

‘Westoxication’ and Resistance: the Politics of Dance in Iran #dancingisnotacrime

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Abstract

This study proposes an alternative analytical framework for the interpretation of the arrest of an Iranian teenage female social media star by regime authorities in May 2018. I argue that the regime’s reaction to the youngster’s dancing was a product of a complicated historical dialectic with the West, rather than an objection to dance as a performative category. While the Iranian regime may have inherited the predominantly negative perceptions of the solo female dancing body from the Pahlavi era, dancing is not a crime in post-revolutionary Iran. However, dance is ‘meaning in motion’, and it can be inscribed and re-inscribed with political, cultural and social markers – depending on the motives of the spectator. This paper argues that it was the meaning ascribed to the teen’s dancing by hardline authorities that led to her arrest, and not the act of dancing itself. By historicising and framing the arrest within the discourse of ‘Westoxication’, this study interprets the arrest as a form of state-centric cultural resistance. The site of cultural contestation, the youngster’s dancing body became the discursive and ideological terrain on which the regime repudiated Western cultural norms in defence of its own post-revolutionary standards of decency and cultural authenticity.

Keywords

Iran, dance, resistance, Westoxication, Orientalism, Iranian intellectual discourse, 1979 revolution

Introduction

In May 2018, the seventeen-year-old dancer, Maedeh Hojabri was detained for showcasing videos of herself dancing in her bedroom on Instagram. Hojabri had posted around three hundred videos, many of which showed her dancing in different styles to Iranian and Western pop music, and often without the obligatory veil. Sporting a modern pixie cut, and in urban attire, Hojabri's repertoire of dance performances included a blend of improvised dance that combined Iranian social dance with dance moves one would see in a Western hip hop video. Her performances attracted a following of more than 600,000 people before her account was shut down. Her Instagram account read: 'This page has been blocked by the honourable judiciary due to the release of criminal content'.¹ The young teen was subsequently forced to make a televised confession and apology, only to be released a few days later.

In the Iranian context, cyberspace has been framed as representing a new 'political street' for Iranian students and youth to consolidate their presence through their digital expertise, and for much of the Iranian public, social media serves as an alternate space for political contestation.² Judith Hanna explains that dance has served as a vehicle for the 'marginalised' (women, youth and minorities in general) to subvert existing rules and norms in an effort to find new identities and spaces³. In Hojabri's case, there is nothing to suggest that young dancer had any intention of provoking or challenging authorities, or of creating or promoting alternative cultural norms and values. Like so many teenagers, the young Iranian dancer shared visual content on Instagram to attract a following and to gain exposure. There are no indications that she had any political motive behind her social media activity. If the young teen had been using the social media platform to push a political agenda, or if she had been complicit with anti-regime groups in any way, it is highly unlikely that Iranian security organisations would have released her from detention.

Why was the teen arrested? Is dancing a crime in Iran? If not, then why did the Iranian authorities crack down on the youngster's social media activity with such heavy-handedness? What was so threatening about a teenager dancing that would lead the powerful Iranian cyber police and the regime's ubiquitous security agencies to pit themselves against a minor? In this article, I explore the motives behind the arrest of the young social media star by employing the discourse of 'Westoxication' (*Gharbzadegi*). A narrative predicated on a return to 'cultural authenticity', and a social critique of the past, Westoxication can shed light on the motives behind the teen's arrest.

By adopting Westoxication as an analytical framework, I argue that the 'crime' in this case was not the teen's dancing but the teen's alleged 'capitulation' to Western cultural

standards. These were the same cultural and aesthetic norms upheld by the Westernising Pahlavi shah, in whose era rose to prominence the Iranian cabaret dancer, who, as I discuss below, was associated with ‘immorality’, ‘social corruption’, ‘degeneration’ (*ibtizal*), and ‘eroticism’ (*shahvat*).⁴ Seen from this perspective, the arrest of the young girl – who in the eyes of regime hardliners was not a seventeen-year-old but a historically-constructed symbol or artifact of neo-imperialist cultural hegemony – signified resistance to Western cultural norms.

Thus, the conflict that played out during this incident was not the ‘regime versus Maedeh Hojabri’, but rather the regime versus the ‘historical West’. By ‘historical West’, I am referring to the West that Iranian revolutionaries blamed for robbing the country of its political independence and cultural authenticity during the pre-revolutionary Pahlavi era (1925-1979). Seen from this angle, the teen’s dancing body becomes the discursive terrain on which the state repudiated Western political and cultural hegemony in an effort to uphold post-revolutionary norms and values.

It may appear that I am reading too deeply into the meaning embodied in the teen’s dance performances – after all, dance is a common social practice, an ephemeral aestheticised art form, and a performative category enjoyed by so many. How could regime authorities possibly derive so much meaning behind a collection of Instagram posts featuring styles of dance one sees on television (or in Iran’s case, on satellite channels)? So much so, that they ended up detaining, and then humiliating a minor on national television. It is therefore essential to grasp the density of political, cultural and social meaning imbricated in dance, and how this is conditioned by the motives and the mindset of the observer. In order to capture the nuances of this complex and peculiar case, this analysis addresses the arrest of the unwitting teenager from a multi-layered historical and contextual perspective.

Exploring the nexus between dance and politics

This study is organised into two strands of analysis: dance and politics. I begin the analysis by situating my argument within mainstream debates surrounding the arrest of the young dancer. I describe common methodological shortcomings, which I sidestep, and I broach the case from an Iranian perspective. In the first section, I demonstrate the extent to which dance, as an art form, can be loaded with political meaning – depending on the social context and on observer subjectivity. I draw on Orientalist and post-Orientalist depictions of belly dance as an example of the way in which dance can be inscribed and re-inscribed with political, cultural and social markers. This is followed in the second section, with an examination of Iranian perceptions of solo improvised dance in order to shed light on general perceptions about the female dancing

body in both pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary Iran. This is followed in the third section with a brief survey of the transformation of dance in modern Iran. This foregrounding is essential as it brings out prejudices towards solo dancers as well as underlying sexual anxieties about the female dancing body. While I argue that dancing in Iran is not a crime, Iranian authorities may have inherited some predominantly negative perceptions of female dancers that predate the Islamic Republic.

