Archiving War: Iran-Iraq War and the Construction of “Muslim” Women

By

Shirin Haghgou

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Masters of Art Graduate Department of Adult Education and Community Development Ontario Institute for Studies in Education University of Toronto

© Copyright by Shirin Haghgou (2014)
Abstract:

The Iranian state’s archiving of the ideological constructions of the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88 have been prolific. This was the longest military conflict of the 20th century, and an important stepping ground in the formation of Iran’s theocratic state, which had assumed power less than two years before the war: the Islamization of the old monarchical state was anchored in the war effort. Women were assigned a special role in the war during which the idea and model of “Muslim woman” was constructed and propagated. These constructions have taken the shape of popular culture, film and theater, literature, as well as sights and events of commemoration. By locating these productions within the framework of the nation building project of cultural nationalism, this thesis aims to provide an analysis of this body of state memorialization of the Iran-Iraq War through the lens of the experiences of Iranian women. As well this research aims to add to the field of critical adult education through an analysis of the topic of women, war, and learning.
Acknowledgements

Forever indebted to Dr. Shahrzad Mojab, for knowing before I did, and better than I did, how best my interests can be wedded to this academic process, and for her continuing nurturing of my 'human capacity'. Endlessly grateful to Dr. Sara Carpenter for her effortless eloquence, intelligence, and hours of guidance. And to Dr. Jamie Magnuson for guiding me in my first understandings of criticality and theory – in one.

Eternal thanks, gratitude, and love to Narges and Farhad.
TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- Acknowledgements
- War in Context: An Introduction
  - The Problematic
  - Research Questions
  - Overview
- Archival Inquiry: As a Method
  - Sources
  - Approaches
  - Translation and Transliteration
  - Poems and Photographs
- Iran-Iraq War: A Historical Sketch
  - Islamic Republic of Iran: 1979
  - Women and the Revolution
  - Iran-Iraq War
- The War Story: Cultural nationalism and the Ideological Construction of the ‘Muslim Woman’
  - Theorization
    - The War Story
    - Women and the Iran-Iraq War
    - Cultural nationalism and Ideology
- Ideological Knowledge Production: Women and Ideological Nationalism
  - The Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Values from the Sacred Defense
  - The Foundation for Martyrs and Veterans’ Affairs
  - Shohaday Zan
  - Festivals, Commemorations, and Other platforms
- Ideological Knowledge Production: The Field of Adult Education
  - Critical Adult Education: An Explanation to the Field
  - Expanding the Field
- Conclusion
- Appendices
List of Tables:

- **Table 1**: Iranian soldiers killed during the war based on occupation.

- **Table 2**: Selection of Memoirs and Autobiographies by Women on the Iran-Iraq War.
List of Appendices:

- **Appendix 1**: Images
- **Appendix 2**: Poems in Persian
War in Context: An Introduction

I take you by the mirror, I kiss you
In the morning, when I step out to the streets for bread,
You’re asleep
During the nights of bombardment, I kissed you so
That I think clouds turned into rain
In that foggy port
There were no flowers, there was no hope
In that fog, we could see men and women drowning
Our kisses, were not exaggerated or deceitful
They were shelter
In the snow and rain
Our daughter had fever
Fourty-degrees
How did we take her? Where to?
The landlord wanted us to leave that house, that city
With our daughter's fourty-degree fever
We bid farewell to the city – we let it go
In the rain, we were going to another city
It was dawn, raining – our suitcases
Heavy
We took our daughter with a fourty-degree fever
To the third floor
It was wartime
The stairs, plenty.

- Ahmad-Reza Ahmadi ¹

Here in Toronto, as I work on the final pages of my MA thesis on the Iran-Iraq War, the sun is setting on the Middle East, yet the skies are alight with the eerie brightness of exploding bombs and death. I write this, in the relative ‘peace’ of my Toronto surroundings, thousands of miles away and seemingly unaffected by the surge of war, violence, internal conflict, occupation, religious fundamentalism, death, carnage, and imperialism, which are threatening the social, political, and economic fabric of the Middle East and North Africa region. I write this as Iraq unravels in imposed sectarian violence following another American occupation, as

Egypt grapples with military led muffling of political dissent, as prisoners of conscience and national minorities turn one more day into night in Iran's prisons, as Gaza burns.

And yet, I struggle with the word ‘peace’ to describe my state-of-being here in Toronto, as a young Iranian woman, aware that this relative calm comes at the expense of hundreds of years of indigenous suppression and genocide, continuing today, and spreading its tentacles of ‘political politeness’ far and wide. I write this, based out of a university invested in companies, which in no small part fuel and equip the military industrial complex profiting from conflict, war, violence, and death, in the very countries I write about.

Despite what seems and feels like an impenetrable tangle of complicity and impunity, I am reminded of the hundreds of years of resistance against these very forces, not only here in Canada, and the Middle East, but the world over. I am reminded of the women (and men) who continue to fight these forces. I write this, in what can only be considered a small way, to honour the memory and resistance of the thousands, in particular women, who have and continue to endure the brunt of the violence of war, of death and carnage, the trauma of displacement, of imprisonment, which complicate the binary understanding of war and peace, civilian and soldier, home front and battle front. I write, to honour their memories and their continuing resistance against systems of oppression and exploitation, which have distanced us so much from our own humanity, that we can allow for wars in the interest of capitalism and imperialist expansion, to continue to take place today.
This process of writing, has been both an academic and personal one for me. It has in effect been a questioning of how my own consciousness, raised in an Iranian, upper middle class, secular family, been shaped by the national narrative of a county in which I spent the early years of my life in. Enloe writes that “the moment one becomes curious about something is also a good time to think about what created one’s previous lack of curiosity.” 2 In the process of writing this MA thesis, I was taken aback by my own lack of knowledge, and in some ways curiosity about a war that had shaped the contemporary history of a country which I, in one way or another identified with. Although Enloe cautions against using terms such as “naturally” loosely, I am going to take the liberty to say that “naturally” due to my personal disengagement with the public state narrative I was unaware of the systematic and pervasive nature of the war narrative in the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). What has only become apparent to me through the course of this research, is the ease with which ideological narratives appear to give us an understanding of history, where in reality the nuances, the context, and history itself is left unexplained. The war, the ‘enemy’, the martyrs, the veterans – there were enough depictions of the Iran-Iraq War around me growing up to know of a conflict in the recent history of the country. When I think about my lack of curiosity, and question it as Enloe asks us to do, I realize that the post-war generation is left without any trace of the history, events, figures, images, outside of the official public narrative. It

---

is here again, that who is allowed to tell the story, and how they tell that story, should be questioned.

The ravages and devastation of wars permeate far beyond the space occupied between combat zones and cease-fire declarations. Violence, death, separation, displacement, and trauma, are explained, legitimized, narrated, and masked under colonial, imperial, patriarchal, and ideological social relations. Amid this tangle of the state’s monopoly and quest for official memorialization of specific aspects, the real human cost of wars are denuded. Given the long lasting effects of war, states are left with the task of narrating and (re)membering these events, in ways that will neither undermine their power, nor the ideological legitimacy of the war fought.

Through an exploration of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s cultural nationalism project, within the specific socio-historical context of the Iran-Iraq War, my goal is to locate and analyze the creation of an ideal woman of the nation – ‘Muslim Woman’. This exploration is carried out through an analysis of the Iranian state’s narrative in memorializing the Iran-Iraq War, which I argue has served as a powerful tool in legitimizing the theocratic regime’s rule, specifically through its ideological cultural constructions. This point becomes particularly salient, when we consider these cultural productions in the context in which they were created. I argue that these different cultural productions serve as images or representations of the war, in both the literal and figurative sense, and am encouraged by critical feminists such as Davis who urges us to “not assume that the image has a self-evident relation to its object” and to “consider the political economy that constitutes
the environment within which images are created and consumed.” ³ Further, I
consider these cultural productions as the building blocks for the Iranian state’s
War Story – a term borrowed from Miriam Cooke’s “Women and the War Story”. I
will argue that the IRI’s War Story has been and continues to serve as an
instrumental ideological pillar on which the state governs and practices its control
and rule over its citizens, in particular women. As well, an analysis of these cultural
products, challenges dualistic modes of interpretation and conceptualization of the
notions of war and peace, victory and defeat, fact and fiction. As these binaries are
challenged, they also bring to light the ideological battle and struggle for the
cultivation of a national narrative rooted in Islamic Shiaa ideology as an ongoing
process in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The coming to power of Khomeini’s Islamic regime in 1979 marked the
defeat of a popular, people’s revolution against the Pahlavi monarchy. Khomeini’s
primary identity for the new Iran was an Islamic one, rooted in Shiaa ideology, and
the ensuing struggle, which saw its bloodiest days in the 1980s, continues today. In
order to quell the struggle, women became Khomeini’s primary target, followed by
higher-education institutions, and finally spread throughout the entire society. The
Iran-Iraq War, largely supported, fuelled, and funded by the West, provided a strong
legitimizing force for Khomeini and his regime. The War, was framed as a conflict
against imperialism, where Islam was pitted against the West’s ‘modern’ imperialist
influences – a trademark feature of cultural nationalism. In this struggle, the

---
creation of an ideological category of Iranian-Muslim Woman became the regime’s primary tool against the enemy.

I am aware and cognizant that by only focusing my analysis on the content of the Iran-Iraq War cultural productions, without considering the process and context in which they were produced, my critique would at best be a ‘truncated’ one. My analysis would be privy to “repeating the same ideological gestures” at the core of my analysis, since the ‘problems of ideology’ depend both on the process in which the ideological content is produced, but also in their ‘epistemological deployment’. After all, not all ideas or thoughts are necessarily ideological since that quality is determined by the relationship of that specific thought or idea – the ‘sensuous labour’ - with the material world. In other words, the ‘product of ideology’ is a “very specific form of mental activity” towards “a particular result.” As such, I argue that one of the ‘particular results’ of the content of the state cultural productions on the Iran-Iraq War, rooted in Islamic Shia ideology, is the ideological construction of the category of the “Muslim Woman”.

**Research Questions**

For the purposes of the theoretical undertaking of my MA thesis, some of the questions I aim to explore are that of why is there a need to engage with the notion of cultural nationalism as an ideological and conceptual category. To this end, I

---


consider the ideological construction of the ‘Muslim Woman’ by the Iranian state, as one of the implications of cultural-nationalism. Specifically, I argue that the eight years of ‘active battle’ between the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) and Iraq, and the ensuing state cultural productions around this war, were and continue to be integral to the legitimization of the Islamic regime and Khomeini’s project of nation building. Further, I aim to explore what purpose, and which system does a particular version of history serve? And what are the implications for the privileging of certain narratives over others, specifically in relation to women and their resistance? Finally, I am interested in unpacking how the notions of women’s experience of wars and conflict be unpacked in the field of adult education.

**Overview:**

In the following sections, I will first provide an explanation of my methodological process, explaining the main sources, approach and structure, and finally a note on translation and transliteration. After, I present a brief historical background of the Revolution of 1979, paving the way for a contextualization of the Iran-Iraq War. By way of the theoretical framework of my research, I extend Miriam Cooke’s concept of the War-Story, to the IRI and the ideological construction of the “Muslim Woman” through the Iran-Iraq War. I go on to frame the IRI’s War Story within the concept of cultural nationalism as I have come to understand it through the works of Marxist-feminist scholar, Himani Bannerji. Next, I provide a mapping and analysis of the main organizations overlooking the production of cultural-content on the Iran-Iraq War. I will then spend the remaining sections in connecting
and explaining the concept of the War narrative to the theorization of ideology and consciousness in the field of critical adult education.

**Archival Inquiry: As a Method**

The process of research for this project began in the fall of 2012, with a particular focus on the production of memoirs and autobiographies by Iranian women on the topic Iran-Iraq War. It soon became evident that the inclusion of women in the official state narrative of the Iran-Iraq War, was by no means limited to the genre of memoirs and autobiographical texts. In fact, during the course of the past two years, the content and approach to the inclusion of women in the Iranian state’s war narrative has taken on a pronounced dimension, with the establishment of new organizations, as well as many commemorative events. Therefore, given the lack of research on the topic, the scope and focus of my research shifted to encompass more of an overview of the general archives of state sponsored and produced cultural content.

