The Romance of the Indo-European Family: Globalatinization, Philology, and the Space of Christian Semantics

by

Navid Naderi

Graduate Program in Literature
Duke University

Date:______________________

Approved:

_________________________________
Wahneema Lubiano, Co-supervisor

_________________________________
Walter Mignolo, Co-supervisor

_________________________________
Fredric Jameson

_________________________________
Bruce Lawrence

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate Program in Literature in the Graduate School of Duke University

2017
ABSTRACT

The Romance of the Indo-European Family: Globalatinization, Philology, and the Space
of Christian Semantics

by

Navid Naderi

Graduate Program in Literature
Duke University

Date:______________________
Approved:

_________________________
Wahneema Lubiano, Co-Supervisor

_________________________
Walter Mignolo, Co-Supervisor

_________________________
Fredric Jameson

_________________________
Bruce Lawrence

An abstract of a dissertation submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate Program
in Literature in the Graduate School of
Duke University

2017
Abstract

This dissertation explores the idea of “history” as a general theory of meaning in its rapport with Christian political theology and its liquidation into the secular idea of a world divided into “familial,” “civilizational,” “national,” “racial,” and “religious” entities and collectivities. The author attempts to demonstrate that the relevance of historical meaning expands globally with Christian colonialism and imperialism, and that historicization ultimately amounts to racialization (“race” here standing as at once the most charged and the most neutral term of division that although is not one with “family” — as in “linguistic families” — “civilization,” “nation,” and “religion,” expresses best the common mode of theologico-political division that these modern signifiers are deployed to effect). Acquisition of historical meaning is the rite of entry into the world of nations, and history ultimately figures the political collectivities that it founds and bestows meaning upon as “communities of blood,” or communities in possession of a sacred shared substance that persists over time, is often constituted by means of purging from it what is produced as “foreign,” and has to be protected and immunized against exterior contamination. The process of acquisition of modern racial-historical meaning and formation into a national situation is particularly explored with reference to Iran.

A variety of scholarly and literary texts are read and recited, alongside an exploration of postmodern war and democratic politics in an attempt to demonstrate the
theological underpinnings of historical meaning. Interrelations of “religion” and “race” are particularly explored and the idea of “secularism” is questioned specially in its rapport with Christian imperialism, Orientalism, and the philological history of “Semitism” and anti-Semitism. The text is largely sui generis, self-referential and poetic in method: it explores the resonances and dissonances of various texts and strives to express the semantic noise of these juxtapositions all the while that it seeks to explore the obscene undersides of contemporary political ideas and ideals.

The text does not reach as much a conclusion at the end as it seeks to raise questions and create problems. It asks, for example, whether there is a “secular” erotic and psychic investment in sexually humiliating the “religious;” whether we standardized humans are addicted to the pornography of war and find murder beautiful; as well as whether exploring the philological co-dependencies of “race” and “religion” raises a question about the logic and function of the analytical separation between racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia.
# Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................. iv

Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................................. vii

1. Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 1

2. *Tahrir* and the Limits of Civilizational Imagination, or تحریر محل نزاع ................................. 15

3. Mystified Body, Enlightened Mind: On History as Brutal Free Love ........................................... 51

4. On Hating Lovingly (addendum to *qršt*) ...................................................................................... 266

5. P/F, or, Filological Dislocation—On Becoming Nationally Situated ............................................ 279

6. Conclusions ...................................................................................................................................... 324

Bibliography ....................................................................................................................................... 325

Biography ............................................................................................................................................. 331
Acknowledgements

I am infinitely indebted to my advising committee(s) for allowing me to get lost, take turns and detours, and change “my project” at every turn. Thank you for allowing me to seek the masochistic pleasure of seeking knowledge and form and failing at knowing and finding form.
1. Introduction

Race—or the “idea of race and the operations of racism”—Wahneema Lubiano writes, is “a distorting prism.” It mystifies what “would be readily apparent to anyone existing on this ground” (my emphasis). As a semantic operator, “race” mys-trans-lates: it mystifies the apparent by removing—as it were—those on this ground, from here to another place, where, mediated by a collective self-image, they appear otherwise to themselves; as if unrelated to that social reality that is apparent there. In “the United States” for example, where Lubiano writes, this “distorting prism … allows [the] citizenry to imagine itself functioning as a moral and just people while ignoring the widespread devastation directed at black Americans particularly, but at a much larger number of people generally.”¹ In this sense race disorients political antagonisms and constitutes dislocated political collectives based on a fundamental denial of the social realities on the ground.

What race mystifies—or covers (as the media “cover”) in layers and layers of social and historical meaning and spectacular light—is an apparent injustice and inequality that is constitutive of modernity: what Walter Mignolo calls the “coloniality” of modernity. As a modern signifier—and it should be readily apparent that “race” is a

modern signifier—race enables modern human collectives to be imagined as unique, as it were, “peoples,” “nations,” “communities,” etc. each with their own “history,” “literature,” “culture,” “language,” etc., while at the same time it projects a general image of where “humanity” is headed in its imagined totality. In our postmodern world “humanity” seems to be (still) headed toward what has been referred to as “the end of history,” that is to say, toward the full globalization of the so-called “free” market and “political” democracy as the most noble ideals and achievements of post-Enlightenment thought. The idea of race is not separable from this grand outline of Human History—neither is the there where democratic majorities imagine themselves to be moral and just despite the plethora of signs that point to the otherwise here, where social realities are forcefully and popularly denied.

Gil Anidjar traces the coming to the world of the idea of race, alongside that of the “nation,” to the becoming central of the rite of the Eucharist to medieval Western Christian Church. Imagining that the Sacrament—the consumption of the pure blood of Jesus Christ—has purified the Christian community’s blood, there emerges in Christian imagination a division between bloods: Christian blood is different from non-Christian blood. This way, Anidjar argues, the Christian community comes to reimagine itself as a community united by a shared sacred substance that is in dire need of security and immunity. The racial, or national, community as a community of blood thus comes into
the world as what we might call today a “religious” community, imagined in terms of “consanguinity.”

By nineteenth century, however, the secular science of philology—a modern science of comparison and classification that is later on divided (or dissolved) into several distinct branches of modern human sciences such as history, anthropology, comparative literature, comparative linguistics, and the comparative study of religion—transforms the political-theological idea that there are different kinds of blood into a providential theory of a “humanity” divided into different “families” whose imagined sanguine differences—assumed to be the real cause of “progress,” or the forward movement of “history”—comes to be generalized into “historical facts,” to use Ernest Renan’s formulation, with the advent of “world religions.” The latter themselves being modern inventions of Christian philologists who constructed such ideas as Judaism, Mohammedanism, Islamism, Zoroastrianism, Mazdaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and the like through the deployments of the concept of “religion” as an explanatory notion that analytically isolates and ostensibly explains certain aspects of various traditions as versions of a Latin notion—namely “religion”—and makes possible scientific representations of the “minds” of those whose “religions” are explored and explained.

Modern philology, thus, again in Renan’s words, transforms race from a matter of “blood” into “a matter of language, religion, laws, and customs.”

Modern philology, in this sense, divides the world into various civilizational and national entities each playing a special role in a providential drama. As science and scholarly practice, philology is inseparable from Christian theology, colonialism, Christian imperialism, and Orientalism. It develops a prism through which the world is seen: a fully-fledged “theory of meaning” that gradually transforms into what we call “history” today. Philology, in effect, establishes “race” and “history” as the two sides of the same coin. As a theory of meaning, history generally reduces the meaning of the world into that of (human) “life” in the world, at the same time that it establishes a hierarchy of dispensability, and projects a future in which “all men” (or “humans” for that matter) are “to come into one fate,” as the poet Robert Duncan wrote in the twentieth century. Or, it illustrates “the whole history of the world, in its unconscious progress towards Christianity” as the philologist and sacred scientist Max Müller had written a century before him. In between the two, historically speaking, there is of

---

6 Cited in Olender, The Languages of Paradise, 91–92.
course the theory of “the end of history,” that not despite, but precisely due to its
Eurocentrism, or its evangelism, provides a somewhat accurate account of today’s political scene as it appears on the old and the new media. That liberal democracy is the best that humans have achieved seems to be a neoliberal democratic consensus today in our “world of televisualiza-

Given the coloniality of our postmodern world, however, the end of history is something many neoliberal democratic majorities still seek in the world. In the South, in the majority non-Christian and non-white parts of the world, many still fight for liberal democracy; and in the North too, many fight for “true” democracy, to “protect” increasingly fragile democracies, and also to “secure” and export it. The fight for liberal democracy and human rights in the South is generally also a middle-class fight for joining the North and climbing up the ladder of progress, as it were. The theory of belatedness still has many adherents and so the end of history still appears to be in the future to many—something worth fighting for. What makes this possible, the theory of meaning, the providential prism, that allows such a view of the world in which “progress” toward “democracy” seem to be the inevitable fate of humanity is history.

One of the reasons why liberal democracy appears as “the best option,” a political model without any real alternatives, and in fact as indisputable good, is precisely that it is

---

Western and “modern,” and a ripe fruit of “human history.” In other words, colonial mentality is still a determining factor. Standardization (including the standardization of politics) is at once imposed and desired. In the South we fight to achieve “democracy,” and in the North we democratically legitimize war and destruction in the name of “democracy.” And this serves to maintain a fundamentally unjust political economic and symbolic order.

Political concepts seem increasingly devoid of meaning in our time of mass mediatized end of history. “Democracy” today seems to be more than anything an article of cynical belief. We see with our own eyes how despite (or due to—your choice) the global expansion of liberal democratic rule there is no justice in the world and there is increasingly more injustice. We see how the cruelest wars are waged in the name of democracy and to protect capitalist democracy, and how the cruelest social orders are kept in place with democratic rule. We see how the destruction of the world is democratically legitimized, and yet we still believe in “democracy” and “human rights” and all that comes with that. What seems lost in the world is seeking-justice, and there seems to be an abundance of seeking “individual freedoms” and “civil liberties.” There is also a general democratic affirmation of a notion of the world as a theater of the most violent competition over scarce resources, an arena for display of strength, and a place in
which the ultimate goal of humanity is a longer average of life, general technoscientific conquest of the universe, and more material comfort and consumerist pleasure.

What I have sought to understand in writing this text is “history” as a theory of meaning and the general belief in it. What meaning does history give to the world? How are political collectivities, or “national situations,” to use a most helpful phrase of Fredric Jameson’s, formed in the aftermath (and as effects) of the acquisition of historical meaning in the longue durée of globalization? How does history, and more precisely historical difference, manifest itself in the contemporary world?

In the first section of the text, that is section A, I take the contemporary example of Mohsen Namjoo, an Iranian popular musician, and his encounter with Western popular music in general and the blues in particular, and the ways that he himself as well as the media framed his practice in civilizational terms: “the East meets the West.” I demonstrate that such “meeting” and the musical form that it takes may be explained in terms of the general dynamics of globalization and the expansion of the free market. There is a general trend in music production in which the deviation from the “traditional” (read “national”) coincides with a double gravitation at once toward the global and the “regional” (i.e. folk musical traditions whose exclusion has historically made possible the invention of “Iranian traditional music”). However, what we witness is not that the deviation from the “national” really opens the way for the “regional” to
enter the market and benefit from it. Quite the contrary, it only makes possible the sampling and superficial appropriation of the “regional” as a rite of participation in global music production mostly by urban artists, at the same time that the general reality of globalization for “regional” musicians (who are not “artists” and for the most part are farmers, bards, storytellers, healers, and also musicians who play at weddings and funerals) is losing one’s traditional means of subsistence and witnessing the very destruction of one’s lifeworld.

At the same time, the ideology of “civilizational encounter” is based on the massive forgetting of pre-modern cultural geographies: an anachronistic projection according to which different musical traditions are imagined as essentially unrelated because essentially containable within modern national and civilizational spaces. There is however a material musical connection between the different melodies and performative styles that the musician brings together that remains unexplainable in terms of a civilizational encounter between “the East” and “the West” and are in fact obfuscated, made completely obscure and unrecognizable, by the terms of that encounter. Namjoo’s music is largely built upon a formal musical connection between the blues and various musical traditions in Iran that are explainable in terms of pre-modern cultural contacts that spread over a vast space from West Africa and Southwestern Europe to West Asia and beyond. Within the terms of “East meets West,”
however, the musical encounter can only be framed as an encounter of the Old and the
New, tradition and modernity, and the clearly audible similarities between the different
musical styles that Namjoo brings together are explained away as accidental similarities
that may be formalized in music theoretical terms but cannot lead the musician to
imagining the possibility of any real cultural contacts—what after all could a black
American musical style have in common with obscure musical styles found in remote
villages in Iran? What obfuscates the audible memory of pre-modern musical encounters
is precisely history as a theory of meaning and a “progressive” scheme, and the
ideological image of the world as divided into different civilizational spheres. The
musician remains engaged with the commodity form rather than the musical form and
that the civilized ear remains incapable of hearing the memory of pre-modern cultural
contact that makes possible the contemporary musical practice.

In section H, I set myself to the task of exploring history as a general theory of
meaning. This is the longest section and the most interrupted. It is interrupted by
commerce and war—race wars, religious wars, and sex wars; as well as free enterprise,
global standardization of sensibilities and politics, and the development of a sweet tooth
and a lustful, insatiable eye that constantly seeks novelty. The main question in this
section is the relation of historical time to colonial space: the division of the world into
civilizational spheres and national spaces and the emergence of the Globe, that is, the
world mapped racially, where humans exist as “unique” and for the most part geographically determined communities with their own unique “traditions,” and yet, where at the same time all these unique human populations seem to be ultimately directed toward a certain Christian future marked by “progress” and a general brotherhood of men. The point I attempt to make in this section is that “history” as a general theory of meaning is not ultimately separable from Christian theology and the meaning that historicization imposes on human collectives is a “racial” and “religious” meaning: it figures human collectives as communities of blood and communities of immunity. Racial and historical meanings dislocate political communities and mystify apparent social realities. Acquisition of history is ultimately acquisition of race, and historicization is ultimately racialization. Race is also the main logic of modern war: there is in our world a clear “geopolitical distribution of corporeal vulnerability” and it is clear who is more disposable and whose life is worth more. Capitalism is a religion whose ideology and political theology, as well as its current tendency of planetary mediation and spectacularization, derive from the only theologico-political tradition called a “religion” before the philological invention of “world religions.” As “religion,” capitalism establishes “a marketplace of death” that is the other side of the free market.

9 Talal Asad, On Suicide Bombing (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 94.
Global sacrifice in this sense is the other side of global consumption and what allows the emergence of the contemporary “global community” is the contradictory combination of the idea that life is sacred (and has to be saved and defended under all conditions) and a clear pattern of global sacrifice (that is for the most part democratically enabled). So it is the Christian logic of communion and sacrifice in its relation to the global hegemony of historical meaning, free market, political democracy, and a principle of marketable truth that I attempt to understand in this section. A few unbearable questions emerge in this section, particularly in relation to the “sweetness of commerce” and the “sexiness of the market” that also seem to be addictive.10 What are we addicted to in postmodernity? Why is there not a popular desire for radically changing the existing order of things? Could we be addicted to blood? Could we be addicted to the pornography of the new, the “love of slaughter,” and the “beauty of murder”?11 Could we be addicted to mystifying tele-visions of a hopeful future at a time when the only thing standing on the horizon is an approaching death? (And as a side question, why are the intellectuals demanded to be polite and civil at such times?)

Section C is a short addendum to a part of section H and focuses primarily on the relation between sex and war. It is a look at the relation between “religion” and

“secularism” as it pertains to the idea of “free speech,” the ideological defense of pornographic imagery, and the ideas of “progress” and “sexual liberation.” I ask whether there is a relation between the insistence to pictorially depict “Islam” as violent and sexually oppressive as an exercise of free speech, the French police’s violent enforcement of nakedness on French Muslim women on the beach to uphold the principles of “hygiene and secular principles,” the American army’s techniques of sexual torture reserved for Muslims, and an American scholar’s narrative of her personal motivation to teach pornography after reading an article about military genocidal rape in Bosnia. The question is, is there a “secular” civilizational and erotic investment in raping and sexually torturing the “religious”? And if so, what is its relation to the ideology of freedom, sexual liberation, and the spectacle of novelty?

Section P, is the last section of the text. What is discussed in this section has for the most part interrupted all the previous sections. The main focus of this final section is on the creation of national situations through the operations of “race” and “religion” as dislocative semantic operators, with the philological-theological idea of “the Indo-European Urheimat” lurking in the background. Few case of historical deployments of “religion” in Iran, and visions of “the Orient” in the United States are explored briefly—the two national situations that I have drawn upon throughout the text. I examine the relations of “the Orient,” “religion,” and “secularism” to the desire for “alphabet
reform,” the institution of “romantic love” and monogamous marriage, as well as sedentarization and murder of nomads and eugenic plans for the extermination of the so-called “undeserving” poor.

Finally, this text is mostly built of study notes that cohere as much musically as based on rational judgment. It is the discourse of a student who obsessively re-cites and seeks meaning in scholarly texts, and an idiot who doesn’t find answers and asks naïve questions, for example: why Americans who have freedom of speech and assembly won’t democratically demand to live in a country that doesn’t constantly bomb the unenlightened and the uncivilized? Why won’t the liberal majorities of Christian nations rebel against their own governments instead of rushing to help the victims of the military violence of the governments that they democratically legitimize? Why do the inhabitants of Iranian metropoles predicate their freedom on the destruction of Iranian farmers’ sustenance? However, despite the obsessive recitation of mostly scholarly texts, the text itself doesn’t have a claim to scholarly truth. Rather it is conceived as a literary text—a satire and a dirge—that mourns the destruction of the world just as it explores its apparent mysteries, and also expresses disgust and hostility in our world of peace, global humanitarian fraternization, and mass mediated image consumption.

**satire** sa.taiə poetical (or prose) work in which vices or follies are ridiculed. xvi (Barclay, ‘The Shyp of Folys, 1509). – (O)F. satire or L. satira (whence also Sp.
sátira, It. satira, G. satire), later form of satura (in earliest use) verse composition
of a variety of subjects, spec. application of the sense ‘medley’ (cf. phr. per saturam in the lump, indiscriminately); acc. to ancient grammarians this was
ellipt. For lanx satura ‘full dish’ (lanx dish, satura, fem. of satus full, rel. to satis
fully; cf. sad) dish of various fruits offered to the gods. Formerly assoc. with satyr
and so spelt, from the common notion (found already in some ancient
grammarians) that L. satura was derived from Gr. sáturos satyr, in allusion to the
chorus of satyrs which gave its name to the Gr. ‘satyric’ drama. So satiric(al)
satirise, f. satire.

sad sæd A. †sated, weary OE.; †steadfast, firm; †grave, serious; sorrowful xiv;
deploribly disappointing or bad xviii. B. †solid, dense xiii (cf. sad iron, solid
flat iron); dark-coloured (cf. G. satiblau, etc.) xvii; (of bread, etc.) that has not
‘risen’ xvii. OE. sæd = OS. sad (Du. zat), OHG. sat (G. satt), ON. saðr, Goth. saðs :=
C Germ. *saðaz ← IE. *sətós, pp. formation (see –ed1 and cf. loud, old) on a base
meaning satisfy and repr. also by Gr. áatos (–*nsátōs) insatiate, hândēn enough, L.
sat, satis enough, satur sated (cf. saturate), OIr. sathech satiated, Lith. sotūs
satisfying. Hence sadden5 sæ.dn (dial.) make solid xvii; make sorrowful xviii;
repl. †sad vb. (xiv) and (dial.) sade (OE. sadian).12
He begins by naming that in a Latin manner … What is a religion? To present oneself on the international stage, to claim the right to practice one’s “religion” … is to inscribe oneself in a political and ideological space dominated by Christianity, and therefore to engage in the obscure and equivocal struggle in which the putatively “universal” value of the concept of religion even of religious tolerance, has in advance been appropriated into the space of a Christian semantics … The universalism that dominates global political-juridical discourse is fundamentally Greco-Christian. Or at least I believe it is. It is a Christianity speaking a bit of Greek. – Jacques Derrida¹

2. *Tahrir and the Limits of Civilizational Imagination, or* تحریر محل نزاع

Tradition accommodates mistakes as well as betrayal; it is not by accident that *tradition* and *treason* have a common etymology. – Talal Asad²

problematic (in the sense that it may be equally erroneous or correct). – Ronald Judy³

It was perhaps 2006 that Mohsen Namjoo’s music was suddenly on the ground. He had hoped to release his music officially but before he was able to do so the music was leaked and the copied CDs were everywhere. Few of the songs were as if just test-recorded, raw and unfinished. A few solos, *setār* or guitar and āvāz, singing, and others with a band of five or six, the Mud Band. Quite a few covers (or “based on a theme by”

---

¹ Derrida, “Above All, No Journalists!,” 74.
as they were described when the albums were published later). The hits that soon made
him famous were “Toranj” (bergamot) based on a theme by Camel with poems by Khāju
and Hāfez, and jabr-e joqrāfiyāyi, “Geographical Determinism” (or more precisely,
“determination”), a cover of Nirvana’s “Love Buzz” with Namjoo’s own lyrics. There
was no advertisement, no promotion, and the works were of amateurs finding their
music. He/they were still running after the officials and waiting for the music to be
allowed to officially enter the national market. As he has said in different interviews he
doesn’t know how the music leaked. As is the rule that the singer is the star he suddenly
became a star, for a while without an image. Not that he wanted to be anonymous. He
didn’t know the music was out and rarely anyone knew who the musicians were. The
music was unexpected; difficult to let go with indifference. It made those who listened to
it turn and talk, maybe take positions. It stirred heated debates. Two tahrirs marked
Namjoo’s appearance “on the ground,” at the beginning and end of “Toranj,” that later
gave its name and became the opening track to his first album published in Tehran in
2007. It was the bestselling album of the year. “Geographical Determinism” gave its
name to his second album jabr recorded in Tehran in 2006 and published in Vienna in
2008. He has published six albums since, not with the Mud Band, one in Italy and five in
the United States.
Not much time had passed since the songs had leaked and he was well-known, but also turned into a question. His music didn’t sit well with the existing divisions of taste and genre, “high” and “low” and “traditional” and “Western” art; and the humor, unabashed satirical tone, sadness, political absurdity, rawness of his lyricism, and his daring experiments with words and music had brought back an old debate (an intellectual monsoon of sorts, as it seasonally returns) about the relation of music and poetry. Every kind of position was taken in newspapers and on blogs, and students asked their professors to talk about what they thought not particularly about his music but what it/he stood for. There was a conference about “underground music” that paid “specific attention” to him as a “phenomenon.” His moving lyricism and satirical absurdity had sent the phenomenologists after meaning. His music was from very early on associated with “protest.” It was said to give voice to “a shout,” “a cry,” often indefinite, sometime said to be “of the youth.” One speaker said the music wasn’t “protesting,” it rather “mourned” the dead-end it found itself in. That it didn’t have any “anger,” it wasn’t “demanding” anything, it was “frustrated,” “hopeless,” and didn’t sound “decided,” it was “aggressive” just as it sought to “console.” It was common to

4 It should be noted that to separate “mourning” and “protest” in Iran would amount to a textbook example of ahistoricity. The history of becoming a national situation of Iran (Iran’s becoming-Iran in other words) is among other things a long history of mourning. The two modern revolutions that in-form Iran as it is today, are informed by mourning thorough and thorough. None of the two revolutions is understandable without understanding the political function of mourning ceremonies (preaching, mourning songs, collective crying, mourning processions, etc.) and the temporality of mourning (the 3rd, the 7th, the 40th, the anniversary, etc) translated into a calendar of protest.
hear said that it gave voice to the absurdity of the political (read, national) situation it emerged from, or it found itself trapped in. He only managed to publish one album there, Toranj, his most lyrically non-controversial, though by no means conservative.

What got much attention, and he himself has elaborated on this on different occasions, was what may be explained as his mixing of the blues scale with different Iranian “scales” (where “scale” translates “dastgāh”), by cutting and adding a few half and quarter notes here and there. Few years later, now a US resident, in a talk at Brown University, in critiquing those whom he called “intellectuals,” (and much of his own

---

5 I take this very helpful term “national situation” from Fredric Jameson. He has used it in different texts. I take it as a fact that as Jameson says “today, all politics is about real estate. Postmodern politics is essentially about land grabs, on a local as well as a global scale” (Fredric Jameson, An American Utopia: Dual Power and the Universal Army, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London: Verso Books, 2016), 13.). So, given that the near-total colonization of the planet earth by states and other vampirical entities such as multinational corporations that more and more have states as their main administrators of public access to capital, determines the general form of human societies and the fate of the planet itself, I find it undeniable that all human populations are trapped one way or another in national situations which are also always-already global situations. Some of course might not think of it as a "trap" and even as Jameson says elsewhere might be “blind” to their own being in a national situation and thus in a sort of identification with the state that governs and determines the common sense of that situation "confuse the cultural and the universal" (Jameson, "Notes on Globalization," 59; in other words to imagine their own national situation as human situation's apotheosis due to their being citizens of the center of the Empire. This blindness however, itself has a global reach and is not particular to those who live in the center. What I can see from listening to public discourse in Persian, for example, is that cultural values of the center are generally considered to be universal, and even when rhetorically rejected they are often reconstituted elsewhere in the discourse. I do not think that this is particular to Iran, and take it to be an effect of the contemporary reality that a good majority of the world's population consumes and emulates central cultural products on a daily basis and so in that sense is culturally determined by the center, or again, as Jameson has it, this is a result of the "de-differentiation of ... the economic ... [and] the cultural," “standardization,” “corporate culture on a global scale,” that “Whoever says the production of culture says the production of everyday life,” and the global expansion of "consumerism as such" (Ibid., 70, 57, 66, 64, 67.). The quoted speaker in the text is Sara Shari’at. A transcript of the talk is available on her website: سارا شریعتی. "متن سخنرانی در سمینار موسیقی زیر زمینی," آرشیو اینترنتی سارا شریعتی: سارا شریعتی. "متن سخنرانی در سمینار موسیقی زیر زمینی," آرشیو اینترنتی سارا شریعتی: April 17, 2011. http://sarahshariati.blogspot.com/2011/04/blog-post_8624.html.

6 "Scale" is a mistranslation for "dastgāh," however I am using Namjoo's own translations and explanations here. These maybe found in various talks. Here I am referring to his March 12, 2014 talk at Brown University titled "Shahram Shabpareh: Honesty and the Minor Scale," available at Mohsen Namjoo, Shahram Shabpareh: Honesty and the Minor Scale (Brown University), 2014, https://youtu.be/7kmMdJmVjAg. The use of "scale" to refer to "the blues scale" has also been criticized by music theorists, however, since it has come to be accepted by blues musicians themselves I refrain from sustaining it in scare quotes.
listeners, who also around this time were becoming more and more critical of his music, he said, fell into this category), Namjoo rightly mentioned that he wasn’t the first to have “mixed scales.” Years before him those whose music the said “intellectuals” dismissed as “commercial” had brought together the blues scale and the “Iranian minor scales.” He brought Shahram Shabpareh, whom he called an “icon of happiness” as an example and talked about the seeming paradox of him being an “icon of happiness” and his frequent use of the “minor scale” which is “commonly associated with sadness.” Exposing the double standards of the “intellectuals” Namjoo also talked about Shahram as an auteur, not only composing his own songs but also writing his own lyrics which also include some alliteration and are thus indicative of his attention to the materiality of language (yet another thing the said “intellectuals,” influenced by the “Russian formalists,” valorized in Namjoo’s but not in Shahram’s music). That Namjoo’s music is liked and defended by the “intellectuals” but Shahram’s is dismissed had to do, according to Namjoo, with the “intellectuals” being subject to a national culture of sadness and mourning. On this latter point he elaborated with reference to Mikhail Bakhtin. He referred to the “fact” that the closest thing to a “carnival” one may find in Iran is given to mourning rather than celebration. It is the “intellectuals” attitude towards
“happiness” that makes them dislike “pop music” in general and Shahram’s music not in particular but as an example.\(^7\)

---

\(^7\)The injunction not to “judge” is one of the most common forms of liberal policing of attitude these days in the space of the Persian language. “Don’t judge” (and not infrequently the word “judge” is used in English) has been elevated to the place of a new cultural mantra for the apprenticeship of liberal citizenship. One has to be unconditionally “open” to different tastes and respect everyone’s choices by keeping one’s “judgments” to oneself. Within the sphere of a translated academic register I hear frequently in conferences and cultural talk shows, both on national and Persian speaking international media, “judging” the thing referred to, always in definite, as “the people” or less frequently “the nation,” is perhaps the most hideous and “elitist” crime one may commit especially when it comes to “popular culture.” Critiques of popular cultural products as signifying the terrible cultural situation that first and foremost is a result of systemic censorship coupled with the consistent expansion of consumerism, are regarded as crimes against the (sacred?) “agency” of “the people.” (“Agency” is often in English). The whole unbelievable series of debates, conferences, talk shows, and asking-for-opinions that followed Yousef Abazari’s aggressive dismissal of Morteza Pasha’i, a recently passed and popularly mourned pop singer, at an event at the University of Tehran, illustrates the problem. What the new non-judgmental common sense found utterly unacceptable, was 1) Abazari’s getting angry and shouting on the stage during the Q&A (i.e. that he as a person, equally caught in the situation, could be overcome by anger). 2) that Abazari (a particularly easy targets for being dismissed as an “intellectual”) not only didn’t “personally like” the late singer’s music, but that he dared to say that it was “bad music” and was critical of its being addressed simply as a so-called “social phenomenon” (that is, as reduced to image) and not at all as music (i.e. he passed a general “judgment,” he didn’t appreciate that there are “personal choices,” that things are always “constructed,” and that “value judgments” as such are passé); and 3) that he said the popularity of Pasha’i, beyond being a result of systemic censorship of music for the past thirty-something years, was symptomatic of a state-funded process of depoliticization that creates celebrities by funding them, giving them public hypervisibility, and using athletes, actors, and singers in political campaigns to cover over the real political issues by means of such spectacles (i.e. “the people’s agency” is neither free, nor necessarily something to be celebrated). The frequent emphasis on “the people’s agency” is symptomatic of the current conditions within this national situation where “the nation” and “the state” are being brought into complicity through such agency; and depoliticization has been Abazari’s critique of the existing situation for a long time now. He has had to say several times that he is not “criticizing the people” but speaking about a structure. The national situation is being forged into a “democratic nation-state” through “reforms” whose main slogan in the last election (2017) was providing the conditions for attracting foreign capital that would then miraculously make everything better and also release the state of all its responsibilities, including free education that is gradually on its way out (another point that Abazari has been shouting about). One argument that was presented by the reformists during the last elections sheds light on the situation: preparing the conditions for attracting tourists, the reformists who won the elections argued, will make the “situation” better for citizens too, in addition to the jobs it would create. As for the debates around the so-called “culture of mourning,” and Iranian music as particularly and symptomatically “sad,” they are as old as Iranian modernism. To quote Colonel Ali Naghi Vaziri (1887-1979), one of the “fathers” of “national” music: “[Our music] is a reservoir of sad feelings, of memories of pain, suffering, imprisonment, and condemnation, of the influence of continued attacks by savage tribes, of mourning songs,” where “savage tribes” particularly refers to “Arabs” and “mourning” is particularly associated with “Islam.” (Vaziri quoted in Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 183. It is true that mourning ceremonies are very common forms of public gathering in Iran, it is however certainly not true that they are the “only” form of public gathering. What has been framed as a “carnival” (certainly a wrong framing, and an academic mistranslation) are the Muharram processions observed by Shi’is all over Iran and many other countries. At any rate, if what is meant by “carnival” in this context is simply public gathering and the celebratory disruption of the temporality of the everyday, one may find a plethora of
However, what made Namjoo’s music particular was more than just “mixing scales,” for “mixing” things as such is the order of cultural production these days and has been so for a while. There were many other underground musicians and bands who mixed scales and genres and never made so much national noise. What made it difficult to be indifferent to Namjoo’s music, I would like to not argue, but maybe bring from below, was rather the problematic relation it established with “tradition” – “problematic (in the sense that it may be equally erroneous or correct).”

When Namjoo was turned into a question, it wasn’t only about him as an image, what he stood for, him as a “social phenomenon” reductively defined. What was more at stake was whether what he was doing with “tradition” was acceptable? In other words, whether his work had “artistic/musical value” according to the scale of “tradition”? Musically speaking (I am celebratory public associations in various locations if one is not already blinded by the rhetoric of nationality—from the various agricultural ceremonies of cultivation and harvest all over the country, to fishing ceremonies in the north and the south, to the annual musical festivals of the Yaresān and public Nowrouz celebrations in the west, etc. etc. Not to mention the very urban public celebrations on chārshanbe suri or, really, weddings in villages where all the public is in attendance. They are not “national,” that is, not incited onto the national scene, but that doesn’t mean that they do not happen in the same geography and by the same people many of whom also participate in Muharram processions. The truly modern fallacy here is the very common framing of “mourning” as a national pathology. It is certainly true that among the warriors of secularism the image of a person crying at a shrine or on any “religious” occasion is the very image of “backwardness.” The secular desire for “happiness” that expresses itself in this way I believe is a desire for what in Persian is called bidardi, lit. ‘painlessness,’ that is said to be the one truly incurable pain by so many poets in that language (some have also suggested that its cure is “fire”). This secular desire for a culture of happiness is a nationally articulated version of a generalizing desire for, and the pursuit of a “happiness” that in truth is an incapacity to mourn, in the sense that Judith Butler writes when she writes about a sort of cultural incapacity to mourn in the United States, which in turn is reminiscent of James Baldwin’s critique of white Christianity as marked by an incapacity to understand and accept sorrow and “to get itself in touch with itself, with its selfless totality” (see “White Racism or World Community,” in James Baldwin, Collected Essays, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Library of America, 1998), 749–56. And Butler, “Violence, Mourning, Politics.”)

8 Judy, (Dis)forming the American Canon, 225, 253.
artificially suspending his poetry for now), a most pronounced aspect of the work was his singing as a “traditional” singer, as someone educated in the “art” of āvāz. But the music was at once departing from “tradition” and reaching towards on the one hand blues and rock, and on the other, what is called “regional music,” musiqi-ye mahalli, where “regional” means “non-urban,” and/or “ethnic.” On this side he was particularly influenced by the music of Khorasan, where he is from, especially Torbat-e Jām, Khāf, Quchān, and the neighboring Turkmen Sahrā, and Kurdish music, that also has a Kurmanji link with Khorasan. This double move at once towards “Western” and “regional” music, in works that also sounded the “tradition,” produced a particular anxiety of “value.” He wasn’t a good instrumentalist, and he was a competent singer. But the main question was not about his virtuosity. Neither was it about his compositional skills. Rather it was about the “value” of his creative practice. More than anything the music had suddenly become popular; it told that he was educated in āvāz, that is, in the “tradition,” but he didn’t treat “it” in any “traditional” way. His music had also leaked in the middle of two ongoing conversations, one about “fusion,” and the other about a sense of stagnation in the field of “traditional music” that had resulted in a sorry search for “innovation,” which in an astonishing triumph of instrumental reason

———

There are also other names, such as musiqi-ye maqāmi (as opposed to dastgāh), that seek to bring together all music that is performed within the territory of Iran and has a link to a language other than Persian, or is not describable with the concept of dastgāh, to somehow demarcate the borders of what is “traditional” (i.e. “national” in the Herderian sense). Mohsen Hajarian as far as I know is the only person who has written about the wrongness of such categorizations—with utmost precision and on various occasions.
mostly led to experimenting with making “new” and exotified instruments through technical and aesthetic manipulation of the already existing. Maestro Mohammad-Reza Shajarian alone made about seven or eight of them, if not more, all sounding the same, and looking exotic on the stage – they went well with the “concert attire” that has been in fashion for the past decade or so. Stagnated, “traditional music” has moved in the direction of cultivating a new look as if to compensate for the mediocrity of the music.\(^\text{10}\)

Over time and gradually, to settle the debates and anxieties concerning the “value” of Namjoo’s musical encounter with “tradition” and to draw the lines of propriety some master musicians were asked for their opinion, and Namjoo too, in turn, was asked for his opinion about “traditional music,” “innovation,” and “the masters” and their works.

Namjoo’s problematic relation to “tradition” is perhaps most manifest in his approach to tahrir.\(^\text{11}\) “Tahrir is a melismatic vocal technique (also imitated by instrumentalists) involving the embellishment of a single note or series of repeated

---

\(^\text{10}\) The post-revolutionary national situation has been one of constant narrowing of the whole field of musical expression, and the felt stagnation of “traditional music” is more than anything a result of the censorship of most other independent music besides “Western art music” (which is not a big part of musical production anyway). All genres described as “popular” remain under stricter censor in the sense that they have to conform more to the state-determined “norms” of expression. In its acoustically impoverished environment “traditional music” has largely turned into a cultural fetish, a thing to preserve and embellish, and present in exotic new ways. For the past ten years or so the most creative artist with strong ties to the field of “traditional music” has been Kayhan Kalhor who generally tends to work in the different market of “world music,” where the most “virtuoso” of the younger generation seem to be headed too. And I have to remind myself here that Kalhor’s breathtaking entrance into the national market of Iranian music as an independent artist was with *Shab, Sokut, Kavir* (1998), “Night, Silence, Desert,” yet another album that deviated from the “tradition” by moving towards the music of Khorasan.

\(^\text{11}\) It was also through tahrir that Shahram Nazeri approached “traditional music” problematically, perhaps the only other contemporary singer to seek such a relation with “tradition,” albeit one from a completely different angle, and not until very recently taking part in the aesthetics of “global mixing.” Listen for example to his works with the Dastan Ensemble.
pitches… or an extended vocal melisma, most often at climatic points towards the ends of phrases."12 Singers weave clusters of small melodies around the notes they hit: bird-like or hammer-like touches on adjacent notes and melodies13 by vibrating the vocal cords, and turning the sound in the chest, throat, and the oral and nasal cavities. Tahrir includes much of what a singer does without words. It often comes after, and occasionally in between, the words of the poem; often using a combination of the letter А/h and a vowel, and sometimes in longer tahrir words such as jānā ‘o soul,’ yārā ‘o friend,’ dust ‘friend,’ del ey del ‘heart, o heart,’ amān ‘amnesty,’ ākh ‘ouch,’ and the like. Approximations of weeping, crying, moaning, lamenting, complaining, and expressions of felt pain are not infrequent in tahrir. Tahrir does a semantic and affective work: it is said to say what is said in the words, to express the “meaning” of the poem, to drive the point home so to speak. It is a resort to the sound of breath and vocal cords, voiceless glottal frication and vocal vibration, twisted in human interior, and approximations of birds, hammers, and intense emotional states, to help language communicate. Tahrir is thus also singing’s closest tie with poetry – the other site of Namjoo’s problematic relation to “tradition.”

13 Two main varieties of tahrir are called bolboli ‘nightingale’s’ and chakkoshi ‘hammer’s.’ The colloquial word for tahrir is chahchahe which is the same as ‘birdsong.’
Besides “mixing scales,” and covering blues and rock songs with poetry from 11th to 21st century, Namjoo not only performed blues melodies and took to sliding on his setār, he also incorporated them into his tahrirs, reversing the trajectory of the instrument imitating the voice by turning his voice box into an instrument, imitating a blues guitar. Influenced by blues, rock, and Turkmen music he took to shouting and exploring the possibilities of dramatic declamation. And he hollered and howled and moaned, and ridiculed, and smirked. All of this opened his music to express a range of attitudes and emotions that were shared but pushed out of musical expression, and in linguistic registers and with intensities deemed improper to āvāz. The common accusations waged against him were that the shouting and howling compensate for his lack of technique, and that he doesn’t really have a proper knowledge of the “tradition” and his music is thus frivolous. He says in an interview with Shirin Neshat: “In the Persian language, the deep meaning of these cries and wails, as in tahrir, has always been about expressing passions and feelings. Again, the attempt was to express those passions and

14 Such tahrirs are to be found all over Namjoo’s works, but more pronouncedly in his solo pieces such as Gis, Aghāyed-e Neo-Kānti, Diazpām, Dahe-ye Shast, Zolf, and Sanamā. Most of these were among the sketch-like leaked works, some have never appeared on his released albums. Different versions of all of them, not all solos, are available on the Internet. Similar to Namjoo, Nazeri’s problematic relation to tahrir also involved the reversal of the relation of human voice and instrument: he incorporated tahrirs from the instrumental radif into his singing.

15 To hear the deep influence of Turkman styles of declamation on Namjoo’s singing, listen for example to any performance by Ashur Galdi Garkazi Barzin.
feelings in a new way.”¹⁶ (But are the “cries and wails” in Persian?) Not only was Namjoo expressing “those passions and feelings in a new way,” he was also expressing feelings hard to encounter (at least) in the recorded history of tahrir, not to mention in contemporary musical production in Iran in general. He used tahrir not only to express “those passions and feelings,” but also to allude to contemporary social and political convolutions that remained beyond the reach of words.¹⁷ Namjoo’s approach to tahrir was (and still is), quite audibly, an exploration of its semantic expressive potential, rather than an illustration of his technical mastery of the “tradition.” His approach to tahrir allowed him to sing the words of “classical” Persian poets, Sa’di, Hāfez, Bābā Tāher, Khāju, Rumi, Nezāmi and others as if they were contemporaries. This is of course because they are. That is, their poems have contemporary social use and meaning. And Namjoo could load their words with new affective content. His was not only a different approach to declamation, but also a different reading of “classical” poetry, and this reading was mostly offered in tahrir, with “wails and cries” rather than words.¹⁸

Exploration of tahrir’s semantic-affective potential also enabled Namjoo to sing New (i.e.

---


¹⁷ In “Dahe-ye Shast” for example there is a tahrir on the only vowel of the word bud, ‘was,’ in a line referring to an incident during the Iran-Iraq war that expresses an astonishing sense of historical irony about the ideological (ab)uses of “the war” – so far from the range of expression associated with āvâz and “tradition,” yet so in place in the song. The audience gives him a round of applause at the end of the stanza. I don’t know how to illustrate my claim through discussing examples in English to readers who mostly don’t know Persian. (Are the wails and cries in Persian?)

¹⁸ Listen for example to the solo versions of Zolf on a poem by Hāfez or Sanamā on a poem by Rumi.
Nimā’i and after) Persian poetry in unprecedented ways. This had been attempted before, first with symphonic orchestra, then with “traditional” ensembles, but more than often led the musicians and poets alike to the conclusion that New poetry and “traditional” music belong to different aesthetics and are generally incompatible. In so far as āvāz is concerned, besides the problems due to the lack of meter and ordered rhyme in New poetry, the problem was (and still is) that more than often the semantic affectivity that is āvāz’s link with poetry is lost when musicians have tried their hand with New poetry.¹⁹

Ā.

Comparing early 20th century recordings of āvāz with contemporary examples, one inevitably notices the gradual emergence and coming to absolute dominance of a fetishistic aesthetics of perfection. Earlier singers’ styles of declamation, intensities of delivery, and styles of tahrir are much more variable than contemporary singers. It is indeed difficult not to hear the sound of nationalization as standardization in contemporary āvāz.²⁰ At the heart of this standardization is a move away from semantic

---

¹⁹ Indeed “traditional” music’s favorite contemporary poet has turned out to be the late Mehdi Akhavān-Sāles (his memory be blessed) the most conservative of the New poets. In the last decades of his life he didn’t even write New poems. The only examples of traditional music with New poetry that have not outright ridiculous (because audibly “forced”) have also been on his works, and all by Hossein Alizadeh, Kalhor, and Shajarian. Importantly the āvāz in these works has always remained formally restricted to free meter. Listen for example to Zemestān Ast, ‘It is winter,’ Delawaz, 2001.

²⁰ The CD set *A Century of Avaz: An Anthology of Contemporary Performance Styles* published by Mahoor Institute of Culture and Art in 2003 is a good illustration of this. Of the thirty three presented musicians only three had the better part of their career after the 1970s, the curious omission of Shahram Nazeri notwithstanding.
expressivity — saying what the words (cannot) say — and towards formal perfection measured according to conformity with and mastery of a “‘national’ repertoire,”\(^2\) (the fetish), and exactitude in imitating the “masters” (of whom, insofar as āvāz is concerned, according to a general consensus, only one is left, some would say “a few”). This repertoire, the first and the only of its kind, is the radif. A mid-nineteenth century invention, that gradually came to be an important reference for “national authenticity,” and was elevated to the status of not only the main means but also at times the ultimate goal of “traditional” music education, particularly after the 1960s. The “radif (lit. ‘row,’ ‘series’)" is

a collection of several hundred pieces (gusheh, ‘corner’) distinguished by mode and by characteristic melodies and motifs, arranged into the 12 dastgāh. Each dastgāh and gusheh is individually named, some referencing regions or towns of Iran (and beyond), others alluding to a sentiment or quality of character; many of the names are shared with neighboring Arab and Turkic traditions.\(^2\)

To make a very long story short, not much is known about the history of repertoires before mid-19th century. What is known however is that before the radif’s canonization individual master musicians had their own repertoires that they used for teaching, related to and different from those of the other masters; and that such repertoires could always be added to. Thus, it is speculated that there has been a high

\(^2\) Nooshin, 55.
degree of variation in, and a general sense of incompleteness with regards to what is now an ossified canon. The few repertoires referred to as radif are ever so slightly different transmissions of a repertoire transmitted by Ali Akbar Farāhāni (1810-1855), a musician at the court of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (1831-1896), through his sons, also court musicians, and their sons and nephews. As for the reasons for the emergence at this time of the radif as an ossified canon of “Iranian” melodies, the most convincing is Bruno Nettl’s who argues that it had to do with the desire for a “scientific” representation of Iranian music to assimilate it to the “more theoretically-grounded … Western music,” and the idea perhaps emerged after the Qajar court musicians traveled to Europe. Even though during Reza Pahlavi’s reign (1925-1941), music education had a more generally military air and was achieved more through ‘scientific’ (i.e. based on Western music theory and system of notation) composition and teaching of patriotic songs at schools, from the 1960s on, with the state funded publication and dissemination of the radif, “the music of the court” was finally fully “transformed into the music of the nation, in contrast to regional ‘folk’ musics.” With this transformation a particular sound emerges that can now be called “Iranian;” as well as “sounding  

23 Nooshin, 58.  

29
Iranian” as a category of musical judgement. That the radif is a mid-nineteenth century invention doesn’t seem to have much impact on its status as the sole means of “traditional” music education and the most authoritative canon of “Iranian sound”—as if its “scientific” birth releases it from historicity (or rather conjures it as History). The radif in this sense emerges as at once “traditional” and “modern” – a modern tradition, stillborn.

“Iranian sound” is not only defined in contrast to the “regional” (or “folk”), and through “scientific” intimacy with “Western classical” music, but also in contrast to “jāz,” a very ambivalent word. In the post-revolutionary situation when a piece of music “doesn’t sound Iranian” quite often it means that its sound is influenced by American popular music. Works in the Western classical style are “classical,” and when supplemented by Iranian melodies and instruments, they are “national,” as the title of Iran’s National Orchestra indicates. Iranian melodies performed by a symphonic orchestra are still “Iranian.” Shortly after the revolution of 1979, as Namjoo reminds us, “jāz” became the code word for music censorship. This has to do with the equivocations of the word “jāz” in Persian where for a long time from the mid-1920s to the mid-1950s it had referred to almost any kind of music influenced by any Western popular styles.26

26 For the different uses of the word “jāz” in the context of music production in Iran see G. J. Breyley, “From the ‘Sultan’ to the Persian Side: Jazz in Iran and Iranian Jazz since the 1920s,” in Jazz and Totalitarianism, ed. Bruce
At the time of the revolution “jāz” carrying its history of ambiguity, also came to mean the “drum set.” Whatever had “jāz” in it could not pass the censor, neither enter the national radio and television, nor be published. This arguably has to do with the common use of the drum set, itself central to jazz, as well as the electric guitar and the keyboard, that particularly after the 1960s distinguished the sound of “popular” music from both “classical” and “traditional.” “Jāz” has changed meaning since and specially after the loosening of the censor on “popular” music after the 1990s, it has come to be used as an equivalent of the English “jazz” (also increasingly pronounced with an a as in English, rather than an ā). With this change of meaning “Western” has come to designate what was referred to as “jāz” before the mid-1950s. That is, what is neither “classical” nor “historically ours,” (say what remains essentially im-proper), and that generally belongs to the category “popular.” Thus, in the 1980s besides the earlier military-music influenced patriotic and the later revolutionary song forms, and the occasional “traditional music,” only Western classical music (which is more “classical” and “scientific” than it is “Western”) could enter the national radio and television. In the same vein at the post-revolutionary university one may study “traditional” or “global”

Johnson (New York: Routledge, 2017), 297–324. Breyley also writes about the tendency towards “regional” music among the younger generation of Iranian jazz musicians. For a more detailed discussion of pre-revolutionary popular music, its generic development, and its relation to the radio and TV (and the move away from sound towards the cultivation of “appearance” in musical production) see G. J. Breyley and Sasan Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment: From Motrebi to Losanjelesi and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
music, where “global music” means what in another register is called “Western art music.” Musical censorship has been less regulated and more subject to governmental taste after the 1990s. All music however still remains under undefined rules of censor and subject to interpretation (and mercy) of the employees of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. One thing however still remains under strict censor: the image of a musical instrument on the national television.

Divers → “Iranian Sound” – chain of (mis)translation:

(scientific intimacy)

1800s ↔ 1900-1960s (radif) 1960s (asymptotically equal to / intimate with)
court music → traditional music → national music ≈ Western / Classical

[engulfed at different times as ← folk | jāz “regional,” “maqāmi,” “epic!”]
i. 1920-1950 ≡ popular western
ii. 1950-1979 [close ties with the U.S.: American jazz
“jāz” retains ambiguity ← [musicians welcome but no government support for local musicians]
iii. 1979-1990: “drum set” ≈ “electric guitar”
iv. 1990-present: “jazz” = “regional”/“global” (market)

∴ “Western” = “jāz”
“classical” = “global” (university)

---

27 For Namjoo’s account of censorship and more see here: Mohsen Namjoo, “The Revolution and Music: A Personal Odyssey,” in Politics and Culture in Contemporary Iran: Challenging the Status Quo, ed. Abbas Milani and Larry Jay Diamond (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2015), 179–216. For clarification, in speaking of “all music” I am not taking into account nowhe and Qur’an recitations, since these have never been performed or published as “music” in the national situation in question. However, the popularity of techno among the nowhe singers is not at all insignificant (cf. the discussion of Iranian social cinema and Hollywood form in section H).
Why can’t we as adults [یه عووان افراد بالغ] be indifferent to America, why all this love and hate and not indifference. – Yousef Abazari

We have to understand, in this country, something that is difficult for us to realize: namely, that the United States is not just one country, or one culture, among others, any more than English is just one language among others. – Fredric Jameson

But how did “the West” and the “region” come to resonate with each other in Namjoo’s music? Of course the first, and perhaps the only, answer to this question has to be sought in the dynamics of globalization. That is, “globalization” is the only concept I find within the semantic field of which to look for elements of an answer. Globalization (and I am here reading from Jameson’s elucidating “Notes” referred to above) comes with a dynamics of the “global” cultural products pushing the “national” modes of cultural production to the margins thus “opening” the way for the marginalized modes of cultural production within the national situation to find more possibilities of expression, and at the same time either be, or just be given a chance to be, incorporated into the global market of cultural products—that the marginal would rarely be given a

---

28 Yousef Abazari & Morad Farhadpour, New York, Kabul: The Semiology of September 11 [Yousef Abazari & Morad Farhadpour, New York, Kabul: The Semiology of September 11]—All quotations from Persian texts are my translation unless otherwise specified.
30 A related question is why do the musicians Breyley writes about also gravitate towards the “regional”?
chance, if at all, for such amplified circulation as the international hits notwithstanding. Namjoo’s double reach out of the modern “national” (i.e. “traditional”) towards the “global” and the “regional” in this sense is first of all an expression of the dynamics of globalization. That is, his music is a product of the market and it would be inconceivable in the absence of a global market that brings together all these locations and makes possible the mostly one-way flow of cultural products from the “globe” to its margins. It might be said, and rightly so, that “global” music is under censor in Iran and thus what we are witnessing is the sort of liberating effect often attributed to the global communicational networks (the Internet, social and corporate media, etc.) that despite the censorship and control of the national market by the Iranian state, give Namjoo access to the forbidden “global” music which then enables him to “shout” and “cry” and “protest” as mentioned before. Here however we shouldn’t lose sight of the very marketability of this “protest,” also signified by the fact that Namjoo’s first album, once officially out, became a bestseller. “But anyway, about the question of protest,” he says in his interview with Neshat,

at that time, if somebody said to us, “You are protesting,” our response was, “What protest? We just want to play music. What do we have to protest against?” When we were starting out, in 2003 or so, in the first current of Iranian underground music, the protest appeared in the work itself. But now, with the way things are in Iran, the very act of playing an instrument is protest. When someone buys an electric guitar it is to say, “I exist.”
Namjoo’s exaggerated post-2009 account aside, the equation of “buying” and “existing” shows the channel of this protest very well. In sum, the cultural exchange mediated by the global communicational network is very much in harmony with the market and the Internet is not a mysterious territory of secret cultural contact and clandestine resistance against the Empire. And electric guitars are just one of the commodities one can buy in protest. But I should remember that Namjoo’s music was and still is political. There is the world in the thought of his music. And polluting the conditioned air of the “traditional” with everyday wails and cries is one his most valuable contributions.

From a perspective informed by the current common use of words in Persian (more or less the same as in English), the heavy one-sidedness of global cultural contact manifests itself in its being imagined as a meeting of “the East” and “the West” where “the West” means “modernity”—the postmodernity of the mode of production notwithstanding. As Namjoo himself puts it in a talk/concert at Brown University, explaining an “E” and a “W” on a hand out:

Eastern music, we mean the music from Middle East, Arabic music, Persian music, or the music from Turkey. And Western music, in this age and in my experience we are talking about the modern music from the modern age, after 60s-70s in the U.S. or in Europe.

“Eastern music” then is a geographic-ethnic-national thing, or imagined in those terms, and “Western music” is generally imagined as a temporal thing, with geographic-
(national) indicators as a sort of afterthought—a contextualization of sorts. The “modern age” is as though a gushing fountain of time; and the one-sidedness of cultural contact something akin to the pouring of time over geography; or in more Universalist terms, the “modern age” represents the immutable within time that will gradually subsume the geographic. In this division of time and space, the so-called “meeting” of “the East” and “the West” is the former’s rite of passage into the temporal order of “the modern,” while the latter may enjoy some exotic spatiality (or “spiciality”) in the meeting. This one-sidedness also explains why as a performing artist in the United States Namjoo has had to do more musicological than musical work. He has been employed by American universities to teach courses on Iranian underground music, contemporary culture in Iran, talk about East-West musical contact, and to theorize his own practice. He says at one point in the talk which I just quoted that he would have preferred if he could “just play music” and “not talk.” He had named the talk “When you are talking about Iranian fusion, what are you talking about?” after Raymond Carver, a writer with much influence on contemporary Persian short story.31

To take this image of the one-sided flow of “the West/modernity” to an imaginary extreme, imagine, for the sake of the argument (or imagination), the impossibility of an unknown American artist with limited financial means coming to

national fame and popularity in the United States by making music influenced by the “regional” or “national” music of Iran to the same degree that Namjoo’s music is influenced by American popular music. Or just imagine the impossibility of any non-rhythmic free-metered musical form with an average length of fifteen minutes becoming popular in the United States in 2017. That is, the “libidinalization of the market”32 and the shared desire for all things “American/modern/marketable” is an undeniable cause of the popularity of Namjoo’s music in Iran—add to that the libidinal effects of censor.

