1 Introduction

In early 1978, *Towards the Great Civilization*, the last pre-revolutionary book written by Mohammad Reza Shah, was published amid great fanfare. To be sure, from the early 1970s, he increasingly spoke of this 'great civilization' and its elements, a significant number of which are found in his first work, *Mission for My Country* (1961), in his trial balloon aimed at the ideologization of the monarchy, *Pahlavism* (1966–1967) penned by Manuchehr Honarmand, and in the ideology of the Rastakhiz Party of Shah and People founded in 1975.[1] Expressing great optimism about Iran's future, the shah portrayed this Great Civilization as an Iranian modernity superior to that offered by the liberal and capitalist West and the communist East. This superiority was rooted in Western-style economic and technological progress within the sacred boundaries of the authenticity of Iranian culture and national identity as defined by the monarchy. He emphasized that a goal of the systemization of his thought in this work was to identify and manage the social, cultural, and moral consequences of rapid economic and technological change whose speed increased from the mid-1960s. I argue that the emergence of state narratives about these consequences coincided with and also constituted a reaction to steadily growing societal concerns that in a number of areas, and particularly those of values and culture, society was rapidly retreating from an imagined uniquely Iranian civilized state. In this regard, the greatest expression was nostalgia in a multitude of forms.

'*Those were the days, my friends. We thought they'd never end*', Mary Hopkin reminds us in her 1968–1969 hit song, an English-language rendition of a Russian song *Dorogoi Dlinnoyu* (*By the Long Road*), which was composed in the 1920s by Boris Fomin with

[1] Zhand Shakibi, *Pahlavi Iran and the Politics of Occidentalism* (London, 2020).

poetry by Konstantin Podrevskii.[2] It became a major hit in Europe and the USA while versions in French, Spanish, Italian, German, and fourteen other languages appeared. Not only has Hopkin's rendition remained popular, but also successive generations of singers in Europe, North America, and beyond have performed it. Paul McCartney, the producer of Hopkin's performance, decades later in explaining his decision to support this piece, indirectly explained the song's enduring popularity across borders: 'It had something. It was a good treatment of nostalgia'[3] and the ubiquitous emotive power nostalgia can exercise in the face of times when '*nothing seem[s] the way it used to be*'.

Hearing this song awakens images from various periods of life, images of elderly parents when young, of family members and gatherings, of friends, of the old family home and neighbourhood, of a cherished local hangout, such as a pub (think *Cheers*), a café (think *Central Perk*), or of any place where everybody once knew your name. And the list continues, encompassing memories and images from not only your personal life but also the larger social and political world around you. If you first voice to yourself or to others, *those were the days*, such images have already provoked and moved you. In both cases, you have succumbed to nostalgia. In the personal sphere, it is a bittersweet sentiment. Its sweetness is rooted in warm memories and 'starry notions [that] we'd live the life we choose, we'd fight and never lose for we were young and sure to have our way'. Its bitterness is rooted in the passing of the people, places, and times constituting these memories and in untraveled paths and missed and lost opportunities. In the societal and political spheres, nostalgia assumes myriad forms that, while seemingly obsessed with the past, are more reflections of discontent and uneasiness in the present and consequent deep anxiety and even fear regarding the future. Important to our encounter with nostalgias, we should recall that discontent and uneasiness fundamentally differ from each other. Discontent, according to the OED, is a 'dissatisfaction of the mind' that is often 'the result of intellectual

[2] Aleksandr Znatnov, 'Pogodoi lunnoyu', *Nash Sovremennik*, 11 (2013). Gene Gaskin, an American songwriter, translated it into English and copyrighted it.
[3] Randal Hill, 'Those Were the Days', *Viera Voice*, 26 November 2018. See also 'Pesniya "Dorogoi dlinnoyu v plenu u Makkartni', *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 20 June 2013.

speculations'. Uneasiness is a sentiment that the present 'should be other than it is'.[4]

Nostalgia in its personal, societal, and political forms and expressions has been a common and inevitable dimension of recorded human experience since the times of Homer and Ovid. 'There must be several kinds [of nostalgia],' noted Grazia Deledda, the first Italian woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature (1926) in the preface to her novel *Nostalgie* (1905), 'don't you think so? The nostalgia of yesterday, the nostalgia of to-morrow; the longing for what is lost, the yearning for what can never be attained–.' Albert Camus in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* was more direct: 'Above all, a person's thought is his/her nostalgia.' Deledda, in her dedication, added to this idea of the ubiquity of nostalgia when she metaphorically noted: '[This novel] is a simple narrative, a transcript from life, from this our modern life, so multiform, so interesting, sometimes so joyous, oftener so sad; beautiful always as an autumn tree laden with fruit some of it rotten, – and with leaves – many of them dead.'[5]

These two characteristics of nostalgia – its eternal ubiquity and progressive intensification in the autumnesque conditions of 'this our modern life' – are the launching positions of our examination of nostalgia in late Pahlavi Iran, defined broadly as the mid-1960s to autumn 1978. It focuses on the forms, expressions, and narratives of nostalgia in two major and interconnected spheres: societal popular and state. Constituting the societal popular for our purposes are the mass media, which acted as a conduit and filter, especially within the confines of Pahlavi authoritarianism, of public sentiments regarding the social and cultural conditions producing nostalgia and as reporter and commentator about them. Also included in this societal popular sphere are criminal and family court proceedings, cinema, non-fiction, literature, and poetry. The state sphere encompasses policymaking, official discourses, narratives, remarks, statements, and writings by leading state intellectuals and political figures, including Mohammad Reza Shah and Empress Farah. Particular attention is given to the progressive increase of expressions of nostalgia in this sphere, which reached new heights during the Rastakhiz period (1975 to late 1978).

[4] Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud and Man's Soul* (New York, 1984), pp. 100–101.
[5] Grazia Deledda, *Nostalgia* (London, 1905), pp. 1–2.

I argue that this increase of nostalgic forms and narratives was both a reaction to the rise and spread of nostalgia in the societal popular sphere and a reflection of growing uneasiness and discontent among these state actors about sensed negative social, cultural, and moral consequences of rapid modernization and industrialization.

Before going any further, I must mention three caveats. The focus is on the forms and expressions of nostalgia *in* the late Pahlavi period. Nostalgia felt by Iranians, including students living abroad during that period,[6] and post-revolutionary nostalgia *for* that period, which is characteristic of Iranian émigré communities, among others, is not discussed. Second, I do not approach nostalgia in order to determine the extent of its role in the 1979 Revolution, although I reference some works on its causes in discussing nostalgia's explanatory power within these two spheres. This study offers a new dimension to the study of late Pahlavi Iran while eschewing the singular focus on the search for the revolution's causes and the long-standing debates about them. Such focus has deprived the study of late Pahlavi Iran of full research and analytical independence from the revolutionary events and thereby has shoved into the historiographical periphery topics and themes that were important and influential at the time but have not received proper attention in the literature.[7] Third, I do not include discourses belonging to organized opposition groups, such as the National Front, the Freedom Movement of Iran, and the People's Mujahedin (*Mojahedin-e Khalq*), since they do not, in any significant way, or at all, address the specific events and conditions producing the nostalgic forms and narratives examined here. Clerical texts are also not included but for the opposite reason. Broad nostalgic themes, such as the decline of morality and the spread of sin, are themes inherent (but not exclusively) to narratives of the three monotheist religions. Clerics, those self-appointed purveyors and guardians of proper morality, use such themes to claim and justify their influence and power over society. Moreover, in late Pahlavi Iran such themes in clerical narratives and

[6] Manijeh Moradian, '"Down with the Shah!": Political Radicalization and the Iranian Foreign Student Revolt', *American Quarterly*, 74 (2022).

[7] This goal reflects approaches by new generations of scholars of Iran. For example, Cyrus Schayegh, '"Seeing Like a State": An Essay on the Historiography of Modern Iran', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42:1 (2010).

remarks, including those of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, offer little to this examination of the relationship between these two spheres in regard to nostalgia.[8] This work, therefore, is not only the first to approach the late Pahlavi period through the prism of nostalgia, but also, given these caveats and the focus on these two specific spheres, raises issues that offer new paths for further research on this topic. We return to this point in the Epilogue.