State organizations, institutions, and platforms overlooking the Iran-Iraq War affairs, are multitudinous, and providing a through and comprehensive mapping is a difficult task. Therefore, for the purposes of this Master’s level research, my aim is to provide an overview of three main government bodies overlooking the archiving and production of the war. These organizations are The Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Values from the Sacred Defense (*Sāzmān hīfẓ āsār nashr arzeshhai defā’ moqaddas*), The Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs (*Bonyād shahīd va omūr īsārgarān*), and the *Basīj* Foundation (*Sāzmān Basīj Mostaż’fīn*). Further, specific organizations functioning under the
auspices of these foundations have also been analyzed, including: The Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Women’s Participation in the Sacred Defense (Sāzmān nashr āsār va arzeshhai moshārekat zanān dar defā’ moqaddas), from now on referred to as Foundation for Women's War Participation, the Information Center for Culture of Sacrifice and Martyrdom, and Shohadāy Zan (Women Martyrs) website. The general policy and programming, as well as the specific cultural productions have been analyzed for each of these platforms.

My decision to specifically focus on these three platforms is in part due to their position within the IRI’s government structure. The Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Values from the Sacred Defense, from now on referred to as Foundation for Sacred Defense, is an affiliate of the Iranian army, while the Foundation for Martyrs’ and Veterans’ Affairs, was the first organization to be established under Ayatollah Khomeini’s orders to overlook and administer matters related to the Iran-Iraq War. Finally, the Basij Foundation was and remains a key and influential figure in state matters, particularly in relation to institutional mobilization and cultural matters. The connection of these organizations to the top tiers of the Iranian state indicates the importance placed on ‘culturalization’ around the Iran-Iraq War. Furthermore, these platforms’ focus on the topic of women and the War, served as informative sources to my focus on the way in which the “Muslim Woman” is addressed in the state’s cultural productions on the Iran-Iraq War.

While there are different materials on each platform, there are many overarching themes linking the different content and sources together. The main self-proclaimed aim and objective of these state archives is keeping the Iran-Iraq
War, often referred to as *The Sacred Defense (Defa’ Moqadas)* ‘alive’ in contemporary memory, and ‘cultivating a culture of martyrdom and resistance’. This objective is implemented through the language of ‘self-sacrifice’ and ‘resistance’, through the medium of ‘cultural production and cultivation.’ Further, the militancy of these objectives cannot be ignored given the role and function of the Iranian military and the paramilitary *Basij* Organization.

A brief note on translations and transliterations: all the content on the above mentioned platforms is in Persian, and unless stated otherwise, all translations from Persian to English are my own. As well, the transliteration guide followed is that of the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMUS).

Some sections are prefaced with a poem, either by contemporary Iranian poets, or by poets and literary figures from the Middle East and North Africa region. The poems in Persian are available in their entirety in Appendix 2. These poems and excerpts are all thematically relevant to the sentiments of war, and that of memory. Primarily these poems were a source of inspiration during my writing process, capturing in their language the many characteristics of wars and conflict, and the different ways in which memory plays into their retelling, and narration. As well, these poems, as cultural productions, provide a glimpse into the alternative ways in which phenomenon such as war and conflicts can be expressed, outside of the confines of official state narratives.

In Appendix 1, I have included a selection of photographs. These are images which I think help to illustrate some of the ways in which the state’s construction of the “Muslim Woman” is visually depicted. These images range from archival
photographs of the Iran-Iraq War years, to those from current commemorative events, specifically held for women.

**Iran-Iraq War: A Historical Sketch**

*I was exploring the difference between revolution and war
When a bullet passed through my body[...]*
- Ghayath Al-Madhoun 8

**Islamic Republic of Iran: 1979**

As many scholars of the Middle East have demonstrated, (Abdo 2011; Keddie 2007; Shahidian 2002; Joseph 2000) women have historically played an instrumental and influential role in nationalist and liberation movements in the region. Specifically in Iran, women’s organizations have been active politically as far back as the first constitutional revolution of 1906. While a detailed historical discussion of women’s roles in these movements is beyond the framework of this research, a brief contextualization of the years leading up to the Revolution of 1979 is necessary. Historicization of the both the War and the Revolution are important in grasping more wholly the environment from which Khomeini’s regime came to power, as well as understanding the tensions in the formative years of the new Islamic Republic, particularly in relation to the Iran-Iraq War, extant today.

The 1970s in Iran saw a growing and increasingly widespread dissatisfaction with the Pahlavi monarchy’s reign, which had assumed stronger authoritarian practices since the US led coup d’etat of 1953, reinstating Reza Shah after deposing the democratically elected Mohammad Mossadegh. Pahlavi’s authoritarianism was

---

identified with US imperialism, and popular opposition to the monarchy took on an anti-Western agenda and tone. Despite a strong secular, liberal, democrat, and left presence within the opposition movement, it was Khomeini’s Shi’a Islamic ideology that eventually brought about the defeat of the revolution with the Islamization of the movement. The overthrow of the Shah and dissolving of the Pahlavi regime was perhaps one of the only common points of convergence for all those involved in the opposition movement. It is at this point, with the coming to power of Khomeini’s Islamic regime, with the referendum of March 31st, 1979 that the revolution was in effect defeated.

It was mentioned earlier that the language and discourse of the revolutionary years had a markedly anti-West and anti-imperialist grounding. The Shah and his regime had over the course of his reign, and specially after the US backed coup d’état of 1953, become synonymous with the West. As Katouzain argues, this sentiment was strong and widespread, even amongst the country’s intelligentsia and intellectuals. The political suppression, fraud, and violence of the Shah’s regime, as well as steps toward modernization and industrialization, were both attributed to the regime’s close relations with the US and the West. Developments in the country under the Shah’s regime were seen in light of “dependency on Western imperialist” and “serving Western interests.”

The distrust for the Shah and his Western allies were not entirely conspiracy theories given the US and Great Britain’s backing of the coup of 1953, after which Iran had effectively become “the principal base of control for the Gulf region” as well

---

as military funding which had reached $1.7 billion during 1968-1972. The 1979 overthrow of the Shah was a “revolt of society against the state”, and while the society was united in overthrowing the Shah, and what was to follow was a forced unity of the myriad factions, tendencies, national minorities, by Khomeini’s regime. At this time the Iranian regime was engaged in a violent and bloody battle internally, which continued well into the 1980s, and manifests itself in different ways till today. Of note is the Mojahedin’s revolt against the regime, who are widely believed to have been behind the killing of many leading figures in Khomeini’s cadre, including Mohammad-Hossein Beheshti, Mohammad-Ali Rajaei, and Mohammad-Javad Bahonar, to name a few. 12 13 As well at this time, the ongoing hostage taking of US embassy staff in Tehran was happening, and the beginnings of the Cultural Revolution, mass killings of political prisoners, the suppression of women and national minorities, to name but a few of the battles Khomeini’s regime was fighting for control and legitimacy on the home front. In a span of twenty-eight months, from February 1979 to June 1981, under the orders of the revolutionary courts, 497 ‘political opponents’ had been executed with the charge of ‘counter revolutionaries’. The following four years (1981-1985) brought the execution of a further 8000

13 Mohammad-Hossein Beheshti was the Chairman of the Assembly of Experts for the IRI, Mohammad-Ali Rajaei had begun his term as president in July 1981, and Mohammad-Javad Bahonar had served less than a month as Prime Minister at the time of his assassination.
14 For a detailed discussion of the Cultural Revolution see (Abrahamian 2008).
opponents. Saddam Hussein’s attack on Iran came at a time of both diplomatic isolation for Iran, and internal conflict and instability.

As the evidence indicates, the coming to power of Khomeini’s regime was marred by extreme violence, as the IRI struggled to establish power, and implement its Shiaa religious ideology against the many different factions and tendencies which had at some point been united in overthrowing the Pahlavi monarchy. In this struggle for legitimacy, women became one of the primary targets of Khomeini’s regime. Women’s presence had been pronounced and visible in the years leading up to the overthrow of the Shah – a visibility which the IRI sought to curb, immediately after coming to power.

**Women and the Revolution**

 [...]the problem with war is not those who die, but those who remain alive after the war.
Ghayath Al-Madhoun

Throughout the Middle East and North Africa, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, women were employed as symbols and subjects for measuring the nations’ advancement toward ‘modernity’. In much the same way, the resistance and liberation movements in the region also used women as symbols of their anti-Western and imperial national projects. The immediate aftermath of Khomeini’s coming to power in Iran, saw a systematic attack on the hard, albeit limited, gains of

---

the women’s movement during Pahlavi’s reign. What took place in Iran after the Islamic Revolution was a deliberate ideological dichotomization by the state between the ‘modern’ and the ‘traditional.’ The Shah’s western backed regime came to be identified with the ‘modern’ and ‘imperial,’ while Khomeini’s ‘revolutionary’ religious government came to represent the ‘traditional’ as a force to counter the authoritarianism of the Shah’s regime, and western imperialism by extension. This form of divisive distinction between the ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ is one of the signifying features of cultural-nationalism, and a common feature of many ‘nation building projects’ in the region.\(^{18}\) Scholars in Joseph’s *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East* argue that historically within each liberation and nationalist movement in the region, women have adopted different and multiple identities and loyalties. However, there has been a consistent attribution of notions of ‘authentic,’ ‘indigenous,’ and ‘traditional’ to the ‘women’ of the nation, in considering national cultures, religions, and family forms.\(^{19}\) The dichotomization between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ by extension creates a temporal disconnect between ‘past’ and ‘present,’ as well as ‘us’ and ‘them.’ This binary conception works to homogenize the categories of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ where the ‘us’ of the nation are conceptualized as a uniform body of citizenry.

Since Iran’s Constitutional Revolution of 1906, women’s role has been regarded as central to the sustenance and future of the nation, where women are seen as “…biological reproducers, educators of children, [and] transmitters of


After the Revolution, and the rewriting of the Iranian constitution, the family came to be recognized as “...the fundamental unit of society,” within which women’s relational identity as mothers and wives were emphasized. As such, an ‘important duty’ for women was defined as being a ‘mother’, which as Bannerji argues, is one of the central features of cultural nationalism where the inclusion of women in the nation is primarily contingent on their “motherhood – as ‘mothers of the nation’.”

In fact, the IRI’s constitution clearly articulates the role and symbol of women in the Islamic state, specifically in relation to the family, as a tool against the Western imperialism encouraged by the Shah’s regime, specifically through the monarchy’s treatment of women. Below is a section of the preamble of the constitution specifically addressing women and the family:

In creating social-Islamic institutions, the human forces which until now have been at the service of a comprehensive foreign exploitation, will recover their true identity and human rights, and in this recovery, it is natural that women, who have tolerated more oppression at the hands of the Shah’s (tāghūt) regime, should have higher demands for the rights. Family is the fundamental unit of society and the epicenter for growth and excellence, and a consensus of ideals and opinions in forming a family, is the true foundation of the movement towards the development and growth of mankind. This has been a

fundamental principle. Providing the opportunities for these objectives to be reached is one of the duties of the Islamic Government. 

We can see here that the unit of the family has been identified as a leading force against the imperialism associated with the Shah’s regime, and the “Muslim Woman” is identified as the pillars of the institution of the family. The seemingly homogenous category of “woman” as presented by the state, is therefore by extension a leading agent in combatting the enemy.

During its still formative months, Khomeini’s regime embarked on a directed mission in curtailing women’s rights in the country. This entailed retractions on the 1963 Family Protection Law, restrictions on women’s employment, decrease in the minimum age of marriage, as well as a quota for female students at universities, and restrictions accessing contraceptives, among others. In the following years, the socio-economic effects of the Iran-Iraq War in the country, in part necessitated the retraction and modification of some of these changes.

