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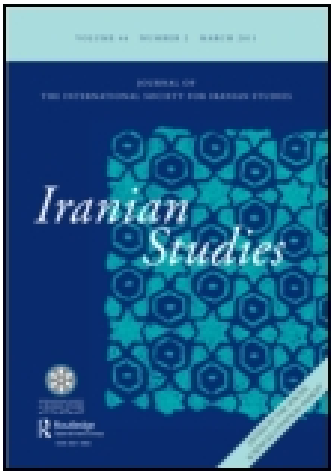

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Appropriation and Explosion in Reforming Language-Games: A Model for Discursive Change

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> The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd.
>
> —Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

With the linguistic turn came an ever-increasing tendency to see language as the locus where truths are born, passed along, or modified. As such, postmodern theories have proved highly compatible with postcolonial studies, which have inspired studies of modern Iran as a country that was colonized, only not officially. However, the latter seem to have fallen for extreme abstraction where metaphysical claims abound: presuming constructivist views of language but failing to present a tangible framework, these studies discuss "discursive change" without giving a clue as to what either discourse or change is. Convinced as such, we have adopted Wittgenstein's idea of language-games to present a tangible model for discursive change.

Introduction

The post-Saussurean world has witnessed a rhizomic growth of language-oriented theories and studies in various areas of knowledge. Whether on the pessimistic pole of the spectrum of thought, where one might place Jean Baudrillard, or on the other equally radical but celebratory pole, where Jean-François Lyotard and Richard Rorty are usually placed, contemporary thinkers have abandoned the representationalist views of language (both "Platonism or reductionism," in Rorty's words, where language represented the outer world to the inner self, and "reversed Platonism or expansionism," where language presented the inner self to the outer world), opting for constructivist notions of language.[1]

Sina Mansouri-Zeyni and Mohammad-Ali Rahebi are students of English Literature at Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran. We dedicate this paper to Dr Gholamreza Shafiee-Sabet and Dr Omid Ghahreman, two prominent figures getting out of whose shadows has been (and we at once fear and hope will continue to be) the most productive effort of our lives.

[1]Richard Rorty, "The Contingency of Language," in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York, 1995), 3–22.

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The latter has led to much contemplation over how language creates truth and how (and what kind of) changes in language cause changes in conceptions of truth and reality.

Postcolonial thought has been no exception.[2] There is no paucity of contemplation over the role of language in both colonizing as well as decolonizing projects; such studies run the whole gamut from discussing the imperially intended implementation of English departments in Indian universities to proposing a subtler view of the adopting of the language of the colonizer by the colonized to proposing unlimited potential on the side of language for (temporally) postcolonial purposes.[3] Modern studies of Iran, as a country that was never officially colonized but did nonetheless suffer a similar fate, have been heavily informed by such postcolonial theories.

Despite the abundance of postcolonial studies that focus on the role of language in constructing and transforming notions of truth and views of the phenomenal world, few have undertaken to delineate the very mechanisms by which such construction and transformation come about. Many such studies take as their premise the implications of postmodern thinking and then seek to present socio-political changes that have resulted from changes in "language": narratives (national, historical, etc.), literary visions, political discourse, readings/interpretations of religious texts, etc. A description of the ways in which such changes in "language" (e.g. narratives, discourses, etc.) have been effected, however, is surprisingly absent and to some degree ignored.

Convinced as such, we have set ourselves precisely the goal of proposing a model for the description of the mechanisms by which discursive changes come into existence. To achieve that goal, we have chosen Wittgenstein's idea of "language-game" and appropriated it for our own purposes, defining it in terms of the two constituents of "vocabulary" and "grammar." Our ultimate argument is that any discursive change is a change in the vocabulary and/or grammar of a language-game. Afterwards, examples of postcolonially informed studies of modern Iran will be given and analyzed to illustrate the need for a model such as ours; the argument in this section is that these studies do presume a constructivist view of language but fail to present a model in which to frame and phrase the discursive changes that they deal with. The main argument of the present study will then follow: we argue that discursive changes result from one of the two following discursive mechanisms: (a) appropriation, where the

[2]The relation between postcolonial theories and the postmodern mode of thinking has itself been subject to much debate; however, it is safe to say that the two share a similar *regime du savoir*, to say the least. Ashcroft, for one, firmly states that "the problem with the relationship between post-colonialism and postmodernism lies in the fact that they are both, in their very different and culturally located ways, discursive elaborations of postmodernity." Bill Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation* (London and New York, 2001), 7–13.

[3]For instances of the three types of studies mentioned see, respectively, Gauri Viswanathan, "The Beginnings of English Literary Study in British India," *Oxford Literary Review* 9 (1987): 2–26; Franz Fanon, "The Negro and Language," *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London, 2008), 8–27, and Hamid Dabashi, *Brown Skins, White Masks*(London and New York, 2011); and, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London and New York, 1989). With regard to the last case, it might be worth noting that in our most recent correspondence Ashcroft stated that he no longer uses "writing back" and prefers "transformation" instead.

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signification of a language-game changes, and (b) explosion, where a language-game loses its signification.[4] Each of these two mechanisms can occur along the two vectors of *vocabulary* and *grammar*, resulting in a sum of four scenarios: (a-1) the vocabulary of a language-game is replaced but the grammar is preserved (appropriation through vocabulary); (a-2) the grammar of a language-game is replaced but the vocabulary is preserved (appropriation through grammar); (b-1) the vocabulary of a language-game loses its signification (through what we call "excessive schizophrenic reiteration"; explosion of vocabulary); and (b-2) the grammar of a language-game loses its signification (again through excessive schizophrenic reiteration; explosion of grammar). Needless to say, each pair demarcates the two hypothetical ends of a spectrum, and any discursive modification would occur somewhere on the spectrum between the two ends, only closer to one or the other. We will present clarifying examples to exemplify the two explosion scenarios, appropriation is to be explored in (our) further studies.

Constructing Language

Exorcizing Plato. For truth to be constructed by language, the idea of truth as existing outside language, the idea that language only *represents* external truths, should be done away with. It is no accident that Wittgenstein should open his *Philosophical Investigations* with an excerpt from Augustine's *Confessions*, where the latter confides in the reader the manner in which he came to acquire language as a means to point to both outer objects and inner desires.[5] Augustine succinctly exemplifies the dual Platonism that, according to Rorty, determined two responsibilities for language in the course of history: representation of the outer world to the inner self ("Platonism or reductionism") and presentation of the inner self to the outer world ("reversed Platonism or expansionism").[6] In this retrospective light, Wittgenstein, and by extension philosophy in the earlier decades of the latter half of the twentieth century, seems to be taking pains to exorcize both of these two modes of Platonism, passing on to the later decades the task of investigating the implications of such an exorcism.