I decided to write this book given the absence within the study of twentieth-century Iran of systematic and qualitative work on proximate nostalgias – that is, nostalgia for the experienced past, that emerged in these two spheres and how their expressions and narratives increased in this period. This form of nostalgia has been sporadically and briefly mentioned in monographs on topics such as literature, poetry, and cinema of the 1960s and 1970s. In Persian-language works, distant or ancient nostalgia – in other words, nostalgia for periods not personally experienced by individuals and society – has received some attention, but for the most part they are limited to classical and new (*she'r-e nou*) poetry, such as the writings of Mohammad-Taghi Bahar, Hossein Kazemzade (Iranshahr), Akhavan Sales;[9] in literature, such as Zayn al-Abidin Maraghahi's *Siahatname-ye Ibrahim Bek*; and in the writings of early Iranian nationalist authors such as Mirza Fath'Ali Akhundzade, Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, and Talibov Tabrizi. The theme uniting these writers is nostalgia for the lost civilizational grandeur of Iran's pre-Islamic imperial eras that was provoked by the sloth and wretchedness into which Iran had descended. The prominent place of this distant nostalgia for the lost golden age of pre-Islamic imperial Iran in Pahlavi state nationalism has been well covered. Yet historiography on the late Pahlavi era still lacks a relatively clear image of the varied forms and expressions of this proximate nostalgia in the societal popular and state spheres.

This absence is intriguing given the large and diverse body of literature on nostalgia that includes comparative and single-case country studies and works on its theorization. In this regard, the historiography of twentieth-century Iran is an outlier. Given this absence, myriad

[8] Ruhollah Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrar (Tehran, n/a) and Sahife-ye Nur* (Tehran, 1361/1982), vols. 1–8.
[9] Mojtaba Zerandini, *Nostalzhi dar Sh'er-e Nou* (Tehran, 1396/2018).

social, cultural, and political dimensions of the late Pahlavi period have remained (partially) hidden, not fully appreciated or understood, and/or in the historiographical periphery. This absence is intriguing also because a generalized nostalgia lurks in studies that focus on the cultural conditions of late Pahlavi Iran as the cause for the revolution or on intellectual themes in the ideology of the revolution and even the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). Such studies reference nostalgia but then subsume the term and broad and ultimately incomplete understandings of it within the confines of a general sociological theory or into an examination of narratives about nativism and of the larger and ever-popular topic *gharbzadegi* (occidentosis), a term made famous by Jalal al-Ahmad with the publication of his book, *Gharbzadegi* (1962). Instead of the term's usual translation, *westoxification*, I use *occidentosis* to emphasize the opinion articulated in the work and popular among a part of the intelligentsia at the time that those individuals who imitated the culture, morality, and behaviour of Westerners suffered from an infectious disease and thereby threatened the authenticity of Iranian culture and identity. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, al-Ahmad wrote this piece at a time when intellectual concerns about the loss, that harbinger of nostalgia, of the authenticity of Iranian culture and national identity began to intensify.[10]

In some cases, Iran's Islamic revolutionary movement is compared to fascism, an ideology, according to a long-standing and dominant belief in the literature, born of and based on nostalgia. As a whole, such cases do not properly explore the term nostalgia as an independent term and the myriad forms and dimensions it can take and make only partial, if any, use of the large body of literature on it. Said Arjomand's *The Turban for the Crown* is an early prime example. He argues that rapid economic growth brought by vast rapid increases in oil income in the 1970s spread Durkheimian anomie and confusion about values, particularly among the traditional and new middle classes who had succumbed to conspicuous consumption. This anomie provided the opportunity to those groups, such as the clergy and its intellectual and bazaar allies, whom the shah had shoved to the side in his drive for

[10] Jalal Al-i Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West*, trans. R. Campbell (Berkeley, 1984). See Afshin Matin-Asghari, *Both Eastern and Western: An Intellectual History of Iranian Modernity* (Cambridge, 2018).

modernization and absolute power, to seize the banner of opposition and eventually revolution. This revolutionary movement in the name of traditionalism he compares to reactionary movements in Europe, such as the Legion of Archangel Michael, the twentieth-century fascist movement of Orthodox Romania, and its armed branch, the Iron Legion; and the Carlists of Catholic Spain. 'The Islamic movement in Iran and European fascism are similar in that they were led by dispossessed elements' suffering from anomie.[11]

Among generally positive reviews of the book, Arjomand's use of anomie met criticism. Juan Cole, the noted historian, remarked that Arjomand 'appeared to be depicting fairly cohesive social groups with real grievances and a sophisticated ability to mobilize for mass political action. This does not sound like Durkheim's anomie to me, although I have to admit that I have never encountered anything that did'.[12] This criticism does not reduce the usefulness of cultural confusion and nostalgia in understanding late Pahlavi Iran, but rather reflects the limitations in the explanatory power of anomie and of its particular, limited use of nostalgia. Chapter 2, in its examination of the literature on nostalgia, illustrates these limitations and shows why nostalgia, free of theories such as anomie, enjoys greater power in conveying the zeitgeist of late Pahlavi Iran.

A recent example of this approach to nostalgia is Ali Mirsepassi's *Political Islam, Iran and the Enlightenment* in which he expands these themes of culture and authenticity to determine the causes for Iran's inability to arrive at the gates of what he calls 'democratic modernity'. He argues that the 'ideational complexes and intellectual trends … generated in the West itself' played a decisive role 'in shaping the principle ideological formation of the Islamist critique of modernity and the West' and thereby the revolution's ideology. Central to his theoretical argument is the idea of 'philosophies of hope' and 'philosophies of despair'.[13]

The narratives of hope look forward and propagate the idea of pragmatic politics and thereby pave the path towards these gates while rejecting the allure of nativism. In its broadest sense, nativism

[11] Said Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (Oxford, 1989), p. 197.
[12] Juan Cole, 'Review', *The American Historical Review*, 96:2 (1991), p. 572.
[13] Ali Mirsepassi, *Political Islam, Iran, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 25.

calls for resurgence, reinstatement or continuance of native or indigenous cultural customs, beliefs and values. Nativism is grounded on such deeply held beliefs such as resisting acculturation, privileging one's own 'authentic' ethnic identity and longing for a return to 'an unsullied indigenous cultural tradition'.

Being a 'high-pitched polemic', nativism 'often traps Third World intellectuals in the marshlands of an insular, obscurest, nostalgic, jingoistic, and particularist, mind-set. Xenophobic nationalism, a conspiratorial mind-set, a garrison-state mentality, and unqualified anti-Westernism are some of the end products of the nativist discourse'.[14] Probably the most prominent example in this regard is al-Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi*. Nativism within this narrative stands in opposition to philosophies of hope.

Philosophies of hope reject this 'high-pitched polemic'. They focus on reforming the present, rather than rejecting it, and, based on 'a more sociological approach', emphasize 'the here and now, the category of everyday life, the framework of pragmatic ethics, and guiding commitment to the democratic possibility of modernity'.[15] These philosophies Mirsepassi finds in the thought of US and British thinkers who, he claims, played a key role in paving the way to this desired modernity in these countries and thus should serve as guides for non-Western countries. In this regard, he cites India as a positive example. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of these debatable claims, recent developments in India, particularly the ideological and political collapse of the Congress Party, the emergence of majoritarian Hindu nationalism, fuelled significantly by nostalgia, as India's dominant political force, and successive electoral successes of Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party on national and local levels, question the conclusions he made not only about India but also about Iran and the Enlightenment.[16]

The philosophies of despair with roots in the 'radical counter-Enlightenment' call for a crusade to resurrect lost authenticity, condemn a corrupted present, and thereby deepen polarization, which paves the way to the gates of fascism. In this regard, Mirsepassi focuses on Heidegger, whom he considers the leading philosopher of the early

[14] Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West* (Syracuse, 1996), p. 18.
[15] Mirsepassi, p. 25.
[16] See Sumantra Bose, *Secular States, Religious Politics, India, Turkey and the Future of Secularism* (Cambridge, 2018).

Nazi movement. It is this Heidegger, he argues, who exercised a determinative and deleterious influence on al-Ahmad, Ali Shariati, and Ahmad Fardid. In his opinion, they are 'the three most significant Iranian intellectuals of the 1960s and '70s' who contributed to the revolution's ideology. He does not reveal when and how, if ever, they became acquainted with Heidegger – either through direct reading of his texts (in translation) or through secondary writing about his thought. Considering Fardid's influence to be as great as that of al-Ahmad and Shariati is also contentious. Debating it, however, is beyond this study's purview.

