaks directly to [individual's] commitment to a 'relational' and non-individualistic subjectivity" (120). This decentralized approach enables the members of a CMW to write their memories about a particular topic, portraying an event or scenes from an event, without being confined to their personal interpretations. This avoidance of initial interpretations strengthens the idea that meaning-making is constructed, (re)generated, and relational, "open to change [that] can be influenced through [mutual] (self-) reflections" (Hamm 2021, 24). With this in mind, third-person narration is required to historicize and/or distance from the internal narrator (Haug, unknown year). This distance enables group members to return to their ingrained attitudes and transform them in a relational manner, which authorizes the present self to observe the past memory at a greater or lesser distance. Actual CMW processes are quite flexible, depending on their contexts. However, the primary practical sequences are as follows:

1. Writing a memory
2. Of a particular episode, action, or event
3. In the third person

4. In as much detail as is possible, including even 'inconsequential' or trivial details (it may be helpful to think of a key image, sound, taste, smell, touch, the weather, etc.)
5. But without importing interpretation, explanation, or biography (Crawford et al., 1992).

Memory scenes are written, based on a collaboratively selected prompt. After transcribing an episode or scene recalled from memory, the group regathers to discuss their ideas. The memory scenes, written in the third person, are read aloud to the group, without judgment. While the principal author remains a "silent witness," other members attempt to discuss their first impressions and write them down in short notes (Hamm 2021, 57), emphasizing their "Empathetic Understanding" of the author's writing. This compassionate contextualization is key to supporting the writer who remembers, without the coercions that framed the original structuring of the memory. The group members - except the main author - talk about the context of the scene, the author's message, and the everyday knowledge that might be embedded in the writing, based on their experiences. Asking for this everyday knowledge demonstrates how emotions are discursively constructed. The group members then propose a title for the writing under review. The results are put together for the second step called "Distance Analytical Understanding," or "Distance Analysis" (Hamm; 58), or deconstruction. In this step, memory workers analyze the sentences, identifying uses of language such as "clichés, generalizations, contradictions, cultural imperatives, metaphors in the written memories" and discuss final ideas. The table below demonstrates how Distance Analytical approaches work:

Table 4-1. Text-analysis: Adaptation Based on Frigga Haug's Model (Hamm 2021, 57)

Subjects Other Topics	Activities (Verbs)	Emotions	Motivations
Linguistic Peculiarities/ use of Language (e.g., use of attributes [adverbs, adjectives], sentence structures, incomplete sentences, animated subjects, rhetorical questions, repetitions etc.			
Clichés			
Topics (How does the topic appear in the story?)			
White spots/blank (Is something missing in the story?)			
Contradictions (Are there contradictions in the story?)			
Connections (Who/what is connected with whom/what and how?)			

Within the "Reconstruction or Abstracting Story" step, the group members consider how the characters are constructed, and/or how the topic has appeared in the story. The group then refers back to the guiding questions, writing the results in a "Topical Transfer or Shifting the Problem." Within this process, the group members encounter the "radically limited" choices they have had to make, in order to understand their experiences in a wider frame. Finally, "each person examines what is not written in the memories but might have been expected to be, and rewrite the memories individually" (Vlachou 2016, 122). The final version of the rewritten memory is no longer simply a personal memory but a collective one, in the sense that the written account has gone through different reflections and is composed relationally. The table below describes each step.

Table 4-2. Steps in Collective Memory Work

Step One	Co-develop shared memory prompts
Step Two	Write individual memory accounts
Step Third	Share each memory with the group for each prompt
Step Fourth	Memory author remains silent while co-participants provide empathetic reading
Step Five	During reconstruction and abstraction, all participants explore discursive norms, ellipses, and assumptions in the account.
Step Six	Topical transfer focuses on the structural factors, conditioning the experience recounted.

For the scope of this thesis, I adopted the same approach to answering my first research question while remaining sensitive to predicaments peculiar to the situations of Iranian diasporic women in Canada. I selected a convenience sample of female international graduate students of the same generation and nationality. Although participants were initially selected from the Prairie context, one withdrew due to the sensitivity of the subject matter and not wanting to add to the complexities she was navigating in her life at that time, which led me to include another participant (using the same criteria), but residing in Toronto. As a result, the entire meeting schedule was organized to take place online. As the primary researcher, working with two other Iranian women, we gathered and committed to doing a one-month CMW process. As there is no separation of data collection and analysis in collective memory work, I participated in the

meetings as both researcher and participant, and documented the results of our conversations. In order to describe the method as it unfolded in our collaborative process, I outline how we co-created our particular version of CMW, below.

Using three selected rubrics – dress code, intimate relationships, and sexual abstinence, I asked participants to share three prompts (i.e., images, photos, videos, and songs) to stimulate our initial discussion. Although I requested three prompts for each rubric our group ended up sharing more than one prompt for each topic. We realized that our memories engaged feelings, each with its own imageries, since our memories were grounded in different places with other people, non-human entities, spaces, and temporalities. For example, as a member of the group, I realized my initial memory of the dress code was associated with a memory where a *Komiteh* member caught my sister in a "violation" in the 1980s. Similar incidents happened with the other group members, too, which led to more prompts.

These prompts were shared using a unique university email address set up for this project alone, through which I provided individual group members with the fundamental principles of our CMW projects. Participants were also asked to select pseudonyms so that I could categorize their prompts and written memory scenes for the final draft of this thesis. After discussing prompts as a group, initial thoughts and ideas were documented. Putting all our thoughts together, the group members concluded on using three keywords, including *Maqnāe* (scarf)[5], *Naqes* (incompleteness), and *Shouresh* (rebellion), as prompts to write their memories. Each member of the group wrote a separate memory. All memories were written in *Farsi*, the dominant language in Iran, yet by no means the only one that frames everyday communications for different ethnicities. Three 500-word memory scenes were sent by participants to the project email address two weeks later. Once I had individually distributed the results, The "Empathetic Understanding" and "Distance Analytical Analyses" took place accordingly, via our online meeting format. Given the group members' limited time the "Reconstruction and Topical Transfer" were written by the main researcher.

However, as we finished our CMW meetings, we realized that addressing possible healing processes for our *toromas* remained. As we kept moving forward, we learned how (dis)identification processes were different in Iran and Canada. As resilient Iranian women, the

[5] *Maqnāe* is a kind of headscarf that is officially worn on official occasions. Students and all other staff must wear *Maqnāe* but not a scarf at school.

spaces where we were accustomed to being active were different from those we experience in diaspora. These multiple spaces and "mo(ve)ments" in our bodies, between spaces and temporalities, here and there, could have resulted in different outcomes. Thus, we decided to compose a "collective biography;" using a method that is not centered on "fixed biographical entities located in time and space, but as fluid, time-travelling nomadic becomings, both acting upon, and being acted upon, by stories generated within the group." (Gonick and Gannon 2014, 33). At the core of collective biography is deconstructing normative notions of power and knowledge on the processes of subjectification and on the constitutive effects of discourse (Gannon and Davies 2006). This fluidity and space-temporal qualification of collective biography enabled us to select the appropriate format to report our resiliencies.

4.4 Collective Biography; Toward a Virtual-Ethnodrama

As a feminist methodology, collective biography initiates the possibility of probing those moments and experiences that participants struggle to articulate. It can be employed to examine feelings, emotions, and senses that are not simply expressed or represented but may be enunciated better, collectively. According to Davies and Gannon (2013), the subjects in collective biography are "emergent within each moment, as one facet of a whole much greater than individual selves and much bigger than human lives alone" (Davies and Gannon 2013, 359). Collective biography, in this sense, "opens a moment-by-moment ethical questioning that asks how things come to matter in the ways they do" (360) and considers how groups can ease these processes. Gannon and Davies (2013) see collective biography as an "important conceptual innovation, bringing together distinct entities (subjects, concepts, landscapes, etc.) such that their distinctiveness *emerges* in an entanglement of agencies—their own and others" (361). This dynamic mattering is the core of collective biography's innovative conceptual/ methodological framework, where individuals' agencies constantly evolve within a circulation of their affects, movements, thoughts, entanglements, and situated connectivities.

This evolving form of subjective-embodied mattering can also be applied in other arts-based practices, due to their expressive capacities. As a method that can endlessly engage and modify participating entities' entanglements, collective biography can incorporate other arts-based practices such as Boalian theatre, which I considered in my second chapter, as a creative way to respond to *toromas,* using related theoretical frameworks to explore memories and their affects,

past, and present. Borrowing from Boal, I highlighted how everyday life could become a theatre stage upon which *toromatized* people might reinvent their embodied actions, performing past distortions of their agency and problematic embodiments, in new and more liberating ways. Much like within a theatrical scene in Boal theatre, the process of storytelling in collective biography engages memories, which can be re-activated in order to re-appropriate oppressed lives into new contexts of agency. That is, the passivity that remained as a result of encountering coercive power may be shifted by practicing and performing what I am calling one's "generative/standby power" in collective creative contexts

Collective biography has different capacities. For instance, its resemblance with "ethnodrama" applies data collection and data analysis in a seamless engagement with a specific artistic form. Inspired by Eva Bendix Petersen's term, "ethnodrama," Gannon and Mnemo ZIN Millie (a composite name for different scholars at Tampere University) combine "ethnodrama" and collective biography to narrate their memories of Cold War childhoods. An ethnodrama, as a written script, consists of "significant selections of narrative collected through interviews, participants observation field notes, journal entries, and/or print media artifacts such as diaries, television broadcasts, newspaper articles," (Saldaña 2005, 2) performed as a play. Gannon et al., (2022) use this method, which "turns ethnographic data into a script through a creative process that simultaneously entails data organization and data analysis" (Mnemo Zin and Gannon 2022, 3). Drawing upon the content of their memories in a memory workshop, these scholars construct seven scenes "to portray workshop dynamics, dichotomies, stereotypes, conflicts, and tensions by condensing observations and embellishing those with some imagination for affective impact" (9). These scenes help them to develop guiding character notes for each of the "composite characters, outlining their different desires, investments, and interests" (9). They allocate a "distinctive subtext" to each group member to motivate and drive their actions. Each scene has at least one message, a conflict, or compromise involving the characters. Thus, collective memory work and ethnodrama enable them to collect data, analyze their memories, and collaboratively compose a script.

I have adopted this artistic approach in the final analysis of my thesis with some differences, to address my second and third research questions. After working through our memories, we concluded that each member of the group had their own unique interpretation of the Islamic Republic's sexual policies. Although our lives were similarly affected by the Islamicists' rhetoric,

some societal, ethnic, and class-related factors framed our *toromatic* memories. We co-developed scenes that could portray our unique assemblages of the patriarchal political regime, in dialogue with each other's perspectives, as presented within particular characters. We used the same pseudonyms to distinguish these characters.

Gannon et al. (2022) describe a dramaturgical understanding of research as a social drama, where characters or participants-actors have objectives, motivations, experiences, and desires to develop strategies, tactics, emotions, and thoughts. As social participants-actors, they adopt different locales of everyday life, setting a scene for enactment and/or revised enactment. This play with the intersections of time, place, and memory, was an ideal fit for our group of Iranian diasporic women. We were internationally and emotionally moved to another setting that could produce quite different perceptions of our recalled experiences. Our commitment to Covid-19 protocols limited us to the partial application of this method. We set our scenes online and called them "virtual-ethnodrama," where we, as social-participants-actors, could collectively share our memories, and analyze them, and compose a relationally salient script for future performances.

Chapter 5

Launching our Collective Memory Work Together

5.1 *Toroma*, Ethics, and Intersectionality

Our Collective Memory Work (CMW) meetings revealed a few emergent personal and emotional predicaments among group members. While three female graduate students agreed to participate in group discussions, there was some hesitation about whether the experience might be triggering. One of the group members withdrew. Given the scarcity of *toroma*-informed care practices in the Canadian context and the possibility of harm to the participants, I had thoroughly reviewed the entire research procedure with participants. When one participant dropped out, I recruited another graduate student from women and gender studies at York University in Toronto through an online peer, for a total of three participants, including myself. I repeated the process to ensure that the remaining and newly recruited member were comfortable, in step with relational modes of feminist research that "prioritize dialogue and collectivity" (Assiter and Collins 2000, as cited in Hemmings, 2012). I ensured that none of the group members would hesitate to share their concerns about the process or their memories, by discussing their needs in detail, individually and together. After reviewing the study procedures, I shared the culturally specific definition of *toroma* with group members, for reflection. My own roller-coaster feelings were a mixture of excitement and anxiety about any problematic encounters with my own past. Once the participant group was finalized, five virtual, three-hour meetings were held over one month and a half, from early May to the end of June 2022.

Participants began taking ownership of the process by sharing discussion prompts, such as videos, photos, and songs. As we agreed upon our discussion triggers, we also began to develop our understanding of the term *toromas* better. As the primary researcher, I asked about the group's first memories of wearing hijab, and the policing of intimate and sexual relationships. By emphasizing "first memories," I sought a deeper understanding of early embodied emotions invoked by the images, songs, and videos. We used our pseudonyms (Ali, Sayeh, and Baran) to

record whose memories we engaged at various points. Pseudonyms ensured anonymity and that nothing would impede us from fully narrating our stories. Although we attempted to use third-person pronouns, some memory workers used both third-person pronouns and pseudonyms when writing their memory scenes. One chose the name “Ali” which codes as male in Persian and Arabic cultures. It means “elevated,” “high,” or “champion,” and is also the name of the first Shiite Muslim Imam (religious leader). Although this name was an homage to the participant's nostalgic memories of her intimate partner, it also queered our discussions of sexual *toromas* and gender-role surveillance.

Although we shared our nationality of origin, age range (all born in the 1980s), and histories with the sexualized policies of the Islamic Republic, our gender, class, cultural, religious, and ethnic statuses were unique. While two of us identified as cisgender women using the pronouns “she/her,” one identified as a non-binary (i.e., gender fluid or ambiguous) who used “she/they/them.” While all of our lives were affected by Iran’s Islamization project, its patriarchal regimes and female interrogative culture, each of us experienced those intensities differently. It became evident that our *toromatic* experiences were contingent upon our family’s religiosity, class, gender norms, and ethnic backgrounds. However, we all recognized the *toromas* each participant was explaining and why they might be anguished or relieved to share their memories.

We also developed trust to intervene with completing the records of each other’s memories, sometimes with laughter and sometimes, staring glumly at each other. Throughout, I documented all reviews and comments and shared them with other group members by private email. I highlighted sentences added by other participants in red.

Each of us wrote three memory scenes on our experiences of dress code, intimate relationships, and sexual abstinence, using the trigger words *Maqnāe* (scarf), *Naqes* (incompleteness), and *Shouresh* (rebellion). Our “Empathetic reading” and “Distance Analysis” of each memory were developed afterward. Drawing on the research questions, we then engaged in “topical transfer” resituating how our *toromas* have affected our bodies and sexualities in a more general, anonymized, public frame.

5.2 Reviving the Past; Exploring Embodied Memories with the Help of Memory Work

5.2.1 Prompted Discussion on the Shared Past

Our first collective memory work began as Ali, Sayeh, and Baran gathered online via a university zoom link I had sent, individually, in advance. Although we had agreed to share just one prompt for each of the experiences we had chosen to focus upon, we ended up offering more materials to enrich our discussion, because we needed to situate our *toromas* within a broader network of different feelings that affected and informed us. We examined the photos, listened to the audio recordings of songs, and watched the videos, collectively. Afterward, each participant spoke briefly about their reasons for selecting those particular prompts, followed by feedback, thoughts, and emotions exchanged among the group members. Below, I will describe the prompts shared by each of the collective memory workers. I have added some images to convey the ideas informing our prompts, although for anonymity's sake, none of the images presented here were our original prompts. No analysis of these prompts was undertaken. Rather, my analysis is has been limited to the written memory scenes.

5.2.2 Dress Code— Ali's First Prompt

5.2.2.1 Birth Certificate Portrait-sized Photo

A birth certificate photo was the first prompt cut from a birth certificate or ID photo. The photo portrays an adolescent girl, in her mid-teens, in a black *Maqnāe*, with a diagonal face, staring out of the frame. The photo has been officially stamped by a notary office in *Kashan*, one of the most religious provinces in Iran. While the ID number could not be seen, Iran's black Islamic Republic emblem was explicit and highlighted. Our collective conversation about this photo is presented below, in bullet form:

5.2.2.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Ali's First Prompt

- Scarf (*Maqnāe*) and how difficult it was to wear it.
- While we were playing, the sheer volume of sweat under the scarf was irritating.
- Unplucked and unkempt eyebrows and how we wished to be neat and shape our eyebrows, but we were not allowed to.
- A personal photo is a bitter memory on its own. It reminds me of how I hated myself when I saw it.
- It is already tied with a national identity, with a nation-state's coercive agenda, which any subject must follow.

- The Islamic Republic's and Kashan province's stamps were meaningful and moving.
- The ID photo reminds me of tensions with my father about taking personal photos.
- The hideous *Maqnāe* — recalls school alarms and demands, such as, "Where is your *Maqnāe*?"
- The way we had to wear *Maqnāe* was so dreadful.
- It reminded me of the irritating *Maqnāe's* elastic cord (sewn on the girls' *Maqnāe* to ensure their hijab could not be loosened).

5.2.3 Dress Code— Ali's Second Prompt

5.2.3.1 The School Anthem; *Hamshagerdi Salam*

"*Hamshagerdi Salam*" (Hello my classmate) is a well-known recorded school anthem, broadcasted mainly by the Islamic Republic's national television and radio at the beginning of each school year. Students would hear this anthem in the schoolyard, welcoming them back to class. The anthem is reminiscent of both sad and happy times for many students of the 1980s generation. While we listened, each participant had a faint non-committal smile on our faces, a hesitancy demonstrated in our conversation:

5.2.3.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Ali's Second Prompt

- A good and sweet reminder of "back to school" time.
- A reminder of our childish pranks at school.
- A source of anxiety; time to go to school
- All school regulations, including dress codes and mandatory veiling *[compulsory everywhere; chador[6] was specifically mandatory in Kashan-Added by Ali]*
- We used to put those chadors in our backpacks and wear them when approaching the school.
- Ill-tempered teachers wanted to expel me because I touched a cat on the street at back-to-school time *[They threatened to do that. I left my cat in the street. I always think I might have killed him by touching him - Added by Ali]*
- A combination of anxiety and happiness; with anxiety, I remember some regulations, such as being a top student at school, and the joy of getting rid of my grumpy father. I could at least get away from him for a while at school.

[6] A long usually black, piece of clothing worn by Muslim women in some countries including Iran, which covers their head and body.

5.2.4 Dress Code— Ali's Third Prompt

5.2.4.1 Motorcycle Sound

This prompt was a typical passing motorcycle sound, one that grabs attention. It sounds like the motorcyclist stopped and revved up the engine on purpose. It was selected due to the participant's memory of returning home from school. We were all annoyed, talking about motorcyclists in Iran. We recalled many occasions when they brutally touched us on the street. We discussed this sound prompt in detail, as outlined below.

5.2.4.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Ali's Third Prompts

- It reminds me of street sexual assault while we were walking, and a cyclist revved up and, at the same time, brutally touched me.
- It doesn't trigger happy memories at all.
- One of the most frightening nightmares in a religious city like Kashan (Qum and Kashan are the most religious provenances in Iran).
- Kashan's alleys that ended at our schools were like a maze. Female students had to pass these abandoned allies where there were a lot of motorcyclists who assaulted them.
- Different types of motorcycle sounds invoked motorcyclists who assaulted female students.
- It is related to the dress code based upon gendered space regulation.
- Female students, including me, were not permitted to pass these allies. *[We were not permitted, more like the space did not belong to us; we were "excess"-Added by Ali]*
- Even a female student like me, wearing a black chador, could be harassed by the motorcyclists. *[The Islamicists said a known quotation that "Hejab masuniat ast na mahdudiat!!"]- (hijab is sanctuary and safety but not restriction!* Ali questioned whether the hijab could protect her against motorcyclist harassment) - *It never protected us!]*
- Assaulted by motorcyclists, I didn't dare to tell my parents.

5.2.5 Dress Code— Sayeh's Prompt

5.2.5.1 Private Mixed Pool Party

A recent YouTube video represented mixed pool parties in Iran, where swimming pools are segregated, and there are no mixed-gender public pools where men and women can swim together. However, some middle-class and affluent families' apartments are equipped with private swimming pools, where family members or friends would spend time together. In addition, some families had private pools in their villas in the countryside, where the chances were better that they could swim in mixed groups without being caught by the morality police. Sayeh brought up this prompt as she felt that the dress code, rather than referring to mandatory veiling, was more

about internalized restrictions. However, there was not unanimous agreement in our shared comments:

5.2.5.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Sayeh's Prompt

- It was a rare case in my mind, as few families had swimming pools in their private places.
- There was a chance of being caught by police.
- The discourse of disclosure of any forbidden activities, including drinking, parties, and having relationships was common. It reminds me of any revelation process, where the morality police could have caught you at any time *[Loū-Raftan in Persian-Added by Ali]*.
- The pool party was a rare case, a more-than-chasm issue for a religious family
- Inhibited female bodies, even when partially covered or wearing swimming suits.
- Many Iranian women have not experienced a mixed pool party.
- I have not been in this environment, due to my body-shaming.
- Many Iranian women did not have the right to attend a mixed party.
- I have personally struggled with the idea of the hijab.
- I have had discussions about the type of clothing within my family as opposed to the mandatory hijab in the public spaces.
- It reminds me of inward-bodily limitations, and simultaneously *[we would swim in our mixed pool in our families, and I received such nasty comments among my relatives-Added by Sayeh]*.
- It reminds me of an inhibited body image.
- It is not a personal issue at all. In Canada, Islamophobic people are concerned about wearing a burqa, putting pressure on women again, in the reverse direction.

5.2.6 Dress Code— Baran's Frist Prompt

5.2.6.1 *Taklif Party*: Hijab-wearing Party

This prompt is basically about a hijab-wearing party, also known as *Taklif Party, Jashn-e-Taklif, Jashn-e- Ibadat*. It is a celebration primarily held at schools, where female students are encouraged to show their willingness to wear hijab. While it is known as an "optional" ceremony in North American diasporic Muslim communities, it is not an optional ritual for Iranian girls. Typically, nine-year-old girls are invited (in imperative terms) to wear a white "*Maqnāe*" and floral "chador" in their *Taklif Parties*. Veiled students sit in a row on the floor, worshiping God and affirming other religious beliefs. The school boards provide them with refreshments, snacks, and so-called "happy chants." The female students then pose for a photograph to capture this sacred moment, both personally and with a group. Our memories of *Taklif Parties* varied, depending on how we had experienced them.