Of these two Platonic modes, one believes that "reality is out there, waiting to be discovered," a precept that the other repudiates only half-way through, according to Rorty, since it abandons the belief in the objectivity of reality only to replace it with a belief in the construction of reality by the human mind (Kant) or spirit (Hegel), thus still assuming an intrinsic nature, an objective reality, for the inner self: both consist in a belief in the "intrinsic nature of reality."[7] Wittgenstein shows the falsity of these two views in his investigations around "ostensive definition" on

[4]We borrow the term *appropriation* from Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin. The influence of their *The Empire Writes Back* on our study is obvious; however, it is not appropriate to recurrently acknowledge such influence due to the different direction our "appropriation" takes from theirs.

[5]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E. Anscombe (Oxford, 1963), §1.

[6]Rorty, "The Contingency of Language."

[7]Ibid.

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the one hand and "sensation language" and "private language" on the other.[8] The fact that only one thread of Wittgenstein's argument alone, that of "private language," has given rise to a body of philosophical contemplation so enormous as "the private language argument" places any probing into Wittgenstein's methodology far beyond the scope of the present study.[9] What is of relevance here is the implications of Wittgenstein for contemporary thought.

Abandoning the view that language *represents* means to believe that language *constructs*, which does not mean "that human beings cause the spatiotemporal world to exist," but rather that "where there are no sentences there is no truth."[10] Once Thomas Kuhn, informed by Bachelard's history of science and his idea of "epistemological breaks," eliminated the problem laid by the claim of sciences to objective truth, the way was paved for constructivist models of language.[11] It is in this context that Lyotard's theory of "phrases," Foucault's "statement" and "archive," and Rorty's "vocabularies" take shape.[12] While these models do work efficiently for their designers, we find language-games to be more relevant to our discussion. What follows is our appropriated version of the Wittgensteinian concept of "language-game" developed in *Philosophical Investigations*.

Language-games. Let *language-game* refer to what is broadly designated by *discourse*, that is, a mode of knowledge production (as in Habermas' *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* or "the discourse of Orientalism"),[13] an area of knowledge (as in "the discourse of medical science"),[14] a socio-political movement (as in "the discourse of *mashrutah-talabi* [constitutionalism]"),[15] or a cultural practice (as in "ritual performance and symbolic discourses in modern Shi'i Islam").[16] It is now imperative to decide what constitutes and distinguishes a language-game.

One unifying thread of all the scattered texts that come together to form a language-game is what we refer to as a "vocabulary," a number of words that are recurrent within a body of texts. Thus viewed, the body of texts that come together to form the

[8]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§26–36 and §§243–75.

[9]Debate over what should be made out of Wittgenstein's discussions around private language was initiated by S.A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Oxford, 1982). For a recent study that attempts to follow the genealogy of the argument see Keld Stehr Nielsen, *The Evolution of the Private Language Argument* (Burlington, 2008).

[10]Rorty, "Contingency of Language," 5–7.

[11]Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago and London, 1996), especially chapters V and X.

[12]For the three models see Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thébaud, *Just Gaming*, trans. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis, 1985) and Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. G.V.D. Abbeele (Minneapolis, 2002); Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York, 1972); and Rorty, "Contingency of Language."

[13]Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Oxford, 1990).

[14]Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (London, 1992), 3.

[15]Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (New York, 2001), 135.

[16]Kamran Scott Aghaie, ed., *The Women of Karbala: Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi'i Islam* (Austin, TX, 2005).

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language-game of Marxism (i.e. "the discourse of Marxism") can be said to share a common vocabulary, words such as *bourgeoisie*, *proletariat*, *ideology*, *capital*, *labor*, *hegemony*, *apparatus*, *class*, etc. Two problems arise: first, not all texts that are (considered to be) Marxist employ all of these words; and, second, not all texts that employ these words are (considered to be) Marxist literature.

As for the first legitimate objection, we are dealing with the question of "family resemblance." Take the case of a family (Wittgenstein's own example) where no single feature can be found that is shared by *all* the members of the family (e.g. "build, features, color of eyes, gait, temperament, etc.," to use Wittgenstein's own example) yet the members of the family can be recognized to be "related" to each other by a number of resemblances scattered among them; similarly, the texts that form a language-game (i.e. a "discourse"), Wittgenstein would say, "have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all" but are rather "related to one another" through "a complicated network of similarities," a number of characteristics that "overlap and criss-cross," a set of word subsets of which appear in different texts.[17] In other words, a text can fall into the realm of Marxist literature by using only a number (and not all) of the words of the vocabulary of Marxism.

The concept of family resemblances wrests authority from any single feature and gives it over to the group of features, to a "network of similarities." As a result, the fact that Marx and Engels speak of "false consciousness," Gramsci of "hegemony," Althusser of "interpellation," Laclau and Mouffe of the "unfixity" and "differentiality" of "social identities," and Hall of "production of meaning" does not prevent them from all being Marxist thinkers.[18] Moreover, this is not because one word such as *ideology* binds all of them together (otherwise, Marx would have probably not referred to Destutt de Tracy, who actually coined the term, as "the fish-blooded bourgeois doctrinaire"). The *family* of words is important: the vocabulary.

The second objection, on the other hand, legitimately implies that while Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* shares a vocabulary with the Marxist oeuvre (e.g. *class*, *accumulation*, *capital*, *labor*, *commodity*, *factory*, *(re)production*, *monopoly*, etc.), it certainly cannot be considered as anticipating or as belonging to Marxist thought —a fact that paves the way for the introduction of what we call a "grammar."[19] By grammar we mean a set of contingent rules that limit and delimit the significations of a certain vocabulary and enable it to enter the disseminations and reiterations

[17]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§66–71.

[18]Friedrich Engels, "Letter to Franz Mehring," *Marx and Engels Correspondence*, trans. Donna Torr (New York, 1968); Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York, 1971), 127–93; Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London, 2001); Stuart Hall, "The Recovery of Ideology," *Culture, Society and the Media*, ed. Michael Gurevitch et al. (London, 1982), 56–90.

[19]Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Andrew Skinner (London, 1982). It is by an evocation of the fallacy of ignoring the rule of grammar that the Mitt Romney campaign comically associated Obama with Marxism-Leninism merely based on the latter's use of the word "forward" (*vorwärts*) as his campaign slogan in the 2012 presidential elections.

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that make its meaning possible: "[g]rammar tells what kind of object anything is (theology as grammar)."[20] Clearly, the manner in which the texts of a language-game deploy the words of its vocabulary, and link them, is definitive to that language-game.

To elaborate, grammar not only links the words of a vocabulary together, it is actually through grammar that a network of family resemblances is formed among the words of a language-game. A word enters into a network of relations with other words of a vocabulary through grammar's consolidation of these relations, itself caused by reiteration, which determines the conventions of meaning production and the deployment of that word: the meaning of a word is "fixed by the way the act of definition embeds in the structure of ... wider linguistic performance."[21] In simple terms, grammar links words; these links are unilateral (i.e. irreversible); this unilaterality is what creates subsets of words within a vocabulary; as a result of the unilateral nature of the links, intra-subset exchange is possible while inter-subset exchange is not. Looked at from another angle, this means that there are two types of grammatical links: one involves links of identification (which makes the words of a subset exchangeable for each other and is thus partially responsible for the formation and expansion of subsets in the first place) while the other includes links of differentiation (which distinguishes subsets from each other by rendering impossible any exchange between those subsets).