Finally to come back to “reality” and complete this image of a globe that resembles a pyramid, it is enough to look at what has entered, or at times been exiled to, the global market from the national situation from where Namjoo’s music has entered this market’s margins. It is clear that when the “global” pushes the “national” away, it is not “regional” music that enters the national or global market but music that is influenced by and appropriates the “regional,” be that the “high” art of Kayhan Kalhor, or the “postmodern” art of Namjoo. The only way for the “regional”—that is the opposite whose exclusion constitutes the “national” and makes it sensible—to enter the market, be that the national or the global market, is as a musicological and not a musical object. That is, the market is ultimately not interested in Noor Mohammad Dorpoor’s music (not in particular but as an example), but could possibly be in those influenced by

his music. The global market already has its own taste and preferred sounds and they are not ultimately that different in Iran and the United States (my ten year old nephew raps half of the day and finds the sound of Dorpoor’s music intolerable). This however doesn’t make much difference for Dorpoor because he is neither an “artist” nor is publishing music his main source of income.

In sum, as globalization opens the way for cultural contact what enters the contact zone is not the “regional” but its marketized image that appears to be “regional,” samples it, or has its rang o bu, “color and smell.” The global market is filled with apparitions of what it makes disappear.

III

?/Jul/17

[and about this whole issue of demanding the state to pay a wage to “regional musicians” as “artists,” one may ask whether it doesn’t make more sense to demand the state to distribute the resources “more” equally and prevent the gradual destruction of villages and small towns, or if a wage is to be demanded then why shouldn’t it be a universal wage for all inhabitants of the “regions,” or all “artists” for that matter? But it seems absolutely impossible to find ways to make the state responsible to prevent further destruction of villages and small towns, by, for example, regulating the import of fruit. There is four times more fruit in the country than it is needed, and it is the
domestic farmers’ fruit that rots away, and not the least because they are less shiny. I read in the news today that to manage the water crisis the government is going to first increase the price of water and then leave it to the private section. And of course as far as it concerns villages and small town, “the regions,” the promised soon-come triumphal “opening” of the way for “foreign capital” and “tourists”—these beloved words of the winning reformists in the last elections—can only bring about more destruction.

– why is it impossible to imagine a total boycott of imported fruit?
– because we like imported fruit.
– the look of it?
– it’s sweet.
– is tobacco bitter? 

Å.

But let me finally stop deferring Namjoo’s own account of his encounter with “Western music.” I take this account from his 2012 interview with Shirin Neshat, an Iranian-American visual artist/celebrity who also collaborated with Namjoo on a project named OverRuled. Neshat’s introductory paragraph introduces Namjoo as “a phenomenon within Iranian culture” who “has pioneered a contemporary readaptation of Persian music.” She also “predict[s]” that “now,” in the United States, where Namjoo
is “in conversation with the whole world. Not just with Iranians,” his music won’t be “reduce[d] … to simple marketing labels, such as Eastern or ethnic music.” Because his music’s “echoes are complex and far too close in ethos to American indigenous music such as jazz and the blues.”\(^{33}\) Namjoo however begins his account with the formative effects of the market and marketing strategies on his musical practice and insists on the market’s determining presence throughout the interview. At the beginning of his career, he says,

\begin{quote}
I had big plans in mind, and not necessarily the popular five-minute song format that later emerged and that suited the socio-political situation. In reality, in the beginning, I was not in any way sensitive to the outside political or artistic atmosphere. I was thinking about my own music projects, with some hopes and dreams that someone would come along and invest in recording them. These were all plans for a large orchestra, especially fusion projects with Iranian poetry and music.
\end{quote}

“Fusion” and especially “large orchestra” fusion were the order of the day at the time and the popularity of a Hamidreza Dibazar’s Foozhan Orchestra in the mid-1990s has to be kept in mind as background to Namjoo’s “hopes and dreams” for a generous investor. During this time, he says, he “gravitated toward Eastern sounds” and along with other members of their band experimented with “several orientations, including mystical music. Another was experimenting with new sounds—for example, a percussion that has all the characteristics of drums but gives an Eastern sound, anything

----

\(^{33}\) “Namjoo by Neshat.” All quotations are from this interview. All italics are mine unless otherwise specified.
from Japanese gong to our own local and folkloric percussion instruments.” The “mixing” began with the “East” and less limited by the market’s exceeding lack of time and patience. The generous investor however never arrived on a white horse and Namjoo was off to military service. There he says he was “exposed to it [“Western music”] by friends who were playing rock and blues, most notably Abdi Behravanfar” (who still leads the Mud Band) and found himself gravitating toward Western musical forms and the five-minute song format—rock, pop, and blues. At the same time, the official narrative told you that if you wanted to release an album in Iran, the prerequisite was to go toward these eight or nine five-minute pieces to fit the market. And you had to include certain content, for example, one piece for the Messiah or a piece for Imam Ali definitely had to be there. Frankly, those conditions made me give in to the market. I didn’t want to be “underground” at all. On the contrary, all my efforts at that age went into getting my music out officially.

Namjoo’s Westward gravitation thus was guided by the national market’s assimilation to a global principle of marketable length that is here configured as that which brings together “rock, pop, and blues” as examples of “Western musical form”—standardization again, this time, globalization as. Important here is that the five-minute song format is not only marketable to increasingly impatient listeners nationally and globally, but that it at once “suit[s] the socio-political situation” and “fit[s] the market.”

During the two years of military service, Namjoo who had “heard rock and blues before … suddenly … became aware of the theoretic aspects of the story”: 
I was reading about John Lee Hooker, a black musician with a certain lifestyle, and others. These musicians from New Orleans, San Francisco, Nashville—their lives were very poor, kind of hobo lives, and their music had nothing to do with mainstream music, like Frank Sinatra’s. I found this difference in lifestyles so fascinating. We have the same thing in Iranian music. The Iranian musician Ali Gholamreza[i] Almajoghi plays dotar six months out of the year, and the other six months he’s farming other people’s land. He’s basically a sharecropper. We also have our maestros who live in Tehran and have official lives. You could never make a musical comparison between Shajarian and Frank Sinatra, but a musical comparison between Almajoghi and John Lee Hooker is possible. “Oh! Baby, Baby!” —a five-note piece that keeps coming and going. I respect John Lee Hooker, Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson . . . and you get those in Iran with musicians like Shir Mohammad Espandar, Gholamreza[i] Almajoghi, or Haj Ghorban Soleimani. In terms of lifestyle and music, they guide each other. When you understand one, you sort of understand the other. This became the basis of a mental project, a long paper that I started to expand on. And this coincided with the time that I found a producer who wanted a certain format for an album, not those old formats that I had had in mind, with grand percussion and world music. So some ideas from here and some ideas from there were combined.

Here again the basis of “musical comparison,” is economy, the force of the market in shaping and styling “lives”: “lives” that “were very poor,” “kind of hobo lives,” “official lives,” and the “life” of someone who is “basically a sharecropper.” Musical differences are due to “difference in lifestyles,” and the understanding of the music is predicated on the understanding of the “lifestyle.” He also says in the same interview that he left Iran to “change” his “lifestyle.” But how does this explain the possibility of “a musical comparison” between John Lee Hooker’s and Bakhshi Ali Gholamrezā’i Ālmajughi’s music, and the impossibility thereof between the music of Mohammad-Reza Shajarian and Frank Sinatra? Perhaps because the “official lives” of Shajarian and Sinatra are
nationally different and thus their music, but the undefinable “kind of” “basically” “very poor” “lives” of Hooker and Ālmajughi that make their music different from the “mainstream music” of their national situations also make them comparable in their difference. But did Hooker remain “poor”? Did his acquisition of wealth make him “official,” change his “lifestyle,” and thus change his music? Is it possible for Ālmajughi to acquire wealth by way of making music? Is he even a “musician” in the sense that Hooker is? What if musical style doesn’t have much to do with the style of “life” after all, not this much, and what is hitting the ear, in other words what suggests musical comparability, is rather to be sought in “‘Oh! Baby, Baby!’ — a five-note piece that keeps coming and going”? Yet in other words, how the hell are Almajoghi and Hooker’s “lifestyles” “comparable”? Yet in other other words, musical form seems to not matter at all, and the force of commodification, formatting, and the temporality of the desire for the “modern” preemptively bar the thought that the heard musical affinity might be an index of other geographies of cultural contact from entering the imagination of a musician whose musical practice bears witness to the memory of those contacts and their interruption. “and you get those in Iran with musicians like Shir Mohammad Espandar, Gholamreza[i] Almajoghi, or Haj Ghorban Soleimani.” What is it that “you get”?
Despite Neshat’s wishful predictions, Namjoo’s audience in the United States has remained largely Iranian until his latest Eastward move towards the “classical” West and his collaboration with the Nederlands Blasters Ensemble (NBE), along with a few other featured “Eastern” musicians, for the CD *Voices from the East* – to be released soon. What has been broadcasted on the Internet from his concerts with the NBE are good illustrations of the extent to which Namjoo’s music has turned into an image (if not a caricature) of itself: if earlier he experimented with tahrir’s semantic-affective potential and moved away from the “traditional”/fetishistic aesthetics of perfection, his collaboration with the NBE bears witness to his attempt to reproduce those experiments with the utmost performative restraint and perfectionism that collaboration with a classically trained orchestra demands. This time he performs Orientalized versions of what before his becoming conversant “with the whole world” was framed as an encounter with “Western music,” now as a “voice from the East” for an elderly audience who have come to see the NBE featuring musicians each of whom “comes from a different culture and has his own God.”

---

34 Quotation is from Bart Schneemann’s introduction to Namjoo’s performance of “Sanama” here: [https://youtu.be/ZLsV1I16RKw](https://youtu.be/ZLsV1I16RKw). The sheer ridiculousness of the idea that each person has “his own God” notwithstanding, the perversity of the marketing strategy and the niche kept for a Mohsen Namjoo in the global market best comes to sight in a subtle change of truth, when Schneemann, the NBE’s conductor, tells in his very brief introduction that Namjoo “was sent to prison for five years, because he wrote a rock song using parts of the Qur’an in Arabic.” The incident happened when had already left Iran, after Abbas Salimi, a Qur’an reciter, sued
Besides its formation as a (hopefully) marketable mix of “traditional music,” (āvāz), and “the five-minute song format—rock, pop, and blues,” (covers), Namjoo’s music, as mentioned before, also takes much of its inspiration, melodies, vocal techniques, declamatory modes, etc. from the blues, described in his interview as “music [that] had nothing to do with mainstream music,” as well as “regional” music from Iran, most audibly the music of Khorasan and Turkmen Sahra. However, when it has come to discourse and the realm of words, for example in his series of talks at Brown University where he has theorized his own practice, he has tended to maneuver most in-between two semantic fields: {“Iranian” ("traditional" ("dastgāh") ⊆ “Eastern” (and “national”))} and {“Western” (music-theoretically describable (→ "scientific" ←) “modern” ≐ “the five-minute

him. He was sentenced in absentia and never went to prison. By no means do I mean to belittle the absurdity of that sentence and the impact it has had on Namjoo’s life; what I mean to point out is the “value” of such information for his non-Iranian audience and the context within which his music becomes marketable to such audiences.
song format—rock, pop, and blues” (and “global”)). Such organization of discourse I have absurdly attempted to formalize here is not particular to Namjoo’s talks at Brown University, and exemplifies the working of a “civilized” imagination that divides the “globe” into separate civilizational spheres with one of them standing at the end of Time, in the place of the “modern age,” as Civilization itself, where all the others are headed: all History is a progressive loss of Time that suits the socio-political situation and fits the market.

However, if we were to think about musical resonances in the work of John Lee Hooker and Bakhshi Ali Gholamrezā’i Ālmajughī outside the imaginary of progress towards absolute Space (“globality” as a “Historically” inevitable fate), we could for example begin with thinking about the importance of plucked strings and storytelling, and the close ties between music and poetry, wails and cries and words, say, the “bardic” character of their practice. In other words, we could think about the salience in their work of “an independent voice declaiming poetry or lyrics,” that is, the centrality of vocal lyricism to their practice, the marginality of which in Western classical music according to Namjoo released it from censor in the immediate aftermath of the 1979 revolution. The centrality of human voice and its instrumental imitations, “the remote

---

origin of these scales ... in speech,” the “speech-derived harmonics” that the various blues and “regional” as well as “traditional” musical traditions have in common, could lead us to think about the importance of bending notes and resorting to the melismatic in their musical practice, and perhaps about Namjoo’s own practice of incorporating blues slides into his tahrirs. It is not insignificant that all the blues musicians Namjoo names were also educated in Delta blues, “the most important core area for the more African stylistic traits in the blues,” and the “style” in which it would be “difficult” to “detect ... any significant ‘European’ musical components.” And if we take into account that

The vocal style of many blues singers using melisma, wavy intonations, and so forth is a heritage of that large region of West Africa that had been in contact with the Arabic-Islamic world of the Maghreb since the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. ... The blues tradition ... has incorporated the centuries-old impact of transcultural processes that took place between the Arab-Islamic world of North Africa and the autochthonous cultures of the Sudanic Belt

---

36 Gerhard Kubik, Africa and the Blues (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2008), 129. Also related to the discussion here is Mohsen Hajarvan’s argument about the derivation of the form of dastgah in Iranian music, (and the concept is much older than the radif), from the form of ghazal that was central to the post 13th century musical culture of the Persian court (and far beyond that, but Hajarvan remains focused on “Iran.”) This arguably amounts to a speech/writing-derived harmonics. See his Mohsen Hajarvan, “Ghazal as a Determining Factor of the Structure of the Iranian Dastgah” (PhD dissertation, University of Maryland, 1999), http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/50992961. In the same vein one may speculate about the impacts of another writing-derived harmonics along the lines of the historical spread of Qur’an recitation and Arabic vocal styles of psalmody.

37 Kubik, Africa and the Blues, 83. On blues as “a Sung Literary Genre” and the “bardic” in the blues see Ch.2 of this book. The title “Bakhshi” before Almajugh’s name is translatable to “bard.” (Of the two other “regional” musicians Namjoo names, Soleimani is also a Bakhshi from Khorasan, and Espendar a donali player from Balochistan, in a tradition with significant East African heritage).

38 Kubik, 93–94.
and also that “the centuries-old impact of transcultural processes” involving “the
Arabic-Islamic world” that had “the Maghreb” on the west, stretches all the way beyond
the borders of contemporary Iran to the east; then it will indeed be very difficult to think
about “a musical comparison” between the blues and the “regional” musical traditions
whose cultural reach often exceeds contemporary Iranian borders in terms of “lifestyle”
and “East-West” contact in “major and minor,” “scale and dastgāh.”

This forgetting of the cultural relations that determine the musical form of
Namjoo’s encounter with “the West” is not as much an instance of ignorance as it is an
instance of ideology, and most importantly a “civilizational imagination” in whose light
the “globe” is imagined as divided into self-identical entities such as (but perhaps only)
“the East” and “the West” that then come to “meet” (and as it is said “clash,” but I won’t
give more than this parenthesis to that matter). The “meeting” for “the East” is also its
rite of passage from “tradition” (=“religion”) to “modernity” (“secularity”). On the one

---

39 This line of connection has been and is being explored and experimented with by many jazz
musicians – examples abound. Listen for example to Ahmed Abdul-Malik’s Jazz Sahara (1958), East
meets West (1959), and The Eastern Moods of Ahmed Abdul-Malik (1963); Abdullah Ibrahim’s Good
News From Africa (1973), Africa Tears and Laughters (1979), and Mindif (1988); Yusef Lateef’s Prayer
to the East (1957), and Eastern Sounds (1961); Hafez Modirzadeh’s The People’s Blues (1996), Post-
Chromodal Out (2012), and In Convergence Liberation (2014); Wadada Leo Smith’s Spiritual
Dimensions (2009), and America (2009); Randy Weston’s Blue Moses (1972), and Blues to Africa
(1975); not to forget Miles Davis’s exploration of flamenco, Don Cherry’s taste for Turkish melodies,
and Alice Coltrane and John McLaughlin’s journeys (along with so many other American jazz
musicians) further east to India. On Abdul-Malik and Weston see the chapters dedicated to their
work in Robin Kelley’s Robin D. G. Kelley, Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern Jazz in
Revolutionary Times (Harvard University Press, 2012). I have learned much about experimental
musical geography from this book.
hand, in postmodernity the musical encounter happens entirely in commodity form. Market provides the smoothest way out of history: the blues is figured as American commodity (“the five-minute song format—rock, pop, blues”) and its aesthetic value for Namjoo’s musical practice is not only not separable from its market value, but is also a function of it: it is valuable (“fits the market”) because it is American, that is, “modern,” i.e. desirable (“suits the socio-political situation”). It is the commodity form and not the musical form that addresses the senses. On the same hand, as I will demonstrate further in section H, “modern” here signifies Whiteness (understood as a global ideology/phenomenon and not restricted to the United States “race relations”), and that is why the blues in Namjoo’s and Neshat’s discourse is so consistently imagined as “Western,” “American,” even “American indigenous music” (and the blues is of course all of these) but never as “black” or “African-American” music—which could then allow its being imagined as having a link to Africa, wherein resides the musical link between the blues and Iranian regional and traditional music that Namjoo has frequently said that he hears. On the other hand, “the East” and “the West,” as it is becoming clear, “meet” in an absolute vacuum. “Africa” is neither in “the East” nor in “the West,” and if let into the equation, by virtue of its absence from these imaginary spaces, “Africa” has to be conceived of temporally, as a “historically” determinant factor, and any resort to the past messes up the entirely future-oriented civilizational scheme of “the traditional
East meeting the modern West.” Because as mentioned before, “East-West meetings” are about “the East” entering the temporality of “the modern,” that is, the temporality of the “future world,” and “Africa” is not imagined neither as being “modern” nor as having any “future.”

The erasure of Africa from the world and blackness from the “modern age” at once constitutes the “civilizational” bond, and the historical obfuscation. Time is a depth, a sea, that is covered over as the continents of “the East” and “the West” come to “meet” on the surface of global space. The moment of “meeting” is the moment of globality: “now,” here in America, the artist is “in conversation with the whole world. Not just Iranians.”

This is a passage from a national/historical into a global/racial situation, and that is why Neshat “predict[s]” that Namjoo’s music due to its closeness to “American indigenous music” will not be labeled “Eastern or ethnic.”

The musical form of this “meeting” remains inconceivable in the absence of the African melismatic connection. The musical witness to, the audible memory of, other geographies of cultural contact and their destruction is obfuscated, and the spectacle of Civilizational meeting in commodity form deafens the civilized ear to the sound of the sea.

40 I thank Wahneema Lubiano for reminding me of the crucial importance of the temporal order here.

41 “Namjoo by Neshat.” – quoted is Neshat.
In the essence of this religious movement that is capitalism lies ... the attainment of a world of despair still only hoped for. Therein lies the historical enormity of capitalism: religion is no longer the reform of being, but rather its obliteration. From this expansion of despair in the religious state of the world, healing is expected. God’s transcendence has fallen, but he is not dead. He is drawn into the fate of man. This passage of “planetary man” [Planeten Mensch] through the house of despair is, in the absolute loneliness of his path, the ethos Nietzsche describes. This man is the Übermensch, the first who knowingly begins to realize the capitalist religion ... The Übermensch is the one who without changing, arrived, who streaked through the heavens—historical man. – Walter Benjamin¹


Bringing attention to Africa as a problem of nescience in this way, the enslaved Kebe articulates the issue of the African’s status in Western modernity as a problematic of the Enlightenment conception of subjective freedom from the phenomenal bonds of nature. – (Dis)Forming the American Canon, 28²

... the content of the discourses on tradition, that is otherness as both monstrosity and corpus mirabiliorium... – V. Y. Mudimbe³

² Reference is to what Lamen Kebe tells Theodor Dwight, an American “ethnological philologist” (ibid, 167), in Georgia in 1845, where Kebe “provided Dwight with a bibliography of the texts used in higher education in Futa Djallon” (p. 28): “There are good men in America, but all are very ignorant of Africa.” Kebe said and instructed Dwight to "Write down what I tell you exactly as I say it, and be careful to distinguish between what I have seen and what I have only heard other people say of. They may have made some mistakes; but if you put down exactly what I say, by and by, when good men go to Africa, they will say; Paul told the truth" (cited in ibid, 174). Allan D. Austin, who uses part of this quotation in the title of the first chapter of his Allan D. Austin, African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles (New York: Routledge, 1997) adds that “Kebe might also have said ‘and very ignorant of Islam in both Africa and America’” (p.3). Austin records the year of the conversation to be 1835.
… Christian theological (that is, historical) … – Gil Anidjar

Without thought, invention,
you would not have been, O Sword,

without idea and the Word’s mediation,
you would have remained

unmanifest in the dim dimension

Jameson, whose notes have guided me through my reading of Namjoo’s work, writes again elsewhere that “globalization also entail[s] the preponderance of space as such,” and this is a part of his “description of postmodernity … meant to be a historical and political diagnosis”: a “suppression of time,” lack of duration and political and historical arrest in a “new kind of present of time” in which “history, historicity, the sense of history, is the loser: the past is gone, we can no longer imagine the future;” a “waning of history, of historicity or historical consciousness” that “confronts those of us still committed to radical systemic change with some very real political problems.” A

---

4 Anidjar, Blood, 268, n38.
sort of spatial arrest in the “instant” that Jameson also describes as “a reduction to the body.”

This concomitance of globalization, omnipresence of space, and reduction to the body however leads me to another book, Denise Ferreira da Silva’s Toward a Global Idea of Race, and her meticulous analysis of two other moments—previous modern ones—that determine the postmodern global condition: the nineteenth century moment of the racial and the twentieth century moment of the cultural. In the mid-nineteenth century, there comes to the world the “scientific … notion of the racial,” which as Silva argues, “institutes the global as an ontoepistemological context.” This is the moment of the mental and bodily determination in global space of “homo modernus, that is, the global/historical consciousness,” for whom “the historical” does not “constitute … the sole ontological context” anymore; for homo modernus is a product of “both fields of modern representation, namely, history [“that assumes time as the privileged ontoepistemological dimension”] and science [“that posits space as the privileged ontoepistemological dimension”].”

Silva demonstrates through a reading of modern anthropological discourse that around the mid-nineteenth century “the science of man, anthropology … transforms

---

race (a term previously employed to describe collectivities in terms of blood relationship) into the racial (a scientific concept) ... that produces the human body as an exteriorization” of “reason”—or really Reason—that having substituted God during the Enlightenment is now understood as “the producer or regulator of the universe.” 8 In a way this is where one has to look for the beginnings of multiculturalism, for by deploying the concept of the racial 19th century anthropology makes the post-Enlightenment Europeans’ way of being human thinkable to themselves as particular, that is, as one—or really, One—among other contemporaneous ways of being human. Reason, in its post-Enlightenment sense, as “productive nomos,” in Silva’s terms, is imagined as manifesting itself differentially in different global regions, thus producing different kinds of “minds (interior things)”—themselves products of the scientific tools of anthropology—that have “bodies and social configurations” as their “signifiers (exteriorizations).” Bodies are “expressions” of the mind and social configurations its “actualizations.” Through the deployment of its scientific tools anthropology refashioned self-consciousness as homo racialis, rendering man (the body-mind composite) a thing for which globality (exteriority-spatiality) constitutes the horizon of existence. Because man can be known, determined in globality, only through the deployments of a scientific arsenal that explains and describes why and how his body and social configuration departs from or approximates others found on other continents.

8 Silva, 116, xvi.
Deployments of the racial make possible a scientific representation of the human, “*homo scientificus,*” addressed “as a spatial (exterior or affectable) thing,” with “a fundamental (‘necessary’ and ‘objective’)” mental and bodily connection with a “global region (continent),” knowable only in relativity. Yet, even though 19th century anthropology conceived of the Enlightened European mind as only one among other manifestations of Universal Reason, it still separated it from all other manifestations to be found elsewhere on the globe by assuming that it is “not submitted to the regulative and productive force of the universe.” Thus while all other anthropologically produced global minds are conceived as “affectable,” that is as “subject to exterior determination,” the Enlightened mind is imagined as “transparent,” that is “not submitted to,” but “able to know, emulate, and control powers of universal reason.” In this sense 19th century anthropology, if we were to accept for the sake of the argument the truth of the fundamental relation it posits between the human and the globe (or land), *both* writes non-submission as a condition of knowing, emulating, and controlling “the regulative and productive force of universe,” *and* writes the Enlightened mind as expressed in that body and actualized in that social configuration that refuses to submit to the “fundamental (‘necessary’ and ‘objective’)” conditions of being human not least in so far as it concerns the exterior dimensions of the others it locates on the globe, if not exteriority as such; for the “transparent I,” to use Silva’s term, ultimately retains some
sense of being non-corporeal. The “Global” then, as the context within which the modern human exists in its “exterior dimensions (bodily and social configurations)” from the moment of its emergence “constitutes a necessarily uneven political surface.”

One underwritten by the necessity of the submission of all to geographical determination as the condition of an Enlightened wish for invulnerability, if not immortality, to be forced into the world.

In the twentieth century, “the age of historicity,” Silva continues, anthropology critiqued the concept of the racial, rejected the body as a signifier of the mind, took the intellectual dimensions of being human and social configurations, “self-created dimensions of collective existence,” as its object of study and was transformed from a science of man into a science of the mind, morality, and the social. Twentieth century anthropological discourse gravitated toward the humanities and sat itself to the task of making scientific sense of human interiority by studying its linguistic and social exteriorizations. From that moment on, to give an account of human difference “the cultural” is deployed as a scientific signifier that declares the racial irrelevant and resists reading bodily difference as signifying mental difference, but retains the signifying effects of the racial because its deployments “presume globality,” that is, a racially

---

9 Silva, 127.
10 Concerning invulnerability, “immortality,” “fighting the enemy at a distance,” and “soldiers who need no longer go to war expecting to die but only to kill,” see Asad, On Suicide Bombing.
11 Silva, Toward a Global Idea of Race, 131, 139.
mapped image of the world, “the ontological context the racial signifies”: what constitutes the politically uneven space in which modern humans exist as spatial things, that is, as subjects of exterior determination. Deployments of the cultural, Silva writes,

resignify racial difference as substantive difference, that is, as God-given bodily traits that correspond to continental borders and are immediate (preconceptual) indexes of the universal determinants of cultural particularity, which anthropological tools aim to “discover.” [In other words] racial difference, now substantive (prescientific and prehistoric) difference, would constitute the “empirical” basis of the division of labor among the scientific projects that deployed the cultural to account for human difference (my emphases).

That is, even though the cultural gives a philosophical-historical (rather than biological) account of human difference, it still writes the cultural human as a geographically determined mind-body composite, and writes all but the Enlightened self-consciousness as ultimately determined by exteriority, that is as historically affectable, and thus “condemned to obliteration when in contact with” the transparency of the “‘modern [European-white] civilization’” (brackets in original).12

Writing the post-Enlightenment mind and its exteriorizations out of affectability, as the actualization of that self-consciousness that exists and knows in space free of exterior determination, 19th century deployments of the racial and early 20th century

12 Silva, 132–33.
deployments of the cultural, regardless of how they treat organic difference, effectively
write all ways of being human as corresponding to always spatially contemporaneous
(one among many), but temporally “not-yet” variants of the exteriorizations of the
Enlightened mind (One among many); at the same time that they write the Enlightened
mind’s desire to never know itself by accepting as an objective necessity the obliteration
of all other ways of being human relative to which it defines its own global difference—
really, its own superiority.

History here provides the semantic context for writing the inevitability of the
humanity’s movement toward post-Enlightenment Europe and its being condemned to
destruction in contact with it. It is “a scale,” as V. Y. Mudimbe puts it, used for
“classifying human cultures”:

a normative langue, a being, which socializes the cogito and all its metaphoric
duplications. It subsumes all cultural paroles. As such, it identifies with their
locus or culture, reflects and expresses itself as both normative in-itself and for-

itself. It properly visualizes the Hegelian dream.

While early anthropologists saw the cultures they studied as in-themselves and for-
Europeans, not only pre-historical but also pre-conscious, to-be-colonized beings, later
anthropologists having had to think “the implicit, the unthought, the An sich, negated in
their own cultural experience by the sovereignty of a history which was a mystifying
socialization of the cogito,” understood the non-European cultures as beings-in-
themselves and for-themselves “the otherness of [whose] being appears as dynamic event, and thus history.” The historical consciousness of non-Europeans, however, remains pertinent only to themselves (unless as objects of study) because in the racially mapped space of the globe their (“historical”) consciousness is ultimately a “cultural” consciousness, that is, something essentially bound to a geographical location. Thus in 1988 Mudimbe writes that “Contrary to the claims of anthropological textbooks one may still integrate data and categories from most present-day studies into the grid proposed by Varenius in his 1650 Geographia Generalis.” All the while post-Enlightenment European consciousness transcends geography and enjoys universality – all alone.

scale\(^1\) skeil †drinking-bowl xiii (La3); pan of a balance xvi; sg. and pl. weighing instrument xv ... OE. sæcalu shell, husk, drinking-cup, weighing scale

scale\(^2\) skeil ... lamina of skin, etc. xv; ... metal plate worn as an epaulette xix

cscale\(^3\) skeil A. †ladder (xv, Lydg.); B. (mus.) series of graduated sounds xvi; C. set of graduation for measuring distance xiv (Ch.; rare before xvi); graduated instrument; D. relative dimension, standard of measurement xviii. – L. scāla usu. pl. steps, staircase, (sg., late) ladder (whence OF. eschiele, mod. èschelle, Pr., Sp. escala, It. scala) :- *scandslā, f. base of scandere climb (cf. scan, ascend, etc., scandal).\(^15\)

---

\(^{13}\) Mudimbe, The Invention of Africa, 190, 195.
\(^{14}\) Mudimbe, 191.
\(^{15}\) Onions, The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology, 793. All English lexical entries are from this dictionary unless otherwise specified. Hereafter I will only give page numbers in the body of the text.
H.

(‘... and anyhow, / we have not crawled so very far // up our individual grass-blade / toward our individual star.’)

Christian individuation did not result in a return flow of history, a cyclical renewal; on the contrary, by universalizing linear time—before and after Christ—it brought a chronology of the human race into general use, initiating a History of Humanity. It has been suggested that, in this instance, Christ marked a decisive break, uniting the histories of communities into this generalized History. – Édouard Glissant¹⁶

What writes the Enlightened mind as One among many in the nineteenth century is its reconceptualization of the geographic in historical terms. While before 1492 “geographical boundaries coincided with the boundaries of humanity,” writes Walter Mignolo, after 1492 geographical boundaries were extended to the “New World,” but the boundaries of humanity remained attached to Christians. “The cannibals and savages were located in [the] space” that was to-be-colonized. “Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however,” the “spatial boundaries” that separated the human from the geographic “were transformed into chronological ones,” and thus the boundary that separated the thing ‘human’ from the ‘world’ out there was refigured as temporal distance, allowing the boundary’s extension to include those previously considered things of space into the category “human,” this time as chronologically distant

relatives. This neither wrote the newly included out of geographical determination, nor the Enlightened mind in affectability. Spatial boundaries that separate the colonizer from the geographic transformed into “a chronology of the human race,” then, cast the light in which the racial maps the globe. And when that chronology is transformed into a history of human cultures, the bestowal of historical time, this time, Silva writes, writes the “others” of the now historically conscious Europe “as twice affectable,” once determined by a “tradition,” cultural historicity, and a second time by a “place … of ‘origin,’” the geography of that historicity.

Glissant does not mention who has “suggested that, in this instance, Christ marked a decisive break, uniting the histories of communities into this generalized History.” It could have been Reinhart Koselleck, who argues, that if not exactly Christ, “he who lives in Christ” did precisely that. This is in an essay about “binary concepts with claims to universality;” belonging to the “historical world,” which “operates for the most part with asymmetrical concepts that are unequally antithetical.” That is, those that set the conceptual field in a way “that one’s own position is readily defined by criteria which make it possible for the resulting counterposition to be only negated.” This gives them “political efficacy but at the same time renders them unsuitable for scientific

---

18 Silva, Toward a Global Idea of Race, 140.
knowledge.” Once such concepts “emerge ... historically,” they constitute “particular modes of experience and expectational possibilities whose given arrangement could turn up under different labels and in different historical situations” (my italics). Koselleck examines three historically related pairs: “Hellene and Barbarian, Christian and Heathen, and finally, the contrast that emerges within the conceptual field of humanity between human and nonhuman, superhuman and subhuman.” What concerns my inquiry here is some of the conceptual arrangements of time and space analyzed in this essay, with important political consequences for the contemporary global situation, not the least of which is the conception of the in-itself and for-itself “historical world” to which these concepts belong.

Hellene/Barbarian, Koselleck writes, primarily offered a spatial, territorial, conceptualization of the political field. Even though, at some point the opposition “assumed a historical perspective, as we say today” and the territorial division came to be “deployed horizontally” after Alexander’s conquests when education became the principle of discrimination. Christianity offered a radically different principle of discrimination: separation. Here “The real antithesis derives from true belief,” and the

---

19”The Historical-Political Semantics of Asymmetric Counterconcepts,” in Reinhart Koselleck, Futures Past: On The Semantics of Historical Time, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 157. It is not insignificant that one side of each opposition has become more or less privatized: “Hellene” belongs to historians, “Heathen” to the Church, and since the political field of humanity is declared leveled, “nonhuman, superhuman, and subhuman” are said to belong to history, as well as popular culture.

20 Koselleck, 164.
“separation” itself is “a criterion of true belief.” The believer is separated from all attributes through his union with Christ who transcends all existing separations: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians, 3:28, NIV). Once a Christian, one is not simply separated from the rest, rather, all that is not Christian is totally negated. This is a “denial of asymmetry” as such. “The Pauline dualism—” writes Koselleck, “here, all of humanity; there, those saved by Christ—permits of only one solution … he who lives in Christ, is the new man who has done away with the old (Colossians 3:9, Ephesians 4:24).” Everything is renewed with the coming of the Good News: “temporal tension structures the Pauline antithesis itself. All the existing peoples … who became defined … as ‘Heathens’ belong as such to the past. By virtue of the death of Christ, the future belongs to Christians. The future bears the new world.”

III

(‘… but we must wait // till the new Sun dries off / the old-body humours …’)

Separation of Christianitas (Christianity/Christendom) from old humanity and its old world is purely temporal; or to be more precise purely spiritual. Baptism ritually mystifies spatiality-exteriority. “Through the waters of Baptism,” as Pope Pius XII puts

21 Koselleck, 169–70.
it, “those who are born into this world dead in sin are not only born again … but … stamped with a spiritual seal,” that makes them capable of being “incorporated in the Body of the Church,” that is, the “Mystical Body of Christ,” where “by the salutary virtue of the Cross” on which “the Old Law died, soon to be buried and to be a bearer of death, in order to give way to … the New and Eternal Testament,” the reborn come “into [His] possession,” “are made flesh of the Crucified,” and thus “united” in the “unbroken unity” of “this Mystical Body”: “For in one spirit we are all baptized into one Body.”

Now, to go back to Koselleck, when there is no Church the Christian relation to the world is spiritualized to the utmost degree, and wherever the Church is established, the temporal distance between Christians and the old humanity can be territorialized. Christians are always in the future: “geographical difference [becomes] chronological difference. The groups’ spatial contrast [has] to be chronologically arranged in so that the victory of Christianity could be secured in advance.” In other words, the Christian horizon of expectation is for the whole world to be incorporated into Christ’s Mystical Body.

---

Body, “united under a single Law,” in a “world at peace” in the Christian future in whose past non-Christians live. Augustine however, had already argued successfully many years ago that “peace on earth and the peace of God could not in any way be identical,” and that geographical expansion helps shortening the temporal distance of the Old and the New.23

Augustine here marks not a break, but a hyphen, between the theological and the political. It is not that the two are separate, that for example “religion” provides the only way to heaven, for which Augustine longs. The way to heaven passes through a conjunctive separation of the two realms. The mystical body is not only a “metaphor” for a “religious” communion, or community. From the Christian Middle Ages on—that is around the same time that the Pauline notion of the Church as Corpus Christi (1 Corinthians 12:12-14) was being transubstantiated through the rite of the Eucharist into the idea of the Church as corpus mysticum with Christ as its head24 and the Church members as a “community of blood”25—the “political” community of Christians was also being imagined as formed into a Body with the “king as head, soldiers and

23 Koselleck, Futures Past, 170–71.
24 “Urged by faith we are,” wrote Pope Boniface VIII in 1302, “bound to believe in one holy Church, Catholic and also Apostolic . . . , without which there is neither salvation nor remission of sins . . . , which represents one mystical body, the head of which is Christ, and the head of Christ is God.” Quoted in Ernst Kantorowicz, The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 194.
25 See Anidjar, Blood, particularly chapters one and two, “Nation (Jesus’s Kin),” and “State (The Vampire State).” More on this notion shortly.
administrative officers as the hands and the peasants at the feet.’”26 However, while the rise of Eucharist during the Middle Ages caused the mystical body of Christ that hitherto resided invisibly in the sacrament to become visible, as “embod[y]ing the visible members (the flesh and blood) of the community;”27 the body politic remained emphatically invisible as the angelic body of the King—in other words, as the State. For the King, as a group of English crown jurists put it around the mid-sixteenth century,

has in him two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body.28

The “body politic,” as the King’s invisible body that stands for that which brings together the “political” community, i.e. the State; and the “mystical body,” that becomes visible in the coming together of the “religious” community in the Church, writes Ernst Kantorowicz, “seem to be used without great discrimination.” Indicating that the “teaching that the Church, and Christian society in general, was a ’corpus mysticum’ the

26 Ibid., 74. Quoted is Kate Langdon Forhan’s “Introduction” to Christine de Pizan’s The Book of the Body Politic.
27 Ibid., 58. The concomitance of visibility and invisibility is however a recurrent theme of Blood.
28 Cited in Kantorowicz, The King’s Two Bodies, 7.
head of which is Christ,’ has been transferred by the jurists from the theological sphere to that of the state the head of which is the king.”

This however should come as no surprise given that as Gil Anidjar has written and said on various occasions, Christianity is the very tradition that, at least since Augustine, separates the theological and the political, the City of God and the Earthly City, the Pope and the Emperor, without this ever meaning that the two are mutually exclusive. Far from that, the two are entangled through and through. It is also “worth being kept in mind,” Kantorowicz suggests, that the theologico-political conception of the king’s invisible Body, is related to “the mediaeval concept of the king’s character angelicus. The body politic of kingship appears as a likeness of the ‘holy spirits and angels,’ because it represents, like the angels, the Immutable within Time. It has been raised to angelic heights” (my italics).

Kantorowicz, 15–16.

See particularly Gil Anidjar, The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy (Stanford University Press, 2003), where he writes about "the enemy's two bodies." Anidjar demonstrates in detail that this separation becomes visible, in a projection of sorts, in Christianity's relation to the two enemies it chooses for itself to love: the Jew, the theological enemy, and the Arab, the political enemy. The projection of the division of the theological and the political is perfectly manifest in two famous characters in the city of Venice: "Shylock the Jew," a character known by his "religion," and "Othello the Moor" which significantly has no "religion." This also sheds light, as Anidjar has also emphasized, on the current situation where the "political" dimension of "Islam" is emphatically under question as a secularized Christianity debates whether a "religion" can be "political" in our modern "secular" age. It is also in this light that we have to see the new surge of scholarly enthusiasm for "Sufism" (aka "Islamic mysticism" – this most terribly mystifying translation) in Western liberal academy. What is being "studied" (or more precisely, "constructed") under this rubric is hardly anything more than a liberal version of "Islam": "Islam" with a smiling face, thoroughly depoliticized, ready for "secular" consumption and adoration. This enthusiasm for a kind and tender version of "Islam" has to be considered in its hidden (really, spectacular) rapport with the liberal enthusiasm for helping refugees all the while that all political action for ending the war is systematically, that is, mystically, avoided. In fact contemporary war is consistently legitimised by democratic means. More about this later in this section.

Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies, 8–9.
What is common to both conceptions of Christian community as mystical body and body politic is that their imaginary organic form, their being conceived as living bodies, (one full of blood, the other bloodless, like angels—or vampires, as Anidjar has it\textsuperscript{32}), figures them as self-contained, intralinked entities, immanent to themselves. While the mystical body, the Church and the visible community of believers in it, feeds on divine blood and thus interiorizes what at least before the Eucharistic transformation of Christian communal imagination was exterior to the community, the body politic is “no

\textsuperscript{32} On vampires and particularly “the vampire state” see the second Chapter of Blood. That the body politic is bloodless and the Church as mystical body forms a community of blood sheds light on a familiar global dynamic. In Anidjar’s words:

the bloodless body of the vampire state rules over, it lives with and feeds on a community of blood, whether that community is the nation it upholds or the races it excoriates, whether the blood is the one it sings, spills, cleanses, or feeds on, or whether it is “the extravasat blood” of the body politic. The American exception, when it comes to race, loses here once and for all its credibility (of which it had little to spare at any rate, when considered historically). For a hematological perspective enables us to observe a more general dependence on a community of blood, a dependence that is more or less exploitative, more or less bloody. It is a question of degrees, in other words, and not of kind. It is a matter of blood quantum, if I may put it that way, a continuum of blood that defines the vampire state. And I do wish to inquire further into this commensurability of the community of blood, later the national or racial community, and to do so precisely in order to demonstrate that its distinction from a theologically founded community of blood is fragile at best, obfuscating at worst, and rather clearly located, at any rate, on a hematological continuum. (Anidjar, Blood, 128.)

Angels have a less pronounced presence in Blood than vampires, there is, however, the famous Angelus Novus, Paul Klee’s painting is there: Walter Benjamin’s “angel of history” who “sees one single catastrophe,” in the past and the “wreckage” of its recurrence in the present, the “piling” up of whose “debris” in the ‘heavenly storm of progress,’ pushes the angel to the future (see “Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in The Frankfurt School on Religion: Key Writings by the Major Thinkers, ed. Eduardo Mendieta, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Routledge, 2005), 268. sec. ix.); and Giorgio Agamben’s “Eros) … Love … a winged … angelic figure with claws,” which as Anidjar leaves no doubt, is a “vampire bat,” “full of love—and out for blood” (Anidjar, Blood, 201–3.)
longer dependent on any exteriority.”33 Rather, as Christine de Pizan puts it (around the same time as this political theology is being developed), the body politic’s “‘particular institutions’” come from its angelic head “‘just as from the mind of a person springs forth the external deeds that the limbs achieve.’”34

The separation of the divine and the earthly—(“The empire of God holds sway over the world and is present in the Church, but the inner community of believers is constantly on a pilgrimage; their empire is merely built upon hope. The worldly empire by contrast is built on property”35)—is then about Providential spatial expansion in the hope that one day the worldly might finally come to its promised end, completely turn into property, and all shall arrive, in one Spirit baptized into one Body that is two but also less than two, to the heaven of pure time that is always both in angelic heads and on the horizon, always expected, always disappearing into the future. That is why, as Koselleck writes, “the believer has good cause to hope, precisely in the moment of catastrophe.”36

So, again:

Christian individuation did not result in a return flow of history, a cyclical renewal; on the contrary, by universalizing linear time—before and after Christ—it

33 Anidjar, Blood, 74.
34 Cited in ibid., 75.
35 Koselleck, Futures Past, 174.
36 Koselleck.
brought a chronology of the human race into general use, initiating a History of Humanity.

The cyclical renewal of Christian individuation is a catastrophe. It is the catastrophe that keeps time linear. The flow of history does not return because it is incorporated, transubstantiated, into a politically mystified Body progressing towards the heaven of the History of Humanity, that always used to be on the horizon but these days are “in general … characterized by this new kind of present of time, a reduction to the body”: “the living or temporal present, history.”37 Current Events.

III

(Ode to Joy)

“[W]ith the discovery of America, and thereby the discovery of the globality of the earth,” Koselleck continues,

the Christian Gospel finally achieved usque ad terminos terrae. The annexation of space and temporal fulfillment could now converge, in the same way that Columbus thought of his voyage as a way of accelerating the promised end of the world … It was the growing apprehension of planetary finitude which in the course of succeeding centuries, drew attention to Menschheit as referent, indeed, increasingly as the intended acting subject of its own history [or as the realization of the Absolute in present perfect38]. In Kant’s words, it is the ‘global form’ of the

37 Jameson, An American Utopia, 13. To be precise this is a misquotation.
earth upon which men ‘are not able to infinitely disperse themselves, but must eventually tolerate one another.’ [One however has to ask, in a historical fashion so to speak, who in particular had acute tolerance problems before knowing that the earth was round. Or were we all always already all too human before becoming Menschen?]. In this fashion, an intersubjective and closed space of action emerged that was sufficiently small that ‘an infringement of right in one place on the earth is sensed everywhere.’ However Menschheit might be interpreted, it has since then been linguistically available as an empirical substratum.\textsuperscript{39}

“Menschheit,” this linguistically available empirical substratum, brings humans together precisely in the same fashion as “Christian;” that is, not by designating the newly incarnated Menschen as one among many, but as the total negation of all existing divisions—in other words, as One among many. As Johann Gottfried Herder wrote in 1769: “What a wonderful topic—to show that to be what one should be, one might neither be Jew, nor Arab, nor Greek, nor savage, nor martyr, nor pilgrim,” (my emphasis).\textsuperscript{40} Neither martyr nor pilgrim, neither in the transcendent past, nor on a spatial pilgrimage of hope towards heaven after its discovery on earth, Menschheit is here and now, the subject of its own history, a colonizer.

Menschheit is literally the “humanity of Christ” (as opposed to His Divinity): the divine incarnated in earthly flesh, in “human form,” and he is ‘neither Jew, nor Arab, nor Greek, nor savage.’ The problem is however more complex, because “Menschheit, 

\textsuperscript{39} Koselleck, \textit{Futures Past}, 182–83.
\textsuperscript{40} Cited in Koselleck, 184.
*genus humanum,* is emphatically not intended as designating a “religious” unity anymore, but it is deployed to designate “a politically intended unity,” which negatively presupposes “all dualities that” prior to the birth of *Mensch,* “organized *Menschheit* physically, spatially, spiritually, theologically, or temporally” (and why not “politically”?). In other words, when Western Christians decided to be “*Menschen*” rather than “Christians,” for negating their own “religious identity” they reformulated the humanity of Christ as that which is common to both the Old and the New to be posited as a linguistic empiricity—a ‘linguistically available empirical substratum’—that as Koselleck brilliantly points out, when deployed as a political tool that intends exclusion, negates the very human form of those who previously could still remain human even if unsaved: “They are eliminated from the universal class to which they belong as human beings, without being able to cease being ‘humans.’”41 In other words, human as a universally intended political-historical concept with a muted theological thrust (or more precisely, with its spiritual dimension turned historical), generates its own counterconcepts by exploiting the dualities it presupposes negatively.

41 Koselleck, 180–82.
III

(‘... of the rare intangible thread / that binds all humanity...’)

although He had been constituted the Head of the whole human family in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, it is by the power of the Cross that our Savior exercises fully the office itself of Head in His Church. “For it was through His triumph on the Cross,” according to the teaching of the Angelic and Common Doctor, “that He won power and dominion over the gentiles”; by that same victory He increased the immense treasure of graces, which, as He reigns in glory in heaven, He lavishes continually on His mortal members; it was by His blood shed on the Cross that God’s anger was averted and that all the heavenly gifts, especially the spiritual graces of the New and Eternal Testament, could then flow from the fountains of our Savior for the salvation of men, of the faithful above all; it was on the tree of the Cross, finally, that He entered into possession of His Church, that is, of all the members of His Mystical Body; for they would not have been united to this Mystical Body through the waters of Baptism except by the salutary virtue of the Cross, by which they had been already brought under the complete sway of Christ (my italics).42

It is exactly Christ’s humanity that posits the necessity for the Old to be either renewed or be damned. It is the Old’s sharing a universal human form with Christ that necessitates his being renewed or damned after Christ became “a bearer of death.” And Christ’s human form, or the human form we all necessarily and objectively share with Jesus of Nazareth is nowhere as apparent as on the Cross.

... So humanism belief in the mere human nature of Christ xix (Coleridge 1812); devotion to human interests or the humanities (c. 1830); after humanist one devoted to the humanities xvi ... humanity humæ.nĭti humane disposition or conduct xiv (Wycl. Bible, Ch.); human quality or attributes xv

42 Pope Pius XII, “Mystici Corporis Christi.”
(Lydg.; mankind xvi); polite learning, spec. (and from xvii pl.) the ancient Greek and Latin classics, literæ humaniores xv (Caxton; depending on uses of F. humanité, It. umanità, and ult. L. hūmānitās liberal education, as used by Cicero, Aulus Gellius, etc.) –(O)F. –L. Hence humanitarian one who affirms the humanity of Christ xix (Moore); one devoted to human action or the welfare of the human race c. 1830. humanize. xvii (Holland). –F. humaniser. {ODEE, 451}

'It.

(‘… the Dream // deftly stage-managed the bare, clean / early colonial interior … ’)

The apparent contradiction between faith and knowledge, between religion and enlightenment, thus repeats itself. It does so because in order to reach the light, in order to phenomenalize itself, to utter itself, to manifest itself, the sacralizing movement, the experience of the sacred, must cede to what I call “auto-immunity.” In it, the living organism destroys the conditions of its own protection. Such auto-immunization is a terrifying biological possibility: a body … organizes in itself … the destructive forces that will attack its immunitary reactions. When religion shows itself on television, wherever it manifests and deploys itself in the “world,” in the “public space,” it at the same time increases its power and its power to self-destroy; it increases both the one and the other, the one as the other, to the same degree … this Christian hegemony in the world of telesvisualiz [dans la mondiale-télévisualisation] is the hegemony of a religion founded on the ordeal of kenosis and of the death of God. Terrifying mystery. The Christian message remains tied to the incarnation, the death of God, under the form of Christ on the Cross giving his body, but also, as a result, through all the deaths of God that have followed in the history of European philosophy until Hegel and Company. What propagates itself as media, as Christian telemedia, is also a certain death of God. – “Above All, No Journalists!”, p. 67
James H. Cone, in his book *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, after Ignacio Ellacuría, writes about “‘the crucified peoples of history,’” and American Christian theology’s avoidance of neither History nor the Cross, but the history of crucifixion. The aim of white violence against black Americans, Cone makes clear, has been and is “prevent[ing] them from participating in politics” (my emphasis). He argues throughout the book that lynching is the same as crucifixion; and that those who died on the lynching tree, and are being lynched with bare hands, bullets, and bombs, are the body of Christ crucified again. Ritual sacrifice is what it is. Cone writes that when he “heard and read about the physical and mental abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, [he] thought about lynching. The Roman Empire that killed Jesus at Calvary was similar to the American Empire that lynched blacks in the United States and also created the atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan.” Cultural memory of white supremacy, History, is brought to real presence each time as another act of murder that attempts to write the others of whiteness out of politics by inscribing them in the City of God. Televised spectacle. Matter of sermonic jokes. News—dinned to.
What concerns my inquiry into the historical, that is, Christian theological (and its ‘hegemony in the world of televisualization’), here, is what Cone writes about the “conspicuous absence of the lynching tree in American theological discourse and preaching” and its ceaseless terrorizing presence in image form, from live spectacle, to postcards to cinematic masterpieces, to all forms of media. He writes that “Lynching became a white media spectacle.” That the “analogy” of the cross and the lynching tree “should have eluded” not only “the Christian agents of white supremacy,” but also “the most ‘progressive’ of America’s white theologians and religious thinkers,” reflects, Cone writes, “a defect in the conscience of white Christians,” or their historical consciousness for that matter. This is however not because white Christians refrained from historical, that is theological-political reasoning and speculation. Reinhold Niebuhr for example wrote in 1943, in an essay titled “Anglo-Saxon Destiny and Responsibility,” that “Only those who have no sense of the profundities of history would deny that various nations and classes, various social groups and races are at various times placed in such a

significance of eating. Denise Levertov writes about “the poet in the world” who “has seen the lifted fork pause in the air laden with its morsel of TV dinner as the eyes of the woman holding it paused for a moment at the image on the screen that showed a bamboo hut go up in flames and a Vietnamese child run screaming toward the camera—and he has seen the fork move on toward its waiting mouth, and the jaws continue their halted movement of mastication as the next image glided across the screen” (“The Poet in the World” in Denise Levertov, New & Selected Essays (New York: New Directions, 1992), 132.) And I am sure you have heard or maybe have seen that there are those who prefer to watch the news live – to tele-picnic.

Cone, The Cross and the Lynching Tree, 30, 32.
position that a special measure of the divine mission in history falls upon them. In that sense God has chosen us in this fateful period of world history.”

Again, History of Humanity, a chronology of the human race.

This defect in historical consciousness is also Cone’s main concern in the essay “White Theology Revisited, 1998,” where he writes about the white theologians’ insistent avoidance of “slavery, colonialism, segregation, and the profound cultural link these horrible crimes created between white supremacy and Christianity”—in other words, their avoidance of history, or the “radical contradictions that racism creates for Christian theology.” White supremacy, Cone writes, is so thoroughly written out of the historical (that is white theological) consciousness that it has become “the ‘natural’ way of viewing the world.” Therefore it must be asked whether racism is “so deeply embedded in Euro-American history and culture that it is impossible to do theology without being antiblack?”

Racism is the politics of white theology that takes the form of avoiding the historical—just as the avoidance of the theological is the politics of secular historical discourse. As the quote about “world history” by Niebuhr shows, however, this is not an avoidance of History, far from that. It is an embrace of History: a political move that

---

49 Cited in Cone, 52.
writes the history of race and racism as irrelevant to “Anglo-Saxon Destiny,” or Christian theology—(Christian History has no geography: christianitas is without borders\(^{51}\)). In white world-historical imagination, then, race and racism belong to the cultural history of racism’s victims, or its invisible “perpetrators,” claiming cultural, that is chronological-spatial, distance from “whom” is a measure of “Anglo-Saxon” liberalness and progressiveness these days—that is how whiteness mystifies its generality, its being-standard: by claiming eugenic distance. This is akin to the political move that writes the theological as the cultural-historical politics of (some) non-Christians, and thus irrelevant to the secular politics that determines the future of “world history”—(I forgot to mention, Niebuhr’s essay about “Anglo-Saxon Destiny and Responsibility” that had originally appeared in a book titled Christianity and Crisis in 1943, has later on appeared in a book titled God’s New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny in 1971).\(^{52}\)

White theology is ahistorical. Christian history is secular. Both are Historical, that is, Christian theological, that is, theological-political. Both strive to be purely spiritual, that

\(^{51}\) On the semantics of the word “christianitas” in its relation to the mystical body, Christianity, Christendom, Christians, peace, and a world without borders, see Tomaž Mastnak, Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western Political Order (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), Ch. 3 “Christendom and the Crusade.”

\(^{52}\) See Cone, The Cross and the Lynching Tree, Ch. 2, n48.
is, free of exteriority—historically non-geographic. Both propagate themselves as a certain mediatized spectacle of the death of God.

\section{III}

(‘… in the rain of the incendiary, / other values were revealed to us, / other standards hallowed us; / strange texture, a wing covered us, // and though there was whirr and roar in the high air, / there was a Voice louder, // though its speech was lower / than a whisper.’)