In the fourth section, I present dance and the dancing body as a site of resistance, not only for the ‘marginalised’, but in this case, for the Iranian regime – a perspective that is not often discussed or considered. Here, I present the theoretical and historical underpinnings of the ‘Westoxication’ narrative. I argue that the arrest of the rising media star can be interpreted as a form of state-centric cultural resistance, rather than simply an objection to dance as a performative category. In the eyes of hardline authorities, the youngster embodied Westoxication, the cultural malady of the Pahlavi era. By shutting down her Instagram account, and by detaining and shaming her, the regime made the dancing teen and her performative art the site of cultural contestation.

The final section engages with the debates and positions taken by Iranian political figures. The broad range of reactions to the teen’s arrest suggests that Iranian state and society are not as polarised as they appear to be. There is no clear ‘us versus them’ binary in relation to cultural norms and standards. By examining the statements of several Iranian officials, this investigation shows that while solo improvised dance occupies an ambiguous position in the Iranian context, it is far from being regarded as a ‘crime’. I scrutinise the statements of several Iranian officials, including those of prominent conservative Islamic figures, to reveal that even those in power criticised security organisations over the arrest. On the other hand, the statements of members of Iran’s judiciary and security agencies reaffirm the perspective that the teen’s dancing was seen as a threat to post-revolutionary cultural norms and standards.

Situating the Discussion Beyond ‘Western Eyes’

Most English-language media resources represent the Islamic Republic as entirely backward and repressive with the arrest interpreted as yet another manifestation of state-enforced imposition of religious and traditional dictates on Iran’s women and youth. The prevalence of reductive narratives of events in the Middle East has been underscored by Billie Brownlee and Maziar Ghiabi who argue that analyses compiled through ‘Western eyes’ often betray local, cultural and historical dynamics.⁵ With reference to the Arab world, Brownlee and Ghiabi explain that the Eurocentric linguistic, thematic and methodological *modus operandi* has led to

the portrayal of this part of the world as ‘underdeveloped’, ‘chaotic’, ‘violent’, and ‘in need of help from the West’.⁶

Similarly, the teenager’s arrest evoked the compassionate concern of Iran-observers who quickly pontificated on the need to ‘emancipate’ Iranian women and youth from Iran’s ‘backward leaders’.⁷ In a podcast series titled, ‘Choreographing Transnational Maternities: Imbrications of Race and Gender in Dance Performance and Spectatorship’, Heather Rastovac Akbarzadeh interrogates how dance has become a barometer with which to measure modernity, freedom, and humanity. Akbarzadeh explains how ‘saviour spectatorship’ of Iranian female dancers constructs a model of ‘Iranianness’ that fits all too neatly within Euro-American geopolitical paradigms that position Iran as backward. Akbarzadeh maintains that this tendency constructs Iranian dancers as, what transnational feminist scholar Inderpal Grewal calls, ‘objects of rescue’. In this narrative, Iranian female dancers gain agential freedom only through non-Iranian saviours and in non-Iranian spaces.⁸

As Brownlee and Ghiabi have suggested, interpretations offered by mainstream Anglo-American and European sources continue to reproduce classical Orientalist tropes.⁹ In these accounts, there is an invariable emphasis on gender, religion and nationality as markers of identity, with Islam as the uniquely determining force behind the regime’s reactionary policies. The discursive ‘production’ of the ‘Orient’ and of the ‘Oriental’ – in this case, of Iran and of the Iranian regime, is limited to representations of an authoritarian state that seeks to wreak havoc in the region while repressing its own people. This has been the dominant explanatory framework for the interpretation of the teen’s arrest in mainstream Euro-American media sources, often uncritically accepted and unthinkingly reproduced, not just by the general public but by many in academia. The standard assumption that the regime’s reaction was an objection to dance itself is a testament to the superficiality of the treatment of cultural resistance and cultural expression in contemporary Iran. The dearth of historically contextualised and critical analysis perpetuates the reductivism so prevalent in Euro-American discourses – narratives that invariably position Iranian women as ‘victims’ of a backward society.

The purpose of this paper is to transcend the ‘totalising discourses’ that Edward Said identified by advancing a more culturally-sensitive analysis of the Hojabri case. I move away from Euro-American liberal and neo-liberal frameworks of freedom that erroneously point to orthodox Islam or state repression as the exclusive explanation behind the dancer’s arrest. In doing so, I am giving agency to both the young dancer and the Iranian regime (as problematic as it may be). Said’s work repeats the Orientalist assumptions of the ‘inability’ of the ‘Other’ to represent itself, and the way in which totalising representations invariably strip the ‘Other’

of agency¹⁰. As Eugenia Siapera underscores, ‘if we assume that the ‘Other’ has no agency or representation, then we fall back to the position of further victimising him or her’.¹¹ My objective is not to validate the regime’s choices by bestowing agency to it, rather it is to demonstrate how pre-revolutionary history and discourse, and not exclusively cultural or religious fanaticism inform social restrictions on cultural expression in contemporary Iran.

At the same time, in the interest of scholarly balance, it is important to acknowledge that the Iranian response to the young dancer represented a form of ‘Occidentalism’ by sending the message that Western cultural norms and practices are anathema to the regime. As I discuss, the regime’s reaction reveals a rigid culturalist and essentialist notion of the West as a malign force that is capable of eroding indigenous, post-revolutionary norms and values. The punitive measures taken on the part of the Iranian regime reflect wholesale denunciation of Western culture, which in turn creates resentment of its own kind.

Locked in conflict, Orientalism and Occidentalism feed off of each other, with the two categories perpetuating pernicious myths about an inevitable ontological and epistemological distinction between East and West, while reinforcing ‘us versus them’ polarities. While the functions, processes, and mechanisms of stereotyping and imagining the ‘Other’ are complex, scholarship can play its part in clearing up some conventional cobwebs. The purpose of this article is to contribute to this scholarship by rupturing the cycle of cultural misrepresentation and misunderstanding.

Belly Dance and Orientalism

The first task at hand is to convey the idea that dance can be inscribed with meaning. Belly dance, a style of dance that was widely performed on cabaret stages in pre-revolutionary Iran, is a prime example of the significance of dance as meaning-making – meaning that is ascribed by the spectator. The opposing reconstructions and rearticulations of belly dance illustrate the fluidity of meaning, purpose and symbolism ascribed to dance, depending on a range of ulterior considerations and agendas.