---

Iran-Iraq War

[...] And I, will awaken, in the dusk of a Jasmine, from behind your fingers
And then
You can tell me of the bombs that fell, while I was asleep
You can tell me of the cheeks that became wet, while I was asleep [...]27
- Sohrab Sepehri

Perhaps one of the most path changing events in the formative years of the Islamic Republic has been the Iran-Iraq War, otherwise referred to as the Sacred Defense (defa’ moqadas) or Imposed War (jang taḥmīlī) within the official Iranian state narrative. In September 1980, the Ba’athist army of Saddam Hussein invaded south and southwest Iran, taking advantage of the instability of Khomeini’s still nascent regime. By May of 1983, the Iranian forces had recaptured the border city of Khorramshahr and rejected moves by Saddam Hussein toward peace, and appeared to be on the offensive. This period between 1983 to 1988 is referred to as “The War of Attrition”, with the popular chant of “War, War, Until Victory” (jang, jang tā pīruzī). 28 In fact, the continuation of the war may be identified as part of the IRI’s global agenda of exporting the Islamic Revolution to the rest of the region. With the chant of “The Road to Jerusalem goes through Baghdad” (rāhi quds az baghdād mīgozarad), the IRI was fulfilling what it considered its global responsibility. Not only was the Islami regime standing up to imperialist forces on the home-front in overthrowing the Pahlavi monarchy, but also in the region as a whole. This militant approach, rooted in Shīa Islamic ideology, was part and parcel of Khomeini’s identity project for the country. As the war progressed, Saddam bolstered the Iraqi

army’s military might with increased support from its western allies, while Iran relied on “...nationalist sentiments, revolutionary zeal and the Shiite cult of martyrdom.”

At the onset of the Iran-Iraq 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. By 1984, four years into the war, Khomeini had retracted an earlier decree forbidding women from participating in jihad or holy war, and called on women to “double the strength of the men” on the front lines.

In fact, early on into the war, women’s ‘ideological role’ in the War was promoted by

---

the state. Gohar ol-Shareh Dastghaib, was one of the four women to be elected to the Iranian parliament from 198-1984. In September 1981, in her statement at the Interparliamentary Union in Havana, Gohar Dastghaib said:

[...]Women are the manifestation and realization of the desires of humanity, the trainers of society and the nourishers of valuable men and women alike. Mr. President, if you would only for a moment picture the human slaughterhouse of Iran and in particular those of 8 September 1978 in Tehran, you would realize the self-sacrifice made by women in their modest Islamic dress as they stood in the front ranks during the riots...The victory of the Islamic Revolution and the curtailing of the domination of the arrogant Western imperialists was a result of the Iranians' true belief in their religion. With their fists clenched and crying out Allah-Akbar the Moslem women of Iran succeeded in throwing out the Shah, this American agent, from their country. And today they are women again who send their brave children to the war imposed upon them to defend Islam, a war that the USA began. Its sordid hands extend from the sleeves of anti-human regime of Iraq. They are responsible for the killing of our innocent young people, but their mothers who train martyrs know how to fight against these atheists. They are proud of their martyred youth and will continue to be so. Our young people are in love with martyrdom and we mothers will never tire of producing martyrs...\(^{32}\)

---

In 1984, the Basij officially started recruiting women into its forces for active combat. The Basij Organization (Sāzmān Basīj Mostaż’fīn) is a paramilitary organization, established under the auspices of the Islamic Republic Guards Corps, with a membership predominantly comprised of “devout, motivated, and faithful Shi’i militants”, at the time of its establishment.  

Basij members were trained in “military tactics, intelligence gathering, and community moral policing”. A further 4000 women were trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) for ‘information gathering’ and ‘security missions’. The continuing role of the Basij in the recruitment and indoctrination of young girls and women can still be seen today. In a meeting with the director of the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Women’s Participation in the Sacred Defense, the Deputy of Basij of the Armed Forces, discussed the importance of “promoting the culture of Basij” specifically among women and girls, since they are the “educators of the future generation, and consequently society as a whole.” Further, in 1986, the first group of female students of the Al-Zahra Seminary in Qom, completed a defense course. Over the course of four months, 10,000 women participated in this course which

---

included learning techniques in weaponry recognition, tactics, demolition, chemical defense, rescue, and first aid.  

A war, which by many accounts could have ended by 1982, was officially declared over in August 1988, with a reluctant agreement to ceasefire by Khomeini. The continuation of the Iran-Iraq War had taken on many different justifications, from protecting the nation’s borders and sovereignty, to a way to “perpetuate the revolution and to nurture its legitimacy.” In his address accepting the cease-fire Khomeini noted that “only a few days ago, I was in support of the policy of the Sacred Defense, and saw the interests of the country and the revolution in the continuation of the war.” Finally, in July 1988, Khomeini ‘drank the poison’ and agreed to UN Resolution 598. In his speech accepting the ceasefire, Khomeini warned that:

I strongly urge the dear people of Iran to be alert and cautious. Adopting the resolution by the Islamic Republic of Iran does not mean that the issue of war has been solved. By announcing this decision the propaganda of the devourers (jahānkhārān) has slowed down. However, the landscape of


events cannot be definitively predicted, and the enemy has not yet stopped its evil, and perhaps might continue with its same aggressive tactics [...] 41

The resolution came into effect on August 20th, after 2887 days, 1000 of which, according to the Information Center of the Iranian Army, included active combat. 42 Out of these days, 793 included attacks from the Iranian side, and 207 days of attack from the Iraqi Army. 43 The eight years of war between the IRI and Iraq, claimed the lives of over 200,000 soldiers on the Iranian side, more than 4000 of whom were women. 44 45 46 The war also proved to be a costly engagement for Iran, amounting to over 309 billion dollars. 47 The War was mostly funded by the United States and other Gulf monarchies in Saddam’s favour. Both the regional countries and the US saw Iraq and the situation as a whole conducive to thwarting “the threat of Iranian influence in the Gulf.” 48 The West’s support of Saddam against Iran effectively bolstered more support for the Islamic regime on the home front, as ‘nationalist sentiments’ and ‘revolutionary zeal’ made up for Iran’s political

43 Ibid.
46 For a breakdown of those killed during the war See Table 1.
isolation. Despite the IRI’s internal war of the eighties, the battle with Iraq, took an official center-stage as “even those with strong reservations about the regime were willing to rally behind the government in a time of national emergency.”

Behind the curtains of the war, unity, however, was non-existent.

Almost immediately after the ceasefire, Khomeini, staying true to his statement about the presence of the enemy, ordered the execution of over 2,800 political prisoners. Echoes of the chant of “War, War, Until Victory” lived on and continues to reverberate in the tactics of the regime today. Memorializing the Iran-Iraq War, and creating a culture of ‘resistance’ against the ‘enemy’ has been one of the primary mechanics of the state to employ the War in maintaining and legitimizing its rule.

**The War Story: Cultural Nationalism and the Ideological Construction of the ‘Muslim Woman’**

*You went far away and were bewildered by the torn thread between reality and imagination, between war narrated and war witnessed.*

- Mahmoud Darwish

---

51 For a detailed discussion the executions of 1988 and the supposed affiliation of the prisoners with the Mujahedin see (Abrahamian 2008: 350), and Iran Human Rights Documentation Center.
The War Story

In her extensive work on how the War Story is told, Cooke writes that “war, far from providing an abiding outcome, has become the pretext for urging the validity of one story against another” 54 and victorious are those who “tell the most convincing story.” 55 In this understanding of the War Story, the role and relationship between power and violence gain particular salience. Cooke explains the role of violence in this relationship as an “instrumentality toward the goal of transforming itself into power and maintaining power.” 56 Articulated differently, in terms of the dialogical relationship between power and violence, it could be said that violence mediates and is mediated through different social relations to arrive at power. In this process, violence requires support to gain legitimacy, and in the context of the Iranian state, I argue that the conflict with Iraq, served as one such ‘supporting’ mechanism for state sanctioned violence.

Given the temporal permeability of conflicts, the War Story’s primary role is to keep alive the memory of the war within the nation – to memorialize it. The role which memory, in its multitudinous forms plays in shaping the War Story, is integral in legitimizing the state’s public and official narrative. The ways in which the palpability of wars and conflicts are sustained for decades onward, in nations which have experienced it both within and outside their borders, serves to more than just pay respect and dues to the ‘fallen men’. In fact, ‘remembrance’, as one form of

54 Emphasis added

memory, may be conceptualized as a ‘representation of history’, and in this sense, it follows that the War Story can be viewed as a form of ‘official’ memory, or rather “officially sanctioned forgetting.”

Memory itself cannot be considered without the mediations of time and place in its formation. Freeman explains the interconnectivity of different temporal realms, suggesting that the “impact of present experience on the rendering of the past” affects the way in which memory is formed. The War Story then, telling the history of an event from the past – has to eternally adapt to the present conditions. While some of the forms of commemoration used by the Iranian state, such as the Sacred Defense Museum, the Sacred Defense Film Festival, or the Resistance Music Festival, may not directly employ the use of personal memories, they are nonetheless part of the process of “official” memorialization and cultivation of the collective, or ‘social’ memory of the nation. Collective memory presents itself as not only belonging to the state, but in fact seeks and gains legitimacy through the mediations between ‘available historical records’ and ‘current social political agendas.’ Across the different state platforms which overlook the archiving and ‘culturalization’ around the Iran-Iraq War, we see an abundance of first and third person personal narratives of the war, presented in the form of biographies, autobiographies, letters, and wills. Specifically, over the course of the past two

years, there has been a noticeable and institutionalized movement toward the documentation of the first hand stories and narratives of women. One such example is the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Women’s Participation in the Sacred Defense, to implement programs on a provincial and municipal level, documenting women’s memories, as well as ‘special stories’ from female nurses at the Oil Company’s Abadan Hospital, and women of the city Māhshāhr affected by the war. This plan was introduced by the director of the foundation, mentioning that since its inception, the foundation had helped to “promote the status of veterans’ families, as well as those of martyrs and PoWs [Prisoners of War].” 60 One of the ways in which this ‘promotion’ is taking place is through authorship on and about the war. These writings, according to Maryam Mojtahedzadeh, the director of the Foundation for Women’s War Participation, have to explain the selflessness and sacrifice of those from the Sacred Defense in order to “develop Islamic values”. In these documentation, we see the interplay of public and private narratives, as private content is used in the state’s ideological machinery for creating a collective and public memory for the state. The public/private binary is challenged, through the Iranian state’s appropriation and incorporation of specific, ideologically adaptable, private narratives on the war, in producing public ones. The question that arises here is whose version of history is presented, and whose stories forgotten?

Traditionally, in telling the War Story, women operate the ‘home-front’ (private) and men operate the front-lines (public). While the role of women outside of the home-front has been extensively highlighted in the Iranian state’s cultural production, predominantly through texts and war photography, these roles have largely been an extension of their domestic and ‘maternal’ responsibilities. Analyzed in this context, ‘women’ were to fulfill a particular role within the narrative of the Revolution and the nation-building project of the country. This role has been embedded in the patriarchal religio-cultural narrative of the Iranian state’s nationalism. As such, the state representation of the presence of women in specific arenas of the war, and their marked absence in other areas, is a reflection of the broader state construction of the category of “Muslim Woman.”

Specifically, within the Iranian state’s archival material from both the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Values of the Sacred Defense (Sāzmān hifż āsār nashr arzeshhai defā’ moqaddas) and Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs (Bonyād shahīd va omūr īsārgarān), women are either present within particular contexts of ‘motherhood’, and to a much lesser extent, active duty, or altogether absent. As well, the role of motherhood is not solely limited to its literal definition. While mothering soldiers, and future ‘defenders’ of the nation is one of its main manifestations, the other highlighted role of women is the supportive position they played behind the frontlines, as nurses, drivers, managers of ammunition and goods storage, relief workers, among other similar occupations. In particular, this

---

62 See Appendix B for Images
distinction is reflected in the published texts on women and the war, as well as war photography. 63

The War Story, in its most common form is one which typically excludes women’s narratives. Cooke argues that by writing about their experiences of the war, women effectively insert their name into this history, which challenges the “instinctive, conventional framing of the war event.” 64 Telling the multiplicity of the ways in which women experience war, serves to ‘undo’ the traditional masculine characteristic attributed to violence, sexuality and glory of war. 65 Here, much of the feminist theorization around autobiographical material, as well as state commemoration and memorialization, particularly in the context of wars are worth paying attention to. 66

One of the striking qualities of the IRI generated and archived content is their personal and private nature. Content such as martyrs’ wills, personal messages to their wives and families, and personal obituaries by family members, are presented and available to promote the state’s ideology. The consumption and production of such material, which can be viewed as autobiographical in nature, are significant as Whitlock argues that they are powerful to the extent that they “...becom[e] part of our own self-creation.” 67 Further, this highlights the non-exclusivity of memory, and the way in which ‘cultural technologies’ employing memory can keep alive

63 See Images in Appendix 1.
65 Ibid
66 For detailed discussions see Maynes et al. 2008; Smith et al. 1998.
whichever aspect of a particular event that the state wants to uphold. This creates a “sense of kinship with people who might otherwise seem very different”, and work toward creating the desired homogeneity which the project of cultural nationalism strives for. Highlighting the dialogical relationship between the reader and these products, the connection between how these ideological constructions have helped to cultivate a homogenous representation of women and their war experiences, becomes evident.