That <Christian history is secular> sheds some light on why, as Enrique Dussel writes, “the modernity of Anglo-Germanic Europe, which begins with the Amsterdam of Flanders … frequently passes as the only modernity” (original emphasis).\textsuperscript{53} In other words, the ahistorical assumption of secularity can shed light on the erroneous but all too common assumption that “modernity” begins sometime around the seventeenth century. For Dussel “Modernity [that is, “the fourth stage of the world-system”] begins in 1492.”\textsuperscript{54} But it is often narrated, or historicized, in a “‘substantialist’ developmentalist (quasi-metaphysical)”\textsuperscript{55} way, as if the Christian conquest of the Americas, “the first … Hispanic, humanist, Renaissance modernity,” belonged to a sort of foreign pre-modernity, perhaps a still “religious,” “Christian” past. This “first modernity,” for

\textsuperscript{54} Dussel, 15.
\textsuperscript{55} Dussel, 18.
Dussel, “is … still linked to the old interregional system of Mediterranean, Muslim, and Christian.”

56 The forgetting of this first (religious?) phase of modernity, “produce[s] a ‘reductionist fallacy’ that occludes the meaning of modernity and, thus, the sense of its contemporary crisis.” This all too historical forgetting of nothing but the conquest and evangelization of the Americas, Dussel writes, is also the forgetting of a question that was still available to the “theoretical-philosophical thought of the sixteenth century,” but that “the conscience (Gewissen) of the second modernity did not have to wrestle with;” namely, “What right has the European,” as Dussel puts it, or “‘Christians [who] have an ultimate aim, which is to acquire gold’” as Bartolomé de las Casas whom Dussel quotes puts it, “to occupy, dominate, and manage” the rest of the world, again in Dussel’s words, or to go on “‘unjustly waging cruel and bloody wars’” in de las Casas’ words.

With the historical forgetting of this question then, “‘Eurocentrism,’” or global white

56 Dussel, 13.

57 “Muslim here,” Dussel writes in a footnote, “means the most ‘cultured’ and civilized of the fifteenth century” (p. 27, fn. 56). (Why is “civilized” not suspended then?)—If “Muslim” is to vaguely refer to the nobility and literati of the Mediterranean world before its Christianization here (later in the essay Dussel refers to “the scholastic-Muslim-Christian and Renaissance philosophies” (14), as well as “The corporeal Muslim-medieval subjectivity” (15)), then why not Jewish-Muslim-Christian? What is it that prevents these three from being seen together even with retrospective eyes, and even when speculating about a time before “Europe” became Christian—that is a place of neither Jews nor Moors, or in its more recent rendition, after “Europe” has been declared “Judeo-Christian,” a secular place, that is, not a place of, or for, “religion”? We have to bear in mind however, that 1492 is not only the “beginning of the conquest,” but also what from the 19th century on came to be historicized as the “the end of the Reconquista,” that is Christianization of “Spain” by the most “civilized” and “cultured.” This is also perhaps the beginning of “Europe.” Does “Muslim here” mean “Christian” then?
supremacy, becomes accepted as a presupposition that is rarely questioned until much more recent times.\textsuperscript{58}

Again, what concerns my inquiry into the historical, that is Christian theological, here, is that in Dussel’s analysis the presupposition of Eurocentrism, or white supremacy, is part and parcel of a “simplifying rationalization,” itself derived from the practices of colonization and conquest, whose aim is “to manage the world-system” with the \textit{Christianitas} as its center. A general process of “simplification of complexity [that] encompasses the totality of the life-world (\textit{Lebenswelt}),” and that among other things, manages to simplify subjectivity, or the idea of the ‘I,’ through “the negation of [its] corporeality,” and its postulation as an “\textit{ego}” that in Descartes’ cited words “‘is \textit{entirely} distinct from the body, and indeed is easier to know that the body.’”\textsuperscript{59}

Now, to go back to the contemporary crisis of modernity—or “The problem [of] the exhaustion of a ‘civilizing’ system that has come to its end,” and its “\textit{cynical managerial reason},” that one has to agree, does all that it can to make everything new and bring about the promised end of the world; to go back in other words to the question of “Christianity and Crisis” (and the United States, “\textit{God’s New Israel},” the center of world-televisualiation)—what has to be confronted is no less than a particular “\textit{planetary administrative}” system (my emphasis), that is, “\textit{modernity or capitalism},” that

\textsuperscript{58} Dussel, “Beyond Eurocentrism,” 13–14.
\textsuperscript{59} Dussel, 15, 17.
both has “life” as its “absolute condition,” and at the same time “cannot limit itself” and thus moves inevitably towards “the death of life in its totality.” In addition to “jeopardiz[ing] the reproduction or survival of life itself,” modernity, capitalism, or the ever-growing Christianitas seeks “the destruction of humanity itself” too. “Humanity” here, in Dussel’s discourse, is equal to “Living labor,” that is, “the human subject” as “the only one that can ’create’ new value (surplus value, profit)” — “the other essential mediation of capital as such.” But capital, as if paradoxically, creates “superfluous (displaced) humanity.... unemployment and ... poverty,” and thus might become a “limit” to its own recreation, unless it manages to forgo its need for “human” that is, “subjective,” that is “creative,” labor technologically, in which case it could continue as a sort of technoscientific dystopia increasingly imagined in American film and on American television and media that is also ever-increasingly consumed globally. And if we were to imagine a “global” (which as you recall is always “local”) outside to this technoscientific dystopia, a planetary outside in-and-for-itself-having-been-with-it, the dystopic technoscientific situation would (still) make death appear on the global horizon by transforming ‘living labor’ to ‘life itself’ increasingly tele-vised in the mode of ‘jeopardized survival,’ next to the advertised tempo-paradise of the techno-scientifically mediated arrest in instants: heavenly time, “present (made) perfect,” techno-

---

mediatically made available, made real, to *homo scientificus* (human as scientifically reduced to body and body politic) that “will-always-already-have-been”\(^{61}\) *homo historicus* (that is, Christian): “life” mediatically besides “body”\(^{62}\)—asymptotically approaching the horizon of catastrophe, prophesized, promised, and tele-visualized. Future anterior is the temporality of standardization, the temporality of an approaching death that hopes to “‘perhaps in the distant future … [raise] the standard of living.’”\(^{63}\)

**H (CC).**

(‘The Presence was spectrum-blue, / ultimate blue ray, // rare as radium, as healing … ’)

Capitalism or modernity (or Christianity and Crisis), then, to repeat, is a global and globalatinizing administrative system that has ‘life’ as its absolute condition and its

---

\(^{61}\) Here as before I am citing, more than less out of context, renditions of the temporality of the Hegelian Absolute, the subject of metaphysics, and the subject of psychoanalysis from Samuel Weber’s instructive essay on grammatical tense in metaphysics and psychoanalysis, “Mistaken identity: Lacan’s theory of the ‘mirror stage’” in Weber, *Return to Freud*, 7–10.

\(^{62}\) In Claudia Rankine’s apt and terrifying rendition of this situation:


83
limit which it cannot but destroy; and ‘humanity’ (i.e. corporeal subjectivity) as a limit that it could possibly surpass technoscientifically. It transforms ‘living labor’ to ‘life itself.’ As “Santa Sophia, the SS of the Sanctus Spiritus,” 64 as ‘the contradiction between faith and knowledge, between religion and enlightenment,’ as Christianity, it ‘repeats itself,’ ‘reaches the light,’ ‘phenomenalizes itself’ by tele-visualizing the world in planetary Self-destruction—S, because planetary destruction in ‘the world of televisualization’ is a result of the autoimmunity of the Strongest that expands itself globally, as Christianization, as religious fundamentalism, as secularization, as human rights, as modernization, democratization, nuclearization—it ‘manifests itself’ in its ‘sacralizing movement … a terrifying biological possibility… Terrifying mystery.’ 65

64 Doolittle, Collected Poems, 1912-1944, 568. [Trilogy, “Tribute to the Angels,” canto 36]

65 On “autoimmunity” and “the reason of the strongest,” particularly as they relate to democracy, terror, nuclearization, suicide, as well as the United States in a proximate context, see part one of Jacques Derrida, Rogues: Two Essays on Reason, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). Derrida, however, even though certainly not sure, I believe is much more optimistic (or maybe “roguish”) about the possibilities of autoimmune democracy than the context of this reference might indicate. My use of the phrase ‘autoimmunity of the strongest’ here, then, is an aberration of Derrida’s reading of ‘democracy’ and ‘this terrible axiom of autoimmunity,’ and perhaps closer to what he elsewhere calls “the auto-immunity of the unscathed that will always associate Science and Religion” (“Faith and Knowledge,” in Jacques Derrida, Acts of Religion, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 80.). I have not yet read the second essay in Rogues, the one that has to do with the “world,” but at this point, if I have understood anything from the first part, I remain incapable of thinking the possibility of any ‘democracy worthy of this name’ to come from this autoimmune process. Also, related, on nuclear suicide as well as suicide terrorism as phenomena belonging to liberalism, and the hope for securing collective immortality, as well as, again, Christianity and its sacralizing movement, is Asad, On Suicide Bombing. To the list of phenomena as which Capitalism as the global expansion of the autoimmunity of the Strongest manifests itself (religious fundamentalism, secularism, democratization, nuclearization, etc.), we have to add “hemophilia” in the literal sense that Blood gives to that word: “a dissimulated keyword of a culture and society in which hemophilia—the love of blood—is a general, but not universal condition … hardly universal, it may still be general, even global—a generalized hematology, and a growing hemophilia” (see Anidjar, Blood, 26.). And “hemophilia” in this sense has strong resonances with what Claudia Rankine calls “hepatotoxicity” in Don’t Let Me Be Lonely: An American Lyric, a book that is a critique of spectatorship and spectacle, a sustained reflection on autoimmunity, and a moving translation of corporeal cramps and clogs and folds, and the thought of weeping. In a way hepatotoxicity is thinkable as resulting from
(’she brings the Book of Life, obviously’)

“Christianity … made life at once sacred and biological, in other words, biotheological;” as well as “new,” but that goes for everything else too. And this has everything to do “with the ‘transformation and decadence of the political realm in modern societies,’ the emergence of homo laborans and the establishment of the ‘primacy of natural life over political action.’”66 Here I am reading Anidjar reading Giorgio Agamben (“as a symptom of sorts,” and in “the role of a convenient foil”) reading Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition* in the context of Michel Foucault’s not having read that book, in an essay titled “The Meaning of Life.” It is an illuminating work of critical comedy and bibliographic psychoanalysis, and an inquiry into the meaning of “life,” and Christianity “as the intricate and contradictory unity of state and mission, a spiritual politics, a unique and transformative, biotheological, and political complex”: tele-visual (as well as pharmaceutical, which Rankine makes impeccably clear, is by no means separable from the tele-visual) internalization of the growing hemophilia in the world of globalatinization. Also important in *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely* is the precise reading of news and advertisement. I read hepatotoxicity as the condition of a time when the soul is being insistently choked out of the body, where “body” and “soul” (if any of the latter is left in this world) are being produced as separate “things,” when in spite of the globalatinizing prevalence of Christian semantics, neither is a “thing,” nor is “soul” separate from the “body,” nor separable, not in so far as it has not reached the throat.

“More than a religion, less than a universal.” On a note that resonates with Cone’s critique of the absence in white theological discourse of ‘slavery, colonialism, segregation, and the profound cultural link these horrible crimes created between white supremacy and Christianity,’ Anidjar towards the end of this essay writes that he has “done no more than allude to the absence of colonialism in philosophical discussions of the biopolitical.”

White theology is ahistorical. Philosophical discussions of biopolitics are ahistorical. They are both Historical, that is, Christian theological. Historical and ahistorical, that is, on a pilgrimage of temporal hope and in denial of the contradictions that spatial expansion has created and is creating for the world, and for that eschatology. In a sense, they both avoid politics. Their politics is temporal (spiritual, racial-chronological, eugenic, mystical) progression, and avoidance of the contradictions of spatial (angelic-vampiric) expansion; in other words, avoidance of the world where Christian theology, world history, news, deploys itself, and expands its autoimmunity.

---

Anidjar, 711, 716, 722 n63, 699.
Anidjar, 722.
III

(‘… coals for the world’s burning, / for we must go forward, / …’)

It is the primacy given to “life” at the expense of “the world,” “the assumption that life and not the world, is the highest good of man,”69 that makes for this avoidance of the political, that is, the worldly. Christianitas is always in the future; in the vicinity of the City of God. The world is where the past is, where the old is to-be-renewed, where is in the news, is turned into news, ‘spectrum-blue,’ covered by angels, ‘When religion shows itself on television, wherever it manifests and deploys itself in the ‘world,’ in the ‘public space,’” when “Contemporary flash agents (radios, newspapers, televisions, films, and their by-products) … spread the radiance of their own dazzle, which is only the reflection of force lines that go unnoticed,”70 where geography is historicized, modernized, democratized, liberalized, turned into “coals for the world’s burning,”71 where will-always-already-have-been-transubstantiated into the Christian future — where everything is new and life is sacred, and bare, and sacred because bare, and ‘What a wonderful topic one might neither be Jew, nor Arab, nor Greek, nor savage, nor martyr, nor pilgrim.’ Reduced to body, plugged to Insta-Heaven: perfect presence:

69 Arendt, cited in Anidjar, 716.
70 Glissant, Poetics of Relation, 175.
History, live (drunk or sober, fiction, documentary, or news): 24/7 pilgrimage of catastrophe.\textsuperscript{72}

\textbf{III}

\begin{quote}
`\ldots the bone-frame was made for / no such shock knit within terror, / yet the skeleton stood up to it: // the flesh? It was melted away, / the heart burnt out, dead ember, / tendons, muscles shattered, outer husk dismembered …’
\end{quote}

And how did Christianity make ‘life at once sacred and biological’? Anidjar makes this thoroughly clear: by making “life.”

\begin{quote}
\textbf{life} laif animate existence; course or manner of living. OE. \textit{lif}, corr. to OFris., OS. \textit{lif} life, person (Du. \textit{liif} body), OHG. \textit{lib} life (G. \textit{lieb} body), ON. \textit{li} life, body
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{72}In a terrifying sustained reflection on 24/7 as the temporality of the world of televisualization, or late capitalism, the world of tele-vision, hemophilia, hepatotoxicity, insomnia (which also looms large in \textit{Don’t Let Me Be Lonely}), light-induced seizure, enlightenment as torture, and reduction to body; a book about a ‘military-vital complex’ (Hardt and Negri’s term, not used in the book) that code-names its torture chambers “Dark Sites” and “Camp Bright Lights,” that tortures with intense white light (and forbiddance of prayer, and enforced idolatry), and that conducts research on white crowned sparrows in the hope of producing the “sleepless soldier,” who could fight day and night for the potential future “sleepless worker or consumer” who will hopefully buy its antisleep pills off the counter, Jonathan Crary describes this prefect presence this way:

24/7 is a static redundancy that disavows its relation to the rhythmic and periodic texture of human life ... a time of indifference, against which the fragility of human life is increasingly inadequate and within which sleep has no necessity or inevitability ... 24/7 environment has the semblance of a social world, but it is actually a non-social model of machinic performance and a suspension of living ... As the most private, most vulnerable state common to all, sleep is crucially dependent on society in order to be sustained ... 24/7 denotes the wreckage of the day as much as it concerns the extinguishing of darkness and obscurity. Desolating any luminous condition except those of functionality, 24/7 is part of an immense incapacitation of visual experience ... it is a zone of insensibility, of amnesia, of what defeats the possibility of experience ... 24/7 is shaped around individual goals of competitiveness, advancement, acquisitiveness, personal security, and comfort at the expense of others. The future is so close at hand that it is imaginable only by its continuity with the striving for individual gain or survival in the shallowness of presents.

Crary, 24/7, 8–9, 25, 33, 17, 41.
‘Christianity made life at once sacred and biological.’ It made “life” by making “‘Man … coincide with the mere life in him … with the uniqueness of his bodily person.’” It did so literally (really, visually) with terror. On the Cross. Where it “isolated and produced” ‘it’ as “life itself … merely biological, perhaps, at least for a little while, the next three days, say, or a few more centuries … life that may be sacrificed but not killed.”

III

(‘… yet the frame held: / we passed the flame: we wonder / what saved us? what for?’)

‘Christianity made life at once sacred and biological.’ It made “life” by making “it” “sacred”:

sacrament  sæ.kramənt  any of the certain sacred rites of the Christian Church  xii; spec. the S., the Eucharist, Holy Communion  xiii; (arch.) sacred or solemn pledge  xiv. ME. sacrament (also sa(c)ra-, by assim. to L.) – (O)F. – sacrament – L. sacramentum solemn engagement, caution-money deposited in a suit, military oath, (in ChrL. by recourse to the etymol. meaning) used to render Gr.  μυστήριον mystery  i. f. sacrāre hallow, consecrate, f. sacer sacred; see -ment. So sacramental  sæ.kraməntəl  xiv – OF. or late L.; sb. rite analogous to a sacrament  xvi.

---

73 Anidjar, “The Meaning of Life,” 718–19 .. 723. The first quotation is a quotation of Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence.”
sacramentalian xvi; f. modL. sacramentarius, applied like Luther’s sacramentirer, sacramenter to deniers of the Real Presence. So sacramentarius, sacramentarius sanctury of a church. xviii. ... sacred sei.krid consecrated, dedicated to xiv; dedicated to a religious purpose xv; reverenced as holy, secured against violation xvi. ... L. sacrēre consecrate, dedicate to a divinity, f. sacr-, sacer ... rel. to sanctire, sanctus; see sanction, saint. sacrifice sæ.krifais offering of a slaughtered animal, etc. to a deity; that which is so offered xix; Jesus Christ’s offering of himself xiv; applied to the Eucharist; gen. (so self-s.) xvi. ... Hence vb. xvi; ... So sacrificial sækrifi,š(al) xvii (Sh.). f. L. sacrificium; cf. contemp. †sacrificial (xvii) ... sacrilege sæ.krilliʒ violation of a sacred person or thing. prop. theft of a sacred object xii; profanation xiv. ... f. sacrilegus one who steals sacred things, f. sacri-, sacer + legere take possession of, after the phr. sacram or sacra legere purloin sacred things (see collect, etc.). sacrilegious -li.dʒas, -li.dʒas xvi. ... the pronunc. has been affected by assoc. with religious. sacrificing sei.krinn (hist.) consecration of the Eucharist. xiii. f. †sacreconsecrate + ing; hence sacring-bell xiv. ... sacram sei.kram (anat.) lowest bone of the spine. xviii. Short for late L. os sacram, tr. Gr. ἱερόν ὀστέον ‘sacred bone’. [ODEE, 781]74

—with scr (which as you see, according to the dictionary, significantly proliferates around xii, xiii, xiv, xv, xvi, xvii, xviii). Particularly, through the Eucharistic transformation of the Latin “munus”: the “gift” that is “due,” the “obligation,” the “improper,” whose being-due turns community to a “site of expropriation;” that which is given out, may it be accepted by God, to, what is offered by God, and certainly so, to

74 Carl Darling Buck, the American philologist, I learned on the Internet, has described that which has scr in it as “a distinctive Italic group, without any clear outside connections.” “Sacred cow ‘object of Hindu veneration,” said the same online dictionary, “is from 1891; figurative sense of ‘one who must not be criticized’ is first recorded 1910, reflecting Western views of Hinduism.” – Given the semantics of this root, then, the commonplace translations of qrb and ḏbḥ (and on many occasions حرم) with derivatives of sacr- are truly mystifying, and such Latinizations are so frequent. Latinizations, and not translations, not because a Latin root is used, but because nothing is made sacred with qrb and ḏbḥ. And, isn’t the exaggerated animal-rights-activistic secular/Christian horror at non-Christian animal slaughter a case in point of transference?
Christians: pure blood of Christ to take in in His Mystical Body and then have inside, become visible as his mystical body, as a community of (auto)immunity: bodyguards (knights?) of the “mere life” inside; a community of “concern with the purity and immunity of Christian blood,” a community for “establishing the supremacy and immunity of Christian blood as well as the victory of Christian commerce and money.”

A community of security: securing the scr they have inside that sets them apart from those that are not baptized into this mystical body, not sealed with its interiorized Spirit of History.

Within the open field of this globally expanding terrorizing autoimmunity (capitalism or modernity, Christianity and crisis), catastrophe is a “frame held” for a future raise in the standards of living for the unsaved, the to-be-renewed, maybe, some day, when comes the promised end, ‘the spiritual graces of the New and Eternal Testament, could … flow from the fountains of our Savior for the salvation of men, of the faithful above

---

75 Anidjar, Blood, 35–36, 33, 152–53. In Glissant’s terms then, in Christianity, there is only ‘comprendre,’ no ‘donner-avec’: “chain of filiation (as hidden cause)” (Glissant, Poetics of Relation, 48. – Glissant however often lumps all the descendants of Abraham together in one category, ‘Mediterranean myth,’ to which he attributes the notion of ‘One,’ as opposed to ‘All.’ The ‘One’ in question however, might be closer to ‘Three’.

76 Take Hegel as witness: “simple infinity, or the absolute Notion [which] may be called the simple essence of life, the soul of the world, the universal blood [das allgemeine Blut], whose omnipresence is neither disturbed nor interrupted by any difference, but rather is itself every difference, as also their supersession; it pulsates within itself but does not move, inwardly vibrates, yet is at rest. It is self-identical, for the differences are tautological; they are differences that are none.” Cited in Anidjar, Blood, 140.

all; ... for they would ... have been united to this Mystical Body ... by the salutary virtue of the Cross, by which they had been already brought under the complete sway of Christ.'

frame freim A. †be profitable; †progress OE.; B. †prepare timber for building xiv; (gen.) shape, construct, contrive xiv. OE. framian be of service, make progress, f. fram forward (see from); cf. ON. frama further, advance ... Hence frame sb. framed work, structure xiv (of heaven and earth, the body xvi); order, plan xvi; whence fra.mework xvii (Milton). [ODEE, 374]

body bo.di frame of an animal; main portion, trunk, OE.; person xiii. OE. bodiġ str. n., corr. to OHG. potah str. m. (MHG. botich, mod. Bavarian dial. bottech body of a chemise), superseded in G. by lieb (see life) and körper (–L. corpus); perh. an alien word in OE. and OHG. Bodyguard (xviii), tr. F. garde du corps. Hence bo.dy vb. provide with a body or shape. xv (Pecock). [ODEE, 104]

To repeat, then, ‘Christianity made life at once sacred and biological, that is biotheological,’ by making life (and keeping the terror of that making alive as ‘a certain spectacle of death of God’ in an enduring ‘frame,’78) by making it sacred with scr, ‘spec. the S., the Eucharist, Holy Communion xiii,’ that brought into the world a ‘community of blood,’ and made possible the mystical division between bloods, and also brought quite a new life to ‘those who are born into this world dead in sin’: brought about a spiritual politics of mystical-historic visibility in Time and vampiric-colonial invisibility

78 And another book to which I will arrive soon is Judith Butler, Frames of War: When Is Life Grievalble? (London: Verso, 2010).
in Space, or the Angelic-Historical chance to ‘represent’ like the angels, the Immutable within Time.’ And as the Christian space of experience (or the clawed wings of the New Christian Eros\(^\text{79}\)) began extending \textit{usque ad terminos terrae} the more it managed the world it colonized (or vampirically loved, angelically covered), the more it instituted “spaces of history … ‘spaces of death [symbolic spaces instituted by terror and torture],’”\(^\text{80}\) and the more “the Dream // deftly stage-managed the bare, clean / early colonial interior”\(^\text{81}\) : a chronology of the human race, brought into general use: a History of Humanity; and a “market place of death” “belief” (cynical, sincere, or mystical) in whose justice and inevitability is both “common in liberal democratic countries” where everyone is Charlie, and “necessary to a hierarchical global order,” with its ‘hemophilic’ taste for particular “patterns of living and dying in the world,” where “differential exchange value” of “human life” is determined according to the mystical-eugenic scale of Civilization\(^\text{82}\) : “democracy \textit{today, in its limits, in its concept and its effective power … the market} ... the tele-technoscientific reason that dominates it.”\(^\text{83}\)

\(^{79}\) See note 32 on the angel of history, angel of love, and the vampire bat.

\(^{80}\) Silva, \textit{Toward a Global Idea of Race}, xxii. Cited in the citation is Michael Taussig; bracket in Silva’s text.


\(^{82}\) Asad, \textit{On Suicide Bombing}, 94.

At once: “at once modern and ancient … at once historical and stable … at once sacred and biological,” Christianity made life on the Cross, and kept life alive by keeping the Cross ahistorically (that is Historically) significant, by means of “the intricate and contradictory unity of state and mission”: “‘the two central vectors of the civilizing mission … religious and political … Christian mission and the colonial state … at once complicit and antagonistic.’” And under secularization life has only been made (facere) more sacred, more sacrified: at once violated and made secure. Made secure, made holy, made inviolable by violation. And beyond all this Christianity made “life”: “at once sacred and abandoned—merely biological.” History (or biopolitical theology) is the unraveling of the contradictions of a violent loving Christian at once.

---

84 Anidjar, “The Meaning of Life,” 697, 705, 717, 722 n63. The quotation inside the last quotation is Ruth Marshal. 85 Anidjar, 723.
III

(‘... and idols and their secret is stored / in man’s very speech, // in the trivial or / the real
dream; insignia...’)

This is the most terrible night of this story that is told and I recite: the story of
Christianity’s creation of sacred, biological, and abandoned life is the story of a series of
mistranslations that amount to no less than a total obfuscation of the “soul”:

Chain of (mys)translation taken from Blood

Hebrew Bible Septuagint Vulgate Luther insistently trans. in Euro. langs. as
nēfēš (Ar. nafs) psyche anima Leben “life”

soul soul †life, animate existence; spiritual or emotional part of man; disem bodied spirit of a man OE.; vital principle xiv; essential part of xv. OE. sāwol, sāw(e)l = Goth. siawala, corr. to OFris. sēle, OS. sēola (Du. ziel), OHG. sē(u)la (G. seele), with contr. arising from the fall of a w at the beginning of a syll. (cf. ON. sāla, sāl – OE.; OSw. sial, siel – OS., whence Finn. sielu, Lapp. siello); CGerm. *saiwalō, corr. formally to Gr. aiōlos quick-moving, easily moved (⁻ *saiwolos), the soul being primitively conceived as a fleeting or flitting thing. [ODEE, 848]. [cf. talawwum]

Know that the soul is “not a figure of continuity ... rather figures a site of interruption ...
It is a great equalizer, ultimately closer to death” and “not the life it is massively taken to
be.”

---

* See Anidjar, Blood, 4–11, 267-68 ns31-35, 47.
* Ibid., 47.
I find the dead subject, *homo historicus*, resuscitated in texts that aim to reenact his killing by choosing his (interior or historic) soul over his (exterior or scientific) body, his warm blood over his dead flesh. – Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, 185

History grounds the native in disaster … the Catastrophe (prophecy was not speaking there. History was. And it was telling the natives what had already been coming to them). – Gil Anidjar

The Abrahamic Lord is a jealous one, mediated in many visages, all worked out in lines often removed from human restrictions. Can one be Christian, accept African prescriptions on ancestorship and attend Islamic prayers? The banality of the question in Mombasa or in Dakar may seem horrific elsewhere. – V-Y Mudimbe

Dear reader, allow me to turn toward you, and ask to go back one more time to Jameson’s *An American Utopia: Dual Power and the Universal Army* and the “diagnosis of the suppression of time by space” in postmodernity, from where I began to digress by way of race, culture, cultural historicity and geographical determination, and not the least by way of history, into this bloody hyper-lighten field of tele-vision—though I never went that far:

88 Anidjar, “Against History,” 159.
The new standardization which can still be thought of … in terms of Marx’s analysis of commodities … Cartesian extension … a kind of underlying substance which … unlike the formless concept of ‘matter’ is historical in its essence and existence … the identity of difference foretold by Hegel … Derrida’s timeless mental exercises … prophecy … standardization … prophesized historically … prophecy which came true … space … historical and political … politics itself … reduced and standardized on a well-nigh global scale … real estate … land grabs … the question of Palestine … Where is time in all this? … the new flash crowds enabled by cell phones and texting … politics of the instant, of the present … this new kind of present of time, a reduction to the body … the living or temporal present, history, historicity, the sense of history … historical consciousness … very real political problems … obligation … dual power … [and a few pages later: “religion … clearly the most dangerous of all candidate for dual power” by I refrain from quoting that for now]

I have cut this text up both before and now in ways that could amount to misquotation, but I have not done so completely without rational and rhetorical justifications, but to be precise, I have taken some poetic license. At any rate we are not at all far from this semantic field and all these threads in one way or another have been woven into this text. However, you remember that what “confronts those of us still committed to radical systemic change with some very real political problems,” in Jameson’s “historical and political” diagnostic description of postmodernity, is not history, but the “waning of history, of historicity or historical consciousness” and also “the sense of history.” On the one hand the assertion of the waning of history, its -city, its consciousness, and its sense has become so common, its affirmation turned to such a

*Jameson, An American Utopia, 12–13.*
commonplace, that it is difficult to deny if not its truth, its accuracy. On the other hand, it is simply not correct. That is, isn’t the world of televisualization also a thoroughly historical, historicized, and historicizing world? Don’t we see so much history all the time? Historical dramas, historical (talk) shows, historical documentaries, drunk historical entertainment, historical fantasies, news, world-historical events broadcasted worldwide, historical breakthroughs, there are even worldwide history channels, and those dedicated to national geography which itself is a historical screen. In university, where I work, everyone around me is involved in some sort of historiographical activity—I too as you see. There is no doubt in the absolute dominance of the historical method and consciousness (and whence the inevitability of engaging its discourse) at least in the humanities, and to such a degree that all other kinds of fabrication are indeed regarded as inferior, as if less capable of meaning (vb.). This is of course obvious in the (at best unjustified, at worst mystifying) disciplinary division between, for example, “Literature” and “Creative Writing,” or “Philosophy” and “Literature,” or the definitely unjustified and mystifying division of “Literature” and “Area Studies” (or “Comparative Literature” and “Orientalism”). And it is history, or more precisely historical method ± geographical determination, that makes possible such disciplinary divisions. At stake is a claim to truth and meaning.\(^91\)

\(^{91}\) The “graphic” in Jameson’s writing, and more generally in what Rey Chow calls “postmodern theoretical
writing” (Rey Chow, “On the Graphic in Postmodern Theoretical Writing,” Twentieth-Century Literature 57, no. 3–4 (September 21, 2011): 372–79.) certainly keeps the relation of thinking with non-narrative modes of fabrication and signification, open to non-historical reading. In her reading of “the graphic in postmodern theoretical writing” however, Chow only focuses on the graphic’s relation to “scientific graphicity”—rather scandalizing especially since sought by those whose “bread and butter is language.” She writes that “we can venture the speculation” that the graphic “offers the allure of instantaneous transmission and illumination of a type of perceptual ecstasy that is simply impossible with words” (376). The proximity of the cliché about music however does not lead Chow to think of the graphic in its relation to sound—even though she does write in a footnote about “etymologies” as “graphic and sonic sets” (379 n1)—and the graphic is read exclusively in its relation to the visual. Neither the sonic nor the kinesthetic is taken into account, nor for that matter the fundamental graphicity of inscription. Chow ultimately reads the graphic as striving to “reduce language’s elaboration” and “graft unto writing ... as a prosthesis,” “the gist, core, or essence of an argument (as if this were indeed possible ...” (376). Bringing into account the relation of graphs to the use of PowerPoint and other technological developments, computerized typography, etc. she rightly insists that scientific graphicity ultimately seeks to “take language’s place” (378). This is definitely true only if we think of the use of different presentation software in academic space these days. Yet on the other hand, as Chow also writes, the graphic in much of “postmodern writing” is not a site of transparency and objectivity, neither is it a completely non-verbal or even an entirely visual thing, not least for as Chow also writes, it is not readable without words. And indeed instances of graphic writing have remained sites of opacity and reading for the readers of those texts. That Chow is not willing to think through this side of the equation, has to do with the initial premise of her reading of the graphic according to which the “non-verbal” is “outside language” (377) and this is true enough in so far as writing aspires to a sort of scientific semantics that as Roy Harris has it ultimately organizes itself around the ‘myth’ of signification as representation, but definitely not true if we were to take into account the impossibility of entirely separating language from the sonic and indeed the graphic, both non-verbal things. Consistent with her reading of the graphic as outside language, Chow also reads instances of graphicity in what she calls postmodern writing as if they were not in the text, as if they were not part and parcel of the same writerly acts. Writing’s having always been graphic notwithstanding, such graphs might as well be as opaque and fecund to their writers as their readers, and all the while, writerly acts, fabrications if you will, that strive to set signs in motion rather than attempting to fix them, occasioning rather than blocking thought and interpretation. Chow however, does not really entertain that idea for she ultimately seeks to separate “theory” form “literature.” She seeks an objective sort of science and writes disapprovingly that, resorting to the graphic, postmodern theoretical writing “ends up rejoining the literary and artistic forces of modernity to become an exercise in esoterism in which objectivity seems indistinguishable from solipsism, from the arcane ins of intransitive (because self-referential) writing” (377). And not accepting that “postmodern theoretical writing” is ultimately just that, writing, she suggests this (perhaps new?) “relationship between the verbal and the graphic” maybe an occasion to bring together sciences and the humanities “in the age of informatics” (378). (On the mythology and semantics of scientific signification see Roy Harris, The Semantics of Science (London & New York: Continuum, 2005). What follows in this section (until the end of the section) is in its totality a reading of one such graphic writing by Jameson. Right there in An American Utopia, page 12. Here is the graph:
In “Against History” Anidjar—(who also writes about television, as well as “time-machines’ … museums and memorials … public debates … as well as … courts of law”)—reminds us that “History is hardly standing out among the embattled disciplines. Instead, it has successfully managed to remain in fashion.” He also points out that “historical books and historical biographies are significantly represented at the top of best-seller lists,” all the time also writing, and maybe shouting, about “New historians and new historicisms and ever newer histories, made and remade … ‘the end of history’ and other eschatologies … the unprecedented intensification of technologies and processes of archivization, the rule of the archive … micro- and macropractices of history and historicization,” and much more, not least of them is the fundamental relation of history, historiography and historical discourse to genocide that never becomes a “‘fact’” not only due to techniques of archival management and discourses of proof, negation, and revision, but also for “genocide … is the perverse achievement of a will that has learned everything it needs to know from historians.”

My reading attempts to show that “X” is “Christianity,” our very old (aka New) world-historical system of “dual power”—a literal reading of sorts. However, I will show this by digressing again and going back to “Notes on Globalization,” that is, the essay that had informed my reading of Namjoo’s music in section A.

* Anidjar, “Against History,” 131–32.
* Ibid., 130.
Important in “Against History” for our going back to the question of the ‘waning of history’ is also the suggestion that history’s “claim to primacy or dominance” has to do with its “scientific signature,”94 and with the “scholarly belief in history,”95 or in the sense that it makes of the world, or again, the belief in its singular “theory of meaning.”

The problematic of the scientific signature of history is also at the center of Silva’s critique of “the critical ‘post’ (-modern, -colonial, -Marxist, -structuralist);” more precisely, the post-tendency to “embrace historical signification” and its attendant “politics of recognition with numerous historical subjects parading and yelling their cultural differences.”96 This is a part of her analysis of the emergence of homo modernus, which as we saw before is the modern subject that is at once historical and global, at once a product of science and history. What is forgotten in attempts to “recuperate the universality of differentiation to write the ‘others of Europe’ as always already historical subjects,”97 and to write “better,” “truly inclusive,” “subaltern,” “pluralist,” “secular,” and other alternative kinds of history, Silva demonstrates clearly, is that “the scene of representation” unto which such historiographical attempts graft their subjects is already instituted by “the scene of (scientific) regulation.” In other words, because “the subaltern is always already inscribed in the larger text, the context of signification

---

94 Ibid., 126, 175 n7. Cited in the last two citations is Jacques Rancière.
95 Ibid., 127.
96 Silva, Toward a Global Idea of Race, 182, 185, 178.
97 Silva, 178.
in which the others of Europe acquire the names one deploys today … the text that delimits their place of emergence,” such histories will necessarily (re)write their subjects as subjects of cultural historicity, that is, as geographically determined self-consciousness that despite ‘better’ historiographical intentions “resists … ‘plurality and diversity;’” for it remains a “‘not yet’ modern … always already anthropological … ‘resisting’” subject ultimately headed in the direction of the post-Enlightenment Europe (or say, the Christian future). Resonating with Anidjar’s note about ‘a will that has learned everything it needs to know from historians,’ Silva writes that “the transparent I, *homo historicus*, could not come into being without displacing, negating, or engulfing all that challenges its claim to self-determination.”

(j.) The least fatal and the most academic problem with cultural historicity that ultimately strives to ‘give (a) voice’ to natives, as the commonplace goes, is that as Silva puts it “having a ‘voice,’ being heard as a subaltern *transparent ‘I,’* does not dissipate the effects of raciality.” And this has everything to do with the “[‘naturalization’] of racial subjection,” (remember Cone: “natural’ way of viewing the world’) “‘natural (divine) law,’” “the theater of divine nature,” “‘empirical’ given[s],” and “‘individual’ God-given attribute[s],” that in contemporary political thought are believed to belong “neither to … universality … nor to … historicity” (remember

---

98 Silva, 183–85. Cited within the citations is Dipesh Chakrabarty whose work Silva criticizes as an example of such recourse to historicity.
Niebuhr: ‘the Anglo-Saxon Destiny and Responsibility’) but are rather treated as givens that at some unfortunate historical crossroad were “mistakenly” mobilized for historical and political purposes; and thus today race or the racial is generally assumed to be a “‘scientific’ fabrication’” and so is rejected as such. As if such rejection (calling race a ‘fabrication’) could magically stop the “political-symbolic” force of raciality, or really make it irrelevant to modernity, humanity, democracy, civilization, and suchlike.99

And again as you remember from before, Silva argued that deployments of the cultural—which as a scientific concept was itself invented by anthropology to replace the racial after the realization that the latter was a “fabrication”—still ‘resignify racial difference as substantive (prescientific and prehistoric) difference,’ or again, ‘as God-given bodily traits that correspond to continental borders and are immediate (preconceptual) indexes of the universal determinants of cultural particularity, which anthropological tools aim to ‘discover.’” In other words, even though the racial is declared irrelevant to true, as it were, scientific, historical, and conceptual inquiry, it does no less than determine the space (and scale) of the “culture” under study.

Writing racial difference as substantive difference, deployments of the cultural presuppose the irrelevance of racial difference. “The presuppositions of an utterance are the propositions which the hearer must accept in order for the utterance to be relevant

99 Silva, 177–78.
for her.” Historically speaking, for <there is cultural difference> to become relevant, that <racial difference is irrelevant> had to be accepted—a proposition which itself entails that <there is racial difference>.

acceptance is a category of propositional attitudes and methodological stances toward a proposition, a category that includes belief, but also some attitudes (presumption, assumption, acceptance for the purpose of argument or an inquiry) that contrast with belief and with each other.100

That <there is racial difference and it is irrelevant>, or in other words, that <there is race, and racial difference is irrelevant>, is the mental content and methodological stance that, to use the language I take from Silva, authorizes the writing of cultural difference as a signifier of globality, that is, the ontoepistemological context instituted by the racial that presupposes the submission of all but the Enlightened to exterior determination; or the affectability of all and the transparency of the One. Whence the contemporary political attitude that, as Silva writes, “assumes and produces raciality as foreign to modern political grammar” (my emphasis),101 all the while that <there is racial difference> determines the extent to which the geographically determined human populations, the foreigners to the modern, organized as they are in a racial chronology or a History of Humanity, may be subjected to further exterior determination.

-------------------

101 Silva, Toward a Global Idea of Race, 140.
That racuality is considered foreign to modern political grammar is perhaps because it belongs to the Empire of God, and modern political grammar is secular—as is Christian history. Like war, as war, and here I take my language from Anidjar, race is theologico-political, or as Silva has it, ‘political-symbolic.’ As you remember from our citation of Silva from before, the racial as a scientific concept that ‘produces human body as an exteriorization’ of reason in the Enlightenment sense of the word, is itself a transformation of ‘race (a term previously employed to describe collectivities in terms of blood relationship).’ When deployments of the cultural presuppose and thus resignify racial difference as substantive, prescientific, prehistoric, preconceptual, God-given difference, the cultural, following the racial, following the corpus-mystical, inscribes the collectivities it describes as racial communities, or, as communities of blood. And it is precisely that meaning, the meaning of a community of blood, a racial meaning, that history bestows on the communities it forms once it is acquired. And it all begins with indigenization and standardization.

(d.) But before going further, let me remind you of two historical facts: one, as Anidjar reminds us, before anthropology, “it was in fact philology—the historical study of languages and texts—that forged the essential dichotomies that marked the history of
race (and of religion too);”\textsuperscript{102} and two, as Cedric Robinson reminds us by way of Michael Landman “‘History as a value in itself is a very European phenomenon. Europeans are the ones who go about investigating the history of other peoples.’” Robinson makes clear later on that ‘investigation’ here is a “euphemism for domination.”\textsuperscript{103} And even though in postmodernity, when historical labor is (still) the most demanded and valued in the liberal academy, and there are thus more and more new histories, more and more communities, peoples, and cultures inscribed in histori-city, and there are more and more historical shows on the TV, I would like to remind you as another historical fact of sorts, that historical time proper expands with and as part and parcel of the spatial expansion of Western Christianity, or if you prefer Western, European, modern, secular, imperial, or colonial rule—(you could even call it “Empire” if you have a tooth for depoliticizing mystifying labels that make the oppressor unnamable). In the words of Aamir Mufti (who is not at all against history), “the effectiveness of colonial rule extends also to the ascription of culture, tradition, and ‘originality’ to the colonized.”\textsuperscript{104} You may already know that “Orientalism” is one of the names of philology. And “what we call modern Orientalism,” writes Mufti, “is merely the cultural system that for the first time

articulated a concept of the world as an assemblage of ‘nations’ with distinct expressive
traditions, above all ‘literary’ ones.”

Modern Orientalism or philology, as Mufti demonstrates in detail, indigenizes and standardizes language and culture. And it does so precisely through the “establishment of separate literary histories ... official historiography ... foundational acts of historicization” and “Orientalist ascription of historicality” as “structured around” a certain notion of indigeneity. In other words, indigenizes by historicizing: by ascribing a ‘tradition’ or a ‘culture,’ or a sort of cultural historicity to “a people” that philological method attaches to the linguistic corpora that it historicizes (as ‘literary’). Philology or Orientalism in this sense provides the conditions of possibility of nationalization, a process that throughout Forget English! emerges most precisely as “partitioning.” Mufti writes particularly about the philological partitioning of Hindi and Urdu through “standardization of ‘vernacular’ languages” of the Indian subcontinent and ascription of separate literary traditions along ‘historical-linguistic’ and ‘religious’ lines to “the now-split vernacular of North India” that “culminated in the religio-political partition of India in 1947.” However, the logic of indigenization, standardization, nationalization, and partition, he develops sheds light over a much vaster space; not least because what is instituted through such ‘ascriptions of

---

105 Mufti, 35.
106 Mufti, 142–43.
historicality,’ such inscriptions of various textual corpora as “one among many other literatures … understood as the unique possession and mode of expression of a people” philologically made available to historical (and only historical) reading, is “world literature,” for which “literary history has been one of the modalities of … institution.”

At the heart of Orientalist techniques and practices of partitioning is what Mufti calls “the chronotope of the indigenous—that is, spatiotemporal figures of habitation (in a place) in deep time” and it is precisely in this chronotope that “Orientalist theories of cultural difference are grounded”: “a notion of indigeneity as the condition of culture.” And even though the chronotope of the indigenous is the fundamental link of Orientalism and “philosophical historicism” whose very well-known Romantic espousers were also famous Orientalists, it is Sir William Jones, the so-called ‘father’ of Indo-European studies (still a very respectable academic discipline), whom Mufti identifies as the main thinker and scholar of cultural indigeneity. And resonating with Silva’s various articulations of the temporality of the ‘not yet,’ and the presupposed ‘objective necessity’ for all cultures to be ultimately headed toward post-Enlightenment Europe, Mufti writes that the chronotope of indigenousness, a temporal structure of deep habitation in time, marks an orientation in and toward modern culture, not a means of return to the origin from the displacements produced by the colonial process. As a

---

107 Mufti, 38, 141, 131.
modernizing modality, therefore, its installation in a sociocultural milieu in fact (and in effect) intensifies the sense of distance from the origin, even as it heightens the desire for its restoration.\textsuperscript{109}

It is no surprise that the chronotope of the indigenous bears striking resemblances, \textit{mutatis mutandis}, to the temporality of the return to the so-called (scientifically, historically, or euphemistically, your pick) ‘Indo-European homeland,’ or ‘Urheimat,’ the search for which might have begun as a Christian theological (that is historical) search for “the languages of paradise,” as well as an inquiry into “‘languages [as] the best mirror of the human mind.’”\textsuperscript{110} But let me leave this story untold for now, until section P, where I will tell you about a historical case of such search for a linguistic home in a particular national situation and about the deep time of being nationally situated. And let me instead, with the language I take from Mufti, attend to the knowledge of partitioning and some historical-linguistic aspects of becoming culturally indigenous to and oriented toward modernity, or the New Christian future.

Owning up to the tradition of its main theorist, the desire for cultural indigeneity, and not least its philological imposition on others, most dramatically and most comically manifests itself in efforts for linguistic purification. As Mufti puts it in the case of “the invention of the modern \textit{śuddha} (purified) Hindi,” this is an “effort to

\textsuperscript{109} Mufti, 129–30.
\textsuperscript{110} Olender, \textit{The Languages of Paradise}, 5. Cited in the citation is Leibniz.
produce a linguistic and literary *center* for the emerging nation-space.” And wherefrom the need emerges to invent such a language? From “a constant search for the ‘original’ language of Hindus” and the nineteenth century official British conviction “that ‘Muslims’ and ‘Hindus’ in India were distinct and radically different populations.”

Recounting “a small but now-famous event from 1847,” historically (and not prophetically) marking a reverse centennial, Mufti reminds us of “a group of Hindu students at Benares College” who complained to “their exasperated British educator” that to “purify” (that is, Sanskritize) their language, they would need to first learn Arabic and Persian to know what words are “foreign” and thus must be purged.111

Another (still ongoing) example of such effort is that put into inventing the modern *sare* or ‘pure’ Persian. And this has everything to do with Sir William Jones and those who pursue his line of study. As promised before, I will come back to this in more detail in section P, but it suffices for now to say that according to familial historical-linguistic studies, the Persian language is classified as one of the “Indo-European”—otherwise, in other places and at other times, known as “Indo-Germanic,” and also “Aryan”—languages. In other words, it is said to belong to the so-called “Indo-European family” of languages. On the other hand, the Persian language has a long history of proximity to and mutual borrowing from Arabic which is classified as a

“Semitic” language; as belonging to the “Semitic family” of languages. The process of indigenization, of becoming indigenous to modernity, inhabiting the deep time of modernity for a nation-space to emerge and be established in the global space as one among other nations and nationally different from all the rest, manifested itself in the national situation where in and through this process becomes Iran, among other things, as a most dramatic effort at “purifying” the Persian language by purging from it all that with the application of philological (historical-linguistic) method could be marked as “Arabic” and thus as “not Persian”—from words to lexemes to morphemes to phonemes to the alphabet itself (and not infrequently it is suggested that adopting the Latin alphabet is the best “solution” if not just necessary in the world of informatics), every element or scientifically separable unit is subject to reform. This is an ongoing historical-scientific effort that has begun in the late nineteenth century and whose main desire and task has been and is to set “Persian” apart from “Arabic” (that is to say, “Indo-European” from “Semitic”—what is really thought is “Persian” from “Arab,” in other words, “Aryan” from “Semite”)—but in the process the practitioners of partition (or apart-heid) have become sensitive to other “foreign” words too. In the academic space, this at times takes the comic form of academic purists who have to add glossaries to their books that consist of new words made from ancient but “purely Persian” etymons on one side (or really “Indo-European”—Avestan for example is not really distinguished
from “Persian” in purist neologisms), and common Persian words that according to purists are “Arabic” (or “Turkish” or “French” or “Greek” or what have you) on the other. Or imagine the more comic situation when a purist has to constantly translate what he just said to common or standard Persian (that according to his science is “mixed with Arabic”) for his Persian speaking audience to understand what he just said, presumably in Persian. But this is by no means a strange hang up of a few fanatic academics; they are only good examples. Not only has linguistic partitioning historically formed the national situation and its modernity—(hatred of “Arabs” is a constitutive trope of Iranian literary and cinematic modernity)—but the desire for linguistic purity is very much alive and definitely intensified in the last decade. When thanked, for example, it is much more common these days to hear the entirely arcane sepās rather than the very common mammun, motshakker, or mersi compared to even five years ago. Or it is standard editorial practice to standardize in the name of editing, and to replace, for example, a writer’s choice of –āt to make a plural, with an editorial –hā that is assumed to be “Persian” as opposed to the “Arabic” –āt (but again, section P).

---

112 This is most terribly manifest in one of the slogans during the Green movement, “our race, nasl, is Aryan, religion is separate from politics.” I will come back to an analysis of this slogan in section P. The rise of the Persian identity is another topic that Yousef Abazari has tried to bring to attention in Iran. I will come back to this later in this section.
The question of this section is what kind of meaning does acquisition of history (following the ‘Orientalist ascription of historicality’) give to or impose on language and the national subject? What ‘deep time’ is the language and the national subject crossed over (trans-located) to in which the use of words over centuries does not count but their scientifically reconstructed, not infrequently hypothetical “roots” do? The native is planted in the depth of modern racial (that is global) time, in a nation-space, where he is to invent a new pure language by purging from it what is scientifically produced as foreign. A language that cannot but be foreign to the native, as all language always is, but in the depth of modern time the native is given the impossible task of owning his language, inventing a language of his own. Indigenous to global space mapped racially and oriented toward the Christian future, the native is a chronotope for cultivating and accumulating geographically determined mystique.

What sort of meaning is it that is sought and made when one studies Hafez, as it is done so frequently and even unquestionably but definitely anachronistically, as a “Persian” or an “Iranian” poet? Two important early commentaries on his poems, as Shahab Ahmed points out, were written in Sarajevo and Lahore, by Ahmed Sudi and Abu-l-Hasan Khātami. Where is Sarajevo and where Lahore in the all too historical

---

113 Shahab Ahmed, What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 33. Ahmed brings this example in his very interesting discussion of ghazal as “the pre-eminent literary form of self-construction and self-articulation—the literary being a discourse that is socially valorized as being
images made of Iran with Hafez at its literary center? Or let us look for an answer to the question about historical meaning in the banalities on the social corporate media. What are these endless debates and popular cultural wars about the nationality of Rumi? What meaning are the different states making when they memorialize him as their national poet, often with the collaboration of the universities in those national situations? “Of course that is an ahistorical mistake, it’s only politics,” I hear you say. Yes, it is, and very stupid politics too, but yet an “ahistorical mistake” and stupid, banal, partitioning, state-cultural politics that is inconceivable outside the space of experience, the political space, instituted by history, ascription of historicality, and national literary historiography.

rhetorically worked, experientially charged, and imaginally invested for the purpose of creating, retaining, and communicating social and existential meaning” and also to mark the historical borders of what he calls “the Balkans-to-Bengal complex” (32-33). The retrospective, that is historical, characterization of ghazal as “literary” notwithstanding, there is definitely more than enough historically produced evidence (e.g. those regarding the so-called “Persianate civilizations of Islamdom,” as the chief Orientalist Leonard Lewisohn has it, or the “Turko-Persian Islamicate ecumene,” etc. etc. –but note the Christian semantics of all these appellations) to single out such a “complex” within the so-called “Muslim world” (as if there was more than one world in this world) as Ahmed himself laboriously re-cites them; but if at stake is a “complex, not so much in terms of ‘… similarity in culture’” but “in terms of … mutually-communicable meaning” (75) then what is really the point of singling out a historically produced cultural geography through which such meaning has travelled. What about Africa and Western Europe? What about South East Asia? If we were to truly follow the link of ghazal and its poetics, we would definitely need to follow the dissemination of the poetics of the Qur’an; a poetics of fragmentation, remembering, and recitation (inseparable from music) that would not be confinable to the borders of the Balkans-to-Bengal complex. The problem is that despite all the astounding effort that this book is a clear witness to, and the centrality of the question of “meaning” to Ahmed’s scholarship, a question inseparable from the question of the Book and the dissemination of its meaning and poetics, the late Shahab Ahmed is still thinking in terms of “Civilization” and not in “diasporic” terms; a ‘diaspora constituted by a book and its culture’ as Daniel Boyarin says in a different context (see what follows). I thank Bruce Lawrence for introducing me to Ahmed’s work and kindly giving me a copy of *What is Islam?*
What is written into oblivion in the process the Mufti calls ‘acquisition of literary history’ (that is also the rite of entry into the space of ‘world literature’ as ‘one among other national literatures’), what is obliterated in the process of indigenization, in the process that culminates in the nationalization of a Hafez or multinationalization of a Rumi, as banal examples, as historical clichés, is the constitutive trans-locality of their works. Neither’s work is monolingual, neither is in conversation with a particular ethnic or religious group, neither’s most important commentaries are in one language or come from the same place, neither is reducible to any sort of nationality not the least because neither was nationally situated (and that is the work of literary history, to situate nationally, to frame). To borrow from Daniel Boyarin, both poets’ practice, the “cultural form” they participate in, is best describable as “trans-local, dispersed, diasporic”: “a diaspora constituted by a book and its culture, not a lost homeland;” a “diaspora … constructed as a discursive/cultural practice among already existing and thriving … communities, not as a natural consequence of some traumatic founding event.”

Boyarin writes particularly about the Babylonian Talmud (which he calls ‘a travelling homeland’ and insists on its being a “heteroglossic diasporic text, a text that incorporates … multiple languages … within its capacious and porous textual, cultural

\[\text{Boyarin, } A \text{ Traveling Homeland: The Babylonian Talmud as Diaspora (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 15–18.}\]
borders”\textsuperscript{115}, and the trans-local cultural condition of various Jewish communities; but he makes it clear that the diaspora is a much more widespread cultural condition. He proposes that

\begin{quote}
 diaspora be understood as a synchronic cultural situation applicable to people who participate in doubled cultural (and frequently linguistic) location, in which they share a culture with the place in which they dwell but also with another group of people who live elsewhere, in which they have a local and trans-local cultural identity and expression at the same time.
\end{quote}

Commenting on a quotation\textsuperscript{116} Boyarin writes that “Obviously, a Muslim \textit{umma} … is a diaspora that has come into being through cultural and religious contacts, not one that has been, traumatically or not, scattered from a putative originary homeland;” enjoining the reader to “Note that the word \textit{umma} is the same word that Jewish Arab writers use to describe their people/peoplehood.”\textsuperscript{117}

\textbf{(v.)} On the next page Boyarin offers another rendition of the diaspora a comparison of which with Mufti’s rendition of the chronotope of indigenousness sheds light, in a rearward way, on the violent, intimate, and antagonistic relations of time and space, more precisely historical time and colonial space, that I have tried to understand in writing what you have read so far. You remember that Mufti emphasized the (rather

\textsuperscript{115} Boyarin, 73.