To go back to the example raised in the second objection, we will briefly argue that while Adam Smith's work shares a vocabulary with Marx's, it employs a completely different grammar and thus creates different subsets of vocabulary, creating a whole other language-game. To offer a short micro-textual example, we shall consider the grammars that link "division of labor" with other words of vocabulary in each of these two texts.

First linking "opulence" and "convenience" of a nation to the proportion of goods to the number of those who consume it ("this produce ... bears a greater or smaller proportion to the number of those who are to consume it, the nation will be better or worse supplied with all the necessaries and conveniences"[22]), Smith goes on to link this factor to "productive labor," which comprises two branches: the number of laborers and "the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which its labour is generally applied."[23] In the first chapter, the latter factor is positively linked to "division of labour": "The greatest improvements in the productive power of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment ... seem to have been the effects of the division of labour."[24] As to the number of laborers, Smith points out that "[t]he number of useful and productive labourers ... is everywhere in proportion to the

[20]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §373.

[21]Marie McGinn, *Wittgenstein and the "Philosophical Investigations"* (New York and London, 2002), 67.

[22]Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, iii.

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid, 7.

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quantity of capital stock which is employed in setting them to work,"[25] linking the ever-growing subset of words which include convenience "for a workman, even of the lowest and poorest order" and a lot of other good things. In the following two paragraphs he then links the "monied man's" increase of surplus "revenue" to increase of demand for labor and increase in wages of labor.

Marx, on the other hand, poses a wholly different network of links in which these words come together in subsets. From the very first, Marx uses the grammatical links of "control" and "subordination" to link the division of labor and the detail laborer as its correlate to the figure of the capitalist, the metamorphosis of "our friend Moneybags":[26] "the assembling together in one workshop, under the control of a single capitalist, of workers."[27] This statement is reiterated profusely throughout the rest of the text and with it the subordination of the laborers to the capitalist is consolidated, placing the capitalist and the laborer in subsets semantically opposed and closed off from each other. Division of labor in "manufacture," which in Smith was linked with the "improvement" of the whole nation, is in Marx linked (among other things) to the becoming-capital of the modes of production in general and the increase of the capitalist's accumulation of surplus value.[28] Furthermore, Marx links division of labor in "manufacture" with the worker's becoming a mere "appendage of [the capitalist's] workshop"[29] through the narrowing of his productive capability. This is in turn linked with the laborer's alienation since no one laborer can hold the commodity in his hands and claim it as the product of his labor.[30] Here we offer a passage to demonstrate the network of links that Marx creates between the capitalist and the laborer through grammatical rules of exploitation:

> On the one hand, the production process incessantly converts material wealth into capital, into the capitalist's means of enjoyment and his means of valorization. On the other hand, the worker always leaves the process in the same state as he entered it—a personal source of wealth, but deprived of any means of making that wealth a reality for himself. Since, before [the worker] enters the process, his own labour has already been alienated from him, appropriated by the capitalist, and incorporated with capital, it now ... constantly objectifies itself so that it becomes a product alien to him. Since the process of production is also the process of the consumption of labour-power by the capitalist, the worker's product is not only constantly converted into commodities, but also into capital, i.e. into value that sucks up the worker's value-creating power, means of subsistence that actually purchase

[25]Ibid, 3.

[26]Karl Marx, *Capital* (Marxists.org, 1999), chapter 5. We use this source this one time to stress the translation of Marx's "Geldbesitzer" by a rather diminutive "moneybags" which might stand in contrast to Smith's "monied man."

[27]Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. I* (London, 1976), 228.

[28]Ibid., 480.

[29]Ibid., 482.

[30]Ibid., 475.

> human beings, and means of production that employ the people who are doing the producing.[31]

The network of links and the interplay of vocabulary in the form of subsets goes on and on, becoming more and more complex as we consider the spectrum of Marxist literature since each new work adds certain words to certain subsets or introduces new links that create new subsets or modify previously established ones.

The Case of Iranian Studies

Let it be said from the outset that our intention could not be further from discrediting the following studies; in fact, we intend to show that such studies suffer from a lack of methodological model *despite* their being convincing and influential. To rephrase what was already hinted at, modern Iranian studies could be defined, it would be no exaggeration to say, with regard to their awareness of postmodern and postcolonial thought. As such, the attention given by these studies to alterations and shifts in discourse could not be overemphasized; these studies share the (implicit or explicit) conviction that discursive change is the best trope for discussions of socio-political change, that truth is the property of linguistic phenomena, that it is change in language (e.g. narratives, interpretations, etc.) that effects socio-political change. Nevertheless, a large portion of these studies fail to frame their arguments in any constructivist model of language: they claim to have captured a change in a discourse but neither provide a definition as to what a discourse consists in nor depict how the change was effected. As the following example will show, many argue that Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati changed the discourse(s) of Islam and Shi'ism; the question is: what is meant by "a change" in a discourse? What is meant by a "discourse of Shi'ism"? How could one argue that there occurred a change in a discourse without first defining what a discourse consists of and what constituent was changed to cause the change in the discourse?

Janet Afary, Michel Foucault and the culture of Iranian revolution[32]. Showing the relevance of Foucault's "critical discourse on modernity and technologies of power" to the 1979 revolution in Iran and his "Orientalist" misreading of the latter at one and the same time, Janet Afary partially focuses on Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati's "reappropriation of the story of the Karbala battle" to make her dual point, that is, to show, on the one hand, how a (Foucauldian) genealogical perspective can shed light on the coming into existence of the revolution and how, on the other hand, Foucault missed certain discursive alterations and as a result "universalized Islam and Shi'ism and never explored the fact that this was a particular reading of Shi'ism." While her argument as to Al-e Ahmad's and Shari'ati's reinterpretation of Shi'ism, and the Karbala paradigm,

[31]Ibid., 716.