Women and The Iran-Iraq War

I will not
Send my sons
To war.
Tomorrow,
Politicians
Will start getting along.
   - Razieh Bahrami Khoshnood.  

The official public narrative of the IRI defines women’s role in the Iran-Iraq War as having been both direct and indirect, also reflected in the way in which the cultural productions around this war are presented. The direct roles involve women who were active on the frontlines in both combat and supportive positions, while women’s roles as mothers and wives, is the indirect way they participated in the war. In fact it is this role which has been highlighted more boldly over the course of

---


the recent years, with the proliferation of state produced content on the War and women.

The state approach and rhetoric toward women and their constitutional and social role is reflected in the format and way in which their role during the Iran-Iraq War is represented. One purpose of this representation is to show that “thanks to the blessings of the Islamic Revolution” women have been able to take on an identity which is indicative of their ‘inner character’. 70 As well, the ubiquitous referral and comparison of women to the Prophet Fatemeh, is framed in such a way to indicate that the Iran-Iraq War resembles previous wars fought in defense of and for the integrity of Islam, where men and women have historically fought alongside one another.

Across all platforms, references to Ayatollah Khomeini’s direct remarks on women’s participation in the war, remind the readers of the context within which these cultural productions should be taken up. The Director of the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Women’s Participation in the Sacred Defense (Sāzmān nashr āsār va arzeshhai moshārekat zanān dar defā’ moqaddas), comments that, “the lionesses of the Revolution and the Sacred Defense, showed that a third way is possible— neither Western nor Eastern, but ‘Iranian Muslim Woman’.” 71 Mojtabahzedeh continues that “while noting that women are the main pillars of the family and in their laps where humans are raised and reach perfection...preserving

71 Ibid
and strengthening women’s positive role in different fields is in line with the leader’s commands, and combatting the enemy’s propaganda on women and family.” 72 In fact, one of the ongoing projects of the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Women's Participation in the Sacred Defense (Sāzmān nashr āsār va arzeshhai moshârekat zanân dar defā’ moqaddas), is to establish a committee to compile Ayatollah Khomeini’s statements on women and the Iran-Iraq War. In one comment, Ayatollah Khomeini is quoted:

Women have more rights to it [Iran-Iraq War] than men. Women raise brave men in their laps. If the brave and human-producing women are taken away from nations, nations will be dragged towards defeat and degeneration.73

While in another, Ayatollah Khomeini comments:

...resistance and sacrifice of the great women in the Imposed War is so awe-inspiring that words and pen fail to convey... I believe that an important part of the warm and vibrant environment of the war is related to the intellectual and ideological status of our sisters, and if our women, were not in that intellectual climate, half of the vibrancy would have been missing. 74

On the shohadayezan.ir website, a section titled ”Perspective and Guidelines” provides an extensive archive of statements by Ayatollah Khomeini and current Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, related to women. The statements range from

72 Ibid
Islam, role of women in Islam, veiling and unveiling, women in the West, motherhood/mothering/raising children, among a variety of other issues including women in combat and politics, specifically in the Iran-Iraq War. One statement by Ayatollah Khomeini reads:

...Brave mothers of the children of Islam, have revived the memory of devotion and heroism of women champions in history. In which other history do you know of these women, and in which other country?  

In many of the statements, women’s role as mothers, educators, and bearers of the future generation are highlighted. Their role is particularly important, according to these statements, because they are the creators of humans, and this, according to the Supreme Leaders, is at the heart of Islam.

One statement titled “Women, the Beloved of the Nation” Ayatollah Khomeini is quoted saying that “your laps are a school in which great youth have to be educated. Study virtues so that your children can be educated in your laps.” In another statement titled “Mother’s Service, the highest of all” it is mentioned that a woman’s role is higher in society than men, since although women themselves belong to an active group, they raise active children as well. Another statement, titled “Women’s role during revolution and Imposed War” Ayatollah Khamenei mentions that “the most important task for women is raising children, and moral support to husbands for entering large arenas, and we thank God that the Iranian

and Muslim woman has showed the most talent in this field.” Other statements’ titles include “Heaven under the step of mothers”, “A mother’s lap, the biggest school”, “Oppression of women in the West”, “Independence of Iranian women and presence in the field of politics”, amongst other titles.

Specifically there is a compilation of statements by both the former and current Supreme Leaders titled “Women and the Sacred Defense”. The statements are grouped topically, with focus on subjects such as the Prophet Fatemeh, Women’s role in advancing Ayatollah Khomeini’s movement and the Imposed War, Presence of Muslim Women on all Fronts, Mothers of Martyrs, Islamic Revolution and Women’s Rights, Balance in Men and Women’s Rights, and Martyr’s Families, to name a few. The religious references, in particular to Prophet Fatemeh and Zeynab are reoccurring. Fatemeh was the Prophet Mohammad’s daughter, and mother to Zeynab. After Khomeini’s coming to power, women’s day in the IRI was changed to April 21st, to mark Fatemeh’s birthday. Further, Zeynab is viewed as a brave figure who “cursed her captors” during the Karbala war in A.D. 680, and accused them of “having seized power after the Prophet’s death...preventing the creation of a just Islamic society in accordance with Mohammad’s teachings.”

In these statements, women’s patience, their selflessness in sending their children (sons) to war, raising children who would go on to become martyrs, are praised. Again here, the emphasis on women’s role in relation to and within the family becomes evident. One statement explains that women’s role in the Revolution and the war is seen as

---

having been more influential than that of men. Ayatollah Khomeini explains that men’s participation is not as multi-dimensional as that of women since:

 [...] the man is just one person who comes to the demonstrations or into combat. That’s it! But when women, the woman of the house, considers herself a part of the combat and enters the field, in reality she is bringing to the field the household in which man, woman and children are a part of...The Revolution and War equipped the women in our society with political growth.\footnote{Shohadaye Zan. (2012). “Woman and the Sacred Defense from Ayatollah Khamenei’s Perspective.” 21 January 2012. Shohadaye Zan. Available: http://shohadayezan.ir/?q=node/456}

It becomes apparent from these statements, that not only is the emphasis on the role of women as mothers, but also specifically contextualized in relation to the unit of the family, which as discussed previously is given specific importance to in the Islamic state’s constitution. Defined as such, any change in the status, organization, behavior, and consciousness of women has a direct effect on the institution of the family. What is reflected in the materials produced by the different institutions is in effect a direct implementation and a concretization of how the ‘Iranian-Muslim Woman’ should be. Based on these cultural productions, women’s roles during the Iran-Iraq War are the living embodiment of the possibility for the existence of women in a particular way – as defenders of the nation through their resistance (Moqāvemat) and role in the family. The proliferation of state sponsored content on women and the Iran-Iraq War, is a well engrained component of the same ideological machinery in ‘protecting’ the status and sanctity of the ‘family’
specially as a response to the soft cultural war the regime has identified as an all encompassing enemy.

Through the examples here we can see that the inclusion of women within the official state war narrative is not always, or, necessarily a subversive and liberatory process. In the case of the Palestinian resistance movement during the first and second Intifadah, Amireh discusses the official representation and framing of women's participation. While women's inclusion and involvement in militarized resistance movements, in what is typically a masculine domain, may give the appearance of dissolved gendered boundaries, Amireh draws attention to the particular way in which female suicide bombers are represented in the official narrative to reinforce traditional female gender roles. The way in which female suicide bombers' participation has been framed within the official Islamist narrative of Palestine, ‘sidelined’ majority of women, without “advancing Palestinian women's participation in resistance or politics” 81 Further, the inclusion of these women in the official resistance narrative, effectively erased “the history of Palestinian women’s national resistance” and reinforced traditional gender roles. 82 Amireh explains that the way in which Palestinian women’s participation as suicide bombers has been framed, plays on traditional masculine and feminine gender roles, and has been presented in such a way as to shame men, specifically Arab leaders for their apathy. More importantly, the inclusion and representation of women’s

militarized participation in the resistance movement, has implications for the way in which “strategies of popular civil disobedience and resistance” play out, and confines the boundaries of resistance within a militarized framework. The inclusion of specific, ideologically adaptable activities, within a specific framework, such as the case of Palestinian female suicide bombers, is visible in the IRI’s state narrative of women and the War. Furthermore, the emphasis on women’s participation in the Iran-Iraq War as an extension of the Revolution, provides the Islamic ideological bolstering necessary for the IRI to promote and condone particular forms of political activity and resistance for women.

In an address titled “Women Have a Very Important and Sublime Place in the Family”, Ayatollah Khamenei mentions that when “the core of the family – meaning women” becomes unstable, then “nothing there [in the family] is in its right place.” Here, Khamenei continues that Islam has accurate methods and recommendations on the topic and suggests that with the Revolution, women were able to enter different fields, with these suggestions in mind. In another declaration, he mentions that in order to truly rebuild a nation, the human force is the most important factor, half of which are women. The Supreme Leader declares that in order for a true transformation to take place, both men and women in society need to be aware of Islam’s provisions for “women’s presence in different fields: women’s activities,

83 Ibid
women’s education, women’s work in society, politics, economy, and scientific fields, women’s role in and outside of the family.” 85

These statements and objectives, as presented on the different platforms overlooking the archiving of the Iran-Iraq War, provide a context within which the cultural productions should be taken up. Specifically, the inclusion of these statements reflect the overall state policy concerning women, and illuminate the strategic importance of the topic to the sustenance of the regime. The way in which women are included in the War narrative of the state, help to define the characteristics of the category of “woman”, specifically, “Muslim Woman” which is allowed to be visible and active in the public realm of the state. This ideological creation of social categories, is an integral part of the project of cultural nationalism.

Cultural Nationalism and Ideology

I sold my white days
On the black market
And bought a house overlooking the war
And the view was so wonderful
That I could not resist its temptation...
Arrived at frightening truths
About poetry
And white man
About the season of migration to Europe
And about cities that receive tourists in peacetime
- Ghayath Al-Madhoun 86

Within the project of cultural nationalism, as Bannerji 87 and Shahidian 88, argue, the state is in a constant mode of struggle for gaining ground in the inevitable

---

space between dissent and domination. One of the mechanisms for decreasing this space for the state is the creation of ideological categories such as ‘woman’, ‘tradition’, ‘culture’ and so on. These are categories disconnected from the historical and material context in which they exist. As a way of addressing the need for engagement with the notion of cultural nationalism as an ideological category, an explanation of ‘ideology’ as I have come to understand it through a feminist analysis informed by Marx’s method of historical-dialectical-materialism, through the works of Smith, Bannerji, Mojab and Carpenter is necessary. I am encouraged to embark on this theoretical approach, as it provides a productive framework that both challenges and offers an alternative to both the theoretical and practical issues we face today.

My understanding of the notion of ideology is informed by the explications of Marx’s theory on consciousness by scholars such as Allman, Bannerji, Mojab and Carpenter, and Smith. This understanding is predicated on the goal of

---

engaging with our social reality in a way that can transform our existing social relations. Allman puts forth an agenda for ‘revolutionary critical education,’ Bannerji proposes a liberatory form of nationalism, while Mojab and Carpenter call for an engagement with a ‘transformative praxis.’

To understand, and therefore to realize the goals of any of the above projects, an articulation of Marx’s theory of consciousness is necessary.