5.2.6.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Baran's First Prompt

- It reminds me of my *Taklif party,* where we were given a floral, <u>white</u> cloth to make our chadors. It reminds me of the smell of that cloth and, at the same time, the convivial gathering of girls who competed to wear a hijab and took photos.
- *Taklif* party was a mere celebration for me. We didn't experience it as oppressive, as it was not common in that period we went to school (early 1990s); we cried and asked to have this celebration.
- *Taklif* party was so funny for me. While we wore chadors, schoolteachers took our photos and sold them to us as memorable photos. It was funny that my mother didn't give me money to buy that photo (laughing together).

Figure 5-1. Hijab-wearing Party or Taklif Party

5.2.7 Dress Code— Baran's Second Prompt

5.2.7.1 Photo of Young Ladies Wearing Long, Gray Manteaux

This photo portrays a group of young women wearing long, pale-coloured manteaux, posing for the candid camera. These manteaux were so fashionable, once they came out in Iran. They were long and oversized with loose sleeves garnished by epaulets that made the shoulders broad and square. While these garments have had different applications worldwide, they were alternative clothing for women unwilling to wear chadors. They were an appropriate outfit covering the female body from shoulder to toe. These manteaux typically came in desaturated, subdued, duskier, and more muted colours such as gray, brown, black, and dark blue. Those women more likely to wear white, vivid, and brightly coloured manteaux were sharply criticized

by the Islamicist forces, the public, and even their family members. We talked about these quarrels in detail.

Figure 5-2. The 1980s Women Manteaux Style

5.2.7.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Baran's Second Prompt

- Those long manteaux reminded me of my sisters. I remember that my sister wore a long white manteau. My sister and her friends were caught by *Komiteh* (moral police) for wearing those manteaux. They had run and taken shelter at our house, where my father saw and yelled at them and called them prostitutes *[Whore! To be literal ha ha-Added by Ali]* while trying to punish them physically.
- Wearing those manteaux was so painful for me. I hated them. As I was too skinny, it made me look so ugly and funny, a great subject to be laughed at by others.
- People and even our family members called us prostitutes when we wore long white manteaux. Gray, black, and dark blue were confirmed for men and women. If we wore white, then it seemed likely we wanted to expose ourselves to non-familial men, meaning they would consider us not as a "modest" or "*Mahjob*" girl but a demure one. *[I am curious whether you intentionally chose mahjob (modest) and not mohajabeh or veiled-Added by Ali]* I remembered wearing a dark purple manteau; my friend told me, "We had seen you with a dark purple manteau in the street!!!" *[Actually, they said we saw you with a pink manteau, haha!!! Now I remember that in their eyes, it looked brighter than it actually was-Added by Ali]* I do not have any idea why the "white" colour was that problematic. I had white trousers. Once I wore them, a terrible assault happened to me in the street. A motorcyclist assaulted me and brutally touched my legs… He then dragged me to the floor. My trousers were torn, and my face and legs were injured. Soaked in tears, I ran to my friend's house, knowing well that I could not share this bitter experience with my family. I knew they would not allow me to go out if they knew.

After discussing our dress code prompts and our written memories, we continued reviewing the next set of prompts about intimate relationships. While these prompts seemed quite personal for each of us, they all had a veneer of stealthy actions taken by protagonists that were remarked by all of us.

5.2.8 Intimate Relationship— Ali's Prompt

5.2.8.1 A Location on Google Map

The photo illustrates an address and the location of a house pinned on a max-sized google map. It is blurred, with a few streets and alleys' names highlighted. It is also attached to the province's name, Kashan, which underlines the building's location. This prompt seemed quite personal to us.

5.2.8.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Ali's Prompt

- I couldn't see my beloved *[easily]*, so I just looked at his room's window to see when he was there. I was not allowed to use the telephone at home. I was punished once by my mother. My beloved and I set a code for ourselves. Once he was available, he turned on the light, meaning I could appear next to my room's window so we could see each other. *[Actually, he hung a black shirt, meaning we could see each other in the same place within the next hour. Windows were too far away for us to be able to see each other, the light only showed his presence, and it was lovely.]* That window was the most loving image etched on my memory.
- Love in distance
- It reminds me of where a beloved's residence can be located or those mysterious happenings in those specific streets and alleys.

5.2.9 Intimate Relationships— Sayeh's Prompt

5.2.9.1 Mountains and Waterfalls

The photo portrays the treacherous mountains of Tehran and some recreational areas on the mountainsides, where many leftists came together during the revolutionary days. However, they became a recreational space after the Islamic Revolution, where individuals, apart from mountain climbing, met and spent their leisure time. Many young couples would meet in these mountains in the 1990s-2000s. We confirmed that each of us experienced at least one of our intimate relationships among those lush trees and jagged rocks, where chances were better to find a

private space on our own. We also recalled those moments when we were arrested by the moral police just because we were close together.

5.2.9.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Sayeh's Prompt

- My sexual and intimate relationships entwine with each other. I could not separate them as both happened in the mountains. Those great kisses, far from families and anybody else's gaze looking…
- It meant "escape" to me…
- These photos of nature trigger the happiest memories for me. I recall the funniest and most satisfying sexual relationships in nature.
- Those kisses behind the rocks
- I do not forget those moments when I had to run away from the police and simultaneously had to be committed to the curfew imposed by my father. What anxiety…

5.2.10 Intimate Relationship— Baran's Prompt

5.2.10.1 A Hindi Video Clip (*Dil*)

This prompt is a 1990 Indian, Hindi-language, romantic film dramedy, portraying the barriers of a couple who are in love but resist arranged marriage by their affluent families. The movie's plot centres on the problems that youth have, especially with their fathers. We watched the video songs embedded in the film, which were memorable for some of us. Since the Islamicist forces forbade videos, some of us could not access them in our homes.

5.2.10.2 Thoughts and Comments on Baran's Prompt

- Passionate love in Hindi movies; those vivid-full of dance movies… oh God, it was so memorable. However, I could not access these kinds of videos.
- I don't know; I didn't watch Hindi movies at all
- Resistance to those who frown upon romantic love
- It reminded me of relationships in general, specifically the pre-marital discord that I had with my ex-husband's father.

After concluding our final thoughts about our intimate relationships, we discussed the last set of prompts on sexual abstinence. Again, one of the memory workers had more than one prompt, included below. At the center of these memories was how a sexual relationship seemed a threatening issue for all of us. That said, as resilient and militant women, we tried not to be petrified by the fears imposed on us in both public and private spaces.

5.2.11 Sexual Abstinence— Ali's Prompt

5.2.11.1 *Chalus* Road

Chalus is one of the northern cities in Iran's *Mazandaran* province. Overall, the North of Iran is known for its virgin nature, which makes it a suitable spot for holiday travel. The word "North" (*Shomal)* invokes a mixture of pleasure, vegetative places, romantic relationships, and nostalgic memories for different Iranian generations. Ali's video shows the long, winding rows of traffic on *Chalus* Road accompanied by a piece of sad, Persian background music from someones viewpoint sitting in a car. The *Chalus* Road triggered a roller coaster of paradoxical emotions for each of us. However, we concentrated on how we might relate it to our sexual abstinence.

Figure 5-3. The Chalus Road

Figure 5-4. *The Chalus Road*

5.2.11.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Ali's Prompt

- I went "North" to commit suicide, which ended my first sexual relationship. I wanted to die after having an unpalatable experience, with a lot of pain after my first sexual relationship. On this road, I had a roller coaster of emotions. Thinking of a broken relationship, I pushed my feet onto the footwell. The sexual relationship was tied to having "no place," something that could have happened in the middle of nowhere.
- *I wanted it to happen. I asked for it. That was mine. When we were in an* easy relationship, *the sex was always incomplete. I wanted to have it completed this time.*
- On the way back, I wanted the world to end. I wanted us to crash and die. I wanted that story to be the last event in my life. I didn't want to return to being separated again.
- As soon as I watched this video, I felt sad; I felt how lucky you were to have your first sexual relationship in the North. I did not have the chance to travel alone.
- I thought that the sexual relationship could not have happened outside that space.
- Mountains, jungles, and meadows were the places where we could run away and have sexual relationships.
- Mountains and nature, in general, meant "to run."

- I thought that road was a great gift to be far away from families.
- I was a virgin till I was 27… that road meant being far from families to have sex.

5.2.12 Sexual Abstinence— Sayeh's Prompts

5.2.12.1 Grand Bazaar

The Grand Bazaar (*Bāzār e Bozorg*) is an old historical bazaar in Tehran. It is split into several long corridors, each specializing in different types of goods with several entrances. The prompt was a ten-minute video of the grand bazaar, portraying people passing by each other. However, this bazaar's ambiance conjured an array of painful memories for us. We recalled how our body parts (i.e., breasts, hips, vaginas) were assaulted and touched by men in the bustling stores of this bazaar.

5.2.12.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Sayeh's Prompt

- It was the most irritating spot to be touched and assaulted.
- I felt I could not defend myself from those male hands that used to grab our breasts.
- I felt I had to push back on the wall because of those men who touched women in Bazar.
- It was so weird!! Full of bitter memories of being assaulted, but also happy memories of gathering and having fun there

5.2.13 Sexual Abstinence— Baran's First Prompt

5.2.13.1 A Photo of a Little Girl with Imploring Eyes

The photo portrays a sad little girl lying on her stomach. She stares at something with her eyes full of grief and tears. Another photo is attached, framing an adult's wrist fastening around the bedsheet. What is happening in the scene is not explicit. We assumed a relationship between the forlorn girl and the adult struggling with something unpleasant. We shared our thoughts.

5.2.13.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Baran's First Prompt

- It feels like a sexual assault
- Reluctance to have sex
- I feel I have seen a child who masturbated and felt ashamed.
- It felt like a child who was sexually assaulted.
- It triggers shame and pain

5.2.14 Sexual Abstinence— Baran's Second Prompt

5.2.14.1 Madonna Video Clips (*Like a Virgin* and *Vouge*)

These last prompts were centred on Madonna as a popular and desirable singer. The participant focused on two video clips which triggered sexual abstinence memories. "Like a virgin" portrays Madonna sailing down the canals of Venice in a gondola and roaming around a palace wearing a white wedding dress. She seems to be a strong and sexually independent woman in this video. In addition, we watched some parts of "Vouge," a video clip where the singer enjoys her semi-naked body on the dance floor. What grabbed our attention was the lace dress that could expose her nude body. We discussed nudity in the video clips to which some of us had access, while others were prohibited from watching them.

5.2.14.2 Initial Thoughts and Comments on Baran's Second Prompts

- It reminds me of my sister, a great fan of Madonna.
- As I belong to a religious family, I didn't have access to video clips, so I didn't feel anything.
- I first watched a Western video clip at my brother's place. As my religious parents had brainwashed me, I felt ashamed that even a quick look at these productions would bring sin and indecency. Their house was located in Tehran, the capital city, and once I travelled there, I had more access. As soon as I found myself alone, I watched these clips. Still, I felt ashamed when I watched them.
- I feel like Madonna's, and any woman's naked breasts seem very sexy.

5.3 Some Shared Keywords

Getting through the long process of reviewing our prompts, we attempted to collect a few keywords that stood out for us in the discussions. This process was brief as we were running overtime. We focused on those words that were commonly elicited from our diverse and personal memories, as outlined below.

Table 5-1. Shared Keywords for Dress Code, Intimate Relationship & Sexual Abstinence

Keywords for Dress Code	Keywords for Intimate Relationship	Keywords for Sexual Abstinence
Shame	Cover	Independency
Scarf (*Maqnāe)*	Hymen	Regret
Chador	Transgression	Escape
Coercion	**Rebellion *(Shouresh)***	**Incompleteness (*Naqes)***
Censorship	Pleasure	Hush-hush
Anxiety (anxious eyes, school, motorcyclist	Courage	Covered
ID card		
School		

5.4 Our Shared Triggers for Writing Memory Scenes

By reflecting on these keywords, we selected one that resonated the best with our *toromatic* memories. There was an agreement that all terms, to some degree, were associated with negative feelings. We concluded by writing our memory scenes on "*Maqnāe*" (scarf required by school dress codes. We also reflected on the word, "*Shouresh*" (rebellion) as most relevant to our memories of intimate relationships. Finally, we found out that the word "*Naqes*" (incompleteness) could explain how we experienced our sexual relationships, bound as they were by constant fear and anxiety.

5.5 Toward Writing Memory Scenes

5.5.1 Feedback on Writing Process

The second meeting started with a common question about how our triggers affected us. Group members stated our difficulties in the writing process. For instance, some memories reawakened old agitations. One of us had disturbed sleep as she initiated writing her memories; another faced uneasiness in contacting her parents back home. However, we all agreed that remembering and writing collaboratively could reduce the internalized pressure, endured for decades. We learned that even though writing about our experiences seemed challenging, "reading" our own memories and "listening" to the others' was soothing and healing. Once we

collectively engaged those past events, we saw similarities between different power structures that, although situational, had affected us in similar ways.

This demonstrates the power of "relational remembering," where each memory is "embodied, lived, and experienced in the networks of personal and public relationships in which each of us is situated, and we come to know ourselves and others through active engagement in meaningful and responsible ways" (Koggel 2014, 496). The whole process of reading memories, of crying or laughing together, was similar to listening to a moving short story, a poem, or the final chapter of a novel. As such, we understood that the poetic features embedded in our language reflected the affectivities of our stories. The poetic character of the Farsi language had advantages and disadvantages.

On the one hand, narrating our memories in Farsi enabled us to express our feelings coherently in our mother tongue, a vernacular in which we had lived and were rooted; we knew its cadences. On the other hand, our memories would be translated into English for Anglo audiences. Given language's vital role in the socialization processes in collective memory-work, as outlined in chapter four, I worked hard to ensure that those translated texts are as accurate as possible in reflecting the poetics of Farsi. In order to confirm this accuracy, I sent each translated text to group members individually, soliciting their thoughts and opinions on my translation. Thankfully, the group expressed great solidarity in revising the less authentic sentences, and confirming the most reliable ones. The following three chapters explore the memory scenes we constructed, on each of the topics we identified: on *Maqnāe* (the scarf), *Shouresh* (Rebellion), and *Naqes* (Incompleteness).

Chapter 6

Results: Memory Scenes on *Maqnāe* (the Scarf)

6.1 Introduction

We started working with our memory scenes, first by doing an "empathetic reading" of those written on *Maqnāe* (scarf), as our first trigger. Ultimately, each of us had three texts to read to others. Although we were supposed to write our memories in the third person to maintain distance from the subject of that memory, we ended up writing them both in the third person and using our pseudonyms. While the primary author was reading their story, the rest of the group took notes. This process was reiterated for each memory scene. After reading the story, the primary author remained silent while the others talked about their interpretations or "empathetic readings" of the stories.

Getting through this process, the memory workers, including the primary author, participated in selecting an "agreed-upon title" that could best describe the content of the written memory. Then, the group discussed their underlying assumptions about the memory context. We also speculated on the probable locations where those events happened. This was followed by discussion of the common-sense theories engrained in our everyday understandings of that event. By noticing our common assumptions, we marked our expressions of any shared everyday knowledge that best described the situation. This everyday understanding was also the hallmark of our discussions, as it could reveal our commonalities and differences in prevailing sexualization processes, and the vital role of discursive constructions.

Each written memory was positioned under its own specific rubric (dress code, intimate relationships, and sexual abstinence). Once the written memory was shared, the "empathetic readings" and "distance analysis," enabled the "reconstruction" level, where we considered how the primary author had constructed her/themself and the others in their stories. Finally, the results of our discussion were summarized through a "topical transfer," prepared by the researcher, to engage the first research question.

6.2 Dress Code: *Maqnāe* (the Scarf)

6.2.1 *Panopticon*

Maqnāe was our first trigger and generational memory of wearing hijab. Although our interpretations were given in the form of a dialogue, for the sake of coherency, I have combined them together into a whole paragraph. Following is the first written memory, collaboratively titled by the group members.

Panopticon

اِشراف

Sayeh was a passionate fan of sports all those years of her middle school. She had not yet reached puberty, but she got taller and taller every day. The school uniform was a long, loose-fitting, and knee-length manteau, and a long Maqnāe covered her breasts which had not developed enough to be called breasts. They were not ample breasts at all. Sayeh was also a team member of the school's basketball team, playing track and field, ping-pong, and on the school volleyball teams as well. Sayeh had to participate in training for at least one of these teams every day. All the exercises happened in the schoolyard. As the students might be exposed to their male neighbour's view, the principal forced them to practice in full hijab in the schoolyard. Like a tiger, the principal was there, monitoring the girls' jumping, their manteaux, and their Maqnāe, afraid lest they take them off. On that autumn afternoon, they were going to practice basketball. The team members were divided into two groups of five and started competing against each other. The coach led the groups and blew the whistle when needed. The girls ran from one side of the schoolyard to the other, shouting "pass it" or "take it." Almost half of the passes were sloppy, as the female students could not see them. The front flap of the Maqnāe would rise and block the girls' eyes with every gust of wind, jump, or even when they raised their hands. Sayeh was a forward player, and was well placed in front of the court. She shouted "here," and her teammates passed, but the pass was not accurate enough and was higher than Sayeh's height. She jumped to grab the ball. As soon as she raised her hands, the Maqnāe came up and covered her eyes. The ball hit her head at that moment, and she fell to the ground. She hit the filthy ground of the schoolyard, which was always full of muddy holes. Her manteau got dirty, she lost the ball, her body got bruised, and the sweat glistened on her body.

Panopticon's Empathetic Reading

The idea of the panopticon was introduced by Foucault, referring to a central observation tower above a circle of prison cells, outlined in architectural drawings of potential prison surveillance arrangements (Foucault, 1979). While the guard is at the center of the panopticon, inmates never know whether they are being monitored. The principal has the same surveillance position in this written memory, with a slight nuance. She is at the center of the school, and her dominant presence constantly affects the students. The students are aware of the possibility of being caught, should they disobey the schoolyard's regulations, including being unveiled.

Typically, in Iran, segregated female schools are attached to the other neighborhood buildings, where chances of exposure to the sight of male neighbors is perceived as a 'sinful' and erotic activity. The title identifies the schoolyard as a prison in which students, like inmates, were being monitored by a guard. Participating memory workers emphasized this constant surveillance. Described as a tiger, the principal has a predatory role in relation to her student victims. This resonated well with our experiences of being interrogated and even physically punished by our principals in other situations.

Puberty was another theme that caught our attention while listening to this memory. We noticed an inhibited body, shame about undeveloped breasts and external judgements. In this sense, we felt that the long *Maqnāe* equipped the author to cover her shyness about an immature body. This positive attribute of *Maqnāe*, however, was offset by the ways it inhibited any physical activity, such as *Marasem Sobhgah*[7] (morning schoolyard rituals). We all recalled those morning rituals when we had to shake our bodies without loosening our hijab. This discomfort had other meanings for the primary author. When asked to interpret her own memory, she noted her failure to catch a ball with wearing a hijab. *Maqnāe* frames the bitter memory of undermining her chances of becoming a professional athlete at that time. It resonated with any situation where someone else is accountable for your loss. The schoolyard, as the precise location of the story, was similar to a judicial court. We agreed that the panoptic positioning of the principal aligned with the fear of being unveiled and with the protagonist's sense of failure as an athlete. Justice is blind until sharing our narratives gives us eyes!

Panopticon's **Distance Analysis and Deconstruction**

As stated in chapter four, we used the template for the distanced analysis and went through the text sentence by sentence considering how the protagonists engaged in the main activities, the verbs they used, the emotions, and motivations of the subject(s) in the story. Then, we considered the use of language, clichés (so common, they would otherwise go unnoticed), the topic as it appeared in the story, the gaps that empathic readers did not understand fully, and the irritations

[7] *Marasem Sobhgah* or morning ritual is used both for the army and at schools to start a new day. Students often stand in orderly queues in the schoolyard, getting ready to go to their classes. These rituals consist of reading some parts of the Quran, singing the national anthem, doing some workouts, and praying for the religious leaders. This ritual functions the same for the army.

and contradictions emerging in the written memory. Summary tables outlining the ways we engaged these topics are provided in the Appendices.

Panopticon's Reconstruction and Abstraction

By reconstructing and abstracting, I attempted to answer several questions concerning each of our written memories. At issue was 1) how the topic appeared in the story, 2) how the authors each constructed her/themself and others in their composition, and 3) what is/are the subtextual message(s) in the text.

In this story, the author presents two situations; the first includes *Sayeh*, the school principal, other students/teammates, and the sports coach as the main subjects of the scene. She illustrates the relationships among students and school staff in a particular sports event, emphasizing the school principal's role. Although *Sayeh* is an active protagonist in her story (along with her teammates), she constructs herself as a voiceless character in the face of the principal, school regulations, and rules. This strangled voice is echoed in the emotions expressed. She describes the principal as a tiger, against whom she does not dare to raise her voice. This repressed voice is not only that of a victim being preyed upon by a predator, the neighbouring male for whom the principal becomes a disciplining proxy. Sayeh does not escape or seek refuge; rather, she persists in her actions in sullen silence and rage. Moreover, Sayeh has a paradoxical interpersonal relationship with the *Maqnāe,* as an outfit, and as one of the characters in the story. It is a piece of personal equipment that hides Sayeh's shame, while also serving to regulate students' bodies. *Maqnāe,* is an animated subject of the story, able to 'do' an activity (to cover or fly up) so that it is 'more-than-an-object/topic; a collaborator and a constraint, causing trouble and failure for her.

In terms of language, the author employs descriptors and adverbial phrases to construct herself, highlighting the school uniforms and their regulation. Underlining the length of the school uniform (long, loose-fitting, knee-length manteau and long *Maqnāe*), the protagonist portrays an oversized garment that is supposed to cover adult women's bodies in an Islamic society. Yet, she is perplexed why the same regulations apply to a body that has not yet reached puberty. This emphasis on the school uniform, however, seems to appear as a cliché in the context of socialization from an early age. The writer also deploys two contradictory adjectives for describing the principal. While the principal is a predator who monitors the girls' outfits in the schoolyard, she also fears that the students may be unveiled in the sight of male neighbours. This

inconsistency reveals the precarious state of her power. Yet, the author, like the other students, seems only partially aware of the forces of social power targeting students' bodies.