Fardid, Mirsepassi claims, influenced heavily by Heidegger's thought, 'shifted the earlier debates on Enlightenment discourses of progress ... to an ontological critique of the West as a uniform totality'. It is here that fascist tendencies emerged as Iranian intellectuals, 'feeding off the social discontent and cultural disorientation endemic to rapidly modernizing societies', created a 'vision of reality based on fantasies of nostalgia' primarily rooted in shared 'sense of community and social meaning' that had to be restored. The resultant vision was 'utopian, impractical, and unconcerned with the practical or ethical implications of the ideas produced'.[17] In this way Iran failed to reach the gates of this democratic modernity. This approach, along with its conclusions, fails to consider two points examined in this study. First, it denies Iranians from across the socio-economic spectrum agency, independent from both Iranian and Western intellectuals, in forming their reactions to the various forms of rapid change that they encountered in their lives. Second, it does not address the everyday issues and encounters experienced by people that produced this 'social discontent and cultural disorientation' and nostalgia which cannot be easily dismissed as 'fantasies'.

These two examples show that any positive comparisons between Western fascism and the thought and ideologies behind the revolutionary movement are underpinned and rationalized by a dominant but limited portrayal of nostalgia according to which forms of societal nostalgia are intrinsically irrational, fantastical, and opposed to the narratives of change, civilization, modernity, and linear progressive history rooted in Enlightenment thought. On the one hand stand the paths of change and modernity travelled by those countries seen as the

[17] Mirsepassi, p. 22.

founding members of the concept of the West, especially the USA and Britain, where nostalgia failed to become intellectually and politically dominant and dangerous. On the other hand stand negative forces, variously labelled as counter-Enlightenment, Romanticism, fascism, and nativism, at the centre of which are 'fantasies of nostalgia', that starting point for all anti-modern and therefore anti-democratic movements. Nostalgia, therefore, is

> the cancer of the body politic; it either reinforces the worst reactionary tendencies within society or imposes a reactionary version of the past. It argues for a time that never really was as imagined by the nostalgic-ridden. Nostalgia is an ideological addictive drug that distracts peoples from deep and important issues and from the process of preparing and managing change by providing them with a sense of warmth and escapism from life's inevitable realities.[18]

The role of intellectuals in producing, consuming, and spreading this 'addictive drug' is only half the story. The other half is the role of the people. In other words, the idea of a pincer movement from below and from above, motivated to varying extents by nostalgia, has been at the centre of cultural explanations about the conditions that brought the revolution. According to such explanations and observations, Iranian and Western, this clerical-led revolution symbolized the triumph of parochial, religious, and superstitious masses who, lacking full literacy and education, and therefore unwilling or unable to accept change, were dangerously susceptible to the sentimentality of memory-distorting nostalgia, to the 'fantasies of nostalgia', propagated by leading intellectuals.

Sharing this negative opinion about the masses were Pahlavi-era political figures as well as state and non-state intellectuals since the dynasty's establishment. They saw in these masses a leading cause for Iran's economic and technological backwardness relative to the West and a major obstacle to cultural and social reforms implemented from above. The key was to inculcate valorization of change.

Propagation of the valorization of change and the struggle against nostalgic sentiments among the populace date to Reza Shah's reign (1925–1941). In 1938, he established the Organization of Public Enlightenment (OPE), a significant step in the systemization of state propaganda and the creation of a unified cultural policy in accordance

[18] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London, 2012), p. 242.

with the state's political and modernization plans. At the centre of these plans was the creation of a *homo Pahlavicus*, the new Iranian loyal to the Pahlavi state, inculcated with valorization of change, which inherently meant valorization of the Pahlavi dynasty, the catalyst of change.

In early March 1939, *Iran-e Emruz* (*Iran Today*), the OPE's illustrated monthly journal, published in its inaugural issue an editorial by Gholamreza Rashid Yasemi, an initial and leading member of the OPE executive committee as well as leading intellectual, professor, poet, and literary figure who contributed to the writing of official school textbooks.[19] It provides a glimpse at the state's early understanding of the challenges facing its programme of rapid cultural and social transformation and outlines the powerful feelings behind nostalgia which we encounter in late Pahlavi Iran.

> Nothing is enduring and stable. The universe is constantly in a state of modernist change [*tajaddod*]. Nothing in this world can become archaic because people, by and large, are condemned to follow the precepts of time while the characteristic of time is constant fluidity and movement. The universe's elements are interconnected. Therefore, as one changes others are forced to change.

Yet people, especially the masses, refused to valorize change, becoming nostalgic in the face of transformations.

> Habits, customs, and familiarity convince individuals of the stability and endurance of things [while] natural human instinct creates the fear to abandon those things to which they are accustomed and forces them to become nostalgic with the passing of old ways and customs.. . . Human souls have an essence which is always prone to these ways and customs. It unites with them. . .. People with all their strength strive to maintain them since changing them means that a part of them also passes away. Therefore, humans fear progressive change and say that the old forms and customs are sufficient. . .. From this dynamic emerges the corruption of morals and thought.

He likened the individual's existence to a damaged boat in a tumultuous sea of change. People 'want to rescue any plank ripped from their ship of existence in the roaring sea, and seek to keep themselves far from the crashing waves of time.' Individuals 'who find themselves in the stormy waters of change throw themselves away from the porthole,

[19] *Iran-e Emruz*, 1:1, 24 Esfand 1317/1939, pp. 2–4.

which looks onto these turbulent waves, and with closed eyes stick their heads inside their stateroom. They hope that they perhaps can remain unaffected and find a place of stability and timelessness.'

The issue facing the state and, by extension, society was to find a path to overcoming nostalgia and resistance to change. Only one faculty, 'the unified will power of individuals and society ... can pull the ship out of the whirlpool of habits and customs, remove the grayness of the old resting on people, ... and shove society forward'. He did not expect most people to acquire such willpower in the first stages of this national resurgence. 'A minority always starts the process...', but with education and the ineluctable movement of time, increasing numbers of people would valorize change and become immune to nostalgia. The young Mohammad Reza Shah, two and a half years later, in late October 1941, only two months after the Anglo-Soviet invasion, his father's abdication, and the dissolution of the OPE, on his first birthday address to the nation declared that one of the most vital issues in determining Iran's future was inculcation among the masses of the valorization of change.

> The people [*mellat*] must learn to want and value progress. In other words, they must learn not to be content that their today is the same as their yesterday.They must learn to travel day by day along the path of change, development, and thus ascendency in both the personal and societal spheres.[20]

This sentiment had evolved by the late Pahlavi period. Less hope was placed on the ability of old generations to accept change, while increasing attention was given to proper cultivation of the new generations which, it was assumed, were open to the changes unleashed by Pahlavi modernization. This approach was not only a foundational principle of the White Revolution but also the philosophy of the Rastakhiz Party. To be sure, since the Reza Shah period, much official attention, particularly in the fields of propaganda and education, targeted the youth. Forugh Kafai, who, in the late Pahlavi period, was a leader in the organization for the protection of animals and a leading official in the department of blood donations of the state-run Red Lion and

[20] Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Talifat, Nugtha, Paymanha, Mosahebeha va Bayanat-e 'Alihezrat Homayoun Mohammad Reza Pahlavi* (Tehran, 2537/1978), vol. 2, pp. 961–964.

Sun Society, Iran's equivalent of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, described this evolution in a post-revolutionary interview.

> You'll remember that at the time when these great efforts were being made to create the conditions for the emergence of the new civilization we were also forced to adhere to some traditions. For example, I could convince a child that a dog wasn't some unclean creature, that it was possible to play with it, that it was indeed clean. But I could never get that child's mother to accept this argument. The goal therefore was to build the future generation. We couldn't do anything with and for the old generation because the old ways and thinking were too ingrained. They had been brainwashed. The only path available to us was the construction of the future generation. One of my philosophical principles dictated that I try to abandon, let go, of the past. The past is the past. It offered nothing. Nothing could be done for it. Therefore, the emphasis was always on the future generation, on children from primary to higher education. That was our goal.[21]

A major reason for this evolution was the expanding nature and accelerating spread of change in the late Pahlavi period. Increasing numbers of people from across the wide socio-economic spectrum were encountering in their daily lives cultural and moral transformations that contradicted their understandings of good and bad, moral and immoral, proper and improper, such as the idea that dogs are not inherently dirty. The consequence was nostalgia-producing uneasiness and discontent.