\textsuperscript{116} The quote is from Finbarr Flood’s \textit{Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter}.

\textsuperscript{117} Boyarin, \textit{A Traveling Homeland}, 19–20.
purely) temporal (or should we say spiritual?) character of what he called the chronotope of indigenousness. It is ‘a temporal structure of deep habitation in time,’ and ‘a modernizing modality’ that when ‘install[ed] in a sociocultural milieu’ (through acquisition of history for example) it bestows on the historicized a sort of double temporal orientation that in fact is a linear line of progress: once ‘toward modern culture,’ say, post-Enlightenment European social configurations as Silva had it, or the Christian future in my satirical rendition; and a second time away from an ‘origin’ the impossible ‘restoration’ of which is the labor of indigeneity to modernity, or say, the labor of national historicity. To be historical one has to have an origin of one’s own, the impossibility of which is perfectly manifest in the desire for and the farcical pursuit of linguistic purity. As part and parcel of historicization that produces the historicized as ‘a unique people’ (say, a race), acquisition of historical meaning manifests itself in attempts to invent oneself as a unique people, as one nation among many, by negating the foreignness of language (an impossible task) by purging from it linguistic elements scientifically produced as “foreign” and replacing them with new words made from newly “discovered,” not infrequently hypothetical, ancient “roots”—a desire and a pursuit that cannot but produce a language that is not only foreign but also alienating, and more importantly, partitioning: a language of apart-heid, a national language.

Now, let us read the other rendition of diaspora by Boyarin:
a diaspora is a synchronic condition in which a given collective is oriented twice: once toward the place that they are in, and once toward another place—once toward a local culture, and once toward a culture that they share with other related collectivities that are not in their place (my emphases).

The diasporic condition is a mode of relation, “an orientation in which a collective is both in its cultural location and also somewhere else at the same time, thus both inside and outside a local culture.” In a place and yet out in relation to another (and yet another) place. Ascription of historicality and indigenization on the other hand doubly uproot the native by grounding him twice out of relation, twice in isolation in the temporality of the nation-space: once in a distant past that has to be invented through ethnic cleansing, through purging what is produced as “foreign,” through practices of partition and apartheid; and a second time in a pilgrimage toward a future enlightenment that is ever on the horizon (for as history has shown Christianity doesn’t ever accept converts, it rather makes New Christians).

Indigeneity, as Mufti had it, is assumed to be the ‘condition of culture,’ and the cultural, the scientific signifier of human difference in ‘the age of historicity,’ writes the native ‘as twice affectable,’ once determined by a ‘tradition’ (invented past, cultural historicity), and a second time by a ‘place of ‘origin,” within which he has to find his historicity, and from which to move away, but to which at all times he will remain

---

118 Boyarin, 21.
119 Boyarin, 65.
attached in a prescientific, prehistoric, preconceptual, divine way: twice out of place, twice out of relation, and twice trapped in the geographically determining temporality of modern standardization.

(z.) It is no surprise that literary history, for example, so frequently if not almost exclusively, takes the nation-space as its space of inquiry and at the same time disregards translation. What does it mean, for example, to study, as it is so frequently done, contemporary Persian literature and not study, again for example, Becket, Borges, Dostoevsky, Duras, Faulkner, Kafka, and Lorca? They are all very influential writers in contemporary Persian language and literature. Or why would one study Iranian films separate from the non-Iranian films that Iranian films are in conversation with and refer to? What meaning is it that is sought and thought in the nation-space, and only in the nation-space? Instead of an answer from me, listen to this, what Barbad Golshiri wrote in a “rebuttal letter” to the editor of the Time magazine that is also partly about their correspondent Karl Vick’s review of an exhibition by him, Curriculum Mortis, in Tehran and the particular way of viewing his work that Vick shared with Holland Cotter who had written about the same exhibition in New York for the New York Times:

Page 34: Just like the NY Times article about Curriculum Mortis (By Holland Cotter, sept. 19, 2013) Mr. Vick has reduced nearly a hundred graves to “graves of people opposing the Iranian regime.” Why one would care to see this and this only? The exhibition had numerous works about those killed by Shah’s regime, Nazis in Warsaw and many others who had nothing to do with the Islamic Republic: Jan van Eyck, Georges Wolinski and Samuel Beckett for instance or an
anchor cemetery in Portugal, Cimitero Monumentale in Milan, Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. Moreover, the largest work in the exhibition was a cenotaph for Arin Mirkan … And a whole room was dedicated to a sarcophagus I had made for Chohreh Feyzdjou … who worked and died in Paris. I could go on with the list of what was there to see, yet I believe many cannot imagine that an Iranian artist can or should work about such people or places.120

And why would one really care to see this and this only if not because of history and historiography that write the subject of cultural historicity (as opposed to Historical historicity) in geographical determination and want to extract from the native, want to make the national subject confess, “the truth,” the historical (that is, theological-political) truth, of the national situation? The subject of cultural historicity can only be heard as remembering, mourning, and asking about “his own” dead. The national subject is declared foreign to the dead in other national (global-historical) situations. What is denied is simple: the synchronicity of the subject of cultural historicity with world history—in other words, that the subject of cultural historicity lives on the same planet, in the same world constituted by History and its spatial expansion (both as historicization of the geographic (archive, narrative), and the ‘becoming media of the planet’ (news)); that the subject of cultural historicity is instituted (partially and ever increasingly) by the same history (as) the history of the subject of History. It is a simple

denial of globalization, say, the universality of our relation to the global dead; a simple
denial of the universality of *global* murder, universality of historical genocide, genocide
as the institution of the generalized universal we live in; global murder as the ever
recurrent historical beginning of standardization kept in retention; genocide as the
‘perverse achievement of historical will.’ It is also the denial that there *is* a “global
community” in this world, a “historical community” instituted more than anything by
genocide and murder. It is history, historical meaning, that determines the “proper”
limits of mourning here. History *gives* the subject of cultural historicity *his own* dead as
the *proper thing* to mourn, as a “national trauma,” an *obstacle to mourning* and an object of
historical self-construction: what turns the subject of cultural historicity melancholic.121

If there is anything in this world that is “ours,” anything that makes a “global
community” (or in less fashionable terms “international community”) out of diverse
human populations, it is ongoing genocide, this all too human historical institution that
“we” are all differentially constituted by, differentially denied the possibility of its
mourning, differentially priced as we are on the marketplace of death. And a question of
real political value in thinking about globalization is how to shatter this global
community, how to ruin it, so that with the scattering of its fragments another

121 It is not accidental that “national trauma” is so frequently invoked for the construction of all things
“national,” “national cinema” for example, that Hamid Dabashi says is born out of “national trauma”
and strictly speaking needs such a “trauma” to be born—see Hamid Dabashi, *Makhmalbaf at Large:*
community may come into being that wouldn’t just be about gathering; that would be able to think difference and incomparability and wouldn’t need to, nor want to, bring “all men into one fate” as the poet Robert Duncan wished for after it had already happened;¹²² that would not be “obsess[ed] with discovering what lies at the bottom of natures,” wouldn’t need to (scientifically and historically) “grasp” the other, and the Other, the incomparable, the other in the other’s opacity, and would rather “give-on-and-with” the other, as Betsy Wing translates Glissant’s “comprendre” and “donner-avec.”¹²³ Not a community of immunity and security, but a community of care and weakness not in denial of vulnerability, that is to say, a community that does not simply deny the indisputable corporeality of that which is called “human;” a community not so fundamentally constituted on the denial (or is it the “traumatic discovery”?) of our being-for-others as is our global community.

What is at stake in the denial of the synchronicity of the subject of cultural historicity with world history is extending the space of experience of the subject of History, who moves democratically toward the horizon of death and makes life sacred, sacrifi ces, on a global scale according to a chronology of human race, but the sacrificed never become relevant to his ‘destiny and responsibility.’ It is a denial of the coincidence (contemporaneity and coextension) of historical time and colonial space, or as Walter

¹²³ Glissant, Poetics of Relation, 190, xiv (“Translator’s Introduction”), 212 n5.
Mignolo would say, of modernity and coloniality, or yet again in Jameson’s terms, modernity and standardization. *But coloniality makes all the difference.* That in our postcolonial world, after all these years of being Westernized, standardized, and modernized; after all these years of being in *formative* relation with the West, we are not capable of being imagined, nor imagining ourselves, as a Western diaspora of sorts, as a Christian umma, it is because Old Christians are always in the future, always *historically placed* higher on the scale of Civilization, never in the same place as the standardized converts unless landing temporarily for murder, domination, extraction, and consumption purposes. This makes the transformation of the global situation into a diasporic situation (note that I am *not* saying “cosmopolitan”), a situation of mutual contact and cultural exchange (that already exists but is denied not least due to Western anxiety of influence), materially and ideally impossible. Not to forget that our often not so unwilling conversion to nationalism was itself a modality of uprootedness, temporal exile and loss of place—or the place’s transformation to a world-historic trap: a national situation.

(h.) The denial of the coincidence of historical time and colonial space, is constitutive of a world that as Kasereka Kavwahirehi writes is “‘de-worlded’ (*se dé-monde* in French) by shirking what makes it meaningful, namely a common world,
which is essentially a place for existence and human solidarity,” for whose “becoming world” it is necessary to “truly awaken from the capitalist ‘dogmatic dream’ … and its sacrificial religion” (my emphasis). Were a true awakening, or conversion, from both this ‘dogmatic dream’ and this ‘sacrificial religion’ to happen then globalization (and importantly so not as a ‘gain’ but precisely as a “price to pay”) could be turned into “the becoming world of a de-worlded world.”

How is the world de-worlded? Kavwahirehi is very clear about this: through the fundamental negation of what “creates ‘obligations’ and ‘makes us obliged beings,’” through the turning around of munus and creating “illusion of immunisation against others through military omnipotence,” precisely through autoimmunization, through creation of “‘immunity’” that “encages life.” (But before I go further, know that this essay begins with a question concerning “the readers of Time” and mass murder and

124 Kasereka Kavwahirehi, “For a Common Ascension in Humanity: The Intellectual’s Mission in the Great Lakes Region,” in Violence In/And the Great Lakes: The Thought of V-Y Mudimbe and Beyond (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2014), 17, 34. “De-worlded” is borrowed from Jean-Luc Nancy, and the quote on the ‘dogmatic dream’ is Slavoj Žižek’s to which Kavwahirehi adds the ‘sacrificial religion.’ Also resonating with Kavwahirehi’s description of the ‘de-worlding’ of the world through ‘shirking what makes it meaningful’ is Mustapha Chérif’s note about “the decadence of modernity” and “that which appears to be a de-signification of the world, a challenging of the very foundation of humanity as it has existed since the time of Abraham,” emphasizing that the critique of de-signification of the world, of the increasing purge of meaning from the world [and this is related through and through to the purge of time and the victory of the five-minute song format, the ever decreasing room for what Nathaniel Mackey calls ‘the long song’] is not about “either nostalgia for tradition or defense of religion. It is the meaning of humanity itself that is at issue.” “The return of the religious,” he writes, “is the reflection of a break between morality and life, between responsibility and freedom.” Adding, reminiscent of Jameson’s point about the suppression of time by space, standardization and reduction to body, “that the commercialization of the world reduces [the] capacity to be responsible and to freely decide [the] future. Indeed, the ability to think, to think in other terms, is challenged by the shrinking of a horizon diminished by an absence of meaning, a breaking of ties, and a dictatorship of the market—and this is all aggravated by the phenomenon of terrorism.” Mustapha Chérif, Islam and the West: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 4–5.
genocide and the millions of deaths in Congo that never add up, never count, never as televised, as “‘mediatically worth’” as the “‘death of a West Bank Palestinian child, not to mention an Israeli or an American’”—“is it really ignorance?” is what the essay asks.)

The world is de-worlded, Kavwahirehi writes, through a double denial of coexistence, the denial of both its co- and its ex-. In other words, the denial of two fundamental, indisputable characteristics of existing as corporeal humans in the world (and thus two semantic sources of being in the human world): that existence is always, necessarily and objectively, co-existence, that is, coming into the world is always already “to come into being with”—there is no being-for-itself that is not being-for-others; and second, that coexistence is always co-existence, in other words, the subject is necessarily and objectively corporeal and subject to corporeality: at once inside and outside itself, ex-posed, out in relation, thrown out and given to care, vulnerable to love and injury:

The existent is not simply ‘thrown into the world’ … as suggested in the formula that has now become a classic; it is at the same time and by so doing ‘trusted to others.’ It is from the mutual exposure to each other that arises the community as a space for our existence, or for our co-existence. In other words, ex- is as fundamental as with … it is openness and spacing.

---

125 Kavwahirehi, “For a Common Ascension,” 19–20, 16–17. Cited in the quote concerning obligation is again Nancy, and on immunity Kavwahirehi quotes Roberto Esposito, the same source that Anidjar refers to when writing about the community of immunity. Cited on the media worth of death is Slavoj Žižek.

126 Kavwahirehi, 20, 26.
Glissant would say it is “distance.” Note that both the co- and the ex-address the existent in exteriority (as well as interiority), precisely as affectable, as subject to exterior determination and to care and caress. And then let us ask what is at stake in our global situation where we have been brought so terribly ‘into one fate,’ really into one history, so terribly colonized, Christianized, modernized, standardized, but differentially (all with the same national difference), and the majority of us (but in reality all of us) as doubly out of place and twice affectable subjects to geographical determination and subjects to a History of Humanity, a chronology of human race, used for the calculation of the price of human life on the marketplace of death? What meaning has history given to our existence that we have become (really been produced as) so foreign to each other. Not that we have ever not been foreign to each other, but it is difficult to think that humans (with whatever name) have ever been as unrelated to each other, as “foreign” to each other, as under globalatinization, in our de-worlded world where “we” are so terribly dragged into involvement in each other’s death through the democratic expansion of the “free” market and its sacrificial religion that literally seeks to annihilate faith, to annihilate all human trust; for it seeks to annihilate the very possibility of the existent’s trustedness.

(t.) It is history, this most modern source of meaning, that has made us foreign to each other, and precisely through de-worlding, by writing the historicized out
of place, out of extended relation, in the depth of modern national (global-historical)
time and oriented toward the New Christian future, the future of ‘the whole human
family’ to remember Pope Pius XII’s words. And it is the capitalist market and its
sacrificial religion, whose theology is historical through and through: it sacrifices according to
a History of Humanity, itself a transformation of spatial difference to chronological
difference.

In Judith Butler’s words, (another essay that Kavwahirehi writes with),
contemporary racial-capitalist religion sacrifices according to a historically (that is,
Christian theologically) determined “geopolitical distribution of corporeal
vulnerability.”127 Say, the geopolitical distribution of the body of Christ. This is why as
Silva writes, “the political-economic (capitalism in the shape of colonialism, imperialism,
or globalization) and the political-symbolic (the racial and the cultural) engulfment of
the globe produce the same peoples and places as ‘the oppressed,’ ‘the dominated,’ the
subaltern, and ‘the South;’” adding that this “seems a self-evident truth that should be
left alone lest there remain no self-assured position for the critic to take,”128 which also
implies the existence of efforts to not leave this truth alone. And history, historical
consciousness, and the sense of history today is definitely interested in obliterating the
self-evidence of this truth by giving us evidence to the otherwise (alternate facts), and

128 Silva, Toward a Global Idea of Race, 14.
theorizing what is strictly a *generalized universal* (generalized with Christian sacrifice, global murder, and historical genocide) as a “universal.”

It is precisely this problem that Anidjar brings to attention when he writes about the “growing attention” that “the antiquity of race (and its universality)” has been attracting in the contemporary academic marketplace. When historians set themselves to the task of finding race in the distant past of *all* human societies, in other words, when historians (and most of us involved in the humanities are some sort of historian these days) “historicize race … trace its iterations across time or place (geographic or cultural)” this act, this historiographic labor, “has an inevitable corollary in the universalization of race.”129 Race spreads backwards in historical time, “we” (the global community) have always been racist, all human societies have always been racist (and also sexist, classist, and homophobic), and global racist murder is not our quintessentially modern problem, and there is no particular party, no particular race, that has to take the credit for it. All the while there is no doubt that modernity has brought universal comfort and progress to all of us, and it is very clear who we should thank for this one.

Mufti sounds a similar note in a comment on two passages from the now-classic book *Empire*, where Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri implicitly (but unambiguously)

129 Anidjar, “The History of Race, the Race of History,” 519.
equate all “‘ethnocentrism’s’” and then attribute the global hegemony of

“‘Eurocentrism’” to the (accidental?) support it received from “‘capitalism.’” “The claim
to (formal) equivalence” of all ethnocentrism, writes Mufti,

seems to secure the claim to (actual) preeminence. But more decisively ... it
appears to place one ethnocentrism, which is primus inter pares in the world of
ethnocentrism, outside the realm of criticism. Once successfully sublimated into
universalism, Eurocentrism is removed from the historical plane of its emergence
in the imperial process and the kinds of social and political conflict, and the
modes of resistance and of criticism, that developed in response.¹³⁰

Race is universalized and when it comes to racism, “Europeans” seem to not be One
among many anymore, just one among many. In other words, race is not a “European”
problem, not relevant to ‘Anglo-Saxon Destiny and Responsibility.’ This is definitely a
historical and historiographical achievement. In the language I take from Silva and
Anidjar, what is sought in writing white racism (that is foundational to our modernity)
out of the realm of criticism, is to separate the political-symbolic from the political-
economic, the theological from the political, the Empire of God from the “Empire,”
Christianity from secularism. On the micro-level of the theoretical-historiographical
enterprise this is an excuse for white thinkers to read primarily white philosophy and
generally refrain from critically engaging the massive library of the critique of the
political-symbolic that never seeks to separate itself from the political-economic.

¹³⁰ Mufti, Forget English!, 245–46.
“Philosophy” maintains its separation from “theology,” “Literature” maintains its disciplinary divisions from “Area Studies,” “Comparative Literature” from “Orientalism” — (is this what is called “secularism”?).

We are back in the same problem that white theology shared with the philosophical discussions of biopolitics: neglecting ‘slavery, colonialism, segregation, and the profound cultural link these horrible crimes created between white supremacy and Christianity;’ neglecting coloniality: being at once ahistorical and Historical.

“History with a capital H, which,” Mudimbe writes, “first incorporates St. Augustine’s notion of providentia and later on expresses itself in evidence of Social Darwinism.”

“The overall outline of history” wrote the linguist and Providential prophet Adolphe Pictet around the mid-nineteenth century, “that is the true battlefield for Christian apologetics.” He set the historians to the task of revealing “the role assigned to each race in the drama of the world.” The role of “Christianized Aryas” according to Pictet was to rule the “entire globe.” But again, it wasn’t prophecy speaking, it was history.

Read again what Mufti writes: ‘Once successfully sublimated into universalism, Eurocentrism is removed from the historical plane of its emergence.’ Remember Kantorowicz ‘character angelicus … represents the immutable within time;’ and Cone, “natural’ way of viewing the world;’ and Jameson “American blindness … our tendency

131 Mudimbe, The Invention of Africa, 17.
132 Quoted in Olender, The Languages of Paradise, 104.
to confuse the universal and the cultural;” and Silva ‘racial subjection has been naturalized,’ and ‘having a ‘voice,’ being heard as a subaltern transparent I does not dissipate the effects of raciality.’

(y.) The critique of the political-symbolic generally tends to fall on deaf ears in a certain direction. This, to go back to the quote from Mufti, happens ‘once Eurocentrism is successfully sublimated into universalism.’ And the ongoing sublimation of Eurocentrism to universalism, the ongoing generalization of a mistaken universal; in other words, ongoing modernization, colonization, or Christianization of the world, that comes with racial-capitalist expansion that is the same as the process whereby the world is de-worlded, is the same as standardization. What allows standardization to be an ongoing process is that despite its horrifying clear reality that stands in front of our eyes, despite for example the contemporaneity and mutual interdependence of “religious fundamentalism” and “neoliberal fascism,” cultural (that is to say racial, or is it “religious”?) difference is assumed, presupposed, believed, to be a fundamental difference, that is, ‘irreducible and unsublatable’ difference as Silva puts it repeatedly throughout her book; not least because cultural difference in its “deep structure” is conceived on the basis of an assumed prehistoric, prescientific, preconceptual, God-given difference. This in turn explains (and indeed necessitates) the continuing

globally sanctioned, democratically consented to, military-imperial expansion of the
United States’ space of experience (and with it that of its allies, and the native’s space of
disaster); the expansion of the autoimmunity of the Strongest to secure themselves
against “foreign” threats by exporting democracy and bombing the unenlightened and
the uncivilized that is the same sacralizing movement that manifests itself domestically
as the systemic and mass-mediatised murder of black Americans. And democracy
expands with the so-called free market that importantly includes American film and
television as most effective tools of standardization. It makes perfect standard sense then
why despite the Christian longue durée of fascism, the word one hears more often on the
media is “Islamofascism.” Fused with the name of a religion, perhaps the name of
“religion” in our de-worlded world, fascism is said to be a “religious” thing, an
“irrational” impulse, “foreign” to secular Christian culture. That cultural difference is
irreducible and unsublattable guarantees the continuation of racial-capitalist war, and its
corollary, standardization, or put more poetically, ‘the coming of all men into one fate.’

All claims to cultural authenticity necessarily resort to the same logic or
imaginary (for here they are one) of the irreducibility of cultural difference. Any claim to
cultural authenticity, national autonomy, or originality has to confront the reality of
standardization. I suggest thinking for example in terms of the global hegemony of
certain forms that in-form a good majority of human cultures: the nation, the state, the
nation-state, the nuclear family, the society of the spectacle, the Hollywood form, the 
five-minute song format, democracy, the novel, and increasingly “the bestseller.”

(k.) (‘enna fe l-jannate sawqan yobā’o fihā s-sowar’)

Why can’t we as adults [be ‘onvān-e afrād-e bāleq] be indifferent to America, why 
all this love and hate and not indifference. – New York, Kabul, 54

We have to understand, in this country, something that is difficult for us to 
realize: namely, that the United States is not just one country, or one culture, 
among others, any more than English is just one language among others. – 
“Notes on Globalization,” 58.

Now, you remember, but you perhaps don’t, that I had arrived to An American 
Utopia by way of “Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue,” where Jameson 
offers an illuminating analysis of the relation between the cultural and the economic 
precisely in the context of standardization. And a careful reading of this essay shows 
that “standardization” is the other name of the “gradual de-differentiation of … the 
economic … [and] the cultural.”134 This is most manifest in the implications of Jameson’s 
“long parenthesis on the significance of the Gatt and Nafta agreements” that is a part of 
his analysis of the global hegemony and consumption of “American film and television 
[that] fall under base and superstructure alike, as it were; they are economic fully as

134 Ibid., 70.
much as they are culture, and are indeed, along with agribusiness and weapons, the principal economic export of the United States.” Gatt and Nafta agreements seek to secure global American cultural-economic hegemony by undermining governmental “cultural subsidies and quotas in other parts of the world but primarily in Western Europe,” with “American state lobbyists” arguing that state economic aid to cultural workers is “’unfair’” from the perspective of “international competition.” Add to that two crucial reminders: one, that “the free movement of American movies in the world spells the death knell of national cinemas elsewhere … along with it, potentially, that of national and local culture as a whole;” and second, that “the triumph of Hollywood film (from which I won’t here separate our television, which is today just as important or even more so) is not merely an economic triumph, it is a formal and also a political one” (my emphases).

(I.) I am not going to remind you of ‘the hegemony of Christian telemedia,’ I am sure you remember that. So let us instead look at the formal and political triumph of the Hollywood form in Iran. A national situation, perhaps one of the few, that is blessed twice. Once, because there is no free movement of Hollywood, and two, because it is outside the rule of copyright and so there is free movement of American film and television. Hollywood films are rarely screened in cinemas, that is to say, “theaters” in

135 Ibid., 60–62.
American, but they are widely available on DVD on the sidewalk or with call-in dealers or downloadable from the Internet. There are state subsidies for filmmakers but definitely not enough. Like everything else, cinema is also exceedingly privatized. There is only national television. There are American films on the national television, but no American television. There are TV shows from other parts of the world. But satellite television is as common, indeed more common, than state television. There is what in English is called “a national cinema,” an “internationally acclaimed” one a while back. The existence or lack thereof of a “form-e melli,” ‘national form,’ is however an often debated topic.

Traditionally, there has always been an interesting enough weekly program dedicated to cinema on the national television. The classic setting of such programs is often an introduction to a film, then the film (generally what would be considered “art cinema” and more than half of the time “classic” European and Russian films) and then a sort of interpretive discussion with a film critic, a filmmaker, a philosopher, an intellectual, etc. The “hot” cinema program for the past few years however, has been Haft, ‘seven,’ a live television program modeled on Navad, ‘ninety,’ a popular soccer show, that does not include a film anymore and not really any intended hermeneutic discourse, but is designed as an up-to-two-hours talk show with film critics, filmmakers,

136 Mohammad Rasoulof’s documentary Bād-e dabur, with the English title The Dish (2008) gives a good account of the national situation as it pertains to satellite television.
screenwriters, producers, actors, film musicians, and other cinema-involved figures speaking about current films, both Iranian and not, and not infrequently really getting into it. It is a show. Massoud Farasati a longtime film critic and a regular on the show has definitely been the most vocal critic on the issue of “national form” to which according to Farasati “we have not arrived yet.”\textsuperscript{137} He is an outspoken lover of classic Hollywood films, a famed reader of Hitchcock, and also one of the main propagators if not the coiner of the term “festival cinema,” meant to figure certain films and filmmaking trends (mostly post 1980s continuation of the “new wave”) as “made to win” at mostly Western European film festivals and catering to a taste for the exotic or for narratives of oppression. An important criticism of “festival cinema” and “the new wave” in general has been the “lack of (attention to) narrative” and “weak screenwriting.” I am not going to directly enter this debate here. What concerns our discussion of the political and formal triumph of Hollywood in Iran, next to the significance of the insistence on the necessity of straightforward narrativity, is “siyāh-namāyi,” literally ‘black-presentation,’ a word that perhaps emerged in these debates in reference to cinematic representations of political oppression, poverty, addiction, crime, etc. Even if this word has a longer history of use (it is not registered in any dictionary as

\textsuperscript{137} The citations here are not direct quotations from any particular text but repeated statements made by the named or often used “keywords” of the discourses under question. Much of such discourse could be heard on various episodes of \textit{Haft} that are also available on YouTube (in Persian). For particular episodes I have given links.
far as I am aware of) it certainly came to prominence in the debates around the screening of Iranian films outside Iran.

“Siyāhnamāyi” came to general use, really deployment, after the heyday of Iranian cinema at international film festivals had already passed, and has come to be the keyword for film censorship in the past few years—(indeed it emerged as a frequently hurled political accusation, and a main trope of the 2017 presidential elections). Significantly, most films censored and barred from public screening with the deployments of “siyāhnamāyi” belong to a genre often called “social cinema,” sinemā-ye ejtemā‘i, definitely not the same as “festival cinema” but occasionally overlapping, at any rate not entirely what is usually praised at international film festivals. And keep in mind that what is censored as “black-presenting” always (without exception) has already had an official permission to be made, but the final result has left the (emerging) censors unsatisfied. “Social cinema,” in the vocabulary of filmmakers who know themselves or are named as “social filmmakers,” is defined as a “questioning” and “critical” cinema, that explicitly seeks to “agitate,” to “speak pain,” to “speak the difficulties,” to “reveal lies and injustice,” to be “a mirror for the society,” and to “educate.” To “black-present” is often used by the critics of social cinema and the censors alike as a sort of one-dimensionality, “representing only problems and not giving the society hope or a self-affirming image.” It is semantically associated with “bitterness” (as in taste),
“exaggeration,” “one-sidedness,” “emotionality,” “darkness,” and “unhappiness.”

Social cineastes, not infrequently labeled “intellectuals” and even the more recent variant “intellectual-presenting” (rowshanfekr-namā), are said to forget that “cinema is primarily entertainment,” and more so by film critics than by censors. That <cinema is entertainment> or that it has to be entertaining is a statement repeatedly uttered by the film critics around Haft and Farasati in particular. And pertinent to the question of “national form,” to call someone an “intellectual” is to imply that they are “removed from the ‘real’ society,” or “the people.” At least for the past five years no other film-critical discourse has had as much television time as the one promoting entertainment, openness to influence from American (rather than European and Russian) cinema, and straightforward and self-affirming narrativity.

(m.) After the Iranian Parliament Committee on Culture (hereafter IPCC) barred eight films from screening in 2014 in an unprecedented event (not the censorship, but IPCC acting as the censor), Haft dedicated three consecutive programs to the question of “the border between social cinema and siyāhnamāyi” each program being a debate between two adversaries, the first between a pro-censor journalist and a
producer, and the second and third each between a filmmaker and a member of the IPCC.\textsuperscript{138}

A four-minute introduction that was broadcasted before all the three programs is a good place to hear and see the problem. The intro begins with the iconic image of someone throwing down pieces of paper out of a window to a group of people gathered in the street, a direct metaphor for revealing political secrets, and reminiscent of the very much alive memory of distributing night-letters, samizdats, protected documents, and the like. The voice over begins: “to approach the shadows and lights [sāye-rowshanhā] of the Iranian society with film and cinema is a cultural necessity for our country that shouldn’t be neglected.” Then cut into a scene from Rakhshan Bani-Etemad’s Ghessehā, ‘Tales,’ one of the eight censored films, where one of the characters asks, holding a DVD in her hands in the street, “who do you even show these films to?” Then the voice over goes on to say that “social cinema in Iran has been known from early on as a cinema that shows pain and social wounds [dard va zakhmhā-ye ‘ejemā’i] and forces [vā-midārad] the audience to think deeply [ta’ammoq] about the roots [of pain and social wounds].” That social cinema has a long history and much audience in the national situation is affirmed and then it is said (and this time there is also televised news footage)

\textsuperscript{138} The three debates may be found here (in Persian):
1) \url{https://youtu.be/iqd4C7n-biM}
2) \url{https://youtu.be/iPC0vgQpn6M}
3) \url{https://youtu.be/KKV6k5SXg4}
but these days there is dissent concerning the quiddity and whatness [māhiyyat va chisti] of social cinema and the approaches to and methods of production [rāhkārhā va raveshhā-ye towlid] in social cinema. It has to be seen where the borders of an effective and dynamic [ta’sirzār va puyā] social cinema are. How is it possible to speak of bitterness and damages [talkhihā va ‘āsibhā] and not black-present? How to criticize [naqd kard] and stay away from a destructive outlook [negāh-e takhribi]? How can a filmmaker be committed to [speaking] the existing damages and values in the society and at the same time make a publically screenable film [filmī ke ‘emkān-e namāyesh-e ‘omumi dāshte bāshad]? It has to be noted that social cinema not only is not negated [nafy nashode] in our country, but engagement in it is recommended [pardākhtan-e be ‘ān towsiye shode]; but on the condition that bright and transparent windows [darichehā-ye rowshan o shaffā] are opened so that [tā] the Iranian cineaste [may] make and screen his social films first and foremost for the Iranian audience [mokhātab] rather than any other audience. Debates concerning the two important strategies [esterātezhi] of [i.] real criticism and [the promotion of] a hopeful outlook on the future [enteqād-e vaqe’i va negāh-e omidvārāne be ‘āyande], and [ii.] strengthening the real foundations of cinema and narrative in social cinema [bonyānhā-ye ‘asāsi-ye sinemā va revāyat dar sinemā-ye ‘ejtemā’i], and of course [va albatte] the analysis of the obstacles around [avāmel-e bāzdārande pirāmun-e] the growth and strengthening of this cinema will aid the cineastes in taking important future steps in/for social cinema [khāhad tavānest sinemāgarān rā dar peymudan-e gāmhā-ye mohemm-e ‘āyande dar sinemā-ye ‘eftemā’i yāri dahad].

The introduction is very much in line with the film-critical discourse propagated on Haft, (that is on the national television and in a program where the phrase “national form” is frequently heard), and it is clearly calling for the adoption and promotion of Hollywood form (dynamic and effective production, straightforward narrative, and a sort of fake hopefulness, say the spirit of the romantic comedy) as opposed to what might be called an imagined “new wave” poetics, that is in-formed by a taste for slowness, non-narrativity or incomplete and fragmented narrativity, and a sort of
observational aesthetics. Social cinema is actually much more narrative and more of a storytelling cinema, but it is also influenced by new wave aesthetics. At stake are the limits of acceptable criticism, and a demand (or televised command) for cinema as (more) entertainment that also takes the form of calling for “real criticism” thus implying that the critique uttered by social cinema (in its imagined totality) is “fake.” As it becomes clear throughout the three debates one main problem, if not the problem, with “social cinema” is that in its imagined totality it is not an apolitical cinema: neither does it refrain from addressing the political-economic (poverty, more precisely class difference, and what it does, what it makes of the society), nor does it refrain from the political-symbolic, and particularly the consequences of an unjust and unjustifiable reading, qerā’at, of “religion,” a Book and its culture (as well as a wrong translation of din).¹³⁹ Neither does it refrain from addressing “current” political issues that might be considered among “the redlines.”

¹³⁹ That injustice is done in this national situation in the name of “religion,” in the name of Islam is best articulated by those intellectuals who have come to be known as “religious intellectuals,” rowshanfekrān-e dini, and for years they have also given the society language to speak to this injustice. “Reading” is an important concept in and a central act of this discourse. The work of religious intellectualism has largely consisted in reading otherwise and not only countering the hegemonic readings of din but also looking for other meanings; in other words it has not been a “reactive” discourse, but also never an apolitical discourse. Abdolkarim Soroush, a veteran of religious intellectualism captures the spirit of the movement very well when he says somewhere that ‘religious intellectuals have worked as unofficial clerics in Iran.’ Many, perhaps the majority of, religious intellectuals call for secular government, and many are politically-philosophically Liberal. The name is not a label. They have always called themselves so. However over the years it has been questioned and attacked in different ways and has also come to be used as a label. The (mis)understandings formed around the phrase roshanfekrān-e dini, “religious intellectualism/intellectualism” are a good illustration of what I call a wrong translation of din. Right from the beginning the idea that “religion” and “intellectuality” (if not “intellect”) may be combined, and whether a “religious” person, a “believer,” can be an “intellectual” have been questioned
What we think of the expressed politics or the understanding of the society, the mirror-turning, the cinematic reading of society, offered by social cinema is a separate issue, and has to be determined in close readings of separate films; but to say that social cinema in its imagined totality addresses itself particularly or primarily to a “foreign” audience is a completely unfounded accusation if not an utter lie. The filmmakers participating in the debates however, it should be noted, insist that their criticisms are more of a “social” than a “political” nature. However, it should also be noted that the

and objected to by those who in opposition have identified as "secular" or "non-religious intellectuals." If we let go of the fanatics who consider a "religious" person incapable of thinking (and they are not few), then there have been those who have brought up the Western roots of "intellectualism" and its "secular" tradition and thus pointed out the (presumably unresolvable) contradiction; and then those, more philosophically inclined, who have questioned the possibility of bringing together the belief in God and commitment to truth and rational thinking. Secular intellectuals have of course been reminded repeatedly that there are enduring traditions of philosophy in particular and thought in general that are not secular and rational at the same time and that as long as there has been philosophy there have also been "believers" philosophizing, and they have not been seeking something other than truth. The popular talk show Pargar on BBC Persian which has had quite a few debates around this topic in the past few years with adversaries from both sides, recently dedicated two more episodes to this debate. The question this time had an air of end about it, as if a long debate was being closed. The question was, “religious and non-religious intellectuals, what dialogue?” and in both programs only “non-religious intellectuals” were invited to discuss whether there was a “dialogue” ta‘āmol between the two sides at the end or not. The reason for the endurance of the question and the debates around it however should be sought and thought in that name, "religious intellectual,” and the ways in which “din” has been translated to “religion” and in the history of the deployments of “religion” as an explanatory concept and the roles that concept and its deployments have played in the history of Iranian modernity. In other words, in the ways in which different phenomena have come to called “religious” in the history of Iranian modernity and the historical force of that name calling. Or say, in the process of the acquisition of history in Iran, or yet in other words, the process of globalatinization in where in this process has come to be nationally situated as Iran—this is a long story that I have to leave for another time and another language, but I will come back briefly to Iranian modernity and the deployments of “religion” in section P. I have learned about the question of cultural translation and the calling of things “religious” most of all from studying Gil Anidjar’s work, and the books and essays his writing have sent me to, and to whom and to all that writing I am so infinitely indebted that I remain incapable of acknowledging it. I have instead taken to re-citing Anidjar’s work after the saying that zakāto-l‘elme nashroh, and reading with his work. However, I do not know how much I have misunderstood things.
members of the parliament present in debates also at times dissociate themselves from politics and the political.\textsuperscript{140}

The first debate sets the general tone. Gholamreza Mousavi generally defends the democratic rights of the filmmakers and the plurality of ideas, and points out the extralegal nature of IPCC’s intervention for the censored films have already been approved by the Ministry of Culture. Mohsen Yazdi, a journalist who defends IPCC’s intervention says that the banned films are “impulsive and emotional [\textit{rag-e gardani va `ehsāsi}],” “made without research,” “are emotional and not rational [\textit{ta’aqqoli}],” “made out of anger [\textit{az sar-e asabāniyyat}],” and says that “these are political films cloaked as [\textit{bā radā-ye}] social,” and that “there is no problem with political cinema, but these are distortive” (some films have brought up the 2009 protests). He also says that “critique/criticism [\textit{naqd}] is separating the right from the wrong [\textit{sare as nāsare}].” (an oft repeated formula about critique and criticism alike that is also in high school literature textbooks), “bringing the good and bad together, a film that is a dead-end and there is

\textsuperscript{140} For the sake of clarity, serious critiques of how festival desire in-forms Iranian cinema notwithstanding, let me add that when it comes to social cinema the accusation of “making films for international festivals” is outright bogus. If there were any films that were ever really “made for” international film festivals, they were directly funded by the state and had what you may call a “mystical” outlook. Not only a good number of the films that get into trouble with the censor are generally not interesting for international film festivals, they also explicitly address the Iranian society, have clear social and even didactic agendas (with which we agree or not is a different issue), and many directly address issues obscure to those not familiar with the banality of the everyday problems in the national situation. Many of these films indeed become more attractive for international film festivals after getting into trouble in Iran and due to censorship. As for the issue of unhappiness, and single-minded negativity; these are really accusations that comes with <cinema is entertainment>. Some of these films are genuinely unhappy and some are very sad. They all have complaints. At any rate they definitely have their share of lightheartedness, affirmation, and hope, but are not generally “giddy.” There are also funny comedies among them.
no hope in it is a manifesto [bayāniye] not social critique, and social cinema means [ya’ni] social critique. They issue manifestos when there are no ways for betterment.” And even though he has earlier said that the censored films were “produced with Internet-knowledge [bā savād-e interneti towlid shodan]” he refers his adversary to check “what foreign websites have written about these films … you can search it and see.” He says that the foreign websites had been surprised how these films were permitted to be made and screened in Iran. Indeed he wants their expectation confirmed. He asks “why is it related to foreigners that we have those who have AIDS [eydži], unemployed women, and problems? What’s the foreigners’ business with that [be khārejiyā che rabti dāre]? The guy [yāru] has come from Vietnam and says ‘I couldn’t imagine this place to be like this’ —from Vietnam!” “How many people do you even think see these films in foreign festivals?” his adversary asks.

“Siyāhnamāyi” as it becomes clear in this debate is directly concerned with what may be shown to “foreigners” and what not. It is a matter of global representation. “What is our global image?” it asks. And it is strictly a matter of “global ranking,” say of global racial positioning. When “even” someone from Vietnam (“Vietnam!” Yazdi is utterly scandalized) is surprised to see that Iran is an alright place upon the first visit, then “we” have really misrepresented “ourselves,” and given ammunition to the enemy. It might be alright if First Worlders think that Iran is a backward place, but “Vietnam!”
His stupidity is founded on the not at all unfounded anxiety of misrepresentation.

However, Yazdi (and those in the position he speaks from and for) is utterly mistaken about the source of misrepresentation. He thinks that it is Iranian social cinema that is to blame for the constructed global image of Iran as a living hell and an unlivable, oppressive place, rather than American television. The real issue, however, might be what is communicated to the Iranian audience and the political-affective force of social cinematic light and social cinematic annunciation. This is manifest most in the statements concerning the emotionality of social cinema and those concerning dead-end, lack of hope, and manifestos.

(n.) The second debate is between Laleh Eftekhari, a member of the IPCC at the time, and Rasoul Sadr Ameli a veteran of social cinema. It is in this debate that the formal and political triumph of Hollywood is the most apparent, literally so. Sadr Ameli begins by situating social cinema as the “dominant mode [vajh-e qāleb] of Iranian cinema” that “has been weakened in the last decade.” He says that “social cinema means [ya’ni] [a] questioning cinema” and that “siyāhnamāyi’ has become a label [‘onvān] for censoring any film that aims to be questioning, effective, and agitating [āzārande] for those responsible/the officials [mas’ulin].” Like Mousavi, he insists during the debate that what the IPCC is doing is unconstitutional and extralegal. He asks in various ways whether the parliament is going to act as a new level of official censor from now on, and
complains that “good filmmakers have suffered from childhood … have killed themselves … labored … to arrive to the level of filmmaking they have reached,” and “did not just become candidates, get a vote, and go to the parliament … How is it possible not to trust them?” he asks, “when they have worked in this country … this cinema … for thirty years?” He ends by saying that “the more cinema, and not only cinema, the more a culture, that is the forehead of society [farhang ke pishāni-ye jāme’a-st], is critical [montaqed] the more it is a sign of that state and that system’s strength [neshān az salābat-e ‘un dowlat va ‘un nezām dāre].”

The keywords of Eftekhari’s discourse on the other hand are “borders” and “soft war.” “Borders” have to be “determined” and “we have to know that we are involved in a soft war and the enemy is plotting against us” and generally looks for “human” and particularly “women’s rights” issues to begin a war, while “they never talk about these issues when it comes to themselves.” Again, not at all an unfounded anxiety, neither a wrong assessment of the uses of human rights discourse, but again, another mistaken identification of Iranian social cinema with American television and Christian telemedia. Eftekhari begins her answer by rejecting Sadr Ameli’s “the more, the better” statement and says that “it is not true that the more we are critical the more we can be effective. The experience of the world [tajrobe-ye donyā] shows this. If you look, those who have been able to impose their own culture, their own wants, their own goals on the world, it
is not like that in their case that they have been more critical and thus better,” (Sadr Ameli on the other hand thinks that that is exactly the case with “them”), “neither is it true among our own films, that those that have been more critical have been more successful [movaffaq]t].” She is strictly speaking from a state-managerial position and the recognition that standardization is an “imposition” of a particular culture on the world does not lead her to a different reading of the “experience of the world.” Indeed, just as Yazdi identified with “foreign websites” and wanted their expectations confirmed, Eftekhari completely identifies with the enemy’s experience of the world. So enmity is not at all a reason not to look up to ‘those who have imposed their culture on the world’ as role models. There is also the issue of “success” that is very much a translation of the American “success,” primarily, if not strictly, financial. “Common folk/the majority ['āmme-ye mardom], meaning, those for whom you make films,” says Eftekhari, “prefer films that have risen from the heart and can sit on the heart … not just black-presenting and seeing and showing things as replete with problems, and only the problems ['eshkālāt] and not the good things [mahāsen] … maybe some particular tastes [ye zā'eqehā-ye khāssi] like that but not the common folk/majority. Common folk/the majority are those who like the reality to be seen, be represented [namāyānde beshe], the solutions [rāhkārhā] to be seen, and without siyahnamāyi … the pains should be seen and also the remedies … not putting the pain under a magnifier and not showing the
remedy.” She says the borders of the sayable have to be determined, and “we” (grammatically readable as the state) “have to determine a structure [sākhtāri ta’īn konim] so that the artist can feel secure [‘ehsās-e amniyat kone] and know that he can set foot here and not there. Meaning, that before writing the screenplay he can know where it is necessary…” And here she suddenly shifts to another discursive act: “At least” says Eftekhari, and lo and behold the formal and political triumph of Hollywood:

At least let us learn from our enemies. From those who have other plans, and they are planning against our family [values], against our decency [effat], against our views, against our religion, against our system. At least let us learn from them. They know well what they are doing. At any rate, we have to dedicate a place … a cinematic organization, so that our artist knows on what ground he is moving [ke honarmand-e mā bedānad bar che zamine’i dārad harekat mikonad].—[Sadr Ameli lets out a couple of half-swallowed sighs, the sound ever so slightly interrupting the scene, and as the camera moves on him he is scratching his head]—as I was telling [there has been no explicit interruption, but the half-swallowed sighs have necessitated a discursive re-beginning], those who are not with us, are on the other side of the seas [un-taraf-e ‘āban], like Hollywood and others [az hālīvud o digarān gerefte], they have planned for themselves, determined their targets [hadaf-gozāri kardan] (slightly more audible sighs), they know where they want to arrive, step by step, with what means, with what outlooks, and for what audience, and [how to] make a cinema for us that is different from all else [sinemāyi ke baraye mā tadārok didan bā hame taǔvot kone (it is not grammatically clear who is the intended subject of this sentence)] and all that. We have to have a similar place with our own values, meaning, that our artist has to know the [differential] characteristics [shākheshā], and also when our screenwriter wants to write a screenplay he knows [the characteristics], and so that we also know where we want to arrive at [be kojā mikhāhim beresim], and also know our means, and also before and during screenings all these things are taken care of.
What to do with the enemy under globalatinization? Love them secretly. Emulate them. Take them as role models. Demand straightforward narratives and happy endings from “your artists.” But no, that is not enough. Make a cinematic organization just like theirs. “They know very well what they are doing.” They are always like that. They are scientifically superior. Sadr Ameli had said earlier that “in this country we don’t have problems when it comes to sciences,” because they are well-organized and no one tells the scientists what to do unlike when it comes to the arts (and humanities). Now, what Eftekhari is saying, is more or less tantamount to a plan for making a “scientific” cinematic organization of sorts. But this would also include “determining a structure so that the artist can feel secure and know that he can set foot here and not there. Meaning, that before writing the screenplay he can know where it is necessary…” Note that the discursive shift to the necessity of emulating the enemy cinematically comes immediately after the mentioning of “screenplay,” the keyword very much baked in *Haft’s* film-critical oven, televised weekly, a real show, exciting and dynamic, not like the earlier “intellectual” ones, slow, and heavy. At any rate, never forget the screenplay, Hollywood, good story, dynamic production, not too much criticism, not too much bitterness, not too much darkness, not too much black-presentation, and it has to be planned for, step by step, don’t forget the screenplay, no poetic cinema, that’s for “some particular tastes,” it’s for “intellectuals,” “common folk” needs to be entertained, the
democratic majority needs spectacular pacification. CINEMA IS ENTERTAINMENT.

Social cinema is mistakenly identified with American tele-vision, and censored in an attempt to make American films “with our own values,” with “our own” national difference, the same as all nations, increasingly American.

Sadr Ameli’s voice is slightly trembling. “But Mrs. Eftekhari,” he says “I have also grown up in this society and it is thirty five years I am making films in this society—what I am saying is [‘arzam in-e ke]...” He makes the point again that there is already the constitution, you say that is not enough, alright [kheyli khob], the council of revolution, the high council of cul… the High Council of Cultural Revolution [Eftekhar gives his stutter the words with a smile: “cultural revolution”], we have them, they are there too, and there are also the clear and transparent positions of the Supreme Leader, [“yes,” says Eftekhari], and there is also the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, what is the parliamentary commission saying in this middle [chi mige komisiyun-e majles in vasat]? Meaning [ya’ni], look, this insecurity, this psyc… state [in hālat-e ravā…], this … this sense of insecurity you are giving the filmmaker with your speech [in ehsās-e nā anmi ke be filmsāz shomā darid bā harfātun midid] now tomorrow whatever film we want to make, alright, so, with all of this principles, it’s hard for me to think that the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance is not already using what is already approved by the High Council of Cultural Revolution, hard for me to think that it is not already taking into account what the Leader has said … it’s doing its work already conserving all this [bā hefz-e hame-ye inā dāre kār mikone] … what I am saying is, somewhere a procedure has to be defined [ye jāyi ye sāz-o-kāri bāyad ta’rif kard] to give the filmmaker a sense of security [Eftekhari: “exactly [ahsant]! just what I said [hamun ke bande ‘arz kardam]”] so that he knows that that film, that is, what it is that he is doing [ke bedune ke dāre un film ro, dar vāqe’ un kāri ro ke dāre mikone], after it is approved of, its screenplay, then he can make his film with calmness [bā ‘ārāmesh], and he can screen it with calmness, and he can come to a conclusion [be natije berese]. It is only in this form [dar in surat] that it may be
hoped [ke mishe omidvār bud] that at any rate [ke be har hāl] art in this country [may find] expansion and extension [bast o gostarest] ... and come to transcendence [be ta‘āli berese].

The debate comes to its most absurd climax when Sadr Ameli asks Eftekharī how many films she has seen, how often she watches films and what some of the last films she saw are. She says she doesn’t watch films that often, in a way that it could mean “never.” And “alright,” that is “precisely” Sadr Ameli’s point, he says, and continues, “you don’t watch films that often and yet you are right now talking to me about Iranian cinema, and basically about the obstructiveness [bāzdāranegi] of Iranian cinema. This is my discussion [bahs]...” and he breaks into a story. “Last night I was in an airplane, I was coming back from Kish, Mr. Gabarlou,” he addresses his story to the program’s host. There was a technical problem with the airplane and passengers got worried and “a sense of extreme insecurity took over all passengers.” A multicultural Iran was on the plane: “women and men that where very pious ... girls and boys that were fashionable [fashen budan], were wearing what they liked ... an Armin... Christian mother and daughter were in front of me, everyone, every kind [anvā’ o aqsām], all of the Iranian society was in this plane.” After a while, he says, many began saying prayers and blowing it to other passengers (just the way you blow a kiss), “such a kind space [fāzā] and such a good space had formed [shekl gerefte bud] in this plane” he says moving his hands:
Now, as a filmmaker I see this, and I want to make this. But as a filmmaker I see another thing too: just as this group [jamā’at] comes to the airport, according to the laws that you have made based on which it is possible to arrest the bad-hejāb and fine them, and make them miserable, just right there, they come and separate a few [ye te’dad-o jodā konan], and now, this is now my film [in dige film-e mane ha], just there they come and separate a few and take them and fine them and take them to prison. Then that unity [vahdat] …

Eftekhari: Just what we call black-presenting.

Sadr Ameli: No no no no … that unity in the plane … what? why black-presenting? Haven’t you passed laws according to which bad-hejāb has to pay a fine, and pay in cash, and if it didn’t work out, then has to be made unemployed, or whatever else? Haven’t you passed these laws?

E: [smiling] No, we haven’t. The law has been there from before …

He makes up the plot for a film on the live show, improvises a screenplay, screening his unmade social film on the national television. The host tries to change the topic. Sadr Ameli doesn’t let go, “no it is important, when I say [that I am speaking] as a social filmmaker this is what I am saying [ino arz mikonam], that I am living in a country that this word ‘bad-hejāb,’ it doesn’t even have a meaning anywhere in the world [hichjā-ye jahān kalame-ye bad-hejāb asan ma’nā nadāre], now this word is an insult [fohsh], it is a vile [rakik] insult, that millions of my countrywomen [zanān-e hanvatan-e man] every morning they wake up from sleep they are its addressees [in fohsh shāmel-e hāleshun mishe].” The discussion digresses into a brief historical review of obligatory veiling, the opinions on it, and its current status as a social problem. They will come back to veiling later on.
again. Note the resort to the world for meaning. “Bad-hejāb,” literally, ‘bad-veiler,’ is definitely a particularly Iranian word, an absolutely national word. As a direct consequence of the legal imposition of veiling on all women in Iran, “bad-hejāb” has emerged as an insult targeting millions of women whose forcibly worn national uniform leaves the law enforcers unsatisfied. Legal intervention in choice of clothes, and particularly so for women, both normally and most of the time for women, remains a classic site for the random exercise of legal violence and for the state to remind the nation who is really in power whenever necessary. This does not mean that “the nation” and “the state” are separate entities, or that “the nation” does not identify with “the state,” or that the state acts as an always violent entity. Any such assessment is at best wrong, at worst looking for excuses to begin a war, or really enter a different kind of war, another phase of war. So no, like any other state, the state in this national situation also acts, normally and daily, as a kind and benevolent entity, and the randomness of its conservative violence is for the most part banal and predictable. As a word, as Sadr Ameli points out, “bad-hejāb” is really meaningless anywhere else in the world, one either veils or not, and “bad” veiling is truly a national invention, a historical achievement, and for that reason a true signifier of the absurdity of national difference. Eftekhari—who calls the so-called “bad-veilers” “the target society [jāme’ye hadaf]” meaning, targets of cultural reform, and as she emphasizes, targets to be reformed
gradually and with patience—says that it is not the case that people can be just
randomly arrested, and then goes on criticizing Sadr Ameli’s unmade film as “black-
presenting,” but instead of referring to the screenplay he spoke which there is good
reason to think she still remembers, she tele-vises familiar televisual imagery, all too
well-known:

E: If you, with that outlook you have, I am sorry, with those glasses you had
worn right now [the camera moves to show Sadr Ameli’s glasses on the table], if
you were to make this film, it means [ya’ni] that the Islamic Republic is the same
place that the enemy…
SA: No, I’m sorry, it’s not at all like that
— the same place that …
— no, it is not like that
— Now let me talk then you make it right, cross my words after… meaning, the
same place that foreign cinemas and satellite channels are representing, meaning,
a place where no one has enough food and the like, concerning conduct [az nazar-
e raftār] everyone has to be ready to be arrested at any moment, women don’t
have security in the street, neither where they walk
— but do they?
— their airplanes are the kind that might fall at any moment, why don’t you
show that if there are technical problems and other things here, what is it a result
of? It is a result of their sanctions…
— No, no, technical problems can happen to any airplane, that was not what I
meant…
— [pointing to a curtain behind them] this curtain [parde], if I only look at its
black part, this is really …
— naturally, yes, I agree with you
— I have to see it all together, see its design, its color, its installation, when I see
this all together
— Beauty is precisely in that …
— Beauty, harmony, all of that, the purpose behind these designs… But if I only
look at the black, this is a problem, or only at the red, it is again a problem.
[Besides the curtain behind them, crimson red, with black shadows in the folds,
the two of them are clad in black, and the host in crimson red.] Why? Because I
have seen it partially. The two are beautiful next to each other. And yet then, I can show this to some, but I don’t have the right to show it to certain others … maybe the captain of the flight knew much more and didn’t say — yes, because he’s the captain of the flight — and why wouldn’t he say? To prevent further stress [esteres]. And why did he say? For there to be a little readiness. If he would come out and say all the truth it could have been worse. Meaning, anyhow, it is necessary to manage [bāyad modiriyyat kard], meaning, at any rate, that he [the captain] managed the time the passengers were in, managed their heart [del-e unā ro modiriyyat kard], managed their conduct [raftār] … — I meant the co-hearted-ness [hamdeli] in that flight, now this is turning to something else, I meant that the co-hearted-ness in the flight can at the end … — It was him who managed the co-hearted-ness

On the one hand, Eftekhar is unconsciously affirming Sadr Ameli’s unmade film. The good and the problematic together, pain and pleasure, black and red, the two sides, the kind space of blowing prayers at each other and the absurd violent space of unjust laws, together. There is no point denying the existence of misrepresentation that Eftekhar points to. I am not concerned with the direct uses of such propaganda here, however, one has to ask whether Iran is really ever portrayed as a place with food shortage? Eftekhar is verbally reproducing, tele-vising, a medley of repeatedly televised images of misery, very much the same as what she is criticizing. In a sense she acts as a television. On the same hand, she goes on to articulate and affirm the necessity of a most insidious managerial discourse, a management of hearts. And not only isn’t she restricting the work of management to the state, but is demanding, and in her capacity as a member of an emerging official organ of censor commanding, the artist to act,
speak, and make according to this managerial rationality. We are in the midst of mythic violence in its everyday banality, the banal everyday violence of absurd laws, laws not intended for the other. Laws intended ‘to separate and take away.’ The banal everyday violence of heart-management, even worse, the management of co-hearted-ness, soul destruction, in the name of “religion,” which is the same as in the name of “the nation” here.