[32]Janet Afary, "Shi'i Narratives of Karbala and Christian Rites of Penance: Michel Foucault and the Culture of the Iranian Revolution, 1978–1979," *Radical History Review* 86 (2003): 7–35

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is acknowledged by other scholars as well, Afary fails to manifest the mechanism(s) through which this reinterpretation takes place and, we believe, falls into the trap of making generalizations.[33]

"In the decade before the Iranian Revolution, a generation of Iranian intellectuals with both leftist and religious leanings gradually carved a new and more militant discourse of Islam, one that borrowed from Western communism, existentialism, and fascism"—claims of this kind abound in Afary's text.[34] Questions are: what *is* a (new or old) discourse of Islam? How can someone "carve" a new discourse? Afary tries to justify her claims by recourse to obscure generalizations such as, "Al-Ahmad believed that modern technology could only be tamed through a return to the twin concepts of martyrdom and jihad, the latter in its combative meaning" or "Shari'ati gave the old religious narratives a new stamp of Western/modern acceptability by connecting to some of the themes of leftist thought, thus making them more palatable to college students" or yet "Shari'ati introduced an existentialist reading of the tragedy of Karbala that was informed by the work of Martin Heidegger."[35] While basing her entire study on the premises that come down from constructivist views of language (as the abundance of such terms as *discourse*, *paradigm*, *narrative*, and *reading* bear witness to) and arriving at a conclusion as big as that it was "a new hermeneutics of Shi'ism" that "encouraged" "many ordinary Iranians ... to join the movement [Revolution]," Afary neither adopts nor adapts nor manufactures any model of "discourse" or "paradigm" or "reading" as the framework of her study; she does not let the reader know what exactly she means by a "new" or an old (or *any*, for that matter) "hermeneutics of Shi'ism" or how and in what manner, through what means or apparatuses, Shari'ati and Al-e Ahmad or anybody else made a move from the old to the new reading, paradigm, discourse, or hermeneutics. Is it that she has a Foucauldian view of discourse as an "archive," a body of possible statements that establish the limits and reality of a subject (here Shi'ism, Karbala, and martyrdom) and then Shari'ati and Al-e Ahmad modify this archive by making statements that follow the rules (of the archive) but only partially, hence a modified archive, a "new reading"? Or, alternately, is it that she views the "narrative of Karbala" in a Lyotardian way and imagines that Shari'ati and Al-e Ahmad, as "addressors," enunciated "phrases" (about Shi'ism, Shi'i Muslims, and martyrdom) with partially different "sense," leading to a modified "phrase universe" and consequently a modified narrative of Karbala, one that makes it incumbent upon Muslim Iranians to revolt against the Shah? To say the least, we do not know.

Seeming to expect the reader to sympathize with her and share her convictions, Afary concludes that "[w]hat happened in Iran in 1978 was, therefore, the result of a twofold set of appropriations: the revival of some old and forbidden rituals of

[33]For one instance see Ali Mirsepassi, "Islam as a Modernizing Ideology: Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati," in *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge and New York, 2004), 96–128.

[34]Afary, "Shi'i Narratives of Karbala and Christian Rites of Penance," 23.

[35]Afary, "Shi'i Narratives of Karbala and Christian Rites of Penance," 24–5.

Muharram and, simultaneously, a new interpretation of Shi'i traditions, one that emphasized martyrdom."[36] One is struck by the lack of methodological difference between the argument and the conclusion. Studies of this kind leave the reader with questions such as: how did thinkers like Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati carve "a new ... discourse of Islam" or "a reappropriation" of the Karbala paradigm? More basically, what does a discourse, a paradigm, or a reading consist is? Given the overwhelming effort on the side of theorists who have written extensively on language and discourse, from classical logicians and grammarians to contemporary analytical philosophers and speech act theorists, from Bakhtin and Voloshinov through Althusser and Foucault to Paul Hirst and Barry Hindess, analyses such as that of Afary seem to be, at best, personal and general musings on some possibilities.[37]

Haggay Ram and the legitimization of the Islamic regim. Ram argues that the legitimization of the Islamic Republice[38] regime underwent a two-stage process during the first decade after the revolution and was achieved through an evocation of the myth of early Islam. During the first stage (the first three years, according to Ram), the clerical regime depicted itself as an exact reenactment, a replica, of early Islamic government, thus giving its leaders the same level of authority that the Prophet and Imam 'Ali were given; the following years, however, saw a tendency to render the Iranian nation as better suited for an ideal Islamic government, thus imposing on Shi'ism "a more 'positive' role—that of constructing and sanctifying, rather than discrediting and undermining a regime."[39]

Unlike that of Afary's, Ram's study is devoid of such terms as *discourse*, *narrative*, or *paradigm*; however, his conviction as to the constructive role of language is manifest in both his methodology, where he retrieves certain statements made at one point after the revolution and certain other statements at another point, and his conclusion, where he argues that through a change in the mode of *talking* about Islam and modern Iran and a certain way of *linking* the two together in *speech* the Islamic Republic regime came to legitimize itself. Against the background of Afary as reviewed above, Ram takes a step further, we believe, in that he shows "micro-textual" precision: he provides textual evidence at the level of the "statement," the "phrase," and is thus partially cognizant of the mechanism through which discursive change is effected. He achieves this through a meticulous reading of the "sermons that were delivered at the Tehran Friday congregational prayers during the first decade of the Islamic revolution" while keeping an eye on the religious texts that these sermons allude to; in this

[36]Afary, "Shi'i Narratives of Karbala and Christian Rites of Penance," 27.

[37]For two early reviews see Diane MacDonnell, *Theories of Discourse* (Oxford, 1986); and Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London, 1989).

[38]Haggay Ram, "The Myth of Early Islamic Government: The Legitimization of the Islamic Regime," *Iranian Studies* 24, no. 1 (1991): 37–54.

[39]Ibid., 38. The necessity of this re-rendering of Shi'ism has to do with the rebellion that is inscribed in it. See Hamid Dabashi, *Shi'ism: A Religion of Protest* (London and Cambridge, MA, 2011); and Ali Mirsepassi, "The Crisis of Secularism and the Rise of Political Islam," in *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization*. Dabashi and Mirsepassi present a genealogy of Shi'ism, arguing that protest and rebellion are in the *raison d'être* of Shi'ism.

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manner, Ram presents the discursive changes that take place at the crossroad of these two textual archives (i.e. the sermons and the religious sources) as a result of their intertextual intersection. Nevertheless, his study does not submit to any one constructivist model of language or discursive change and suffers from the same lack of methodological framework mentioned earlier. It is now worth relating how Ram takes a step further from Afary.

One instance that is by no means exceptional is when Ram places a sermon by Rafsanjani against its Qur'anic background: "'There, Abu-Jahl and Abu-Lahab have made [them] homeless,'" Ram quotes Rafsanjani, "'Here, Saddam ... [has] made [them] homeless.'"[40] Then, he informs the reader that Rafsanjani is referring to the Iraqi refugees who sought sanctuary in Iran during the Iran–Iraq war, relating Rafsanjani's statement to the Qur'anic text it alludes to: "Like Iran's Muslim society today, which was doing its utmost to accommodate the helpless refugees, so did the *ansar* prefer the Prophet's companions 'before themselves, though poverty afflict them' (Qur'an 59:9)."[41] Providing numerous other examples, Ram shows that such statements worked to legitimize the Islamic Republic as a reenactment of the Prophet's government.