The "filthy" and "muddy" surface of the schoolyard does not reveal whether the schoolyard is a "public" or "semi-public" space. On the one hand, the schoolyard is located within a gender-segregated female school, where students should have more freedom to move and act. Yet the same strict sartorial regulations imposed in the public spaces outside the school are exercised on their bodies. This ambiguity reveals a subtext that gender-role surveillance is not simply a matter of space, but Islamicist's power ideologies, which locate responsibility for the behaviours of male predators, squarely in the court of women and girls, who are forced to comply with interference in their power, even to play.

Topical Transfer and Shifting the Problem

The subjects described in "Panopticon" are alienated from themselves and others. Celine Leboeuf (2016) offers the critical concept of "bodily alienation" where the body is marked by its failure to realize its chosen activities and relations with others. Overall, alienation is a condition where human beings' relations with themselves, other beings, environments, and species, are disrupted. Leboeuf (2016) deploys Rahel Jaeggi's term, "relation of relationalessness," where alienation is "a disturbance of relation(s), [concerning] the acts of relating to self and the world outside" (Leboeuf 2016, 28). She also scrutinizes the methods by which any body is separated from the sense of being actively engaged within the process of living.

Similarly, the illustrated body in the "Panopticon" memory scene is separated from its agency. It is an overwhelmed body, bound by a set of paradoxical feelings: inhibition, humiliation, rage, and despair. Stringent regulations restrict the protagonist's willingness to be an active and energetic player. Added to these regulations is the superior power of *Maqnāe*, which acts upon the protagonist's body and causes alienation and failure. Eventually, this story reveals how young girls' bodies and sexualities are affected, regulated, and "othered" using restrictive clothing techniques that remain outside of their control and agency.

6.2.2 *A Photo of the Two*

The second memory scene on the same trigger, *Maqnāe*, followed the identical procedure applied to the first one. Once the memory text was read, the group discussed their empathetic

interpretations of its central message. We collectively titled the text and completed our distance analysis.

A Photo of the Two

یک عکس دو نفره

The primary school was located between the downtown, with old buildings made of brick, and the main street, with several fancy shopping centers. They were in grade three, apparently nine years old. At nine years, all those little girls would participate in a Taklif Party. A white Maqnāe was the outfit provided for this party. The images of all those veiled girls wearing white Maqnāe, as broadcasted on TV, grabbed Ali's attention a couple of days before her own Taklif Party. The image of veiled girls holding the hands of their mothers who were covered in chador, as well as sitting at their Janmaz (prayer mat), gave her ideas. Those girls had white skin, cherry-red lips, and sweet smiles. Ali's tanned and dark skin, especially her hairy face and spaced teeth, could not compete with their white skin beauty. Having a white Maqnāe, however, could have made the whole situation a little more bearable. Her mother could just sew her Maqnāe, using a cascading triangle cloth sewn at the sides and garnished by lace fabric around its bottom edge. It looked so plain. Ali insisted a green ribbon be sewn in the shape of a flower with fur around it, from a haberdashery. When she got to school, she turned her attention to those who had always been at the center of her attention. They came from affluent families whose fathers owned shopping malls. Ali's friend, Sin, was not that wealthy, yet her aunt lived abroad. It meant that Sin had a lot of good quality, western-style stationery. Her aunt was a grade-three teacher, meaning the school staff could have spoiled Sin; teachers even offered her a lot of tasty food. Sin's family had brought her a natural garland that day: it was made of miniature red roses, white flowers, and green twigs. Sin had white skin and full red lips, and when she wore the garland, she looked quite similar to a fairy.

It is not at all clear what happened when Ali and Sin ended up taking a photo together when the photographer came. The photos appeared. Ali's Maqnāe was hand-made, embroidered, and adorned with a green ribbon and fur, whereas Sin's Maqnāe was from the market with a beautiful and natural garland on it. Ali had fair skin, joint eyebrows, restless black eyes, a fake smile, and a hand that she did not know how to put under her chin to complete her photographic pose. Sin had white skin, flowered cheeks, bright honey eyes, and a bright sunny smile. She beamed proudly at the camera, without posing for that photograph. Ali's Manteau was black, while Sin's had a dark amber orange hue. The photograph was taken at Sin's request, but Ali said she wanted it too, and insisted on having it. Although Sin said that the photograph belonged to her, Ali refused. On the way back home, Ali and Sin argued, which made Ali cry. Mim, also Ali's friend and companion, asked Sin to back down. Sin left them in a rage.

Ali felt guilty for many years whenever she saw that photograph. Why did she insist that much? Why was it so important to her to have Sin's photograph, at the cost of losing herself?

A Photo of the Two's **Empathetic Reading**

At the center of this story is the significance of "the other." The protagonist uses every chance to highlight the difference between her/themself as a disadvantaged person and "her/their privileged other." Drawing upon various dichotomies, the author emphasizes the profound differences in appearance, her style of *Maqnāe*, lack of confidence in a photographic pose, and

class status. Notably, the author's class status intersects with her lack of self-esteem and attainments. We agreed that class was accentuated as the primary source of the author's *toroma* in this memory. The class issues make nine-year-old Ali a melancholic subject who desires the other subject's decorated *Maqnāe*, beauty, confidence, and other privileges.

With some nuance, we were also unanimous about the embodied alienation that emerged from this written memory, as in the former story. Under the guise of desiring a fancy *Maqnāe*, the author repeatedly compares her body, face, and beauty with that of her peer, who belongs to a well-off family, with distinction and reputation. *Maqnāe*, in this sense, is a property, by means of which Ali abjectly compares her body with her veiled peer who owns a market-ready adorned *Maqnāe*, complicit with "standardized beauty." This standard beauty equates with those neat, docile little girls covered by white *Maqnāe* and a floral chador, an image that is both broadcasted by local TV, and performed at Ali's school, where belongingness is measured by one's compliance with *Maqnāe* norms.

By grabbing the photograph, Ali aims to acquire a property that she has been deprived of in reality. Her insistence reflects a strong desire to be included among those "veiled," "stylish," and "affluent" girls, cherished by the Islamicist school staff. She does not, however, represent her/themself as a passive protagonist in this process. From our vantage point, despite Ali's sad story, she got what she wanted; even though she appeared unhappy and forlorn throughout, she could reappropriate a part of her loss, in the end. This reading partially corresponded with the author's own interpretation as well, as it demonstrated an act of independence and/or a form of agency.

When asked for her comments on the story, Ali highlighted her desperate attempt to compensate for a part of the discriminatory situation she/they faced. To her/them, the handmade and embroidered *Maqnāe* signified her impoverished position, as she sought to make the more fashionable garment a part of her own property. In this sense, it seems she wanted to make the situation more tolerable. She also managed to deprive the more affluent student from using her poverty to ridicule or patronize her, through the photograph. This compensation process, accompanied by the feeling of loss and suppressed rage, led to our common-sense assumption that "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence." Yet, this "other side" was produced in an educational setting that emphasized sameness among students, purportedly for pedagogical purposes. Talk about a hidden curriculum, in plain sight!

A Photo of the Two's Reconstruction and Abstraction

The written memory begins with a series of dichotomies, highlighting the less privileged state of the author in relation to her/their peers. From the author's viewpoint, these dichotomies are marked by the primary school's problematic location. The school is situated between the derelict downtown and the opulent buildings of shopping malls, which assist the author in demonstrating opposed atmospheres for her/their story. These conditions are emphasized by binary adjectives and adverbial phrases representing Ali's engulfment in paradoxical feelings about her "othered" and "othering" peer. To her/them, these "others" are veiled, beautiful, and neat girls whose class status has brought them many privileges, placing them at the center of positive attention. Ali is described as a girl with tanned dark skin, a hairy face, spaced teeth, joint eyebrows, restless black eyes, and a fake smile. By contrast, Sin, as Ali's so-called friend is a beautiful "fairy" with "white skin, cherry-red full lips, flowered cheeks, bright honey eyes, and a bright sunny smile." Attributing vibrant colours to this beautiful, veiled, and prosperous girl, while emphasizing her/their own scruffiness, the author dichotomizes the entire situation, positioning her/themself in a less privileged condition, appraising the "others" property, including their *Maqnāe*.

Notwithstanding, the *Maqnāe* allows the protagonist to express oppressed feelings about her/their socio-economic class. Focusing on Sin's family background, including her aunts living abroad, the protagonist demonstrates how having an adorned *Maqnāe* is not a simple matter of being a tidy person. Sin's neat *Maqnāe* is a "market-based" outfit, decorated with a natural garland. Because of having such an attractive appearance and other privileges, Sin is spoiled by the school staff. On the other hand, Ali's hand-sewn and embroidered *Maqnāe* is plain, meaning that she/they do(es) not have access to high-quality clothing, as cherished by the school board. This means she has less opportunity to grab the teachers' attention and be their favourite. In the protagonist's viewpoint, having an ornamental *Maqnāe* could temporarily heal her/their pain of loss and meet the feminized requirement to be a "beautiful, veiled and ideal" student.

Ironically, Sin's lifestyle is a huge source of praise and guilt for the protagonist. She/they construct/s her/themself as a person who has internalized the superiority of other people. In her/their clichéd outlook, there is a connection between being rich and living abroad or having western-style stationery. This association makes the author feel repentant about the entire situation and places her/themself in an inferior position. The fortunate, upper-class, veiled girls' superiority over Ali, as symbolized by the beautiful *Maqnāe*, helps fix the Islamicists' ideal

image of a successful woman in her mind. We concluded that glorifying Sin's position, praising her outfit, and exaggerating the significance of her social and economic capital, could result in internalizing prevailing ideas of idealized feminine expression.

Topical Transfer and Shifting the Problem

Similar to the former written memory, an "alienated body" and the "othering process" are the focal points of this story. The author's body and sexuality are entangled with negative feelings such as embarrassment, repentance, and agony primarily derived both from Islamicist sexualized policies and the author's social class status. The author strives to "own" an adorned *Maqnāe*, propelling her/themself to fit the Islamicist's ideal dress code. Within this Islamicist discourse, she/they unconsciously separate from her/their own body, desiring the other "skin," "body gestures," and "garment," yet internalizing this "other" under her/their skin. Since conforming is almost impossible for her, she/they prefers to own a photograph as a substitute for her perceived lack, even though it cannot assist in disentangling her/their lost agency and activities.

6.2.3 *Prim*

The last written memory scene on the *Maqnāe* went through the same process. Once the whole memory was read, the group, except the primary author, discussed their empathetic readings and comments. The distance analysis was accomplished afterward; thus, we prepared ourselves for the next rubric on intimate relationships.

Prim

شق و رق

It is mid-September, and the weather is getting cooler and the days, shorter. It is "Back to School" time, and stores and street vendors are full of school supplies in Tajrish square, including backpacks and gray and dark blue manteaux with embroidered sleeves. She is not able to read yet but can see those white papers hanging on the front of the shop's doors with large, black embossed words written on them. She does not understand the meaning of the words, though. Her mother enters a store asking the shopkeeper to show her something. The bustling voice of the market is on her mind. Her mother nods her head, saying, "No! This is too big!" The white and linen fabric looks like two triangles sewn together on both sides with a circle in between. That hole is for her head, she realized later. Although her mother seems unsatisfied, she grabs the "Maqnāe" from the shopkeeper. They come home, and her mother takes the sewing kit. A pink thread or something similar is in her mother's hands. She writes her name on the Maqnāe, securing it with the pink thread. She might want to show that her daughter is the primary owner of the Maqnāe. It is the beginning of the fall, and she is so passionate about coming to school for the first time. She puts on a gray manteau and her ironed, white, and prim Maqnāe, which smells

like her mother's hands. She carries her gray and orange backpack, putting its straps on her Maqnāe. Her father frowns upon her, saying that putting straps on her Maqnāe makes it wrinkled. He says a Maqnāe should be prim, as if she did not know before!! She puts the straps under her Maqnāe, making it light and free. She drops her father's hand across Alef Street, walking alongside the river's bank. She looks at the Maqnāe's sharp shadow on that sunny morning, which makes her taller. She arrives at the schoolyard.

The school bell has not rung yet. After the school principal's speech finishes, she and the rest of the seven-year-old students go to classes in orderly queues. The classroom is not spacious. It has two rows of six benches; at each bench sits three seven-year-old girls, sharing a bench. Students are seated with folded arms. The teacher enters. She has a kind face and a sweet smile. She talks about the class regulations, including that students are allowed to take their Maqnāe off in the classroom, but not in the schoolyard. Slightly shifted on the bench, she feels hot while sitting between two other students. It is the beginning of the fall, yet the indolent heat of the summer still stretches into the classroom. Her mother has sewn an elastic cord to her Maqnāe. She had told her that that cord would remind her of Maqnāe so that she will not leave it at school. She tucks it behind her ears, and it feels itchy. She sweats, sitting on a cramped school bench with two other students. She hangs the Maqnāe over her neck, leaving it to hang for a while. She sees her friend taking her Maqnāe off and putting it in Jamizi.[8] She does the same. When the bell rings, she runs to the schoolyard without knowing that her hair is unveiled. She remembers the rules and feels as if she is naked. Where is her Maqnāe, she asks?! It is break time, and the classroom is left in silence. She returns to the silent classroom, taking her Maqnāe with pencil shavings stuck on it. She seems pale and worried, imagining her father's reaction when he sees the dirty Maqnāe.

***Prim's* Empathetic Reading**

There were three crucial moments in this story as observed in our empathic readings. The first one revolves around a "lost childhood," when the seven-year-old narrator experiences her first day of schooling with anxiety about how her parents and school staff will treat her. Second, we reflected on how the protagonist's enthusiasm for going to school could temporarily defamiliarize unpleasant memories of the *Maqnāe*. Lastly, we focused on the critical moment of 'nudity,' when the author unknowingly felt guilty and distraught about being unveiled.

To us, the little girl represented in this story is entangled between three mentalities on wearing *Maqnāe.* One is her mother's approach, who cares about her daughter's comfort. The other reflects her father's admonition to being tidy and have a prim uniform at school, and finally, the school regulation on wearing the *Maqnāe* in the schoolyard. These three approaches produce a seven-year-old girl subject who suffers from constant anxiety, instead of devoting her youthful energy to discovering and learning. That anxiety conjured up an array of "self-policing

[8] A free case under the school benches in which students could put their books and other stuff. It was also where a lot of students put their pencil shavings, a bitten fruit, or other dirty things.

memories" among us, where we were constantly expected to be in control of our behaviours and not do anything inappropriate. We named this feeling a "lost childhood" or "lives-depleted-from-energy," as we were caught in responding to incessant interrogation over trivial matters, such that we lost the happiness and passion that children typically might enjoy.

Nevertheless, we agreed that the presented image of *Maqnāe*, especially when combined with the author's feelings about the smell of her mother's hands, gave us a new perspective. That is, although we had different bitter memories of *Maqnāe*, the author temporarily rekindled our enthusiasm for going to school for the first time. This feeling did not last long as we turned to discuss the sense of "nudity" and "guilt" in the text.

From our perspective, the moment the protagonist feels naked is pivotal, as it shows how the Islamicist sexualization policy mechanism affected the lives of Iranian women and girls. This situation demonstrates how we all internalized the Islamicist dress code as a part of our bodies and sexualities, without actively tracing those effects to larger structures. Some of us had the experience of feeling naked on the streets in Iran, and in the diaspora, just for being unveiled. This common sense was equated with how "a burnt child dreads the fire," meaning no matter how far our distance from our past memories, we carry them in our bodies.

Prim's **Reconstruction and Abstraction**

By looking briefly at the sentence structures in *Prim's* story, we noticed the critical role of the main protagonist, who engaged in a lot of activities. Other leading characters in the story include the author's mother, father, the rest of the students/seven-year-old girls, and their teachers. Although the writer is the leading actor for much of the story's activities, she is perplexed about how to wear her *Maqnāe.* This ambiguity is also at the core of her relationships with the rest of the characters. Drawing upon temporal features, weather conditions and locations, the author describes an ambiance that develops this sense of ambiguity and ambivalence within which her relationships with others are constructed.

Among all the characters, the protagonist initially focuses on her mother, who provides her with the *Maqnāe,* embroiders her name on it, and adds an elastic cord to make sure it does not come loose. The author praises this attention and care as she enjoys the smell of the mother's hands, interwoven with the texture of her neat *Maqnāe.* This feeling of comfort, however, turns

into disgust when the *Maqnāe* constricts her neck in the hot classroom, making her uncomfortable, confused, and despairing.

The protagonist is again confused by her father's command to wear the *Maqnāe*, appropriately. From the author's perspective, the father gives his verdict on the style of *Maqnāe*, instead of offering comfort. He frowns at her and mocks her ignorance of how to wear the *Maqnāe* or to keep it tidy. This moroseness animates the author's fear and anxiety that her *Maqnāe* might get dirty, because she already knows that bringing back the untidy *Maqnāe* will have consequences.

The final bafflement occurs at the end of the written memory when the author is confused about the school's regulations for wearing her *Maqnāe.* She and the other students encounter a kind teacher who informs them about school dress code regulations. Some elements such as "orderly queues," "sitting on cramped benches with folded arms," and rules about *Maqnāe* suggest an entangled and monitored self-conscious body, unable to speak on its own behalf, or to be fully at ease. It represents how the students' bodies are disciplined and affected by the Islamicist power structure, mobilized within but located far from the school site.

Topical Transfer and Shifting the Problem

The core of this story, similar to the other two written memories, focuses on detaching the body from its activities and environment. *Maqnāe,* in the two former stories, was something "extra" that could be either an obstacle in the path or make a distinction for the individual protagonists. Equally, it frames an attachment to the body while obscuring the body parts from which the person becomes detached. Some accounts show how their protagonists internalize this attachment/detachment. Here, the author's mother, although caring about her child's comfort, makes the *Maqnāe* part of her daughter's body, by affixing elastic to the garment. In other words, she participates in advancing a means of oppression for her offspring, taking away her security. On the other hand, the father threatens the author about any inappropriate way of wearing the *Maqnāe.* The protagonist both questions the *Maqnāe,* and grows accustomed to its constraints, very quickly. Finally, the schoolteacher's complicity cements rules that may affect her body and sexualities for her entire life, with a kindness that belies the power structures involved.

Chapter 7

Results: Intimate Relationships as a Site of *Shouresh* (Rebellion)

7.1 Introduction

Shouresh (to rebel) was the second trigger word we used in writing our memory scenes. As a noun, this word refers to a person who opposes or fights against someone in authority. It also indicates a revolutionary person who intends to transform a non-functional condition or situation. A *Shoureshi* person (a rebellious one) deliberately avoids obeying authoritative people, denying their own or any other subordinated positions. After examining our prompts to see how the "Islamization project has shaped our intimate relationships," we noticed our audacity and courage to rebel against multilayered structures of power designed to control and affect our intimate relationships. Our discussions proved that despite the cumulative fears and apprehensive conditions that constantly affected our behaviours, thoughts, desires, bodies, and sexualities, we each had a unique way of expressing our agency to overcome obstacles. It seemed to us that we had fears, yet rebelled against prevailing patriarchal power relations. Following, we have written three memories about our inner *Shouresh* (rebel), which are (in)directly related to our intimate relationships.

7.2 *Emancipation*

Emancipation, the selected title for the first memory in this series, was processed like the others. Once the memory was read, the empathetic reading, distance analysis, reconstruction, and topical transfer were shared, respectively.

Emancipation

رهایی

Both older sisters also had obeyed a stupid rule in their house. They were not permitted to sleep over at friend's places, or for work or social events, but only in their home. Sayeh had cancelled so many business and leisure trips because of this rule. She avoided going to parties outside the city, as she had to stay there at night. This strict rule was exercised as long as they lived at their home, no matter their ages, professions, and experiences. Sayeh had striven to change this rule so many times. She cried, argued, and confronted her parents, but nothing

changed. But there was a difference this time! Her beloved broke up their relationship. She had wept, walked all day, and took shelter in her friend's house. She needed someone to protect her, so she did not call her beloved or go to him and beg him to come back. She needed someone to understand her. She needed someone to help her not to make any momentous decisions. It was midnight, and she was afraid of returning to their house. The last choice was to give a call to her savage mother, who mainly put the phone down on her each time she wanted to let her know she would arrive a bit late. She made her emancipatory decision. Devil may care! She switched off her cell phone! She stayed with her friend and mourned her lost intimate relationship. She cried a lot, but that night was neither her mother's nor about the stress in her limited world. Only her lost beloved and relationship mattered. From the next day on, Sayeh's life was divided into two parts: before and after rebelling. Does it matter that her rebelling was the most minor and insignificant revolt in the world?

***Emancipation's* Empathetic Reading**

Rules and regulations were the central themes that captured our attention in this story. The written memory introduces a "strict rule" that all female family members must obey. The author gives a concise description of the effects of these constraints. This rule is so absolute that no one is allowed to object. Discussing the rule's characteristics, we noticed the absence of the subject who enforces the rule in women's lives. We felt that the pervasive nature of the patriarchal power exercised by the mother against her daughter leads the protagonist to resist, unexpectedly.

Despite this dominant power, the author underlines her agency. By highlighting her futile endeavours to stop the circulation of power norms in her family, she manifests how she did not let that strict rule prevail. We noticed the significance of "lost beloved," enabling the author to rebel against her subordinated situation. We all noticed how a finished, dead, and broken relationship provokes her to be revolutionary, active, and a radical "doer," regardless of the reasons. The "absence of her beloved" is a good enough excuse to generate her "standby power" to act against those rules that hamper her ability to be an active agent. Despite the precarious situation and the author's need to be protected, she remains the only one who can care for herself by finding an equitable friendship as haven. Thus, the author's broken intimate relationship enables an emancipatory decision to refuse her mother's authority, which might otherwise constrain the author's future relationships.