What is censorship? The unjust and unjustifiable demand not to ‘come out and say all the truth.’ It is strictly a question of the limits of sayable truth. And truth makes all the difference. The critique of censorship, the political demand to end all censorship, is not at all to be confused with the call for a so-called “freedom of speech,” “my freedom to say whatever I like” by insulting others, freedom to speak hurtful bogus and propagate untruthful hate. What is censored is truth spoken to power, and to demand an end to censorship is to demand limitless truth. It is to affirm that the imposition of limits on sayable truth is absolutely unjust and unjustifiable under all conditions, and under no condition is the freedom to say the truth to be equated with the hateful predication of one’s “freedom” on insulting others.

What is critique? It is the opening to truth’s attack. the endurance of the growth of its seed. that connects the heart, the tongue, and the limbs: speech. Speech that is not bogus is never free. it comes out of twisted interior. out of ‘captivated absence.’ out of
the turns of body and soul. It is the translation of the tahrir of thought. It has nothing to
do with a so-called “free spirit.” The most terrible mistake is to equate “critique” and
“criticism” with “free thought.”

“Mr. Sadr Ameli, you as a filmmaker, where do you see ‘siyāhnamāyi’?” asks the
host, “If you open this a little maybe [there’ll be an intersection] with the point of view
of Mrs. …” Sadr Ameli cuts his words and articulates his defense of (social) cinema in an
attack on television and “the visual attack of technology,” and by way of national
television as the object of criticism moves to a critique of the national situation in its
totality:

Look, I see “siyāhnamāyi” in one-dimensionality. Mrs. Eftekhari said it correctly.
If in a colorful space my camera was to only show black and show black [siyāh ro
neshun bede va meshki ro neshun bede] this would seem completely biased
[mogrezane]. However [agar che], it is my imagination that [tasavvor-e man bar ine
ke] before anyone wants to call me, call that film [be man, be ‘un film bege] “black-
presenting,” the people themselves are intelligent, they’ll know, and won’t pay
two cents attention to that film [be ‘un film do zár e’etenāyi nemikonan], because the
endurance [mandegari] of cinema is in that the intention [niyyat] of the filmmaker
and the writer is apparent [peyda-st] on the screen [parde]. It is really apparent,
meaning, this, this is a mystery [ya’ni aslan in ra’ze –his face opens up saying this].
Despite/against [dar moqâbel-e] all this visual onslaught of technology that has
emerged in the world [in hame hojum-e tasviri-ye teknolozhi ke tu jahân be vojud
umade] why is cinema still attractive [jazzab]? Because cinema is light [baray-e inke
sinemâ nure]. It throws [ mipash-e] light on the screen and from the screen on the
spectator [tamâshâgar] and he enjoys, and the purity [paki] of this light brings him
to ecstasy [vajd] and causes everyone to laugh together, everyone to weep
together, everyone to sob together, and everyone to know together that this film
in [it, in] its heart, there is mal-intention [ke in film tu(sh), delesh su’e-niyyat hast].
My assumption [farz] is that … [and he shifts to another discursive act] and
really, culturally speaking, has it only been cinema [mage faqat be lahâz-e farhangi
سینمای بوده؟ در این سی‌وسه سال گذشته، آن‌ها مسئولان [مطیعیان] مساجد، آن‌ها مسئولان آموزش قرآن و راهبردهای دینی [ومر-دینی]، آن‌ها مسئولان آموزش و پرورش و راهبردهای مربیانه [اموزش و پرورش] که باید آموزش دهند [تربیت] بچه‌ها، آن‌ها مسئولان حال اقتصاد و همه چیز [حال اقتصاد و همه چیز]، ولی آن‌ها مسئولان که قابل توضیح است بر پایه عوامل فرهنگی [همین مطیعیانی که همیشه را به دست داشته‌اند]، آنها نمی‌توانند محکوم باشند؟

هاتی آن‌ها از پارلمان گویست یا می‌گوید می‌گوید می‌گوید، سال‌ها به شما می‌آموزند در تلویزیون و می‌آموزند بسیار خوب می‌آموزند و می‌گویند شما می‌خنده‌اید، شما داشتید همه این پول از خود گذاشته‌اید [همه این پول از خود گذاشته‌اید]؟ آیا چه نوعی نتیجه بعد از سی‌وسه سال می‌گیرید؟ آیا کسی به این واکنش می‌گوید؟ آیا فقط وقتی یک مشکل در یک فیلم وجود دارد، آنها به همه تایید می‌شوند؟ چیزی که می‌گوید بسیار سخت [هر چیزی که می‌گوید بسیار سخت]، می‌گوید کسانی که در این سی‌وسه‌سال از کار خود نکوداشتند و حتی اگر از کار خود نکوداشتند طیفی از نتایج زیادی به دست آورده‌اند، زیرا آنها به مکان‌هایی غیر مناسبی راه یافته‌اند [به مکان‌هایی غیر مناسبی راه یافته‌اند]، زیرا ما [ماها] نتیجه‌های … [و در اینجا دیگر دیسکورسیو شیفت باز] اگر من اصرار بر "درک نشدنی" دارم، این است زیرا این درک نشدنی [درک نشدنی] بیشتری را از ما برداشته، حالا [حالا] می‌بینید. کسی که می‌خواهد در برآوری [در برآوری] باشد. کسانی که می‌خواهد آماده شود [کسانی که می‌خواهد آماده شود]، چرا باید به این صورت باشد؟

— آه، هم‌اکنون [هم‌اکنون] سال‌ها نمی‌خورند، آنان نمی‌دانند …

The filmmaker insists on cinema’s difference from television, and in fact positions cinema against television. The reason for cinema’s endurance despite and against the global technological attacks on visual experience, on seeing, according to the filmmaker, is to be sought in the mystery of cinematic intention that is apparent on the screen. The filmmaker has nothing to conceal, nothing that is not hidden to the filmmaker, an apparent mystery: cinema is light, and what is in the heart of a film is apparent on the screen. No “truth-management” is required. It is the praise of cinema as light, the apparent mystery of the unconcealable truth of cinematic intention, that brings the filmmaker to the attack on television as the vital organ of the national situation. The “national medium” par excellence, the very medium of parliamentary speech that has “all this money … a budget,” there is no one in it “to respond,” and scapegoats social cinema for its own failures. It is very important that the tele-discourse the parliamentarian who doesn’t watch films resorts to is not against cinema as such, rather, it desires a tele-visual cinema, one that is not light but instead has a “good story.” An “entertaining” cinema whose (mal-)intention is not apparent, thoroughly mediated in (tele-)visual effects. Is not intended to speak the word of heart, but intends to manage hearts, by revealing only as much truth as it is manageable. The filmmaker attacks the television; that is to say, precisely the parliamentarian’s speech, the position from which the parliamentarian had spoken. Eftekhari had both used televised speech when she
mistakenly, if not mal-intentionally, identified Iranian social cinema with American television so as to justify its censor that also coincided with the formal and political embrace of Hollywood; and also had tele-vising verbally a medley of televisual imagery in her attempt to show that what is seen through Sadər Ameli’s social cinematic glasses amounts to “sīyāhnamāyi.” The misidentification of the light of social cinema with tele-vised news literally turns Eftekharī’s speech to television-speech. Literally a governmental, managerial, translation of a film-critical tele-discourse primarily televised on Haft itself: at once the affirmation of the necessity of adopting Hollywood form (being in-formed by it), and accusing social cinema to be primarily addressed to film festivals rather than the society. This time from the position of a parliamentarian that uses “we” referring to the state apparatus, and at the same time strangely insists that her commission’s actions are “not political.” The real horror is that that might be true. It is true at any rate that the national situation is more and more moving away from politics and toward management, and that is why, as Sadər Ameli put it in the very beginning of his speech, ‘social cinema has been the dominant mode of Iranian cinema but it has been weakened in the last decade.’

The weakening of social cinema in the last decade is a direct consequence of laws that aim to separate and take away (and this should not be understood as saying that social cineastes as intellectuals have always, or even for the most part, been aware of the
mutual interdependences of the desire for “democracy,” and the desire for “truth-management”). Toward the end of the debate, at one point Sadr Ameli responds to Eftekhari’s managerial discourse by asking her why she sees “the artist” as “separate [jodā]” from the “we” she keeps using:

— why do you see the artist as separate from yourselves so that ‘we’ have to tell him what to do? This is really perplexing
— No, please excuse me, when I said “we” I don’t mean “me” by “we”
— No, I don’t mean “you” personally either, I mean the parliament
— No, it’s not the parliament, I don’t mean the parliament, it’s not at all like that
— then please say it more clearly, I didn’t understand
— sure [chashm], I will tell you again [she says apologetically], maybe, at the end, the sender [of the message] has had a problem [shāyad belakhare ferestande eshkāl dāshte—a laugh takes over her face]. At any rate, the view is this [nazar in ast] that there will be a place [yek jāygāhī qarār begire] to tell us where we want to arrive at in the future, who are our audience, what are our goals, where do we want to go step by step, what is our content, if there is Mr. Sadr Ameli now, how many like him do we have to have in the future, how should they be educated, what should we do? We should enrich this cycle day by day, whatever we have we have to add to our capital …

“Just what is talked about as cultural engineering [hamun mohandesī-ye farhangī ke matrah hast dige]” says the host non-ironically.

Eftekhari’s choice of the word “the sender,” ferestande, to refer to herself, with a half-embarrassed laughter, is completely consistent with her identification with the televisual apparatus. It is strictly media jargon, not at all a common word one would use, least so to refer to oneself in an act of apology. She refers to herself as a telecommunicational source. Sadr Ameli reminds her once more, this time with a more
impatient tone, that “the artist” lives in the same society as “the parliamentarian” and there is no ground on which she can separate herself from the artist, nor the artist from “the society.” The image of the artist as not belonging to the society, if not its outright enemy, also finds a central place in the third and last tele-debate concerning “the borders of social cinema and black-presentation,” where Masoud Jafari Jozani, another longtime filmmaker with a penchant for the comic, asks his adversary Bizhan Nowbave, another member of the IPCC, but one who watches films and reminiscent of Yazdi’s discourse in the first debate insists on the necessity of “research” and “expertise” and distancing oneself from “emotions” and the like:

— Excuse me, but what is this expertise of yours [bebakhshid, in takhassos-e shomā chiye]? Why are you so worried? Do you think we are foreigners? All of cinema is the enemy of this country, and you are the only savior and superman [nāji va superman] who have come to save this nation from us bad guys [ādamā-ye bad]?

Politics in the national situation is farcically approaching Hollywood mythology. Let us turn off the television now and go back to our discussion of history. But before leaving the TV room let me tell you one more thing. The emergence of social cinema in Iran is unthinkable without state support. It is a cinema that from its beginning has taken the camera to the society and thus its relation to the state has also been antagonistic. The television/state desire for Hollywood form however emerges at a time when cinema is increasingly privatized, like much else. The camera of social cinema
which in its imagined totality is not separable from the new wave has traditionally been
an outgoing and observing camera. Not very straightforward, not a hidden camera, but
a camera that seeks to bring you to see a story as much as the film tells you a story. The
dominant mode of Iranian cinema that has been weakened in the last decade, not least
by privatization, is not at all heroic.\footnote{The heroic is definitely the dominant mode of Iranian "war cinema," "sinemá-ye jang," which again is not separable from "social cinema" nor entirely from "the new wave," but certainly as a name figures what it names as a more coherent entity than either "social cinema" or "the new wave." However, neither the best of war cinema has been other than social cinema or separate from the new wave, nor what is referred to as social cinema has refrained from addressing the war. War cinema however is much more of a "produced" cinema, much more studio based, definitely more narratively coherent, and much closer to Hollywood form. The heroic in Iranian war cinema however, it has to be noted, is almost always cast in the spirit of "defense" and not "conquest" and its desire for immortality is much more accepting of death than the Hollywood heroic (the official title is "the cinema of holly defense" but it is rarely referred to with that title in everyday speech). Often it is the heroic acceptance of death and a sense of radical altruism that makes the hero's memory immortal, unlike the Hollywood hero that is representative of a desire for physical immortality.} And the demand for a cinema with more "heroes" is another important aspect of the film-critical discourse propagated on *Haft*, and it is part and parcel of the demand for tele-visions of a hopeful future. If I were to be hopeful I'd say it is entirely possible for social cinema to be renewed if the state was to again subsidize the experimental work of emerging artists as it once did. It is the latter that is increasingly improbable. The discourse of the parliamentarian signifies a resistance to experiment. It desires (and (extra)legally enforces) an approach where one already ‘knows’ where one ‘wants to arrive at;' a completely managed process, determined step by step: cultural engineering, calculation of future capital, the de-differentiation of the cultural and the economic:
I will tell you again, maybe, at the end, the sender has had a problem. At any rate, the view is this, that there will be a place to tell us where we want to arrive at in the future, who are our audience, what are our goals, where do we want to go step by step, what is our content, if there is Mr. Sadr Ameli now, how many like him do we have to have in the future, how should they be educated, what should we do? We should enrich this cycle day by day, whatever we have we have to add to our capital

“Siyāhnamāyi” as a bogus political accusation and a keyword of censor emerges from the anxiety of “global appearance” and “one’s” national place on the scale of Civilization. It is stirred by tele-visions of the globe, that is, the world in the process of being de-worlded. It is deployed to censor the light of social cinema and accuses the artist of being an “intellectual.” Separates the “unhappy,” “emotional,” “bitter,” “dark,” “angry,” “critical” intellectual from the society, and in the same move, declares the society as in need of more entertainment and less truth. It wants to manage systemic social distress. It is deployed by a tele-discourse that seeks Hollywood in-formation. An entirely future oriented discourse—and the (desire for the) censor of social cinema as that which intends to bring to social attention the here and now, the everydaily of the society, is thus constitutive of this tele-discourse: it is a denial of the present and a dislocative act that seeks to obstruct cinematic visions that attempt to ground the society in its place, its social space, and instead wishes for and encourages tele-visions of “a hopeful future,” the visions of a savior and a superman. In that, its theology is Historical through and through, denies the prophecies of the black light of social cinema, and
adopts an ahistorical approach to social reality. It seeks a “national form,” it wants to “make a cinema for us that is different from all else,” that has the same national difference as all (disappearing) national cinemas: increasingly American.

A democratic majority in the national situation that frequently appears as “the nation” on the national, social, and corporate media, desires Hollywood form; might even be addicted to it. To win (an award at) the Oscars, is a source of national pride, spent in the campaigns of democracy. The films that have won have also been accused of “siyāhnamāyi,” and attacked in the same campaigns of democracy. But, to win the Oscars is still the game, only with more “heroic and hopeful” films. At the last ceremony of Hollywood form, the two national situations met in the mood of liberal democracy. One gifted its guilt and furious claps to the other, the other gave a protest speech in absentia, but also accepted the gift with the members of the scientific community present in lieu.

Iranian social cinema is not to be understood as a resistance to Hollywood form for itself is increasingly in-formed by Hollywood, and particularly the desire for narrativity and dramatic tension manifest in its move away from what has at times been referred to as a “poetic” cinema. It is perhaps better to understand the resistance of social cinema as a resistance to studio produced phantasy; it seeks to remain out in “the
society.” It is also true that at times social cinema revels in tropes of “the victim” and thus joins the forces of depoliticization as well as “the heroic.”

On the occasion of the first Academy Awards for Iranian cinema, widely celebrated on the social and corporate media, Mohsen Namjoo thanked Asghar Farhadi for winning the Oscars and “breaking the crypt [telesm] of that cinema that showed Iran to the world as a big village full of poor poets who often spoke Kurdish or with some other remote accent, and were devoid of all the existential contradictions of the modern human” (findable on the Internet). The number of films in Kurdish produced in Iran does not exceed the number of one’s fingers.

*(yoriduna ‘an yotefu nur-allāhe be-afwāhehem’)*

*(morq-e hamsāye qāz-e’)*

... la douceur du commerce: the beneficent influence of trade on savage or violent, barbaric mentalities, the introduction of cosmopolitan interests and perspectives, the gradual implantation of the civil among rude peoples (not least those of feudal Europe itself, I may add). Here already we have a conflation of two levels: that of exchange ... with that of human relations and everyday life (as we would now say today)... free enterprise and political democracy ... — democracy — ... Free World ... this particular better mousetrap ... libidinalization of the market,
if I may put it that way—the reason why so many people now feel that this boring and archaic thing is sexy—results from the sweetening of this pill by all kinds of images of consumption as such: the commodity as it were becoming its own ideology, and in what Leslie Slord calls the new transnational “culture-ideology of consumption” changing traditional psychic habits and practices and sweeping all before it into something allegedly resembling the American Way of Life … the habits and addictions of postmodern consumption … —“Notes on Globalization,” 68-9

Yes, we are just barely beginning to conceive of this immense friction. The more it works in favor of an oppressive order, the more it calls forth disorder as well. The more it produces exclusion, the more it generates attraction. It standardizes— –Poetics of Relation, 138

To escape from the immanent fall in the trap of some sublime romantic ideology that is the beginning of all world-historical partition and all national apart-heid (especially in these days of the return of everything existing), the ideology whose famed musical expression would be the famous Ode to Joy, that historical anthem par excellence of humanity and humanism and humanitarianism and all other derivatives of ‘human-,’ it is important to remember as Glissant writes in Poetics of Relation that among other things is a poetic analysis of standardization, that “sensibilities have already been diverted widely by these processes of exchange,” and “Standardization of taste is ‘managed’ by industrial powers.” In other words, we are historically standardized humans and it is not possible to hear the 9th symphony (or see Hollywood films for that

142 Glissant, Poetics of Relation, 148.
matter) with nonhistorical ears as it were. We are condemned to love it or to hate it, it is our predicament, the humanitarian music of de-worlding, and the point may be sounding it, so maybe it would be possible to hear it as music.

Near the closing of the long parenthesis on the significance of Gatt and Nafta agreements (but the parenthesis cannot be said to close until the end of the essay), Jameson puts the point of standardization this way: “The point is therefore that, alongside the free market as an ideology, the consumption of the Hollywood film form is the apprenticeship to a specific culture, to an everyday life as a cultural practice: a practice of which commodified narratives are the aesthetic expression, so that the populations in question learn both at the same time.”143 We have to understand this at a very fundamental level, where the economical and the cultural are not at all separate or separable. Let’s say, at the level of the production of living labor, the production of homo laborans, taking full note that homo laborans is as modern a conception of “the human” as any other species of the binominal nomenclature of “human.” And to prevent any spiritualist confusions before going further, let us state the obvious: this is as fully a “cultural” process as a “corporeal” process. Of course, we are talking about “sensibilities” as well as things “sweet” and “sexy.” So this world-historical apprenticeship to a global standard of “life” is also the acquisition of a standard “body.”

In other words, all global “lifestyles” are global “bodystyles.” (Remember scr and the making of “life,” and remember terror and the reduction to abandoned “body.” And remember the ‘geopolitical distribution of corporeal vulnerability,’ the geopolitical distribution of the body of Christ).

Let us begin with the process of the postmodern apprenticeship of homo laborans into a standard life and a standard body: say, the process of standardization as becoming homo economicus + homo culturalis; or homo modernus, the human as global-historical body-mind composite: homo racialis laborans, subject to both political-economic and political-symbolic exterior determination: subject to theogico-political exterior determination. And another statement of the obvious to prevent confusion (or hopefully to bring it about): it should be clear that “white” is a race and thus “Europeans” are as colonized, and in fact more mentally colonized, given the work that has not been done in this field, than all the colonized. In other words, we humans live (in) a colonial world; in Jameson’s words: “a very persuasive view that I think many of us, particularly in the Unites States, tend to share unconsciously and practically to the degree to which we are ourselves the recipients of the new world culture.” So, capitalism and colonialism are not unrelated, neither are capitalist culture and colonial-ist culture (call it “imperialist” if that’s found more historically accurate); obvious enough.
So, to go back to the topic: the current process of apprenticeship of *homo laborans* into a standard life and a standard body, in other words, the postmodern process of humanization, begins for the most part right as the human enters our de-worlded world. “In countries in which imports reign, childhood is the first deportee,” is how Glissant puts it in 1990.144 Resounding, in 1998 Jameson remembers “A great Indian filmmaker” who “once described the ways in which the gestures and the allure of walking of his teenage son were modified by watching American television,” adding that “: one supposes that his ideas and values were also modified.”145 Forgetting the one way flow of such modifications (that is, global assimilation and the obliteration of Diversity in the world, or standardization) for the sake of the argument, that in itself shouldn’t really be a problem. Children and mimesis—that’s as old as it gets. The question is, what values and ideas, what bodies are we globally acquiring, what are we being modified into? Let me tell you a related story, a related “:,” when I took notice one day of a mother who was teaching her child that he was entitled to a seat and didn’t need to give up his seat for an elder to sit. It made me think how this was part and parcel of the same process of the acquisition of a standard bodystyle that manifests itself in that truly obnoxious, cruel, and increasingly standard demand of new parents that the elders don’t “bother” their children by hugging, squeezing, pinching, and kissing them. What is happening

---

with these new styles of middle class parenting is fundamentally the cruel bestowal on
the children of a body of their own, their antisocialization into standard non-obliged
beings, say, their in-corporation into free democratic subjectivity by demanding the
erasure of the everyday sweet violence of society. And what is this if not the cultural
obliteration of the fiduciary without which nothing like “society” is ever thinkable? It
is absolutely certain, objectively and with the testimony of the senses, that ideas and
values are as much corporeal as semantic (and that is one thing that “tradition” means,
or meant, before it was historically translated to “tradition” ‘as corpus mirabiliorium’)—
that is a (self-evident) truth.

Then let us take note that in 2017 touchscreens are not only emerging as a new
toy for the newborns (a most effective pacifier), but also as a most effective and insidious
technology of global childhood and adult deportation to the world of Christian tele-
media. It is a long time in the North, and a considerably shorter time in the South, that
children for the most part have been effectively separated and taken away from the
allies and the street—a primary site of socialization—and deported to the house where
they are increasingly stuck to screens, directly connected to tele-Christianitas, globally
consuming the same images and games. In this sense the new standardization is the

146 That society or community is unthinkable without the fiduciary is a recurrent theme in many of Derrida’s
works that I have referred to in this text.
global production of the tele-human, *homo tele-visalis* if you like. Global childhood deportation to the PLANET OF THE NEW MEDIA.

For Glissant “standardization” is inseparable from “generalization.” Indeed “negativity is used to punish any production that does not consent to international standardization or conform to the generalizing universal.” In *Poetics of Relation* standardization emerges as a violent and intimate absorption in and adoption of a generalized universal that never ceases to generate rebellion against itself. Standardization is the result of a dislocative ‘affective diversion’ “by the processes and products of international exchange, either consented to or imposed.” At a fundamental level, the desire for standardization, when expressed from the periphery of the globe, is a desire for shortening the distance with the center that responds to the central desire for their absorption and obliteration. It is an enforced desire for relation with the elsewhere of ‘diverted sensibilities’ that generates attraction by producing exclusion. Products of international exchange are “products bearing an intense relational charge, such as Coca-Cola, wheat bread, or dairy butter,” or American film and television, and “it will not be easy to get anyone to replace” them “with yams, breadfruit, or a revived production of madou, mabi, or any other ‘local’ products,” like poetic cinema for example.147 In

Jameson’s words they have become their own ideology, sweetened and made sexy.

Iranian social cinema is a good example here, as is the fruit produced by Iranian farmers.

I did tell you the other day that there is four times more fruit in the country than needed and it is the domestic farmer’s fruit that rots away. The state of course refrains from regulating the importation of fruit. It does not sit well with the general will to privatize. It is indeed a dilemma whether the imported fruit is “imported” or “trafficked.” And a “dilemma,” not only because of the massive amount of fruit that is trafficked, but also because it is trafficked through official channels, the same channels through which all import comes in—how else could such an amount of any perishable product be trafficked? There is as usual a legal loophole that allows the constant flow of imported fruit to the market. Every now and then some fruit might be confiscated and extinguished. There are only four kinds of fruit—tropical ones—that are legally imported. All else is trafficked and none are “new” fruits (but all are new)—all that is trafficked grows domestically too. However there is still no reason why the imported fruit shouldn’t rot and the domestic importer pay the price instead of the domestic farmer.

It was not long ago, more or less a decade, that the problem of imported fruit became a matter of public debate. In the beginning imported fruit was much more expensive than domestic fruit, but also much more shiny. Not infrequently it came
packaged. Packaged fruit was itself a novelty of sorts, but also these were themselves new packages, plastic, and also “chic,” shik, nothing like the disfigured cardboard boxes of dates, that traditionally packaged fruit, that made you lick your hands after holding them. So there emerged also counterfeit “imported” fruit: domestically produced and put in imported packages. Imported fruit was often bought for special occasions, not just your everyday fruit. No reflection on imported fruit can disregard the matter of “appearance” in all its semantic valences. It is a commonplace that the imported fruit is not as “sweet,” as “tasty,” as the domestic fruit, but it certainly “looks better.” It is firm, without blemish, and often more sizable than the domestic counterpart. Out of season availability is another advantage of imported fruit that has turned from a surprise to an expectation and also brought about the out of season availability of industrially preserved domestic fruit. Its true secret however is (at least was, when it began flooding the market) the little sticker that not infrequently could still be noticed on the fruit after it was washed and put in a dish on the table: commodity as its own ideology. Later on it certainly became more “classy” to take the sticker off. You can imagine how the desire for imported fruit gradually took over the market and imported fruit became trafficked fruit and then it was not more expensive than domestic fruit anymore but it still remained more shiny, and the way of import or traffic was opened more and more and then imported fruit could even be cheaper, and domestic fruit absolutely lost the
competition, to the point of rotting away, sometimes even on the trees, even not worth picking, and in a few cases it is now the domestic fruit that has turned into luxury fruit.

Banana however is another story. It is a traditionally imported fruit, a luxury fruit two decades ago and perhaps the only one with a sticker at the time. Nowadays one hears more ambiguous feelings about bananas. I heard it said one time a few years ago “the bananas these days, they taste like raw potato.” In the national situation banana has at times been referred to as an “enigma,” because it tends to be as cheap as the cheap domestic fruit these days. It mostly comes from Africa. It is asked in the media how is it that bananas come all this way by the sea and the land, are sold for many times more that they were bought at the origin and yet remain so cheap, how is it that we can’t “manage” to produce our own domestic fruit for cheaper? The real dilemma of imported fruit, its apparent mystery, is its sweet, sexy appearance.

When Mir Hossein Mousavi ran for president in 2009, in that now-(in)famous election, regulation of the imports and the promise of agricultural support was central to his campaign. He talked a good deal about agriculture, particularly import of grains but also fruit, and also villagers, rustāyiān, and nomads, ‘ashāyer, as important workers and producers in the national situation. The domestic farmer, more literally “the native farmer, keshāvarz-e bumi,” and “domestic/native agriculture,” where central to his speech. These were not issues that came to public attention with his campaign, but they
were important elements of his discourse—at the end he did come from the time of the heyday of the “jahād of construction.”

Imported fruit, domestic agriculture, the native farmer, and recently more increasingly the shantytown-dweller—hāshiye-neshin, literally ‘margin-sitter’—appear not infrequently on the national media and hyper-frequently in election times. The two dominant currents of democratic political power make different uses of them; but also imported fruit remains trafficked fruit, and sells better than the non-imported kind (domestic grains are definitely luxury grains, particularly domestic rice, the most consumed grain). These days no government seems willing to support the domestic agriculture in any real way and the population that sits on the margins is growing more and more.

The question related to our inquiry into la douceur du commerce in its relation to standardization and democracy, standardization of politics and the acquisition of a sweet tooth (of the eye) here in this section, is how is it that the democratic force that was mobilized in an election and its aftermath in which native agriculture and the domestic farmer were important topics, never picked up the question of imported fruit and the discourse of the native farmer in any meaningful way. Indeed domestic agriculture and the native farmer completely disappeared in the protests that ensued and their massive mediations.
The main thing asked for in the protests was “my vote,” signifying the political demand for (liberal) “democracy.” National television was also an important trope of the protests, where it appeared in the streets as the “lying media” because not much of what happened in the street appeared on it and much else did (such as courts of law, later on). The street however suffered no lack of appearance on the satellite television and the Internet. There was also “a sacrifice to a secular mind” that happened in the street and kept happening online. I am not going to directly engage this issue here. We have had the TV on for too long. Let’s do history instead. Not least because here there is no difference between history and news: we are in the realm of “the history of the present,” “lived experience of … political life,” and “the ways … history continues to color political memory and animate social life”¹⁴⁸—say, we are in post-modernity, in the time of the historical reduction to the body, biopolitics of the instant, and tele-theology of planetary mediation.

The political demand for “democracy” in Iran is historically associated with the question of “secularism” (surprise!) and also the political demand for it. The question of democracy as well as its political pursuit in this national situation is historically inseparable from the question of secularism and its pursuit. What follows should not be

read as a rejection of all political calls for secular rule in Iran. If what is meant by a political call for “secular rule” is the negation of “religious discrimination” (which is tantamount to saying the negation of modernity) we all have to call for that. But that is not at all a clear issue. So instead let us remain with the question of secularism in its global-historical relation to democracy and our inquiry into the sweet appearance of imported fruit.

The democratic call for secularism in the 2009 protests that came to call itself the Green Movement manifested itself in the streets most forcefully in two slogans: “neither Gaza nor Lebanon / may my life, jān, be sacrificed, fadā, for Iran,” and “our race, nasl, is Aryan, āriyā / religion, din, and politics, siyāsat, are separate.” Secularism appeared in the streets as the desire for nationalist sacrifice, and race as the logic of the separation of religion and politics. We are at a historical crossroad. It is History speaking here. History is the translator of jān to jān, fadā to fadā, nasl to nasl, din to din, siyāsat to siyāsat, and philology, Orientalism, the cross on the road, the inventor of āriyā, and the coiner of “world religions,” such as Judaism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Mazdaism, Manicheism, Islamism (this one has had many names, some even without an ‘-ism,’ but its emerging liberal name is certainly “Sufism”), and also Secularism (and this one is both the negation of “world religions” and their mistaken identification with “religion” which as you know used to be the name of vera religio Christianity). At this crossroad, here, there
is no difference between history and Christian revelation. These are however bitter issues I’ve kept, I’m trying to keep, for section P, but they come up all the time, as bitter things tend to do. Anyway, I don’t want to change the taste of your mouth here now that we are talking about sweetness (though this bitterness is inseparable from the question of sexiness, but let that be till section C). What concerns our inquiry into standardization, democracy, and the sweet tooth of the eye, here in section H, is that unlike the domestic farmer that quickly disappeared in the democratic mist of the post-election protests, the domestic Aryan has remained an important democratic figure and his discourse, even if in disguise, is increasingly more funded and politically used in the national situation.

The discourse of the Aryan has always been present on the Persian satellite TV channels mostly produced in Los Angeles. Its official domestic revival however, was first and foremost funded and massively mobilized for the News-Historical resuscitation of the Persian identity by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his second government (his vice-president Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei in particular), right after he was accused of rigging the elections by Mousavi (who had also accused him of lying before the elections and also spoke of the domestic farmer), as well as by the same protesters who called for Aryan secularism. Ahmadinejad’s second government was responsible for bringing the so-called Cylinder of Cyrus from the British Museum to Iran for the second time, after
Mohammad Reza Pahlavi who called himself “the King of Kings, the Sun of the Aryans,” shāhanshāh āriyāmehr. Ahmadinejad also called this ancient Babylonian, British museumed, newly Persianized cylinder “the first charter of human rights.” The Persian identity since then, even though “officially” more “correctly” as it is said in American, has indeed come to enjoy much political attention in the national situation where both opposing dominant currents of democratic power resort to the modern and newly revived Persian identity for the same reason: getting votes. It is a strictly democratic issue. This amount of NEWS-HISTORY-NEWS suffices for the purpose of our inquiry at this point.

The question therefore is what is the desire for “secular (liberal) democracy” that shows itself as News-Historical-Social cathexis on a racialized object belonging to the British Museum, and turns the population away from the fruit rotting away on the trees and the domestic farmer losing more and more to the domestic importer? The News-Historical-Democratic will that was mobilized in 2009 has since invested its hope two more times in the domestic reformist on whose platform Mousavi had also ran, and to whom he belonged too, even if more marginally. However, the domestic reformist these days is more and more the domestic neoliberal. He calls for opening the way for “foreign capital” and particularly encourages “the tourist industry” that promises to make the situation better for the non-tourists too. Significantly, the domestic reformist
has coined the word “Iranophobia,” irānharāsi, to refer to what in English is called “Islamophobia” thus mystifying the real global problem for its own national democratic use.

So once more, what is the desire for “secular (liberal) democracy,” what is secular liberal democratic desire that appears as News-Historical cathexis of the demos on a racialized object belonging to the British Museum and turns away the population from the fruit rotting away on the trees and the domestic farmer losing everyday more and more to the domestic importer? What is secular liberal democracy that leaves no way for the domestic farmer but to leave the cracked, dried up soil of waterless villages to live in shantytowns near-in big cities? What is the relation of secular liberal democratic desire in this national situation with defunding agriculture, cutting state support from villages, forgetting the devastating crisis of water, leaving trees to dry up, and instead erecting more standard skyscrapers on the soil of big cities? The answer lies in a series of (news-)historical questions: What is the relation of secular liberal democratic desire with that early twentieth century mass murder and sedentarization of nomads who weren’t easy to domesticate, that early twentieth century well-nigh obliteration of nomadism by Reza Pahlavi, the father of “the Sun of Aryans” and the “great modernizer” of the national situation? What is the relation between murdering nomads and the anxiety of global appearance? How should “we” appear to
“Europeans,” those “real Aryans,” those not “invaded” by “Arabs,” those whose language doesn’t have “Semitic” words? With or without nomads? With or without veiled women? With or without Pahlavi hats? With or without ties? With or without turbans? With or without beards? How should we appear in general, on a daily basis? With “big” noses or with plastic surgery? With black or blond hair? With our own eyes or with colored contacts? Do they look at us when we protest? When we reform? When we become more and more like them? Why do they prefer to look at us only when we are “religious”? Why do “we” always appear as a veiled woman in the media and on book covers? Why does ‘a sacrifice to a secular mind’ go viral on the social and corporate Christian tele-media? Why is it so appealing to watch? Is it sexy? Is it sweet? Is it suckular?151

Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, perhaps the only historian to have taken up the question of race and the Aryan discourse in Iran in a meaningful way rightly contextualizes the rarely talked about sedentarization and murder of nomads in the context of the anxiety of appearance and next to the much talked about issue of sartorial reforms. See, Zia-Ebrahimi, The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism. I will come back to this book in section P.

Iran has one of the highest rates of plastic surgery, particularly nose jobs in the world. The 2005 documentary Nose, Iranian Style by Mehrad Oskouei is an interesting place to see the problem. The models in the surgeon’s catalogues it turns out are exclusively white. Of all the surgeons and patients that the filmmaker interviews only one surgeon who is aware that this is indicative of a racial desire. The majority of the mostly young adults who undergo these surgeries wish to be more sexually appealing. The high rate of nose jobs has been persistently explained by appealing to the obligatory veiling. It is a commonplace to say that the reason for the very high rate of plastic surgeries is that the only thing women can “show” is their face. This is a triple obfuscation, one, because there are as many men who undergo these surgeries as women; two, because many women who veil of their own will also undergo these surgeries, and three, because such statement is simply founded on a misunderstanding of the everyday working of sexual desire and attractions in the Iranian society.

Cf. “Because like us Christians, secular, suckular, or otherwise, he cannot consume or commune without there being at the same time a sacrifice, a murder, an identification.” Larry Rickels, Vampire Lectures, cited in Anidjar, Blood, 201. A related question is, how is it that the discipline called “Iranian studies,” a discipline almost entirely in English, mostly based in the United States, and a discipline whose main question has been Iranian modernity has so massively avoided addressing the question of race? One could not ask this latter question of scholars in Iran because even though they too have been largely preoccupied with the question of modernity, they could not
The new standard suckular neoliberal democratic desire is the desire at once for free enterprise and political democracy that shows itself as news-historical-antisocial cathexis on a cylinder belonging to the British Museum and turns away the population’s political intention from the fruit rotting away on the trees where they live, and makes disappear the domestic farmer losing everyday more and more to the domestic importer daily taking bigger gulps of the sweet global *jus du commerce*. The answer lies in the “enigma” of the banana. And the answer lies in the ‘chronotope of the indigenous,’ the acquisition of history as becoming indigenous to modernity. So, remember double modern dislocation, double orientation toward philologically invented hypothetical roots and a fantastic Christian future increasingly realized (which is here the same as virtualized) through deportation to Tele-Christianitas. The answer in short is that the nation believes in History (this most modern source of meaning); in other words, in what Francis Fukuyama calls “the end of history.”

---

have had access to the enormous library of the studies of race; neither is race a topic that is discussed in any meaningful sense in the Persian language. But the only explanation for the lack of the study of race by the students of Iranian Studies particularly in American universities, where they mostly are, and where the question of race is consistently debated, is that the students of Iranian studies have *actively avoided* the question of race. The problem is most manifest in the almost total unthinking embrace of “Persianness” by the scholars in this field, and the ideological (in the derogatory sense) “secularism” of this discipline, for the problematic of race in Iranian modernity is nowhere as manifest as in the question of “religion” as the emergence of the above slogans in the streets clearly indicates. And let us not forget that many Iranian intellectuals who write in English and did talk and write quite a good deal about the 2009 protests, actively tried to explain away the slogan “neither Gaza, nor Lebanon” by issuing useless apologetics rather than trying to understand where it really came from.
What has been lost is the possibility of strike. I am not speaking of a worker’s strike here, but precisely social strike, the other side of social revolution. And this shouldn’t really be hard to imagine in this particular national situation. This incapacity to (imagine) strike has everything to do with the obliteration of the (fiduciary in the) society. If national public education is a good indicator of national historical memory, then we have to agree that social strike is not at all hard to think of in Iran—a country with two revolutions in its modern history. I cannot imagine mentioning “the tobacco boycott” and getting a what-are-you-talking-about look from the majority of those eligible to vote in the democratic majority. Not to mention the national news-memory and another discourse of boycott that comes around every election season, “the boycott of the elections.” However, today to talk of a total boycott of imported fruit, a social strike against the capitalist labor/pleasure of consumption is outright ridiculous in Iran, as is the total boycott of anything imported. Why? This is not because fruit is more pleasurable or addictive than tobacco, not to mention that one could still eat all the fruit one wishes, just less sexy ones that are even said to be sweeter. This is rather because the domestic democratic majority has developed very sweet teeth of the eyes and it doesn’t seek justice in any meaningful way, rather it seeks “freedom” (all kinds of it), and “democracy,” precisely a “better” mousetrap that’s not worth two cents. So from a global perspective, that is the perspective of the geopolitical distribution of the body of
Christ, the democratic majority in this national situation seeks to separate itself from “Gaza and Lebanon” and join the forces of the global separatists. The democratic majority exercises its power supporting a politics of outright absorption in neoliberal racial-capitalist “free” market. At any rate what I am suggesting to translate as “social strike” here is *nehzat-e tahrim*:


*Nehzat-e tahrim-e tanbāku* however, these days on Wikipedia is translated as “The Persian Tobacco Protest.” This is a news-historical translation. ‘The movement of/for the boycott of tobacco’ would be a straightforward translation. So, *nehzat-e tahrim*: ‘uprising of sanction’ would be an “up-to-date,” “sensational” translation. ‘Movement of boycott’

---

152 Unless specified otherwise all Persian lexical entries are cited in translation and transliteration from Ali Akbar Dehkhodā, *Loqatnāme-ye Dehkhodā*, chief eds., Mohammad Mo’in and Ja’far Shahidi, Tehran: Tehran University Publications, 1998, New Edition. Hereafter I will mention the volume and page number only in the text. I am infinitely thankful to my mother Soghra Rostami Jalilian for accepting the trouble of looking these words up for me, taking pictures, and sending them to me with her usual unusual kindness.
would be a good translation. ‘Divestment’ is also a very good translation of *tahrīm* under capitalism. ‘Migration of boycott,’ ‘the travelling of sanction,’ ‘standing up and intending to forbid,’ ‘mobilization to pronounce unlawful,’ these are all possible translations. Yet, my heart is with ‘social strike,’ because capitalist consumption at this point in news-history is a work we do for upholding this system. It is precisely where there is no difference between work and leisure. It is the meeting point of the cultural and the economic: the everyday work-leisure of “living labor,” the global reproduction of *homo laborans pricarius*.

We have to think of (imagining) social strike. If there is any possibility of destroying capitalism and ending its crisis, if there is any way out of CC, it is in our capacity to socially strike. We have to exit a tradition of consumption and cultivate a forbidding tradition of anti-capital(ist) strike. There is no use in thinking of this as any sort of asceticism or “ethical” consumer politics. Rather, we have to think of it, speak of it, and engage in it as global social war against NEWS-HISTORY/CC. We have to locate the beating hearts of late capitalist image-consumption and tele-humanization and strike. Imagine a total boycott of Facebook. A social strike against Amazon. Bringing books back to the streets. Bringing absolute bankruptcy to Google. Total sanction against American television and all international corporate media. A public migration from Instagram. Leaving all state functionaries and presidents alone to tweet at each other till
their fingers foam. I will give a social-fiction plot for such strikes at the end of this section. As for now, believe it or not, this is my two cents, you might think it is idiotic (so do I): today, more than any time, we need anti-capitalist clerics and shouting intellectuals. We need to declare war against capitalism and for that we need the ‘music of thought’ (this most beautiful phrase of Glissant’s). We need a rude attack on Civilization. A ruthless destruction of all commercial appearance to renew the sweetness of exchange and everyday relations—the sweet violence of obligation.

(f.) “To oppose the disturbing affective standardization of peoples,” Glissant writes, “it is necessary to renew the visions and aesthetics of relating to the earth.”153

Note that “renew” is not at all the same as “new,” let alone “radically new” or “New.” What is “necessary,” is renewing what is already there, say a world, that is being eroded, de-worlded, its music being mute-screened, by the forces of (that also means the desire for) standardization, at once violent and intimate: “free” enterprise and “political” democracy, global war and global pacification (and humanitarian all-inclusive fraternization around the cult of the victim). At once sacrificing on a global scale according to a historically determined geopolitical distribution of corporeal vulnerability and mercifully attempting to save “the most vulnerable,” mourning each chosen hyper-mediatised murder four or five days on the social and corporate suckular

153 Glissant, Poetics of Relation, 148.
media. Sacrificing and raising the global standard of life: asymptotically approaching equal temperament. Asymptotically, because the tuning shall continue permanently: perpetual peace.

The movement of generalization is a progression toward post-Enlightenment “Europe,” the direction of the Christian future (toward which as you remember the native is already oriented disoriented by hypothetical roots); and the cultural as we have discussed is not only not (anymore) separable from the economic, but also has been turned into a weapon for the destruction of the possibility of exchange: standardization on the scale of globality: pyramidal globalization: globalatinization: tele-Christianization aka AMERICANIZATION.

This is consumerism as such, the very linchpin of our economic system, and also the mode of daily life in which our mass culture and entertainment industries train us ceaselessly day after day, in an image and media barrage quite unparalleled in history.154

As we have seen through the examples of Iranian cinema, agriculture, and democracy (that allegedly resembles politics), the global expansion of consumerism and the apprenticeship into a daily practice (allegedly resembling a “way of life”) expresses itself in the so-called Third World, the South, or whatever other name one wishes to give to those parts of ‘our global neighborhood’ that are not particularly white and Christian,

154 Jameson, “Notes on Globalization,” 64.
as an unquenchable and unthinking desire for consumer products, in other words, for the marketed image of sweet and sexy, be that Hollywood form, stickers and plastic wrappings, political democracy, or historical cylinders. “In rich nations,” writes Glissant,

in which imports are balanced with more or less difficulty by exports and in which, consequently, foreign goods offered for consumption are exchanged more or less indirectly against local production, it is easier to maintain equilibrium between the levels. The international product has a less severe impact on sensibilities; “desire” for it is not so implacable. In poor countries any appeal for self-sufficiency grounded solely in economics and good sense is doomed to failure. Good sense is of no consequence in the tangle of world Relation. Sensibilities have become so profoundly contaminated in most cases and the habit of material comfort is so well established, even in the midst of the greatest poverty, that political dictates or proclamations are inadequate remedies. Here, as elsewhere, one must figure out how much we have to consent to the planetary evolution toward standardization of consumer products … and how much we should push for invention and a new sensibility in association with "national" products.

This is where the imagination and expression of an aesthetics of the earth—freed from quaint naïveté, to rhizome instead throughout our cultures’ understanding—become indispensable.155


155 Glissant, Poetics of Relation, 149.
etc. etc. There is no end to this list. When I was travelling to the United States (really, America), for the first time, a family member sat next to me to say those last goodbye phrases for which you need to sit next to someone. He slapped my thigh and said, half-jokingly and half-sadly, “heeeeeey... remember me when you go there and drink that original Fanta!” We laughed and of course I couldn’t forget that when I was going back for the first time. So I bought an orange Fanta, for no other flavor would do, especially for him. It wasn’t allowed on the plane. On the last leg of my flight from Frankfurt, I asked for an orange Fanta on the plane. It was a smaller can, so I couldn’t lie, and I had to tell him that I had gotten it on a German plane and it wasn’t directly from America. We mixed and shared the little can of Fanta, with ice. But a can of Fanta from a German plane is never the same as one directly from the American soil. This is while the same exact product is available in Iran with the label in Arabic letters. And my relative was older than the revolution and had had “original” Fanta before the revolution, so he knew well that they all tasted the same. The unmistakable emphasis of the desire for saccharine sweetness, however, was not at all on fântā, but on asl, “original,” the same word that also appears on the labels in Arabic letters. ‘Good sense is of no consequence in the tangle of world Relation.’ The desire for standard consumer products is unmistakably a charged desire for relation with the elsewhere of that desire.
Remember the chronotope of the indigenous. The indigenized is uprooted from where he is and can only desire more uprootedness, more modernization, more standardization, more and more *douceur du commerce*. We have seen this in all the examples discussed here. The indigenized is not precisely in place, but in the nation-space, that is to say, the fantastic spatial appearance of historical time. This is perfectly clear in the example of social cinema, when the state attempts to block the observational camera of the social filmmaker that is invested by a desire to absorb the light of the everyday social and political appearance of the national situation in place, and instead provide the national cinema with a projectile camera invested by a desire to project the fantasy of a hopeful future and provide the nation with heroic spectacles (Hollywood “with our own values”). The consumerist native is not even strictly speaking on the earth and this is very much manifest in the example of imported fruit and agriculture in general.

(s.) Consumer desire takes a different form in the white and Christian North (which *sensu lato* could be said to include Northern Tehran too, for example, but let us remain within the logic of national situations, with the reminder that “global” is always global). Food from the former colonies has a special place in European hearts. Indonesian and Surinamese food in the Netherlands are good examples of this, but the Moroccan food joints remain much less frequented by the Dutch. Food from all over the
world however is not at all difficult to come by in the streets of the small big cities of Holland but to go eat a particular ethnic or nationally defined food is not really a pastime in this national situation. When you enter Leiden on a train, you enter Steinstraat. Some call it Gaza Strip. It is one of the few busy streets of the city. There are stores all along, and the only store to make long distance phone calls. Beyond a few other scattered joints, Steinstraat is the only place to eat after eight or nine. Three food joints stay open till late. At least they did, a few years ago. They are Kurds, Turks, and Arabs. The street has been named Gaza Strip by the white Dutch. That is, I only heard it named that way by the white Dutch. I lived on Steinstraat the first year. If it came up in a conversation, someone might have said, ah, you know, it’s called Gaza Strip. The first time I asked why? I thought it was named in solidarity. He said because of all the immigrants. I didn’t think it was strange at all. It sounded very innocent. Like a joke you make to a friend. I was an immigrant too, at least I thought of myself that way. It happened a few more times, that it would come up and someone would say, ah you know… I’d say, yeah, I’ve heard it. I realized what the name meant after the second year when Geert Wilders and his Partij voor de Vrijheid won a good number of seats in the parliament. “The immigrants” were perceived to be “many.” The presence of three “immigrant” food joints and the call store were enough to turn Steinstraat to Gaza Strip. I never knew where the family who owned the call store were from. They were African
Muslims, and we spoke English. They perhaps knew most of the non-European immigrants; it was certainly cheaper to call home from there than from a Dutch cell phone. I don’t know but I think all the Gazans were Dutch.

The Saturday market’s early afternoon is as most lively as it gets, more lively than the late evening bar. In Leiden all of Leiden is there. When it is sunny there isn’t enough room to throw a needle. Finding a place to lock your bike is a hassle. The market is on the two sides of a canal. It has been there for a long time, from before capitalism. It has moved a little up and down, but it is still there, twice a week, just as the canal, every day. The Dutch like to remind you of how old things are. Everything is certainly cheaper than the supermarket, rarely anything is packaged, there is fruit with blemish, the smell of fish takes over the street, and the vendors shout and call the customers forth. You can also eat there. There is fried fish, and raw herring too, you have to swallow it with onions, lemon, and salt. It is still difficult to swallow. Arabs and Turks sell nuts and sweets in bulk, dried fruit and olive, feta, dates, mint, pepper, sometimes tomatoes and cucumbers. Cheese other than feta is Dutch business, smaller stands, but the cheese is much denser, much more difficult to cut, and it comes in perfect slices, wrapped in paper. Two stands I remember, the vendors were often much older, with white hairs, and if they saw you wondering, they’d tell you about the cheese, give you a little taste. And there are flowers. In bunch or single stems, all sorts. When it’s the season, there are
tulips in all colors. Red tulips are always the most beautiful and pussy willows the most medicinal. Leave a bunch in the corner of the room and the coy scent takes over overnight. Musk willow, bid-meshk, they are called in Persian. Avicenna wrote that smelling them is cure for headache in his Qānun. A teacher of mine used to remind us that Ibn Sina named his book of medicine Qānun and his book of philosophy Shefā: The Law in Medicine, from the Greek kanon, ‘measuring rod, standard,’ from the Hebrew qaneh (Arabic qanaḥ), Assyrian qanu, Sumerian gin, ‘reed, cane’; and The Book of Healing, philosophy, healing for the soul. Pussy willow flowers are the best quencher of thirst in the heat of summer noons, mixed with sugar, water, and herb-Sophia, Descurainia Sophia, Sophia Chirurgorum, flixweed, tansy mustard, khākshi, or khākshir in Persian and Kurdish, not that easy to find in the West. In the spring you have to wait around for flowers as long as fish. I bet you couldn’t leave that market without fish and flower. You can always get by in most places in Holland only speaking English. But at the market, you better know at least some Dutch. You can still get away with English, but the trade is certainly sweeter in Dutch. Turkish and Arabic can help too.

In Leiden, there are three cinemas. Two of them show Hollywood films, mostly, if not almost exclusively, and in the evenings they are not very empty, when the popular films come they get full. It is interesting how popular films are already “popular” before having been seen. The small, delicious, quaint Kijkhuis but frequently shows films to
audiences of less than ten. It is half-hidden in a little back alley that opens to a courtyard
with bars and restaurants. Kijkhuis is funded by a special program for the arts and has a
discount for students. It is the only of the three cinemas that frequently shows non-
Hollywood films, including some Dutch films and American independents. Kijkhuis is a
place you go to be embraced, in the dark of cinema and the light of film. Even if the film
doesn’t end up being that good, the place always is.

Ah, dear … America, America... The United State is a different story. Here, eating
food and especially “foreign” food is elevated to a national hobby of sorts. One more
than often refers to food with a national adjective. You say for example, “let’s have
Chinese tonight,” “there is this really good Indian place,” “what about Ethiopian?” “I
really like Thai,” “I prefer Mexican,” “let’s go to the new Italian place,” “have you been
to the new Japanese place?” There is also “the African place,” “the Mediterranean
place,” “the dinner,” “the taco truck,” and “soul food.” More or less strict divisions are
made between “the authentic” and otherwise. The borders of “authenticity” are perhaps
most severely maintained in the case of Mexican food. Willingness to eat “foreign” food
(and this doesn’t really include European food), to “try” everything “new” could also be
said to be an ambiguous source of cultural prestige and a sign of “openness” to “other”
cultures. “The foody” is certainly an American figure. There is also food activism, food
consciousness raising, the farm to table movement, food blogging, food journalism, fair-
trade food, healthy food, junk food, food deserts, photographic food shared in very large quantities on the social-corporate media, food truck rodeo, deep fried everything at the state fair, and also the “farmer’s” market which in Durham, for example, is a total luxury affair, a sort of communal simulation of another mode of production, and a very polite space. They close very early and everything is more expensive than the supermarket.

The Lexington Market in Baltimore is another story. It is an indoor market. The light and the hum inside are reminiscent of so many markets with covered roofs. If you go on a Saturday there is music. Good music. I was there only for a few hours and it happened to be a Saturday. We ended up there by a medical accident of sorts. I was visiting a friend with another friend and it is said that raw oysters are good cure for hung over. Lexington market is a lively place, opens your heart just as you enter. It is not older than capitalism, of course, we are in the New World, but much older than late capitalism. It is not a luxury resemblance of a market, and it is there every day. Port cities all over the world have a similar smell and a resonant vibe. For me they are reminiscent of childhood—even the handle of the door was a fish … two handles, on each side, two fish at the door, you’d open one of them only for a car. At the Lexington Market, there is fried fish and potatoes too, and of course, the medicine we sought. Raw oysters are even more difficult to swallow than raw herring. You have to down it with
the force of the hot sauce. Lucky my friends liked them, they had convinced me to “try” it in the first place, it really helps with the headache they said, and it is delicious too, you have to try. They finished them up. I won’t tell you anything about Royal Street in New Orleans. But if you ever go to America, don’t don’t go to New Orleans.

In two apartments I have rented in America, my landlords left me special catalogues introducing me to places to eat in the city. There is also The Food Film Festival, a whole cluster of food films on the different Internet television platforms, and also food porn, the only kind of porn that is widely shared on the social-mediatized public scene. Foreigners in America would recognize a particular problem as “American” very easily: if you are out with friends and decide to go eat, the decision making process could be a torturous one. One foreign friend once put it this way, “as if it is more about the food than the gathering.” Cinemas that show other than Hollywood films still tend to be the good smaller ones (in American standards of course) and are more than frequently somewhat empty. They show foreign films and American independents too.