Events frequently surprise and the 1979 Revolution was no exception. What puzzled and intrigued observers was the participation, alongside the masses, of the educated professional middle-class consisting of younger generations, which were the product and leading beneficiary of Pahlavi modernization, and their turn to religion and clerical leadership. The sinister shadow of nostalgia was seen. Arjomand noted:

> [C]onsider the middle-class feminist, in one of the massive December demonstrations, who was chanting, 'Death to the Shah, Long Live Khomeini!' Tears were streaming down her face because, as she explained to the French reporters covering the event, Khomeini was making her rediscover her 'Iranianness'. Was it *Nostalgie de la boue?* Perhaps, but not entirely. Like

[21] 'Forugh Kafai', *Oral History Project of Foundation for Iranian Studies* (Washington, 1989), p. 4.

the rest of Iran's new middle class, educated women were too inebriated by a newly discovered national communion and too seduced by the myth of revolution to think clearly.[22]

The language of this passage – inebriation, seduction, myth, psyche, and longing – as well as the idea of 'fantasies of nostalgia', implies irrational sentimentality. Individuals succumbing to nostalgia are weak and immature, and thus unwilling to believe in the inherent benefits and promises of the future offered by progressivism and modernity when confronted with myriad new tendencies concomitant with modernization/Westernization. While this approach to nostalgia has immediate roots in the Voltairean Enlightenment and ideas of progressive history, its fundamental sentiment traces back to ancient Greece and Rome, as Chapter 2 details. A brief look at *nostalgie de la boue* is useful, since the sentiments behind this term are encountered in this work.

Nostalgie de la boue, which means 'nostalgia for the mud', comes from the play *Le Mariage d'Olympe* (1855) written by Émile Augier, one of the most popular playwrights of Napoleon III's Second Empire (1852–1870), a period of industrialization and rapid socio-economic change similar to that of late Pahlavi Iran. The play revolves around Olympe Taverny, a courtesan and social climber, who seeks to obtain wealth and position through beauty, sex, and the destruction of a family. She achieves this goal with her marriage to a rich nobleman, Henri de Puygiron. Now a countess and having changed her name to Pauline, she plots her path to and within polite upper society. Despite her success in this endeavour, she becomes discontented and bored with her new life. Finding this society artificial and vain, she feels nostalgia for her old friends and life and its traditions and culture with which she grew up as a member of the lower socio-economic classes.

The phrase *nostalgie de la boue* comes at the play's beginning in a conversation that Henri's uncle, Marquis de Puygiron, has with his two aristocratic friends, Baron de Montrichard and Baudel de Beauséjour, about the durability of an individual's adoption of cultural and moral changes brought by a rise in socio-economic standing. The Marquis remarks to Montrichard, 'Place a duck in a lake amongst the

[22] Arjomand, p. 110.

swans, and you will see how he will become nostalgic for his own pond and end up returning to it.' Montrichard responds, 'The nostalgia for the mud!'[23] In the last act, Montrichard repeats it to himself in response to Pauline's implicit remarks indicating nostalgia for her previous identity and life. *Nostalgie de la boue*, therefore, questions the ability to accept and tolerate rapid and fundamental changes to one's sense of identity and authenticity, even if such changes bring social and material improvement.

I do not deny that nostalgia can take reactionary and politically dangerous forms. Cursory dismissal of nostalgia, however, as fantasy, irrational, and blindly regressive, and reducing it to limited theories, such an anomie or to ideas, such as 'philosophies of despair', do not reflect the work done in nostalgia studies and ignore the diversity, complexity, and multidimensional characteristics of nostalgia's forms. I use these advances in the multidisciplinary field of nostalgia to examine forms and expressions of nostalgia in the societal popular sphere of late Pahlavi Iran. In this way, we achieve a deeper understanding of the zeitgeist of 1960s and 1970s Iran and of the experience of Iranian society with rapid change not only on its own terms and independent of intellectual rhetoric and debates, but also in comparative perspective (a theme I introduce later). I do not claim, however, that nostalgia is *the* prism through which to view the late Pahlavi period. Nostalgia is not a substitute. Yet we must not forget that nostalgia and its intensity at any point in time tells us more about uneasiness and discontent with the present and ideas, fears, and unease about the future than about the past.

Another aim is the promotion of greater use of the writings of the large body of social commentators, academics, journalists, writers, and news reporters in the most popular daily and weekly publications. Collectively they played three roles, as conduit and filter of public sentiments of nostalgia in the conditions of censorship, as reporter of nostalgia-producing events and conditions, and as commentator about them. I use the term literati to describe this group instead of intellectual given the differences in the education, professional, and/or political standing, and the writing or journalistic remit of the individuals contributing pieces to these publications. A good number of them would have considered themselves and would have been considered

[23] Émile Augier, *Le Mariage d'Olympe* (Paris, 1995).

intellectuals, while others would have found themselves unworthy of this designation. For example, in spring 1975, Arslan Khalatbari, a founding member of Iran's Bar Association who served as Tehran mayor, governor of Gilan province, and two terms as a Majles deputy, wrote editorials for a major national newspaper on the causes for the steady rapid rise in nostalgia-producing reported cases of sexual violence (we will encounter this piece in the succeeding chapters). He would have been considered an intellectual, since from the mid-1960s, the Persian term for intellectual (*roshanfekr*) '... in a broader sense [referred] to both the intellectuals and the intelligentsia, or, in general, all those who, in one way or another, were associated with modern education and modern professional skills', such as academic writers, judges, engineers, doctors, and company managers.[24] The reporters who lingered in police precincts, municipal morgues, and courthouses seeking the next spectacular crime 'scoop' would not have been considered intellectuals, even if they saw themselves as such. In fact, as we shall see in Chapters 2–11, such reporters and a significant number of their editors were increasingly accused of lacking proper academic and moral education, whose consequences were their undermining of the Persian language and 'authentic' Iranian journalistic standards, including didactic goals, and their privileging of profits over upholding societal morality.

In examining this literati's writings, I make only limited, sporadic references to 'the big three', among other intellectuals, because they either did not address the specific nostalgia-producing themes dominating in the societal popular and state spheres or only broadly mentioned a generic nostalgia in their social criticisms and prescriptions for the future which does not advance our understandings of the nostalgic themes in these spheres. Prominent examples in this regard are al-Ahmad with his popularization of the term gharbzadegi and Shariati with his subsequent expression 'return to self'.[25] To be sure, these figures to varying degrees exercised an influence on specific segments within educated public opinion, including the literati. Yet one must wonder whether such influence of these intellectuals so favoured in the literature exceeded, or even equalled, that of the literati among the larger reading public from across the socio-economic spectrum in

[24] Boroujerdi, pp. 21–22. [25] Ali Shariati, *Bazgasht* (Tehran, 1384/2005).

informing and framing understandings of the present and anxieties about the future. After all, this literati in real time wrote on social and cultural conditions, anecdotally and using qualitative and quantitative methods, albeit frequently rudimentary and flawed, and reported on and reacted to events, scandals, and incidents, including crime and criminal and family court cases, for the most popular mass publications which are at this work's core: the newspapers *Ettela'at* and *Kayhan* and the weekly magazines *Ferdowsi*, *Sepid-o-Siah* (*White and Black*), *Khandaniha* (*Interesting Readings*), *Ettela'at-e Haftegi* (*Information Weekly*), *Javanan-e Emruz* (*Youth Today*), *Zan-e Ruz* (*Woman's Day*), *Tehran-e Mossavar* (*Tehran Illustrated*), and *Negin* (*Ring Gem*). Their circulation numbers were much greater than those of intellectual books and thick journals. Not only did this public with much greater frequency skim or peruse these publications but also discussed with others the hottest topics and events in them. At the same time, many within this public paid little, if any, attention to grand intellectual debates or could not follow their purposely dense and obtuse language. One can also argue that the good number of this literati, who had little more than a secondary education and/or earned only modest incomes at a time of rising living costs, felt the pulse of society better than these intellectuals because they directly experienced in their daily lives these social and cultural conditions.[26]