Finally, we discussed the "savage mother" role in this story. In our view, although the author intends to hide who exercises the strict rules in their house, she attributes wildness to her mother, indicating her role in maintaining tension and struggles for the protagonist. The author's savage mother imposes a curfew, making her fearful of returning home. This shattered our assumptions

about a clichéd figure of the caring mother who protects her children from injustice. By comparing our ideas about caring and savage mothers, we concluded that the patriarchal power structures do not necessarily reify in a male figure, metastasizing in any gender-role surveillance, authoritative, or controlling systems that exercise power over women's lives. The author's emancipatory and momentous decision to rebel divided her life into two parts, which led us to conclude that "if there a trouble, get rid of it," meaning emancipation will only happen through one's power to act.

Emancipation's **Reconstruction and Abstraction**

This story revolves around two coercive messages affecting the protagonist's relations with intimate others (i.e., her sisters, mother, friend, and lost beloved) and her responses to their actions. Others' critical roles are highlighted from the beginning. She portrays her sisters as obedient to their mother's "strict rule;" perhaps a maladaptive response to her own past *toromas*. Although the author initially submits to the rule, despite her frustration with its impracticality, gradually, she becomes willing to change her position. The protagonist refers to a range of activities (i.e., cancelling her trips, staying at home, crying, arguing, and confronting) to describe how she has resisted the stupid "strict rule," unlike her sisters. Although there is an explicit description of how the author has constructed herself in relation to her sisters, her relationship with her "savage mother" and "lost beloved" are more implicitly stated.

Nonetheless, the author has two ways of thinking about relationships. First, she seeks a healthy and strong relationship to alleviate the pain of losing her beloved. At the same time, she searches for an emotional bond to assist her in overcoming her lack of agency in the break-up. She desires a compassionate person who understands her sorrow, but stops her from making any momentous and unreasonable decisions while in pain. While she needs this healthy connection, she must detach from a coercive and controlling relationship that prevents her from being an active agent. Her rebellion is, in fact, a decisive moment during which she momentarily and then more permanently disentangles her life from subordination to a controlling relationship, especially with her mother. The author's mother, on the other hand, loses her beloved, too; her daughter, who resists having connection with her. It is a critical moment in recognizing the difference between negative and positive relationalities and their capacities to enable or disable

the power to act. Thus, the daughter chooses a liberatory activity instead of being fearful and returning home.

The emphasis on the "lost beloved" is critical in this story. The author composes a text based on her "dead" or "broken" intimate relationship and her feeling of loss and mourning. The juxtaposition of a strict rule, anxiety, a sense of loss, and the focus on a stressful relationship with a "savage mother" has an explicit subtext. It shows that the network of rules and regulations outside the relationship weighs more on this protagonist than the relationship itself. Those regulations are the core of a returning *toroma*, haunting her intimate connections.

Topical Transfer and Shifting the Problem

As discussed in chapter three, "everyday resistance" and 'incremental encroachment' are embodied in this written memory. The author's rebellion against her mother, exposes the gendered power relations in her private sphere. She encroaches incrementally on her mother's power, initially by arguing and confrontation and later, by her radical decision-making, reappropriating the personal agency that was eclipsed by her fear and apprehension. The author's behaviour is paradoxical, in the sense that she seeks to make a vital decision but at the same time recognizes her fragility, such that her lost emotional connection becomes a turning point that transforms the power relations in her life.

7.3 *Guard*

Guard was the next written memory on our shared trigger *Shouresh* (rebel). A guard is someone responsible for preventing prisoners from escaping. One of the old-fashion equivalences of the guard in Farsi is *Daroughe*, meaning chief of police or someone who governs a city or rural area. We selected this title, as we felt the story hinges on keywords such as fighting, atrocity, interrogation, surveillance, and escape, not only in public, but in the private sphere.

Guard

داروغه

Z appeared from the door and jumped at her. She delivered a hearty slap in her face. She was shouting insults at her. Ali's ears were ringing, and she could not hear properly. Still, she remembers one sentence: You have been saying this for several years, and now it is your turn to listen!

It was an upstairs' hallway, probably in the middle of the day, as the room was bright and sunny. While shouting and screaming, Ali pulled the cloth on the shelf, and all those silly decorations flew. She does not recall what the fight was about. Her mom would occasionally

walk upstairs and be picky about something. It was more or less related to Ali's travels, her phone conversations, her hijab, and her clothing style. She alarmed Ali about "what people would say; what would they think of Ali's behaviour?" reminding her of her father as a martyr's brother and a man who had a reputation in the bazaar. It was one of the first times Ali cursed her mother. Her mother could not shut her hellish mouth! Why did she not shut up?! Her mother's voice drilled her brain. Ali shouted for her mother to shut up, but she continued.

Damn, Z had gotten married; still, she and her nosy husband had not gotten lost. They were living as a guard in their basement. Z had simply forgotten the terrible fights she had with their parents, those smacks that she would get if something were deemed wrong with her. It was as if now that she was married, all her adolescent memories had been wiped out. She had forgotten those severe punishments given by their parents for her curfew or love letters that leaked out. She never sympathized with Ali. She had constantly been checking on Ali since she was a child. Now, her husband was checking the home computer at every opportunity without permission. One intruder was gone, and two were back. As soon as she heard the sound, Z raced up the three-story building as if she were harbouring her long-standing grudges. She slapped Ali on her face. Ali had fallen to her knees with that first slap. The next slap was delivered while she was looking down. Ali did not back her face off as she was given the next slap so quickly... as she couldn't respond instantly. She burst into tears and said she would no longer live in that home. She packed her stuff and hit the road. She went to her friend's bookstore, where she could work. It was a statutory holiday. She stayed at the store and cried for two hours. She asked R, the bookstore owner, to join her. Her left eye was constantly tearing because of being hit. She later found out that her cornea had been scratched. She was exhausted. Why wouldn't she die?

R arrived, hugged her, and lent her some money. She had no place to go except Tehran. She was embarrassed to go to her brothers' place, especially since she did not feel comfortable with her sister-in-law. She went to N's house, her older sister. N took after her mother, but she was more brutal and tenacious and used to condemn everyone. She at least talks less than Ali's mother, and that was a blessing.

Guard's **Empathetic Reading**

Our empathic reading was more about trying to understand why this familial policing and violence were happening. The gratuitous violence of being beaten for no reason was the first theme that grabbed our collective attention. The author portrays a person caught in a heated argument and being beaten without knowing or remembering the cause of the fight. This helpless person does not even have a chance to respond to the delivered slaps, so being "voiceless" was the second theme that emerged from our discussion. Although the author could not defend her/themself or seemed powerless to act, she/they was/were expected to answer to others (her/their mother and sister). The protagonist emphasizes her/their need for shelter and escape from this interrogation. However, she/they is/are greatly concerned about changing the deplorable situation and rebelling against it.

Surveillance and being controlled by same-sex family members are other focal points in this story. The protagonist's trivial sexual behaviours, such as her/their clothing style and telephone conversations (apparently with a counterpart), are controlled by her/their picky mother and elder sister, who were also monitored by parents they resented. This multilateral control is the story's hallmark and why she/they rebel/s against her/their subordinated situation. Even though it was not clear why the author was being beaten and abused, we assumed that escaping remained her/their primary motivation. We strongly intuited an affective association between the author's rebellion and her/their desire for a meaningful intimate relationship, which could not be consciously articulated, yet might be etched on her/their embodied memory. The author later confirmed this assumption, as she/they aimed to flee from her/their sister and the punishments that were inflicted for no reason. Finally, our common-sense summation paraphrased this situation as "one does harm; another bears the flame," meaning another might punish one's values and thoughts, passing on their own *toromas,* without reflection.

Guard's **Reconstruction and Abstraction**

A critical underlying message in this story is how the "subject of the quarrel" has been constructed as inaccessible. Overall, two or more entities positioned at different levels in power structures that mobilize a spectrum of violence, create a volatile situation. By accepting their own inferior positions, complicit abusers can perpetrate violence that they once endured, while the protagonist finds her/themself the object of violence. Having been cornered, the author initially positions her/themself as subordinated, giving the "other" the power.

By separating her/their pseudonym from the story's subject, the author attributes a set of verbs and activities to the anonymous protagonist. A brief look at these verbs reveals their harmful and destructive nature. Throughout the story, Ali shouts, falls, and looks down. Similarly, the pronoun "she" is used in the text, referring to she who curses, bursts into tears, cries, and has no place to go. When the author "hits the road" and escapes the situation, she must resolve both practical and emotional challenges. Arguably, the figure is a melancholy, feared, voiceless, displaced, helpless, tired, anxious, and embarrassed person, a desperate individual who considers "escaping" and "abandonment" as the only actions left. The author's reason to escape is more critical than the act of escape, itself. The constant surveillance, guarding, interrogation, and

imminent jeopardy interwoven in the story's context makes the author's actions both reasonable and rebellious.

The author's emphasis on the aggressive nature of her/their family members is another salient point and a method by which she/they has/have constructed them as "others" in the story. The protagonist's mother's and sister's punishments, their monitoring of her/their trivial sexual behaviours, and the severe physical violence they perpetrate, put them in a place of dominating power. The "exercise of power," however, is more crucial than who seizes control and what their gender roles are. In this sense, the author's mother is portrayed as picky, one given to alarms, smacks, and severe punishments. She is also depicted as a nerve-racking person who is able to drill one's brain with her voice, as she verbally oppresses her offspring, demanding that they be ashamed of her/their activities (i.e., clothing style, commuting in the neighbourhood, talking on the phone). Thus, Ali's mother is the leading figure of oppression in the story.

Added to this oppression is Ali's sister, Z's unfair behaviour. As an elder sister, she had familial permission not only to monitor and bully her younger sister, but also to physically punish her/them. This unveils the multiple systems of oppression imposing on the author's life, even if it resembles a clichéd fight that every sibling has, if not for the excessive violence. Notably, the author emphasizes how her sister had been attacked by their parents over love letters. That long-standing "grudge" clearly haunts the violence that returns to take revenge, but on the wrong subject. Ironically, the sister's desire for vengeance gives the voiceless author power to rebel against Z as her main guard, leaving the entire scene, forever.

Topical Transfer or Shifting the Problem

Ali's alienation reflects her interrupted agency. Ali's ears ring, and she/they could not hear, due to repeated slaps. The scratched cornea indicates continuing pain, and an attack on her power to see. Above all, Ali's lapsed memory and her/their inability to recall the cause of the fight suggests that her own position may not have been at the core of the event. It is a case of "trauma is as trauma does" (Stevens 2016, 20) on the part of her sister. Moreover, these interruptions of embodied agency temporarily overwhelm the author's ability to be an active agent in her/their life. In terms of temporality, projected pain propels the author to go back and forth between her/their past and present, reliving the scene. It also clarifies why she/they took refuge in her/their older sister's house, even though she takes after her mother. Many traumatized people may return

to their abusers as a last resort. Yet, the act of changing her/their deplorable condition, rebelling against normalized violence and activating her/their "standby power" transforms that apparent choicelessness into an active state of being.

7.4 *Manifesto*

The last written memory on intimate relationships and our shared trigger *Shouresh* (rebel) was *Manifesto*. We selected this title as the story had three distinct components that invoked the term. A manifesto is "a written statement publicly declaring the issuer's intentions, motives, and views" (*Merriam Webster,* online). These components include 1) a written statement by an individual who might seem fragile at the beginning of the story but is impregnable at the end; 2) it is also comprised of one's beliefs about an ideal set of outcomes; 3) and finally, it contains what the author intents to do in the future. Thus, the manifesto dares the author to criticize her deplorable situation and rebel against those who created it.

Manifesto

بیانیه

A few days have passed since Nowruz,[9] and she is still looking for a fresh start. There is a vicious cycle, everything repeats, and nothing seems new. The weather smells like winter, and there is pale sunshine. She has sat with a friend in a relatively secluded cafe and is talking. She seems in her early twenties, feeling like a noble warrior who can overcome all those forces that have been projected onto her. She is sitting in a café, thinking of a lost beloved with whom she wanted to start a new life together, until a few days ago. He has gone, and everything is over. She looks at her cigarette smoke, and the life that is similar to a caught fish slips off her hands. She has not experienced any sexual relations during her twenty-two-year lifetime. She still is captivated by him, now lost, supposedly forever. She is sitting and crying. Not only her eyes, but her skin is tearful. She believes that she could make things right. She has a strong desire to get back to him, imagining a place where they can live together. She thinks of a private house, a roof that never was available to them to be together. She thinks about her partner's sarcasm, saying, "What do you take me for? An idiot? Do you think that we should sleep together in other's places? You are supposed to be my wife!! You mean a lot to me. I respect you!!" Meaning that he would not be able to sleep with her as sex would bring her indecency. Her coffee does not taste great at all. She has to finish that damn text tonight. The text is a manifesto that is supposed to be rendered in front of her father to announce her final decision. She will announce to him that she will rent a house, that, she is going to be an independent person, reading her books, and writing articles continuously. She wants to do so… but she needs a house with turquoise walls on which Gaugin and Matisse's paintings are hung… a house where the smell of coffee would waft through, where she could smoke every so often, where she could be carnally entwined with her

[9] The Persian New Year

beloved, where her books would witness them making love, where they warmly, astringently, and lingeringly kiss each other. She will tell her father that she will leave that dull house… a house that was father-controlled for a long time, a house full of repentance, suffering, and pain. She will lie on that green and soft carpet with her beloved in her new house. She will revive their lost love. They will be entwined with each other on that green carpet again. She starts writing the letter: "As you know, I have always dreamed of being a creative writer… something foreign to the nature of family life. Women are expected to be homemakers; I am afraid! It is not for me! I have made up my mind. I will leave this house despite all its predicaments…." She continues to write to her father, who has consistently assumed himself the family's anchor. She will tell him that it is not his command that makes a house a home; otherwise, love, passion, books, kisses, and wine make it a home worth living in.

Manifesto's Empathetic Reading

The "will to act" or "will to change" was a recognizable theme in this story. The author criticizes a few people in her text, especially her father. Thinking of her lost beloved's bitter words, the author inadvertently shifts into her father's behaviours, announcing her decision to leave their house. Moving between the beloved and the father seems crucial as both have an "authoritative voice" in common. Establishing a home, a roof of one's own, enables the author to regain her lost agency. We recognize a tone of personal power in this text, emphasizing a "power with" instead of "power to." Throughout the story, the protagonist determines to actively 'do' something to compensate for her lack of liberty (expressed in repentance, suffering, and pain), making her future life more equitable and enjoyable.

The author ties this generative power to the loss of her intimate relationship. The author's desire "to make things right" and give her beloved a "roof of their own" represents her determination to create an alternative relationship and life different from the current one. In our empathetic reading of this story, we once again understood the significance of the "lost beloved," which gives the author a great deal of power to change her situation. The author's poetic language and the creation of dream images of congress with her beloved addresses practical possibilities, including a private place to be alone with her beloved and to take refuge in her imagination. Again, this imagined process denotes an active agent who desires to actualize all available potentials, making the most of them. Putting these components together, we concluded that this story is a telling example of 'you will harvest what you plan,' meaning that growth is based in our efforts to change and our patience to see the result.

Manifesto's Reconstruction and Abstraction

At the core of this story is a subject involved in several activities that engage different times, places, and objects. She connects the past, present, and future through her imagination. She describes almost all of her activities in the present tense, using the future to outline her willingness to create change and actualize her possibilities. She is also sensitive to the seasons and weather, associating them with her moods (i.e., she associates the feeling of winter cold with her boredom). This temporal-spatial imaginary outlines how she has been affected by each place she had inhabited to date, and what her ideal location looks like. She explicitly deploys objects and settings to propose her revised lifestyle. Lastly, a spectrum of embodied negative and positive feelings (pain, reticence, suffering, sadness, passion, and some specific sensations like taste and smell) delineate the flow of her feelings. Drawing upon these components, the author constructs herself as a person alive in her body.

This living body, however, holds difficult memories about her relationships with male characters, creating two male figures (the lost beloved and her father) without any real presence in the story. Unspoken blank spots in the story demonstrate the author's "apprehension or fear to say," given the affective similarities between her father and her beloved. From her vantage point, and based on her lived experiences, her father is the one who commands at home, supposing himself the anchor of the family. The protagonist's efforts to write a manifesto to communicate with him reveals an unfriendly relationship. Writing a text instead of talking to her father shows the author's uneasiness. It suggests that she has been interrupted in past efforts to clarify her meaning. Crafting her simple desires as a written manifesto nourishes her imagination to plan a future where she can act freely, without her father's command.

The imaginary dialogue between the author and her former intimate partner clarifies his controlling behaviour, as well. He determines when and where they should have sexual relations. He also intimates that he has control over her marital status. His claim, that, "you are supposed to be my wife, you mean a lot to me, and I respect you," reveals an inequitable power dynamic at the heart of Islamicist marital ideologies. Unless they get married and have "legitimate" status, the male character can hinder any further sexual relationships and control the author's desires. Instead of interpreting his propositions as typical masculine hegemonic behaviour, the author supposes that having a private space and a safe home would repair their broken relationship. Therefore, she actively intends to secure this house.

Topical Transfer and Shifting the Problem

This lack of her own "private sphere" is the author's motivation to rebel against the story's male figures. In fact, the protagonist rebels against two situations. First, she stands up to her father and intends to break the rules by which he governs the family house. Second, she seeks to retrieve her "lost beloved" by offering an intimate relationship outside of marriage. In both cases, she takes herself to be a "noble warrior" who seeks independence and self-determination. Having a "house" plays a critical role in this process. However, it remains unclear to the participant readers why she would ask a partner to return who is a primary source of her pain.

Chapter 8

Result: Sexual Abstinence as a Site of *Naqes* (Incompleteness)

8.1 Introduction

Naqes (incompleteness) was the last trigger we deployed to revive our memories concerning sexual abstinence. Discussing initial memories of our sexual relationships, we concluded that our carnal desires have never been divorced from apprehensive experiences. As a result of being policed and monitored, this apprehension has gradually grown in our bodies over time. Talking about our sexual memories, we considered ourselves as criminals who expected to be interrogated, arrested, and punished for having any trivial sexual gestures or connections. This feeling of internalized interrogation and carrying the collective memory of living in a "policed body" escalated a sense of incomplete sexual relationships, meaning we could not recall them free from our trepidations. However, we noticed that despite these fears, we have always responded to our sexual desires, discovering joys, and pleasures, and making room for them.

8.2 *Unsatisfied Desire*

Unsatisfied Desire or *Nakam* was a title we chose collectively for the first memory story in this series, a Farsi adjective describing an indisposed person who is unable to fulfill their dreams or satisfy their desires. In Iranian popular culture, however, an unsatisfied person is primarily a young man who has passed away before having a sexual relationship with a woman. We selected this title intentionally to underline unsatisfied feminine desires as routinely neglected in patriarchal Iranian culture.

Unsatisfied Desire

ناکام

The ground was wet, and the red, orange, and yellow foliage adorned the street. Sayeh and Pedram were walking hand in hand in Taleghani Park, relishing the pure sky of Tehran. They were both huge fans of nature, but their political interest was their initial excuse to get acquainted. They spent exciting days in the first flush of an intimate relationship, starting with a

world full of fear and hope. They sat on a bench in the park. Sayeh had put her head on Pedram's shoulder, talking to him while they noticed any passersby who looked at them strangely. They were most careful about the inquisitive gardener who might pass them by and would see them next to each other. They kissed ardently. It was their first and irresistibly led to more. Sayeh thought that her panty and jeans were likely soaked, and that the wetness had reached her manteau. They were absolutely impatient. Their kisses and hugs were interrupted by the movements of passersby. There was no private place. Sayeh suggested they go to her car in the parking lot of Taleghani Park, which was relatively secluded. They sat in the car. Sayeh sat behind the steering wheel, and Pedram next to her in the passenger's seat. Their eyes were full of lust, and they were happy with their kisses and hugs. The car seats, however, were uncomfortable. The gear was in the middle, and the steering wheel did not let Sayeh move her legs comfortably. They decided to sit in the back seat together, to better cling to each other. They were sweaty, demanding, and frustrated. Their desire was literally unsatisfied. The windshield was steamed up. Someone tapped the driver's window with his finger. Sayeh and Pedram jumped! The police asked repetitive questions: "Che nesbati Ba ham darid?" What is your relationship status?" And "Khejalat nemikeshid? Weren't you embarrassed?" Confused and frightened, they got out of the car to talk to the officer. They replied, "It was cold outside, we were sitting in the car," "We were doing nothing," "Our families are friends," "Yes, our families know we are out together".... It was as if they had been hit in the head with a hammer. They were lucky that the officer had not seen anything. They were humiliated, begged, promised not to repeat, and left. Sayeh could not drive at all. Their legs were shaking, and she could not press the clutch. Yet, she could not wait there; she had to run away. She pressed the accelerator and parked one block further along, and started to cry. She wailed and shook. It was as if that sexual pressure and inflammation coupled with fear and repression could not fit in her body. She burst out crying again. Pedram did not feel any better, she supposed. She was aroused, frightened, and humiliated. They went home with a set of half-baked and failed feelings. The filthy state of that day was never forgotten. She has not heard from Pedram since then.

Unsatisfied Desire's Empathetic Reading

The *unsatisfied desire* story initially begins with the representation of vivid, colourful images of the author's feelings about her intimate relationship. The lively combination of foliage, the clean and pleasant air, the couple's enjoyment of each other's company, and their fear and hope were palpable. On the one hand, the protagonist aims to emphasize the naturalness of sexual desire. Sayeh repeatedly highlights their enthusiasm for nature, yet she focuses on the couple's political affinities. On the other hand, their apprehension about arousal is key. The passersby and the inquisitive gardener denote an interrogative culture, where everybody can police their desires.

The author's intense feelings and the lack of privacy were two other themes we discussed. At issue was the protagonist's awareness of her own body and sexual responses. Because of this lack of privacy, she finds herself in a "displaced body" that does not belong anywhere. This entanglement of public and private spaces displaces unsatisfied desires. In our common-sense

analysis, we identify the unsatisfactory position "between a rock and a hard place." Islamicist sexual ideology permeates the power relations that form the hallmark of this challenging position.