If the nineteenth century saw in belly dance and the harem, mystery, sexuality and cultural backwardness, the twentieth century transformed these same images into testaments of female empowerment.¹² Belly dancers became enmeshed in the political machinery of colonialism, exploited as anthropological curiosities and used for erotic titillation at the World Fairs.¹³ Tempered by cultural, racial or colonial preconceptions, nineteenth century European travellers connected belly dance with sexual excess and seduction. Stories and myths about dancers were circulated by travellers, artists and writers who described a performance of

depraved immorality.¹⁴ By the early 1900s, variations of Middle Eastern social and folk dances, were performed in vaudeville houses, burlesque shows, and on film as a form of exotic artistry.¹⁵

Judy Mabro underscores the stereotypical notions of Eastern femininity and sexuality expressed through belly dancing: ‘dancing produced strong reactions from travellers [...] European tradition led them to expect a romantic and voluptuous performance; European prudery led them to damn it; Eurocentrism led them to ridicule it’.¹⁶ In Reina Lewis’ words, during the nineteenth century, Oriental dancers ‘came to be fetishised into an isolated female sign of the Orient’s erotic and passionate potential’.¹⁷ Painters such as Jean Leon Gerome, ‘the darling of the Orientalist movement and the lion of artistic circles’, portrayed dancing women suggestively: in the case of his ‘Dance of Almeh’ (1863), the dancer sways *sans* brassiere in a coffee house filled with reclining men.¹⁸ By the early twentieth century, this manufactured vision of belly dance consolidated the fantasy of the belly dancer as the embodiment of the decadent Orient.

An important shift occurred in the mid-twentieth century as Western women began to appropriate belly dance. This shift was a critical moment in the history of Western representation of belly dance, marking the beginning of the dance’s ‘re-deployment’ in the service of feminist empowerment and gender politics. The 1970s witnessed an increase in the popularity of the dance form in the US and in the major cities of Europe. Women flocked to take lessons, leading to the dance’s commodification and monetisation, much like other ‘eastern practices’ like yoga. A range of how-to books challenged the dominant stereotypes about belly dance by repackaging the activity as a healthy form of exercise that had long been subject to misinterpretation through ignorance and conservatism.

The proliferation of belly dance publications coincided with the expanding fitness industry, and the emergence of ‘goddess worship’ and ‘goddess feminism’ in the 1970s.¹⁹ Belly dance was reconstructed as the remnant of women’s fertility rites associated with primeval goddess worship.²⁰ The new visibility of belly dance as an expression of women’s femininity and as a popular fitness practice, raised the status of dance as a means of female empowerment, thereby transcending belly dance’s previous stereotypical representations. At the same time, as in the practice of yoga, which was rearticulated and stripped of its religious origins in order to serve as a better cultural product for Western consumption, the West compromised the original philosophy behind belly dancing. Contemporary belly dance, according to Anthony Shay, represents a conceptual break from its Egyptian origins and constitutes an almost entirely new,

Orientalised and auto-exoticised dance genre that retains only fragments of the earlier belly dance aesthetic.²¹

The complex ways in which belly dance has been represented demonstrates the extent to which dance, as an art form, can be inscribed and re-inscribed with social, political, cultural, historical, racial, hierarchical, colonial or sexual meaning. As I explore in this analysis, similarly, Hojabri's dancing body was loaded with layers of meaning – some inherited (the enduring perception of the solo female dancer), some almost innate (the tendency to conflate dance with sexual expression), and some that were politically construed (a critique of the past, and resistance to cultural subjugation, or Westoxication). These dense and complex layers of meaning explain why the teen was arrested by Iranian authorities. Thus, the emphasis is on the meaning attached to dance, rather than the act of dancing itself. As I elaborate below, dancing is not a crime in Iran, and hence it is inaccurate to attribute the teen's arrest to opposition to dance as a performative category.

Solo Improvised Dance in Iran: Inherited Perceptions and the Role of Gender

The next task is to establish general perceptions about the solo female dancer in Iran. While Iran has a long tradition of dance, solo improvised dance in public has been somewhat stigmatised. Zeinab Stellar observes that in both pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary Iran, dance was seen by members of the public 'as the worst possible behaviour of an undisciplined body in public' and a 'symbol of all vice'.²² Parya Saberi reflects on the 'duality of dance in Iran': 'Many people who consider traditional folk dances charming and innocent and dancing at weddings to be a joyous activity may consider professional dancers to be corrupt and immoral.'²³ Shay emphasises this ambiguity by arguing that the female dancer constitutes an ambiguous, powerful, and highly negative symbol in Iranian society. This, he indicates, is reflected both currently and historically in attempts to ban its public performances.²⁴

Many dance scholars attribute the stigma attached to the female dancing body to Islamic principles of modesty and veiling. One such scholar is Saloumeh Gholami who contends, 'Within particular segments of society in Iran, dance is believed to be a cause of immorality and a way to incite sedition'.²⁵ Such views, she holds, can be attributed to beliefs of certain orthodox Shi'ite schools.²⁶ Shay, on the other hand, attributes the negativity towards dance to *pre-Islamic* perceptions regarding public entertainers. He maintains that the Islamic Middle East has inherited many of these negative perceptions from the ancient Mediterranean world, where dancers were considered to be in the class of *infami*.²⁷

Shay highlights, ‘What is often not understood in the West about the public entertainer throughout the Middle East, is the utterly abject position these performers generally occupy, and have occupied historically, not only in Iran but also throughout this vast region’.²⁸ This was true, he explains, from ancient Greece, Rome and Byzantium into the present Middle Eastern Islamic world.²⁹ Indeed, the current Iranian regime may have inherited some of these ossified perceptions, which pre-date Islam. What I try to convey in this analysis is that Islamic standards are insufficient in explaining the motives behind the arrest. The fact that Hojabri received the support and solidarity of conservative and religious members of society is a testament to the ambiguous position dance occupies in Iranian public perception.