To explain this theory, it is helpful to mention that Marx was offering his method as an alternative to the paradigms of idealism and mechanical-materialism. The former views ‘ideas’ as the “cause or origin of the real world” while (old)materialism inverts this relationship to consider our material reality as the cause of our ideas and thoughts. ⁹⁵ While the points of departure and culmination for these paradigms are different, they both share an inherent quality of separating our ‘ideas’ from our ‘material reality’. Marx’s explanation for this relationship is dialectical, and as such locates our consciousness and social reality on a map, determined by a mutually constitutive relationship of internal relations. In idealism, the premise that our ‘ideas’ are the source or cause of our material reality, suggests that the formation of our consciousness does not rely on reality, and that ideas have had a prior temporal existence. As well, within the old Hegelian materialism, the same one-way direction of cause and effect points toward our consciousness as determined by our material reality. Now, the question that arises is why should

these paradigms be of any importance to the theoretical endeavor at hand? In taking on any theoretical approach, one should consider its epistemological outcomes, and as such, the separation of thought from action also necessarily has grave implications for how we conceive our social reality. Inherent in the knowledge stemming from ideological reasoning, is the same characteristic of dichotomization, where the produced knowledge has an existence separate and distinct from the material reality of the world in which it is produced. Marx’s theory, however, can be viewed as a different method of inquiry to the question of how ideas take shape and develop and their relationship to the material world - in other words it can be thought of as the ‘theory of the formation of ideas’. 96 This theory defies any separation or division between consciousness and reality, and instead suggests that there exists a dialogical relationship between the two.

Marx’s critique of ideology, is itself an ‘epistemological critique’ or rather, an epistemological tool for interpreting the world through a different lens. 97 Questions concerning epistemology, how we know, what we know, and even what we constitute as knowing and ‘knowledge’ are determined by the way in which consciousness is formed. 98 If we are to meaningfully engage with the notion of cultural nationalism as an ideological and conceptual category, then our epistemological endeavours should work toward producing knowledge that is equipped with the tools to transform our consciousness and social reality.

96 Ibid.
What connects our consciousness with our material reality? And why are the implications of the rupturing of this connection important to consider? First, what ‘consciousness’ is should be clarified. Consciousness exists in the “context of actual social existence as it is lived,” 99 or stated differently it can be viewed as the dialectical relationship between thought and action. 100 Allman articulates this relationship as mediated through “our action in and on the material world.” 101 What this suggests is not a causal link between objective reality and our consciousness, or a static and unidirectional conceptualization of our interaction with the material world. Instead, it suggests that consciousness exists and develops within the ‘social being’, and not externally to it. 102

Across the different platforms for the cultural production of the Iran-Iraq War, there is an existing, ideal form of being, into which a specific definition of a woman, often characterized by her specific experiences, is superimposed onto. It is within this space of disconnect between the ‘material world’ and the ‘experiencing selves’ that the internal relation between ‘knowledge’ (epistemology) and ‘social transformation’ (ontology) occurs. 103

I consider the cultural productions of the Iran-Iraq War as some of the ideological content employed by the state to create a national narrative. The content

of ideology not only “tells us a great deal about those who produce them” but also speaks to their ‘purpose’, particularly at times when the content itself acts as a barrier to accessing and viewing the ‘complexities’ as well as the ‘historical and social specificities’ of that content.  

Perhaps one of the central tasks of unpacking the cultural content of the Iranian state’s nationalism in relation to the Iran-Iraq War is to locate those very complexities and specificities, which constitute the state’s ideology. I maintain that these specificities may be gleaned when considered in the context of the notion of cultural-nationalism.

Culture, defined as the ‘normative’ and ‘imaginative’ in ‘expressing dimensions of life’ is “an essential dimension of existence in any given socio-historical and political space.” Given that a relationship between culture and politics always exists, how it is employed is what determines the specific characteristics of that relationship. As such, there is never a unitary articulation of a politics, or a culture, nor is the “incorporation of an entire people within the same national symbolic cultural constellation” (ibid) achievable. This is to suggest that within the project of cultural nationalism the process of hegemony is never complete, as ‘culture’ and ‘politics’ are never constant.

It is within this space of dissent and inclusion that the violence and exclusionary nature of cultural nationalism presents itself. The level and degrees of both inclusion and exclusion “necessarily depend upon the comprehensiveness of the ideological articulation of the segment of the population” who have control and

---


jurisdiction over the relations of production of ‘national identity and culture.’ 106 In this process, ‘dominant’ and ‘subordinate’ national identities are formed, mediated through different social relations of power, such as patriarchy.

In effect, the specific characterizations within different nationalist projects determine the tools with which the state implements its hegemony. In the ‘cultural’ variation of nationalism, a particular aspect of culture “becomes the insignia for the nationalist movement to hegemonize and to come to state power.” 107 With a dialectical understanding of the social relations of politics and culture, I borrow from Shahidian and his explanation that since culture “both reflects and articulates material interests” 108 it cannot be ‘indifferent’ or ‘benign.’ 109 As well, those groups who have ‘political leverage’ and control economic production actively produce culture. However, in this dialectical sense, cultural hegemony cannot be solely explained as a social relation exercised from above. In fact, one of the determinants of the degree to which hegemony is achieved at any given time, relies on the give and take between opposition and domination – in other words, it is “accompanied by various degrees of conscious and active acceptance by the masses.” 110

One of the mechanisms with which cultural hegemony is both maintained and legitimized, is through the way in which it is interwoven with the national narrative of the state, where it works to become part of the common consciousness.

106 Ibid
108 Emphasis Added
110 Ibid.
In this process, the particular cultural narrative of the state becomes part of the nation’s ‘official’ or ‘collective’ memory. 111 Within the ‘collective memory’ of the state, domination gains the upper hand over opposition, in the form of content that the state chooses to exclude in its narrative. In the post-Revolution Iranian context, women were constitutionally defined by their family status and duties, while Khomeini encouraged their pro-Islamic Republic activism. 112 What is apparent in the context of the Iranian state is that women’s agency is encouraged and supported. This support, however, was and continues to be strictly engrained in an anti-West and imperialist rhetoric, which as was explained earlier has been a legitimizing tactic for the regime since the Revolution. Specifically, women’s representation in the cultural production of the war is framed within an identification with the collectivity, “engaged in a crusade to save their people – nation, race, the Islamic ummat.” 113 114 The engrained patriarchal nature of identification with cultural-nationalist causes, presents itself as one extending beyond the private, where women are able to break away from more traditional private roles, into the public realm for the greater good of the nation. The authority to behave as such no longer rests on the male figures inside the home, where the “call of the faith supersedes a


114 Ummat refers to an Islamic nation or community.
husband’s authority.” 115 In fact, this is the case with many first hand accounts available on state archives, where memoirs of women who defied their families to either remain in cities that were being evacuated, or participate in the war effort actively, are showcased. These are the women present within the state narrative, whose allegiance to the leader of the Revolution, and to the men of Islam “create[s] a higher patriarchal power that outranks husbands.” 116 The construction of the ideological category of ‘woman’ takes place within the boundaries of culture – that of “beliefs, norms and practices of social good and moral conduct,” where it integrates within the ‘cultural common sense’ of the people. 117 If we chose to define culture as such, it becomes apparent that homogeneity as a quality is unattainable – it is within this unattainability that the process of violence and hegemony collide. Hegemony functions within cultural nationalism, as ideological categories weave through these divergent elements of culture to create the appearance of homogeneity, and in the process collude the myriad social relations of power at play. To this end, hegemony operating within the boundaries of cultural nationalism takes on both social and political undertones. 118 The cultural productions on the Iran-Iraq War are expressions of both these social and political elements of hegemony, putting forth a homogenous category of the Iranian “Muslim Woman.”

116 Ibid.
The War Story in the IRI is comprised not only of narratives in the form of texts and memoirs, but includes a wide range of other productions including museums, photography, music, cinema and theater, street art, along with memorial sites and commemoration events. I consider these cultural productions as props of the Islamic regime’s project of cultural nationalism which function at the expense of those whose stories are left unheard within these productions – masked by the ideological constructions for the survival of the regime. Cooke explains the role of violence in this relationship as an “instrumentality toward the goal of transforming itself into power and maintaining power” 119 where violence mediates and is mediated through different social relations to arrive at hegemony. As well, within the dominant and subordinated groups, the subjects of ‘self’ and ‘other’ of the nation emerge – those subjects who belong to the nation, and those who do not. Since this determination is a process, the categories of ‘self’ and ‘other’ are prone to constant change. Here, it is important to mention that cultural categories such as language, or religion, do not exist or function as independent categories. These categories are continuously mediated through different relations, and their consideration as unconnected to other social relations is a feature of ideological abstraction. To conceptualize these categories as existing in a vacuum, is to disregard their totality, which in effect renders them hollow of any analytic content. Further, the exclusion

---

of the social-relations effectively masks the “oppressive and exploitative practices” active within them.\(^{120}\)

As with any other social category, gender too, does not play out consistently and its existence at any given time is contingent and connected to other social relations. In a conceptualization of the social, one which, borrowing from Bannerji, is respectful of its integrity, gender cannot be envisioned as an independent category.\(^{121}\) As such, the notion of an ‘ideal gender’ or an ‘ideological commitment’ to gender, is not possible as it is interacting with other social relations of class, race, ethnicity, among others. Yet, the ideological promotion of these categories is necessary for “preserving gender and social institution,” which in turn works toward preserving the hegemony of the state.\(^{122}\) The breadth and terms of this preservation, as mentioned previously, is a process determined by the interaction between resistance and domination, articulating the violence of cultural-nationalism.

**Ideological Knowledge Production: Women and Ideological Nationalism Construction**

Before beginning to discuss in detail any of the material from the state archives, and government bodies overlooking the Iran-Iraq War affairs, a few points should be made clear. I refer to the cultural productions of the war as ‘state


sponsored’ meaning that their production has either been commissioned by the government bodies overlooking the Iran-Iraq War affairs, or they have been archived under one (or more) of these institutions. However, identifying these productions as such, is not to suggest that another category of entirely ‘independent’ productions exist. While non-state sponsored and commissioned works on the Iran-Iraq War exist, all cultural-productions in the IRI meant for public release must first be approved by the state. In the case of majority of these cultural products, including publications, movies, theater, and music, it is the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance which has to approve and give permission first.

Another point of clarification is that in going through the different platforms, I have paid particular attention to the role and representation of the Revolution of 1979. While this historical event is not the main focus of my work, both its temporal proximity to the start of the Iran-Iraq War, and the inseparability of the two events in the state’s official narrative, places the Revolution in a unique position in relation to my research. In fact, as mentioned previously, one of my main arguments is that the Iranian state has employed the Iran-Iraq War in such a way, to reinforce the identity of the Islamic nation, specifically concerning women.

The instrumentality of commemoration sites, museums, holidays, texts, movies, and other art and cultural forms of the Iran-Iraq War, becomes all the more significant once it is placed within the socio-cultural and political context of the IRI. The official start of war between Iran and Iraq coincided with the ongoing “Cultural Revolution” in Iran, with the intent of stripping the nation of its pre-revolutionary symbols and to (re)build it rooted in a strong ideology of religio-cultural
nationalism. In other words, it could be argued that the country went through a process of Islamization, and the “Cultural Revolution” was instrumental in this process. The “Cultural Revolution” which was spearheaded by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance aimed to “combat “cultural imperialism”. This process saw the censorship and shutting down of many media outlets, including newspapers, books, and movies, the rewriting of textbooks in order to purge it of any “favorable depictions of the monarchy and secular heroes”, as well as the renaming of streets, public spaces, and towns which had any reference to the monarchy. This process can be seen as a form of rewriting of the nation's history, (re)framed within the Islamic Shiaa ideology, and the Revolution as well as the Iran-Iraq War were two significant historical events taking place at the time, providing necessary content for the “culturalization” of the Islamic Iranian State. In this context, the significance of the following organizations and platforms overlooking the archiving of the Iran-Iraq War and the content production becomes evident.

The Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Values from the Sacred Defense (Foundation for Sacred Defense)

This foundation is one of the main government affiliated bodies responsible for the archiving and proliferation of war related material. Established in 1991, two years after the official declaration of ceasefire, this foundation functions under the jurisdiction of the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces.

---


124 Ibid.
The main aim of this foundation is the preservation and publication of the values of the Sacred Defense, and “promoting a culture of resistance, sacrifice, jihad, and martyrdom” (Tarvīj farhang muqāvemat, īsār, jahād, va shahādat).

Part of the mandate for the Foundation for Sacred Defense is based on Khomeini’s decree that “keeping the memory of martyrs alive, is no less than martyrdom itself” (Zendeh negah dāshtan yād shuhadā kamtar az shahādat nīst). There are multiple platforms, affiliated with this foundation, that directly deal with cultural content, including Emtedad Cultural Network, Sobh, and Sajed – The Integrated Website of the Sacred Defense. While all of these platforms include relevant content, such as photography, list of books and publications, martyrs’ wills, among other cultural products, it is the recent establishment of the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Women's Participation in the Sacred Defense, which requires particular attention.