Unsatisfied Desire's Reconstruction and Abstraction

There are two distinguished moods represented in this story. First, a young couple who relish each other's company experience sexual pleasure by kissing each other. It is as if the beauty of nature permeates their bodies, enhancing their sexual power. Shortly after, these positive feelings turn into a sense of shame and humiliation. Sayeh and Pedram start feeling like "strangers" under the watchful gaze of passing individuals, leaving them uncomfortable and wary. The stares of passersby denote their own repressed bodies, also subject to interrogation. The protagonist's anxiety about the inquisitive gardener's proximity demonstrates that surveillance and interrogative power is not only at the disposal of a legitimate authority. The gardener has the ability to make them ashamed. Thus, random street surveillance controls bodies even in a relatively secluded place. The author's use of conditional verbs signifies her 'careful imagination' alert for imminent danger.

This strained atmosphere is not limited to the presence of the passersby or the gardener. From the beginning, the police have been the primary source of their fear. Although the cliched role of the police is inspection and interrogating, an intimate relationship, however incomplete, could have dire consequences for young people in an Islamic society. The police officer projects a sense of criminality. As a result of this "criminalization process," they learn that they must pay for any bodily arousal by admitting to being criminals who will not be in a relationship anymore. Arguably, when the author refers to a set of actions such as running away, shaking, wailing, not being able to drive her car, and being lucky not to be seen by the police, she is referring to the terrible danger that has threatened them.

Topical Transfer and Shifting the Problem

The author's interrupted agency and problematic embodiment are transparent in this written memory. The uncomfortable feelings under the rubrics of "failure," "fear," "agitation," and "humiliation" manifest the way "power to act" has been taken away by Islamicist forces who empower random people to intervene in others' relationships. *Unsatisfied desire* demonstrates how sexual feelings are distorted and framed by an authoritative voice, whether official or casual,

that transforms the author's positive feelings into more-than-negative ones. It propels the author to take refuge in different places. This instability results in "no place to go." Even the author's car's parts, such as the gear, steering wheel, and seats, create a sense of insecurity and uneasiness. Thus, there seems to be no other way than to deny her relationship and leave it forever (Sayeh has not heard from Pedram since then).

8.3 *Dizziness*

We chose *Dizziness* or *Mangi* in Farsi as a title for the second written memory in this series on sexual abstinence. Dizziness and *Mangi* are defined as a whirling sensation in the head and a tendency to fall (*Merriam Webster,* online) both in English and Farsi. This confusion is often due to illness or poisoning, but it also includes confusion. We selected this title as it could best describe the ambiguous condition (confusion, joy, fear, and mental attitude) many of us have experienced, facing our first sexual relationships.

Dizziness

منگی

The dizziness of being sleepy. It could be 2 or 3 a.m. The lights are off. There is a sound of the night, a combination of the gas passing through pipes, the sound of crickets nearby, and dogs barking from afar. Intense heat is felt. She had opened the porch door to let the desert breezes blow. A single bed and a mosquito net are set on the carpeted floor of the living room, which is empty of furniture. The webbed ceiling of the mosquito net shimmers under the bright blue moonlight. Her face is not visible. The heady smell of her sweat mixes with the scent of "American Sport" Eau de Cologne. The pleasant heaviness of his body settles on Ali's body. Ali did not really understand what was happening, yet there was an amalgamation of excitement, joy, horror, numbness, and confusion. Her Mom and Dad are downstairs. They are asleep. Where are the others? It is sometime between 2001-2003. Where are her sisters others? His sisters Fa, Su, and Z?

Farideh is a toddler, so she must be asleep. Su is not available, as she studies in Tehran. Z has got married, but lives in the basement. She had unlocked the living room door, but kept it as if closed. With a racing heartbeat, she monitored every sound from the staircase. The apartment's entrance faced the basement. How likely was it that Z or her husband opened the door when B entered? Their bathroom was just in the hallway, and it was quite possible that someone would go to the bathroom in the middle of the night. They were the primary danger, in addition to her mom, who sometimes went around at night, especially if she heard a noise. What about the neighbours? What if someone saw B grabbing his shoes when he entered the house?

At the time, she only knew she had to do it. How did they do it? She feels that her memory lapses. B probably rubbed his penis on her vulva or even on his stomach. They were so shy to do more. She felt hardly any sensation in her body except a heart bursting with fear and excitement and temples burning with intense pressure. She held her breath and sharpened her ears, so as not to miss the slightest sound. She was always aware of the situation.

Five or six years later, in a separate incident, she woke up at the sound of Saad's mother's footsteps in his room, in the basement of their house. She grabbed her clothes and jumped into the closet. Sleepy and terrified, Saad took the mattress from the floor, and replaced it on the bed. Ali could see the shadow of Saad's mother standing in the doorframe from between the closet's hinges. His mother had worn prayer's Maqnāe. Her face was not visible in the darkness. Ali had held her breath, but she was worried lest her racing heartbeat could be heard. Ali's pink ponytail holder had remained on the floor. Damn it!! Saad's mother took the ponytail holder and asked whose it was. Saad responded indifferently, "It belongs to my friends!" His mother opened an old box and looked inside. But she did not open the closet. She must have known about their hiding place because she expelled Saad from the space the next day. Saad's mother was a school principal.

She did not even know when it was over. The incredible feeling of being asked to hug, kiss, and have someone who jeopardizes his freedom to touch your body, was worth everything. She remembered the past incident, and how B must have left before everyone woke up for the morning adhan, so the house returned to normal. What a great sleep she had, after he had gone in the morning! Her heart was calm, and her body was happy. The house and the city woke up gradually, as Ali fell asleep.

***Dizziness's* Empathetic Reading**

The core of this story is based on having a sexual relationship in isolation and secrecy. The tense atmosphere of the story, that feeling of fear coupled with pleasure and the discovery of sexuality echoed with all of us. We had all experienced our first sexual relationships in an almost similar vein. Whether basements, our cousins,' or friends' rooms, all were filled with a sense of anxiety and the dangers of being caught red-handed by family members. Our primary reading of this story was how locations and regulations construct embodied feelings. These invisible regulations have made apprehension an embodied habit.

We, as memory workers, agreed that we would not have realized what a sexual relationship might be like if we had not staked out positions similar to Ali's, because sexual matters were unspeakable either in families (even those who were relatively open-minded) or in the education system. They were taboos that could impose a sense of shyness and shame on our bodies, should we talk about them. Similar to how the protagonist hid her/themself in the closet, we would conceal anything sexually themed. Sexual topics were red lines in both the private and public spheres over which one must not cross.

In the absence of sexual health pedagogies and safe education, adolescents were obliged to take risks. Although we, like the author, were audacious enough to seek out sexual relationships, we bore a sense of being "guilty" and "shameful" for crossing those red lines. Our immature, stealthy, and ambiguous sexual experiences launched roller coasters of feeling; among them were

our enjoyment, fear, guilt, and anxiety. Ambiguity was the inevitable result of an "incomplete" response and/or the roller coaster of feelings that accompanied our sexual needs. The 1980s generation, who learned to censor our sexual desires and hide our relationships, could not fully respond to our sexualities. Having secret and complex relationships, however, was the price we had to pay to learn about our sexualities. This price was paid by the author in efforts to educate her/themself about her/their needs. She/they confirmed her/their incomplete understanding of what was happening in a bodily encounter with someone else. We were supposed to avoid this troublemaking. Thus, we embodied the proverb, "Don't rock the boat![10] " and had to be satisfied with our ambiguous sexual desires.

Dizziness' Reconstruction and Abstraction

This written memory includes multiple subjects. The author has (un)consciously segmented her body parts to demonstrate how her/their feelings are compartmentalized. "Ali," "she," and her "face" and "heart" are split up to specify the actions each can do. In this sense, "she/they" is rendered as an individual who knows her embodied activities. She unlocks the door, keeps it as if closed, monitors the situation, and knows her family members' habits well. She is similar to the police, in control of the entire situation. In terms of feelings, she feels her racing heartbeat, a memory lapse, her heart bursting in fear and excitement, and her temples burning in pressure. Therefore, she understands the tense atmosphere and the risks involved. She/they desire/s to be hugged and kissed, despite knowing the political and practical consequences. Nevertheless, "Ali" is also ignorant of her/their situation with feelings ranging from joy to horror to numbness regarding sexual activity. This separation enables the author to present her/themself as an "uncertain subject" in an ambiguous atmosphere, where knowing and unknowing about sexuality are mingled.

In terms of temporality, this story is centred on two fragments of the past, attached to stealthy sexual relationships in two different locations. One belongs to the author's deep past, and the other is more recent. In the first part of the story, the author constructs a character who is afraid of the sudden presence of others, including her/their parents, sisters, and even neighbours The author disobeys their house's regulations in order to meet their needs. This memory, however,

[10] This admonition was used to show how raising contentious issues has the potential to destabilize prevailing norms and structures.

reminds the author of another apprehensive sexual experience in her/their partner's (Saad's) house. Despite the move from one place and time to another, the tense atmosphere remains the same. Again, the author feels as if she/they had committed a crime and escaped from a powerful authority. These two related yet different fragments denote an entangled body that cannot recall its sexual experiences without remembering the heavy and stifling atmosphere surrounding them. Affected by this tense ambiance, the protagonist uses incomplete sentences and repetitive questions to delineate her/their ambiguity about sexuality as criminality. She/they is caught up in the "absence" of others, and even herself, owing to the triggers of internalized anxiety and fear.

Topical Transfer and Shifting the Problem

The story's crucial takeaway involves how the author mingles her/their feared body with a sense of "voluntary agency." This agency includes being engulfed with apprehension and mixed feelings, in the discovery of her sexual desires. While many adolescents hide their erotic relationships from their parents' eyes in many cultures, the author risks life-threatening danger to discover her/their bodily agency. She/they actively resist/s her/their mother's authoritative voice. Focusing on "mother" as a "real danger" is critical in the story. It illuminates the multiplicity of power relations and their nuances regarding gender-role surveillance. Thus, this story demonstrates how "othering" is perpetrated in distorting power relations that capture even caring relationships in complicity with violence.

8.4 *So Far… So Close*

So Far…So Close was the last written memory we worked on, collectively. This title was picked based on a Persian movie we had all watched, yet there was no connection between the movie's content and that of the participants' story. The title was chosen intuitively, based on how it moved us.

So Far… So Close

خیلی دور... خیلی نزدیک

It is around 8:00 p.m. when her father commands her to go to bed. It is a dull autumn evening, and she does not know why she likes it. She enjoys the fall, the season when she was born, with all the drizzly rains that fall. Her father turns off the house lights. The house is immersed in warm and dim yellow light in a silent atmosphere. It is a time when the whole family gets ready to speak slowly and, in a whisper, afraid lest the father wakes up. She gets ready to go to bed, as directed. She does not feel the slightest bit sleepy. She has a strong desire to stay with her mother in the kitchen. Resisting this enforced compulsion to sleep swells in her throat. She wants to

shout, but she does not dare to say she would rather not go to bed. There would be a bitter dispute as soon as she would disagree with house rules. Her father's yell resonates in her head. She withdraws from any disagreement. There is no place for an eight-year-old girl in their three-room apartment, so she must sleep in her parent's room, somewhere between them. She leaves her mother with great sadness and goes to bed. It was not long until her father falls asleep. She thinks about how much she fears him, how much she hates him. In the darkness of the room, she sees her father's body, counting his breaths. She tosses and turns. She cannot sleep. She flinches under the blanket, clinging to the ground. She does not know why she relishes this feeling. She lies back down, and her vagina is hitting the ground. She loves this hitting. Something is shaking in her body. She pushes her vagina harder while she worries lest her father wakes up. She breaths heavily and quietly. She does not know why but knows that no one, and above all, her father, should hear her breathing. She does not know the reason for this concealment, yet she does and enjoys it. She exhales a sheer volume of breathing into her pillow, which makes the pillow warm and cozy. Her father's body moves next to her. She has reached climax. She fastens around the bedsheet as well as her pillow, still exhaling heavily. Her father moves again. She is scared. She is like a dead body. Her father tosses and turns. She still seems to be dead. She can see her father's face now. Her open eyes are not visible in the darkness, and even if they are visible, how great is it that her father is unable to see them. She waits for her father to fall asleep again. She has learned the rules. She prepares herself. She moves on the floor, going up and down and enjoying it. She hears her breaths. She reaches climax. Her father snores. The breath is trapped in her chest, and hits the pillow hard. She lets her body relax and be soothed. She hits the warm pillow and feels a deep sleep fill her eyes.

***So Far…So Close's* Empathetic Reading**

The fusion of sexual pleasure and deep fear at the center of this story caught our attention. Apart from the psychological reasons behind the story, we were astonished by its resonant poetic tone. The presence of the father is the primary source of the author's anxiety. The protagonist uses "rain" and "the fall evening" to portray a melancholic atmosphere. The gloomy house is her father's territory. This control and the author's inability to disagree with her father are embodied in her deep fear. The protagonist, however, depicts her mother as a safe and secure person who protects her from the heavy weight of the father's commands. We highlighted how the mother shelters her daughter in the face of the father's control. Even though the mother is not present in the text, we feel the warmth of her cuddle from the author's vantage point.

Surprisingly, the author's great fear leads to her discovery of self-soothing through sexual pleasure. Like other stories, we noticed a relationship between the lack of personal space and the discovery of sexual pleasure. While space regulation in the two other stories did not allow the authors to fully meet their sexual needs, the author in this written memory finds a limited space in her father's territory to discover her sexuality. In contrast to the commander's terrain (their home), the author's safe zone is her warm and cozy pillow and the blanket, where she finds

sexual expression. This mix of danger and pleasure seemed like a masterpiece for us. The fusion of her erotic voice with the father's snores, and her dead body at the moment of climax were like a scene from a short movie showing how a repressive authoritative voice kills sexual joy. Even though the author did not know what sexual pleasure was, she knew she was doing something forbidden and was afraid of it. This reminded us that the whole memory is narrated from an adult's lens but not from the little girl's viewpoint. We concluded that the author might be "afraid of her own shadow" even though her fear of her father remained reasonable to us.

So Far…So Close's Reconstruction and Abstraction

Power relations are unbalanced throughout this story. The author takes every opportunity to shed light on how power is exercised in this home. It is not only the author who has to follow the rules, but all family members (i.e., they whisper when the father is going to sleep, as required). The protagonist constructs herself as a defenceless entity in the first half of the story. A brief look at her activities reveals that she disagrees with her father but does not dare say so. As a result of this lack of power, she shouts inwardly, yet is left in her sullen silence, withdrawing expression of her disagreement. This animates a sense of fear and hatred for her father, feelings that provoke her "generative/standby power" to satisfy herself. This hatred and fear are transformed into a sense of love, relish, and joy when the author proceeds with their sexual pleasure discovery. Through this accidental discovery, the protagonist realizes what her body is capable of. Her body parts (i.e., vagina, open eyes, breaths) become active agents again. By the same token, the slaughtered voice, her desire to shout at her ornery father, change to pleasurable breaths relying on her own body. Within this process, the author recognizes how to restore the power she thought she had lost.

However, this power is reappropriated by "monsterizing" the other. By constructing the father's voice as an absolute power in the house, the author presupposes and accepts herself as a feeble entity from the beginning. She constructs her father, who commands, orders, and yells, as a governor who runs the house as his territory. This distorted reflection will not assist her in disentangling her body-memory from the pain and suffering of his overdetermined sense of entitlement. She needs her own power for that, even in this vulnerable and dangerous place near her sleeping father.

Topical Transfer and Shifting the Problem

The binarized nature of the story denotes that presumed superiority cannot last. Despite the author's initial attempt to construct herself as a silent, inactive, and subjected character, her body works to liberate itself from oppressive regulation. Although she engages in stealthy behaviour, the author's commitment to pleasing herself precipitates a new kind of agency.

8.5 Distorting Complicities

There is a crucial common thread among all these stories. Under the banner of the Islamic Republic's sexualized and sexualizing policies distorting complicities advance through interpersonal relations, often involving violence that leads to *toromas.*

The *Maqnāe*, is a tool for disciplining little girls' bodies, by oversexualizing them. A principal accountable for student education threatens them. Friends fight over a beautiful *Maqnāe.* A seven-year-old girl becomes anguished over dirtying her *Maqnāe*, in part, because another teacher attempts to let her remove it indoors, as an act of kindness, which gets subsumed within the dominant power structures to reinforce prevailing projections. By Islamacizing little girls' bodies (and later adult women) and politicizing their hair, the hijab, which is erroneously supposed to protect them, normalizes sexualized violence, and triggers their *toromas.*

These distorted complicities are traceable among intimate sexual relationships as well. In all these stories, there are paradoxes and ambiguities in relationships that reflect the Islamacization of sexualities. By constraining any trivial sexual behaviour, the whole society becomes oversexualized. This over-sexualization creates an apt ground for different power relations to be activated. A motorcycle becomes a license to randomly assault women and girls, sexually. The complex power relations in Iranian patriarchal families became more intense with the establishment of the Islamic Republic. As a result, people are caught in an endless network of mutual policing, whether for safety or dominance. It can be seen among mothers and daughters (*Emancipation, Dizziness)*, sisters (*Emancipation, Guard),* father and daughters (*Manifesto, So Far…So Closed)*, police and couples (*Unsatisfied Desire),* and even between lovers (*Manifesto).* Notably, mothers and other female figures turn against other women, in step with the regime. Thus, those mothers (and sisters) who might be *toromatized* by their erstwhile oppressors became the enforcers of the patriarchal regime to discipline and control others, passing their *toromas* on.

Toromas can be passed beyond a generation or even a nation-state, into different localities and chronologies. Those distorted and complicit relations, the cumulative fear of being interrogated, controlled, and beaten, will impact subsequent generations, within and outside a nation's boundaries, unless people actively stop the circulation of that destructive power. Only when intergenerational and "transnational" *toromas* heal, can people restore their "standby power" to act and alter their distorted relationships.

Chapter 9

Discussion and Results: Collective Memories in Diaspora: From Targeted Girls to Resilient Women

9.1 Scenes from a Collective Biography of *Toromatic* Memories: A Virtual Ethnodrama

Our four collective memory work (CMW) meetings culminated in one collective biography. Within the CMWs, we attempted to respond to my first question on how our juvenile bodies and sexualities were affected by Islamicist policies in public and private spaces. We understood that despite our multiple forms of problematic embodiments and interrupted agencies, our lives were similarly affected by and within Islamicized sexualization processes. Our *toromatic* memories followed us in Iran and into the diaspora.

To respond to the thesis's second and third questions, we developed a collective biography in the form of a "virtual ethnodrama." Collective biography probes those moments, emotions, feelings, and lived experiences that are difficult to articulate, yet can be collectively enunciated among collaborative evolving subjects. As collective memory workers, we decided to create a script and dramatize our data to see 1) whether or not we have (dis)identified with our *toromas* 2) what the resiliency and healing processes look like in our context of geographic migration 3) and how our diasporic healing processes affect our relationships with women and men back home in Iran. Recalling the contexts of our memories collectively and writing a script assisted us in turning those unpleasant past moments into an opportunity to reflect and create. Thus, we initiated a free discussion about the study questions and responded to them as characters in a play (using the same pseudonyms we had created for our CMW meetings). We established different locales from everyday life within each scene in order to intervene and interact with each other. Within this process, we began to articulate those emotions and thoughts that had not been stated in our written memories.

There are three initial scenes, including our agreements and disagreements about our *toromatic* memories. All virtual scenes are held within our computer screens. The scenes' descriptions illustrate our time, locations, and conditions when remembering our respective pasts.

Each stage consists of at least one subtext about our (dis)identifications with sexualized and sexualizing Islamiscist policies in Iran and gender biases in Canada, our healing processes, and our relationships with men and women back home in Iran. In this "dramaturgical understanding of research as a social drama[s] the characters (as participants-actors] each have objectives, motivations, experiences, conflicts that block them from achieving their desire, and express [ing] emotions" (Mnemo Zin and Gannon 2022, 9). Throughout this virtual ethnodrama, we strove to find out whether and how we might be able to 'take actions that could help heal our *toromas.*'

Scene 1

(The stage is a computer screen divided into three closed windows of our faces. Ali, Sayeh, and Baran get online to initiate a free discussion about the memories they had shared through their collective memory work. Because of its virtual nature, the stage represents different places and times. We are based in Saskatoon and Toronto. Sayeh is walking around the dining room, looking for a comfortable place to sit. Ali reclines against the wall and seems tired but happy. Baran is in a closed-door room; she wears a microphone).

Baran: Well! It seems we have finished our arduous journey (*everyone laughs)*! Yet, when I think about our *toromas*, some questions remain unanswered. It is still questionable for me whether we have really dis/identified with all those cumulative fears and *toromas.* Our memories demonstrate that our bodies and sexualities have been entangled with many negative feelings. However, if those bitter memories are left in Iran or have moved with us into the diaspora, it is not necessarily evident. To you, have any of these *toromas* we have explored together resurfaced here in Canada? If so, are there any resiliency processes to be utilized in the context of geographic migration? Also, how do our diasporic healing processes affect our relationships with men and women we know in Iran? These are questions that I could not answer, individually. So, let's dig into them a bit deeper!

(*There is a meaningful silence among us. It seems that everyone reflects on their experiences and thoughts—Baran breaks the ice)*

Baran: Well, I constantly reflect on my immigration outcomes. I could begin to observe my problems from a greater distance by moving from Iran to Canada. I occasionally look at those issues that seemed trivial in Iran but have become a severe problem in my new setting. For

instance, why did I get accustomed to that surveillance as if it was a normal part of my everyday life? Why should I be interrogated on the street just because I am walking next to my partner? I feel that the police were a part of the street, like cars, traffic lights, stores, etc. It was pretty normal to be policed on the street, without even asking for a reason. That is why once I see the police patrolling the Saskatoon's streets, I feel I could be caught with no rhyme and reason. Sayeh, have you ever seen the intersection of Idylwyld and 25th street at night? Some signs have flashing lights that look like Iranian police gear. I always feel they are the riot police!

(*Sayeh and Ali stare at their screen's cameras. Ali is biting her nails, and Sayeh shakes her head, indicating disagreement)*

Sayeh: I don't feel the same at all. Frankly, I feel more normal since I have moved here (*she laughs)*. I suppose I did not have any problem in Iran either. I don't care about my appearance, and if someone tells me to wear specific clothes (*she shrugs her shoulders and laughs),* I may ask why I should do that, but I finally wear them. Hijab was not a big deal, something I wanted to confront or pay any price for. Instead, I tried to pay this price for more fundamental rights, such as equal rights for going to the stadium or protesting femicide, with which Iranian women have seriously struggled. I don't know how I should explain it…

Baran: I hear you; I am highlighting the same, in fact. It seemed to me that wearing a hijab was a part of my being, a part of my head. But at the same time, facing those moral police made me anxious. I had to have some strategies to bypass them.