In illustrating the second stage of the legitimization process, equal textual attention has been paid by Ram. After the regime was firmly established, Ram argues, it was time to go beyond being a mere replica, hoping that the Islamic Republic could evade the fate of the early Islamic government. To achieve this, Rafsanjani modified the rhetoric of "reenactment" in the course of two sermons:

> Having delineated all possible parallels between 'Ali's state and the Islamic Republic of Iran, Rafsanjani then asked a supposedly unexpected question: if the two governments and societies resembled one another, why was it that those of 'Ali disintegrated, while those of Iran were only strengthened as a result of challenges from within and without (or why "has this government lasted and become stronger day by day, whereas that government, the government of 'Ali ... fell?")? The key to the answer, Rafsanjani announced in the two sermons under examination, lay in "the disposition of the people" in both periods and in the fact that "the people of this time are rightly and justly better than the people whom 'Ali ... reigned over.[42]

Needless to say, Ram goes on to provide enough instances of this new mode of relating the two nations (i.e. not just paralleling the two, but stating that the Iranian nation of today is superior to the Arab nation of the Prophet's day) with the same textual precision, showing how a difference in narrative, a difference in the way of talking about the two nations, "interpellated," as Althusser would probably say, the "subjects." However, it should be noted that this is a retroactive reading of Ram's study.

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[40]Haggay Ram, "The Myth of Early Islamic Government," 43.
[41]Ibid.
[42]Ibid., 49.

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Reforming Language-Games: Appropriation and Explosion

If grammar and vocabulary are the two sole constituents of any language-game (i.e. "discourse"), then any discursive change could be said to take place along the two vectors of grammar and vocabulary. In other words, any discursive change is a (series of) change(s) in either the vocabulary of a language-game, the grammar of a language-game, or more probably both. Two sorts of changes, we believe, are possible to occur: the vocabulary and/or the grammar of a language-game may be modified (what we call *appropriation*), or the vocabulary and/or grammar of a language-game may lose their signification so that they may no longer be used in a meaningful way (what we call *explosion*).

Needless to say, the distinction between a change in the vocabulary and a change in the grammar of a language-game is hypothetical and for the sake of analysis (for none can take place without causing the other). A taking further of this hypothetical distinction will result in four extreme scenarios: appropriation through vocabulary, appropriation through grammar, explosion of vocabulary, and explosion of grammar. Nonetheless, it should be consistently recalled that while changes in vocabulary and grammar are vectors, consequent discursive changes are only scalars, that is, they do not have direction (exclusively along vocabulary or grammar).

Appropriation

A language-game, as we defined above, is a system of signification. *Appropriation* is the changing of the signification of a language-game by means of the making one's own of either its grammar or its vocabulary. For considerations of scope and cohesion, we have only introduced "appropriation" here and left it to be probed in (our) future studies.

Appropriation through vocabulary happens when the grammar of a language-game is preserved but the vocabulary is replaced. The least probable of all four scenarios, appropriation through vocabulary usually results in radical/oppositional re-writing of histories and narratives. The turns in writing the "history" of pre-Islamic Iran after the Islamic conquest of the country, where the main concern was to find the progenitor of humankind, provide a suitable example.[43]

Appropriation through grammar is at work when the vocabulary of a language-game is preserved but the grammar is replaced. By re-deploying the vocabulary of a language-game according to a new grammar, such discursive phenomena re-establish the rules that determine the use of the vocabulary and thus change the significations of the whole language-game. Examples would be the discursive changes Afary and others

[43]See Tavakoli-Targhi, "Contested Memories," *Refashioning Iran*. The problems arose from the fact that "the androgynous identity of Kayumars and the perception of her/him as the progenitor of humankind was irreconcilable with the Biblico-Qur'anic view of Adam as the primal man." What descended from this disparity was a number of replacements of various mythistorical figures (i.e. the vocabulary) as the progenitor of humankind (i.e. the grammar).

rightly claim Shari'ati and Al-e Ahmad made in Shi'ism if close readings of the kind we present below were done.

Explosion

Explosion is the result of the rendering insignificant and meaningless of a language-game by reiterating machines installed within the language-game, machines that incessantly reiterate statements that (a) employ the vocabulary of the language-game but are heedless of its grammar, or (b) follow the grammar of a language-game but are heedless of the boundaries around and within its vocabulary. This mechanism is what we refer to as "excessive schizophrenic reiteration."

To better appreciate this mechanism, attention should be paid to the undertones carried by the words *excessive*, *schizophrenic*, *reiteration*, and *explosion*. *Excessive* is meant to evoke the work of Georges Bataille where he argues that "unproductive expenditures" (belonging to "general economy"), activities that have "no end beyond themselves" (the most famous example of which is the Potlatch), do not yield to prevalent utilitarian and capitalistic values ("restricted economy") not by opposing them but by *escaping* them, that is, by affirming and negating the utilitarian culture at the same time.[44] Our use of the term *schizophrenic* is mostly influenced by the texts of Deleuze and Guattari, whose notion of "deterritorialization" has also been a source of inspiration.[45] *Reiteration*, in its turn, connects our writing to Derrida's discussion of repetition and difference, a concept that we find to be a more appropriate way of discussing the consolidation of language-games than that of "use."[46] Lastly, *explosion* is intended to bring into the game Baudrillard's work where he argues that the infinite reproduction of images in the media will eventually result in "the implosion of meaning."[47] That said, explosion consists in the production and reproduction (*reiteration*) of statements within a given language-game that have "no end beyond themselves" (*excessive*) and do not totally follow the rules of that language-game (*schizophrenic*).

Explosion of grammar. Within the vocabulary of a language-game, as was discussed, the grammar establishes subsets whereby intra-subset exchange of words is possible while inter-subset exchange is not. Excessive schizophrenic reiteration of statements that deterritorialize words from their subsets and consequently the subsets themselves but seemingly preserve the grammar will result in the explosion of that grammar. In

[44]Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Shared Vol. I* (New York, 1988), 21–6. See also his *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927–1939*, trans. Allan Stoekl, Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie, Jr (Minneapolis, MN, 1985), 118.

[45]Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York, 1977), and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, MN, 1978).

[46]Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL, 1988), 7. See also Jacques Derrida, "Psyche: Inventions of the Other," *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (Stanford, CA, 2007).

[47]See Jean Baudrillard, "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media," *Simulacra and Simulations*, trans. Sheila F. Glaser (Ann Arbor, 1994).

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other words, when a grammatical rule is repeatedly used where it should not be, that is, when it is repeatedly used to link words that it should not, the grammar loses its signification simply because it is applied in cases so various and irreconcilable that it no longer makes any sense.