There is also democracy in America, yes, there is democracy in America, a whole lotta freedom. At least, it is said so. In the United States, depending on your income of course, you can consume the whole world. Willingness to do so could even be a cultural value, among the humanitarian in particular, who also particularly care about the
elections and freedom of speech. Yet not bombing the religious and the unenlightened never becomes a democratic demand in America. Americans are generally oblivious of their government’s involvement in international warfare. They know that their government is at war, but it is just normal. I have seen two elections here. I have watched them on the television with Americans, often with highly educated ones, mostly Christian whites, mostly considered “leftists” and/or “liberals” in the United States (in America the two are combinable). I have listened to their debates, very heated debates, yet they never thought their government’s leadership of international warfare was deserving of debate too. “Foreign policy” remains foreign to American democratic self-understanding. If someone around brings it up, right there at the scene, at the television, the response could be silence, apologetics, less so joking admission that “yeah, this is America” (chuckles), or rarely a reminder about the “reality” of terrorist threats and the importance of national security. You see, I know most Americans I know through the university. Those who have reminded me of the “reality” of terrorism, I knew all of them through an “Area Studies” connection. I sought contact with the “Areas” when I had just arrived. I was even officially encouraged to do so. Gradually I found it much easier, if not better to avoid such contact. Talk can cause headache too.

Once I received an email, not from the “Areas” but from the “Letters,” with a precise rhetorical reading of a few sentences of a vice presidential debate, though none
of what had registered on the faces, none of what was in the tone. The sentences had struck a foreign friend and I on spot but none of our American friends—we turned and looked, at everyone, at each other, at our non-foreign friends who simply kept watching, not at all startled, then burst into laughter. The rhetorical reading attempted in good faith to show me why it was still somehow, maybe, ever so slightly possible to read those sentences in good faith and not see the terrible democratic banality of the war. It was read from the script, not from the live show. It was written that yes, it is impossible to not see the horror of American exceptionalism on full display, but also that the subjectivity of those who identify as leftist and/or liberal is different from those who might not hear the terrible message. It was written that the sentences where “in reality” much more ambiguous than what our foreign ears have heard. Either that, or American ears are foreign to foreign policy talk. I cannot not think that Americans (and I am primarily concerned with the leftists and liberals here) are not democratically down with bombing wherever and whoever their government bombs; and that this casual attitude toward global murder (that as you remember is always global) is constitutive of American democracy that in turn and return determines the form of our global neighborhood.

“Neighborhood Watch,” officially a post-1960s institution but in reality as old as America, the whitest of all American institutions, stands nationally for the American
state’s global activity: the American “home front”: “the sphere of civilian activity in war” as Merriam Webster puts it, “First known use: 1917.” A good place to observe the neighborhood watching is on a wealthy neighborhood’s listserv. The content is even more terribly repetitive than the news. Unlike when watching television, in the home front Americans are an alert nation, their eyes always on the street.

Not killing the uncivilized is not a democratic demand anywhere, not either in other national situations whose military forces make up the NATO for example. Or among the aspiring nations. But to be “kind” to the refugees is a sign of being Civilized. To be Civilized one needs the uncivilized to kill and love. Such loving murder allows communion. There is a hegemonic consensus in the global community to kill the uncivilized, and “help” the victims, especially “the most vulnerable.” And bombing the uncivilized and helping the most vulnerable may be the very condition of moving up the scale of Civilization and joining the leadership of the global community. You can of course say it is sweet this way. For if Americans, for example, were to not bomb the uncivilized, to not democratically authorize it every four years, they wouldn’t get to drive all these tanks they drive in the streets. They call them SUVs, sport or suburban
utility vehicle: SSUV. Americans are very fond of acronyms. One has had to have
developed quite a sweet tooth to take gulps of oil this way.156

There has been a long history of training. Think for example of the modern sugar
trade, the “new spice,” the “sweet salt” the Crusaders brought from Terra Sancta. What
Beatriz de Bobadilla y Ossorio gave to Cristopher Columbus, and what took over the
global market in the nineteenth century, and turned honey into a luxury sweet. The
sweet tooth of the market didn’t grow overnight. It is the tooth of an embodied national
(which is the same as racial, religious/secular, and cultural-economic on our level of
analysis, that is the level of the production of living labor, homo laborans) tradition that is
literally constitutive of the New World, that is to say, of capitalism, globalization,
globalatinization, and particularly this national and imperial situation, the United States
of America; say, a nationally developed financial sense. “The average life of a slave” in
America, “was fifteen years, no more than six in harsh climates. Planters worked their
slaves to death because it made better sense financially, they reasoned, to buy full-
grown men and women to replace the deceased than to have to care for them, even in a
limited way, for the rest of their lives.”157 It made financial sense to deny the slave all
credit when the early capitalists, the founding fathers of our global neighborhood,

Press, 2013), 94.

201
developed their sweet teeth, and the sweetness of the capitalist market itself, the sweet
tooth of our de-worlded world, our modern predicament. And it makes financial sense
to be a humanitarian and re-legitimize global war every four years.

Whiteness, the tradition that is constitutive of our global neighborhood and also
its current constituent power, say, the political ideology of its sacrificial religion, among
other things is a modern cultural-economic process of the acquisition of brutality, and an
embodied tradition of the denial of all kinship. Whiteness is the tradition of “the
human,” whose very invention, say, the process of its extraction from the linguistically
available substance “humanity” (the humanity of Christ as opposed to His divinity), has
been historically (that is traditionally) predicated on the invention of the Native and the
Negro by means of brutality. In other words, whiteness is a tradition (embodied and
idealized) of brutality historically predicated on and affirmed by the brutal denial of the
humanity of those in opposition to whom Western Christians defined themselves as
white (and more recently as “secular”). The fundamental contradiction of the denial of
the non-Christian’s sharing a universal human form with Jesus of Nazareth manifest
itself as making the humanity of the non-Christian apparent on the Cross of History,
that is these days generally mute-screened, or social-corporeal-mediatically made
unmournable.
The contradiction of “religion” and Enlightenment most farcically appears as scientific debates over the “humanity” of the Native and the Negro. One had had to deny what One had made appear so forcefully that One has taken to the habit of producing false knowledge, of mystifying Oneself. False knowledge does not mean “scientific fabrication.” All science is fabrication—all knowledge is necessarily linguistic. What is at stake here is self-mystification, mal-intentional self-deception. For the Europeans should have known and certainly did know very well that those whom they were brutalizing were humans. They made themselves not know it. As Dussel had it, they made themselves forget the question of ‘what right does the Christian have to do all this?’ They tricked themselves into false fabrication whose point is not gnosis but mystification. And it is precisely with the historical-semantic consequences of these cultural-economically motivated mal-intentional scientific mystifications that we are dealing today, not to mention the continuation of mal-intentional mystifications. But dear reader, please remember, it is not personal, it is not about “Americans,” but about what allegedly resembles an American Way of Life. The point is to get a glimpse of the site of strike, the beating heart of the generalizing universal, the generalizing bodystyle, for it is said that ‘there in the body of the children of Adam is a morsel of flesh and when it is whole all body is whole and when it is corrupted all body is corrupted, and that is not but the heart.’
In classes I have taught in America I have found that a most difficult point to get across to the Christian and Christianized students is that bombs kill indiscriminately. That if you are a human, if you share a universal human form with Jesus of Nazareth, let alone a tree, you are of necessity vulnerable to bombs. It is difficult to teach the white Christian student that even adult men are vulnerable to bombs. It is very difficult to convince them that the real problem is not the refugee but the bomb; that it is good to help the refugees, but it might be much better to not make them refugees in the first place. It is as difficult to convince Iranians that there is no democracy in America, that it is a ruse. But they had a black president, they’ll always tell you. It doesn’t mean anything, you repeat all the time. Don’t you see what is going on in the streets? Don’t you see the ongoing murder? Don’t you see the clear pattern of sacrifice? Is a black president a better choice for leading global murder? What about a woman president? What kind of “democracy” is that? The rule of what law? It is not the rule of law, you have learned to say, it is the rule of love, and this is precisely what “democracy” is, unless the word is translated literally in practice, and unless there is a law that is not all love, not all free suffocating intimacy, but a law that is a seeking-justice and allows us to keep our distance. Over time you have memorized a whole plethora of arguments, examples and counterexamples, stinging remarks and comparisons to hurl at the adversary. Prison is a good place to turn the argument around. If you say there are
political prisoners and imprisoned intellectuals in America, most Iranians won’t believe you. They say you just like to hate America. Why are you there if you dislike it this much? “Amperiyālism,” “este’mār,” “koloniyālism,” these are not words you can easily use in intellectual debates, unless you are already preaching to the choir. The worst however (because the most abused, but definitely the most precise answer) is “tahājom-e farhangi,” ‘cultural invasion.’ The Iranian democratic majority believes in (the existence of) democracy in America even more credulously than most white Americans. Many Americans of color, I would even say most, also believe in the ruse, it’s more a matter of who is the president, what is a better choice for the leadership of global murder.

Could there ever be democracy anywhere in the world if there is no democracy in America? I don’t know, dear reader. Yet I think that democracy, democracy’s literal translation in practice, isn’t really achievable anywhere in the world until it erupts on the soil of America. That is no reason not to “try” it elsewhere in the world, perhaps even all the more reason to do so, but if it is going to be something other than a resemblance of politics, wherever it is, the demos has to always aim for democracy in America. You might think it idiotic, so do I, but I am convinced, this is our postmodern political predicament: if there is ever going to be politics again, we have to aim globally for democracy to strike the heart of America. But Americans might not even be living in this world, definitely not so when they rush to help the most vulnerable.
Ah (you say), this is Holy Wisdom
Santa Sophia, the SS of Sanctus Spiritus,

so by facile reasoning, logically
the incarnate symbol of the Holy Ghost;

your Holy Ghost was an apple-tree
smouldering—or rather now bourgeoning

with flowers; the fruit of the Tree?
this is the new Eve who comes

clearly to return, to retrieve
what she lost the race,

given over to sin, to death;
she brings the Book of Life, obviously.

This is a symbol of beauty (you continue),
she is Our Lady universally,

I see her as you project her,
not out of place…

… she carries a book but it is not
the tome of the ancient wisdom,

the pages, I imagine, are blank pages,
of the unwritten volume of the new; …

… she is Psyche, the butterfly,
out of the cocoon. –HD, Trilogy, “Tribute to the Angels,” cantos 36-38
There is democracy in America and this is precisely what “democracy” is. Or there is no democracy in America, and there ought to be democracy in America if there is going to be democracy anywhere in the world. In other words, given the particular place of the United States of America as the Sancta Sedes of the sacrificial de-worlding religion of capitalism and the generalizing heart of the mistaken universal, for there to be democracy in the world, the global export of American “democracy” has to be stopped. Whence the utter need for social strike, or, general abstention from democratic legitimization of global murder in America. But the problem is that there is “a kind of blindness at the center,” as Jameson puts it, that results from, and I would add democratically in, “a fundamental dissymmetry in the relationship between the United States and every other country in the world.” This central national-imperial blindness “can be registered, for example, in our tendency to confuse the universal and the cultural,” which as we have learned is not separable from the economic, and thus the American-democratic-imperial confusion of the cultural-economic and the universal goes hand in hand with the military-exploitative global generalization of what is best describable as post-Enlightenment Western values, that at the same time are keywords of postmodern global war, and particularly the so-called War on Terror. For example, it is difficult for Americans (and I would add many non-Americans) to understand that “human rights, feminist values, and even parliamentary democracy are not necessarily
to be seen as universals.” In other words, Americans, like many, perhaps a good majority, of non-Americans confuse the universal with the generalized universal. And this confusion guarantees the continuation of generalization, that is to say, standardization, and the global export of something that ‘allegedly resembles an American Way of Life’ along with American democracy. The point is precisely the alleged resemblance. In other words, even though Americans democratically enable, authorize, and legitimize global murder—say, the material foundation of the ‘fundamental dissymmetry’ between the Unites States and the rest of the world—their way of life itself is as standardized, and in fact much more standardized, as the rest of the world. In other words the American desire for consumption of the world is as strong as the generalizing global desire for standardization, or, the generalizing global desire for de-worlding. The difference is that America is the vanguard of standardization and not only the beating heart of generalization of ‘consumerism as such’ as a way of life, but also the prime receiver of what allegedly resembles a way of life.

I have also claimed that Americans are as much out of place as the doubly uprooted and doubly indigenized. The difference, or really the foundation of the fundamental asymmetry, is that while those indigenized to modernity are put out of place by being oriented and disoriented toward hypothetical roots and the Christian

---

future, Americans simply live in the future, and democratically pretend to be in the present world, just the inhabitants of one of the world’s national situations rather than the citizens of the imperial situation that the United States is. In other words, American democratic subjectivity is predicated on de-worlding, which in turn becomes the predicament of non-Americans, but because Americans ultimately live in this world, at least corporeally so, de-worlding is their predicament too; it is only going to get them last. And as we have discussed global murder is very hierarchical, and corporeal vulnerability has a very visible geopolitical distribution that is knowable objectively and with the testimony of the senses if one is not committed to mystifying oneself.

Of course now that that aspect of the world that is called “the environment” is increasingly seeking us out, even Americans are not safe. But let us stay in the world of politics and human relations. Let us be anthropocentric, or rather demo-centric, and try to imagine once more the music of de-wording, the music of the erosion of what we have to renew—unless we are completely satisfied with this ceaseless movement of sacrifice and consumption. Today, here, in world-televisualization, planetary mediation and de-worlding, to ‘renew the visions and aesthetics of relating to the earth’ we need to close our eyes and listen to the world. So, remember the partitioning of the world, modern Romantic apart-heid. Remember the humanitarian music of de-worlding, at once democratically legitimizing sacrifice and helping the most vulnerable victims, and
imagine you are at a club with a muted screen in the background: imagine explosions of
dazzle, the sacralizing movement of history, the contradiction of “religion” and
Enlightenment, imagine SANTA SOPHIA reaching the light, phenomenalizing itself on the
television. Instead of war drums, imagine muted news running in the background: THE
E-BOOK OF LIFE. Imagine the muted 24/7 ob\scene background of democracy and free
enterprise. Imagine you’d be touched by that screen.

(r.) I coin the word “ob\scene” analogous with the word “on\scene” coined
by Linda Williams. She introduces the word in her “Porn Studies: Proliferating
Pornographies, On\Scene: An Introduction,” and in the context of the practice of
American politics, American television, American family, American public, the
American university, censorship, free speech, the subject of right, Universal Studios, a
Hollywood musical, and also appearance and making disappear. More precisely,

feminist debates about the propriety or danger of pornography [in] the 1980s and
1990s, along with the larger societal debates about censorship in general, ...
“speaking sex” ... sexually explicit talk ... the oval office ... the very practice of
American politics requires familiarity with the alleged explicit sex acts ... We are
compelled to speak sex, whether to protect ourselves or our children from aids or
other sexually transmittable diseases, or simply as a result of watching The
Sopranos, Sex in the City, or Queer as Folk ... a wide variety of different media ...
public arena ... public view” ... public sphere ... “look at the pictures!” ...
exhorting (male) senators to look ... keep others (women and young pages) from
looking ... divers forms of speaking sex ... extreme futility of censorship ... when
those in favor of free speech and speaking sex nevertheless themselves censor
some of its more sensational elements ... 1998 ... the pro-free speech World
Conference on Pornography, ... the arrival of pornography as a legitimate
academic subject ... pornography’s right to exist ... Conference sessions
overflowed with videos, slides, photos, and other visual exemplars of its topic, not to mention the amusing, genial spectacle of porn stars in attendance rubbing elbow in the lobby of the Sheraton Universal Hotel with families setting out on tours of Universal Studios ... in the proceedings of the conference published by Prometheus, the exuberant visuals disappeared ... the volume is shockingly denuded of the very illustration that had made the conference so lively ... a 30s Hollywood musical”159

Williams traces the trajectory of her coinage of the word “on/scene” and its derivative “on/scenity” to a certain “late sixties’ ‘optimistic prediction’ concerning the “‘end of obscenity.’” Obscenity however didn’t end and sex today “insistently appear[s]” everywhere because with the appearance of “the new public/private realms of Internet and home videos,” what at a time might have been “bedroom-only matter” is no more “off (ob) the public scene” “in the literal sense.” So “to describe this paradoxical state of affairs” Williams has “coined ...

on/scenity: the gesture by which a culture brings on to its public arena the very organs, acts, bodies, and pleasures that have heretofore been designated ob/scene and kept literally off-scene.160

The context is the so-called “sex wars” and I am not going to directly engage this topic here. For now, let us stay in the semantic space and the literal sense of things. It is true that as long as there has been television and before that cinema, war has never been off the public seen. In fact, it is a most fervent spectacle permanently on the scene. We

160 Williams, 2–3.
have talked about its spectacular appearance and its perfect presence quite a lot at this point. However, what the word “on/scenity” and the context of its introduction and coinage (which I will come back to more explicitly in section C) brings to attention is that despite the obscene permanent presence of war on the American scene, there isn’t really much “speaking war” in the American public sphere, unlike the American public arena and (public) view. As if war in America is ob/scened, kept literally unseen, precisely by being ceaselessly brought on the scene. Not bombing the unenlightened never becomes a democratic demand in the Unites States, and the “foreign policy” debate in the election season is an unpopular sideshow of sorts. How are we to think of this paradox? In terms of, for example

ob\scenity: the gesture by which a culture not-sees: makes disappear from its public view, makes unseen, what is on in the background of its public scene (say, its “foreign” arena), as well as in the dining room and bedroom and any other room with a tele

Or should we push the limits of sexually explicit talk, add to the “tension between the speakable and unspeakable,”\(^1\) and ask whether what insistently appears as tele-vision, as tele-vised public arena, tele-visualized foreignness, as a sort of muted background screen, say as everyday repetitive novelty, as current events; and also as explosive

\(^1\)Williams, 4.
dazzle, as hyper-mediатized touching spectacular sacrifice, shared, shared, and re-shared, could also be related to ‘the very organs, acts, bodies, and pleasures’ on a culture’s scene (which as you remember is the beating heart of the generalizing universal)? In other words, what is the relation, if any, between a culture’s on/scene and its ob\scene gestures? Jus du commerce might give us an indication:

The most eye-opening statistics is the following: Hollywood makes approximately 400 films a year, while the porn industry makes from 10,000 to 11,000. Seven hundred million porn videos or DVDs are rented each year … fewer viewers see any single work … videos repeat themselves even more shamelessly than Hollywood (e.g., Co-ed Cocksucker 21, Talk Dirty to Me 13, Dirty Little Sex Brats 14), this is a mind-boggling figure. Pornography revenues … broadly … construed … magazines, Internet … cable, in-room hotel movies, and sex toys … total between 10 and 14 billion dollars annually … bigger than movie revenues … bigger than professional football, basketball, and baseball put together … pornography is no … “sideshow” but “the main event” … Who is watching all this pornography? Apparently all of us … “Porn doesn’t have a demographic … The market is “as diverse as America.” 162

There is a striking formal similarity between porn and news. Both are prime examples of spectacle, both are intended to take the subject out of itself as it were into the screen or “the world out there;” everyone watches both, ‘fewer viewers see any single work … videos repeat themselves even more shamelessly than Hollywood.’ Both are generally available for free in many formats and on many platforms, yet both are generative of massive amounts of money. Both are very touching, and both are main events that

__________________________

162 Williams, 2.
somehow are perceived to be sideshows. However, while porn is public/private, publically available but mostly watched in private, news in late postmodernity is private\public, privately shared, shared, and re-shared on the public social-corporate-mediatic scene. In both cases there is a good chance that the spectator is bodily isolated, however, while the touch of the public screen is sought for arousal and release in private in the case of porn, the touch of the news induces public arousal and release on the social-corporate media. Both porn and news get old very fast. The spectator always seeks what he has not seen before where in a sense there is nothing new to see. What is sought however is precisely what is already seen, NEW SCEEN, a new arousal, private release in public.

ob\scene on/scenity: the gesture by which a culture privately comes together in public, brings to public what is already on the public scene, makes unseen and waits for NEW SCEEN

Let us go back and read the quote from “Notes on Globalization” concerning the sweet and the sexy once more: ‘conflation of two levels: exchange with human relations and everyday life (as we would say today) … free enterprise and political democracy … Free World … libidinalization of the market … the reason why many people now feel that this boring and archaic thing is sexy … results from the sweetening of this pill by all
kinds of images of consumption as such: the commodity as it were becoming its own ideology … the new transnational ‘culture-ideology’ of consumption … changing traditional psychic habits … something allegedly resembling the American Way of Life … the habits and addictions of postmodern consumption.’

Porn is then the very image of consumption, the very image of commodity as (it were becoming) its own ideology, and a moving image of the libidinalization of the market. It is a cultural keyword that signifies photographic incitement to unthinking consumption. Think for example of a rather recent coinage: “food porn,” particularly inseparable from the corporate-social-mediatic late capitalist everyday cultural behavior, and a loving and glorifying adoption of advertisement porn-aesthetics. Porn is the prime sweetener of this boring and archaic thing. Even a glance at the world of advertisement confirms that. And even though porn itself, as it were, is not advertised that widely, much advertisement is also advertising porn. A great example of something ‘resembling Life,’ perhaps even resembling economy: ‘between 10 and 14 billion dollars annually … bigger than movie revenues … bigger than professional football, basketball, and baseball put together.’ Neither film nor television, neither rom-com or action narrative nor the televised arena of athletics, yet the metamorphosis of them all, porn is the very image of the world of culture industry, the world of unthinking entertainment and service economy. Porn industry is the metaphor par excellence of the late capitalist marketplace.
It generates massive revenue and creates a plethora of exploitative opportunity and precarious employment, and represents the most shamelessly uncreative quest for the perpetual repetition of the spectacle of novelty. It is certainly closest to the news in spirit.

Porn is the very spectacle of the new transnational culture-ideology of consumption. It is a commodity that needs to be defended, and in its defense also produces its own ideology. It makes its defenders speak for it and has a deep connection with “freedom of speech.” Arguments against porn-culture could be readily dismissed as “moralizing,” “puritan” and the like by some of the most radical practitioners of the American academic resemblance of politics. However, the most academic and revealing, as it were, insult thrown at arguments against porn and porn-culture is “sex-negative.” This indeed is one of the most inexcusable intellectual crimes in the late capitalist American Consucademia. One has to be for sex as it were, under all conditions. One has to constantly affirm not only sex, but also sex-obsession as the most ancient universal human institution as it were. Sexuality is not far from, how should I say it, what about “the American academic sacred”? Porn is an addictive commodity that has to be defended, for example, as “a genre for the production of sexual viewing pleasure” pure and simple, and shouldn’t be “conflated” neither with “ordinary rape,” nor “with genocidal rape, degradation, and abuse.” When it comes to porn one has to carefully
differentiate and separate things denial of whose entanglements is certainly unacceptable in other areas: “mechanically or electronically reproduced images,” for example, have to be insistently separated from “the acts themselves.”

Porn is historicized in defense. It is said that porn, as the commodity that we know today, has a history as long as there has been explicit depiction of sexual intercourse (check out the English Wikipedia entry for yourself). It is commodity-ideology. Porn wants to be consumed, and demands the affirmation of its right to exist. It is a great allegory, if not literally the alle-gory, of commodity culture, if not of free enterprise and democracy as such. It speaks the culture-ideology of consumption otherwise. It is the very agora of the culture-ideology of consumption. But a reversed agora, one in which the public comes together in private. ‘Who is watching all this pornography? Apparently all of us.’ The apparentness of pornographic consumption has to be confirmed as a public secret, a private/public thing, for even though it is a late capitalist addiction, it is apparently not publically admitted. To call pornographic consumption an “addiction” might itself qualify as “sex-negative.” Let’s call it a cultural habit, or a postmodern cultural modality of public/private communion, if that helps. At any rate, let us not forget that “sexuality” as a thing to identify with and consume, not to mention porn as a subject of right, is a modern thing. That might be theoretically agreed

363 Williams, 11.
upon even in its academic temple. Historical method however is insistently used to prove “its” ancientness.

Remembering Laura Mulvey’s classic analysis of visual pleasure and narrative cinema as a point of theoretical analogy to complete our allegory of commodity-culture or culture-ideology of consumption, porn is the purely figurative, as it were, description of the same culture that Hollywood provides its narrative. Think for example of the important narrative-heroic work Hollywood does for training future soldiers, also trained with joysticks and the touch of screen. Think of the very corporeal excitement of a soldier when shooting his target in a street on a screen. Think of the adrenaline high that comes with killing. Think of soldiers who can’t wait to kill. Think of “eye-fucking.”

It is military jargon. Let us read a quote from Trained to Kill: Soldiers at War by Theodore Nadelson, a war veteran and a psychiatrist who has written about war and the experience of American Vietnam veterans he has treated for post-traumatic stress disorder:

‘[Combat] absorbs us utterly, it is as though the human being became one great eye. The eye is lustful because it requires the novel, the unusual, the spectacular. It cannot satiate itself on the familiar, the routine, the everyday.’ … Soldiers in contact with the enemy become enthralled … The reflex to defend against mortal harm results in lust and freedom—not thought, only action … Some men, more predisposed to embracing risk become intoxicated with it … “the essence of life itself” … a tendency to plunder, which is not derived from “biological urgency but of an impulse lunched from the eyes, not to consume, but to possess” … reward systems deliver pleasurable responses such as when looking at the object of sexual desire … “Looking,” as an end in itself, avoids the anxiety that
accompanies the painful anticipation of rejection by the sexually desired object. Both looking and taking by force deprive the person who is the object of the right to say no. In war, there is always looking without being seen ... Nazi propaganda presented the German soldier’s eye as projecting, not receiving: “Shining eyes are the prerogative of the German soldier” ... The eye feasts in war, is engaged by war’s constant novelty. Poet Ezra Pound called it “a love of slaughter.” In Andalusia the eye is like a sexual organ and Andalusians prize the mirada fuerte—the strong gaze. In southern Spain, rape can be ocular (... personal communication). The Bible speaks of “the lust of the eyes” ... Marines call it “eye-fucking”—to seek targets and vicariously project killing force ... They get hard doing it.164

The eye feasting at war in the novel, the spectacular, the unusual; soldiers avoiding the fear of rejection by rushing not only to kill, but to actively seek targets, kill, and revel in the seen, get hard at each NEW SCEEN. Free enterprise and democracy’s obscene behind the scene: ‘the unwritten volume of the new.’ News is actively produced by raping eyes ceaselessly seeking the new, never satiated, never thinking: pure being in action: perfect presence, addictive, arousing, intoxicating, live history in making. De-worlding in action: this is where things are taken possession of for the American democratic majority to come together to consume. Where freedom is lustfully produced and the right to be a free consumer of the world is practically affirmed. The world is ritually possessed, de-worlded, by projectile eyes, and resemblances of the images of the nation’s knights’

164 Nadelson, Trained to Kill, 65–66.
quest for spectacular novelty run mutedly, but publically, in the background of the
American public view. UNIVERSAL STUDIOS: LIVE NEWS!

Murder, just like porn, is addictive in a very corporeal sense. Listen to another

American soldier:

I got a photograph. I’m holding two heads—standing there holding two heads by their hair. Can you believe it? ... like savages, like long ago ... and nothing un-normal about it, that’s the un-normal part—it was normal, real, it was accepted. They took a picture of me. That’s how I remember it because of the photo. That’s why I still have it—reminds me of those times—without the picture I won’t believe it in peacetime ... In ‘Nam you always got something to do ... but you don’t want to think of it, you [will] get back home, back to the “real world.” But now you are in hell and you act it ... So nothing matters. The VC I killed ... Jesus! Well, you had to do it. You had to do it to get out of there. I didn’t care about the VC—they would have killed me. But the women and kids? First I was picking them [children] up after the gunships shot up a ville. Then I capped them too. They’d grow up to kill you—maybe that was the story. But that’s crazy—but like I said crazy was normal there. Unless you accepted that as normal, you could not live through it ... They would do things, then it’s over, and you go on. Hell, they [the VC] would do it to you, you have to do it to them a hundred times harder and worse ... So these guys found these women in a village and they started to rape them. Yeh, and the are banging away, and then they take out their K-bars, for God’s sake! And they are stabbing them, crazy, out of control, and banging away—crazy—and still doing it when the women are dead. You understand? Maybe you understand ... but it isn’t possible to get people to understand who were not there. It was terrible what I—we did—but we all did it, those good guys I knew. All good, do anything for you. I can say it, I loved them. ... But the worst thing I can say about myself is that while I was there I was so alive. I loved it the way you can like an adrenaline high, the way you can love your friends, your tight buddies. So unreal and the realest thing that ever happened. Un-fucking-imaginable. And maybe the worst thing for me now is living in peacetime without a possibility of that high again. I hate what the high was about, but I loved the high. And life in peace fucking kills me with dullness ... God I went so down after I came back to this real world. I used whatever I
could to get the feeling back. Booz, drugs or shot some guys, got in real trouble. I couldn’t live in any other way, you see?165

The United States is always “real,” as opposed to Vietnam that defies reality. It is at once ‘so unreal and the realest thing.’ What goes on behind the scene of the news is the production of real unreality, say, real production of disappearance, production of blank pages for the TELE-BOOK OF WORLD-CONSUMPTION. It is a spiritualization of the world. In hell, where the soldier has been turned into pure action, perfectly present, pure being absolutely incapable of being absent to itself, that is, incapable of thinking; incapable of asking for himself, incapable of being found in absence. De-worlding as spiritualization: the turning of the world into what does not matter: real unreality, pure image: ‘like savages, like long ago.’ You cannot remember it without a photograph: absolute presence, like porn. It is crazy yet you have to accept it as normal in order to live through it. Acceptance as you remember is ‘a propositional attitude, a methodological stance toward a proposition, a category that includes belief, presumption, assumption, acceptance for the sake of the argument’ and similar attitudes. The soldier has to accept hell as normal in order to keep producing news: the spectacle of novelty: un-fucking-imimaginable: there is nothing like it in the “real world.” And this is felt as a corporeal reality: a high, loved, hated, total aliveness, total negation of the realty of death: raping

165 Ibid., 68–69.
the dead: the soldier is as if freed from all bodily limits, coincident with pure presence, pure spirit, sealed. The soldier is reduced to live history. The soldier in action has no soul. The soldier cannot be interrupted by death.

The new technological advances however could be said to have turned American soldiers also to consumers of their own performance of the acts of state-murder. American soldiers, reduced to soulless makers of RAPE-NEWS-HISTORY, are not exposed to the danger of death as much anymore, they don’t really come to contact with enemy that much. Technological advancement allows killing at a distance. Eye-fucking might be even closer to watching porn these days, de-worlding the world, sacrificing on a global scale, realizing the Christian future virtually, from afar, killing the enemy on the state’s behalf in a masturbatory way by touching a screen, reduced to the stately eye of the finger: homo militaris digitalis.

(§.) A professional photographer I once met at a bar described to me his practice precisely in terms of the projections of an armed eye. He told me about his experience of taking photos as a sort of public shooting. He said that he is often hired to shoot at public events and parties and described his camera as a gun, literally so. He said that at work he imagined himself as holding a gun and shooting. What he does, he said, is shoot indiscriminately, take as many photos as he can and then pick the good ones, later in his studio, and modify them if need be. He often used the verb “shooting”
intransitively—neither “shooting photos” nor “shooting at the party” for that matter. I asked him whether he had been at war. He said no, he was just a photographer. I asked whether he thought that if he was using an analogue camera his practice would be different. He said, yes, of course, he couldn’t possibly waste that much film. He said that he does shoot with an analogue camera every now and then, but just for himself, as “art” he said. At work, he was a public shooter. I asked whether when he used an analogue camera his practice could be said to consist more in letting the light in, whether the camera could be said to be a window rather than a gun. He said that that makes sense but he had never thought of it that way. I thought of asking whether he would describe his current practice as similar to public shooting, but I couldn’t. I said instead that if we were to follow with the analogy of the window, one could say that shooting with a digital camera is like using a military flashlight. He said, yeah, that makes sense. I said that’s the disaster of our time. He didn’t respond.

on/scene obscenity: the gesture by which a culture puts itself off-stage by bringing on-stage, by publically screening the very organs, acts, bodies, and pleasures of the projectile eyes of its rapist will that produces for it victims to love and save thus figuring itself as foreign to what it democratically enables
If news, that is to say world-novelization, simulates the American state’s acts of
de-worlding, then porn is the simulacrum of national American public/private supernal
existence. As the two sides of a dazzling coin porn and news give us an image of the
contradiction of the United States as a national situation spectacularly blind to what
constitutes its national situatedness: homo consumerist sacrificant : homo porno
communitaris.

(t.) What are we exactly addicted to in postmodernity? What is this terrible
addiction to novelty? Could it be could it be “beauty”? A terribly wrong, terribly
mistaken, generalizing notion of beauty? What is the aesthetics of the New World, this
News-seeking sensibility that never ceases to “make” everything “new” by seeking to
annihilate all that it figures as “old;” all that it projects as distant in time (‘like savages,
like long ago’ only memorable as an image—of the self—a photo-graphic evidence, One
cannot believe unless as a an essentially foreign thing of the distant past)? Why this urge
to go to the old, to the New Ancient, as to the colonies, to search for the “radically new”?
What is this concomitant love and hate? What is the relation between historical time and
colonial space? What has photos graphed on One’s eyes that One cannot see it but as real
unreality? And what is its relation to the global production of traumatized humanity? (I
forgot to tell you, if you go to America, you realize many people “have”—that is the
verb they use—what they call “childhood traumas,” it is a constitutive trope of the self.
Some even like to suggest that everyone has them. Don’t make jokes about it, some take it personally. I heard a really good point in a colloquium once, the paper was about cultural memory and trauma, it is a very widely discussed topic in the West, someone said that it is always the trauma of the perpetrator that keeps causing trouble).

What are we exactly addicted to in postmodernity? Could it be “love”? A generalized ‘love of slaughter’? The beauty of murder? Nadelson calls it the “beauty,” the “duende” of murder, and describes it this way:

The joy and celebration of the killer’s own life, skillfully taking a life. He is the hunter or, in the simile, the fisherman, the superior of the slain, the quick not the dead. He is the manifest lord raised high by the dead body he has created. The victim is faced down, neutered, dirtied, and diminished. The killer has manifested the most naked self-assertion. He is adulated as a hero, his potency glorified; he shines.\textsuperscript{166}

Are we addicted to the pornography of war? To seeing ‘the victim faced down, neutered, dirtied, and diminished,’ to ‘the most naked self-assertion’? Are we addicted to the glorification of potency—the heroic? Is postmodernity the generalization of a pornographic adulthood? It certainly is a generalized and generalizing celebration of global murderers. I told you, it is very difficult to convince Iranians that there is no democracy in America. What is the psychic conditioning that is the corollary of the global hegemony of Christian tele-media, the global spectacular simulation of the death

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 64.
of God? Is there a relation between eye-fucking, the vicarious unending search for new
targets to kill to get hard, and the everyday consumption of a world one democratically
participates in its de-worlding? What is the relation between eye-fucking, the ceaseless
production of new victims, and the humanitarian rush to save the most vulnerable?
What is this generalizing psychic habit that sustains the fundamental relation between
consumerism and this sacrificial religion called capitalism?

Remember the mute-screened music of de-worlding, the ob\scened behind the
scene of “free” enterprise and “political” democracy, global war and global pacification
with the supplement of all-inclusive suckular-social-corporate fraternization around the
cult of the chosen victim (preferably “the most vulnerable”): freely and democratically
sacrificing on the scale of globality: the racial-geopolitical distribution of corporeal
vulnerability. Sacrificial rise in the standard of life: asymptotically approaching equal
temperament: perpetual peace: the movement of generalization: progression toward
post-Enlightenment “European” social configurations in the direction of the Christian
future where there is no “religion” and everyone is happily “secular”: standardization:
pyramidal globalization: globalatinization: tele-Christianization: AMERICANIZATION.
Asymptotic equalization, because the “equal perceived ‘distance’ from every note to its nearest neighbor”\(^{167}\) is never perceivable due to the operation of the racial, that is, the projected light in which the globe is mapped in which “culture” is a resignification of race, previously blood (differentiated with \textit{sacr}-, crossed over ‘soul,’ \textit{nefeš}), conceived as a substantive, prescientific, prehistoric, preconceptual, God-given difference: a (terrorizing reduction to a) bodystyle, a lifestyle that coincides with a continent. This is why, “thinking about current events,” say, news-history, “in culturalist terms (… generally ends up being racist...”\(^{168}\)

There is nothing new, nothing novel, nothing news-worthy, nothing surprising, about “‘Entire communities, countries, even continents, as in the case of sub-Saharan Africa [having] been declared ‘redundant,’ superfluous to the changing economy of capitalist accumulation on a world scale,’” as Jameson quotes Giovanni Arrighi who continues, “‘the unplugging of these ‘redundant’ communities and locals from the world supply system has triggered innumerable, mostly violent feuds over ‘who is more superfluous than whom,’ or, more precisely, over the appropriation of resources that


were made absolutely scarce by the unplugging.’’\textsuperscript{169} Such unplugging of ‘entire communities, countries, even continents’ from the cycle of capitalist accumulation and consumerist consumption is a capitalistic religious act. It is the sacrifice that allows the continuation of consumerist consumption. It goes hand in hand with the mass murder, democratically authorized mass bombardment of “Muslims,” the unenlightened “religious” people of this world whose murder allows suckular Christian identification as “secular.” It goes hand in hand with the routine everyday murder of black Americans in America, the unplugging of black neighborhoods from the cycle of white accumulation and consumption. It goes hand in hand with the racial concentration of populations in shantytowns and favelas all over the Americas, unless you are colorblind and wish to not see it. And don’t forget that the “white” populations of American trailer parks, the unplugged white, are made racially and eugenically and democratically distant from the colorblind white. Whiteness is a generalizing ideology and has a good deal of believers among the so-called people of color, just as there are many non-Christian Christians.

Let me ask once more a question that has been asked in different ways by Anidjar, Derrida, Mufti, and Silva before. Not to use their authority, my question is different from theirs, a different version, but I have learned to ask it from reading their

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
words: What is the point of this strict separation between “racism,” “anti-Semitism,” and “Islamophobia”? Aren’t they all Christian inventions? Has anyone but Christians done all that white Christians have done on such a global scale? Has anyone had this much problem with coexistence? Why after more than five hundred years of white Christian violence against non-white non-Christians there is no reparation? Does the non-recognition of the reality of this long tradition of violence, some call it “history,” have to do with the coincidence of the unreal and the real, the savage and the civilized, the democrat and the democrat? What is the point of all these fantastic historical arguments according to which if white Christians had not done all that they have done and are still doing, someone else would have? What is this projectile attribution of historical potential to the whole of humanity?

I suggest that the universalization of History and historical meaning has to do with white raciality being conceived as esoteric, while the rest are made to carry the marks of raciality out in the open, exoterically. For how does the subject of History singularly remain out of geographic determination? How does the subject of History manage to be at once out of the world and consume the whole world? How does the subject of History manage to at once democratically authorize global murder and rush to help the victims? How does the subject of History manage to live a real unreality? In other words, what historical semantics allows the subject of History to retain a position,
more precisely a mystical position, as if out of globality, out of exterior determination, foreign to foreign policy and familiar with all the global dead? Another iteration of the same question: how is it that the humanitarian members of the white race so frequently imagine themselves as not having a race, as if not equally constituted by their own scientific fabrication, as if immune to the operations of words?

This has to do with the religious symbolics of raciality, or the political theology of race. So let me go back one more time to *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* and to the issue of *munus* and the coming to the world of the community of immunity that was also central to Kavwahirehi’s reading of the de-worlding of the world and annihilation of the conditions of possibility of coexistence, *co-ek-sistance*, in other words, de-worlding as what allows the de-worlder not to face the world and be a non-obliged consumer.

With the historical rise of the Eucharist, Anidjar argued, as you remember, that the Christian community invented itself as a “community of substance.” The being-in-common of community was reinvented, retranslated, reinterpreted, as an appropriated substance rather than an expropriating absence: “a possession in common, rather than ... an obligation due.” A gift due wrongly translated into a gift one properly owns and thus has to protect and preserve. And again as you remember the shared substance of this New Christian community, what the reinvented community claimed to own, their property that made necessary taking many measures to ensure its immunity, was blood,
properly speaking Christian blood, “where,” Anidjar argues, “the origin of both nation and race must be explored”: “Jesus’ pure blood” whose “striking absence … from scholarly theorizations of race testifies to the vanishing of Christianity from critical attention” (this last part, ‘the vanishing of Christianity…,’ might as well be what is otherwise called ‘secularism’). The New Christian community was invented by claiming ownership of Jesus’ pure blood that was ritually shared with the community through the cult of Eucharist that gathered those properly gifted, in and as the mystical body of Christ: Church, the institution that instilled “the love of blood … in the hearts and minds of Christians,” and set in motion the concept of “consanguinity” as a massive disciplinary and ideological apparatus. This is the story of the invention of a new genre of man: “Christian men, later self-made men, men of ‘flesh and blood’” who “own and make their history.” The “matrix of signification and rule” that is the Eucharist, Anidjar writes, made “Christians … believe that their blood was different from the blood of others,” indeed “that there were different kinds of blood.” Thus from the mid-fifteenth century, or maybe even before, but certainly well into the 19th century, at least one Christian nation that was particularly troubled by bloody ambiguities due to its history of intermarriage with and later on forced conversion of Jews and Muslims to Christianity and also their expulsion that apparently had remained troublingly incomplete, demanded those seeking certain offices to prove the purity of their blood by
presenting official “estatutos de limpieza de sangre.” These statutes indeed signified that “Christians were … hematologically distinct from converts.” Converts in this specific location were categorized differentially and had different names like conversos, moriscos, marranos, mudéjares, and also “New Christians.” These so-called “New Christians” however, were and are never really imagined or accepted as Christians due to the impurity of their blood, and so the real New Christian, Anidjar argues, turns out to be the so-called “Old Christian,” who now, in his post-Eucharistic reinvention as “Old,” could and “would take pride in a lineage linking him directly with Jesus and Mary. He is Jesus’ kin.”\(^\text{170}\)

So, esoteric blood and exoteric form, interior bloody divinity and exterior corporeal humanity. Our postmodern predicament is to make the subject of history pay his debt to the way of flesh; in other words, to recognize his humanity, his sharing a universal human form with Jesus of Nazareth rather than mistakenly assuming mystical incorporation into His Divinity and forgetting it too, reinventing the New Old Christian this time as the Modern Secular.\(^\text{171}\) In other words, our postmodern predicament is to

---


\(^{171}\) The separation of Church and State being an old Christin institution notwithstanding, the image of the “Arya” as it emerges in nineteenth century Christian philology, that is to say the site of the establishment of modern secularism, is the fantastic image of an ancient “secular” of sorts. The “Aryan” is consistently portrayed against his fictional other, the fanatically religious “Semite,” the inventor of monotheism and its absolute subject: the theological Jew and the political Arab, word and sword; and later on the racialized, de-theologized Jew, and the pure image of “religion” the fanatic Muslim. See particularly Olender, *The Languages of Paradise*; Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).
find a cure, talking or otherwise, for this murderous illusion of non-corporeality and universality—to have the subject of history understand that you ache therefore you are.

To destroy the global community of immunity: to have the subject of history understand that your global love is too much, please keep distant, but before that please give back what you stole, in currency and credit—keep all museum objects to yourself. Either come in and have tea with us or leave, said a poet once. Otherwise our predicament is the continuation of asymptotic sacrificial-consumerist equalization because the equal “perceived” distance from the “neighbor” (whom we are to love, that is to say claw and suck dry, as equally as our “enemy”) is never perceivable. In other words, there is no end to post-modernity, no end to standardization, no end to the sacralizing movement of history, no end to the terrifying flight of angelus novus, the vampire bat of history, usque ad terminos terrae, unless it is brought about violently. There is no end to love, to planetary tele-visualization, no end to the news. The hegemon is deaf, the hegemon does not hear the breaking of strings, the music of de-worlding, and His Deafness appears as a certain spectacle of the death of God on mute-screens: NEWS: THE PROJECTED LIGHT OF THE (END OF) HISTORY’S.
(s.) ("Debitores sumus non carni ut secundum carnem vivamus")

Just before the end of "Debitores Sumus... On Ways of Exhausting Our Question on Violence," an essay that I began this section with a quote from, and that has been difficultly present in the back of my writing from the beginning of this section—H—not least because I have utterly failed and I am utterly failing with each sentence I write to find any "kind of clean, ethical language to use in order to express the unspeakable," Mudimbe writes that "what is negated in the Great Lakes' violence is not only human dignity, but might also be the mysterious and unique humanity of the gift of life."172

Ay dear, know that I do not know if I understand anything that I have cited here. But I know that I hear things in them, so I re-cite and I recite, and to face what I hear I make for myself a graphic trace, a movement in words that I share with you. I may be mistaken, but I do not lie, I write. Writing is judgement and lament, the work of intellect and liver. Writing is translation. A corporeal occurrence, an opening to that which seeks us. It is the here of translation, a promise of truth, and a prayer for its attack. What I think I know, what I hear as true, what I am certain of its truth, is that what is being negated in our de-worlded world, with mass murder, genocide, unplugging, with global sacrifice and global consumption, is precisely that, 'the mysterious and unique humanity

172 In Mudimbe, "Debitores Sumus ... On Ways of Exhausting Our Question on Violence," 188, 199.
of the gift of life’—‘the soul of the living.’ What is being negated by this global spectacle of the death of God is human soul that is by no means separate from human body. The Qur’an says that it desires sin, it blames, it may become certain, but surely it reaches the throat, it reaches the clavicle, and it tastes death—that is a promise. What is being negated in our de-worlding world is the possibility of promising, the possibility for humans to be interrupted by death, by the taste of death. What is being affirmed is a screen. And a muted one too. We standard humans are being trained to remain seated and keep watching television. Pacified tele-visionaries. Soulless mystics.173

(x.) In a recent talk titled “Rationality, Moderation (e’tedāl), Fascist Movements, Religious Extremist Movements,” at a conference called “Rationality and Moderation in the Contemporary World” on the World Philosophy Day, Yousef Abazari criticizes the distance official philosophical discourse assumes from political realities in the context of a diagnosis of state neoliberalism in Iran, and says that unlike the very

173 “There is no innovating loss. It was never invented, it happened as something physical, something physically experienced. It is not something an ‘I’ discusses socially. Though Myung Mi Kim did say that the poem is really a responsibility to everyone in a social space. She did say it was okay to cramp, to clog, to fold over at the gut, to have to put hand to the flesh, to have to hold the pain, and then to translate it here. She did say, in so many words, that what alerts, alters.” Rankine, Don’t Let Me Be Lonely, 57.

“The only language of loss left in the world is Arabic—
These words were said to me in a language not Arabic.
Ancestors, you’ve left me a plot in the family graveyard—
Why must I look, in your eyes, for prayers in Arabic.
Majnoon, his clothes ripped, still weeps for Laila.
O, this is the madness of the desert, his crazy Arabic.
Who listens to Ishmael? Even now he cries out:
Abraham, throw away the knives, recite a psalm in Arabic.”
abstract talks preceding his talk, he is going to remain concrete and focused on “our own region: Iran and the Middle East,” and of course a good deal of the talk was about America. How can one speak of “our own region” and not speak of America? Is there even a “Middle East” without an “America”?

Focusing on the period after the war (1988 to present), he brings to attention the continuity of the political-economic policies despite the changes in political-symbolic policies that come with the back and forth of the government between the two parties. Central to his talk is the problematic of truth and the epistemological function of the market under neoliberalism: the market functions as an entity that determines the truth, and as a corollary it justifies a politics of lying. He emphasizes the rationality of the market and its extremist mode of moderation, as well as the semantic changes that the market as an epistemological horizon has introduced into the political vocabulary, for example, that “democracy” has become synonymous with “civil and individual liberties” and is losing or has lost its meaning as public participation in politics. A direct manifestation of the market’s determination of truth according to Abazari is the gradual fading out of free higher education in Iran (a point he has brought up on various occasions). Free higher education is one of the last means left for publically challenging the absolute takeover of marketable truth.
Right from the beginning of his talk Abazari brings to attention the election of Donald Trump to presidency in the United States, “who apparently has fascistic tendencies and more importantly has given momentum to a movement demanding racist and religious discrimination,” emphasizing that this is the result of a much longer process and mentioning Reagan in a note on periodization. He doesn’t however mention anything about the much longer history of white nationalism. He relates the recent revival of the Persian identity in Iran to the rise of white nationalism in the United States in the context of an analysis of global neoliberalism, and says he is horrified at the sight of young people at the grave of Cyrus (the so-called “the Great”) shouting anti-Arab slogans. Globalization, he says, is becoming-neoliberal. Again, he doesn’t mention anything about the modern story of acquisition of history and of becoming-Iran. Abazari rightly emphasizes in his talk that it is very important for those who want to understand the rise of Daesh to pay attention to evangelism and evangelist ideology in the United States, making clear that he is not speaking about a conspiracy but rather about official ideology, bringing to attention the lack of “media coverage” when it comes to “religious extremism” in the “Christian world.” He asserts what he says, and I can’t deny it, is the fundamental link of fascism and neoliberalism. He emphasizes evangelism repeatedly in his talk— “evangelist crimes in Iraq” … “they wanted to make a neoliberal heaven”—
but again does not delve deeper into the modern history of Christianity, or really the history of modernity, or the history of History.\textsuperscript{174}

\textbf{(z.)} Right in between the mention of the “American … export of a way of life itself … consumerism as such,” and the citation of Arrighi concerning the unplugging of entire human collectives from the resources of the world, monopolized and made scarce by the Strongest, and the declaring of humans superfluous and redundant on mass, Jameson writes that “Since the discrediting of socialism by the collapse of Russian communism, only religious fundamentalism has seemed to offer an alternative way of life—let us not, heaven help us, call it a lifestyle—to American consumerism.” And a few sentences further, “but it has also been argued that all the other recrudescences of what people think of as local and nationalist violence are themselves reactions and defense mechanisms in the face of heightened globalization.”\textsuperscript{175}

What is called “religious fundamentalism” is not so much an “alternative” to American consumerism, but, the other side of the same coin: an absolutely postmodern phenomenon, reaction and defense mechanism, as violent, facile, and unthinking, as American consumerism. It is also postmodern nationalist violence; one that does not

\textsuperscript{174} The talk is available here: \url{https://youtu.be/TPC_Y49Bj9Q} [in Persian].
\textsuperscript{175} Jameson, “Notes on Globalization,” 64–65.
emerge from a modern nation-space, but from the postmodern global space, and not in the name of a nation, in the modern sense of the word, but in the name of a “religion,” that is to say, a race in the modern sense of the word. Borrowing a perfect word from H.D., religious fundamentalism is perhaps best thought as the “counter-coin-side” of global liberal democratic loving violence and capitalist religious sacrifice whose deep structure is unmistakably Christian and its military leadership is with the United States. Of course we all know about the mutual material and spiritual dependence of the two sides on each other that also particularly has to do with Russian communism (also a Christian affair, but certainly of different coinage) and its collapse, and then the ongoing war which in a certain light looks like America and Company’s war against itself over other peoples’ heads. The essential difference between the two sides of the coin however, is that while the one called “religious fundamentalism” takes it upon itself to play the role of the nation and the state at once, its counter-coin-side that doesn’t really seem to have a name, but generally operates in the name of “peace,” “democracy,” “human rights,” “women’s rights” and the like, is formally divided between the space of consumerist nations and that of the sacrificing state(s). Let’s call them the nationstate, and the nation-state(s).

The current “religious fundamentalism” is perhaps best understandable as an unthinking consumption of “religion.” This is most manifest in the fact that many who
join the fundamentalist organizations are reportedly non-practicing and newborn, and that the reasons for such “returns,” as it were, to “religion” have more to do with globalization and its discontents than a movement of the revival of older traditions of knowledge and knowing. It is the counter-coin-side of the unthinking global democracy which is everything but “political.” Think for example of the Taliban’s imposition of full veil on women in Afghanistan, and the French police’s enforcement of mandatory nakedness on Muslim women, in particular, at the beach. The former cites a “religious” code of public morality, and the latter a “secular” code of public morality. They both primarily target (Muslim) women.

“This archaic and ostensibly more savage radicalization of ‘religious’ violence,” writes Derrida, “claims, in the name of ‘religion,’” or ‘secularism,’

to allow the living community to rediscover its roots, its place, its body and its idiom intact (unscathed, safe, pure, proper). It spreads death and unleashes self-destruction in a desperate (auto-immune) gesture that attacks the blood of its own body: as though thereby to eradicate uprootedness and reappropriate the sacredness of life safe and sound. Double root, double uprootedness, double eradication.176

It is thus a revival of the same temporality and the same fantasy as that figured by what Mufti called ‘the chronotope of indigenousness’ in the case of modern nationalization and nationalism, and Silva wrote about in terms of ‘double affectability’ — a postmodern

176 Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge,” 89.
nationalist, that is to say historical-globalist, that is to say Christian theological-racialist affair, and a radical denial of the trans-locality of all culture and the fundamental foreignness of all language. A radical denial of out-of-place-ness in the world, our common (other)worldliness, our necessary and objective exposure to each other that necessitates distance as much as it allows intimacy. Distance is fundamental to our co-existence, and this ‘ostensibly more savage radicalization of ‘religious’ violence,’ this postmodern revival of modern secularism, seeks to bring the community together, to make a(nother) global community, one for a people ‘with their own God,’ or one in which one is ‘finally what one ought to be’: a radical denial of our diasporic condition, our corporeal and spiritual co-contamination, that is to say kinship, givenness to each other.

What is our deal with history today? Can we let go of it? This is perhaps one of those dialectical reversals that come with the distribution of historical time over colonial space in the world, but unlike the sense of the absence of the sense of history, historical consciousness, and historicity in America, in Iran, or really in “our region,” one is rather confronted with a suffocating abundance of history. Listen, for example, to the poet Hafez Mousavi:
Here

the Middle East.

We speak in the language of history
dream historical dreams
then behead each other
with historical daggers.

From Sham to Hejaz
from Hejaz to Baghdad
from Baghdad to Constantinople
from Constantinople to Isfahan
from Isfahan to Balkh
the dead preside
over our lands.

Here

the Middle East
and this damned thing passing through our blood
is history.

(Dec 25, 2006)\textsuperscript{177}

To “do history” as it is said in English, is of no use anymore—it is definitely of harm. Any attempt at national historiography, any attempt to (re)produce human collectives as “nations,” which is what history does for the most part given its preference for the nation-space as site of inquiry, necessarily partakes in the language of apart-heid, for it necessarily has to negate the trans-locality of culture, of languages, stories, music, etc. etc. in the geography it historicizes, that is, the space it translates to global-historical,
that is to say racial, time. In other words to produce a people as a nation, to give them a homeland, an *Urheimat*, an origin, to ascribe to them cultural originality, necessarily has to negate the foreignness and fundamental unoriginality of all language and culture. As Mufti has it “nationalism is a fundamentally Orientalist cultural impulse.” Because it is Orientalism, the philological study of the Orient that has produced us as subject to “nation” and “civilization” (and neither is clearly distinguished from either race and/or religion).