Sayeh: Yes, I hear you. I was caught twice for wearing a short manteau. I cursed them, I yelled at them, I complained… I was scared, too… but I don't know why; it didn't become my main concern. I might be conservative?! I might have got used to wearing it (*she laughs)*. However, by travelling abroad, either as a tourist or as an immigrant, I took any opportunity to uncover my head and became unveiled. Hijab is not a big deal for me, but the body is. My body has been constantly abjected since my childhood. This is a source of real *toroma* for me. I am getting better, but not because I have moved to Canada. I had a partner who helped me to reconnect with my inhibited body. If I don't have any problems right now, it is because the change process started back home. This new geography did not affect me (*she laughed and apologized! It is not clear why she made an apology).*

Ali: What do you mean by saying it did not affect you? Does it mean you are still ashamed of your body?

Baran: I believe she means the care and attention she received from her partner have outweighed the effects of moving to another setting, right?

Sayeh: True, it was more an inward feeling than moving from one context to another.

Ali: But dress codes and clothing were complex issues for me in Iran and Canada (*Sayeh and Baran are intrigued. They are all ears to listen to Ali's story)*. My family and the milieus I grew up with were more dogmatic than the Islamicist forces. Their tenacious beliefs and ingrained religious attitudes about women's bodies and sexualities have always *toromatized* me. But I gradually resisted accepting their ideas since I was a teenager. Notably, our sisters-in-law played critical roles in this process of resisting. They resided in Tehran, and they were unveiled in their wedding ceremonies. That was the first time I saw a woman who did not wear a hijab. It was weird. I was astonished and wondered how on earth a woman could sit next to a man unveiled, with a short skirt. My mother called them immodest women, but I never agreed with her. When I went to the Kashan University, I took off my chador. I did it before I officially started school because I knew well that my parents would suppose that being unveiled was my peer's influence. However, I could dare to unveil fully (*she laughs and says not in her family but among her friends)* when I smoke cannabis. When I moved to Tehran, I could even change my dress among my friends.

Baran: How old were you?

Ali: I was 25-26, I suppose. Those internalized pressures I bore in my body made me a practical radical. I was never caught by the morality police (*Komiteh in the 1980s and today's Gasht-e-Ershad)*. I was not a massive fan of wearing cosmetics, so there was no excuse to arrest me. It took me a long time to dare to become unveiled among my family members, especially with my mother. It was at my wedding ceremony (*Ali's face shows a paradoxical feeling at this moment; as a non-binary woman, she had to accept her/their family's heteronormative values and obey their desires to have a wedding)*. In that ceremony, I partially came out of concealing that I am an unveiled woman, although forced to marry a man.

Baran: To me, there was and still is a relationship between these dogmas you are mentioning and moral police interrogations on the streets. Do you think the Islamicist ideology affected our parent's mentalities about our dress code and bodies in the private sphere?

Sayeh: I don't think so. It did not affect my immediate family, but my maternal uncle was influential. My uncle was an Islamicist at the beginning of the revolution. My father, on the other hand, was a leftist. They did not get along well with each other. As I aged, my uncle was at one of the highest levels in the regime. As a member of the political-religious force in the Islamic Republic, he had principles he enforced when he came to our home. We, those ten-year-old girls, should not be unveiled in our private backyard. It was related to the position he had among his political allies. Having said that, he changed his mind about religion and his position among fundamentalists after the reformist movement[11]. Indeed, this change affected us and our relationship with him.

Baran: I know what you mean. My family was conventional more than religious. My parents practice Islam, but in their own fashion. They said prayers and went on fasts, but there was no mandatory hijab at home, and both men and women partied together. However, I was prohibited from wearing shorts or a crop-top at home. But I believe those limitations refer more to protecting us all from coercive measures than genuine religious belief. I recall not being allowed to polish my nails or wear lipstick. If I would polish my nails, I had to hide them from my father. He believed that those who wear crop tops were prostitutes!!! I understood later that the punishments I was meted out for clothing and styling were a means of establishing power by disciplining someone!

Ali: Do you mean it was not a religious belief at all?

Baran: I believe so; my father had paradoxical behavior. He did practice Islam but also was a huge fan of pornography. He was a staunch ally of monarchists but also respected those religious leaders who started the revolution in 1979. What does it mean to you?! *(We all express consternation because we have mixed feelings about this question. It seems paradoxical for us).*

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[11] Reform era is known for the gradual changes that happened in the political atmosphere in Iran. The 2nd of Khordad Movement usually refers to the coalition of some reformist groups that criticized the rightish and fundamentalist Islamicist and proposed some keywords such as democracy, modernity, and civil society.

Ali: Do you believe the Islamicist's ideologies and the government's sexual policies influenced him?

Baran: In my opinion, the public and private spheres have constantly affected each other, meaning the public has always constructed its counter-publics, yet has nourished and permeated the interpersonal relationships within the households.

Sayeh: That is true. Your father and many other male guardians were supported by the Islamicist ideology and the Islamic Republic's jurisdiction.

Ali: The Islamicist's forces would support them and make their hearts warm. Imagine a fundamentalist Muslim father in Canada who is picky about his daughter's hijab! He would not be supported by the law but by his communities. I mean, he would not be able to rely on the law.

Baran: I cannot agree more. Because of these internalized regulations, I never felt free to wear shorts in Iran or Canada. If I wore tights at home, my father would gaze at my legs and make me ashamed of my own body. This inhabitation of shame has been deposited in my body.

Ali: You didn't say if those changes in the political atmosphere changed your father's approaches too!

Baran: Right! I suppose those Iranian TV programs produced in the diaspora could influence my father's approaches a bit. Those diasporic political opposition programs broadcasted by satellite could change the Islamicist dogma in the private spheres if families accessed those media. You know, many religious families did not access any channels except the Islamic Republic's national TV program, right?

Ali: To answer this question, I would like to return to my familial positionality. My parents had been living in Iraq for 20 years before moving to Tehran. They were part of an Iraqi minority with the strictest religious values in Iran. To me, they were more dogmatic than the Islamic Republic's forces, so those political changes did not impact them. My sister and I resisted obeying many regulations in our family. Yet, similar to your father, my dad used to police my body. If I wore tights, he would notify my mother to alarm me that wearing clingy pants would not be an appropriate outfit at home.

(*We look at each other, not knowing if we should be surprised or sad. We nod our heads— Ali continues smiling at us).*

That means he would sexualize my body first and then alarm my mother to correct me. It was as if constant police were living at home. Can you imagine?

Baran: Of course, I can. I told you about my similar condition.

Ali: After the reformist movement, he frowned at our bodies less. I strongly stress that our sisters-in-law, who came from the capital city and were unveiled, affected their treatment of us. Moving to Canada and being far from them, I could digest some of those *toromas* and have a better relationship with him (*Ali laughs and says only with her/their father, but not her mother).*

Baran: How did you improve this broken relationship?

Ali: Well, I experienced migration twice. Once from Kashan to Tehran, and the second to Canada. The distinct feeling I have had since moving to Canada is that I am no longer webbed in the network of having to answer those interrogations. I feel fantastic when I feel the wind in my hair or when I wear pyjamas for going shopping. It was a celebratory feeling since I moved here. However, as time has passed, I have noticed the different mechanisms of "policing beauty" or body control here. Now, I feel that my body does not fit here either.

Baran: In terms of what?

Ali: In terms of health and promotion discourses. I have a hairy body, and when encountering those super sexy, naked models with flawless skin, I feel ashamed and abject again. The politics of clothing in Iran affected me; I did not care about my appearance. (*Ali laughs and adds that who wanted to see our underwear on the streets!).* It didn't matter if I had hair on my chin. But it seems it is of paramount importance here.

Baran: What do you mean by 'policing beauty' Ali? Can you tell that people here care about their body image? I do not see people around here obsessed with their bodies.

Ali: But there is a policing of calories here in Toronto (*collectively laughing).* They praise so-called ideal and sexy bodies. York University has an excellent reputation in fat studies. However, I can see that those participating intellectually in the seminars are fit and sporty. Excuse me! But I don't buy it that you can change your body imagine by #ing. What is that supposed to mean!

#love your body! Underneath there is a system of policing beauty and health here that is irritating. There is a double-edged sword to me. On the one hand, we had moral police who interrogated any so-called sexual behaviours. On the other hand, this policing of beauty and health promotions affects me here again! Yet, I believe I am happier here for sure!

(Sayeh and Baran live in Saskatoon. Apparently, they have not been in communities where ideal and tiny bodies are praised. They seem shocked!)

Scene 2

(Ali, Sayeh, and Baran seem a little tired and stale after reviving all these bitter memories. Ali asks for a cup of tea. Baran needs to smoke, and Sayeh strongly desires strawberry ice cream. We make a pause, and everyone closes off their cameras. The scene is a black screen, including three avatars. When the scene is lit, all faces are more satisfied and happier)

Sayeh: I was thinking of the body image you mentioned, Ali! (*She is finishing her ice cream so still absorbed with her dish and spoon)*. To me, there is a series of beauty norms that you have to adhere to as a woman. For instance, you should keep your hair tidy and dyed or have your nails polished and manicured. I am neat, but I hate to do my hair. I polish my nails, right! (*she shows her nails to Baran and Ali to get their agreement)*, but I might not care about them all the time. I happen to wear shorts, but I don't shave my legs and feet. These choices do not mean that I am an unkempt person. Yet, it is not the same for other people.

Baran: In Iran or Canada?

Sayeh: Everywhere! I don't know?! Maybe I am super sensitive, or my mother gave me this sense of being insufficient. She has constantly criticized my body and said to me that I am abnormal, not 'female enough'…That I will never be a "person" at all. Her scolding has always affected my sense of my body. I am still on some mental health medications for these reasons. If it is not violence, but it is, then what? It might not have directly related to the Islamic Republic's sexual policies, but still, it is a very *toromatic* memory for me (*She reflects for a while in silence and continues)*. It speaks of a country where any regulation enforcement targets girls, especially from their childhoods, to ensure that they will not breach it later. It distracts our attention.

Ali: This is a stunning point. It allows anyone to interfere in our affairs and shape our mentality towards our bodies. If, as a child, you were asked why do you pat your hair? Why did you pluck your eyebrows, either at home or in school? What if other people in workspaces scanned and commented on why they wore such inappropriate eyebrows? This isn't very good. Here in Canada, people seldom comment on your body; still, they indirectly push you to be "in style" with consumer culture.

Sayeh: Wow, I heard these sentences a lot *(Sayeh seems cheered up that someone else has the same feelings).* These interrogating comments were very annoying, as I wore simple clothes and didn't care much for my fashion style.

Baran: I believe those interrogating voices deposited from back home still play a role in our mentality. Plus, in my opinion, our bodies have been interrogated on several fronts: the family who gave itself the right to question our appearance. The public and popular culture that dictated who is an attractive woman. Then we faced the Islamic Republic's sexual policies, and were part of a quiet but widespread counter-public. You had to wipe out all non-compliant appearance in public spaces so that you would not be questioned, interrogated, and policed. This is an extraordinary contradiction and paradox. I feel that our body-minds have carried all these contradictions and brought them into the diaspora.

Ali: Which one is more highlighted and etched on your memory?

Baran: I would say all, but for the sake of your question, I can say the punishment that I got used to being delivered by my father at home (*Baran's face shows hatred*) was very heavy and triggered me. Like your father, my dad used to sexualize my body when I wore tights. He even criticized me when I got my period at ten years old!

(*Everyone is shocked to hear this statement. Ali and Sayeh nod when Sayeh says to Baran: your dad wanted to resist your natural body. Baran agrees and continues).*

Baran: Exactly! I sometimes feel that we, like those coming from countries in the global south, seem an exception to other people. I usually think that we are unique in terms of political obstruction, geographical conditions, and the anger and crisis underneath people's skin, due to living in that region. It is as if we need some extra explanation of whatever we have experienced. I do not want to objectify our experiences as exotic ones, but no one can ever understand Iran's

sexualized policies unless we educate ourselves about them using both a transnational AND regional lens.

Sayeh: But my colleagues from the MENA[12] have the same understanding of our issues. There are some nuances, but we are almost in the same boat over sexual matters.

Ali: I believe the same. Our issues must be analyzed from a transnational viewpoint. Many fundamental Islamicist forces are becoming radicalized in other countries, namely the United States; even though the marriage of religion and politics brought super conservatism in Iran, beginning the Islamic revolution, it spreads. These approaches affected our bodies, clothing, the intimate and sexual relationships the most, and shaped our roles in the public sphere.

Scene 3

(*Ali's point about our sexualities prompted the others to change the subject to our intimate and sexual relationships in Iran and Canada. The scene is still the same. Ali and Baran are chatting about university issues while Sayeh has left to have a cup of Iranian herbal tea).*

Baran: I have always been ashamed to talk about my sexual relationships among my family members and even my sisters. But you know better than me that sexual and intimate relationships should especially be hidden from our fathers and brothers. We couldn't take the risk. But when I recall those days, I feel we should have broken those rules. Now, it is too late. I am not afraid about my relationships here in Canada. Who is going to ask about my relationship's status on the street? It would be harassment!!

Sayeh: My family was so strict about sexual matters. There was a general rule. No one could sleep over from outside the house. My mother despised sexual relationships, and she passed this hatred on to us. I went through many therapy sessions to recover and disentangle my body from this feeling. I even exposed myself to an array of jeopardies. For example, I tried threesome relationships, even though I was unsure if it was the type of relationship I desired. I just wanted to get rid of the fearful image that my mother had imposed in my mind.

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[12] MENA is an acronym for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Baran: Do you think the Islamic Republic's sexual policies influenced your mother's mentality about sexual relationships?

Sayeh: Absolutely! But I believe it is more cultural than political, even though they are not separated. The Islamic Republic hegemonized the ideology that women's bodies should be controlled. Similarly, my body was controlled and even harassed before I left that country. I first immigrated to England when I was 28 and had my first relationship outside my country. Simply speaking, I did not have any personal place to sleep with my sexual or intimate partner in Iran.

Baran: What strikes me is that, apparently, we still get anxious to talk about our relationships with our parents back home, it still makes us anxious, right? Is it still that deposited fear which hinders us from talking freely?

(*Ali raises her/their eyebrows in surprise! It is no longer possible to talk about this issue with their parents)*

Ali: It has a lot of consequences. I still need to be protective about my relationship status and keep it secret (*Ali and their partner pretended they got married. They do not believe in marriage and identify as queer people)*. I think that a single person cannot change that heteronormative mentality. I won't be able to tell my parents that I believe in polyamory. Marriage is a shield that can protect me from that heteronormativity.

(*Ironically. Ali, Sayeh, and Baran mention that their parents have been sleeping in separate rooms for years. This is the way their ideal marriage ended up).*

There was an absolute silence about sexual matters at our home. Sex and menstrual cycles were forbidden topics in my family. I did not know what a sexual relationship meant until my mid-twenties. We did not have access to any satellite TV or movies to help me reflect on what I liked. I have encountered many experiences equal to assault and harassment. I mean that ambiguity and ambivalence, the silence in our house, triggered so many misunderstandings about sexuality for me. Plus, I had to pretend to be someone with a fake marital status. I believe in open relationships. I follow my authentic sexual orientation and gender identity in Canada. I could find names of categories for those experiences that might seem like sexual deviance in Iran. I realize that I am not a pervert. I am not really into the politics of identity. However, discovering those

categories legitimized my so-called deviant sexual experiences, and I got legit for myself. This "redefining of identity" was one of the most outstanding outcomes I gained in the diaspora.

Baran: Does this healing process affect your relationship with your parents or other men and women back home?

Ali: Not really. We still do not get along well with each other. Although my mother was so oppressive at home, she was so shy about sexual matters that I could not talk to her about my sexual relationships. My partner and I have told our friends about our non-binary identities. We told them that we have found our identity categories right now.

Baran: I feel I am so neutral in terms of gender identity. If I could change it right now, I would be agender. I really don't want to have one. I desire to behave as I wish, and I do not want to be identical to any category.

Ali: My partner is more progressive than me.

Sayeh: So is my partner. He was the one who could push me to ignore social gender norms.

Baran: Perhaps the main characteristic of the people we are with is that they understand love as "care." Careful people affect our lives, as they know the adverse effects of harassment in others' lives. This is so healing for me.

Ali: You may have read my mind. I cannot agree more.

(*It is almost 9:00 pm in Saskatoon and 11:00 pm in Toronto. Sayeh starts walking home. She looks for another cozy place to chill out. Ali still reclines against the wall and follows Baran's commentary)*

So, we can describe our healing process in this way, having our own room and independent lifestyles. We overcame numerous *toromas* to find our safe spaces. Plus, having a caring partner who protects and cares for you even more than yourself will help. I would say we remain mindful of who we have been, who we are, and who we are going to become.

Baran: True, and I will add "paying attention to your silent body." I found dancing and moving in the diaspora so soothing. No one interrogates me on the street. Why shouldn't I make the most of this opportunity? This body is capable of creating so many movements. Maybe we

can undo those wounds and *toroma* by performing our bodies' agencies over and over again. So, I reflect on my healing process like that.

Ali: Have I ever told you that theatre was the turning point in my therapy sessions?

Baran and Sayeh: No way!!!

Ali: Yes, the theatre scene at Kashan university is still a sacred place where I can take sanctuary. It was a miracle cure for me. No one was sexist in that scene. We would improvise as if there were no gender roles. All those simple embodied movements seemed meaningful there. It was as if we could create another life in the theatrical scene. My partner and I started our relationship while playing "the theatre of the oppressed."

(*Baran is beaming).*

Sayeh: Doing sports had the same effect on me. I was privileged to play in professional basketball teams since I was eleven. I became a member of the national team, later. Yet, as we had to play veiled, or as FIFA did not confirm Iranian sports suits, I withdrew (*She seems sad for a while)*

Baran: Oh my God, what a surprise! I did not know we had this much in common. Dancing was a life-changing activity for me. I could get rid of a destructive intimate relationship through the courage of embodied movement, just as I could reflect on my body when I became a radical contemporary dancer. Contemporary dance, and contact improvisation, pushed me to study Women and Gender Studies…

(*Baran faces Ali and continues)*

So, Ali, I would say moving our bodies and having a splendid collective such as ours can assist our healing process, right? It is amazing… May I ask how the collective memory worked for you? What kind of journey was it?

Sayeh: (*While smiling)* I found two incredible people with whom I am safe. I feel so close to you now. I never talked about my mother except with close friends. Over these meetings, I felt so strong to talk about those *toromas*. I genuinely felt that I could get rid of those fears.

Ali: Your question reminded me of those first sessions when I was doubtful if I should continue these meetings. I was tearful when I heard about the group's aim. I remember I was terrified at the beginning that the things I had buried and came to Canada to escape and make a new life might revive again. Throughout what I experienced in this process, the journey from one point in our past to another, I felt such wow!!! How resilient we were. Despite all those terrible problems, we could still find a solution to being ourselves. It reminds me of our capabilities to reconstruct all those ruins. Honestly, I thought I could not control myself to reface my *toromas*. But I am much better right now. I mean it! A fantastic point through this process was that despite all of our different social and cultural differences; we were similarly affected.

Baran: Exactly! Those power structures had different tactics within one big strategy: enforced coercion on our bodies. I understood that patriarchy has not merely a male figure. Patriarchy is a practice. At stake is who is in the center of power, how power is distributed, and how all these layers are folded together.

Last Scene

(Ali, Baran, and Sayeh say goodbye to each other with laughter and their faces full of pleasure and passion. They say that in the not-too-distant future, they will come together again to do additional work and create and perform their lives together. The scene and screen shuts down).

Chapter 10

Final Thoughts; Toward an Emancipatory Diasporic Resilience

10.1 Conclusion

This research's primary objective has been to consider how Iranian women's bodies and sexualities have been affected by the imposition of the Islamic Republic's sexualized policies and how these bodily *toromas* resurface in the diaspora. Embodied fear is a form of technology utilized by Islamicist forces' to reify the normalization of sexualized violence and female interrogative culture. I also sought to understand the feasible healing process for Iranian diasporic women. The Islamization project aims to produce and reproduce gendered Muslim subjects, by controlling women and other minoritized bodies and sexualities, to support a nationalism that resists western imperialisms by imposing an imperialism of its own. Female bodies have been a battleground. Indeed, the *toromatic* memories of the bodies most affected have traveled to other lands via the escaping diaspora.

Considering dress code, intimate relationships, and sexual abstinence as sources of *toromas,* I attempted to engage generational peers in collaboratively analyzing how women's bodies and sexualities have been affected by Islamic sexual policies. By working on our memories, together, as diasporic Iranian women, we realized that the Islamic Republic's sexual policies have continued to affect our bodies and sexualities. Each of us had at least one *toromatic* memory, which affected us in a relatively similar way, having been constantly policed in public. Although we were affected by the Islamic sexual policies early on, we resisted following their rules in adulthood. We concluded that our bodies were affected most by interpersonal power relations in our private spheres. Our collective memory work revealed how the Islamicist ideology about modest women permeated our family structures and dynamics, and altered power relations at home. In particular, we learned how the Islamicist patriarchal polity had employed female power figures (i.e., female police or *Sister of Zeynab*, mothers, sisters, principals) to discipline other women.

The dress code created an "alienated body," detached from its agency and depleted in its power to act, beginning in childhood and youth. Focusing on *Maqnāe* (scarf), we recalled how the hijab was a coercive measure to discipline our bodies at school. Our memories unpacked how students were monitored, surveyed, and treated by principals and teachers. At the heart of our three pieces of memory (*Panopticon, A Photo of the Two, and Prim*) were bodies engulfed in uncomfortable feelings with no outlet. Our strangled voices echoed inside our bodies in rage, anger, confusion, and silence. However, these entangled emotions were less passive once we got older. Our virtual ethnodramatic collective biography, in particular, demonstrated our resiliencies and the processes through which we withstood the impositions we faced in both public and private spheres. Despite the cruelties of the morality police (today's *Gasht-e-Ershad*), women have become the most valiant warriors against them. Hence, the more we resisted following the Islamicist forces' dress code, the less likely we were to face consternation about our clothing in the diaspora.