Another perspective that can shed light on the motives behind the arrest of the teenager is the gender dimension. As I indicate below, ‘performing’ men have also been subject to harassment in the Islamic Republic, however, this does not mean that the gender element is not at play. Ida Meftahi explains that female dancers have consistently been sites for contending discourses in pre-revolutionary and post-1979 Iran. Meftahi describes the Iranian national dancer who emerged during the Pahlavi era: depicted as an angel or a Persian princess, the ballet-trained national dancer portrayed femininity, chastity and ‘a controlled performance of sexuality’.³⁰ The ideal female subject on the Pahlavi ‘national(ist)’ stage, the national dancer performed to traditional Persian music, regional folk music and to classical and contemporary European musical pieces.³¹

She was distinguished from the cabaret dancer who was associated with moral corruption. Depicted as sexually provocative, the cabaret dancer dominated private sector entertainment and the commercial film industry, leading to the development of a ‘dancer-prostitute character’ in pre-revolutionary cinema.³² Cabaret dancers performed to belly dance music, upbeat Iranian music, ‘imaginary and invented’ African music, and popular urban Western music in performances that featured ‘jerky movement’, ‘provocative shimmies’, and the ‘free-flow rotation’ of ‘accentuated hips’.³³ Costumes varied from the more covered traditional-style period clothing to revealing belly dance attire, leading the public to identify cabaret dancers as ‘nude’ (*lukht*) or as ‘half-naked’ (*nimah-lukht*).³⁴ The national dancer, on the hand, was always fully covered with clothing primarily inspired by Persian miniature paintings.³⁵ Symbolising ‘degeneration’ and ‘eroticism’ in revolutionary discourse, the cabaret dancer became an emblem of the ‘social ills’ of the Pahlavi regime.³⁶

Did female sexuality have a bearing on the decision to arrest the dancing teen? As Hanna explains, dance and sexual expression are often inflated by the observer, who may interpret a particular dance genre as constituting ‘a more explicit sexuality’.³⁷ Would the teen

have been arrested if she had been ‘more covered’, according to more conservative Iranian standards? Would her Instagram page have been blocked for ‘criminal content’ had she been performing a traditional Iranian folkloric choreography? As I explore below, hardline officials defended the teen’s arrests by making references to modesty, morality and nudity. This reinforces the gender dimension of the arrest as all of these references suggest that Hojabri’s movements were seen as communicating an overt and potentially threatening sexuality that went against the post-revolutionary female ideal.

#dancingisnotacrime

While solo improvised dance is frowned upon in Iran, dancing is not a crime in post-revolutionary Iran. Following the revolution, a renamed and reframed style of movement-based performance known as ‘rhythmic movements’ (*harikat-i mawzun*), emerged, showcasing revolutionary, religious and mystical themes.³⁸ The ‘desexualized and controlled’ performer became the main subject of the dance scene, reinforcing the image of the ‘proper Muslim’, expressing purity, chastity, and spirituality.³⁹ Meftahi explains that within decades after the revolution the dance scene had ‘grown enormously’, to include salsa, break dancing, and contemporary dance. However, because of strict scrutiny and instances of penalty, much dance, she notes, remained underground.⁴⁰

Dancing is not a crime in post-revolutionary Iran, just as singing is not a crime – it is worth mentioning that the first of similar arrests occurred in May 2014 when a group of seven Iranian youngsters created and starred in their own version of a video for Pharrell Williams’ song ‘Happy’. The group were arrested after posting their rendition of the music video ‘Happy in Tehran’ on YouTube. Both the men and women were forced to confess and to apologise on national television before being released on bail. In this case, police chief Hossein Sajedinia warned that the video was a ‘vulgar clip’ that ‘hurt public chastity’.⁴¹ Again, as in Hojabri’s case, had the group created their own rendition of a traditional folkloric song, it is unlikely that they would have gone through the same ordeal. Like the singers, the dancing teen was seen by the authorities as promoting Western cultural products as opposed to ‘indigenous’ ones.

Dancing and singing are not criminal offences, however, they became ‘crimes’ because they were framed with Western dance styles, Western songs and Western accoutrements as references. What is interesting to note is that the control of cultural outputs in Iran is not always determined by gender. As I mentioned above, there is a gender element, but it is not always clear cut: both men and women are subject to scrutiny. It is not Islamic ideals of womanhood that are at stake, it is the fact that these youngsters were seen as promoting or elevating a

‘Western’ identity as opposed to their own identity (their ‘own’ identity being the identity that security agencies would prefer to see, as bearing the hallmarks revolutionary Iran).

Thus, the outpouring of support for Hojabri on social media with Iranians from all walks of life posting videos of themselves dancing with captions and hashtags such as ‘#dancingisnotacrime’, is a misrepresentation or misreading of the regime’s motives behind the arrest.⁴² One such dancer who has a massive following explained to the online diaspora magazine, *Iranwire*, that in posting dancing videos she was sending a message to the young dancer that she had the support of the community. At the same time, she added that she was sending a message to the regime that ‘if dancing is a crime, then we are all criminals’. Another dancer in support of Hojabri told *Iranwire* that she wanted to send the message to regime authorities that ‘being a woman is not a crime’.⁴³ As I explain in this study, it was not the act of dancing that was so controversial, but the political subtext ascribed to it by regime authorities.

Dance as the Site of Political and Cultural Resistance

Scholars of dance, ethnicity and national identity have long acknowledged that dance is a conduit of much more than aesthetic, rhythmic expression.⁴⁴ ‘Dance is an aestheticised practice that produces values’, explains Jane Desmond, who adds that the dancing body can become the ‘site of meaning in motion’.⁴⁵ The body, Desmond explains, serves as both a ground for the inscription of meaning, a tool for its enactment, and a medium for its continual creation and re-creation.⁴⁶ She adds that dance is ‘performance of cultural identity’. It signals group affiliation and group differences, whether consciously performed or not. Movement serves as a marker for the production of gender, racial, ethnic, class, and national identities. It can also be read as a signal of sexual identity, age, health, as well as various other types of distinctions and descriptions that are applied to groups.⁴⁷

I would add that dance can also serve as a site of resistance, not only for the dancer, but also for the observer. Resistance is a theme not normally allotted to the Islamic Republic in terms of its right to enact defiance in the cultural realm. In this study, I turn the idea of resistance on its head. I argue that Hojabri’s dancing body became the site of resistance not only for Iranian women and Iranian youth, but also for the Islamic Republic. Stephen Duncombe’s observation is instructive here: culture can be seen as a site of contestation through which social, economic and political conflicts are played out.⁴⁸ As I mentioned above, the conflict that played out concerned the Islamic Republic and the ‘historical West’. In the eyes of hardline agents, Hojabri was not a dancing teen but a historically-constructed purveyor of neo-

imperialist cultural hegemony, which in turn, triggered the regime's ideological impulse to enact resistance. By cracking down on the teenager's social media activity and by taking punitive action against her, the Iranian regime was, in effect, contesting and opposing what it saw as a threat to post-revolutionary national identity. I explain why this 'threat' was subdued below.