Short introductions of these publications are provided either below or in subsequent chapters where they make their initial appearance. *Ettela'at* was founded in 1926 by Abbas Massoudi, who established Ettela'at Publications, one of the country's largest publishing houses. A major figure of the Pahlavi era, he enjoyed close links with the Court, served as Majles deputy and subsequently as a senator regularly appointed by the shah from 1949 until his death in 1973. *Kayhan* was founded by Mostafa Mesbahzadeh in 1943 with the shah's help. At the time, the Crown was increasingly assailed by the print mass media which had found itself liberated from the strict censorship of the Reza Shah period. The young monarch was particularly displeased with *Ettela'at*'s critical tone regarding leading members of

[26] For an examination of the educational background and work history of journalists and reporters from the mid-1950s to 1974, see Gholamhossein Salehiyar, ed., *Chehre-ye Matbu'at-e Mo'aser* (Tehran, 1351/1973). See also Farid Qassemi, ed., *Tarikh-e Shafhai-ye Matbu'at-e Iran* (Tehran, 1382/2003).

the royal family.[27] Abdolrahman Faramarzi held the licence, while Mesbahzadeh was its editor. A short time later they switched roles. Faramarzi had been close to Reza Shah and during his son's reign was a Majles deputy. Mesbahzadeh during Reza Shah's reign obtained a doctorate from the Sorbonne. Upon his return, he taught law at Tehran University, served three terms in the Majles and then three terms in the Senate. *Ettela'at* and *Kayhan* were the country's most widely read daily newspapers. The competition between them was intense.[28] What is important is that they were competing for a similar national readership. In the period covered in this work, they were never shut down for crossing red ideological or political lines.

Ferdowsi was a weekly sociopolitical magazine founded in 1948 by Nematollah Jahanbanui who had entered the field of journalism four years prior. At the time his education consisted of a secondary-school diploma and his obligatory military service. In 1962, he obtained an undergraduate degree in law from Tehran University. He supported Mohammad Mosaddegh up to the 1953 coup, a position which earned him a spell in prison. Friends within the elite ensured his release. In 1974, the state closed *Ferdowsi* as part of a major cull of loss-making publications. This step increased state control over the mass media.

In the 1960s, *Ferdowsi* received many official reprimands or was closed for pieces that, in the opinion of SAVAK (*Sazman-e Ettela'at va Amniat-e Keshvar*), the shah's security and intelligence service founded in 1957, violated political sensitivities or could outrage public sense of morality. This publication assumed a leftist tendency, to the extent allowed by the state, that frequently targeted and condemned Western, and especially US, imperialism. It gave particular attention to Washington's war in Vietnam and political interventions in Central and South America, which reminded readers of the 1953 coup d'etat.

On the domestic front, from the early 1960s, *Ferdowsi* used the issue of moral and family decline and the rise of licentiousness in the West,

[27] Hossein Fardust, *Zohur va Soghut-e Saltanat-e Pahlavi* (Tehran, 1389/2010), vol. 1, pp. 131–133; Maryam Abedini Moghanki, *Matbu'at-e Rezhim-e Shah, Motale'e-ye Morudi-ye Ruzname-ye Keyhan va Ettela'at* (Tehran, 1386/2007), pp. 36–38.

[28] For an example dating from 1961 of this intensity, see *Goftegu-ye Ettela'at va Keyhan* (Tehran, 1340/1961).

especially among its youth, to undermine the idea of the West as the example to follow and to blame it and Occidentosis-ridden Iranians for the spread of moral, sexual, and family decline in Iran. Reporting on these issues, although provoking in the first half of the 1960s repeated reprimands and several closings by SAVAK, increased in intensity and expressions of nostalgia until its closing in 1974. These positions and reporting made it one of this period's most popular sociopolitical publications. For example, in 1971, a SAVAK report concluded that *Ferdowsi*, 'to increase its sales and maintain its national popularity among the intellectual and educated classes, some of whom for whatever reason are frustrated and disillusioned, tries to publish severe and extreme criticism. Many articles are coming from those with extremist anti-West views'. In the same year, increasing amounts of SAVAK interrogations of student activists in Shiraz, Khorasan, Tehran, and Tabriz showed that 'the magazine *Ferdowsi*, with its articles on socialism, imperialism, anti-Americanism and Vietnam, had incited them'.[29]

Khandaniha, like *Ferdowsi*, was one of Pahlavi Iran's oldest magazines. It was founded in late 1940 by Ali Asghar Amirani but took off only after Reza Shah's abdication. He too had a law degree from Tehran University. Although enduring closings by SAVAK in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it continued publishing until several months after the 1979 Revolution.[30] Amirani had links with the Court and enjoyed a good relationship with Shapour Gholam Reza, one of the shah's brothers, and Assadollah Alam, who, in addition to being an old friend and close confidant of the shah, served as interior minister (1957–1960), prime minister (1962–1964), and minister of court (1966–1977).[31] Published twice weekly, it was an Iranian form of *Reader's Digest*, with articles and news pieces chosen from other newspapers and sociopolitical and intellectual magazines. It targeted those readers who, while interested in social and political affairs, had little time or patience to review regularly the increasing number of publications. It also published its own reports and commentaries while Amirani wrote lead editorials, a practice that began in the late 1950s.

[29] *Matbu'at-e 'Asr-e Pahlavi, Majalleh-ye Ferdowsi* (Tehran, 1384/2005), pp. 250–253.

[30] Zobeideh Jahangiri, *Amirani dar Aine-ye Khandaniha* (Tehran, 1383/2004), pp. 143–144.

[31] He also was governor of Sistan and Baluchistan province (1946), minister of agriculture (1950), and chancellor of Pahlavi University (1963–1966).

He was a consistent vocal opponent of communism, the Tudeh Party (the Iranian communist party), domestic groups with strong leftist sentiments, and communist states and movements in other regions of the world. However, both *Khandaniha* and *Ferdowsi*, especially from the end of the 1960s, published pieces similarly critical about the nostalgia-generating themes covered in Chapters 2–11. Two notable exceptions existed. *Ferdowsi* sensationalized these themes and more frequently used the term gharbzadegi than did *Khandaniha*.

Sepid-o-Siah, *Ettela'at-e Haftegi*, and *Tehran-e Mossavar* were the most popular illustrated magazines whose main targeted adult readership consisted of individuals with little or no interest in political and international affairs. These three publications provided basic reporting on foreign and domestic trips of the imperial couple and members of the Court and on government activities and policies while giving great space to general-interest pieces, serialized stories, generally romance laced with varying degrees of erotica, celebrity news and rumours, sports, entertainment, fashion, crime, and puzzles.

Ettela'at-e Haftegi, the oldest and most popular of the three, was founded in 1941 by Massoudi and continued publishing throughout this period. The history of *Tehran-e Mossavar* is divided into three periods. It was founded in 1929 as a serious social and literary publication. In 1941 Ahmad Dehghan, who had worked for *Ettela'at*, acquired its licence with Massoudi's support. In it he regularly targeted communism, the Tudeh Party, and the USSR and thereby acquired a strong readership. In 1950 he was assassinated. That same year, Abdollah Vallah, a Qajar prince who had served as its editor, acquired its licence which he held until the publication's closing in the 1974 press cull. He toned down significantly its previous serious sociopolitical character and, from the mid-1960s, transformed it into a mass publication with shades of yellow journalism. He served two terms as a Majles deputy in the late 1950s and early 1960s. During this period, *Tehran-e Mossavar* provoked SAVAK reprimands and closure for publishing pieces and photographs considered to be offensive to the public sense of morality. In this regard it was considered a publication more scandalously provocative than *Ettela'at-e Haftegi* but less so than *Sepid-o-Siah*, especially from the late 1960s.[32]

[32] *Matbu'at-e 'Asr-e Pahlavi, Majalleh-ye Tehran-e Mossavar* (Tehran, 1379/2000), pp. 25–30, 95–96.