Yet there is no escape from history, not until it is completely destroyed. History is our modern predicament, still with us in *postmodernity*, and perhaps in a much more suffocating way as ever, not least because it is now widely televised, social-corporate-mediatized, and every possible discourse is historicized—at the end we standardized humans live in *NEWS-HISTORY*. What can perhaps help us in the task of destroying history so as to make room for breathing in spaces colonized by historical time is to engage in the semantics of history. Not at all a “historical semantics,” but precisely the former, a semantic study of History’s operations in colonial space, say, a semantic study of historical translation—in other words, a semantic study of the dynamism of the otherness of Western Christian being as it appears in and from colonial space; say a semantic study of the counter-coin-side. The task is to undo, that is to say re-translate,

the chains of mystranslation and Latinization. However, since history constitutes much of what we have in common in the global community, or in Glissant’s terms much of what makes up the space of Relation even if as a negation of Relation (or as Romantic apart-heid), to conceive of this semantics of history as a satirical poetics could also at the same time restore a sense of temporal duration to the West, where there is a sense of the absence of history despite its overwhelming televisual and academic presence. The task of the satirical poetry of Relation is to study the semantics of historical mystification and mystranslation and translate them to Christian revelations, whereby also restore a sense of historical meaning to the Christian West. For we could go on forever producing alternate histories and finding new and novel and ever newer histories of unknown pasts and achieve nothing but fattening the historical library—colonial, postcolonial, people’s, etc. In other words, achieve nothing but extending History’s space of experience, the space of historical meaning, and the horizon of the disappearance of the peoples without history. The only possible history is a history of the West. What we need is a reversed Eurocentrism—and a satirical poetics of historical meaning rather than a historiography.
It is philology, in other words, that forbids mourning, because the invention of philology is the “appropriating event that has made us what we are, that of us which is ‘proper’ and which, in addition (but is it an addition?) has given us our literary language” (ATDP 20). To the extent that literature is “the twin sister of philology” (ATDP 15) it partakes in the impossibility of mourning. And, if it is true that “we know nothing today of mourning (that is, of catastrophic mourning),” it is because of philology, because of the philological invention and distribution of art, religion, and literature. For “from the beginning, philology has decided everything with regard to mourning ( . . . it has decided everything with regard to the disaster of which it is the mourning). Art would therefore be, in its function as well as in its content, entirely dependent upon this decision of philology” (ATDP 15). Ultimately, “that which defines itself as literature does so historically and only as a reaction to the onset of a philological project … Literature [finds itself] in a double dependence vis-à-vis philology” (102). – “Against History,” 153

Diversity, the quantifiable totality of every possible difference, is the motor driving universal energy, and it must be safeguarded from assimilations, from

---

179 The translation is made available by one of the translators here: https://www.academia.edu/14270870/Arabic_Manuscript_of_Muhammad_Kaba_Saghanughu_of_Jamaica
fashions passively accepted as the norm, and from standardized customs. – Poetics of Relation, 30

What I think he meant is, “look: the problematic of coalition is that coalition isn’t something that emerges so that you can come help me, a maneuver that always gets traced back to your own interests. The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it’s fucked up for you, in the same way that we’ve already recognized that it’s fucked up for us. I don’t need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?” –Fred Moten

Music is wounded kinship’s last resort. –Nathaniel Mackey

Ay dear, how to pray from within a national situation? How to become absent form national situatedness, from the globe, the projected union of national spaces, so that a nothingness may be found? How to leave the global community, end the Romantic apartheid? How to pray for rain? How to revive visions and aesthetics of relating to the earth in postmodernity, at the time of de-worlding at the point of the finger? How to pray for the eye to reborn when His Deafness appears on the television? How to remember Ishmael? How to mourn the world out of equal temperament?

Catastrophic mourning knows us—steals the breath, brings the onslaught of sigh on all

---

180 “The General Antagonism,” In Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2013), 140–41.
181 “Sound and Sentiment, Sound and Symbol” In Nathaniel Mackey, Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality, and Experimental Writing (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 232.
consolation, burns the liver, plants seeds of sorrow. Catastrophic mourning know us—we know how to *mur*, we know *muye*, we know *hura*, *chamari*, *sharveh*, *shin*, *zanjamura*. We know *zār*, we know *zāri*, we know *nowhe*, we know *mātam*, we know *saeta*, *hazāragi*, *esteqāse*, we know the blues. We know *lālā*, we know *liku*, we know *dashti*, *dashtestāni*, *lā elā*, *hey lelo leylā*, we know *shur*—but how to reason with the Strongest who neither wants our coffee and halvā nor leaves? How to convene to confound the global democratic majority, differentially out of place, out of the world, directed toward the Christian future and increasingly inhabiting it virtually, in *postmodernity* actually? How to descend to the world from THE PLANET OF THE NEW MEDIA?

The coalition begins in the ears. The problem today is certainly not lack of Communication, nor lack of Information—least so visual communication and information. The problem is that Communication doesn’t become talk, nor does Information become knowledge, in-knowing-formation. Nor is the problem lack of dissatisfaction, anti-capitalist anger, general antagonism, and also resentment. The problem is that wrath is mistranslated differentially around the world to create the Globe—that *wr-* is globally disoriented by the operations of the racial, the “religious,” the cultural. The problem is a generalized practice of not seeing, a generalized unfounded untruthful democratic hope, and we need the music of thought to open our eyes. I told you earlier, I am convinced like an idiot, as an idiot, that we need anti-
capitalist preachers, shouting intellectuals, and an opening to catastrophic mourning. I believe, I know, that catastrophic mourning knows us.

There are certainly the most important issues, the structural and institutionalized barriers to knowing: the reduction of study and the practices of seeking (and) knowledge to what is called “expertise;” and the separation of studies: disciplinary divisions maintained through the operations of a logic of blood that for example divides history from History, history from history, history from anthropology and sociology, the study of literature from the study of religion, culture from culture, Letters from Areas, Areas from Areas, and so on and so forth—historical cuts into global space: a generalized and multiplied barrier to knowing the world that I see most manifest in the hegemony of the historical method and the well-nigh banishment of poetry along with the Dark Ages from the general academic conception of literature, that otherwise manifests itself in narrowed down literary studies, whereby the student focuses on just one topic, or only one medium. Nothing seems as far from literature as such focused study. It is analogous to the differential approach to the analogue and the digital camera: within the current disciplinary divisions study is not conceived as a way of opening a window and letting the light come in and focus the student, but rather in conceiving very short term plans, more or less pre-determined fields of study, and a general approach in which one already knows where one wants to arrive at: ultimately land a
job on the marketplace of knowledge (I was going to say “truth” but it is a contested notion in the West). That material comfort is the ultimate goal of life, and the only true desire of humanity, is so deeply accepted that even literature is studied as a profession and directed from the beginning toward the academic marketplace. The market in America certainly determines the truth. To tell you the truth, there isn’t really much thirst for knowledge in the American university, there is a general problem-solving approach to knowing, and there is an abundance of anxiety and stress mostly due to the market-orientation.

However, what concerns my inquiry into the (im)possibility of praying, calling the (other)worldly forth, from within the conditions of national situatedness is the general separation of the academic space and the space of public intellectuality in the United States as the Sancta Sedes of the generalizing universal. Of course, this concerns the very small section of the American academy that does the work of critique. How else to call forth the coalition if not by public criticism and by socializing the knowledge that has been so largely concentrated and monopolized by the University? It is a truth that one can never have as easy and as open an access to books, essays, films, and the like as through a giant American corporate university. To tell you the truth I have no idea how to socialize this monopolized knowledge but I know that it is necessary to do so—not at all to “level it down” as the cliché criticism of critical knowledge would have us believe,
but precisely, the other way around: to socialize an elaborate language that opens up the space of thinking, knowing, and sensing the world to seek justice in it. I have dreamed of a revenge fantasy of sorts, not a utopian one, but something like a social-fictional plot for organizing large scale social strikes. *Nehzat-e tahrir-e rošānehā-yē zedde ejtemā*: social strike against the corporate antisocial media.

Concerning free speech, I am sure you have heard that American intellectuals may lose their jobs for losing their temper (and this is not at all a new thing, think twice). In Civilization One’s “freedom of speech” is predicated on One’s freedom to insult whoever One likes, and yet “rudeness,” lack of civility is punishable by the official knights of “freedom of speech.” The question is, what is at stake when intellectuals are “asked” to not shout, not curse, not blame “the people” or even certain states, not veil in solidarity, and are punished for shouting, cursing, blaming, and veiling, differentially in different national situations: officially by firing from universities in the Free World; and liberally, through tele-shaming, tele-analysis and tele-condemnation by civil intellectuals, in the not so free parts that strive to acquire civilization by being civil, claiming ancient civilization, and encouraging the “agency” of popular “votes” and all the while not seeking justice in any meaningful way? Add to that that the command or civil “demand” that intellectuals ought not to shout comes at a time that NEWS-HISTORY is not only screened, but also mute-screened.
A good place to see the working of academic civil rituals is in the generally accepted behavior in the American academy, a norm that can also amount to a code of conduct, whereby in order to make a critical remark about a study one has to first sweeten it with few good words. It is the academic equivalent of serve with a smile. Once in a conference I witnessed that a critical remark was followed in a collective effort—clearly an “effort”—by a whole round of very repetitive praise as if to cushion the atmosphere and make the speaker forget the sound of the critique. It was a ritual performance. The American academic space in general has a very low tolerance for clash. There is also very low tolerance for cutting into each other’s speech. As if no one ever had an urgent point. A very ordered approach to speech, wherein the possibility that the adversaries could at times go back and forth is generally avoided and debate is conceived as necessarily a matter of taking full turns. This normative civility also manifests itself in the cold tone of classrooms and the general tendency to refrain from challenging each other. The seminar in its daily reality is often not a place of debate but a space of making passing remarks and avoiding clash.

A careful observation of recent developments in the work of public intellectuality in Iran shows the hegemony of a desire for a similar code of civility. The normative social manifestation of this new code of conduct is the demand/command/cultural mantra: “don’t judge!”—and its academic version is something like “describe the
democratic agency of the people,” whereby the notion of “the people” is the keyword through which the intellectual removes himself from the society and into a properly “academic” descriptive position. What is asked is for the intellectual to be un-musical: to censor the semantic-affectivity of his speech. There is however not, or not yet, as massive a break between the realms of academic and public intellectuality in Iran (where the so-called cultural press also still exists and university presses are still more marginal) so the United States makes a better example here for the sake of my inquiry.

What is most forcefully avoided and thus negated through these rituals of civility and codes of conduct is the music of thought. One is asked to not embody one’s thought, to tone down the semantic-affectivity of critical thought. If there is one lesson to learn from the past revolutionary movements, it is that the music of speech has a most essential role in bringing about a sense of the necessity of justice and a desire to seek it. Think of the any number of public intellectuals and revolutionary leaders and the importance of the semantic-affectivity of their speech and the music of their thought. It is not without a reason that preachers make good revolutionary leaders. And under this unprecedented onslaught of the visual attack of technology and the generalized condition of sensory deprivation imposed through the increase of sensory stimulation to the point of desensitization, our ears might be our last resort. To take up the work of
public intellectuality and socialization of critical knowledge—and precisely as work, as socially necessary labor without pay—is a necessity at this time.

(z.) The world has to come back to the world from THE PLANET OF THE NEW MEDIA. We don’t need to occupy the new media, we need to migrate, and not to other new media, open source ones for example, but to the street; and not to disrupt the street either, at least not initially so, but to use the city as a meeting place. And not a meeting place for a politics of the instant, the overthrow of any state after which no one knows what to do (as Žižek likes to mention), but a meeting place for a politics of duration. Revolutionary violence is necessary at some point, but it has to happen after we know what we really want to do. So our descent from THE PLANET OF THE NEW MEDIA should take the form of a socialization of critical knowledge and public learning.

To relate to the earth, we have to first come back to the world from the Christian future and thoughtful violence and the music of critique is indispensable here. Glissant is clear about the need to “figure out” the acceptable limits of standardization when he writes that ‘Here, as elsewhere, one must figure out how much we have to consent to the planetary evolution toward standardization of consumer products.’ In order to figure out any consent we need to first be able to talk, particularly when it comes to such a general problem such as standardization. Can standardization be interrupted if the
AMERICAN forces of standardization are not confronted within America, and if Americans keep democratically enabling it?

Today, not only the states generally don't represent any anti-capitalist desire (and capitalism in the full-sense, as Glissant would say), not even in their national-representative presence in the circus of the United Nations; but also with the emergence of the touchscreen as a most effective pacifier and technology of childhood deportation to tele-Christianitas, an increasingly militarized humanity might be (I think is) in the process of absolute reduction to the eye of the finger and isolation on a nightmarish scale that no dystopian visionary has imagined yet. Simulation of 24/7 public assembly and the normative social-corporate-mediatic behavior that has emerged in the last decade has already reduced the society to a most useless resemblance of itself not to mention the large scale training in antisocialization and general narcissistic absorption in gadgets that has come with it.

If there is going to be politics in this world in a very literal sense we need to relearn how to relate in society in less visually hyper-mediated ways. In the West, let’s say, in the UNITED STATES, this can take a similar form to Occupy, but with a reversed logic. The existence of Occupy movements (in the broadest sense) in various places of the world indicates not only the existence of a general anti-capitalist desire, but also the willingness to undertake social action. The emergence of such movements is of course
immediately related to the emergence of the new social corporate media and the large-scale communicational networks which they enable—(but also think of the new academic barrier to knowing: “networking”)—to the point that the discussion not infrequently has been about the so-called revolutionary potential of these media, perhaps even more than to the social-corporeal capacity of those who gathered and occupied, not to forget the intellectual visits and human loudspeakers and the tahrirs of thought. It is not difficult however to see that the new social-corporate media, despite the instantaneous social mobilization they can enable, are themselves the new organs and platforms of late capitalism and generators of unreal amounts of money—not to mention that their primary function is not at all social, but antisocial, isolating, and pacifying. A total boycott of Facebook, Instagram, Tweeter, Amazon, Google (I know, I’m including all) and the like would cause an irreparable blow to the capitalist market at this point.

But how to do such a thing particularly when social-corporate-mediation is the most real unreal postmodern addiction? There has to be a replacement drug, a medicine. And the medicine is corporeal-sociality and loss. That is, loss of the social-corporate-media. Let’s call our first social strike Leave Facebook (and all the other companies that it includes like Instagram). It is a good site to begin to strike. The first step is to frame Facebook not in its capacity to let us “share” things infinitely, but in its capacity as a
corporation. There is need for an antagonistic economic analysis, akin to a night-letter or an samizdat, to show how a total boycott of Facebook and Company would affect the capitalist market in its totality, and how many capitalists, banks, insurance companies, advertisement companies, etc. etc. it will bring bankruptcy to. How would it affect the Wall Street in particular? Since we are in the UNITED STATES and the land of free speech, the authority of anti-capitalist intellectuals with a following would be indispensable for issuing night-letters and samizdats. This could help organize the anger and bring about the initial desire for a social migration from Facebook in an effort to organize for its total boycott. The night-letters would initially be made public on Facebook itself, but since there is good reason to think it will be censored, they should also be printed in large amounts and distributed on university campuses, around the city, in bars and coffeeshops, churches, mosques, synagogues, and any other place imaginable. In each city depending on the size and population, different places of gathering will be determined and mentioned in the night-letters and convenient times will be determined.

Leave Facebook would take the form of daily public gatherings, two or three hours a day, or as long as the gatherers wish. We count on each other. Those who participate in the Occupy movements and the usual agitators are the initial force of the social strike. There would be no clash with the law and law enforcement (unless they force it and we have to prepared for that), because these gatherings would not interrupt
the order at all. The target is the corporation in its monetary existence. Of course if the boycott is successful it would cause large scale unemployment and terrible economic crisis particularly for the United States, but war always has casualties.

The gatherings can happen in parks, city squares, places of worship, university campuses, or any other place that could allow us to gather without giving any reason for law to be enforced. And we will disperse until another day. There have to be those who put the time in and gather every day, like the occupiers, but only for a few hours. Let’s call them the ushers. They keep the place warm and make it known that there is a gathering happening here and everybody is welcome. The point is to practice patience, duration, and ongoing debate and socialization. Those who play music, bring instruments. Poets will read poetry. Those who can will bring food and drinks and books and essays and films and all sorts of medicine for each other—akin to the Occupy’s people’s library but more a practice of lending and borrowing and ongoing exchange. Phones, tablets, computers, all digital stuff will be forbidden and the gatherers of course have already quite Facebook and committed to the boycott. No weapons allowed—particularly in the United States severe measures have to be taken and everyone has to be disarmed. We can keep the weapons for when there is enough force and when we know what we want to do. These are the only laws: commitment to boycott, no gadgets, no weapons.
The daily social-corporeal gatherings will be the replacement drug for social-corporate-mediatized “gatherings.” Surely they will be livelier and can satisfy much of the needs that the new media satisfy in an abusive way. The most important thing is this: there has to be intentional intellectual participation. Just like Occupy there will certainly be the desire to be lectured by intellectuals with more authority. It has to go beyond that however. Those versed in critical knowledge have to organize and commit to visiting different gatherings in where they are on a regular basis. Different topics have to be incited to debate and the debates have to be guided as much as possible through intellectual interventions, raising questions, challenging claims and all that. There will be no code of civility, no demand to lower one’s voice, no demand to be emotionally in control, no censor, no safe space, no enforced consideration of traumas. The point is to learn to conflict, dispute, quarrel, and clash. And for this reason, the debates should not be limited to polite conversation. When disagreements arise the adversaries should be able to attack each other. Only verbally. If there is physical attack the rest will intervene and prevent physical violence. But if violence is verbal there is no need to prevent it. Instead we will join forces with justice and attack the unjust verbally. Since we will necessarily have different ideas of justice there will be many quarrels, and we only have to escalate them. No pacification needed. And there is no reason to imagine that quarrel would be the norm, it only shouldn’t be suppressed. The goal is to allow communication
to happen and to get the point across even if it is bitter. The point is to learn to enjoy the bitterness of truth. Humor would be indispensable. The task is to make room for the growth of a social-corporeal-critical language, and begin a conversation about the world, the global community, capitalism, angels and vampires, Christianity and crisis, “religion,” race, gender, class, how can we change it? what is there to do? what is the meaning of life? and all that—all the while that we enjoy each other’s less-mediated warmth, music, poetry, food and drinks, smokes, books, and revel in the prospect of bringing about large scale bankruptcy to capitalists and an unrepairable financial crisis for the whole system. To relate to elders and to children would infinitely help us. Of course there will be those who would join us themselves, but I imagine the gatherings would largely consist of younger people. We can go to the usual hang outs of elders, parks, squares, wherever they are, and if they too are willing to socialize with us, bring the gatherings to them.

With idiotic thinking and facile reasoning, I imagine that with persistence the gatherings can become more extended and more expansive. If they are there all the time and work for the dissemination of critical knowledge and orientation of wrath toward the institutions and instutionals who deserve it, given the extent of their reach and their use all over the world, organizing around a general boycott of the new media could allow us to bring about a social-corporeal anti-capitalist international, whose aim would
precisely be the mobilization of the force of *wr-* for the destruction of all nation-space, and the possibility for us to be distant and in Relation. There is no need to not use the Internet and its capacity for large scale communication, and it is here that the open source communicational platforms come to our help. We are anti-new media and anti-technoscientific reason, not anti-science or anti-technology. We have to use all that is in our disposal, the task is rather to wreak capitalism by striking against some of its most monstrous corporate-formations. But to be caught once more in *ANOTHER PLANET OF NEWER MEDIA* would be worse than any nightmare. The point is to come back to the world. To socialize an elaborate language in how many languages we know, to translate and tend to words, to work for the out-growth of languages, their in-growing-in-each-other; to cultivate other fruit, other eyes, another stomach, other teeth, another palate, to reorient sensibilities, to become not a community, but a scattered diaspora of foreign communities. For all, but particularly for the West, for the *UNITED STATES*, for rich nations, for the North, for Western Christendom, this would mean a loss. They have to let go of their current monopolies and have to largely change their habits of consumption and learn to be less comfortable.

In *IRAN* social strikes will take a different form. We have to do all we can to prevent the destruction that comes with further privatization. We have to defend the spaces of public intellectuality that are being increasingly defunded. From these spaces
we have to engage in a ruthless critique of mass culture and the dearest political ideals that have been turned into weapons of depoliticization. To make the inhabitants of large cities understand that they are not all of the population is a most important task. We also have to attack Hollywood form, the official desire for it, and the officialized film-critical discourse that feeds that desire head on. The defense of social cinema against the demand for more entertainment and narrativity, as well as its critique is necessary. If Hollywood is officially let in, the spaces of public intellectuality would be the only spaces from which to resist its destruction of whatever is left of IRANIAN cinema. There is definitely much less anti-capitalist desire in IRAN. So it has to be built.

It is a commonplace that there is no left left in Iran. There is nothing to do but continue struggling for it. The task is still translation. It has been for a time now, but with much ups and downs. As it has been suggested by Morad Farhadpour, translation has certainly been the most important form of thinking in Iran. It has developed into what Farhadpour calls *tafakkor-tarjome*, ‘thought-translation.’ This has to continue and thought-translation has to be cared for, tended to, and disseminated. However, we need to discuss the geopolitics of translation and extend the scope of translation to non-European letters in an organized effort. Translation of postcolonial, decolonial, and anti-colonial literature is a necessity. Most important perhaps is translation of the critical studies of philology and Christianity. It would clarify an enormous amount of cultural
mystranslations and confusions. This shouldn’t be understood as resisting Western letters. To deprive oneself of the knowledge and pleasures of any language would be an utter stupidity.

As for the new media, we can organize in similar ways to the UNITED STATES mutatis mutandis. But given the austere marginality of anti-capitalist desire it would perhaps be useless. However, if the situation goes on as it is, it will not be late that online stores and particularly that monstrous destroyer of bookstores, Amazon, or its equivalents are to take over. One has already emerged but it is not yet dominant. In the case of their accursed arrival we have to fundamentally resist them. If we can make the state to ban them we should do so, but that would be improbable. To defend the bookstore is not about defending a business. The streets in big cities where there is a concentration of bookstores are important places of socialization of knowledge. Bookstores are always joined with coffee shops, cinemas, theaters, and places of intellectual conversation. We cannot let books be taken away from the streets.

wr- r cons.-combination occurring initially in many words implying twisting or distortion, the earlier of which often have cogns. In other Germ. langs. Difficulty in pronouncing the combination is shown by ONhb. sps. with wur-, as by later wer- (xiv—xv). Loss of the w is shown by reduction to r in writing and by the converse use of wr- for r-, which appeared in xv and became frequent in xvi. Retention of w has remained locally when in standard Eng. it has been lost. {ODEE, 1014}
— a music of reserved spirituality through which the body suddenly expressed itself. Monotonous chants, syncopated, broken by prohibitions, set free by the entire thrust of bodies, produced their language from one end of the world to the other. These musical expressions born of silence: Negro spirituals and blues, persisting in towns and growing cities; jazz, biguines, and calypsos, bursting into barrios and shantytowns; salsa and reggaes, assembled everything blunt and direct, painfully stifled, and patiently differed into this varied speech. This was the cry of the Plantation, transfigured into the speech of the world. For three centuries of constraint had borne down so hard that, when this speech took root, it sprouted in the very midst of the field of modernity; that is, it grew for everyone. This is the only sort of universality there is: when, from a specific enclosure, the deepest voice cries out. —Poetics of Relation, 73-74

... that which protects the Diverse we call opacity. — Poetics of Relation, 62

There is a beautiful documentary by Saman Salur named Ārāmesh bā diyāzpām-e dah, ‘calmness with diazepam 10.’ It is about Namjoo and made before he became famous. They are friends I believe, Salur and Namjoo. The camera certainly tells that.
Namjoo has also played in another film of his, *A Few Kilos of Dates for a Funeral*, also a beautiful film. In its poetic character Salur’s cinema is much closer to the older generations of the new wave. He, Namjoo, is twenty-nine years old, he says in the film, and has come to Tehran recently—he talks as a rebel, from the depth of his heart, and with such sincerity one cannot expect from any established artist.

There is a point around the middle of the film, just after Namjoo and the film crew have paid a visit to the late Haj Ghorban Soleimani, a famed bakhshi from Quchan, Khorasan, with whom Namjoo had studied for a while—he, Namjoo, is sitting on the grass next to a small creek, with wild buttercups in the back. He is speaking about his encounter with the blues. “Ah! then sometimes suddenly these proximities are found [ye nazdikihāyi peydā mishe],” he says, moved, picking grass, really, really, one comes to **happiness** [ādam asan be sha’af miyād], meaning, one is just left there [ya’ni mimune], what! what! [e! e!] … The *gushe* [lit. ‘corner’—any of the several hundred pieces that make up the 12 *dastgāh*] of *salmak* [name of the corner] in *shur* [name of the dastgāh], my master, for example, Mr. Master Nasrollāh Nāsehpour, he has learned it from Mirza Abdollah, Mirza Abdollah had learned it from Mirza X, Mirza X had learned it from Mirza Y Khan [mirza igreg khan]… these are the root of root of the tradition [inā dige asl-e asl-e sonnatan], it couldn’t have even occurred to them [aslan dar mokhayyalashunam nemigojide] that there might be music outside Iran, let alone that they could have exactly known their pieces [che berese be inke bekhād daqiqan qete’āt-e unā ro khabar dāshte bāshe]. Listen, here is the piece, look in the *salmak* of *shur* we have … this is in the fourth interval of *shur*, it goes like this [he begins playing the setār and singing along] le lā li le lā le lā le le le le le le le le le le le le le li li li li li li li li li li li li li one two three four, then after four, alright, it has a vibration [bāzi ‘game’] here, it’s like this, the gushe of salmak, instead of going, for example, to *dashti* … [singing] one two three four five [tahrir], now without going on five, before five, it points
[to another note] here, just a little touch [nimche], they call it the gushe of salmak, it is a particular interval, it becomes like this, [begins playing and singing again], one two three four  di di diri diri di delāy láy dá lá láy láy láy láy láy he y láy now, we have the same exact thing in the blues scale, like this [begins playing again, this time nasalizes his voice and imitates a guitar],  da da da diyu diyu diyu da de re da di da dey dey diyu ra de da da da ra de da diyu ra de le le ley182

šff [shf] (Ar. inf.) another’s friendship taking away of one’s heart [shfte kardan-e dusti-ye kasi del-e kasi rá] (Montahi al-areb) (from Ānandrāj) (from Aqrab al-mawāred) (Nāzem al-attebā). to make fall in love [shfte gardānidan] (Tarjomān al-Qor’ān of Jorjāni) (Dahār). taking away the heart and making fall in love. love. (from Masāder al-loqa of Zuzani)  to make someone’s heart sick …  the arrival of something to the curtain of the heart and the blackness of the heart or the interior veil of the heart [rasidan-e chizi be parde-ye del va soveydā-ye del yā hejāb-e andarun-e del] (Ānandrāj) …  to rub tar on a camel …  the becoming-green of a dried plant [sabz-shodan gereftan-e giyāh-e khoshk] … this meaning with qeyn is mo’ajjame –cf. šqf  the resting of something on something [garār gereftan-e chizi dar ru-ye chizi]. the entanglement of something with something [darāvikhtan-e chizi be chizi]

182 The film is available here: https://youtu.be/l_wf-tCq-k
The scene I am referring to begins at 21:03
Double rape. A *new cruelty* would thus ally, in wars that are also wars of religion, the most advanced technoscientific calculability with a reactive savagery that would like to attack the body proper directly, the *sexual* thing that can be raped, mutilated or simply denied, desexualized—yet another form of the same violence. Is it possible to speak today of this double rape, to speak of it in a way that wouldn’t be to foolish, uninformed or inane, while “ignoring” “psychoanalysis”?—“Faith and Knowledge,” 89

4. On Hating Lovingly (addendum to qršť)

D’un sirventes far en est son que m’agenssa
No.m vuolh plus tarzar ni far longa bistenssa,
E sai ses doptar qu’ieu n’aurai malvolenssa,
Si far sirventes
Dels fals, d’enjans ples,
De Roma, que es caps de la dechasenssa,
On dechai totz bes. …
… Roma, als Sarrazis faitz petit de dampnatge,
Mas Grecs e Latis gitatz a carnalatge.
Inz el potz d’abis, Roma, faitz vostre estatge
En perdicion.

—Guillem Figueira

she is the counter-coin-side
of primitive terror; …

… her book is our book; written
or unwritten, its pages will reveal

a tale of a Fisherman,
a tale of a jar or jars …

—H.D. “Tribute to the Angels,” canto 39

Dear reader, I hate to continue this debate, but I have to go back one more time to section H to attend to some personal matters that I had left out of the earlier
discussion—and personal has never been this political. So let me get back one more time
to the issue of obscenity, and its relation to sex and war, and free speech, the free
market, and political democracy. Linda Williams, in the introduction to her book Porn
Studies published by Duke University in 2004, traces the trajectory of her “being moved
to teach pornography” to an essay by Catharine MacKinnon about Christian and Serbian
men raping Muslim and Croatian women in a concentration camp in Bosnia and filming
it. MacKinnon had written that “With this war, pornography emerges as a tool of
genocide,” and this was “the last straw” for Williams. She was ‘moved’ and felt
‘obliged’ to teach and defend pornography in response. The Serbs are never said to
be Christians, I am adding that for the sake of clarity. And before I go further, let me
clarify that I am neither concerned with the question of the “propriety” of teaching
pornography, nor am I interested in arguing for the legal censor of pornography, nor am
I concerned with the feminist sex-wars; rather, I am concerned much more directly with
sex and war and with Williams’s narrative of her personal motivation to teach
pornography, and what lead her to “realize” that she “had an obligation” to do so. She
felt the motivation and arrived to this realization of her obligation in 1993. Let us read
Williams’s narrative in full:

Although I had experimented with teaching some pornographic film in the past
in the context of a literature class, and though it was already clear to me that
moving-image pornography was the most enduringly popular of all the film
(and now video, dvd, and Internet) genres, it was not immediately apparent to
me that it belonged in the classroom. It was especially not apparent that I should
Teache it to young and impressionable undergraduates. Could one ask students to
analyze, historicize, and theorize moving images whose very aim was to put them into the throes of sexual arousal? When I teach other film genres (melodrama or horror), analysis of our responses of pity or fear form part of what we examine. Although I knew that it was possible to transcend the initial embarrassment of talking about sexual representations, I was not convinced that even the most highly motivated undergraduates could handle watching and analyzing moving-image or other forms of visual pornography.

Until 1993, the above had seemed compelling enough reasons not to teach pornography. However, in that year, Catherine MacKinnon wrote an article for *Ms.* that entirely changed my mind. She argued that the Serbian rapes of Muslim and Croatian women in Bosnia constituted an unprecedented policy of extermination caused by pornography: “The world has never seen sex used this consciously, this cynically, this elaborately, this openly, this systematically, with this degree of technological and psychological sophistication, as a means of destroying a whole people. . . . With this war, pornography emerges as a tool of genocide” (27). Reports by Muslim women that some of the rapes had been videotaped, transformed ordinary rape, MacKinnon believed, into a historically unprecedented atrocity. The real culprit in these rapes was, for MacKinnon, not the Serbian rapists, but the supposed saturation of Yugoslavia with pornography. Such an argument encourages us to shift attention from the real crime of politically motivated rape to the supposedly more heinous crime of filming it. Instead of concentrating on how Muslim and Croatian women became the targets of sexual crimes, MacKinnon preferred to blame pornography as their cause. We come away from her article with the impression that it is pornography that we must fight, not rape.

The notion that pornography raises the misogynous crime of rape to a new level of technically unprecedented genocide is also the premise of MacKinnon’s 1993 book *Only Words*. As in the case of Bosnia, it is the mechanically or electronically reproduced images, not the acts themselves, that are taken to be the most reprehensible. Pornography is conflated with genocidal rape, degradation, and abuse. It is never for an instant taken to be a genre for the production of sexual viewing pleasure. For MacKinnon, pornography is sexual abuse, pure and simple.

Now these are the kinds of arguments that can only work if one has little knowledge about moving-image pornography, its history, its conventions, and its various uses among very different kinds of viewers. For example, a look at the history of the representation of rape in hard-core, moving-image pornography, teaches that where rape was once represented from a masculinist “lie back and enjoy it” perspective in the old illegal stag films and in the early features, it has increasingly become taboo as women have become a component of the audience.
... Indeed, most forms of violence are now strictly taboo, to the extent that the usual fictional fistfights and gunfights of feature films are rarely seen in pornography.

I had endured the argument of Only Words without being moved to teach pornography, but the argument about rape in Bosnia was the last straw. This was not a theoretical argument about the evils of porn, it was an argument that encouraged taking action against pornography as if it were the same thing as taking action against rape. As such, it seemed to me to be thoroughly inimical to the goal of feminism. Though I could take satisfaction in Erika Munk’s subsequent, well-informed response to MacKinnon’s specious arguments, I knew that what had not been adequately countered was a facile fantasy about the root evil of pornography, one that can only persist in ignorance of the genre’s history and its close analysis. As a feminist scholar of moving-image pornography, I realized that I had an obligation to do more than write about, or engage in polemics about, pornography. As one of the relatively few scholars in the United States with some expertise in this area, I needed to do what other scholars have done: integrate my scholarship into my teaching. I did not do this lightly, for I was acutely aware of the aforementioned problem of the status of texts that seek to sexually arouse viewers. I resolved nevertheless to teach a course that would approach the history, theory, and analysis of the genre of moving-image pornographies as a way of understanding the various constructions of sexuality and the history of the representations of sexual pleasure. The goal was never to defend pornography against the sex-negative, sex-scapegoating MacKinnons and Andrea Dworkins of this world, but to promote a more substantive, critical and textually aware critique of the most popular moving-image genre on earth.¹

So, a whole book was ‘endured’ by ‘one of the relatively few scholars in the United States with some expertise’ in Porn Studies, but a seven page more or less journalistic essay about military genocidal rape of Muslim women by Christian soldiers (whose “religion” unlike that of their victims is insistently unwritten) in a concentration camp in Bosnia was ‘the last straw.’ ‘Mechanically and electronically reproduced’

¹Williams, Porn Studies, 10–12.
pornographic imagery had to be defended against ‘conflation’ with ‘genocidal rape’ which Williams also found to be ‘ordinary rape.’ MacKinnon however had clearly distinguished between genocidal rape and “everyday rape” by way of an analogy to “the Holocaust” and “everyday anti-Semitism.” ‘Ordinary rape’ itself comes directly from MacKinnon’s essay to Williams’s introduction, where the former asks “How do real rapes become ordinary on the evening news?”

(c.) MacKinnon’s essay itself is largely made of very graphic descriptions of rapes and sexual tortures as recounted by witnesses and victims, with added visuals, and it is not the focus of my discussion here—as mentioned before I am concerned with Williams’s personal narrative of her realization of her obligation to argue against the conflation of images and acts. It is however important to know as background knowledge that it would be difficult to read MacKinnon’s essay as primarily arguing against pornography rather than military genocidal rape. The two are really not distinguished from each other in her essay, and ultimately the essay is about “turning rape into pornography” and not pornography causing rape. There is a good deal about the common consumption of pornography by Serbian soldiers and unlike Williams, MacKinnon certainly does not think that the ‘mechanically and electronically reproduced images’ are totally irrelevant to the ‘acts themselves.’ What she describes is the genocidal and systemic use of rape and also mechanically and electronically

---

reproduced images of rape, the official use of rape to boost "Serbian morale" (in the words of a Serbian soldier), and ritualistic live reproductions of pornographic scenes by the soldiers (whose religion again is not mentioned, unlike the religion of their victims).

So, to say that the essay argues that ‘it is pornography that we must fight, not rape’ is more than anything Williams’s ‘impression’ as she puts it herself (though she attributes it to ‘one’). What is at stake in MacKinnon’s essay is that the camera and visual technology are used systematically and unambiguously as genocidal weapons (thus the subtitle of the essay: “postmodern genocide”) and also that “Some of the rapes that are made into pornography are clearly intended for mass consumption as war propaganda.”

She also establishes a relation between the defense of pornography and the rhetoric of freedom and free market. More precisely that the Yugoslav market that she claims was “saturated” by pornography “before the war” has been referred to as “the freest in the world,” and also that pornography is figured as the “emblem of democracy and liberation in post-Communist eastern Europe and increasingly protected as speech worldwide.”

Despite Williams’s claim that MacKinnon never takes porn to be ‘a genre for the production of sexual viewing pleasure,’ the latter does write in the beginnings of the essay about the “use of media technology, including pornography, to make hatred

---

sexy,”⁴ and also clearly documents at various points throughout the essay the viewing pleasures and enjoyments taken in the acts of sexual torture watched live and on mass by Christian soldiers. The difference perhaps is that MacKinnon does not necessarily think of such pleasures as “positive” under all conditions. My rather personal question is what is it that allows Williams to so easily forget and unread the documentation of sexual pleasure taken by the Serbian soldiers in raping, filming, and watching the rapes? What is it that allows her to insist so uncritically and with such bad faith on the separation of ‘mechanically and electronically reproduced images’ and ‘the acts themselves’? Could it be related to the insistent forgetting of the Serbian rapists’ “religion” as opposed to the insistent identification of their victims with their “religion”? And could such forgetting be related to ‘the various constructions of sexuality and the history of the representations of sexual pleasure’ in the context of the historical encounters and sexual representations of the Christian and the Muslim, the secular and the religious? Is such forgetting related to “freedom,” its enjoyments, and what it takes to endure it? To respond to this question let me turn away from the personal and toward the political—the counter-coin-side. But before I proceed know that according to Williams “pornography is a genre that seeks to confess the discursive truths of sex.”⁵

---

⁴ MacKinnon, 26.
⁵ Williams, Porn Studies, 8.
(c.) Let us begin with the year of the book’s publication, 2004, when Williams remembers 1993 and the essay about the filming of genocidal rapes in Bosnia, ‘the last straw’ that ‘moved’ her, made her ‘entirely change’ her ‘mind,’ and made her ‘realize’ that she has an ‘obligation’ to ‘teach porn’ as ‘a genre for the production of sexual viewing pleasure’—not that it really needed defense against the ‘sex-negative,’ ‘sex-scapegoating’ people of this world given its status as ‘the most popular moving-image genre on earth.’

I think that you remember that 2004 marks the coming into public view of another military sexual encounter between “secularism” and “religion”—this time in Abu Ghraib, Iraq. What has to be confronted for understanding the atrocities at Abu Ghraib is not the abuse of the human rights of the victims, for they apparently had none, but the clearly visible enjoyment and pleasure on the faces and in the poses of the American soldiers. The pleasure they take in torturing their prisoners, in watching them diminished and abused, the apparent joy in the soldier’s posing for the photos, their clear sense of unquestionable superiority, the massive emotional disconnect between the acts they are doing with their limbs and the sense of innocence registered in their smiles and their game-playing poses. “Freedom” and its ideology is what those posed-for photos register. The joy of the sexually free while imposing their freedom on their sexually unfree prisoners of war as torture—“the jouissance of torture,” Judith Butler calls it:
we can see here the association of a certain cultural presumption of progress with a license to engage in unbridled destruction ... If we ask what kind of freedom this is, it is one that is free of the law at the same time that it is coercive; it is an extension of the logic that establishes state power—and its mechanisms of violence—as beyond law. This is not a freedom that belongs to a rights discourse, unless we understand the right to be free of all legal accountability as the right in question.6

That is precisely the right to freedom that is affirmed and exercised by civilized countries, chief among them the United States, in our world. It is pure love, absolutely beyond law. It is the farce of our world that the free can never be held accountable for their unbridled exercise of freedom. Everything can be justified by the Strongest and as we have all seen torture is not at all an exception. The right to torture is in fact particularly reserved for the civilized and the free to be exercised on the unenlightened and the religious. For “torture … in this regard,” as Butler puts it, is “a technique of modernization,” that seeks to construct the self-image of the torturer as civilized, progressed, advanced, and sexually free through “the construction of the subject of torture … the Arab subject as a distinctive locus of sexual and social vulnerability.” And it is important, as Butler emphasizes, that the use of sexual torture in Abu Ghraib should not be understood as “aberrant individual acts nor as fully conscious and strategic goals of the US military,” but as acts that make “explicit a coercion that is already at work in the civilizing mission … a noxious deployment of the notion of sexual freedom.” What is

at stake in sexual torture is precisely a forced confession of a discursively constructed truth of the sexual unfreedom of the subject constructed through those very acts of torture. You cannot enjoy it, says the free smiling torturer, unlike us who can take so much pleasure in torturing you, pose for the cameras, and watch you naked and force you to do what you clearly don’t enjoy, look how sexually backward you are. Or in Butler’s construction of the tortures’ internal dialogue: “‘we embody that freedom, you do not; therefore we are free to coerce you, and so to exercise our freedom, and you will manifest your unfreedom to us, and the spectacle will serve as the visual justification for our onslaught against you.’” Confess the truth of your sexual backwardness, says the torturer, smiling, clearly having fun, and posing for the camera. That the torturers “read pornography or impose it upon their prisoners” is not at all irrelevant to their sense of “themselves [as] more sexually ‘advanced,’” and “these are not aberrant moments in war, but rather the cruel and spectacular logic of US imperial culture … barbarism of the civilizational mission.” Or should we refrain from ‘conflating’ the images and the ‘acts themselves’? Should we be moved to theoretically separate the viewing pleasures of the torturers from the sexual tortures ‘themselves,’ as it were, and teach the separation at the university? Is the remembering of 1993 accidental in 2004? What about the forgetting of the sexual viewing pleasures of the Serbian rapists?

7 Butler, 128–32.
(c.) But it is 2017 now, and we have progressed even more. So let me ask whether there is a relation—a psychic relation—between eye-fucking for the production of news, theoretical separation of the images of genocidal military rape from the acts themselves, democratically authorized sexual torture in defense of freedom, and the ritualistic defense on mass of the right to freely depict in image form—mostly derogatory caricatures—and insistently in relation to sex and war, symbols and figures of a religion that in our world has been turned into the very image of “religion”? There is a secular psychic investment in figuring “religion” as the very antithesis of modern civilization by means of depicting the adherents of a particular religion as backward, violent to women, homophobic (during the 19th and early 20th century as homophilic), enemies of freedom, etc. etc. It is crucial that what is defended furiously and on mass, ritualistically on the social-corporate-media, and whose defense is the very sign of being a civilized and a democrat, is not the exercise of a right to freely depict a state as backward, fanatic, dangerous, unenlightened, violent, and the like, but a people—that is why “religion” means “race.” That is how “religion” generally works in our world, it translates racially.

To close this section, let us look at the ways in which the defense of secularism and “free speech” appeared in the aftermath of the 2015 murder of secular French journalists by religious French murderers at the office of the French magazine Charlie Hebdo: the global defenders of “free speech” exercised their defense by social-corporate-
mediatically reproducing ad infinitum what had already led to murder. Not only a political affirmation of an unrestrained right to depict whatever one likes, but also an affirmation and celebration of the content of the very images that had already led to murder and that were found generally injurious not only by the murderers. In other words, a public predication of “my” right to “free speech” on insulting a particular group of people, that is to say a religion, or a race. Three more pieces from what followed to complete the image: immediately, the arrest of more than fifty people by the French government for “defending terrorism” as they put it, in other words, for speech that was found injurious to “secular” sensibilities; a massive increase in the print run and sales of the magazine and allocation of new funds to it; and finally later on and after a few more attacks, the (extra)legal imposition and enforcement of mandatory nakedness on “religious” women at the beach, not insignificantly beginning at the city of Cannes and spreading to other French beach cities from there. The reasons mentioned for this latter act of law enforcement included “respect for good customs, morality, secularism, and secular principles,” and also “compliance with hygiene and safety rules.” The “secular” police forced the “religious” women to take off their clothes on the beach and also generated money for the state by punishing the wrongly clad financially.
Having quoted a Marin’s description of the beauty’s appearance—“‘like a ballet-dancer,’” again, with “‘savage,’” image of the self, repeated two times, but this time recognized by the self, known as the self, causing the self to smile—the writer of *Trained to Kill* writes that

Through literature and film most of us experience a filtered parallel universe that allows only what we want to and are prepared to see. It gives those of us who want it a transient and safe identification with the person using a weapon against an enemy without us having to inhale the stink of death. Audiences for hard contact sport, in general, seek and cherish *duende* … it is real and its meaning often transcends the bounds of the physical.*

### III

**free** fri not in bondage or subject to control from outside. OE. *f्रो = OFris., OS., OHG. *fри* (Du. *vrij*, G. *frei*), ON. *fрир* (only in comp. *fриálz* ← *fриálz ‘free-necked’; cf. OHG. *fриálz* free man, OE. *fｒेळ*, Goth. *fриálz* freedom), Goth. *fриз* ← CGerm. *fризaz* ← IE *priyos*, the stem of which is repr. also by Skr. *priyās* dear (*priyā* wife, daughter), Av. *fryó*, W. *rhydd* free, OSl. *priyatjǐ* friend, OE. *fриgu* love, *f्रो�*, Goth. *fријοн* (see friend), OS. *фри* woman, ON. *Fригг* (cf. Friday). The primary sense is ‘dear’; the Germ. and Celtic meaning comes of its having been applied to the members of the household connected by ties of kindred with the head, as opp. to the slaves. The reverse development is seen in L. *liberī* children, orig. the free members of a household. **freebooter** *фри.бу:тау* piratical adventurer. xvi. – Du. *vrijbuiter*, fr-bueter; cf. filibuster. **free.dom**. OE. *фридом*; cf. Du. *vrijdom*. **free.holder**1. xv. tr. AN. *fraunc tenaut* ‘free tenant’, one who possesses a **free.hold** estate, AN. *fraunc tenement* ‘free holding’. **free** lance military adventurer. xix (Scott); later esp. fig. **freely**2. … **freewill** unrestrained choice, (theol.) power of directing one’s actions without constraint by necessity. xii; tr. Late L. *liberum arbitrium*. [ODEE, 375-76]

**bogus** bou.gəs (orig. U.S.) counterfeit, sham. xix. Appears first in 1827 applied to an apparatus for coining false money; of unkn. origin. [ODEE, 104]

---

*Nadelson, Trained to Kill, 65.*
To think “religion” is to think the “Roman.” This can be done neither in Rome nor too far from Rome. A chance or necessity for recalling the history of something like “religion”: everything done or said in its name ought to keep the critical memory of this appellation. European, it was first of all Latin.—“Faith and Knowledge,” 45

5. P/F, or, Filological Dislocation—On Becoming Nationally Situated

At present, “Islam,” and “the West” have taken on a powerful new urgency everywhere. And we must note immediately that it is always the West, and not Christianity, that seems pitted against Islam. Why? Because the assumption is that whereas “the West” is greater than and has surpassed the stage of Christianity, its principal religion, the world of Islam—its varied societies, histories, and languages notwithstanding—is still mired in religion, primitivity, and backwardness. – Edward Said

And what, again, is a religion? First of all, it is something that, essential to the Orientalist vision, “could be studied apart from the economics, sociology and politics of the Islamic people” (105). “History, politics, and economics do not matter, Islam is Islam, the Orient is the Orient” (107). – Gil Anidjar

“Thanks to modern scientific research, it has been shown that pure, unadulterated Christianity is nothing other than a branch of the venerable Buddhist religion.” – Richard Wagner to Franz Liszt, June 7, 1855

How did “we” become “Iranian”—nationally situated? What Mufti calls “the chronotope of indigenousness” is installed in Iran around the mid nineteenth century and a “nation-space” instituted through the acquisition of literary history that at the

---

1 Said, Covering Islam, 10.
2 “Secularism” In Anidjar, Semites, 61. Cited is Said.
3 Cited in Olender, The Languages of Paradise, 70.
same time is an acquisition of race. “Religion” is the key concept of this story, the key mystifier. Sir John Malcolm, a statesman and a historian, whose *History of Persia* (1815) sat the “signposts” for the “national history of Iran,” was on a mission to have a “‘blank’” in British colonial “‘Literature … filled up.’” “‘Persia [seemed] hitherto neglected,’” and Malcolm reminded his fellow East India Companions and other compatriots, that “‘It must, therefore, be allowed to be highly desirable’” to attend to it and extend the wings of history to cover the neglected. Malcolm’s work, a good illustration of the state-missionary knowledge that finds scientific signature with the development of philology, conceived of “‘Persia,’” writes Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, “(with its modern borders projected onto the past),” for the first time, properly as a national unite, populated by “Persians.” “Malcolm’s national category of ‘Persia,’” Zia-Ebrahimi continues, “was a geopolitical concept suited to policymakers and the maps of their imperial aspirations.” (Orientalism, as Anidjar keeps reminding, is Christian imperialism, and its other name is secularism). To fill the blank in colonial Literature, “religion” was deployed by Malcolm as an analytical concept that makes possible the knowledge of the “mind” of the race: “‘religion has always exercised a supreme power over the human mind.’” It is precisely the assumption of secularity that makes “religion” knowable—it’s analytical separation from all else, that in turn makes the object of the study measurable according to the theological temporality of secular “progress”: “‘the people is neither in a state of improvement, nor has it fallen behind their forefathers.’”
This is figured out by means of “an analysis of demography, the character of the population, a description of cities and roads, an assessment of the general stagnation of Iranian arts, crafts, and sciences;” as well as the description of “‘Persian’ ‘manners and usages’” divided by class—the population assumed to be “‘citizens’”—and also “a critical assessment of the position of women in society.” Malcolm’s History of Persia became Nāser ed-Din Shah Qajar’s bedtime story—read to his majesty of course.4

It was precisely this semantic space, this imperial dream, this notion of “Persia” populated by “Persians,” that was adopted by Iranian nationalists—the anti-“religion” secularists in particular. As mentioned before, the desire for an “original” and “pure” language is one of the first manifestations of the acquisition of historical meaning in where in this process becomes “Iran.” For “Iranians” to emerge as a nation on the global scene, that is the ‘politically uneven surface’ of the modern world, they first had to be figured as a unique people, with an original “language”—here the same as “race” and “culture”—and a “history”—the same as all the previous—of their own, that had to be invented by setting “it” apart from “Arabic.” Nothing particular—yet another episode of Romantic apart-heid the work of which was mainly done by Orientalist di-vision: the vision of the world as divided into civilizations, all ‘drawn into one fate.’ Baked by state-missionaries, many of whom the same philologists and comparative linguists who were convinced that “Muslims” and “Hindus,” for example, were distinct peoples. They also

4 Zia-Ebrahimi, The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism, 34–35.
argued (and apparently convinced the majority) that the Persian language and Persians as a race belong to the “Indo-European family” (as do “Hindus”), and Arabic and Arabs to the “Semitic family” (as do “Muslims”).

Before going further, to prevent post-colonial confusions and protests, in saying that the work was already done by Orientalists, by no means do I mean to mitigate, God forbid neglect, the “agency” of Iranian nationalists. They whole-heartedly and unthinkingly believed in and accepted the Orientalist ideology, actively used the scientific authority of philology, took into account their own class benefits, participated in various ways in political oppression and propagation of racial hatred (some call it “progress”), and were by no means passive recipients of Orientalism as a political ideology (and in fact a “religion”), but its active local agents.

The essential contradiction of the theological notion that “Iranians” are a particular people, belong to a certain “family,” have a particular providential role to play ‘in the drama of the world,’ and are destined to “progress” toward a particular paradisiacal “future” (one destroyed in the “past”), first and foremost becomes manifest in “Arabic” being imagined by the emerging nationalist elite of the time as the main obstacle on the way of progrès and the achievement of civilisation. Iranians, now imagined as an “Aryan” nation were being held back, as it were, by a certain phantasmatic “Semitic” linguistic, religious, racial, cultural, element that could be set apart and marked as “Arabic” (and also as “Islam”) with the application of philological
methods and imagination, and thus the purging of this particular scientifically produced phantasm emerged as the way forward, toward the Christian, that is to say secular and nationalist, future where “Iranians” would have finally realized their supposedly primordial “Persian,” “Aryan” potential.

Modern philology in this sense, (the broad sense of the term), is the source of a political imaginary on the basis of which many Iranians are able to imagine themselves (of course, as “agents”) as at once superior to and victimized by Arabs. Even a cursory look at the history of the dissemination of anti-Arab sentiments reveals that its tropes and imagery were directly borrowed from Orientalist literature and popularized over a century by nationalist intellectuals and later on through film and literature, and most importantly, by means of national education under the Pahlavis (1925-1979). In other words, these were not some atavistic hatreds indigenous to the society and then stirred and mobilized by a nationalist elite; quite the contrary, the secular nationalists learned this from Christian philologists and actively planted them in the society as Orientalist agents in their own right.5 Zia-Ebrahimi, as far as I am aware of the only scholar to have addressed at length the question of race and the Aryan discourse in Iran, calls this

---

5 Reza Zia-Ebrahimi goes through this history in detail in his book on Iranian nationalism, paying particular attention to the works of whom he calls “dislocative nationalists” and also the institution of modern literature (see below). Hamid Naficy very briefly documents tropes of anti-Arab racism in early Iranian cinema in Hamid Naficy, A Social History of Iranian Cinema. Volume 1, the Artisanal Era, 1897-1941 (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). Negar Mottahedeh would however have us believe in no less than Comte de Gobineau’s “insights” that such hatreds were already popular sentiments in the 19th century, if not indigenous to the society, and the inhabitants of the territory that later became Iran already recognized themselves as “Persians” through their hatred of “Arabs.” In fact Mottahedeh accepts Gobineau’s claims throughout her book without slightest critical intervention. See Negar Mottahedeh, Representing the Unpresentable: Historical Images of National Reform from the Qajars to the Islamic Republic of Iran (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008).
political imaginary “dislocative nationalism,” which he defines as an “ideology” and a modality of “reading … Iranian history” that “dislodges Iran” as a space of political action “from its empirical reality.” Dislocation in this sense is “an operation that takes place in the realm of imagination.” It is “a racial lens” that “allow[s] for imagining kinship between Iranians and Europeans” at the same time that it provides “a racial formulation of difference and opposition between Iranians and Arabs.” Dislocative nationalism for example manifests itself in fantastic contemporary formulations according to which the contemporary rulers of Iran could be imagined as “Arabs” or “of Arab descent” and “Islam” in “Iran” can be imagined as an invasive and colonizing element and the source of all national misery. “Dislocation,” Zia-Ebrahimi writes further, “is the attempt, through the historicist discourse of nation and race consolidated by the pseudo-scientific arsenal of Aryanism, to dislodge Iran from its Islamic and Eastern reality and artificially force it into a European one.”6 We have to remember however that philology certainly belongs to the history of science. More about this later.

News-historically speaking, “dislocative nationalism is a modern ideology without any antecedent before the late nineteenth century” that emerged … sometime between 1860s and 1890s, and later became integrated into the official ideology of the Pahlavi state (1925-1979). It became part and parcel of the teaching of history in the national curriculum for several decades and shaped the understanding of history, nation, and race of generations of Iranians. It is therefore deeply embedded, and its influence in Iranians’ identity and self-

6 Zia-Ebrahimi, The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism, 5, 166.

284
perception seems, for the foreseeable future, indelible. Moreover, its core doctrine enjoys remarkable stability. It is a lively ideology, and since the 1980s it has become the most conventional form of secular opposition to the Islamic Republic. Even the officials of the Islamic Republic themselves do not seem to be immune from its appeal and quite frequently tap into its imagery to shore up their patriotic credentials. That sediments of dislocative nationalism are to be found on both ends of the political spectrum is only testimony to the dominance of this ideology in modern Iran.7

At the “heart” of dislocative nationalism there is the “dissociation between Iran and Islam”8 that figures the former as a now corrupted but essentially high ranking member of world Civilization and the latter as an epitome of barbarism and the main cause of the former’s corruption and “backwardness.” The roots of this political imaginary have to be sought in what Edward Said has called “‘a secular post-Enlightenment myth whose outlines are unmistakable Christian,’”9 namely Orientalism, that as Zia-Ebrahimi puts it “reinterprets the advent of Islam to Iran as a rupture,”10 as an “Arab invasion” (as it is frequently said to this day). “Religion“ is the key mystifier here. It Orients antagonisms and mistranslates inequality.