Pathologising the West: Westoxication

In order to understand the social and political implications of the teen's dance, this analysis frames and analyses the teenager's case within the discourse of Westoxication, the rally cry of the 1979 revolution. Hamid Dabashi puts it succinctly: 'no other term than Westoxication has been the singular source of so much calamitous consequences in contemporary Iranian history.'⁴⁹ Indeed, as the Hojabri case demonstrates, the Westoxication narrative continues to inform social restrictions and cultural expression in contemporary Iran. It also explains some of the arbitrariness and ambiguity surrounding arrests like the young Hojabri's.

My point of departure is the 1953 coup, which set the stage for the emergence of profoundly anti-Western sentiments that were conflated with anti-imperial and anti-colonial convictions. Under the leadership of prime minister Mohammad Mossadeq, Iran's iconic anti-colonial hero, the Iranian parliament voted to nationalise the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) and the oil refinery at Abadan under the new National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). After the vote, Britain instigated a worldwide boycott of Iranian oil to pressure Iran economically, and with the assistance of the American Central Intelligence Agency, successfully removed Mossadeq from office in August 1953. Following the coup, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's dictatorship was reinstated, and the beleaguered prime minister was humiliated in a sham trial, spending the rest of his life under house arrest.

Following the coup, heightened repression, coupled with Mohammad Reza Shah's state-imposed Westernisation campaign, a form of 'modernisation without modernity', contributed to a growing sense of alienation amongst the Iranian intelligentsia.⁵⁰ The Iranian literati characterised the post-coup years as a period of 'strangulation', 'loneliness' and 'nothingness'.⁵¹ Perceptions of the West as the bastion of democratic principles quickly faded and a new revolutionary discourse emerged calling for national independence and a return to authentic culture.

The accumulation of revolutionary energy in the build-up to Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's overthrow in 1979 can be largely attributed to Iran's emancipatory aspirations vis à vis the West. While Iranian revolutionaries, intellectuals and dissidents espoused differing

ideals, preferences, and worldviews, they were united in their opposition to the Shah's acquiescence to foreign meddling and cultural encroachment. Intellectuals and revolutionary thinkers began searching for a usable past – a version of Iranian history that would rid the country of Western influence. Anti-Western, Iranian-Islamic romanticism quickly became the focus of cultural discourse among dissidents who started to experiment with Islamic norms and imagery as ideational tools to rally support behind a struggle against a *tahajom-e farhangi* (cultural invasion).⁵²

At the forefront of this anti-Western tide was Iranian intellectual, Jalāl Āl-e Ahmad, whose ideas on national awakening and cultural protectionism emerged as the foundation of Iranian social criticism in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵³ He adapted and popularised the notion of Westoxication or *Gharbzadegi* in his seminal treatise of the same name, published in 1962. In *Gharbzadegi*, Āl-e Ahmad delivered a trenchant critique of the Shah's cultural and political dependence on the West. He criticised the Shah's Westernisation campaign while cherishing traditional archetypes of national consciousness stemming from the past.

Āl-e Ahmad diagnosed the pathology of Iran's infatuation with the West by portraying Pahlavi Westernisation as an affliction that had infected Iranian society from the outside.⁵⁴ He described *Gharbzadegi* as a disease that killed wheat from within – a malady with two faces: the West, and those inflicted by the disease, the *Gharbzadeh*.⁵⁵ In passage reminiscent of Said's description of self-Orientalisation, Āl-e Ahmad writes: ' [...] the west-stricken man can only recognise himself through the writings of western orientalists. He has singlehandedly turned himself into an object to be placed on the microscope of orientalism, and he relies only on what the orientalist sees there, rather than what he really is or feels or sees or experiences himself. This has to be the ugliest symptom of westitis'.⁵⁶

Although the ideas of Orientalists were not heavily criticised by Iranian scholars, in the context of the anti-Western stance that dominated Iranian intellectualism during the two decades preceding the 1979 revolution, several Iranian thinkers like Āl-e Ahmad did attack Orientalism. As Hamid Algar noted in his introduction to *Occidentosis*, the book's theses corresponded with some of the critical points made by Said (bearing in mind that Said's *Orientalism* was published later in 1979).⁵⁷ Āl-e Ahmad's criticism of Orientalism centred on the idea that Orientalists did not have enough academic knowledge about the cultures, histories and languages of Middle Eastern countries. He held that Orientalists were politically motivated to study aspects of Islamic history that served their interest in dominating the East. For Āl-e Ahmad, Orientalism was 'a parasite growing on the root of imperialism'. He criticised the 'Occidentotic' (*Gharbzadeh*) for being so deferential to the West: 'In the eyes of the

Occidentotic, the view of the Orientalist or the Western researcher is in every case preferable to that of the Eastern specialist'.⁵⁸

In his *Dar Khedmat va Khianat-e Roshanfekran* ('On the Service and Treason of Intellectuals'), Āl-e Ahmad extended his critique of Westernisation to secularism and liberalism, excoriating Iranian modernists for critiquing Islam and the clerical establishment.⁵⁹ In Āl-e Ahmad's assessment, of all the cultural institutions it was the education system that had become the most Westoxicated. Āl-e Ahmad lambasted Iranian scholars for disregarding the West's intrusion into Iranian affairs and for being complicit in the Western imperial project.⁶⁰ He contended that Pahlavi society's inferiority complex vis-à-vis the West, and the collusion of the Shah in this perpetuating this malaise, had cost the country its cultural authenticity and political independence.

According to Āl-e Ahmad's categorisation, Hojabri can be considered an 'Occidentotic', or a *Gharbzadeh*. That is, an Iranian citizen imitating a Westerner at the expense of her authentic culture. From this perspective, the reaction to Hojabri's dancing can be interpreted as an manifestation of the regime's anxieties concerning Western cultural influence, which hardliners in particular regard as a smokescreen for neo-imperial political domination. Seen from this angle, Hojabri was castigated for being afflicted with *Gharbzadegi*, the same disease that had plagued pre-revolutionary Iranian society.

It was in this intellectual milieu that Ayatollah Khomeini launched his anti-Shah project. Through the practices and rhetoric of Shi'a revolutionary activism, and a cultural 'remoralisation' project, Khomeini advanced a distinctly non-Western variety of modernity through the establishment of an Islamic republic.⁶¹ The centrality of culture in post-revolutionary reorganisation was made clear in Khomeini's statement that 'We have not made the revolution for cheap melons. We have made it for Islam'.⁶² While the ideological rationale behind Iran's cultural revolution is beyond the purview of this study, suffice it to say that Khomeini believed that the post-revolutionary system would remedy, or at least quarantine the malady of 'Westoxication'. Decades later, Hojabri's dancing embodied a symptom of a 'disease' that although incubated, had flared up in the form of a several Instagram posts. The 'disease' had mutated, and it had re-appeared in a post-revolutionary cultural setting, and the regime would once again attempt to inoculate it by making an example out of the unwitting social media star.