Sepid-o-Siah was founded in 1953 by Ali Behzadi, who obtained an undergraduate degree from Tehran University and a doctorate in law from the University of Paris. The cover of its first issue featured a photograph of Mosaddegh. After his overthrow, Behzadi ensured that *Sepid-o-Siah* remained a primarily mass entertainment publication. Its serialized love stories were generally more risqué and provocative than those of *Ettela'at-e Haftegi* and *Tehran-e Mossavar*. Moreover, from the late 1960s, its exposé reports detailing examples of moral decline became more scandalous and controversial. SAVAK noted in 1970 that *Sepid-o-Siah*'s publication of such romance stories and social reporting had no other goal than 'the spread of moral corruption'.[33] It too was shut down in the 1974 press cull.

To understand the decision to focus on these publications and literati, we need to step back and review three factors that significantly influenced the awareness of the general public, the literati, and the body of state intellectuals and political figures about macro social and cultural issues covered in this work and how such awareness influenced the emergence, spread, and intensity of nostalgic feelings in the societal popular and state spheres.

The 'science of the state' is the compilation of statistics and information about society needed for governing it and extracting from it human resources, particularly for the military, and monetary resources in the form of taxation. It dates to the ancient Roman and Iranian Empires, albeit on a primitive level. In the modern era, the state has relied on the systematic gathering of demographic, socio-economic, crime and other forms of data to manage the criminal justice system, public health, social services, and education, and to formulate and judge the success or failure of policies. Through the publication and propagation of such data, this science of state has played an important role in the expansion of public awareness about society and its conditions. Iran only in the Pahlavi era gradually embarked on the systematic and professional acquisition of this 'science of the state'.[34] Given its comparatively slow development and the high rates of illiteracy, it did not exercise an influential role in raising public awareness until the 1960s.

[33] *Matbu'at-e 'Asr-e Pahlavi, Majalleh-ye Sepid-o-Siah* (Tehran, 1382/2003), pp. 52–53.

[34] Amir Mohammadi, *Tarikh-e Sejel va Sabt-e Ahval dar Iran* (Tehran, 1400/2021).

Sarah Igo in *The Averaged American* chronicled the rise of a second factor exercising an important influence on raising and shaping public awareness about society, namely public surveys and polling. In the USA, they began to emerge haphazardly in the first four decades of the twentieth century and took off after the end of World War II. From there these practices slowly spread to Western Europe, starting with the UK. Surveys were understood as 'a catch-all category containing a multitude of modern information gathering techniques: market research, academic surveys, opinion polls, community studies, and quantitative reporting'. These surveys aimed to tell Americans, 'Who we are', 'what we want', and 'what we believe'. Driving this process were

> anxious public discussions about the ebbing of traditional social bonds [that] raised urgent questions. How, with diverse people clashing in cities, would the nation summon unity and stability? ... How, amidst a dazzling array of new commercial entertainments, might common mores be determined? Many commentators in the new century sensed a crisis in older notions of the American public, and particularly the breakdown of conventional religion, culture, or morality as regulating ideals. Social surveyors were among those who searched for a replacement, for new definitions of community, citizenship, and norms when the old moorings no longer seemed to hold. The alignment of national introspection and social scientific description across the first half of the century was thus not accidental.

Igo argues that two fantasies lurked behind these surveys. 'One was the promise of empirical surveys to disclose society to itself. The other was the possibility of locating a definitive midpoint in an infinitely heterogeneous nation. In other words, to define the average American who constituted mass society.'[35]

In Pahlavi Iran, the state, universities, and research institutions did not conduct such surveys in any serious, systematic way on a national or local scale. To be sure, the Pahlavi state sought to define this mass society but from above, around the figure of the shah, and based on its absolutist monarchical ideology and programme of modernization from above. These attempts did not fill the vacuum created by the lack of surveys and studies that are designed to determine from below the ideas of mass society. Filling it and thus playing a highly influential role

[35] Sarah Igo, *The Averaged American* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), pp. 10–11; 3–5.

in disclosing society to itself were these emerging and increasingly competitive popular publications, the personal experience and microworld of their literati and of those reading them. Importantly, this vacuum and lack of empirical data makes exhaustive measurement of nostalgias across the socio-economic and cultural spectrum of late Pahlavi Iran, particularly among rural and tribal groups, parts of the illiterate and semi-literate population, and peoples involved in traditional trades and crafts threatened by industrialization and importation of foreign goods, extremely difficult, if not impossible, in some cases. It thereby conditions a focus on nostalgic forms in the societal popular and state spheres for which we have primary source material, and which acted to an extent as a conduit, filter, and reporter of forms of nostalgia across of the socio-economic spectrum. Lastly, we need to consider the primary factors, namely high illiteracy rates and censorship (they are covered in Chapter 9), which ensured that public awareness about society and conditions in one's own microworld was low and that such awareness was inordinately shaped in the Qajar and early Pahlavi periods by limited personal experience and that of others in one's microworld.

In the late Pahlavi period, the mass media developed faster than the science of state and survey/poll taking. Therefore, it came to play a vital and perhaps oversized role in raising public awareness about cultural and moral conditions and thereby in defining the initial broad contours of mass society based on questions posed by the shah himself: 'What were we? What are we today? What do we wish to become?'[36] This process took off without a relatively useful amount of qualitative and quantitative information about macro and micro moral, cultural, and socio-economic conditions in the past which play a vital role in judging the present and thereby in regulating the forms and intensity of nostalgia.

Returning to our preliminary discussion of nostalgia, I agree that the terms gharbzadegi and return to self, which were increasingly used in intellectual and political discourses in late Pahlavi Iran, provide a good sense of the period's zeitgeist. However, the picture they draw is incomplete, since their focus on seemingly never-ending intellectual

[36] *JR*, 89, 31 Farvardin 1355/1976, pp. 1–2.

debates about the authenticity of Iranian culture and identity and the attempts of intellectuals within these debates to find for themselves a role in mediating the encounter between Western culture and Iran's pre-Islamic and Islamic heritage diverts our attention away from people's everyday encounters and reactions to changes within their microworlds and from their consequent forms of nostalgia, which are not contained or properly addressed in high intellectual debates and discourses. For example, in the 1970s, while highbrow intellectuals decried the spread of conspicuous consumption, which they attributed to gharbzadegi, and spoke in nostalgic terms about a return to authenticity of identity, people on the street increasingly decried the ongoing rise in violent crime, including the kidnapping, murder, and raping of boys and girls, and spoke in nostalgic terms about the days when children could safely play in front of their homes and walk the streets. In their reactions, as we shall see, they did not reference gharbzadegi or 'return to self'. What these people felt and expressed was not a mere 'fantasy of nostalgia' but a powerful proximate nostalgia rooted in the times of their childhood or that of their parents when reports about these types of harrowing crimes were rare, if at all. State forms, expressions, and narratives of nostalgia that reacted to and dealt with these forms of nostalgia in the societal popular sphere also find little reflection in intellectual narratives. Moreover, the picture's labelling is misleading, since lurking behind these intellectual labels and feeding them are proximate nostalgias resulting from discontent and uneasiness about the present given positive understandings of the recent past and perceived negative social, moral, and cultural consequences of rapid economic and technological modernization. In other words, the genesis of these terms, their use in intellectual and, from the beginning of the 1970s, state discourses were manifestations of nostalgia. Nostalgia, therefore, is a more accurate and powerful descriptive term.

With a nod to Camus' statement that an individual's thought is, above all else, his nostalgia, I premise this book on the idea that nostalgia encompasses more elements of an individual's multifaceted identity than culture, that element at the centre of intellectual debates about Occidentosis, return to self, and Iranian authenticity. Emmanuel Berl, the well-known French historian and essayist, provided a broad but effective understanding of this watery term. Culture, he wrote, 'is like the sum of special knowledge that accumulates in any large united

family and is the common property of all its members'. Aldous Huxley, the English author of *A Brave New World*, in an essay on history (1931) metaphorically explained Berl's definition.

> 'Do you remember Aunt Agatha's ear trumpet? And how Willie made the parrot drunk with sops in wine? And that picnic on Loch Etive, when the boat upset and Uncle Bob was nearly drowned? Do you remember?' And we all do; and we laugh delightedly and the unfortunate stranger, who happens to have called, feels utterly out of it. Well, that (in its social aspect) is Culture. When we of the great Culture Family meet, we exchange reminiscences about Grandfather Homer, and that awful old Dr Johnson, and Aunt Sapphi, and poor Johnny Keats. 'And do you remember that absolutely priceless thing Uncle Virgil said? You know. *Timeo Danaos* [roughly translated as beware of Greeks] ... Priceless: I shall never forget it.' No we shall never forget it; and what's more, we shall take good care that those horrid people who have had the impertinence to call all on us, those wretched outsiders, who never knew dear mellow old Uncle V., shall never forget it either. We'll keep them constantly reminded of their outsideness.