An interesting instance of this type of explosion emerged after the publication of Iraj Pezeshkzad's *My Uncle Napoleon* (*Dai jan napelon*), a novel that reiterates the grammar of the Iranian version of "conspiracy theory" so schizo-excessively that it finally explodes. Conspiracy theory, as theorized by Karl Popper, is the conviction that "whatever happens in society—especially happenings such as war, unemployment, poverty, shortages, which people as a rule dislike—is the result of direct design by some powerful individuals and groups"; while once these individuals used to be Homeric gods, "their place is filled by powerful men or groups [today]—sinister pressure groups whose wickedness is responsible for all the evils we suffer from."[48] Many have since studied the roots and consequences of conspiracy theories.[49] In Iran, a combination of a history of "arbitrary rule" (sudden shifts in government and social castes) and "the country's rich legendary and mythological culture" resulted in "a self-fulfilling prophecy: the foreign powers became far more influential in the country's politics than they might otherwise have been, by virtue of the fact that they were believed to be absolutely invincible."[50] Katouzian is not exaggerating when he says that "[i]f there was one thing on which almost the whole of the country's intellectuals, and representatives of virtually all the political trends and tendencies—ranging from the shah through to the conservatives, the Tudeh Party, and the Popular Movement—were united, it was this theory."[51] *Dai jan napelon*, by contrast, is the story of an increasingly paranoid individual who associates any event, no matter how insignificant, with British conspirators; the whole novel could be said to have been built around an extended irony. In order to illustrate how Pezeshkzad's novel makes the grammar of this conspiracy language-game explode it is first imperative to excavate the conspiracy language-game itself, which can be done by a close reading of Hoseyn Makki's *Tarikh-e bist-saleh-ye Iran* (A history of Iran) as a well-known source, and then put the two against each other.

The Iranian conspiracy language-game and Uncle Napoleon. Any remote acquaintance with Iranian conspiracy theories as well as a fleeting look at its literature, including Makki's book, will obviate the need for an argument for the claim that the vocabulary of the conspiracy theory can be summarized as follows:

[48]Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* Vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ, 1966), chapter 14: The Autonomy of Sociology.

[49]For two definitive treatments of the theme, see Richard Hofstadter, *"The Paranoid Style in American Politics" and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA, 1996) and Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley, CA, 2003).

[50]Homa Katouzian, "Khalil Maleki: The Odd Intellectual Out," *Intellectual Trends in Twentieth-Century Iran: A Critical Survey*, ed. Negin Nabavi (Gainesville, 2003), 34.

[51]Ibid., 35.

{the British, the Russian, conspiracy, coup d'état, foreign agents, appearance, reality, truth, concession, deceit, evil, ill-intentioned, constitutional revolution, the hidden hand, appointment, India, resign, role, embassy, the Fifth Column, ... }

Clearly, the set alone would not be of any help. What is equally important, and more difficult to map, is the grammar of this language-game, which at once forms and is formed by the subsets within the above vocabulary. Let us consider Makki's views on the 1921 coup d'état.

"The coup was absolutely and without a doubt staged by London"—statements of this kind should not surprise the reader.[52] Almost as bold is Makki's claim that the coup (which he sometimes uses exchangeably alongside "the 1919 concession") is *the* origin and cause of the entire subsequent history of Iran; hence the grand link between the British, and by extension all foreign superpowers, on the one hand and Iran's socio-political stage, more particularly the miseries of "the nation," on the other. Makki's historical investigation takes a tour of innumerous appointments and removals (all British-staged), e.g. appointment, removal, and reappointment of Moshir al-Doleh (Prime Minister, twice) and his cabinet, removal of Colonel Staroselsky (Commander of the Persian Cossack Brigade 1918–20), appointment of Fathollah Sepahdar A'zam (Prime Minister) and his cabinet, and appointment of Reza Khan (Persian Cossack Brigadier and later the Shah). The story around Reza Khan/Shah is more complex, as one of the book's subheadings show: "The Coup Candidates," where Makki recounts the British contemplations on who would be the best choice to lead the coup.[53] That said, Makki also hints at Russian influence on similar appointments and removals, though with more subtlety. Thus, the subsets start to form: *Russia* and *Britain* are in one subset, and *Moshir al-Doleh*, *Staroselsky*, *Sepahdar*, etc. are in another.

Two important points emerge. First, the subsets are linked through the grammatical rules of "appointment" and "removal," i.e. *Russia*/*Britain* + *appointed*/*removed* + *Staroselsky*/*Sepahdar*/etc. Second, the holding together of the words within one or the other subset is not arbitrary but due to a family of resemblances, that is, in one subset are words that evoke the superpowers, Western countries, imperial powers, etc., and in the other are words including officials, commanders, Shahs, etc. So, safe adjunctions to the subsets would be *the Ottoman Empire*, on the one hand, and *Mohammad-Reza Shah*, on the other.

Pezeshkzad's *My Uncle Napoleon* revolves around an extended irony: the title character, a former low-ranking officer who gets his appellation from his fascination with Napoleon, becomes increasingly suspicious of everything going on around him as being staged by the British to get back at him for the innumerable defeats he has imposed on Britain, defeats that are no more than figments of his imagination. One strain of events that he associates with the British is the occupying of insignificant, mundane local positions by equally insignificant (with regard to trans/national

[52]Hoseyn Makki, *Tarikh-e bist-saleh-ye Iran* (Tehran, 1979), 2.
[53]Ibid., 18–175.

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policies) local people. In this manner, the novel incorporates the grammar of appointment/removal but by no means observes the resemblances that hold the words of the corresponding subset together, the rules that territorialize the subset. "Do you think that the British, who struggled so many years to appoint Khodadad Khan, would simply forget about it?" asks Uncle Napoleon rhetorically while relating the fake story of killing Khodadad Khan, a local official of no trans/national significance, someone who probably did not even exist outside of Uncle Napoleon's imagination.[54] Maharat Khan, an Indian merchant residing nearby, is another person to be subjected to the grammatical rule of appointment: Uncle Napoleon "believed that the British had sent the Indian to reside near his house and monitor his activities."[55] In this way, not only does the novel disregard the family resemblances that hold the words of the subset of appointment/removal together, it also complicates the issue by bringing in "the Indian," someone from a "British colony," a word from a subset that has its own grammatical links in the colonial language-game that the Britain of the time was associated with and engaged in, so that the deterritorialization of the subsets of the vocabulary is taken further. The same suspicion is held against the Indian's wife.[56] Even a roaming photographer is taken to have been appointed by the British to spy on Uncle Napoleon.[57] So is a fish seller.[58] The staff of the local hospital is no exception, either.[59] The climax of the appointment issue could be said to take place when Uncle Napoleon is convinced that his personal valet, Mash Qasem, is also a British agent.[60] The British, Uncle Napoleon is convinced, do not limit their malicious activities to appointing people; they also try to "remove" from his shoe-polishing position the roaming shoe-polisher whom the Germans had "appointed" to guard Uncle Napoleon.[61] The grammar of appointment/removal is thus used here to link the subset of superpowers (here almost exclusively the British) first to Khodadad Khan, whereby the link pretends to engage with the proper subset, and then to Maharat Khan and his wife, the photographer, the fish seller, the hospital staff, the valet, and the shoe-polisher: a subset that does not yield to territorialization (no family of resemblances holds the words together) and is therefore not a subset and, consequently, neither limits nor delimits the reiteration of the grammatical rule, as if the rule could be applied anywhere and to link just any word to the subset of superpowers: the schizo-excessive reiteration makes the grammatical rule of appointment/removal explode—it no longer *signifies*.