This historical representation of the West is firmly built into the conceptual architecture of the regime, showcasing the 1979 revolution as a revolt in defence of national independence and political sovereignty. So potent and commanding is this narrative that it is institutionalised

in virtually every facet of Iran's post-1979 political system – from its governing bodies to its vetting agencies, its security apparatus and its religious bodies. It informs the country's economic outlook, regional and foreign policy, and it defines the boundaries of social and civil liberties. It buttresses national affinities and supports the psychological and political roots of the post-1979 national identity. It also provides the ideational and emotive canvas on which hegemonic emotions geared to nationalist activism are explored. This outlook serves to reinforce the principles behind the revolution, to galvanise society and to ensure compliance and regime durability.

The regime continues to reproduce and to reify the narrative of a perpetual revolutionary struggle against foreign encroachment. However, as Farideh Farhi explains, the Islamic Republic has backtracked from its initially uncompromising stance on some critical and rather complicated issues. However, she underscores that the regime maintains its firm grip on 'signature' cultural issues, such as 'female veiling, abstract notions of cultural assault (*tahajom-e farhangi*), and interactions between men and women', themes that 'keep popping back into the public arena' as needed statements or re-statements of Iran's post-revolutionary identity.⁶³

Westoxication lies at the core of Iranian revolutionary discourse and its central tenets continue to inform cultural dictates. With this foregrounding in place, the section that follows will build the argument that the teen's arrest was an attempt to reinforce a threatened identity through punitive action, and an effort to reinstate the revolutionary principle of cultural indigeneity.

Reaction and Resistance

Hojabri's case stirred a wide debate along the political spectrum in Iran, but by no means was official reaction homogenous. Hojabri's tearful confession was broadcast by the state-run television network, *Sedā va Sīmā-ye Jomhūri-ye Eslāmi-ye Īrān* on a documentary entitled, 'Bīrā-hī', which can denote, 'without a way, waywardness, lack of direction, disorientation, or having gone astray'.⁶⁴ What is implicit in this title is that the 'correct way' is one defined by the post-revolutionary ruling elite. Hojabri's dancing represented deviance from this well-delineated post-revolutionary 'path'.

Hojabri expressed regret on the programme and explained, 'I understand that dancing is an art but it should not be shown to everyone'.⁶⁵ Her public admission of guilt created a backlash among Iranian society as political activists, opposition forces and even more progressive elements of the religious establishment criticised the regime for going too far by

allowing the state broadcaster to air her confession. Many felt that Hojabri's public humiliation was unnecessary as it was seen to have potentially long-term consequences on the seventeen-year-old and her family. However, those that sympathised with Hojabri were relatively reticent on the subject of the appropriateness of her dancing or of her appearance. On the other hand, security-enforcing institutions were more vociferous in condemning her actions. Interestingly, as I shall discuss below, the judicial authorities were quick to reject any involvement in the broadcasting of the young woman's confession.

Following her televised confession in early July 2018, the Iranian Association for the Protection of Children's Rights issued a statement condemning Hojabri's confession, calling it 'a clear symbol of violence against children', and a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. According to the state-funded *Iranian Students' News Association (ISNA)*, the statement emphasised that the youngster was under the age of eighteen and that 'according to the law on the protection of children and adolescents, creating such a degrading atmosphere causes psychological harm to a child'. The Association appealed to the prosecutor general to 'protest the violated rights' of the seventeen-year-old adolescent.⁶⁶

The outcry from the reformist camp was bold and strong. Mohammad Taghi Fazel Meybodi, a reformist cleric, criticised the network for 'playing with the reputation of a young woman and her family'. Meybodi, a theologian from the holy city of Qom tweeted 'the executives of the broadcasting station have neglected religious tradition by toying with Hojabri and her family's reputation'. He added that station executives were not equipped to deal with women's issues or family issues. While Meybodi did not comment on the appropriateness of Hojabri's videos, he reflected on the irony of the authorities being 'unable to stop more pressing problems such as corruption'.⁶⁷

This criticism was echoed by reformist political commentator Abbas Abdi who wrote in an op-ed for the daily Iranian newspaper, *Etemad*: 'Those who aired this programme should accept responsibility for its consequences. There is no benefit in arresting people for these things and forcing them to repent. It is psychologically destructive to bring someone on television and to make them cry. Everyone will ask why you don't do this to thieves and embezzlers?'⁶⁸ In a similar vein, Ehsan Bodaghi, Iranian journalist and parliamentary reporter for the government-run daily, *Iran*, questioned the hypocrisy of the public confession. In a tweet, he asked: 'Does anyone remember the last time that an economic criminal [an embezzler] wept with such regret on Sedā va Sīmā?'.⁶⁹

Female politicians also voiced their opinion vociferously. Reformist politician Azar Mansouri, a senior member of the Union of Islamic Iran People Party and a senior member of

the Islamic Iran Participation Front, tweeted: ‘Policy-makers and decision-makers, if you are open to questioning, then on what compassionate, moral, humanitarian or religious grounds does the country’s largest state broadcaster justify a youngster’s public confession?’⁷⁰

Others like Seyyed Mostafa Tajzadeh, a reformist politician and a senior member of the Islamic Iran Participation Front, reflected on the timing of the arrest and confession. He tweeted that while it was plausible for such confessions to have taken place in the first decade following the 1979 revolution, it was incomprehensible how a person whose only capital was their art, could be penalised in such a manner. Tajzadeh went to far as to assert that the ‘forced confession was a show of weakness on that part of an establishment that shows its might on the international stage against the world’s superpowers, while fearing the joy and vitality of a youngster’.⁷¹

Moving along the political spectrum, the Islamic Consultative Assembly lawmaker, Mohammad Ali Vakili, voiced a more conservative preoccupation. Vakili told *ISNA*, that at ‘a time when the country is in crisis, airing these kinds of programmes on television shows that the officials are having a problem identifying current priorities’. He explained that while the teenage girl’s actions were not defensible, he opposed the broadcasting of the confession as it would only ‘contribute to propaganda against Iran globally’.⁷²