He called these cultural signposts 'our dear old Culture-Aunties and Uncles and their delightful friends.... If you can talk knowingly about their sayings and doings, it is a sign that you "belong", that you are a member of the family'. If not, 'well, obviously you're bit of an outsider'.[37]

Huxley, while focusing on culture, inadvertently showed why the concept of nostalgia encompasses more than culture and thereby plays a greater role in concepts of personal and social identity. Identity is based not only on culture and the heritage that flow from it but also real 'old aunties and uncles', family, friends, and places, such as homes, hangouts, and neighbourhoods, in which our experiences with these people and traditions take shape, continue, and produce social signposts that demarcate personal and group identities on micro-levels and thereby determine outsiders and insiders. Disruptions and discontinuity, the types of which were taking place in late Pahlavi Iran, within this physically and psychologically close source of identity known as one's microworld, create powerful sentiments of nostalgia, just as the sense

[37] Aldous Huxley, *Music at Night and Other Essays* (London, 1957), pp. 134–135.

that one's culture and/or moral values are lost or are in the process of being lost produces nostalgia in society at large. In sum, nostalgia is integral to not only discussions about culture and civilization but also conceptions of identity on various levels starting from the most personal and rising to national levels.

Examining the late Pahlavi era through the prism of nostalgia is to examine a multidimensional and universal phenomenon that Iran shares with the rest of the world and especially the West. Thus, interwoven into this study is a comparative look that focuses on the forms of nostalgia and the causes for their emergence in the West and the drawing of comparisons between it and late Pahlavi Iran. In this way, we can temper the essentialism and cultural relativism that can explicitly and implicitly dominate approaches to the study of those big questions in the historiography of twentieth-century Iran and help answer a fundamental question posed inside and outside of Iran: 'How can one write a non-Orientalist history of Iran?'[38] For example, in the first two decades after the revolution, a dominant approach was based on the idea that '[t]here is much about Iran that is enigmatic'.[39] This idea of an 'enigmatic Iran' was linked to the use of theories and approaches seeking to determine why Iran's historical path so differed from some historically determined overall direction which led to societies and political systems similar to those of the West as it was defined after World War II. Why had it not reached 'democratic modernity'? As mentioned before, a limited and ideologically charged understanding of nostalgia played a large role in such theories and approaches. This 'enigmatic character' was particularly seen in the ultimate outcome of the revolution, a clerical state that rejected the West's modernities.

The other reason for this focus on the West and thereby neglect of the non-Western world is the decisively influential role played by Pahlavi-era Iranian conceptions of the West's present and distant and proximate past in Iranian understandings of the process of modernization and the changing social and moral conditions experienced in late

[38] Ibrahim Tofigh, ed., *Namidan-e Ta'ligh* (Tehran, 1398/2020), p. 11.
[39] M. Reza Behnam, *Cultural Foundations of Iranian Politics* (Salt Lake City, 1986), p. 3.

Pahlavi Iran. The countries of the West, and especially its leading members, the USA, the UK, West Germany, and France, were regarded as the most economically and technologically developed in the world, while the USA was seen as the world's greatest superpower. Much earlier than any other country, they had travelled the developmental path upon which Iran had recently embarked. Therefore, dominant state and intellectual opinion in Iran held that only their past and present could provide negative and positive examples from which Iran should learn, and constitute the prism through which Iranian public and intellectual opinion could judge their own country's present circumstances and make conclusions about the emerging trajectories to the future. In this regard, the globe's remaining countries offered little to nothing, since they fell into what was known at the time in the West as the Second World, which encompassed poorly industrialized totalitarian communist states of the Eastern Bloc, or the Third World, which constituted a majority of countries, which was made up of economically, technologically, and politically underdeveloped and developing countries. Lastly, as explained in more detail later, an essential element of Pahlavi ideology was Aryanism according to which Iranians were racial cousins of Westerners and Iran's pre-Islamic Achaemenid Empire was a starting point of Western civilization.

This comparative perspective is more powerful in the first quarter of the twenty-first century than the last quarter of the previous one given the spread of the politicization of nostalgia in the West, for example in the USA and the UK. The West's victory in the Cold War, the collapse of the USSR, and the eastward expansion of the European Community/Union promoted the idea of the end of history. Liberal democracy and capitalism, globalization, and cosmopolitanism, all of which have roots in Enlightenment thought, were now clearly the only paths to the future, paths paved by these two countries. By 2016, however, politicized nostalgia in the USA and the UK reached a new peak.

In June 2016, the UK held a referendum about the country's membership in the European Union. The campaign between the Remain and Leave camps was bitter, reflecting and deepening political and societal polarization. Pragmatic politics had disappeared in a country that, at least according to long-standing popular perceptions, had seemingly invented it in the modern era. The flames of nostalgia fuelled the Leave campaign as it called for the defence of British sovereignty and authenticity of culture and identity in the face of globalization,

epitomized by the EU, and immigration. This nostalgia was felt by those who suffered a decline in lifestyle, and thus self-respect, due to rapid economic and technological globalization; by those who felt that the authenticity of national identity faced existential threats by increasing immigration; and by those who yearned for the days when Britannia ruled the waves, possessed an empire, and was sovereign master at home, unbound by the EU.[40] During the campaign, Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democrat Party and deputy prime minister in the pro-Remain coalition Tory government headed by David Cameron, spoke of the pivotal role of nostalgia:

> Those campaigning for us to leave the European Union like to evoke a sentimental, nostalgic vision of Britannia, proud and independent, ruling the waves once again. But the truth is, leaving cannot return us to a halcyon age – if such an age ever existed – .[41]

The Leave camp won the referendum. Seven years on, the issue of Brexit remained a divisive political and cultural issue but with a majority now in favour of rejoining the EU. Lord Heseltine, an old Tory grandee and deputy prime minister in the government of John Major (1995–1997), echoed majority opinion when he called nostalgia-driven Brexit 'the biggest historic mistake this country has made in peacetime'.[42]

About five months after the Leave camp's victory, Donald Trump was elected president of the United States. He had based his campaign on the (in)famous slogan 'Make America Great Again', which projected and enflamed nostalgia for 1950s America. This shock victory in a country that had voted twice for Barack Obama led to the question, 'What happened?' Research shows that worries about immigration and consequential sensed threats to authenticity of American culture and national identity mobilized white working-class voters as well as a good number of white educated voters to support Trump. These threats came equally, if not more, from internal American elements, namely urban and academic areas dominated by 'liberal elites' and multiracial and multi-confessional populations, exemplified by New

[40] Edoardo Campanella and Marta Dassù, *Anglo-Nostalgia* (Oxford, 2019), p. 14.
[41] *The Independent*, 20 April 2016. [42] *The Observer*, 11 June 2023.

York City. These 'liberal' and thus inauthentically American areas, along with immigration and a sense of declining lifestyle resulting from economic globalization, were driving issues within Trump-supporting groups.

> White working-class voters who say they feel like a stranger in their own land and who believed the U.S. needs protecting against foreign influence were 3.5 times more likely to favor Trump that those who did not share these concerns . . . 68% of white working-class Americans believe that the U.S. is in danger of losing its culture and identity.[43]

Since these two events, the politics of these countries continued to polarize. In the USA, this polarization has been the greatest, driven by the Trump presidency, the Trumpian Republican Party and their themes of nostalgia, resentment, and grievance, and, finally, by their portrayal of critics as enemies of American authenticity. Joseph Biden, having defeated Trump in the 2020 election, in his 2021 inaugural address made a plea for national unity and a return to the pragmatic politics of the past. His clearly felt nostalgia for those days confronted the Trumpian Republican Party's politicized nostalgia for the 1950s. Biden's calls went unheeded. Jennifer Rubin, a conservative columnist for the *Washington Post*, writing about the state of the Republican Party in spring 2021, noted:

> It is hardly surprising that a party [Republican] dedicated to reverting to a time when White males dominated every aspect of society resents or even detests much of the modern world. It's hard to miss what they mean when they declare they do not 'recognize' America any longer.[44]

In November 2024 Trump, running on the same MAGA slogans of his 2016 and 2020 campaigns, defeated Kamala Harris, his rival from the Democratic Party and Biden's vice-president.