**The Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Women’s Work in the Sacred Defense (Foundation for Women’s War Participation)**

Information regarding the establishment of the Foundation for Women's War Participation is limited. Without an independent platform, the website of the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Values from the Sacred Defense, directs users to this sub-foundation, which lands on the webpage of www.defapress.ir (The Sacred Defense News Agency affiliated with the Foundation for Sacred Defense). The only information available on this newly established branch of the Foundation are news articles. Piecing together and tracing back these articles, the Foundation for the Preservation and Publications of Women's Work in
the Sacred Defense appears to have been established sometime in the latter half of 2013, with Maryam Mojtabehzadeh, as mentioned previously, as its director. Based on Mojtabehzadeh’s comments from an interview following her appointment as the director of the foundation, she outlines the ‘promotion of heroic and martyr women’, as well as the ‘preservation of the culture of self-sacrifice and resistance’, as the reasons for the establishment of this foundation. These goals are nestled within the context of Ayatollah Khomeini’s call for the maintenance of the ‘eternal epic’ which according to the late Supreme Leader, are the families of the martyrs and veterans, specifically women. In an interview after her appointment, Mojtabehzadeh quotes Ayatollah Khomeini’s statement that, “the Sacred Defense was an unmatched treasure with women as its safe-keepers who during those days and until today, preserved it and will pass it on to the next generation.” Mojtabehzadeh’s use of this quote is in response to a question asking her which organization had prior to the establishment of the foundation, taken care of the responsibilities of representing women. In her response, Mojtabehzadeh maintains that in effect it had been the women themselves who had taken on this responsibility. Further, according to Mojtabehzadeh, one of the main goals of the foundation is “culturalization” based on the values of the Sacred Defense, as well as a focus on the topic of ‘women and family’ which she emphasizes is of great importance for the country. A common characteristic, visible across all the platforms, and as well reiterated by Mojtabehzadeh is the inseparability of the Iran-Iraq War from the 1979

---


52
Revolution. Therefore, while the name of the foundation suggests a focus on the Sacred Defense, in reality one of the overarching goals of the organization is “introducing the role and place of women in the Sacred Defense and the Revolution.”

Below, are some of the objectives of the Foundation for the Publication and Preservation of Women’s Work in the Sacred Defense, speaking to some of these overarching themes of the Revolution, women, and family:

- Research, identification, collection, and compilation of written and unwritten works in the cultural, scientific, historic, and artistic fields involving women in the Sacred Defense and the Revolution.

- Edit and registration of cultural, educational, and heroic principles of women.

- Provision of relevant programs for the purposes of introducing the relics and cultural values of the Sacred Defense in relation to women and family, through different media, websites, and by supporting programs for the young generation in this field.

- Programming for presenting an *Iranian-Islamic* ¹²⁷ lifestyle based on the culture of sacrifice, martyrdom, and resistance.

- Defining a parenting model for raising children, and promoting the status of the *Muslim woman* ¹²⁸, based on the culture of sacrifice, resistance,

---

¹²⁶ Ibid
¹²⁷ emphasis added.
¹²⁸ Emphasis Added
martyrdom, and resistance in the society as well as on the international level.\textsuperscript{129}

Briefly here I would like to provide a background to Maryam Mojtahezdadeh, the first and current director of the Foundation for Women's War Participation. Mojtahezdadeh was directly appointed as the director of the foundation, by the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces. While the creation of the foundation by itself is a significant step toward the consolidation of a specific ‘culturalization’ tactic in relation to the War and women, the appointment of Mojtahezdadeh is perhaps even more telling. Mojtahezdadeh’s appointment as the director can be seen as a concentrated effort to firmly incorporate the rhetoric of ‘woman’ defined only in relation to the family unit within the IRI’s official War Story.

Prior to taking on the role of the director of this foundation, Mojtahezdadeh was the director of the Center for Women and Family Affairs of the Office of the President, during former president Ahmadinejad’s term in office (2005-2013). It should be noted that it was during Ahmadinejad’s first term in office that the name of the center was changed to include ‘family’. During Mojtahezdadeh’s supervision of the Center for Women and Family Affairs, in 2011, the National Committee for Women and Families was established. The objective of this committee is to “strengthen the sacred institution of the family and protect its sanctity and building

strong familial relationships based on Islamic laws and ethics.” 130 In one statement from during her term as the director of the Center for Women and Family Affairs, Mojtahedzadeh provides a historical background for the ways in which the unit of the family as the central axis for society has weakened through the combined effects of secularism, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, and so on. In this statement, Mojtahedzadeh condones the change in title of the Center for Women’s Participation of the President’s Office to the Center for Women and Family Affairs, as an important ‘cultural’ event in the country’s history. This change, Mojtahedzadeh explains reflects not only “preserving the human dignity of women in Islam, and emphasizing the positive presence of women in various spheres of social, administrative, political, cultural, economic, scientific...” but also reflects women’s “central position as the center of affection and the cultivator of the sublime human and the main factor in the survival of health and morality in society...” 131

Statements such as these, as well as policies affiliated with the center, are reflective of defining women always relationally to their roles as mothers within the family unit, and as a force against the weakening of the family by ‘western’ and non-religious values. Given Mojtahedzadeh’s professional background, it seems hardly a coincidence that much of what the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Women’s Participation in the Sacred Defense, advocates and organizes is centered

on and highlights women’s relationship with the family as the primary one, specifically their role in raising children. 132

Mojtahedzadeh, believes that the way in which women participated in the War is the best role model for an “Islamic-Iranian” lifestyle. The “Iranian Woman” is described as having had an ‘independent and prominent’ role during the war, which according to Mojtahedzadeh, the Supreme Leader considers a ‘shining moment’. And in this moment, the celebration of the “greatness, patience, and perseverance” of the martyrs and veterans’ wives and mothers is seen as a ‘religious and human duty’. 133

In fact, in the ‘About Us’ section of Defa Press, the news agency affiliated with the Foundation for the Publication and Preservation of the Values from the Sacred Defense, Ayatollah Khamenei is quoted remarking that the eight years of the Sacred Defense is not just one period of time, but rather “an expansive treasure which for a long time to come, our nation can use, extract from and invest in.” 134 In another statement, Mojtahedzadeh, mentions that values such “sacrifice and patience, resistance, jihad, zeal and cooperation” from the Sacred Defense, are good models to take up in order combat the increasing distance from the cultural values of the Islamic Revolution, which she considers as a destabilizing for the family unit. 135

In conjunction with the IRIB (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting), the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Women’s Participation in the Sacred Defense is producing a TV show in honor of the women of Khoramshahr. The series titled, “Khoramshahr’s Symbols of Patience and Tolerance” is set to include women who were active in Khorramshahr during the war years, as well as wives of martyrs, authors, and government representatives.  

Another festival organized by the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Women’s Participation in the Sacred Defense, has been the “Festival of Strength and Patience” the first one of which took place on Woman’s Day in 2014. One of the outlined objectives of this festival is “cultural mainstreaming” of the wives of martyrs, veterans, and PoWs, in order to both identify them and to promote their status.  

As mentioned previously, one of the goals of the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Women’s Participation in the Sacred Defense, appears to be “culturalization.” Furthermore, in what can only be explained as an effort to streamline the work of the organizations with the larger state policy, Mojtabehzadeh pointed out that the Supreme Leader has dubbed the new Iranian year (March 2014 – March 2015) as the year of “Economy and culture, with national determination and jihad like management.” As such, according to Mojtabezadeh, the values and processes of the Sacred Defense are good models for realizing the

---

137 See Images
138 This is the Iranian Woman’s Day, which coincides with the birth of the Prophet Fatemeh
goals of this year, and particularly in combatting the ‘soft cultural war’ being waged against the country.  

**The Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs**

The Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs (*Bonyād shahīd va omūr īsārgarān*) was originally founded in 1979 with Ayatollah Khomeini’s orders, under the name of *Bonyād shahīd* (The Islamic Republic Martyrs Foundation). In 1990, *Bonyād shahīd* was divided into three independent organizations: The Martyr’s Foundation, The War Veterans Foundation (*Bonyād Jānbāzān*), and the Headquarters for Supporting former PoWs (*āzādegān*). However, in 2004 these three organizations merged together under the title of The Foundation for Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, in order to comprehensively address the needs of the different constituents, under the jurisdiction of the Office of the President. After the merger, the “First National Congress to Commend Self-Sacrifices”, the “National Victory Celebration” (Liberation of Khorramshahr) were held. As well, the website [www.isaar.ir](http://www.isaar.ir) was established in order to “disseminate information and ease the target group’s access to the latest information about welfare, education and cultural, health and medical...” The merger also brought about the creation of *Hayat* News Agency ([www.hayat.ir](http://www.hayat.ir)) as another means for dissemination and access to information for the foundations different constituents. While the foundation has a ‘cultural’ association, the main cultural wing of the Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans’ Affair is *Navīd Shāhed* – the Information Center of Sacrifice and Martyrdom. *Navīd Shāhed* was established in June of 2005, in order to “reflect all

---

cultural events of sacrifice and martyrdom” as well as disseminate cultural information, and act as a database for cultural related activities and happenings. This platform includes books and publications, doctoral thesis topics and abstracts, as well as a section on martyrs’ messages, some of which are categorized under the titles of ‘Wives’ and ‘Raising Children’, as well as a section on ‘Women Martyrs’, including a list of names and short biographies for the women martyrs. Given the context of the website, it would appear that all those included as ‘martyrs’ had lost their lives during the eight years of the Iran-Iraq War. However, looking through the details of the brief biographies provided, it becomes clear that included in the list are those killed during the years leading up to the 1979 Revolution. This is one of the many examples of the ways in which the continuity of the War is depicted and represented in the state’s narrative. The interconnected manner of representation of the Revolution and the War, and the ongoing threat of the enemy, is one of the manifestations of the violence on which the Iranian regime has come to be.

The section titled “Martyrs’ Words” (Kālām Shuhadā) is comprised of a selection of martyrs’ wills, from Khorasan province, taken from a series of books. These selections have been divided into categories, such as ‘opinions’, ‘worldviews’, ‘messages to families’, as well as on ‘martyrdom’ and revolution’, ‘Quran’, and ‘god’, among a wide range of other topics. The category of “Messages to Families” is further subdivided into four sections of “Martyrs’ message to Mother and Father”, “Raising Children”, “Families of Martyrs” and “Martyrs’ Message to Wife and Children”. In this last sub-section, messages are addressed to wives and children,

---

separately, and range from calling on their wives to continue with life like the Prophet Zeynab (Zainab Güneh), to raise their children like the Prophet Fatemeh (Fātemeh Vār). In these statements, the predominant role, and in fact occupation, for women is defined as mothers. Specifically, the “job” of motherhood is likened to the “job” of prophets. 142

**Shohadāy Zan**

The inclusion of the category and topic of ‘women’ in majority of the archives and platforms, appears as a sub-category. As is evident from the statements of the Foundation for Women’s War Participation, the inclusion of women and women’s stories are to serve a very particular purpose, or rather to promote a particular culture within the field of the Sacred Defense, and not showcase women’s participation in the War in its totality. Having said this, the shohadayezan.ir website is the only platform dedicated entirely to women and the Iran-Iraq War. This website functions as an affiliate of the Basij Organization of Women’s Society (Sāzman Basīj Jame’ Zanān) 143, which is one of the official groups of the Basij Foundation (Sāzmān Basīj Mostaž’fīn). 144 The shohadayezan.ir website is predominantly comprised of cultural content including writings, audio and visual material, paintings, along with an extensive collection of Ayatollah Khomeini and Khamenei’s statements related to the War and women. Further, one section titled

---

143 Website of Basij Organization of Women’s Society. Available: http://tanineyas.ir/ (Translates into “Echo of Jasmines”)
“Women’s Role in the Sacred Defense” is divided into the following sections:

“Women’s Status in Islam”, “Imam and the Leader’s Viewpoints”, “Women’s Role in the Sacred Defense”, and “Role of Women in the Islamic Revolution.” Another section on the website is titled “Women Authors.” This section is subdivided into six different categories, including: Relief Workers, Veterans, Poets, Aid Campaign Members, Authors, and Researchers. Each of these sub-categories includes an index of the names of women who have been involved in these different fields, along with their biographies, and writing samples for some.