Firmly on the hard-line end of the spectrum was Touraj Kazemi, the head of Tehran’s cyber-police, known as the ‘Police for the Sphere of the Production and Exchange of Information’ (referred to in Iran as ‘FATA’). Kazemi confirmed that he was leading a crackdown against popular Instagram accounts, and he announced that individuals that posted ‘indecent’ material online would be pursued for committing crimes against national security. According to Kazemi, while such cases were outside of the remit of cyber-crime, they would be investigated and ‘dealt with severely’.⁷³

The relatively conservative *Entekhab* online news website known for articulating a more a modernist defence of the Islamic Republic quoted spokesman of Iran’s judiciary, the hard-liner, Gholam Hossein Mohseni-Ejei. Ejei asserted that the judiciary had not authorised the state broadcaster to reveal Hojabri’s identity or image on television. The broadcaster was supposed to seek the assistance of the media centre at the judiciary, which it did not, according to Ejei. He also added that ‘the individual’ [Hojabri] did not have even one night of detention. The official statement of the judiciary, according to *Entekhab*, was that it had not granted permission to Sedā va Sīmā to reveal images or the name of the offender on the television programme, ‘Bīrā-hī’.⁷⁴

Ejei contended that it was regrettable that the public assessed social issues from only one angle. Referring to social media celebrities, he inveighed, ‘If people do not believe in the [1979] revolution and in the service of the martyrs [of the Iraq-Iran War 1981-1988], then where is their shame? Why do they expose themselves half-naked or naked and pollute the public realm? Of course, this a crime’.⁷⁵ It should be noted that these references are in line with the labels attributed to the cabaret dancers of the pre-revolutionary era. What is significant is that Ejei is not condemning the dancing, as I have indicated above. Rather, he is lamenting the lack of modesty or consideration for the principles of the revolution. Ejei’s social, cultural and moral criticism of social media celebrities is reflective of the perspective of the traditionalist camp – a position that is clearly informed by Iran’s political and revolutionary history as Ejei’s reference to the revolution and to martyrs indicates.

There is also the question of public versus private domains. From Ejei’s perspective, an Instagram account that is open to the public is public domain. Ejei maintained that it was the right of individuals to post images and videos on their password-protected Instagram pages, however, ‘when that page is no longer private and open to the public sphere, it becomes a real public space, like a street’.⁷⁶ Ejei added that ‘anyone who had dismissed the government or the authorities in this debacle would be subject to questioning by God’.⁷⁷ What is interesting is Ejei’s conflation of national loyalty, the state, and the role of God in a statement that connects all of the nodal points of Iran’s theocratic ideology.

The Hojabri case touched on all of the Islamic Republic’s trigger points. At its core, the criticism attached to Hojabri’s dancing represented a critique of the past, a form of reclaiming cultural heritage, and the validation of post-revolutionary cultural norms – albeit through repressive means. Persecution and harassment were the by-products of the arrest and not the main goal. This explains why Ejei objected to the public shaming of the young dancer, confirming that ‘yes, it was wrong to reveal the individual’s face and identity’. Nevertheless, Ejei was unequivocal about the teenager’s ‘moral crime and the lack of consideration for the principles of the revolution’.⁷⁸

Tasnim, a news agency that defines itself on its webpage as a ‘security news agency’, quoted Mohammad Hussein Ranjbaran, head of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Broadcasting (IRIB) Public Relations Office, and a former journalist at *Sedā va Sīmā*. Ranjbaran defended the network’s decision to air the programme, claiming, ‘We are getting calls from some families – that are not even religious – keen to be informed about social harm. They begged us to make programmes that would put a stop to this uncontrollable situation in cyber-space and to protect family decency and respect’. He also emphasised that a judicial order had been issued

for legal action against Hojabri. *Tasnim* also quoted the Communications Office at the Tehran cyber-police headquarters, which made the announcement that Hojabri's actions were against the law and subject to legal action. Ominously, the Communications Office added that had Hojabri's file been within their remit, they would have chased it until the end.⁷⁹

What is noteworthy is the fact that none of the individuals that posted videos of themselves dancing on social media in support of Hojabri were dressed as 'immodestly' as the teen was, a factor that had clearly raised the ire of conservatives and hardliners. Perhaps it was Hojabri's undulating and bared midriff and skin-tight jeans that were seen as a transgression from culturally permissible standards. Clearly, Hojabri's dancing was no longer perceived as an art form, but rather as a form of erotic provocation if we consider Ejei's emphasis on 'nakedness', which brings to mind earlier prejudices about the cabaret dancers of the Pahlavi era. Seen from this perspective, or from this spectator's gaze, it was not the teen's dancing that was the crime but the lack of regard for the standards of decency and cultural authenticity – the hard-won ideals of the 1979 revolution.

Conclusion

Dance is 'meaning in motion', and it was the meaning ascribed to dance that led to the young Hojabri's arrest, and not the act of dancing itself. In this study, I have emphasised that dance can be loaded with political, social and cultural meaning, depending on the motives and mindset of the spectator.⁸⁰ The discussion of belly dance conveys this clearly: dance can be inscribed and re-inscribed with political, cultural and social markers. Likewise, Hojabri's dancing body was ascribed with meaning by the observer, namely the hardline judiciary, the cyber police and intelligence agents that perceived her as succumbing to Western cultural norms and ideals.

In analysing the motives behind the arrest of the social media star, I have explored Iranian perceptions of female solo dancers in both pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary Iran. What becomes clear are latent prejudices towards solo dancers as well as underlying sexual anxieties about the female dancing body. The survey of the transformation of dance in modern Iran, in particular the low status attributed to the 'degenerate' and 'semi-naked' cabaret dancer, reveals a possible gender dimension to the arrest. The Iranian officials' justification of the arrest with references to nudity, social impropriety, and revolutionary ideals, suggests the conflation of pre-revolutionary prejudices with current ideological inclinations. Iranian authorities may have inherited the predominantly negative perception of female dancers – a factor that may have contributed to the teen's arrest.

The paper's central argument is that dancing is not a crime in Iran, and that the regime's reaction to Hojabri's dancing was a product of a complicated historical dialectic with the West, rather than an objection to dance as a performative category. By framing and analysing the teen's arrest within the discourse of Westoxication, I have interpreted the arrest of the crackdown a projection of the regime's historical grievances. The statements of Iran's cyber police, judiciary and security organisations present the young Hojabri as a 'Westoxicated' counter-cultural symbol that posed a threat to post-revolutionary principles. In this light, the punitive action taken against the youngster can be interpreted as repudiation of Western cultural influence and an effort to preserve cultural indigeneity.