These developments in the USA and the UK, as well as the rise of the radical right in other Western countries, such as France and Germany, resulting from rapid transformations in people's micro and macro worlds, growing concerns about the loss of authentic native identity, and the spread of nostalgia require us to revisit assumptions about late Pahlavi Iran.

[43] Robert Jones et al., 'Beyond Economics', *PRRI/The Atlantic Report* (2017).
[44] *The Washington Post*, 8 April 2021.

Final Points

Since this work is the first to examine forms, narratives, and expressions of nostalgia in late Pahlavi Iran, it does not claim to be nor could it be an exhaustive study of nostalgia across socio-economic, class, and cultural spectrums. Outside of the exceptions and exclusions mentioned earlier in this chapter, I have tried, to the extent possible within the confines of a single monograph, to include nostalgic forms and expressions from across these spectrums and thereby introduce topics for further research about nostalgia among the multiple and varied subaltern groups in late Pahlavi Iran.

This work has two interrelated focuses. It examines the forms and expressions of nostalgia in the societal popular sphere, which emerged from the mid-1960s in reaction to increasingly rapid social, cultural, and moral changes, and the subsequent noticeable growth in forms and expressions of nostalgic sentiments in the state sphere from the late 1960s to late 1978. These state narratives and discourses of nostalgia, which reached new heights during the Rastakhiz period, show that in this regard the Pahlavi state was not immune to or ignorant of societal tendencies. Naturally, it sought to integrate and shape them within the parameters of its ideological and political framework. I also argue that the nature and the speed of particular social, cultural, and moral changes, and, in some cases, what seemed like changes, were producing nostalgia among state intellectuals and officials, political figures and the elite, even at the top of the power pyramid. We return to these issues in the Epilogue.

Chapter Structure

This study is about nostalgia in the societal popular and state spheres in late Pahlavi Iran and not about the large body of writings about nostalgia. Thick tomes would be needed to detail them and their debates. However, since this book is the first to introduce the concept of nostalgia to the study of this period, Chapter 2 offers an explanatory and analytical narrative about the multifaceted world of nostalgia through time and space based on heterogeneous sources from myriad fields, including literature, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, history, and politics. These sources at times might come across, to use David Lowenthal's remark about his study on the heritage crusade, 'as

seemingly wantonly eclectic or absurdly disparate'. Their use, however, is purposeful. They provide cogency, richness, and comparative context to points in our discussion of nostalgias in late Pahlavi Iran.[45] Only the reading of the chapters on Iran will reveal the full relevance of the points made in Chapter 2, including the comparative context.

This exploration flows between three fundamental factors, namely personal nostalgia, societal nostalgia, and the politicization of nostalgia. This classification also governs the examination of nostalgias in the societal popular and state spheres of the Pahlavi period. Moreover, our discussion of nostalgia in Iran is intertwined with two overall issues, which is also discussed in Chapter 2. First, I examine forms of personal and societal nostalgia across time and place and the conditions of change in which they emerge on a mass level, independent from grand critiques of modernity made by intellectuals, writers, and social critics and from the emphasis on a link between nostalgia and modernity.

Second, I use the philosophical duel between Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau as the starting point to examine the relationship between nostalgia and the concepts of civilization and modernity that emerged from the Enlightenment and evolved from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Specifically, it shows how forms and expressions of nostalgia in Rousseau's thought, the French counter-Enlightenment, and Romanticism, amongst others, constituted the base of intellectual and philosophical criticisms of fundamental themes in Enlightenment thought. The decision to include this debate was made given the great extent to which the themes debated by these two dominating figures of the Enlightenment set the context for and find strong reflection in our examination of nostalgia in late Pahlavi Iran. To be sure, a strict and constant boundary between these two overall issues does not exist. However, making this classification and exploring the dimensions of the Voltaire–Rousseau duel enables an appreciation of the range of conditions and circumstances that led to the intensification of nostalgia in the societal popular sphere and their subsequent politicization in late Pahlavi Iran. In addition, elements of

[45] David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 12.

Rousseau's thought and criticism of the Voltairean Enlightenment occupied an important place in intensifying debates in the 1920s about the causes for Iranian backwardness and obstacles to change. The best example comes from a series of articles published by *Shafagh-e Sorkh* (*Red Twilight*), one of the country's most influential newspapers, in early 1925, a time when Reza Khan was preparing to depose Ahmad Shah, establish his own dynasty, and launch a vast programme of change based on the Western model. Extending over twelve issues, three literati critics and sympathizers of these elements debated whether Rousseau represented a 'danger' to such programmes.[46] Chapter 2 shows why some Iranian literati considered him a danger.

Chapter 3, 'Nostalgia and the Late Pahlavi State', traces the emergence of three fundamental themes in the forms and expressions of nostalgia in state discourses and narratives from the late 1960s and their systemization and intensification in the Rastakhiz period. These themes can be summarized as the rise of conspicuous consumption and love of luxury, the spread of atomistic individualism, the privileging of one's self-interest over all else, and the celebration of material and sexual hedonism. In other words, it examines new state narratives of nostalgia, which were a reaction to and reflection of nostalgias in the societal popular sphere.

Chapter 4, through the examples of the suicide of Gholamreza Takhti, the beloved wrestler and national hero; the emergence of the Genovese syndrome in Iranian cities; and the spread of pornography, examines the main nostalgic trends in the societal popular sphere to which this politicized state nostalgia responded. The themes discussed in Chapter 3 and their origins in this nostalgic triad were the driving forces behind transformations in other social and cultural spheres that produced sentiments and expressions of nostalgia in the societal popular sphere, which are examined in the remaining chapters. They examine these negative transformations as they were viewed at the time and the forms and expressions of nostalgia they produced. Importantly, each chapter covers the politicization of nostalgia and its forms in state discourses and policymaking.

[46] *Shafagh-e Sorkh*, 320–332, 20 Farvardin 1304/1925-24 Ordibehesht 1304/1925.

Chapter 5, 'Love and Marriage', examines nostalgias in the societal mass and state spheres in regard to the structure, cohesion, and moral standing of the initial unit of the family, husbands and wives, and fathers and mothers, that emerged at the end of the 1960s and greatly intensified during the 1970s. It not only draws parallels between Iran and the West, but also shows how transformations at the top of the family structure in leading Western countries, combined with emerging tendencies in Iran, enflamed steadily Iranian sentiments of proximate and anticipatory nostalgia.

Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 focus on the rapid growth of a generation gap and the spread of hippieism, new phenomena in Iran, whose extent consistently hit new highs in this period and were a powerful driving force of nostalgias in Iran as well as in the West.

Chapter 8 focuses on a major and familiar form of urban nostalgia which afflicted old urban families and individuals who were faced with the consequences of large and increasing rural–urban migration, rapid population growth, the destruction of old neighbourhoods and the tight-knit and seemingly stable microworld they represented, and with a spreading new way of urban life imposed by multi-floor apartment buildings and complexes. While Tehran takes centre stage in this chapter since its population grew the fastest, due primarily to migration, other major cities, such as Mashad, Isfahan, and Shiraz also make appearances.

Chapter 9, Chapter 10, and Chapter 11 examine the link between rapidly rising crime and nostalgia in this period. Crime is a mirror to which a society, elite and masses, look when judging the present and pondering the future. It is society's most important barometer in determining the overall state of morality, an issue integral to societal self-image and concepts of national identity, and to gauge the performance of the state given its role as protector of citizens' security. In this way, crime plays a powerful role in creating and spreading societal nostalgia. On the one hand, societal proximate nostalgia is particularly powerful given the nostalgic's personal memory and experience, as the earlier cited example about the kidnapping and raping of children showed. Yet, on the other hand, this nostalgia can be subject to distortions. The state and reach of print media, its sensationalism of crime stories, strengths and weaknesses of the criminal justice system, the extent of people's willingness and ability to report crimes, and the character of a country's political system and its approach to censorship

play roles in this distortion. These factors as they pertain to Pahlavi Iran are examined in Chapter 9. Chapters 10 and 11 show how the rapid rises in reported crime provoked increasingly intense forms of nostalgia for envisioned proper Iranian morality, social conscience, and basic human decency.