The fluid position of *Maqnāe* in our stories uncovered its surplus, meaning it was a piece of clothing that could determine how we related to others. By its long length, it could protect an inhibited body, but it was an obstacle to free bodily movements. By the same token, *Maqnāe* could determine one's class status. Owing a beautiful and adorned *Maqnāe* could invoke the image of an ideal girl in the Islamicist force's perspective. A "complete Muslim woman" wears a neat, beautiful, and decorated *Maqnāe* from an early age. This "standardized beauty" could affect us as little girls, especially, but not as adult resilient women.

The regulation of "how" and "where" a *Maqnāe* must be worn was another aspect of the "alienated body." Our bodies were confused about why they should be covered in gender-segregated places. In this sense, wearing or not wearing *Maqnāe* was not crucial, but "where to wear" and "how to wear" mattered. The spatial regulation, apart from separating the outside from the inside, made our bodies apprehensive of constant interrogations such as "Where is your *Maqnāe*?" or "Why have you taken it off in the schoolyard?" Being interrogated or punished led to a "self-policing" mentality that infested every arena of action. The more religious our families were, the more we faced interrogation of body and clothing. Some families who were staunch allies of the Islamic Republic's sexual policies rigorously monitored their girls' clothing at home. This surveillance propelled us to continuously inspect our bodies to see whether we were performing properly. Indeed, this internalized self-policing and constant surveillance imposed a

sense of guilt and criminality on us, through the "feminization of sin," as discussed in chapter three.

In terms of intimate relationships, our bodies were also more closely monitored in private than in public. Even though the moral police (*Komiteh* or today's *Gasht-e-Ershad*) worked toward the elimination and proscription of intimacies in public, the intensities of private monitoring were their corollary. We encountered different rules and regulations that influenced our intimate relationships. These "rules" reflected the patriarchal power structures within families that, albeit affected by the Islamicist ideologies, were independently exercised on our bodies. However, our stories show that we attempted to resist our families' power and disentangle their violence from our adult lives.

Shouresh (rebellion) was a turning point to defy those strict rules. We, as rebellious women, strove to shift and refuse the power dynamics operating within our worlds. Although we were active agents in disturbing the balance of those power relations, we endured the heavy burden of violence inflicted on our lives. In some cases, the gratuitous violence was overwhelming. Some grappled with violence committed by our mothers or sisters. Once fathers would threaten pedophilia, they could get mothers to discipline their daughters, making them agents of their abuses. Mothers, and in some cases sisters, have been complicit with repression, *toroma*, and the powerlessness girls and women feel in conventional Iranian patriarchal families. They have used their daughters to ventilate their oppressed feelings. Being voiceless and frozen, having a speech impediment, and escaping were our initial responses to family violence. Yet, we incrementally encroached upon and changed our experiences by rebelling on multiple levels, making momentous decisions to stand up for our belief and ourselves.

Although we meant to trace our intimate relationships we recalled different forms of power structures, controlling situations, subordination, and escape (*Emancipation, Guard,* and *Manifesto*). What seemed a coincidental focus on "lost beloved," coupled with the feeling of loss, and sorrow, denoted ruined intimacies overshadowed by involvement in constant tussles with private and public regimes. These coercive measures reduced our capacities to feel. However, our "standby power," our will to act against the oppressive atmosphere in private, was immensely useful in tilting the absolute power at home.

Notwithstanding, our intimate relationships have been imbued with Islamicist heteronormative values. This theme was at least recognizable in one of the written memories (*Manifesto*), where

the “unmarried” author was unable to meet her sexual desires. This resonates with Butler’s (2004) argument, in “Quandaries of Insect Taboo,” that prohibition of any non-normative sexual exchange leads to the institutionalization of heterosexual relationships. The power of Islamicists’ insistence on marriage as a legitimate relationship has enforced these values. In our virtual ethnodramatic collective biography, we emphasized how apprehensive we were of what might be deemed illegitimate relationships. Our policed bodies feel less agitated in the diaspora, yet those interrogations have been inscribed in our kinetic memories. Even though there are no moral police to query our relationships on Canadian streets, the *toromatic* fears have travelled with us in Canada, even as we pursue relationships that might be considered perverted ones back home.

We now recognize the amalgamation of pleasure and fear at the heart of our sexual experiences. Contrary to the coercive “sexual abstinence” imposed on our experiences of *toromas*, we learned about our courage and agency in discovering our sexualities as more than symbols of national and patriarchal power.

Our written memories (*Unsatisfied Desire, Dizziness,* and *So Far…So Close*) unveiled how our bodies were mutually policed on the streets and at home. To avoid further punishment and threats from moral police and our families, we experienced our sexual relations in secrecy and with anxiety, and often as incomplete.

Nevertheless, we jeopardized our lives to experience sexual pleasure. Despite fear, guilt, and shame, we proceeded toward sexual actualization. Even with trepidation, we staked out our safety at home or on the streets to discover what carnal relations are. This means we paid the price of sexual explorations. We attempted to gain carnal knowledge in the absence of informed sexual health pedagogies. Had we not risked our modest and silent bodies, these liberatory outcomes would not have been achieved.

10.2 Undoing *Toromas* is a Process

This study was launched by my emotional roller coaster at the Pearson International Airport, and my fear of returning to my homeland, Iran.

After three years of pursuing this research, I have now recognized why questioning of any sort conjured an interrogative court that can leave me *toromatized*. *Toroma*, the Persian term is here aligned with the normalization of violence and interrogative culture supported by Islamicist sexual politics. Together with two other women from my generation, I learned how our bodies

and sexualities were affected. Shifting from the isolation of “I” to “we” at the end of this journey, undoes the imposed isolation and supports the need for finding collective solutions.

My biggest takeaway from this journey was that “learning is healing;” once we immerse ourselves in “understanding” our powerlessness, chances to reappropriate our lost powers, capacities, and agencies, emerge. Taking seriously Gadamer’s (1977) emphasis on the role of language seriously in collective memory work, I have argued that historical consciousness of Iranian women’s *toromas* includes but also exceeds the linguistic task, in so far as the relational body becomes a repository of the suppressed. This suppressed energy and its lived effects form the individuals’ “standby power,” releasing pent-up energy and agency toward critical decisions and moves that have the potential to interfere with distorted and distorting norms, for self and others, even in the absence of language.

Although we had constructed some voiceless and powerless personae in our written memories, we realized our remarkable resiliencies once we encountered each other in our ethnodramatic collective biography. We concluded that our *toromas* would not be healed unless 1) we acknowledge our gradual and active resistance against those insidious forces, encountering each other as people with potentials, 2) caring intimate partners who understand the *toromatic* roots of those monitored relationships can help us learn to protect and love ourselves, 3) a collective practice challenges minoritizing practices in both Canada and Iran, and, 4) by paying attention to our new agencies in new geographies and chronologies, we can form new relationships with our once silenced bodies. Thus, undoing *toromas* is not a once-and-forever healing, but a process that needs an evolving body-mind and a community in which to actively unpack the reasons for feelings of powerlessness.

“Pumphouse Groove” was a show I performed with my KSAMB dancing community, a contact improvisation[13] (CI) dancing company including six other Canadian dancers in Saskatoon in May 2022. Pumphouse is a remnant of Saskatoon's early coal-fired power plant, built-in 1911 and enlarged in 1929 to keep up with ever-growing electrical demand. As it was the leading site for producing energy for the entire city, we were inspired by the theme of pumping energy toward our futures. Putting all our potential power into practice, we performed ourselves as seeds

[13] Contact improvisation is a form of improvisational dance that has developed internationally since 1972. It involves exploring one's body in relation to others, using the basics of sharing weight, tactile, and movement perceptions.

that could be grown and harvested in the following years. The focal point in this piece, however, was an “evolving” and unfinished entity that could live in relation to “others” and create new opportunities to grow. I was intrigued by an “emergent subject-body” that was able to set the scene, yet change it constantly, as needed. The subject-body that emerged from this scene promoted the idea that life, movement, and dancing are not a matter of “choreography” but “improvising.” The future is improvised by engaging all our potencies and whatever intact agency survives the onslaught of distorting complicities.

10.3 Suggestions for Further Research

Collective memory work and collective biography are contemporaneous affective-feminist methodologies. They initially require a long process to capture participants’ full involvement. *Toroma*, as a complicated subject matter, needs more in-depth collective memory work, especially for diasporic women emerging from despotic regimes. Based on this initial experience with the method, I would recommend a workshop-series-based format for engaging with affected women. This approach can assist participants in recalling their pasts, without imposing harsh time constraints, and in establishing healing supportive friendships and community. It can also help facilitators who may not have direct experience, develop a deeper grasp of the forces conditioning the lives of diasporic women.

There is an advantage to being engaged with a larger sample, which I hope to pursue in future research. Due to the constraints of completing a master’s degree, I was committed to restricting my data to a smaller group of participants. By expanding the sample, however, more accurate and diverse comparisons can be made. Moreover, women are not the only marginalized group suppressed by the Iranian Islamicist forces’ sexual policies. Other sexual minorities, including 2SLGBTQ+ communities, those who suffer ethnic oppression, and people with disabilities, have also been severely affected.

Collective memory work is a unique method for developing a collective healing process. Many Iranian women urgently need to articulate their *toromas* and those wounds that have passed intergenerationally at home and into the diaspora. As shown, it will be vital to consider how such *toromas* affect women’s (and all gendered) child-rearing practices, including whether they choose to have children at all. This is not merely a national but transnational issue. As a diasporic collective healing process, collective memory work and collective biography can support Iranian

women and other sexual minorities, to engage in healing processes that may be difficult for westernized processes to grasp fully. Such an approach could assist Canadian trauma-informed care centers to broaden their horizons, including more diverse and unique definitions of trauma in their agendas. Recognizing the unique kinds of *toromas* impacting Iranian-Canadians may support more profound healing processes, emphasizing culturally appropriate approaches to the structures of feeling that invade human bodies under totalitarian regimes.

Throughout this research, I have emphasized that the *toromas* endured by Iranian women entangle the whole body-mind. Because of Covid19 and holding online meetings, our access to body language remained limited. As embodiment is a focal point – insert an "a" before "focal" in healing *toromas,* more emphasis on in-person meetings and assessment of body language are encouraged. Free physical activities, such as dance, theatre, and performance, which allow the body to express its suppressed emotions can help reinvent and redirect interrupted agency. Intersectional feminist theatre, dance, and performance may be capable of addressing a multitude of sexual traumas/*toromas.* Perhaps, those "lost lives" and "problematic bodies" can thereby be enabled to reappropriate their power to act.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Invitation to Participate in Research

Are state-sponsored gender surveillance and interrogative cultures only a personal issue? How might targeted people remember such experiences, individually or collectively? What happens when we discuss and write our memories together and invest in creating a generational collective biography of our everyday experiences of such events? You are invited to participate in a research project that addresses these issues in relation to the experiences of women and girls born in the 1980s in post-revolutionary Iran, which has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

If you are interested, you are invited to participate in a study that aims to explore how diasporic Iranian women's memories of post-revolutionary and post-war Iran have shaped their lives and embodied habitus. The research involves 15 hours of total time commitment to engage in memory-work and collective biography sessions (either online or in-person, depending on pandemic conditions). We will gather to discuss how our bodies and minds have been influenced as Iranian girls and women through living specific historical events and now living as part of the Iranian diaspora. By sharing stories about our pasts in the present, we will remember together how our girlhood and our female bodies and sexualities have been influenced by past and current state and cultural practices. Finally, we will co-write a collective account of what we have learned together at the end of the five proposed sessions, as a prompt for future research.

Only one known study has been conducted in Canada on diasporic Iranian women's embodied experiences and memories concerning the impact of the revolutionary and post-war "Islamicization project" on Iranian politics and on gendered lives and experiences. Hence, your experiences, feelings, and thoughts are significant, and your voice is critical in improving services for diasporic Iranian women's experiences of the Islamicist regime and its ongoing effects.

Because of the collaborative nature of the research method, confidentiality becomes an important responsibility of participants. The researcher will, however, ensure anonymity in the completion of the thesis project. No group emails will be used to set up meetings, and any email conversations (which will not address the substance of the study), will be permanently deleted immediately, once the necessary information has been recorded. Any documentation shared with the researcher will be gathered on password-protected memory sticks and saved on the password-protected USask One-Drive cabinet server. No personally-identifying information will be recorded, printed, or linked to your responses. Sharing memories and first thoughts about experiences, which we will identify as significant together, will create an opportunity to listen to each other, and write our own specific memories, which we will then use to create a more generalized collective biography. Your participation in this project is voluntary, and you are

under no obligation to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.

By participating in this study, you will help develop a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges surrounding diasporic Iranian women's everyday memories of past experiences and help to take practical steps for our shared healing, establishing preliminary criteria for more specialized mental health services for diasporic Iranian women who have been navigating challenging histories as they adapt to their daily lives in Canada.

If you are interested in participating in this research project or have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact the researchers.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Haleh Mir Miri, Graduate Student

Women, Gender, and Sexualities Studies

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Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled:

Diasporic Body/Memory Politics: Women's Affective Dis/identifications with Coercive, Traumatic, and Sexualized Public Gender-role Surveillance in Post-revolutionary and Post-war-Iran

You are invited to participate in memory-work sessions and collective biography co-construction that emphasize your experiences of coercive, sexualized public surveillance and interrogation of gender-role performance in post-revolutionary and post-war Iran, and how these inform your experiences as a diasporic Iranian woman. You are welcome to talk about your everyday experiences of related behaviors, responses to gendered clothing restrictions and requirements, policing of relationships and popular culture representations, or anything else of interest in your memories of the Islamic Republic of Iran, related to the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war era. Your experiences as a member of the Iranian diaspora in Canada and your efforts to develop resilience and heal in the wake of these memories are also crucial to the goals of this study. To be eligible to participate in this study, you must self-identify as enduring formative experiences in a patriarchal family and/or in Iranian society that impact your everyday life as a member of the Iranian diaspora in Canada. Please read this page carefully.

Researcher(s): Haleh Mir Miri, Graduate Student of Women, Gender, and Sexualities Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, Ham688@usask.ca;

Supervisor: Dr. Marie Lovrod, Associate Professor, Women's, Gender and Sexualities Studies, University of Saskatchewan, Marie.lovrod@usask.ca.

Once you have reviewed this document, please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role in it by contacting ham688@usask.ca or supervisor, Marie.lovrod@usask.ca.

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this study is to understand how Iranian women's memories of their gendered experiences of post-revolutionary and post-war Iran have affected their everyday diasporic lives in Canada.

Procedures: The study will be composed of memory-work and collective biography sessions, undertaken over the course of five weeks (the session's format, location/s, and timing to be mutually decided in introductory pre-sessions). Two other graduate female students of the same nationality and age cohort will collaborate with the graduate researcher to establish these collective memory writing exercises.

Group members will discuss their interests and concerns about familial, institutional, and public implementation of the Iranian "Islamicization project" as experienced in their respective home provinces over three decades (comprising childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood). The group will share stories about what each identifies as a significant, emblematic memorial experience or related experiences , which will help us identify specific key words and questions to use as memory prompts to be engaged over the course of the five sessions. As each group member writes and then reads her stories for the group, others will listen, inquiring about details and images that may help them summon and more fully articulate their own remembered stories.

After each memory-sharing, deep and respectful listening, and discussion, group members will separate into a quiet space to write one or two of their own related memories. When we share our written memories by reading them into the group; listeners will note where they are curious about rationalizations or clichés, which may have crept in to limit deeper understandings of the experience shared. Then, we will attempt to rewrite our memories, to address these lacunae. The final version of each of the stories will be used to create a more anonymous and generalized collective biography, which no longer signifies individuals' identities, but illuminates the larger assemblages of everyday invasions and coercions around girls' and women's subject formations in Iran, as they are understood now, as members of the diaspora in Canada.

Videoconferencing Procedure:

If in-person gatherings are not permitted, we may choose to participate in a password-protected Zoom meeting. The USask agreement with Zoom ensures that all data will be routed through servers in Canada. The privacy policy of Zoom Video Communications, which hosts the Zoom platform, is available at https://www.zoominfo.com/about-zoominfo/privacy-policy

1) You are free to turn off your video camera if you choose not to be video-recorded.
2) If participants agree, the sessions will be recorded by the researcher and the audio recordings will be saved on the researcher's local password protected computer (and backed up on One Drive-University of Saskatchewan) for transcription, after which the A/V files will be destroyed beyond recovery; You may ask for the recording to be turned off at any point without giving any reason.
3) If participants do not agree to recording, the researcher(s) will take field notes
4) Researcher and participants agree not to make any unauthorized recordings of the sessions.

Please note that despite privacy policy of the organizations supporting the above-mentioned platforms, there is no guarantee of the privacy of data with the use of any web-based platform. Also, when discussing collective memory work from home, the researcher will be participating

from a location where they cannot be overheard. To the extent possible, you are also requested to maintain the privacy of our conversation at your end as well.

COVID Procedures:

All participants will be taken through the current COVID-19 safety protocol. Data collection will take place in person ONLY if public health measures allow or virtually if participants choose or public health conditions require social distancing. We are taking all safety precautions to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 (e.g., use of **masks for researchers and participants throughout (disposable masks will be provided), sanitizing of surfaces and shared items**, hand washing, physical distancing, etc.) and expect you to follow public health directives as well. **The researcher adheres to the USask vaccine mandate and is fully vaccinated to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19.** Self-assessment/screening questions (for researchers and participants) must be answered for any in-person interactions:

Do you have any of the following new or worsening symptoms or signs?

- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing
- New smell or taste disorders
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain
- Unexplained fatigue, chills, or headache
- Have you travelled outside Canada or had close contact with anyone who has travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days? Or travelled to a community under public health advisory?
- Have you had close contact with anyone with respiratory illness or confirmed or probable case of COVID-19?
- If the researcher or participant answers "yes" to any of these questions, the collective memory work will be postponed, and advice will be given about contacting Saskatchewan Health Authority.

Timeline:

Given the group's agreement to develop collective memory-work and a collective biography, the 15 hours available can be used differently based upon the group's preference. The initial plan is for 5 sessions (each 3 hours) on separate days, or these can be divided into two half days, where the student researcher and the rest of the group will spend a longer period, each day discussing their memories together. Since planning for the sessions will start as soon as the student researcher receives ethics approval, collaborative decision will be organized with a duration of two to five weeks to hold sessions, as suits the mutual convenience of participants.

Potential Risks: Due to the sensitivity and controversial nature of the Islamicization process in Iran, some participants may be concerned about messy memories that may surface in these sessions. There may be complicated feelings associated with recalling negative experiences. Of course, you need not share anything that you do not wish to talk about. You will be provided with community resources for support, should you require immediate emotional assistance. At the end of the study, you will also receive a debriefing form that will outline the directions of the study in more depth, as we have developed them together.

Potential Benefits: Your participation in this study may contribute to a deeper understanding of issues and factors influencing the everyday adjustments of diasporic Iranian women, who grew up in post-revolutionary and post-war Iran, to their lives in Canada. Your involvement may also help to improve mental and social health services in Canada for diasporic women from Iran, by identifying healing practices and processes which may be transferrable to other diasporic communities.

Compensation: No compensation will be provided for this study.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: If you consent to participate in this study, your signed consent form will be stored separately from the data gathered, which will consist primarily of our shared writings, and researcher notes on our discussions. Any individual email communication with you, as an individual, will be permanently deleted, once we establish our meeting schedule. As a member of the group, you are expected to respect the confidentiality of all group members. Your data will be anonymized, and any documentation of your consent will be kept entirely separate so that they cannot be linked to your anonymized data. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym for use in the study. Any quotations taken from your writing or the student researcher's notes for the thesis document will be fully anonymized. The resulting research may publish in abbreviated form in an academic journal and/or presented at a professional conference. The data will be stored for a minimum of five years after completing the study. When the data is no longer required, it will be destroyed beyond recovery. Participants will have the opportunity to review the consent for collective memory work and collective biography (when they receive their invitation), and prior to agreeing to participate in the sessions. In addition, the content of consent form will be reviewed in each session.

Storage of Data: The data and consent forms will be stored securely at the research supervisors' office at the University of Saskatchewan, with electronic data stored securely on a password-encrypted memory stick, or behind password-protected computer behind two locks and uploaded to secure University of Saskatchewan servers. The data will be kept for a minimum of five years in Dr. Lovrod's office and secure USask servers. The data will be permanently destroyed without the possibility of recovery after five years. No identifying information will be included with the data. Only aggregate data will be used in any presentations about the research or any subsequent journal articles.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you can share only those stories that you feel comfortable discussing with the participant group. You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty. You may no longer have an option to withdraw your data once you have reviewed your notes and delivered the final version of your memory piece for inclusion in the collective biography and thesis for defense, as it will have become part of the context of our group discussions. Should you wish to withdraw from participating in collective memory work sessions, your data will be deleted. After the withdrawal date, some dissemination may have occurred and it will no longer be possible to withdraw your data.

Follow up: Collaborators will have the opportunity to review and approve the final text of the written pieces and collaborative biography quotations used in the thesis before defense. The thesis will be accessible after the student's defense estimated to be finished by the end of summer, 2022. To obtain results from the study, please contact Dr. Marie Lovrod, Marie.lovrod@usask.ca Also, the results of the study, in the form of a formal thesis, will be given to the USask Library, for public access.

Questions or Concerns: If you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact the researchers in the emails provided above. This project was reviewed on ethical grounds by the U of S Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Research Ethics Office toll-free at 1-888-966-2975 or ethics.office@usask.ca. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact Dr. Marie Lovrod at the email provided at the top of this form. You may also send the primary researchers an email to receive a summary of the results.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided above. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

____ _______________

Name of Participant Signature Date

________________________________ __________________________

Researcher's Signature Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and the researcher will take a copy.

Appendix D

Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in this study! We hope you have appreciated the experience. This form provides additional background about our research to help you stay informed about the progress of this collaborative study. Please feel free to ask any questions or to comment on any aspect of the study.

You have just participated in a research study entitled ***Diasporic Body-Memory Politics: Women's Affective Dis/identifications with Coercive, Traumatic, and Sexualized Public Gender-role Surveillance in Post-revolutionary and Post-war-Iran***

conducted by Haleh Mir Miri, ham688@usask.ca.