Desmond's explanation that dance can signal, enact and rework social categories of identity has also been useful in this analysis. In the Hojabri case, the 'West', as a social identity, was codified in Hojabri's dance performances. Thus, the teen was seen as reinforcing and reifying Western cultural products. To conservative hardliners, the youngster's repertoire of Western-inspired dance styles in Western urban attire represented a form of cultural subjugation to hegemonic Western norms – the very norms they resisted by overthrowing the Westernising Pahlavi Shah. Consequently, Hojabri's dancing body became the discursive terrain on which regime hardliners contested and resisted what they perceived as a manifestation of Western cultural imperialism.

As indicated in the introduction, the goal of this investigation has been to offer a counter-narrative that empowers the subject of my study. By connecting several thematic vectors of analysis, I have revealed the disruptive potential of a young woman's dance, which had the power to trigger the ideological impulses of the Islamic Republic. Michel Foucault's dichotomy of power and resistance is useful here – albeit turned on its head.⁸¹ What becomes apparent in this analysis is that ultimately 'power' rested with the tormented young dancer, while 'resistance' belonged to the juggernaut of the Islamic Republic that felt threatened by an innocent youngster's social media activity.

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Notes

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- ¹⁴“The Reaction to the Detention of Maedeh Hojabri”. *Iranwire*. July 9, 2018. <https://iranwire.com/fa/features/26776>
- ² Golkar, “Student Activism, Social Media an Authoritarian Rule in Iran”, 62.
- ³ Hanna, “Dance and Sexuality”, 214.
- ⁴ Meftahi, *Gender and Politics in Modern Iran*, 5-6.
- ⁵ Brownlee and Ghiabi, “Passive, Silent and Revolutionary”, 301.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 312.
- ⁷ For example, see Jason Rezaian, “What the Arrest of an 18-year-old Instagram Star Says about Iran’s Backward Leaders”. July 12, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/07/12/a-teen-is-jailed-for-dancing-on-instagram-its-nothing-new-in-irans-war-on-women/?utm_term=.4442ee9aeb7d
- ⁸ Akbarzadeh, “Do Iranian Dancers Need Saving”, 453-470.
- ⁹ Brownlee and Ghiabi, “Passive, Silent and Revolutionary”.
- ¹⁰ Said, *Orientalism*.
- ¹¹ Siapera, “Cultural Diversity and Global Media”, 124.
- ¹² Dox, “Dancing Around Orientalism”, 53.
- ¹³ Jarmakani, *Imagining Arab Womanhood*.
- ¹⁴ Mabro, *Veiled Half-Truths*.
- ¹⁵ Dox, “Dancing Around Orientalism”, 53.
- ¹⁶ Mabro, *Veiled Half-Truths*, 118.
- ¹⁷ Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism*, 173.
- ¹⁸ Thornton, *The Orientalists*, 172.
- ¹⁹ Maira, “Belly Dancing: Arab Face, Orientalist Feminism, and U.S. Empire”, 332.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 323.
- ²¹ Shay, “Dancing Across Borders”, 128.
- ²² Stellar, “From ‘Evil-inciting’ Dance to Chaste ‘Rhythmic Movements’”, 235.
- ²³ Saberi, “What It’s Like to Be a Dancer in the Islamic Republic of Iran”. *Dance Magazine*. July 2, 2019. <https://www.dancemagazine.com/dance-in-iran-2638945653.html>
- ²⁴ Shay, “Dance and Non-dance”, 61-62.
- ²⁵ Gholami, “Dance in Iran”, 6.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ Shay, *The Dangerous Lives of Public Performers*, 78-89.
- ²⁸ Shay, “Foreword”, in Breyley and Fatemi (eds.), *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment*, xiii-xiv.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, xv.
- ³⁰ Meftahi, *Gender and Politics in Modern Iran*, 42.
- ³¹ Meftahi, “Dancing Angels and Princesses: The Invention of an Ideal Female National Dancer in Twentieth-Century Iran”, 21.
- ³² Meftahi, *Gender and Politics in Modern Iran*, 42.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 61, 81.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1, 7.
- ³⁷ Hanna, “Dance and Sexuality”, 213.
- ³⁸ Stellar, “From ‘Evil-inciting’ Dance to Chaste ‘Rhythmic Movements’”, 231, 237-238.
- ³⁹ Meftahi, *Gender and Politics in Modern Iran*, 165.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-11.
- ⁴¹ “Iranians Behind Tehran Version of ‘Happy’ Sentenced”. *The Independent*. September 18, 2014. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iranians-behind-tehran-version-happy-sentenced-six-months-prison-and-91-lashes-9741014.html>
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- ⁴³ “The Reaction to the Detention of Maedeh Hojabri”. *Iranwire*. July 9, 2018. <https://iranwire.com/fa/features/26776>
- ⁴⁴ Reed, “The Politics and Poetics of Dance”, 503-532.
- ⁴⁵ Desmond, *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, 1-2.
- ⁴⁶ Desmond, “Embodying Difference”, 50-51.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.
- ⁴⁸ Duncombe, *Cultural Resistance Reader*, 35.
- ⁴⁹ Dabashi, *Post-Orientalism*, 258.

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- ⁵⁰ See Tazmini, *Revolution and Reform in Russia and Iran*, 216, 248, 264.
- ⁵¹ Bill, *The Politics of Iran*, 74.
- ⁵² Term adapted from Fazeli, *Politics of Culture in Iran*, 197.
- ⁵³ Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West*, 68-9.
- ⁵⁴ Mohammadi, *Political Islam in Post-Revolutionary Iran*, 62-3.
- ⁵⁵ Āl-e Ahmad, *Occidentosis*, 27.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 73.
- ⁵⁷ Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906*.
- ⁵⁸ Quoted in by Akbar and Saeed, *Contemporary Approaches to the Qur'an and its Interpretation in Iran*, 14.
- ⁵⁹ Mirsepasi, *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought*, 50.
- ⁶⁰ Āl-e Ahmad, *Occidentosis*.
- ⁶¹ Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*.
- ⁶² Bayat, "Islamism and Social Movement Theory", 904.
- ⁶³ Farhi, "Cultural Policies in the Islamic Republic of Iran", 2.
- ⁶⁴ "The Issue of the Confession of Maedeh Hojabri". *Ionline*. July 13, 2018.
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