Another section of the website “Memorials and Festivals” is sub-divided into five categories. These sub-categories include: Memorials for Women Martyrs, Sacred Defense Film Festival, Sacred Defense Theater Festival, Sacred Defense Book Festival, and, Sacred Defense Poetry Congresses. Each of these sections includes an index of the entries at these festivals related to women and the Iran-Iraq War, with a brief description on each.

The Shohadāy Zan provides the most organized and comprehensive list of the cultural content produced on women and the War.

**Festivals, Commemoration Events and other Platforms**

If in the immediate years following the Iran-Iraq War, women were only a side consideration in the cultural materials produced, the developments over the course of the past two to four years, indicate that inclusion of women in the war narrative is now part of the larger state approach.

The language and rhetoric of many of the more recent organizations and events in particular related to women, has been one of ‘modeling’ (Olgū Šāzī). The values and events of the Iran-Iraq War are presented as those to be followed today,
specifically as a mechanism for combatting the threat of cultural “soft war” in which women are seen as one of the main demographic targets, and by extension the family unit. In particular, the values of the Sacred Defense are seen as a positive and effective role model, since the War, according to the official state narrative is considered as part of the Islamic Revolution itself.

In 2014, the first Shâhed Literary Festival was held in Tehran, with a theme of “Martyrs’ Wives”. At the closing ceremony of the festival, Shahidi, the Vice-President and chair of the Foundation for Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, said that “the blood of our martyrs and veterans insured our revolution.” He continued that since the year had been called the year of “Economy and Culture” by the Supreme Leader, the Foundation has taken on the promotion of the culture of sacrifice, as one of its main goals. In 2014, the first gathering of “The Waiting Mothers” also took place, to honour the 600-plus “waiting mothers” in the Tehran province. “Waiting Mothers” refers to those whose sons are either missing or ‘unknown’ soldiers, whose ‘patience’ was praised by the Supreme Leader at this event. As well in 2014, Mojtabahedzadeh announced April 13th as the official “Day of Tribute to Mothers and Wives of Martyrs” – in which she referred to these mothers as the ‘unknowns’ of

---

Another event organized for the first time is the First Veterans’ Wives seminar, which took place in 2014. Commenting on this event, the director of the Foundation for the Prevention and Publication of Women’s Participation in the Sacred Defense, commented that the outcomes of the “imposed war” would have been very different had it not been for the support of families. For images from some of these commemorative ceremonies see Appendix 1, Images 1-6.

There has also been a significant proliferation of texts on the Iran-Iraq War, written by women, or about women, in the form of biographies and autobiographies. Jamshidiha and Hamidi estimate the number of these texts close to 100. In a comprehensive analysis of the published memoirs by and on women during the Iran-Iraq War, these authors categorize ‘women’s war experiences’ into different groups to portray the multiplicity of ways that women were affected by this conflict. Briefly, ‘women’s war experience’ is categorized as: displacement, change in family structures, change in ‘female disposition’, women’s body and war experience, abeyance, and relocation in daily life. The authors locate these categories within eighteen selected women’s war memoirs as a way to demonstrate the lived experience of the afore mentioned categories. The publishers of these books which include Sūre Mehr Publishing Company, Shāhed Publication, Mo‘āšeṣeh

---

Farhangi Samā’, Nashr Shāhed, are either affiliates of the two main organizations directly overseeing war and veteran’s affairs, or affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. A list of some of these titles can be seen in Table 2.

In these cases, the notion of autobiographical texts’ ‘double agency,’ \(^{150}\) complicates the Iranian War Story told by women, which although includes them, does not always offer a necessarily different version of the story. In fact, this double agency lies in their ability to act as both a powerful tool for those whose voices have been historically marginalized or silenced [women], while also having the ability to be co-opted in such a way as to "...to reify dominant relations." \(^{151}\) The inclusion of women’s narratives and presence in the Iranian state’s War Story serves to portray the Iran-Iraq War as not only a war waged on the nation’s borders, but as well on the very values and ideals of the 1979 Revolution. In this premise, these ideals are to not only be protected by male soldiers on the frontlines, but also by the women, in both their complementary role to soldiers, as well as in the private sphere protecting the home-front. The civilian experience, or rather the everyday realities of war, are experiences that everyone can have, and this universality, is “critical in re-imagining a world where conflict is a constant fact of life.” \(^{152}\) When women’s stories make it into the War Story, the stark distinction between ‘civilian’ and ‘combat’ experiences is blurred, and the battlefield both literally and figuratively


seeps through to all spheres of life. This argument stands to be extended to imply that the need for ‘resistance’ and ‘defense’ then, are no longer limited to the borders, but in fact all realms of society are in need of protection.

The emphasis and orchestrated effort to include women's experiences, narratives, and memories within the larger official public narrative of the war, is a means to curb the actual potential of these experiences. Whereas the inclusion of women within the War Story as explained by Cooke is considered an anomaly, in the case of the Iranian state, we see a concentrated effort to make visible, and to include women in the larger narrative. Here, I argue that the only available framework for the inclusion of women’s experiences within the IRI’s War Story is a militarized one. While, the emphasis of these archival platforms is more on the domestic and supportive role of women during the War, and not their combative roles, the militarization of women’s inclusion within the IRI’s War Story cannot be overlooked. As one of the main organizations directly overlooking the archiving of the War, the Foundation for the Sacred Defense, functions directly under the IRI Army’s control. Further, the Shohadāy Zan platform, has also been established by the Basij Organization – a paramilitary group. The co-optation of women’s experiences of this War, by the state, severely impacts the history of women’s resistances, and as well presents a limited framework under which women can be active during times of conflict.
Ideological Knowledge Production: The Field of Adult Education

One of the main aims of the content of the cultural productions around the Iran-Iraq War is ‘culturalization’, particularly of the younger generation around the values and principles of the War. In fact in much of the state narrative, the Sacred Defense is seen as an ‘educational’ repository, where the experiences of those men and women are to be used as models for the current and future of state building. Further, Ayatollah Khamenei has referred to this material as necessary for ‘education’ in the teachings of the Sacred Defense. In a statement, the director of the Foundation for Women’s War Participation, prefaces the activities of the foundation as following Ayatollah Khamenei’s three interpretations of the War: a source of wealth (spiritual), educative, and a place for acquiring knowledge.  

	Sites of commemoration, and memorialization are important locales in the field of adult education. How can these sites, in the particular case of the Iran-Iraq War affect the goals of critical adult education? There are many variations, descriptions, and explanations for the concept of “critical adult education.” My own personal understanding of this concept has been informed by the works of Allman and Carpenter and Mojab.  

154 Allman’s notion of “critical education” or rather “revolutionary critical education” is one which paves the way toward a personal and social transformation. What Allman advocates is by itself not capable of “bringing


about the transformation of society,” however it is able to expose the social relations necessary for a transformed one. ¹⁵⁶

A dialectical understanding of our world suggests that our consciousness, or the way in which we ‘form ideas’ is “internally, or dialectically, related to reality.” ¹⁵⁷ How this reality is shaped, and the mechanisms used for presenting it, affects our consciousness and how we ‘think’ about that reality. Our consciousness then, can be both utilized in ‘creating ideology’ and as well in critiquing it. ¹⁵⁸ What do we mean by consciousness? And what do we mean by the ‘material’ when determining the mutually constitutive relationship between the two? As human beings, our consciousness rests in the “ability to live, experience, think, create, and relate to others” - it is our human capacity. ¹⁵⁹ The development and ‘actualization’ of this capacity is rooted in materiality - that is – on the “fundamentally socially-physiological and historical.” ¹⁶⁰ As such, since consciousness is always “consciousness about something” and this ‘something’ is socially rooted since “the individual is socially individuated,” ¹⁶¹ the question is what are the implications of the ideological construction of the category of ‘woman’ on women’s consciousness?


¹⁶⁰ Ibid.
¹⁶¹ Ibid.
Particularly in the state presentation cultural content of the Iran-Iraq War, where there is a missing connection between the subjects and the material world.

Women’s experience of war and conflict is complex and diverse, and it is within this multiplicity of experiences that ‘learning’ should be located. Mojab explains that the inclusion of the experiences of living through, resisting, and surviving, the conditions of war are important components of learning during and after conflicts, as well as crucial elements for realizing the goals of emancipatory learning. Furthermore, women play an instrumental role in ‘building and sustaining peace’ as a result of the multiplicity of ways in which they experience war and conflict.  

As such, I would like to locate women’s lived experiences of wars within the framework of a critical or revolutionary adult education. Marx’s theory of consciousness, in which Allman’s notion of revolutionary adult education is located, as a mode of inquiry allows us to look at the question of how ideas take shape, and develop within their relationship to the material world. This is in contrast to ideological conceptions, which serve to separate the individual from the actualities of their world. This approach toward adult education necessarily has consequences for the knowledge produced. In Marx’s dialectic and material articulation of our consciousness, the ideas we produce – our “sensuous labour” – exists and comes to fruition through its internal interaction with the “social environment, the material and natural world.”  

war are articulated within the framework of critical adult education is an integral part of the process.

Bannerji’s conceptualization of experience in a historical and dialectical manner is a useful approach to locating experience at the center of critical adult education. In its least complex articulation, Bannerji describes experience as a “sense of being in the world.” ¹⁶⁴ How we come to understand our world – our material reality – or the ‘social’ - accommodates the way in which we conceptualize our own ‘being’ in the world. In other words, how can we think about our experiences, and understand them in relation to our material reality? Bannerji argues that the fragmentation of the social - the rupturing of our consciousness from our material reality - renders us incapable of understanding our experiences in relation to a ‘social ontology’, or rather how the social world is produced.

Bannerji suggests the specific and particular issues can be the entry point into a non-fragmented, ‘complex’ understanding of the social, where “each little piece of it contains the macrocosm in its microcosm.” ¹⁶⁵ The location of these ‘specifics’ within the ‘general’ is but one aspect of the dialogical and internally related nature of ‘the social’. It is here that the theoretical approach we take to understand ‘experience’, can determine the outcomes of learning and knowledge production. If we content ourselves by only valuing each experience on an individual basis, despite the comforting notion that we are honouring people’s


“differences”, we are in fact limiting ourselves in our ability to ‘mobilize’. By privileging the knowledge of ‘subject positions’ we become ill equipped to arrive at the processes active within the current capitalist social relations, and embedded within the experiences themselves.\(^{166}\) In fact, Bannerji prompts us to go ‘above and behind’ the immediate in order grasp the issue in its entirety - to be able to locate it within our specific historical moment, and as well understand it in relation to the other social relations concurrently at play. A holistic approach to defining experience can help us to connect struggles, and glean the generalities, the ‘objective truths’ from the particularities of the everyday. Let's take the example of the publicly presented narratives of Iranian women’s experiences of war, specifically those involved in active combat or present on the frontlines. By looking at this example head-on, as opposed to from ‘above and behind' we may think that women in the IRI are free to be present and active in a field that is traditionally male dominated. We may conclude from the image of a rifle yielding chador clad Iranian female soldier, that while her appearance may be different, in practice she is performing in no less a restrictive manner than she would under a secular regime and government. By ignoring the history of the specific conflict, and the ideological framework within which this woman is appearing in the state’s official narrative, we are shortchanging ourselves by way of critical analysis, and will fail to recognize the broader implications of this specific event. Failure to understand experience in terms of both the immediate and extended relations, has the potential for falling into

the trap of ideological reasoning. This approach, according to Smith means “interpreting people’s actual life processes as expressing ideas or concepts,” and not as mediations of the ruling social relations. 167

This approach to theorization around the notion of experience has direct implications on knowledge production—central to the field of critical adult education. Allman maintains that the separation of thought from reality is directly linked to how knowledge can, and is, conceptualized. From this separation, follows, that knowledge is either a product of our thoughts, or ‘discovered’ by the “scientific, empirical observation of reality.” 168 The knowledge produced from a fragmented conceptualization of ‘the social’ is of the same nature - an epistemology that is also entirely disconnected from the social reality. This ideological form of epistemology, one which fails to acknowledge the dialogical relationship between consciousness and material reality - and by extension the relationship between theory and practice - is counter to the notion of ‘the social’ as proposed by Bannerji. The separation of thought and practice, de-contextualizes and ‘de-specifies’ concepts and discourses. Ultimately, in relation to the conceptualization of ‘the social’, this means that we are unable to move away from the specific, unable to link the particular, and reach the understanding that they are “‘specific” to a general, larger, set of social, structural, and institutional relations.” 169

As mentioned previously, the materialism of Marx’s theory of consciousness is rooted in a historical-dialectical materialism in its approach to social inquiry. As has been discussed, consciousness exists ‘therein’ the ‘social being’ and not outside of it. Therefore, since consciousness and our material reality are dialectically related, it follows then, that our ‘sensuous engagement’ with reality does not solely take place on an objective level, since both ‘thoughts and feelings’ are at play in that engagement. This suggests that “there can be no dichotomy or separate existence of cognitive and affective domains.” 170 Articulated in the language of internal relations, the subject does not exist outside of the object, but is “instead situated in the same process as those that constitute it.” 171 This understanding of materialism as a method of inquiry suggests that the world exists “only in the activities of real individuals.” 172 Following this premise then, history and society are comprised of the ‘activities’ and ‘practices’ of human beings, coordinated by the social relations of a particular historical moment.