The purpose of the study has been to explore how Iranian women's memories of post-revolutionary and post-war Iran have affected how our memories of that period have impacted our everyday lives in Iran and Canada. The goal is to identify, through our memory-work writings and anonymized collective biography, key factors that may improve the practice of healing processes or/and mental and social health services provided to diasporic Iranian women in Canada.

Promoting equal access to culturally appropriate healthcare for women in a multicultural society, requires a deeper understanding of the situational and generational contexts that

contribute to wellness challenges. This project seeks to contribute to the development of culturally sensitive solutions that benefit women of ethnic minorities and by informing healthcare providers of specific needs, circumstances, and experiences that may shape service access and compliance.

Please hit "print screen" to obtain a copy for your records. Alternatively, you may email the researchers using the contact information above, and a copy will be sent to you.

Thank you so much for participating!

Without you, this research would not be possible.

Appendix E

Resources for Support

Emergency Resources

Canadian Medical Association, Physician Wellness Support Line (24/7)
https://www.cma.ca/supportline

Crisis Support

1. Crisis Services Canada (24/7): 1-833-456-4566.
2. Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service (24/7): 1-306-933-6200

Organizations for Additional Support

1. Student Wellness Center at University of Saskatchewan: https://students.usask.ca/health/centres/wellness-centre.php#Urgentassistance
2. Canadian Mental Health Association: https://saskatoon.cmha.ca/
3. Saskatoon Trauma and PSTD Counselling: https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/therapists/trauma-and-ptsd/sk/saskatoon

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) 08-Apr-2022

Certificate of Approval

Application ID: 3259

Principal Investigator: Marie Lovrod

Department: Department of Women's and Gender Studies

Locations Where Research Activities are Conducted: The research will be conducted online as may be required under COVID conditions and where possible, in person and on campus among a group of three people living at or near University of Saskatchewan. As appropriate, the project will follow provincial and pandemic safety protocols, including social distancing, sanitizing, wearing masks, etc. Research meeting sites, whether online or in person will be chosen with participants safety mind, and based on the mutual decisions articulated between the researcher and (See Risks and Benefits section)., Canada

Student(s): Haleh Mir Miri

Funder(s):

Sponsor: University of Saskatchewan

Title: Diasporic Body/Memory Politics: Womens Affective Dis/identifications with Coercive, Traumatic, and Sexualized Public Gender-role Surveillance in Post-revolutionary and Post-war-Iran

Approved On: 08-Apr-2022

Expiry Date: 08-Apr-2023

Approval Of: Behavioural Ethics Application

Email invitation

Consent form

Debriefing form

Support resources

Acknowledgment Of: TCPS2 CORE certicificate: Haleh Mir Miri

Review Type: Delegated Review

CERTIFICATION

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TPCS 2 2018). The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this project, and for ensuring that the authorized project is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month prior to the current expiry date each year the project remains open, and upon project completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: https://vpresearch.usask.ca/researchers/forms.php.

Digitally Approved by Diane Martz, Chair
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
University of Saskatchewan

Appendix F:

Table 6-1. *Panopticon's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction

Use of Language ***(e.g., use of attributes [adverbs, adjectives], sentence structures, incomplete sentences, animated subjects, rhetorical questions, repetitions etc.)***
Adjective and Adverbs: Passionate fan Taller & taller every day Long, loose-fitting, knee-length Manteau Long *Maqnāe* Undeveloped breasts Ample breasts The breasts were not breasts, it seems!! *Male neighbour's sights* Full hijab Principal like tiger Principal afraid lest Accurate enough Filthy schoolyard Muddy holes Repetition: Long *Maqnāe* has been repeated in different locations. The focus is on the principal and her brutal approach
Clichés: Ill-tempered principal Principal forced A uniform is almost always uncomfortable
Topic (How does the topic appear in the story?) Panopticon was a metaphor for a situation where the principal constantly monitored the students' outfits: All the exercises happened in the schoolyard. As the students might be exposed to the male neighbour's view, the principal forced them to practice in full hijab in the schoolyard.
White/ blank spots (Is something missing in the story?) Panopticon? What does Panopticon mean for a reader? Why is the male view so important? Why choose this trigger? Why did Sayeh feel the way she did?

Irritations (Is there something that irritates us in the text?)
A mixture of hijab and bodily activity The emphasis on undeveloped breasts Why was the principal so forceful? Public and semi-public regulations in the Islamic Republic and its school Why the schoolyard? What is the difference between schoolyards? And schools?
Contradictions (Are there contradictions in the story?) The breasts were not breasts but should be covered? If it was that hard to participate in the competition, why did Sayeh remain eager to do so?

Table 6-2. ***A Photo of the Two's*** **Distance Analysis and Deconstruction**

Use of Language ***(e.g., use of attributes [adverbs, adjectives], sentence structures, incomplete sentences, animated subjects, rhetorical questions, repetitions etc.)***
Use of attributes [adverbs & adjective] White skin Cherry-red lips Sweet Smiles Tanned and Dark skin Hairy face Spaced teeth Insistently bought Good quality Western-Style stationery White flowers Miniature red-rose Green twigs Full red lips (the focus is on colour in contrast to the black and white and plain Ali's entity and stuff). Hand-made *Maqnāe* Embroidered *Maqnāe* Green ribbon and fur Joint eyebrows Restless black eyes Fake smile Beamed proudly Black Manteau Dark amber Orange Manteau Sin as fairy White Skin Flowered cheeks

Bright honey eyes Bright sunny smile Repetition Images of the veiled little girl who grabbed Ali's attention were mainly broadcasted on TV Focus on the colour of skin and other facial features. Animated subject *Maqnāe* is a repeated and animated subject that could assist the author in temporarily enduring her painful situation. Rhetorical questions Questions at the end demonstrate an inward dialogue or grappling with the inner self. These questions echo a voice of repentance Sentence Structure Some passive sentences seem to be written in passive mode intentionally.
Clichés Wealthy people and their connection with the western countries
Topic (How does the topic appear in the story?) A photograph portrays two different styles of *Maqnāe*; one hand-made, plain, embroidered as opposed to a market-based style adorned by a western-style garland.
White/blank spots (Is something missing in the story?) We do not understand the relationship between her aunt and school staff. Why having a white *Maqnāe* could make the situation bearable? What did it improve?
Irritations (Is there something that irritates us in the text?) The binaries that are overstated. The affluent girls have an embedded superiority over Ali, and she/they have already accepted this superiority.
Contradictions (Are there contradictions in the story?) Sin contradictory position in Ali's mentality. On one hand, she and her lifestyle are highlighted in the whole text, on the other hand, it is the source of guilt and restlessness for Ali. A simultaneous source of beauty and guilt for Ali

Table 6-3. *Prim's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction

Use of Language *(e.g., use of attributes [adverbs, adjectives], sentence structures, incomplete sentences, animated subjects, rhetorical questions, repetitions etc.)* Adjective and Adverbs Embossed words Embroidered sleeves Bustling voice of the market White and linen fabric Grey manteau *Ironed, white, neat, and prim Maqnāe*

Orange and grey backpack
Orderly queues
Folded arms— which is typically known as not being open to communicate
Kind face- is used for the very first time
Sweet smile
Indolent heath
Cramped school bench
Silent classroom

Quotation

"No! This is too big either!"— What is too big? It seems that the author talks about the imagery in her mind.

Repetition

There is an emphasis on the protagonist's mother in this story. Her mother is repeated in several sentences with different modalities.

Question

Where is my *Maqnāe?* It is a question that the protagonist asks to emphasize the absence of *Maqnāe* and her feeling of being naked; otherwise, she knows where she left it.

Clichés A typical mother cares about her daughter's school uniform. On the other hand, an ill-tempered father who frowns upon her and forces her to do what he wants is another clichéd concept.

Topic (How does the topic appear in the story?) The story's focal point is about a little girl entangled between three mentalities wearing *Maqnāe*. One is her mother's approach, who cares about her daughter's comfort. The other is about her father's mentality on being tidy and having a prim uniform at school, and finally, school regulation on taking off *Maqnāe* at the schoolyard.

White/blank spots (Is something missing in the story?)

That hole is her head's place. What does this hole look like? It is weird.
Why were the students told not to take off their *Maqnāe?* What was wrong with taking it off?
Why should an elastic cord be sewn in a *Maqnāe?*

Irritations (Is there something that irritates us in the text?)

The anxiety about being punished both by her father and society/school

Contradictions (Are there contradictions in the story?) How is it possible that a kind person with a sweet smile talks about the class's regulations?
The teacher has a positive impact on the author though
The elastic cord which was sewn for the protagonist's comfort was itchy and irritating

Table 7-1. ***Emancipation's*** **Distance Analysis and Deconstruction**

Use of Language *(e.g., use of attributes [adverbs, adjectives], sentence structures, incomplete sentences, animated subjects, rhetorical questions, repetitions etc.)*   Adjectives and adverbs   A stupid rule   A strict rule   A savage mother   Is a wired descriptor as typically, mothers are not savage.   Emancipatory decision   Lost intimate relationship   The most Insignificant and minor rebelling   Slang: Devil may care! The exclamation mark and the author's tone show that the protagonist has made a landmark decision.   Animated subject   There was no stress. Stress was not available, as if a constant entity/person who has always been present.   Incomplete sentence   Before and after rebelling   Rhetorical question   This question has been asked to have the confirmation of the reader. In fact, the protagonist knows that it does not really matter what others believe, but her release does matter.
Clichés mourning after breaking up
Topic (How does the topic appear in the story?) the story is centred on a strict/stupid rule by which the author and the rest of the female members of the family are not able to sleep over at other's places but at their homes.   The story demonstrates how that strict rule was exercised. But by who? We do not know.   The author had striven to change the rule, but she was not able to do so. By focusing on the different endeavours, the protagonist is going to highlight her agency.
White/blank spots (Is something missing in the story?) What was important? The lost beloved or being against the strict rule?   Why aren't they able to stay over in other's places?
Irritations (Is there something that irritates us in the text?)   A girl asking for keeping a romantic bond or being so choiceless and needy

Contradictions (Are there contradictions in the story?) The author attempts to bypass the stupid rule; still, she is a bit fragile, begging her beloved to return. She also seems sensitive to making any decision. We may remain empty-handed if the whole situation is about Emancipation as she is begging, needing someone to help her, understand her, and protect her. Needing, begging, and protecting are the focal points of the story called Emancipation. The emancipatory situation is so subjective (precarious situation of the author)

Table 7-2. *Guard's* Distance Analysis and Deconstruction

<table><tr><td>
Use of Language (e.g., use of attributes [adverbs, adjectives], sentence structures, incomplete sentences, animated subjects, rhetorical questions, repetitions etc.)

Adjectives and adverbs
Silly decorations
A martyr's brother
Nosy husband
Had simply forgotten
Terrible fights
Adolescent memory
Severe punishments
Constantly been checking
Long-standing grudges
Respond instantly- as if the author is looking for a means to defend quickly, and the focus is on her incapability
Constantly tearing
Was more brutal

Quotation:
"There has been a long time that you have said; now it is your turn to listen!"
This quotation is for emphasizes the threatening statement and dispute between two people.
"What do people say about her behaviour?" --- which behaviour? How do we know what kind of behaviour it is?

Questions:
Why does she not shut her mouth? Anger is expressed in this monologue. But we do not know this, except that her mother is picky.

Why doesn't she die? It is a question that reveals the debilitating state of the author

Metaphoric sentences:
Drilling one's brain as a metaphoric sentence shows anxiety and rage; still, this is not clear why the author is that furious?
Cursing
</td></tr></table>

Damn Z Shut someone's mouth. (Delineates a sort of rage, rage as a feeling is embedded) Z and her nosy husband did not get lost
Clichés It may want to illustrate an argument between siblings—it is more than siblings' argument though
Topic (How does the topic appear in the story?) In a dispute between two sisters, one of them is checking on her younger sister. The elder sister's resemblance to a guard shows a multilayer power structure in a family. The younger sister is bullied by her sister, and she rebels against her imposing power. She runs away.
White/ blank spots (Is something missing in the story?) We do not know what the author has said that otherwise should listen to now. *As soon as she heard the sound, Z came up the three-story stairs as if she were harbouring her long-standing grudges*. - It is not clear who she is?! There is an ambiguity
Irritations (Is there something that irritates us in the text?) why was she embarrassed in that terrible situation?
Contradictions (Are there contradictions in the story?) Ali is being treated brutally but took refuge by that family member… it is more than a contradiction; she is choiceless. This rebel has a personal meaning for the protagonist.

Table 7-3. ***Manifesto's*** **Distance Analysis and Deconstruction**

Use of Language *(e.g., use of attributes [adverbs, adjectives], sentence structures, incomplete sentences, animated subjects, rhetorical questions, repetitions etc.)* Adjective and Adverbs Vicious cycle Pale sunshine Relatively secluded Noble warrior Lost beloved Caught fish Tearful skin Strong desire Private house Damn text! Independent person Turquoise walls Warmly, astringently, and lingeringly kiss Dull house Green and soft carpet Consistently assumed Question *What do you take me for? An idiot?* It is not clear why the protagonist attempts to return to a partner with whom she has a lot of premarital discord Yes, life may seem transient, but for what reason will she fight against this fleeting life? Animated subjects Such as the smell of coffee, roof, sex, life, and skin… these all have agency in the protagonist's viewpoint. The literary tone of the text The smell of coffee A tearful skin Those books that witnessed their making love Formal tone: "As you know, I have always dreamed of being a creative writer… something unlike the nature of family life. Women are expected to be homemakers; I am afraid! It is not for me! I have made up my mind. I will leave this house despite all its predicaments…." What does being a creative writer have to do with the nature of familial life?

Clichés, the author, has built up so many dichotomies to describe her dismal and mundane situation as opposed to what she alternatively would like to fulfill. The fathered house is constructed from black and white imageries, whereas the desired place is colourful, vibrant, and full of joy and happiness. The manifesto is a cliché … resistance is manifested as a manifesto
Topic (How does the topic appear in the story?) A young girl in her early twenties, sitting in a café, is motivated to return a lost beloved. From the beginning, she wants to make a change in her mundane routine, fighting back all those forces putting on her shoulders. She later reveals that she will have a personal space to have a sexual relationship with her lost beloved and make her wishes accurate in that personal setting.
White/blank spots (Is something missing in the story?) She tosses a philosophical approach toward life and suddenly talks about her lack of sexual relationship. What is the relationship between these two? Why does the author write a manifesto about her decision with her father? Partner's questions are asked without any answers. Why were they asked? For confirmation... give information A couple of times, we do not know what topic the protagonist talks about. What is that damn text? What does it have anything to do with coffee? Lost beloved?
Irritations (Is there something that irritates us in the text?) She wants to get back to a broken-up relationship while she thinks about her partner's sarcasm The lack of private space for having a sexual relationship
Contradictions (Are their contradictions in the story?) she wants to fight back against all barriers; still, she is sitting and crying.

Table 8-1. ***Unsatisfied Desire's*** **Distance Analysis and Deconstruction**

Use of Language *(e.g., use of attributes [adverbs, adjectives], sentence structures, incomplete sentences, animated subjects, rhetorical questions, repetitions etc.)* Adjective and adverbs: Red, orange, and yellow foliage Walking hand in hand Pure sky Huge fans of nature Political interest Exciting days Intimate relationship The passersby who looked at them strangely Inquisitive gardener — has a crucial role, as without being police, he could interrogate their relationship. Kissed agitatedly First kiss Palatable kiss

Sexually aroused
Absolutely impatient
Private place
Relatively secluded
Full of lust
Uncomfortable
Move her legs comfortably
Front/back seat
Sweaty, demanding, and failed
Unsatisfied desire
Confused and frightened
Agitatedly
Aroused, feared, and humiliated
Half-baked and failed feelings
The filthy state
Repetitive questions (Interrogation)

Verbs:
Might and would — the author's imaginary situation; the likelihood of what is going to happen. This worrisome problem has an actual foundation though

Repetition:
Agitation is repeated twice. It shows how nervous they were when having their sexual relationship.

Animated subject:
Even the steering wheel did not allow them to have unrestricted sexual pleasure. The steering wheel is a metaphor, but at the same time, it resonates with the whole situation.

Questions:
That are not simple questions but had the state of interrogation because the police were asking. Many quotation marks seem to have something to do with repetitive answers due to being interrogated.

Clichés police officer and interrogation——— Being interrogated is a regular act by police officers and even by the citizens

Topic (How does the topic appear in the story?) The story is centred on a couple who are anxious and worried about "something" from the beginning of the story. There is something that is supposed to hinder them not to express their joy of being together fully. There is something wrong with them for which those passersby looked at them strangely. They are anxious about those inquisitive eyes that might interrogate their relationships. Several people policed their intimate relationship before the actual police arrived and caught them. "Unsatisfied desire" can cover the whole meaning of the story. There is a combination of sexual pleasure/pressure and fear, and the protagonist wants us to hear her failed and unsatisfied feelings.

White spots (Is something missing in the story?) Why were they careful and worried when they sat on the bench? Why did the inquisitive garden keeper make them worried? How did those individuals know that "somebody" was a "he"?
Irritations (Is there something that irritates us in the text?) The embedded agitation in the story is so irritating. Why should a sexual pleasure experience become a source of agitation for some people? The image of being hit by a hammer just because of a sexual relationship was irritating.
Contradictions (Are there contradictions in the story?) You won't promise the police if you commit a crime, but you are fined. Why promise?

Table 8-2. ***Dizziness's*** **Distance Analysis and Deconstruction**

Use of Language *(e.g., use of attributes [adverbs, adjectives], sentence structures, incomplete sentences, animated subjects, rhetorical questions, repetitions etc.)* Adjectives & adverbs Intense heat Webbed ceiling of mosquito net Intense smell (the usage of senses and feelings that highlight and adds up the intensity of the condition). pleasant heaviness *racing heartbeat* always aware of responded indifferently wake up gradually How did a house return to a normal situation? It is the author's mentality that returns to its normal state. (Animated subject) Incomplete sentences The descriptive phrases and incomplete sentences assist the author in creating an ambiance accommodating the intended subject within it. Sentence structures The use of synaesthesia (when you experience one of your senses through another), **sounds** of the night, and the sound of gas passing through the pip are examples. Constructing the other person's presence with his smell, using and focusing on the name "*American Sport" Eau de Cologne."* Cursing while she is whispering to herself. This is another short sentence that shows grappling with the inner self. There are some specific ambiguous moments when the author is talking about her sexual experiences, and she (un)intentionally uses "it" instead of calling it "intercourse" or whatever was sexually happening.

Rhetorical questions Who is she talking to? Us? As a reader, or is it she who looking at her memory? - *Where are the others?* How should we know where her family members are? How likely was it that Z or her husband opened the door when B entered? She knew the answer but asked us. The questions make the whole situation ambiguous but function as a hook What about neighbours? We have the faintest idea about neighbours as the sources of danger How did they do it? This question shows a sort of ambiguity in her memory or that dizziness. Repetition Many questions have been asked about why we are not provided with the answers. These are inward feelings instead of questions.
Clichés The nervous erotic/love stories should be concealed from parents' eyes. Racing heartbeat as a sign of anxiety
Topic (How does the topic appear in the story?) there is someone who makes love with others, but with a lot of stress, ambiguity, and fear of being discovered. Having sex or some sexual relationships in secrecy is the story's core. Amazingly, the two stories encompass the same plots in different times and locations, meaning the author's mentality about the combination of having sex and being stressed has not changed.
White/blank spots (Is something missing in the story?) the author gives us the context, but we should speculate what is going on. The primary dangers she mentions are not tangible for those who have not lived these conditions as a real life-changing danger to their lives. In other words, the threat of what? What is the relationship between taking a house from your offspring and being a principal?
Irritations (Is there something that irritates us in the text?) The whole anxious feelings that are being expressed for something that is considered pleasurable for the author. It is not sexual harassment or assault, yet it is stressful
Contradictions (Are there contradictions in the story?) We understand that the author is sexually enjoying the other one's body. But why pleasant heaviness? Understandably, many people relish different states in their sexual relationships. However, pleasant heaviness can be considered a contradiction here. How did a house return to a normal situation? It is the author's mentality that returns to its normal state. It was all about a stressful situation; how did it become a peaceful situation all of sudden?

Table 8-3. ***So Far---So Close's*** **Distance Analysis and Deconstruction**

Use of Language *(e.g., use of attributes [adverbs, adjectives], sentence structures, incomplete sentences, animated subjects, rhetorical questions, repetitions, etc.)* Adjective and Adverbs

Dull autumn evening
Drizzly rain
Dim and yellow light
Silent atmosphere
Bitter dispute
Great sadness
White darkness
Breath heavily and quietly
Warm and cozy
Relaxed and soothing
Deep sleep
Warm pillow

Repetition

There is a repetition of the father's order without giving us a clue what are these orders about? Or why does a father order? The figure of the father is stressed.

Hate and fear of father remain ambiguous. Why does she hate him? Just because he said to go to bed…. Cumulative fear of today's heat…

Clichés

An evil and ill-tempered father who orders a lot
A kind mother, as typically kindness is attributed to a mother
Asking a kid to go to bed is a controlling mechanism.

Topic (How does the topic appear in the story?) The story is about a little girl who doesn't want to sleep but must obey her father's orders. But the inner tension is that she has to make herself tired because she cannot sleep, and this brings her a new sexual discovery. She is simultaneously scared and pleased.

White/blank spots (Is something missing in the story?)

Why should the whole family speak quietly? Is it just because the father is asleep?

Did she disagree with her father before?

Did she know what would happen if she said "No?"

Which rules are they that she has learned?

Irritations (Is there something that irritates us in the text?) What annoyed us was why she didn't dare to say no; if she did, she might not have faced a confrontation.

Why should she sleep that close- in his proximity- to her father?

Why does a father order and doesn't say? Why did the author use order?

Contradictions (Are there contradictions in the story?)

The author describes the fall as dull, but she enjoys it.

She does not know why but she knows that no one, and above all, her father, should hear her breathing

How is it possible that someone does not know something but knows?

Her open eyes are not visible in the darkness, and even if they are visible, how great is it that her father is unable to see them.

How are their eyes visible, but simultaneously her father cannot see them? Why isn't her father able to see her open eyes if they are visible?