A third and a fourth subset in the vocabulary of the conspiracy language-game become distinguishable with regard to the grammatical rule of appearance vs. reality.

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[54]Iraj Pezeshkzad, *Dai jan Napelon* [My Uncle Napoleon], 176. The translations from the original Persian are ours.
[55]Ibid., 185.
[56]Ibid., 201.
[57]Ibid., 226.
[58]Ibid., 331, 342.
[59]Ibid., 381.
[60]Ibid., 382.
[61]Ibid., 267, 353.

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The grammatical rule, as defined in universalistic terms by Makki, stipulates that while certain events in the country might have the appearance of "naturalness," they are all plotted by the British, a fact that he considers so complex that it "cannot be understood by just anybody."[62] Chehabi summarizes the attitude: "[I]t implies a hidden reality beneath and at odds with the superficial appearances of the political and social world: nothing is as it seems."[63] Instances of these innocent-looking events are the 1921 coup, the construction of the railroad, the announcement of a state of emergency (aka martial law) by Sepahdar, etc. While these events seem to have happened naturally or have been done with the "good" intention of developing the country, the conspiracy theory holds, they are all planned by the British and serve their benefits that range from helping guarantee the rule over India to signing hugely beneficial concessions to helping stage a coup. The grammatical rule of appearance vs. reality renders the words from the third subset as merely deceiving appearances and recognizes their "reality" to be the words from the fourth subset and in this manner links and (re)territorializes the two subsets. That said, it should also be noted that, just as was the case with the grammatical rules of appointment and removal and their related subsets of words, these third and fourth subsets are not totally unrestrained, that is, not every word could be put in them, not every event could be said to have been triggered by "the hidden hand of Britain," and not everything could be said to be the true intention behind such acts.[64] In other words, "sometimes the appearance and reality of affairs are one, but people are so deceived and so suspicious of anything political that they hold negative [suspicious] views on many nonpolitical events that are linked to nowhere"; coming from Makki, this delimiting remark should be taken seriously.[65] Therefore, there must be a family of resemblances that chain together the words of these subsets; a review of what Makki and his cohorts consider to be appearances and what they propose as the "evil" intentions behind them reveals that the third subset admits words that imply events that are of a national scale, of huge social repercussions, with significant political consequences, etc. and the fourth subset hosts words that relate to imperial purposes, colonial projects, and other possible intentions that the Britain of the time was commonly associated with in writings outside the language-game of what is now called conspiracy theory. Thus, safe adjunctions to the third and the fourth subsets could be *the development of the cities in the northern part of the country* on the one hand and *gaining strategic advantages over Russia* on the other hand.

Pezeshkzad's novel, however, does not go with such safe adjunctions. "Who do you think is responsible for this?" asks Uncle Napoleon, "could it be someone other than the British? ... to get back at me?" he adds rhetorically, referring to the undeserved notoriety he has allegedly received for participating in the bombardment of the

[62]Makki, *Tarikh-e bist-saleh-ye Iran*, 65.

[63]Houchang E. Chehabi, "The Paranoid Style in Iranian Historiography," *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London, 2009), 155.

[64]The title of an influential book by Ahmad Khan-Malik Sasani, qtd. in Chehabi, "The Paranoid Style in Iranian Historiography," 158.

[65]Makki, *Tarikh-e bist-saleh-ye Iran*, 65.

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Majles.[66] As such, the statement engages the grammatical rule of appearance vs. reality to link "an innocent-looking piece of rumor" to "the real intention behind it" and, moreover, simulates aptness through the grandiosity of the Majles issue. Once the engagement of the grammatical rule is established, the novel soon takes it to the level of schizo-excessive reiteration: the Indian officer's urinating in Uncle Napoleon's eglantine shrub (appearance) is taken to be a British plot to dishearten Uncle Napoleon (reality or intention).[67] A roaming photographer's promotional shot is taken to be spying.[68] The pre-marital pregnancy of a retarded girl in the family is blamed (though momentarily) on the British, the "true" intention behind which, Uncle Napoleon declares, is to "destroy" his family.[69] To include all such reiterations here is not necessary; suffice it to say that, when Uncle Napoleon's nephew, Puri, is set up with a prostitute to test his sexual competence or "masculinity" (*mardanegi*), the protagonist, for personal reasons, throws a firecracker at the two so that the noise might distract Puri and prove him incompetent, Uncle Napoleon takes it to be the opening of a British attack on him.[70] The family resemblances in the third and fourth subsets are disregarded, the subsets deterritorialized, and thus the grammatical rule of appearance vs. reality rendered without signification—it explodes.

Although the rendering insignificant of the conspiracy language-game by *My Uncle Napoleon* includes many other explosions through schizo-excessive reiterations, the two instances above are sufficient for the purpose at hand, to show *how* the novel does what it does. This illuminates Chehabi's claim when he says:

> The beginning of the decline of conspiracy belief can perhaps be traced to the corrosive effect of humour. When Iraj Pizishkzad's [Pezeshkzad's] novel [*My Uncle Napoleon*] appeared in the 1970s and was soon turned into a very popular television series, Iranians for the first time laughed at the conspiracy-centred worldview of a paranoid patriot.[71]

This, we believe, is how our proposed model is helpful.

Explosion of vocabulary. Explosion of vocabulary involves certain processes in which words from the vocabulary of a language-game are schizophrenically placed within other language-games, inserted into their rules of grammar, and linked with their vocabularies. Through the schizo-excessive reiteration of a word in different grammars and different vocabularies (i.e. different discourses), the word is pushed beyond semantics, beyond polysemy: it loses its significations, becomes detached from its 'original' chain of signifiers. To illustrate the mechanics of such explosions we will turn to the figure of Dr Hesabi and the recent attempts to dislocate it from its current monolithic position.

[66]Pezeshkzad, *My Uncle Napoleon*, 178.
[67]Ibid., 210.
[68]Ibid., 226.
[69]Ibid., 234.
[70]Ibid., 370.
[71]Chehabi, "The Paranoid Style in Iranian Historiography," 175.

The case of the posthumous professor. In this part we will try to briefly outline some of the ways in which the book of memoirs entitled *Ostad-e eshq* (*Master of Love*) creates and consummates a link between language-games of heroism, nationalism, and Islamic faith around the proper-name/figure of Dr Hesabi. We shall then point out recent trends that have criticized or ridiculed the bizarrely exaggerated descriptions of Hesabi.[72]

In *Master of Love*, proclaimed by its author to have been compiled from a selection of choice "memories" recited to him by his father during sessions devoted to "lessons of life," the now (in)famous Iraj Hesabi recounts the life and achievements of the professor. Regardless of issues of authorship and veracity, *Master of Love* manages to create a discourse of heroism around the figure of Dr Hesabi via linking several subcategories of vocabulary to his name.