There is a long history of post-Enlightenment European identification with pre-Islamic “Persia” and particularly the “‘oldest [religion] in the world’” (original bracket), that is “Zoroastrianism”—which as the -ism indicates is itself a modern invention as one among many other “world religions” (really, another version of the venerable religion of

7 Zia-Ebrahimi, 3.
8 Zia-Ebrahimi, 5.
9 Cited in Anidjar, Semites, 30.
10 Zia-Ebrahimi, The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism, 85.
Christianity, like Buddhism, Hinduism, Islamism, etc.). This identification is concomitant with a hatred of “religion,” in general as it were, and “Islam” in particular—structurally associated with “Arabs,” “despotism,” “the sword,” and male sexual excess. Early anti-clerical secularists, and I am reading Zia-Ebrahimi here, like Voltaire—(who, as Anidjar likes to remind us, to criticize Christian clerics wrote a play about Mohammad, similar to Freud who wrote a book about Jesus and named it after Moses)—Diderot, and Holbach revered Zoroaster who was also included by “‘Sylvian Maréchal in his Dictionnaire de Athées.’” Montesquieu believed that Zoroastrianism “caused the kingdom of Persia to flourish,” and provided “women” in particular with “‘sweet liberty’ and ‘equality’” which “‘the Mohammedan religion,’” the image of “‘despotism’” par excellence, took away from them. Less anti-Christian figures were no exception: Herder, for example, who saw “ancient Persia” at the glorious beginnings of human civilization, also saw “Islam” as the end of whatever was good in the world. Malcom considered pre-Islamic Iran to have been “‘well advanced in all the arts of civilized life’” and a place of “‘happiness and prosperity,’” but was emphatically clear that “‘no Mohamedan nation [has] attained a high rank in the scale of civilization.’” Edward Brown whose Literary History of Persia is still a most referenced source in Iranian universities thoroughly identified Zoroaster and Christ “‘the great proof of the truth’” of whose “‘teaching is that it advanced in spite of the sword, not by the sword.’” The “history of its [Zoroastrianism’s] origin, the cruel fate of its founder, the tortures joyfully
endured with heroic fortitude by its votaries all remind[ed Brown] of the triumph of Christ, rather than the triumph of Muhammad.” Jean-Baptist Tavernier also saw Zoroastrianism as close to Christianity.11 Adolphe Pictet, a providential prophet in his own right, saw in Zoroastrianism “an early form of monotheism outside the Semitic tradition,” and Sylvian Lévi saw in Zoroaster a Persian “rival to Moses.”12 It was precisely in the semantic space instituted by this discourse and its anti-Arab, anti-Semitic imagery that early Iranian dislocative nationalists or Persian chauvinists, whichever you prefer, like Mirza Fathali Akhundzadeh and Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani found their historical agency. The mystranslative capacity of “religion,” that is to say “race,” is put in use to found a nation-space, a racial, that is to say global, community. For all their hatred of “religion” (“Islam” and “Arabs”) Akhundzadeh and Kermani and the long list of their followers, loved “Zoroastrianism” and saw in it not as much a “religion” as the sign of the glorious past of a “civilized race” (that is, “Persians”).

The philological distinction between “Aryans” and “Semitics” from its beginning is a distinction between “religion” and “politics.” Ernest Renan, Anidjar writes,

emphatically considered Hebrews, Arabs, and other Semites as a race locked out of any political organization, one frozen in the past of a religious desert, a race that produced nothing but the strictest and driest of monotheisms … There is an abyss (not a clash of civilizations, since Semites do not constitute one), a chasm between Aryan and Semite, the chasm that separates religious origins from

---

11 Zia-Ebrahimi, 85–90.
12 Olender, The Languages of Paradise, 98–99.
political growth ... If the Semites invented religion, the Aryans invented politics, science, the arts, and really everything else.\textsuperscript{13}

It was the same for Rudolph Friedrich Grau, who as Maurice Olender writes, had set himself the task of bringing Aryans and Semites together—a “reactionary” of sorts who saw in the all too common “praising of the Aryan values” a clear threat to the Church. He saw Christianity as a “timeless Semitic portion” of “Indo-Germans,” as he called the Aryans, “notable for the constantly changing quality of their [values],” as opposed to the Semites who “were notable for the static quality of their values,” set, and in fact revealed, once and for ever—this of course made the Semites “unfit for political life.”\textsuperscript{14}

This was the basic philological distinction: stagnant monotheists and dynamic polytheists, the religious and the political; Semites, “settled in one place and thus attached to their languages, cultures, and religions,” and Aryans, the true agents of “universal historical progress.”\textsuperscript{15} Despite their sever attachment to place, however, the Semites were always moving, the eternally nomadic tribe that they were. Their “monotheistic civilization was nomadic at heart,” and this tribal existence, again, according to Renan, caused their society to be completely devoid of “political or judicial institutions.” Aryans on the other hand, Adolphe Pictet tells us, “lived in ‘fixed’

\textsuperscript{13} Anidjar, Semites, 30–32.
\textsuperscript{14} Olender, The Languages of Paradise, 110.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 12.
dwellings” from the beginning, as it were. The story is basically always the same, Aryans and Semites, politics and religion.

It is in this light that we have to read the history of “Iranian nationalism” which is the same as the history of “Iranian modernity” and “Iranian secularism”—and “religion,” that is to say “race,” is the key mistranslator in this history, the key dislocater. Iranian dislocative nationalists saw and still see in pre-Islamic Persia a world-class Aryan civilization destroyed by the advent of “Islam” elevated to the position of the very “mark” (in the sense of the theologically privileged sign) of “backwardness” and the main barrier to political “progress.” The early nationalists definitely knew “Islam” and “Arabs” as “Semitic,” but over time the word “Semite” and its derivatives have disappeared from public discourse in Persian; though “Aryan” still has a salient discursive and cultural presence. It is within the space of this historical semantics that the two 2009 slogans I mentioned before—the joint political demands for Aryan secularism (“our race is Aryan / religion and politics are separate”) and Aryan separatism (“neither Gaza, nor Lebanon / may my life be sacrificed for Iran”)—find their full sense. The rejection of “Gaza and Lebanon” of course comes with political sympathy

---

16 Ibid., 68, 97.
17 Anidjar, Semites, 14.
18 Anidjar emphasizes the disappearance of both “Semites” and “Aryans” from political and religious discourse in English and presumably other European languages, all the while that “anti-Semitism” is persistently in use. In Persian too, despite the persistent cultural relevance of “Aryans” there are no “Semites” (neither “anti-Semitism” which is “yahudi-setizi,” thus “anti-Jews” rather than “anti-Semites”). “Arabs” however definitely translates “Semitic.” The Aryan discourse is also in use in India, particularly among the Hindu nationalists, and also in Tajikistan where the year 2006 was called the Aryan year. On a relevant note, TÜRKSOY, The International Organization of Turkic Culture, declared the year 2012 the year of Mirza Fathali Akhundzadeh.
for Israel (but does that need mentioning?). The reason for the separation of “religion” and “politics” is “our race” that is “Aryan;” and secularism at once requires the declaration of racial separation from “Arabs” (the eternally religious race) and readiness for nationalist sacrifice to move forward toward the paradise of democracy and free market—really, a philological-news-historical declaration of belief in “religion,” mistranslated as “secularism.” In 2009 the “progressive” nation found no other way to the New Paradise of “free” enterprise, “political” democracy, and “human” rights, but the same old modern way: deny kinship with Arabs, affirm Aryan religious, that is to say political, separatism. It was History that spoke in the streets of Tehran. And it was History that had fun in Abu Ghraib.

III

The theologico-political violence of (the philological-historical desire for) “civilization” (these days mostly called “democracy”)—a future firmly rooted in hypothetical pasts, actively propagated by nationalist agents—is best manifest in three realms: alphabet reform and language purification, nuclearization of family and the institution of romantic love, and sedentarization and murder of nomads. I will go through each of these briefly.
As for language purification, enough about this inanity has already been said. Another manifestation of the same confusion is the entirely modern conviction that the Persian alphabet is “difficult” to learn and even is an “obstacle” to learning, especially because there are more letters in the alphabet than there are phonemes in modern standard Persian. That is, there is no one-to-one relation between the graphemes and the phonemes established through the phonological analysis of modern standard Persian, and thus the letters of the alphabet are not “representative” of the phonologically perceived and described sounds of modern standard Persian. In effect the Persian alphabet, scientifically produced as “Arabic,” is figured as an obstacle to “proper education” that hinders the nation’s upward mobility on the scale of civilization. In other words, the alphabet is figured as a main cause of “backwardness” and in this sense it constitutes an-ever-returned-to site of cultural desire for “reform,” “change,” and polemic tension as many scientific linguistic arguments are still put forth that explain why the current alphabet is particularly “imprecise,” “not efficient,” and most of all “difficult to learn.” The suggested solutions range between throwing away the “extra” letters in an attempt to establish a one-to-one relation between the letters of the alphabet and the phonemic inventory of modern standard Persian; or the adoption of the Latin alphabet which would just make everything “easier” in the our age of informatics. It is often suggested by the opponents that that the change of the alphabet would cause
unnecessary cultural disruption and also that no one-to-one relation exists between phonetic and graphic representation even in languages that already use the Latin alphabet. What is never asked however is whether the current alphabet is really “difficult” to learn and if not what cultural anxiety precisely causes the perception of the alphabet as an obstacle to learning and “progress”? In other words, what does the desire for reforming the alphabet mask? Is there a relation between the hatred of “Arabs” as a constitutive trope of Iranian modernity, modern Persian literature in particular, and the desire to purge “Arabic” letters (and words)?

What is truly at stake is modernity as racial anxiety. The attempts to purge “Arabic” words and “change” and “reform” the supposedly “Arabic” alphabet are ritual enactments of the desire for racial purity. Modernity demands a pure language, strictly monolingual—an “official” language. Historically speaking, for “Iranians” to be invented as a nation, they had to be invented as a community of blood, a community of substance. The way for this was already paved by philology and the notion of “linguistic families.” “Humanity”—as you remember, itself extracted from ‘the humanity of Christ,’ ‘the head of the whole human family’ in whose loving embrace one could ‘finally be what one should be’ (emphatically ‘neither Jew, nor Arab’) —was imagined by nineteenth century philologists and race scientists as having once been “divided into families, each different from the others” in the distant past. In this philological vision of the longue durée of human history the “racial distinctions” of these “families,” their
substantive differences, constituted “‘the secret of all the events in the history of
humanity,’” as put for example by Renan. Over time with the advent of ‘world religions’
these blood-familial distinctions were said to have been gradually generalized and
transformed into “‘historical facts.’” To hear the rest from Renan: “‘Language thus
virtually supplant race in distinguishing between human groups, or to put it another
way, the meaning of the word ‘race’ changed. Race became a matter of language,
religion, law, and customs more than blood.’” Renan indeed suggested “that the term
‘linguistic races’ be substituted for ‘anthropological races’”19—and why not “historical
races,” given the common philological derivation?

The advent of modernity demanded a New Community, a racial community
defined by ownership and hysterical protection of its “language” which came to be
defined as “Persian” for the whole country—that there are a plethora of other languages
spoken in the territory whereby defined as “Iran” notwithstanding. Philology made it
possible for national Iranian territory to be imagined as a home lost to “Arabs”—with an
imagined continuous history of nationally conscious “Persian” inhabitants—which had
been subjected to a process of “decay” from the time of “Arab invasion” and conversion
to Islam historiographically reconstructed as a “forced” conversion from
Zoroastrianism.

19 Olender, The Languages of Paradise, 58–59.
Secular nationalism was about the invention of a community as guardians of a sacred substance, and the substance here was language, that is to say race. Philology provided the imaginary in which “language” could be figured as a “familial” substance. And philology too provided “religion”—and the “religion of the sword” in particular—as an explanatory concept through whose deployment what was scientifically produced as “Arabic” could also be historically imagined as remnants of an originary traumatic “invasion,” rather than, for example, borrowings over a long history of cultural contact. In effect a traumatic beginning had to be installed in the national imagination. When the Iranian secularist and nationalist elite decided that the way to “modernity” passes through purification of the “Persian” language from “Arabic,” they were indeed defining “Persian” as the substance of this new national community. Separating “Persian” from “Arabic” was and is the method of re-enacting this newly acquired “trauma of origin,” necessary as it is for owning the Persian language as a “national” language to be purified after the fact of the belated realization of its “impurity” in order to invent the “original,” “pure,” substance of the New Community to be then protected and preserved. Indeed to decide that the linguistic elements marked as “Arabic” are in fact other than “Persian,” to decide that they are “alien” to a language whose history is almost entirely in Arabic letters, is not but to subject that language to a “blood test” and then an “ethnic cleansing” of sorts. In fact the Persianist ideology, the Persian nationalism that emerged from the anti-Semitic, anti-Arab, anti-Islamic, historical and
philological labor of Christian Orientalists and Iranian secularists is at the root of the political oppression of most non-Persian speakers (most of whom are Persian speakers too) in contemporary Iran—a story that begins right after the counterrevolution that emerged from within the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 when the Persianist elite of the center, having just become the members of the first parliament, sent Russian brigades to villages and small towns to forcibly shut down their (mostly non-Persian speaking) soviets.20

P.

“We are often reminded [but are we really? by whom?] of the countless procedures which Christianity once employed to make us detest the body [and, more recently, religion]; but let us ponder all the ruses that were employed for centuries to make us love [that is, also, hate] sex [and indeed religion], to make

20 On the Constitutional Revolution see Janet Afary, The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). It is very important to remember—and this is so often forgotten today—that the Constitutional Revolution was by no means a monolingual affair and its most important centers were in the margins—Afary documents these with meticulous detail. "Religion" however is consistently deployed as a mystifier in this book. After an established tradition Afary reads all non-secularist modernist discourse as a sort of intentional deceitfulness. This was done by these really, as it were, secular intellectuals "to protect themselves from the wrath of the more orthodox 'ulama who had the power to instigate a mob against them. At the same time religious dissidents believed that by expressing their progressive ideas under the guise of traditional religious beliefs they would have a better chance to attract a mass following. Such practice had been the agreed-upon political tactic of the nationalist leaders ... [and] dissent intellectuals ... were willing to deemphasize, or even hide, their strong secular and modernist views" (23). Framing the discourse of many constitutionalists in this way Afary basically figures them as liars and frauds, and to keep the religious/secular binary intact, historiographically reconstructs all heterodoxies as masked secularism. In this she also sides, even if unconsciously, with the potential mob raisers who would accuse the heterodox of deceit and propagating lies. On the other hand, throughout the book when the so-called "orthodox 'ulama," particularly the land owning 'ulama, act on the basis of their class interest and side with the king, this is not registered, for example, as deceitful use of "religious" authority for "secular" gain. Afary even goes on to suggest that many who have been called "ulama" shouldn't really be called so because they might have been less orthodox than the term “ulama” suggests—with this Afary demands that “ulama” (in English) be given a fixed meaning according to an Anglphone academic orthodoxy, rather than for example, be used how the word might be used in Arabic, Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, or Urdu (cf. the Wikipedia entry for “ulama” in these languages vis-à-vis English). There were many “low-level clerics” in the constitutional revolution, Afary complains, who were "recognized ... as religious figures instead of social democrats" (44, my emphasis)—as if the two were mutually exclusive.
the knowledge of it desirable and everything said about it precious.” – Michel Foucault, cited with brackets in “Secularism,” p. 46

“the person of the Antichrist is at the same time the pope and the Turk. Every person consists of a body and a soul. So the spirit of the Antichrist is the pope, his flesh is the Turk. The one has infested the Church spiritually, the other bodily. However, both come from the same Lord, even the devil.” – Martin Luther

“When Thomas Jefferson accused King George III in the Declaration of Independence of scheming to reduce Americans ‘under absolute Despotism,’” writes Timothy Marr, “he spoke from a political tradition that identified the purest form of despotism as that held by the Ottoman Sultan over his supposedly powerless subjects.” This was part and parcel of a sort of American dislocative nationalism. One that constructed Britain as the Orient and the British as “Turks;” accused them, for example, of “coresponsibility for the slave trade,” and thus projected an image of America as a virtuous republic of democrats. Or, by projecting the image of “despotism” on the Orient, that is to say on “Islam,” sought to construct itself as “republican” and “democratic” by seeking distance from the phantasm of Oriental despotism. “To establish their new nation firmly on democratic grounds,” Marr continues, “worldly Americans had to demonstrate their distance from, and superiority over, the despotic excesses of the old world.” Among many other things, the “antidemocratic and

---

21 Cited in Marr, The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism, 92.
antichristian” “Islam” was associated with “illicit sensuality,” and the “perverse excesses of the male Islamic despot” came to stand as a figure of horror at the degeneration of “liberty … into the vice of passionate license.”

The main thinker of this tradition of course was Baron de Montesquieu who had already established the link between “despotism,” “luxuries of the harem,” and the rule of “fear” and “terror,” as opposed to “virtue,” “honor,” and of course “law.” The despot “was a slave to his own inordinate passion,” “atrocious’ and ‘monstrous.’” So the best way for a republican and a democratic nation “to bolster their own sense of cultural,” that is to say racial which is to say religious, “superiority,” was to counter despotism by promoting family values, lest the emerging American nation would fall into “devotion to idols of fashion” and the country would “devolve into an ‘empire of passion.’” From the efforts to counter despotism there grew an enormous body of Orientalist literature in America, published as books and in the free press, that has been called both a “secular counterpart to scripture,” by Marr, and “‘the first body of religious fiction in America,’” by David Reynolds whom Marr quotes. These works of secular or religious imagination, central to which is what Marr calls an “‘imperialism of virtue,’” sought to conquer imaginary Oriental despots in their effort to universalize the relevance of American domesticity, “the democratic vigor of American gender performance that celebrated the fortitude of female virtue and the viability of male valor,” as well as “both democracy

---

22 Marr, 20–22.
23 Marr, 24–25.
and Christianity” on a global scale. Many despots converted to both “democracy and Christianity” in these religious or secular, but for sure democratic and republican, stories and were made to realize by virtuous Christian women how they had treated their wives as slaves, and were introduced into proper romantic marriage characterized by the “equality of devoted love between two consensual citizens.” Despotism was precisely that which made “egalitarian love between men and women” impossible, and “disrupted the social process of moral home building”—it “stifled” the “possibilities of democracy at home.” This was again a tradition transmitted by Montesquieu.

“‘Everything comes down to reconciling the political and civil government with domestic government,’” he had written in The Spirit of the Laws. The task of keeping the nation from falling into excessive Oriental sensuality and despotism in America was thus given to “‘republican mothers’: ‘domestic economists’ and ‘models of virtue.’”

Dislocative nationalisms bring far away nations close—they seek to unite them. Iranian secular nationalism is another manifestation of the same tradition, that is, Orientalism, after it had “‘accomplished its self-metamorphosis from a scholarly discourse [and republican fiction] to an imperial institution,’ its self-metamorphosis from Christianity to secularism.” For Iran to become nationally situated there had to be nuclear family and romantic marriage—or, the story of “the veil.”

24 Marr, 34–36.
25 Marr, 39–43.
26 Anidjar, Semites, 49.
“Religion” is the key mystifier here. Deployed as an explanatory concept, “religion” makes possible a “translation” of “the veil into a sign of societal backwardness.” The work for this had already been done by the philological invention of the Aryan and the Semite. The veil was read as a sign of “Arab invasion” and the destruction of the “Aryan civilization” of pre-Islamic Iran; and political progrès predicated on Persianization, that is to say, secularization. You remember that Montesquieu believed that women enjoyed ‘sweet liberty’ and ‘equality’ before “Islam”—so did Akhoundzadeh and Kermani and many others; many still do. It was this co-operation of “race” and “religion” that made possible, and makes possible, the mystranslation of “the veil,” philologically produced as “Arab,” to a sign of “backwardness,” philologically explained as racial inferiority. But secular nationalists did believe alongside Renan, that “Although subjugated by a Semitic religion, Persia always maintained its right as an Indo-European nation.” Dislocated as they were, Orientalist nationalists imagined the antagonism to be with “Arabs” rather than Christians—their Aryan “family” who had already set up the globe as the scene of an eternal war between “the Aryan” and “the Semite,” “political progress” and “religious stagnation”: “two poles of mankind’s movement,” Renan had written, “and their

28 Zia-Ebrahimi, The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism, 109.
antagonism defined nothing less that the world in which we live,” reads Zia-Ebrahimi.²⁹

It was that “right,” their “right as an Indo-European nation” that secular nationalists, or local Orientalist agents, sought to confirm by purging “Arabic” words, arguing for alphabet reform, and also demanding a fundamental reform of women, as it were, so that they be reinvented as proper objects of romantic love.

The sense of national backwardness presented itself, as it were, to Iranian nationalists, primarily in women and as women, as such, as it were. Women’s language, their bodies, their wisdom and knowledge, all were seen as manifestations of abject backwardness. To be transformed into “the scientific mother and the learned companionate wife” as Afsaneh Najmabadi puts it, the “modern woman” was required to “[acquire] a healthy body, proper ethics, and correct manners.” It was only after acquiring “a veiled language, a disciplined body, and scientific sensibilities,” that the nationally situated woman (preferably, then forcefully, unveiled, then again veiled), “could be imagined as a citizen,” and qualify as romantically lovely.³⁰

Secularism, that is to say Orientalist nationalism, also made Iran’s backwardness appear through ‘institutional incitement to talk about sex,’ to remember Foucault’s phrase. Deployed as an explanatory concept, “religion” incited sex into a discourse of pathologies and perversities—and “religion” was offered as an explanation.

²⁹ Zia-Ebrahimi.
³⁰ Najmabadi, Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards, 205, 152–53. Akhundzade, perhaps the first to push for alphabet reform, also connected the reform of the alphabet with women’s progress. If the alphabet was made easier and more efficient, as it were, women could “become literate and then become teachers to their own kind” (cited in ibid, 183).
"Religion" explained "sexual perversity," identified as "the vice," "unnatural love," "pederasty," "homosexuality," and suchlike. The veil had not only come to stand for male sexual excess realized as imprisonment and deprivation of women from proper education and thus their transformation into all that modernist sensibility found reprehensible; it had also come to be seen as the most visible sign of a system that caused men to engage in "the vice," particularly because "Islam" or "religion," kept women away from men and from their sight. So the nationalist seculariat demanded women to shine and be spectacular, satisfy "men's natural desire to see women," thus help them cure national backwardness. Many nationalist intellectuals felt compelled to talk sex and condemn "unnatural," (or is it "unnational," then "international"?), "love," as a most reprehensible sign of backwardness inflicted on the national body by "religion," or "Arabs." Through incitement of sex to national discourse, secularism effectively made sex speakable as pathology.

31 Kermani cited in Najmabadi, 56. It is also within this context that one has to read, if one really has to, that gem of a book Kamran Talattof, Modernity, Sexuality, and Ideology in Iran: The Life and Legacy of a Popular Female Artist (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011). An ardent believer in backwardness theory, Kamran Talattof coins, in this unforgettable book, the word "modernoid" suggesting that "Iranian society has failed to achieve modernity and ... as a result, its culture has become unstable, changing constantly in a chaotic fashion and yet always lacking a modern conceptualization of sexuality ... In such modernoid society, for example, pious religious men in power can use advance technology to impose a medieval notion of sexuality on society and in particular on women" (9). One prime sign of modernoidity is lack of pornography which according to Talattof is utterly liberating. He also laments at various points throughout the book that "despite" her having been a modern women and a true heroine of agency, Kobra Sa'idi (Shahrzad), the actress and poet whose carrier he studies, was still in the grip of medieval notions of sexuality and for example refused to undress in front of the camera. To represent sex on the screen is definitely the ultimate sign of "modernity" and "civilization" chez Talattof. "The book was awarded the Latifeh Yarshater Book Award presented by the International Society of Iranian Studies. The Latifeh Yarshater Book Award is given every two years to a work that contributes, directly or indirectly, to the improvement of the status of women in Persian societies" (the Internet).
The cure for both women’s unscientific conduct, superstition, foul language, and anti-family values, and men’s sexual depravity, was romantic love. In this way, women could learn proper behavior from men; and men could also progress and learn civilized behavior through socializing with women.\textsuperscript{32} To be transformed into a companionate wife suitable for romantic love, and a patriotic mother of the future sons of the nation, “the woman was above all to be educated in the science of home management.” She was to be turned into a “‘learned woman who will protect her family relationship and will prevent discord and difference which is the greatest cause of the destruction of family and nation.’” She could “‘advise her husband in some worldly affairs,’” but above all a “learned woman can increase her spouse’s happiness when he is happy and console him when he is sad.” Romantic marriage, which also meant the nuclearization of family, also meant the breakdown of extended kinship—particularly so for women. “Family itself,” Najmabadi writes, “was now reenvisaged. Socially, it was relocated in relation to the national community rather than in relation to other kin and families:

“The family is the foundation of the country,” and within the family, woman as mother was the foundation. As such “her intellectual development or underdevelopment becomes the primary factor in determining the development or underdevelopment of the country.”\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{32} We have to remember that we are squarely within the world of the nationalist elite and the urban upper classes—in villages, for example, were women have always been part of the labor force and where the houses are not divided in the way one usually encounters in books in English about “the veil,” the order of things would have certainly been different.

\textsuperscript{33} Najmabadi, \textit{Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards}, 194–95.
The meaning of “development” in this sense is best manifest in the semantic transformation of the word mollā bāji that went from meaning a learned woman, particularly a teacher, in this period, to a derogatory term meaning a superstitious woman—and this is what the word still means in contemporary Persian. The fundamental contradiction of instituting a nation-state through romantic marriage appears early on as nationalist-feminist investment of political agency in restricting men’s ability to divorce, rather than increasing women’s ability to divorce: stronger nuclear families, rather than equal right to divorce. The science of “‘husband-keeping’” was particularly dedicated to the art of “happiness,” to providing a happy home for men to build the nation, and part of a larger discourse that as Najmabadi writes took the form of “manuals for conceptualizing nuclear monogamy.”

A most important contribution of the institution of romantic love and nuclear monogamy was the invention of the love of “Iran”—the hidden partner, as it were, in the institution of romantic marriage, and the phantasmatic object of nationalist love par excellence. The emerging nation-state, as Najmabadi demonstrates in detail, was imagined as a female body: both as a weak and ever-close-to-death mother that had to be cared for and rejuvenated, as it were, by the sons of the nation; and also as a wife that had to be protected by nationalist zeal and honor, and loved for her unsurpassable beauty. Traditional tropes of love poetry were put to use here, however, since the

---

34 Najmabadi, 203-5.
“beloved” of ghazal was opaque to the modern order of gender, for it to be readable as a woman and a fantasy of an ideal beloved/wife/mother, “beauty” had to be feminized and eros had to be subjected to a particular sexual order. Secular modernity demanded a strict nuclear familial order and thus was initiated a process that Najmabadi calls “heterosocialization of culture and heteronormalization of sex and eros” that among other things lead to “the disappearance of the male beloved from visual representations, like his disappearance from love poetry.” This one has been so perfectly accomplished that even the mentioning of the existence of the male beloved in love poetry causes scandal these days, despite the easily readable plethora of signs in the poems themselves. Or in the case of visual representations, figures of beauty and youth that could be either male or female or neither and both, look rather unquestionably female or feminine to our twenty-first century eyes. This, however, as Najmabadi makes clear does not mean that secular nationalism lead to the masking “of an already existing notion of homosexuality. Rather, this is itself the moment of constitution of homo- and heterosexuality.”

The moment of the institution of sex as pathology.

Najmabadi, 38–39. See Part I of the book “Beauty, Love, and Sexuality” for a detailed reading of the tradition of “amorous couples” and some discussion of love poetry. Even through Najmabadi clearly registers the modernity of the distinction between hetero- and homo- sexuality, she still projects these concepts back in time and reads through their lens what according to her own assertion of the modernity of sexuality would amount to a retrospective generalization. This is particularly clear in her readings of love poetry and her assumption that the attribution of transcendence to the beloved of love poetry is a modern masquerade. The non-perception of the maleness of the beloved is certainly an effect of the modern feminization of beauty and the masquerade of heteroeros, but the transcendence and the extended gnostic semantics of the beloved of love poetry are well-documented in pre-modern texts.
What does “family” after all have to do with “romance”? Why does the institution of romantic love take the form of the nuclearization of kinship? The answer lies in the semantic space of “civilization.” One of the first signs of “civilization’s beginning,” wrote Frederick Engels in 1884, is the “decisive victory” of “the monogamous family.” The monogamous family, where “civilization” begins, Engels continues,

is based on the supremacy of the man, the express purpose being to produce children of undisputed paternity; such paternity is demanded because these children are later to come into their father’s property as his natural heirs. It is distinguished from pairing marriage by the much greater strength of the marriage tie, which can no longer be dissolved at either partner’s wish. As a rule, it is now only the man who can dissolve it and put away his wife … (the Code Napoléon … in all severity among the Greeks … goddess … Marx … the heroic age … women already being humiliated … competition from girl slaves … Telemachus … Odyssey … Homer … pleasure of the conquerors … Iliad … Achilles … Agamemnon … Homer … the captive girl … Cassandra … Aeschylus … Teucer … Telamon … The legitimate wife … chaste and faithful. In the heroic age a Greek woman is, indeed, more respected than in the period of civilization … chief housekeeper … slavery side by side with monogamy … young, beautiful slaves … Dorians and Ionians … Sparta … marriage relations … still more archaic … pairing marriage … vestiges of group marriage … childless … two households … two unfruitful wives … several brothers could have a wife in common … Bismarck … Plutarch … a Spartan woman … Schömann, even greater freedom. Real adultery, secret infidelity … without the husband’s knowledge … Spartans were therefore less tempted to take the helot’s wives … Spartan women and the elite of the Athenian hetaerae … Athens … women’s apartments … strangers … Aristophanes … Molossian dogs kept to frighten away adulterers … Asiatic towns, eunuchs … Chios … Herodotus …
Wachsmuth ... Euripides ... oikurema ... chief female domestic servant ... female slaves ... system of prostitution ... intellectual and artistic culture ... high above the general level of classic womanhood ... men who would have been ashamed to show any love to their wives ... love affairs with hetaerae; but this degradation of the women was avenged on the men and degraded them also till they fell into the abominable practice of sodomy and degraded alike their gods and themselves with the myth of the Ganymede ... the origin of monogamy ... among the most civilized and highly developed people of antiquity ... not in any way the fruit of individual sex love ... marriages of convenience ... the victory of private property over primitive, natural communal property ... quite frankly: the sole exclusive aim of monogamous marriage ... to make the man supreme in the family and to propagate future heirs ... indisputably his own ... monogamous marriage comes on the scene as the subjugation of the one sex by the other; it announces a struggle between the sexes unknown throughout the whole previous prehistoric period ... Marx and myself in 1846 ... the first division of labor ... the first class opposition that appears in history ... the antagonism of man and woman in monogamous marriage ... Monogamous marriage was a great historical step forward; nevertheless, together with slavery and private wealth, it opens the period that has lasted until today in which every step forward is also relatively a step backward, in which prosperity and development for some is won through the misery and frustration of others. It is the cellular form of civilized society ... double-edged, double tongued, divided against itself, contradictory: here monogamy, there hetaerism with its most extreme form, prostitution ... the old sexual freedom—to the advantage of the men. Actually, not merely tolerated but gaily practiced by the ruling classes particularly, it is condemned in words.36

How to read this today? Engels argues that the “monogamous family” and thus “civilization” began sometime “between the upper and middle stages of barbarism.”37 In “savagery” there is “group marriage,” in “barbarism” “pairing marriage,” and in “civilization” “monogamous family.” This is the line of “our” historical progress—steps

37 Engels, 125.
forward. What is at stake here is a dislocative strategy of positing “civilization” as an imaginary time-space assumed to have begun taking place elsewhere in the past, onto which the colonial mind projects its Origin/History, from there/then retrospectively positing “barbarism” and “savagery” as both its forgotten pasts and its unfacable others.

A few pages earlier Engels had written that “the exclusive supremacy of the man,” which as we learned later was ‘quite frankly: the sole exclusive aim of monogamous marriage—which as the above indicates was, as it were, mostly a Greek affair—was already established by “patriarchal family,” “(In the Semitic form)” of which “the chiefs, at least, lived in polygamy.” But the “perfect type” of this “form” is certainly “the Roman”:

Its essential features are the incorporation of unfree persons and paternal power: hence the perfect type of this form of family is the Roman. The original meaning of the word “family” (familia) … among the Romans it … refer[red] … only to the slaves. Famulus means domestic slave, and familia is the total number of slaves belonging to one man … familia, id est patrimonium (family, that is the patrimony, the inheritance) … The term was invented by the Romans to denote a new social organism whose head ruled over wife and children and a number of slaves, and was invested under Roman paternal power with rights of life and death over them all.

In this sense, “‘therefore’”—Engels quotes Lewis Morgan, ‘in the light of’ whose writings Engels writes—“‘This term,’” that is to say “family,” “‘is no older than the
ironclad family system of the Latin tribes … after the separation of the Greeks and Latins.”

It is precisely this latter “separation” that determines the very line of historical progress, in the story of monogamous marriage, or the progressive romance of history, that follows:

Among the Romans, who as future world-conquerors had a larger, if a less fine, vision than the Greeks, women were freer and more respected. A Roman considered that his power of life and death over his wife sufficiently guaranteed her conjugal fidelity. Here moreover, the wife equally with the husband could dissolve the marriage at will.

This is the Romance of the Indo-European Family. If you have any doubt let’s read the next sentence: “But the greatest progress in the development of individual marriage certainly came with the entry of Germans into history.” “Germans” here stand for a proletarian past of sorts: “on account of their poverty, very probably,” remnants of “pairing marriage” still lingered among them. In this sense “Germans” were similar to “Spartans” and “American Indians.” And “women were greatly respected among the Germans and also influential in public affairs.” So after the “separation of Greeks and Latins,” the Roman heritage was finally transformed to “romance” proper by the “Germans” with whom “again an entirely new influence came to power in the world.” This was the “new monogamy, which now developed from the mingling of peoples

38 Engels, 121.
amid the ruins of the Roman world” (my emphasis). And who were these “peoples” roaming around in Roman ruins? Perhaps “Germans,” “Spartans,” and “American Indians.” It is important, that this “new” and more “progressive” form of family cannot be attributed to “the legendary virtue and wonderful moral purity of German character;” rather, it is the influence of the less developed but “more fulfilling” (editor’s footnote) form of “pairing” common among “Germans.” Disputing the “legendary virtue” attributed to the “Germans,” Engels reminds the reader that “particularly during their southeasterly wanderings among the nomads of the Black Sea steppes,” the legendary virtuous had “acquired … unnatural vices.” At any rate, it is to the proto-proletarian “Germans” and the co-mingling crowd that “we owe” the “greatest moral advance” achieved in the History of Humanity “: modern individual sex love, which had hitherto been unknown to the entire world.” But the struggle has to continue, for even though much better than the Greeks and the Romans, bourgeois German marriages (also opposed to “French … ‘immorality’”), are still generally unfulfilling and the new “marriage of convenience turns often enough into the crassest prostitution—sometimes of both partners, but far more commonly of the women.”

There is however a paradox, a fundamental contradiction within the field of “modern sex love.” It could only develop in a monogamous setting because the true love is not between the husband and wife. They are only the setting for true passionate

39Engels, 131-34.
adulterous love to emerge: “the highest form of sexual impulse … this form of individual sexual love, the chivalrous love of the middle ages, was by no means conjugal. Quite the contrary, in its classic form among the Provençals, it heads straight for adultery, and the poets of love celebrated adultery.” The historical task is to achieve true “sex love,” rather than the current rule of infidelity and adultery, the current so-called monogamy, ridden with “crying moral contradictions.” Achieving the “real rule” of true—as it were—“sex love,” and the final abolition of the “unavoidable social institution,” that is “adultery” and “prostitution,” according to Engels, is the historical task “of the oppressed classes, which means today among the proletariat.” Engels was certain that the “Greek,” “Latin,” “German,” “civilized” institution of monogamous marriage indicates the main line of “progress,” and finally, one day, when the revolution comes, with the help of the proletariat, women are going to be free, have equal right to divorce, and men shall finally learn marital fidelity: “according to all previous experience, the equality of woman thereby achieved will tend infinitely more to make men really monogamous than to make women polyandrous.”

Renan, for whom, the division between Aryans and Semites was nothing less than the primary determining factor of world history, definitely had a more divided and divisive vision of the history of human kinship than Engels, but for sure he agreed with his contemporary that monogamy is absolutely necessary for the future of human

---

40 Engels, 133–35, 145.
history. He was sure that “among the polytheistic Aryans of primitive times the family unit observed a ‘strict monogamy,’ whereas the monotheistic Semites were polygamous.” And their polygamy according to Renan, was “inimical ‘to the development of all that we call society.’”

P.

“eternal war, the war that will not cease until the last son of Ishmael has died of misery or has been relegated to the ends of the desert by way of terror [la guerre éternelle, la guerre qui ne cessera que quand le dernier fils d’Ismaël sera mort de misère ou aura été relégué par la terreur au fond du désert]” —Ernest Renan, inaugural lecture upon assuming the Chair of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac at the Collège de France, 1862

By suggesting that only the “Jewish question”—and not an “Arab” or “Muslim” one—has been exported by and out of Europe, one forgoes an account of Europe. One naturalizes, moreover, and separates both anti-Semitism and Orientalism in their distinct, and anachronistic historical garbs. … Such an approach is not sufficient to account for the current state of affairs, nor does it recognize the ways in which these two political identities—the Jew, the Arab—have been constituted by, and most importantly, with and within, Europe. The question that must be raised, then, is, Where are the Aryans, the Indo-Europeans? Or what does the Christian want? Or again, and more practically perhaps, What is Europe? What is Europe such that it has managed to distinguish itself from both Jew and Arab…? – Gil Anidjar

The establishment of the national institution of romantic love in Iran was about instituting a “geobody” that seemed to be in a constant process of disappearance. The

41 Olender, The Languages of Paradise, 68.
42 Cited in Anidjar, Semites, 6.
43 Cited in “The Semitic Hypothesis (Religion’s Last Word),” in Anidjar, 35–36.
ancient glorious “Iran” was imagined as constantly exposed to “a loss to the integrity of a naturally coded body,” as Najmabadi writes. There emerged “a huge literature of grief and mourning.” Impossible philological mourning. Now dying mother, now out of reach wife, now romantic beloved, for the national fraternity to emerge a state had to emerge with clear cut borders. The global institution of Romantic love demanded strict territorial integrity. Nomads, the border-crossing tribes in particular, could change their political allegiances and they came to be sites of projection of national-body anxiety. The number of months they spent in each territory were calculated, and declarations of loyalty taken from them, to determine modern borders. “As a sense of Iranianness emerged [or is it “Persianness”?] these people became marked as figures of suspicion.”

When in the late 1920s, the central state was instituting its power, with Reza Pahlavi as its strongman or great modernizer, “the military was unleashed on the nomadic populations of Iran with the explicit objective of obliterating their way of life and culture,” as Zia-Ebrahimi puts it. “Besides being a threat to centralization” — even though the central government wouldn’t form if it wasn’t at least partly for the Constitutionalist nomads who effectively overthrew the Qajar dynasty — Zia-Ebrahimi, also contextualizes the sedentarization, and in effect mass murder of nomads, as I have mentioned before, in the context of the Pahlavi state’s acute anxiety of global appearance, given its choice of dislocative nationalism and Aryan secularism as official

---

44 Najmabadi, Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards, 104–5.
45 See Afary, The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911, Ch. 9.
ideology. The nomads were perceived as the very opposite of both “modernity” and “national” belonging imagined in Aryan terms—not a thing one would witness in a modern nation on its way to the secular future. It was also Reza Pahlavi who renamed the country that the Europeans had called “Persia,” “Iran.” What is in a name?

A name got Ishmaels in trouble. They also came to be called “the ‘Tribe of Ishmael,’ the ‘Ishmaelites’ … the ‘American Gypsies,’ and ‘Grasshopper Gypsies.’” They were “discovered,” Nathaniel Deutsch writes, by a “remarkable and complicated man,” who also “invented” them, as Deutsch argues. Oscar McCulloch, “a Congregationalist minister,”

A pioneer in the emerging field of hereditarian theory and an important proponent of the Social Gospel, McCulloch helped lay the groundwork for eugenics, scientific charity, and organized social work in the United States. Just as important for the subsequent history of the Tribe of Ishmael, McCulloch was also an armchair Orientalist with a deep fascination for Islam.46

This was in 1878. By 1933, photographic and textual information about the Ishmaels as a “Degenerate Family … which, despite opportunities, never developed a normal life,” were exhibited in the “Hall of Science building,” at “the Century of Progress Exposition” in Chicago. This was done by “the prominent eugenicist Harry Laughlin and his colleagues” who having not been able to capture “some flesh-and-blood individuals,” had had to do with an “ominous caption,” “an elaborate genealogical tree ... and a

handful of photographs labeled.” These were exhibited next to “‘A Superior Family: The Roosevelt Family-Stock.’”47

There was a blank of sorts that Oscar McCulloch had to fill in order to invent the Tribe of Ishmael: “the absence of obvious physical markers to differentiate” the Ishmaels from their “respectable white neighbors.” And the Orient helped filling up the blank caused by this curious absence: “McCulloch created a set of discursive signs to indicate their difference, the most striking and effective of which were … exotic-sounding names.” Names, the sounds of names, and other signs, a discourse in short, made a racial difference “appear” as it were. McCulloch and the other eugenicists who followed his work, Deutsch reminds the reader, were already aware of Ishmaels being a “white family,” Christian and “descended from old-stock Americans,” but Orientalism enabled them to turn the Ishmaels scientifically distant, make them culturally, that is to say mentally, which is to say racially, strange. Orientalism allowed a phantasm to be scientifically translated into something, as it were. McCulloch’s “original intent,” Deutsch writes,

was not to argue that the Ishmaels of Indiana were actually Muslim, but that they resembled their biblical namesake in the threat they posed to civilized Christian society. Similarly when he likened them to Native Americans, he generally intended the comparison to be symbolic rather than literal … [the] underlying ideological assumption was that poor whites … who did not live by middle-class norms, were functionally equivalent to outcast groups such as Muslims, Native Americans, and Roma (my italics).48

47 Deutsch, 1–2.
48 Deutsch, 4–5.
The question is, what is precisely the difference between the symbolic and the literal when the ideological function is to conjure a target that deserves, as it were, to be exterminated? Are the “physically apparent” marks of raciality “literal” rather than “symbolic”? “biological” rather than “social”? How do actual “Muslims,” as it were, resemble a threat? In other words, where, precisely, is the Orient?

What did McCulloch and his fellow eugenicists see that required racial translation—a setting apart according to the logic, and historical metaphors, of blood? What was the phantasm that required the Ishmaels to be “identified as a distinct community”? The “most abject poverty” McCulloch had “ever saw,” as he wrote in his diary on January 18, 1878. He helped them out that day. He was a charitable man, indeed after devising a scientific method to optimize charity, raise the standard of life, and it was his scientific aspiration that led him to ultimately characterize the Ishmaels as belonging to “undeserving poor” who deserved to be gradually wiped out in a civilizing process. McCulloch was already part of a middle-class on a “civilizing mission” who “saw themselves as forming a vanguard … hoping to enact a kind of Manifest Destiny in microcosm,” with an “agenda to make Indianapolis into a modern city.” Civiliza-

49Civili-

tion always needs to first identify the uncivilized—fill a blank in a literature. McCulloch had already “mistakenly assumed,” upon his first encounter with the Ishmaels, that their

name “was a pejorative pseudonym.” He couldn’t hear it otherwise. Two days later, on January 20th, he wrote in his diary that the “case” of Ishmaels “seems to be a case similar to that of the ‘Jukes.’” Still assuming that the name Ishmael is not the real name of the family he had “discovered” two days earlier, still in the Orient, he wrote, “‘Real name is not known but called so from wandering habits.’” Orient, where the names are unreal, is what allows mistranslation—a phantasm, a bloody difference, that turns names into insults.

“Wandering,” “‘annual gypsying,’” and “‘wandering blood,’” became signs to translate the Ishmaels into a “tribe” and became the permanent marks of their difference. Ishmaels weren’t nomads, they did however have kin outside Indianapolis and apparently moved more than it was deemed proper by eugenicists. Arthur Estabrook and Charles Davenport however preferred “nomadism” and “wandering impulse.” Davenport was in fact very clear about his reason for the use of “nomadism” which in eugenic discourse was “clinically defined as a ‘sex-linked, recessive, mono-hybrid trait.’” In a 1915 book on “feeblemindedness” and “nomadism” or “wandering impulse,” Davenport wrote: “‘I am inclined to use the word ‘nomadism’ just because it has a racial connotation,’” and scientifically linked “nomadism” to “‘thieving propensity and lack of appreciation of property rights.’” The homeless and the vagabond were called “‘street Arabs’” in English for a long time. Loved as in the works of Horatio Alger, 

50 Deutsch, 4.
51 Deutsch, 27.
or hated as in the work of Jacob Riis. “‘street folk,’” said an article in *Harper’s Weekly* in 1868, “‘all belong to a nomadic race. Every where they are found they can be recognized as true Arabs.’” In Baltimore, there were the “Arabbers.” They “sold fruit and vegetables from horse-drawn carts.”\(^{52}\)

Not only “nomadic,” the Ishmaels also refused wage-labor. They didn’t conform to civil code of Indianapolis middle-class norms, and they lacked Protestant work ethics. So they had to be dealt with eugenically. Around the same time, Deutsch writes, “across the Atlantic similar efforts were under way to domesticate the itinerant Celtic community known as the Travellers or Tinkers.” Adding that a “comparison of the two campaigns reveals a common set of cultural assumptions, as well as a shared sense of how to deal with people whose lifestyle conflicted with the socioeconomic expectations of a modern industrialized state.”\(^{53}\) And as we saw earlier, around the same time, in Iran too, nomads were being “dealt with” though there wasn’t yet any “industrialized state” there and the nomadism was very common, not at all strange to anyone. But Orientalist modernity and the promise of modernization made it necessary to “deal with” nomads. Where is the Orient? And why is the advancement of Civilization predicated on killing nomads? What does it have to do with eugenics and global appearance? What does it have to do with Aryan and Semite?

---

\(^{52}\) Deutsch, 62, 55.

\(^{53}\) Deutsch, 62–65.
Ishmaels’ “lifestyle” was also associated with “sexual licentiousness, laziness, and criminality.” Already on January 20th 1878, McCulloch, eugenicist, Social Gospel advocate, and American Orientalist, who couldn’t read the Ishmaels’ name but as an insult, had laid the full image down: “‘They are a wandering lot of beings, marrying, inter-marrying, cohabiting, etc. They are largely illegitimate, subject to fits … They are hardly human beings.’” And following a venerable tradition he had planned the inevitable: “‘The children ought to be taken from them and brought up separately.’”

The story of “the Tribe of Ishmael” is a story of a phantasm. It is the story of ‘actuality’ and ‘resemblance,’ the “symbolic” and the “literal,” the “biological” and the “social,” the “imagined” and the “real,” the “deserving” and the “undeserving,” “Anglo-Saxon civilization” and “the ‘Asiatic Menace,’” “public policy” and “the ‘one-drop rule.’” It is another story of purification—that of “the Caucasian race.” It is also a story of the cultural and the economic, “wage-labor” and “pauperism,” the “‘well-born’” and the “‘feebleminded,’” the “racially ‘suspect.’” It is a story of appearance and sound, a “‘normal-looking’” race, and “exotic-sounding” names. Orientalist, scientific studies and public arguments about the Tribe of Ishmael were instrumental to the passage of sterilization laws, racial integrity laws, immigration acts, and the like—all having much to do with “family” and “romance” and the Romance of the Indo-European Family. Ishmaels could be anyone but “normal” and properly “Anglo-Saxon.” They could be

---

54 Deutsch, 27, 10.
“degenerate,” “cacogenic” whites with “defective ‘germ plasm,’” detrimental to the future of the superior race. They could be “Jews, Arabs, Chinese, and other ‘Asiatics’” when it came to immigration laws. They could be the “undeserving poor” across racial lines. They could be a “tri-racial” tribe of fugitive African Muslims, poor whites, and American Indians, with their “own distinctive culture.” They might have passed on old “traditions” and helped establish “the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam.” Their story is the story of a phantasm: “the Ishmaels have appeared and reappeared under different guises throughout American history.” This is a story of “race, religion, and science.”

55 “Orient” is the key mystifies here. It brings forth a phantasm that is to be exterminated, scientifically produces that which is to be purged.

---

**Arab** æ.rəb one of a branch of the Semitic race xiv (Trev.); (from the nomadic character of the Arabs) wandering child of the streets xix. –F. Arabe (= Sp., It. Arabo, etc.) –L. Arab-s – Gr. ‘A’raps, Arab– – Arab. ‘arab. Arabian ðrei.bian. xiv (first as sb. arabiens, Ch.). f. OF. arabi (see below) or L. Arabus or Arabius – Gr. Arábios (Herodotus). Arabic æ.rəbık. xiv (first as sb., Ch.) – (O)F. arabique, ðarabic –L. Arabicus – Gr. Arbikós. Gum Arabic (c. 1400), OF. gomme arabic, etc., exudation of an African species of acacia. Araby æ.rəbi ðArab horse xii; ðnative of Arabia, Arab; ðadj. Arabian, Arabic xv. –OF. ar(r)abi, prob. –Arab. ‘arabî, adj. of ‘arab. ¶ As the name of the country Araby is a different word – (O)F Arabie – L. Arabia – Gr. Arabiâ (ODEE, 46-47)

---

55 Deutsch, 5-18.
P.

Dislocative imagination as defined by Zia-Ebrahimi, operates in a similar way to Mufti’s chronotope of the indigenous. Sir William Jones and Indo-European philology and linguistics are behind both phenomena, that is, if they are two. They both come with the acquisition of historical meaning and effect an imaginary double Orientation toward hypothetical ancient roots, an “Urheimat,” and the promise of “progress.” They mystify or Orientalize existing empirical realities. Nationalism is an Orientalist impulse, just as secularism—they are the counter-coin-sides of “religion.”

The search for the Indo-European Ursprache and the Aryan Urheimat was a historical and scientific search for the origins of the languages of “Europe” (which emphatically did not include Hebrew and Arabic, neither did it include Turkish for that matter). As Maurice Olender writes in The Languages of Paradise, this was a search for the origins of nations; and languages were “the instruments with which” the nations “maintained their identity over time.”\(^5\) It was in India that Western Christians found their hypothetical roots, their timeless characteristics, linguistic origins, and polytheistic tendencies that also turned out to be in stark contrast with their monotheistic neighbors who also happened to be in Europe. Philology was history, science, and religion all at once. Romanticism, historicism, Orientalism, and the comparative method. Renan who saw philology as close to “physics and chemistry” called it “an empirical science of the

\(^5\) Olender, The Languages of Paradise, 5.
spirit” and also “the exact science of the things of the spirit.” Max Müller argued that

“philology should be considered a natural science” and should methodically follow

“botany, geology, and anatomy,” that is, set itself to the task of “comparison and
classification.” This was to make an advancement from the “older philology, which dealt
with classical and Oriental languages and literature, [and] was indeed a historical
science.” The new natural-scientific philology would rather take “language itself” as its
“object of scientific investigation.” Through comparing and classifying “world religions”
Müller intended to bring about a “Science of Religion” to show what prennialists and
mystical universalists also intended and intend to show, namely, “that all religions were
based on the same intuition, the same revelation, and the same providential truth.” The
Science of Religion, if successfully brought about, Müller tells us “will restore to the
whole history of the world, in its unconscious progress towards Christianity, its true and
sacred character.” Philology in this sense was Western Christian dislocative
nationalism that sought to dislodge “Europe” from the empirical reality of its relation to
Hebrew and Arabic.

Before the Indo-European Urheimat, however, Olender tells us, there was
Christian paradise and the continent of Scythia where Renaissance thought sought the
origin of European languages. By the nineteenth century Renan could be scientifically

57 Ibid., 52.
58 Ibid., 88–92.
certain that Eden was near Kashmir, Sanskrit had substituted Hebrew in the
genealogical understanding of the West, and European Christians had found in the
Vedas “the sacred book of the religious origins of the race.”\textsuperscript{59} It was on the basis of the
same scientific genealogical reconstructions that Wagner could write to Liszt that science
had proved that \textit{pure} Christianity is nothing but Buddhism. Why would European
Christians seek their “origins” in India? They perhaps assumed that if they went far
enough, and back enough in time, they would reach a place and a time, where there
would be neither Jews there, nor Arabs. There they could lay the foundation of an
“Aryan” nation-space, the hypothetical past of the Christian future.

\textbf{III}

Nazis who gave honorary degrees to the American eugenicists who studied the Tribe of
Ishmael, also “started a ‘trend’ that remains operative today.” They established “Islam
… as the paradigm of religiosity (as were the Semites)” at the same time that they
“thoroughly racialized and detheologized the Jew.”\textsuperscript{60} If philology is at once Western
Christian “history” and “science,” and if “Semites” stands for the (in)distinction of
“race” and “religion,” then “Aryans” stands for the (in)distinction of “race” and
“science,” “race” and “history.” The question then is, is white a “race”? Is capitalism a
“religion”? If so, then “secularism” is “scientific history,” that is Christian philology, or

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{60} Anidjar, \textit{Semites}, 19.
Orientalism. If there are no “Semites” and anti-Semites are all around, then “secularism” is Aryan separatism. If “religion-phobia” is “racism” then “secularism” is “anti-Semitism.” If “religion-phobia” is not “racism” then “secularism” is “alphabet reform,” “romantic love,” and “wage-labor.” The question then is, what is the historical science according to which “racism,” “anti-Semitism,” and “Islamophobia” are separate phenomena? What is the logic of this separation?
6. Conclusions

The official format of the dissertation requires “Conclusions” to be added as a final chapter. So, here is one: “conclusion;” and here another one: “conclusion;” and since there is no grammatical dual formation in English, the two together amount to “conclusions.” Once properly formatted as a title, we will have precisely what is demanded: “Conclusions,” plural and with a capital C.
Bibliography


———. *Representing the Unpresentable: Historical Images of National Reform from the Qajars to the Islamic Republic of Iran.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008.


Biography

Navid Naderi was born on Dec 25, 1982 in Kermanshah, Iran. He holds a BA in Persian Language and Literature from Allameh Tabataba’i University (2006), MA in Linguistics from Leiden University (2009), Research MA in The Study of Art and Literature from Leiden University (2011), and a PhD in Literature from Duke University (2017). He has one published article in English titled “Reducing the Number of Farsi Epenthetic Consonants” (with Marc van Oostendorp). Scholarships include Huygens Scholarship 2009-2011; Duke University Program in Literature, 2011-15; Global Teaching Fellowship, International Comparative Studies, Duke University, 2016-17; Summer Research Fellowship, Duke University, 2014, 2016, and 2017.