How do we choose to look at knowledge? As something already existing, which we can access, or do we consider it as something we can make ourselves? If we decide to take the second path, we are in a sense reclaiming knowledge, and accounting for the disconnecting tendencies of ideological epistemologies. 173 In the

general context of any form of learning the relationship between ontology and epistemology determines how we can consider the ‘individual’ and the ‘social’ in learning, in one and the same time. Epistemology is how we come to know what we know about the world, and ontology refers to ‘how the social world is produced.’ 174 This “requires an understanding of what constitutes social reality, what the relation is between an individual and that reality, and how that reality comes to be “known”.”

Bannerji argues that the fragmentation of consciousness from our material world effectively erases ‘the social’ from the notion of ontology. She also outlines the creation of ‘thought objects’ as one of the perils of fragmentation or rupturing the ‘totality’ of the social. 175 These ‘phenomenal object forms’ retain the quality of an object when their dialectical social relations are ignored. That is, when their “concrete social determinations” are not taken into consideration, they retain the qualities of something static and ahistorical. This is a quality visible and present in ideological constructions of different social categories, such as that of “Women”.

According to Marx, both idealism and the old materialism “are blind to the internal relations between consciousness and reality and more generally tend to assign a thing-like status to that which is actually human in nature or the result of human

beings’ social relations.” 177 Let us consider the implications of this in relation to the
dialogical relationship that exists between ontology and epistemology. The ontology
of ‘social being’ can-not be wholly developed or understood, without an
epistemology which can make the connection between thought and its ‘material
sociohistorical’ grounding. 178

Conclusions:

In the preceding pages, I have provided a historical sketch of the socio-
political environment in which the Iran-Iraq War took place. As part of a historical-
dialectical framework, this mapping, provides a contextualization of the War by way
of gaining a better understanding of the conditions in which the state’s ideological
knowledge productions have been created. My employment of this framework has
been informed by Marxist-feminist scholar Himani Bannerji, and her theorization
around the notion of cultural nationalism, as an ideological category. Through an
unpacking of the content of three state platforms overlooking the archiving of the
Iran-Iraq War, I have located the nation building project of the IRI within the
framework of cultural nationalism. Specifically, my concentration has been on the
deployment of social constructions, such as that of the category of “Muslim Woman”
within this nation building project. Finally, I have located the topic of women and

177 Allman, Paula. (2011). Critical Education Against Global Capitalism: Karl Marx and
Revolutionary Critical Education. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 164.
178 Bannerji, H. (2011). Demography and Democracy: Essays on Nationalism, Gender,
and Ideology. Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, Inc.
ideological nationalism within the field of adult education, with a concentration on theorizing around the notion of “experience.”

Based on the official goals and objectives of the three platforms addressed in this research, “keeping alive” the memory of war does not only serve commemorative purposes, but also functions as a mechanism for “modeling” of the past in the present moment. I have argued here that the Iran-Iraq War played a legitimizing force for Khomeini’s regime, particularly in the context of the violent internal power struggle of the 1980’s. In fact, conflict, is one of the fundamental premises of cultural nationalism, and as such the continuation of the war rhetoric accompanied by the threat of an ever present “enemy” does not seem out of place in contemporary Iran today. Within the nation building project of cultural nationalism, arriving at homogeneity is an impossibility, as there always exists, albeit in varying degrees, a tension between opposing and dominant forces. The power struggle, and political tensions which were unraveling parallel to the Iran-Iraq War, may have changed in form, but are still extant today.

The IRI’s proclaimed enemy has been the imperialism associated with the West. In the years leading up to the coming to power of Khomeini’s regime, this enemy presented itself in the form of Mohammad-Reza Shah and his Western backed monarchy. The following years, the enemy appeared in the shape of Saddam Hussein’s Western funded and supported Ba’athist army. An easily identifiable enemy, and a much more palpable threat, made the justification for resorting to any means necessary to protect the nation, an easier task for the state. Today, in much of the content related to the topic of women and the War, the enemy remains the West,
this time under the guise of “soft war” with cultural pillars as its main target. Here, again the unit of the family is presented as one of the main social institutions in need of protection, and by extension, so too women.

The study of the case of the Iran-Iraq War and the ideological construction of the social category of “Muslim Woman” is not only relevant to adult education, but as well has the potential to expand the field. Unpacking the notions of experience, state, ideology, consciousness, war and peace, women, war, and learning, can work toward advancing the inherently interdisciplinary nature of both the practical and academic dimensions of adult education.

The theories of critical adult education stand to exercise their transformative powers in the fabrics of the social relations engulfed in the violent ideological net of religious fundamentalism and imperialism threatening the Middle East and North Africa today. As well, the many different ways in which women can experience war and conflict zones, provides a powerful locale for expanding the notion of ‘experience’ within the field of critical adult education, toward connecting resistances and women’s struggles globally. The process of transforming the self in the transformation of our social reality, cannot be achieved without analyzing experiences in their totality. A totality which “far from being an abstraction that forgets about specific differences” encompasses the different existing social relations. 179 Honouring women’s experiences of war, in their totality, toward the non-ideological production of knowledge, carries radical transformative qualities.

---
Bibliography:


Navide Shahed. *Victory of the Islamic Revolution and Women's Role.*


Navide Shahed. “About Us.” Available:


Table 1.
Iranian soldiers killed during the war based on occupation.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>115,080</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>39,001</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>3117</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Student</td>
<td>2895</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Student</td>
<td>36,898</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>2,432</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (under 10)</td>
<td>2,503</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14,263</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>217,489</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.
Selection of Memoirs and Autobiographies by Women on the Iran-Iraq War.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traceless Stars: Grandmother (Collection of Women’s Memoires from the Sacred Defense)</td>
<td>Reza Raissi</td>
<td>Sama’ Publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War Correspondent: Maryam Kazemzadeh’s Memoir</td>
<td>Reza Raissi</td>
<td>Yad Banoo Publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last Sunday: Masoomeh Ramhormozi’s Memoir</td>
<td>Maasoomeh Ramhormozi</td>
<td>Sooreh Mehr Publishing Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wandering Shoes: Soheila Farjamfar’s Memoir</td>
<td>Soheila Farjamfar</td>
<td>Sooreh Mehr Publishing Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady of the Moon (1): Zahra Tajoh’s Memoir – Wife of Martyr Masoud Khelati</td>
<td>Ahad Goodarziyani</td>
<td>Milad Noor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the Language of Patience: Group Memoir Wives of Sacred Defense Commanders</td>
<td>Sohrab Fazel</td>
<td>Nasim Hayt Foundation in Partnership with Sarir (Affiliated with the Foundation for the Publication and Preservation of Values from the Sacred Defense)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryam’s Boots: Maryam Amjadi’s Memoir</td>
<td>Fariba Taleshpour</td>
<td>Sooreh Mehr Publishing Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady of the Moon (4): Fields of Grape, Fields of Apples, Fields of Mirror – A Conversation with Safiyeh Moddares Wife of Martyred General Mehdi Bakeri</td>
<td>Morteza Sarhangi and Ahad Goodarziyani</td>
<td>Milad Noor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady of the Moon (2): Morteza was the Mirror of my Life: A Conversation with Maryam Amini wife of Martyred Seyyed Morteza Avini</td>
<td>Morteza Sarhangi and Hedayat-Allah Behboodi</td>
<td>Milad Noor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daa: Memoir of Seyedeheh Zahra Hosseini</td>
<td>Seyedeh Zahra Hosseini in Partnership with Seyedeh A’zam Hosseini</td>
<td>Efsat Publishing Company</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1

Image 1 – The first gathering of “The Waiting Mothers” 181

Image 2A – First Festival of Patience and Resistance

Image 2B - First Festival of Patience and Resistance

181 http://hamshahironline.ir/details/262213
182 http://www.defapress.ir/Fa/News/16767
183 http://www.defapress.ir/Fa/News/16767
Image 2C - First Festival of Patience and Resistance

Image 3A – “Zahrai Mothers at the Tomb of Heavenly Boys”

184 http://www.defapress.ir/Fa/News/16767
Image 3B - “Zahrai Mothers at the Tomb of Heavenly Boys”

Image 4A – Fourth Gathering of Mothers of Fatemieh Martyrs - Tehran

Image 4B - Fourth Gathering of Mothers of Fatemieh Martyrs - Tehran

186  

187  
Image 4C - Fourth Gathering of Mothers of Fatemieh Martyrs - Tehran

Image 5A – First Gathering of Makers of the Epic – Tribute to Mothers and Wives of Martyrs

Image 5B - First Gathering of Makers of the Epic – Tribute to Mothers and Wives of Martyrs

Image 5C - First Gathering of Makers of the Epic – Tribute to Mothers and Wives of Martyrs


Image 6A - Mother's Day 2014

Image 6B - Mother's Day 2014


Image 6C - Mother's Day 2014

Image 7A – “Sending Troops”

[Links to images and related websites]
Image 7B – Women and the Sacred Defense

Image 7C – “Donations”


Image 7D – “Ready for Defense”
Image 7E – “Sending Troops”

Image 7F – “Sending Troops”

Image 7G – “Ready for Defense”

نه گل بود

به کنار اینه میبرمت، میبوسمت
صبح که من برای تکه ای نان از خانه به کوچه میروم
تو در خواب هستی
در شب های بمباران چنان تو را بوسیدم که
گمایم ابر باران شد
در ان بندز مه آلود
نه گل بود نه امید بود
ما غرق شدن زنان و مردان را در مه
میدنیم
بوسه هایی ما نه گزار بود، نه دروغ بود
پناه بود
در برف و بوران

دختر ما تاب داشت
تب چهل درجه
چگونه او را بردیم کجا بردیم
صالحیانه میخواست ما خانه و شهر آنان را
ترک گرفیم
در تب چهل درجه دخترا ما
ما شهر را ترک گفتیم رها کردیم
غروب بود باران بود چمدان ما
سنگین بود
دخترمان را که چهل درجه تاب داشت
تا طبقه سوم بردیم
جنج بود
پله ها فراوان بود

******************************

به باغ همسفران

و من در طول گل بسی از پشت انگشت های تو
بیدار خواهم شد
و آن وقت
حكایت کن از بمب هایی که من خواب بودم و افتاد
حكایت کن از گونه هایی که من خواب بودم و ن شد
بگو چند مرغابی از روی دریا پریدند
در آن گیرو داری که چرخ زره پوش از روي روابی کودک
گذر داشت
قناری نخ زرد آواز خود را یای چه احساس آسیب و
پست
بگو در بندار چه احساس مصوعی از راه وارد شد
چه علمی به موسیقی مثبت بود باروت پی برده
چه ادرکی از طعم محماول نان در مذاق رسالت تراوید
و آن وقت من، مثل ایمانی از تاش »خاستوا « گرم
تو را در سر آغاز یک باغ خواهم نشانید. تو را در سر آغاز یک باغ خواهم نشانید

******************************

از کتاب "عشق با زبان دیلماتیک"

[سرانم را
به جنگ نمی‌پرسم
فردا

94
سياسة مدارها
با هم گذار می‌آیند.