Throughout the book, we witness different rules of grammar that link Dr Hesabi to various words of different subcategories in different ways and thus make the proper noun *mean*. The more important links in the semantic network surrounding the titular "master" include "being hindered by" (which connects with different illnesses, poverty, non-appreciation, and the envy of others), "knowing/learning" (which connects with numerous languages, diverse scientific disciplines, etc.), and "achieving" (which connects with the founding of many institutes, different projects, being appreciated by famous and influential figures, etc.).[73] Added to these are links that constitute Hesabi as a point of convergence of nationalism and Islamic religiosity.

The most prominent aspect of the creation of the Hesabi figure is the connotations of scientific genius ascribed to him. This is achieved by a two-fold link of "acquaintance" and "surpassing" through which the proper noun "Hesabi" is placed in the same subcategory as the proper nouns of such world-renowned scientific figures as Bohr, Fermi, Dirac, Schrodinger, Einstein, etc. and becomes, through reiteration, elevated to their status.[74] It is worth noting that beside the link of "acquaintance," which places the two words it links in the same subcategory to lend the connotations of one to other, there is also the rule of "surpassing" that serves to create hierarchies within the subcategory established by the aforementioned rule; thus the said scientists are humbled by the complexity of Hesabi's theory and the enormity of his wisdom. This rule of grammar is also at work in subsuming the eclecticism involved in Hesabi's processes of learning from different cultures and disciplines under the rubric of a genius and a scientific spirit characteristic of Iranian-Shi'ite identity: he is always beating the "Westerners" at their own game whether it be command over the German language, the management of mining sites, nuclear physics, or training teachers and engineers in the "foreign" disciplines.

[72]Iraj Hesabi, *Ostad-e eshq* [The master of love] (Tehran, 2011).

[73]For the sake of brevity, we shall only cite the page numbers relevant to the three categories. For the obstacles see Ibid., 1, 4, 42, 46, 49, 52, 56, 96, 100, 102, 147, 149, 162; for his knowledge, 15, 77–8, 83, 88, 94, 95, 98-9, 160, 184–6; for the list of achievements see 187–92.

[74]Ibid., 122–3.

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The issue of the subsumption of eclectically selected parts under the Iranian-Shi'i whole is taken further in a rather recent comment made by Iraj Hesabi narrating how Einstein, his sister, and some eminent physicists gathered at Dr Hesabi's residence in Stanford to celebrate the Iranian new year or Nowruz. While the individual genius of Dr Hesabi cannot surpass Einstein's, his cultural identity and wealth of historical heritage succeed in establishing the superiority of the national hero. This narration, however, has caused unprecedented reactions among the notable scientific figures in Iran. Dr Reza Mansouri, a professor at Sharif University, has recently released a harsh statement criticizing the exaggerated image of Hesabi as "fraudulent" and "shameful."[75] He dismisses the Nowrooz story on the grounds that the dates at which some of the characters resided in Stanford do not overlap. Dr Movahed, a notable philosopher, in a recent interview commented on the exaggerated depiction of Hesabi, saying that he was "merely a university professor" and a "typical one" at that.[76]

These speeches, however, are predated and indeed facilitated by an on-going discourse of humorous anecdotes and jokes especially prevalent among the more educated classes of the younger generation that by deploying the proper noun of "Hesabi" in schizo-excessively diverse con-texts have managed to bring about a relative or sometimes absolute explosion of the language-game built around it.[77] Some of these anecdotes can be found at the Facebook page entitled "the Posthumous Memoirs of Professor Hesabi." Here we shall briefly investigate two examples from this source alongside two jokes practiced by and prevalent among university students.

The first joke simply consists of mentioning or pointing at random objects and stating, matter-of-factly, that the object was discovered/invented/founded by Dr Hesabi. The words thus linked with the proper noun via this grammatical link were simply too diverse and random to belong to or form any vocabulary or a subcategory thereof. This inability to form vocabularies through sheer excess and randomness is exactly the quality that we have come to designate as schizophrenic explosion: the proper noun "Hesabi" comes into contact with so many different words and rules of grammar (as we shall see below) that it starts to lose the meaning it had acquired through the reiterations of its "original" language-game; its carefully mastered chain of signification erupts. The excess of the schizophrenic application of the word removes it from its restricted meaning-iteration and places it back in the commonality of language(-games).[78] An example of this type available at the Facebook page is the attribution of the discovery of the "first atom" to professor Hesabi.[79]

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[75]Reza Mansouri, "Shayyadi zir-e lava-ye nam-e marhum Hesabi" [Deceit under the protection of the late Hesabi's name], http://www.rmansouri.ir/userfiles/file/Articles/shayadi.pdf (accessed March 20, 2013).

[76]http://www.parsine.com/fa/news/69526.

[77]For this emerging more realistic mindset see Sina Mansouri-Zeyni and Sepideh Sami, "The History of *Ressentiment* and the Emerging *Ressentiment*-less Mindset," *Iranian Studies* 47, no. 1 (forthcoming).

[78]See Giorgio Agamben, "What is an Apparatus," *What is an Apparatus* (Stanford, CA, 2009).

[79]Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=407547595974583&set=a.401012153294794.95996.322792814450062&type=1&relevant_count=1.

The other joke consists in replacing the proper noun with some unknown issue: if someone doesn't know what has happened to some food that was left in the fridge, they might say that Dr Hesabi ate it for this or that reason. This seemingly innocent little joke places the proper noun in so many different rules of grammar belonging to different language-games that it manages to dislocate the name of Hesabi from any carefully preserved language-game in which the name is only placed in specific links and connected to specific subcategories of vocabulary. An example of this type of joke which places the name in different links can also be found at the aforementioned Facebook page where the caption to a photograph identifies the three figures with their backs to the viewer respectively as "Dr Hesabi, Einstein, Dr Hesabi."[80]

We believe that it is through these guerilla explosions of language-games, which try to preserve a monopoly of meaning on and through certain words, that special signification-charged words, sacred words, can be restored to a level of commonality which will then allow for these words to be spoken about publicly.

In Lieu of Conclusion: Towards a Methodological Analysis of Emancipatory Strategies

Directing our gaze toward a methodology of emancipation through discursive transformations, we believe that strategies of meaning-destruction can be equally or more effective in subverting hegemonic power/discourses than attempts at appropriation or meaning-creation. We agree with Baudrillard, at least to some extent, when he says "From today, the only real cultural practice, that of the masses ... is a[n] ... aleatory practice, a labyrinthine practice of signs, and one that no longer has any meaning."[81] Building toward such strategies, however, requires detailed analyses of the mechanics of language-games and the possibility of their transformation or explosion and this is what we have attempted to produce here.

[80]Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=405716699491006&set=a.401012153294794.95996.322792814450062&type=1&relevant_count=1.

[81]Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 65.

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