5-12-2024

The Sea of Sorrow Has No Shore: A Note on Grief and the Radical Practice of Grief

Fatemeh Kazemi
Syracuse University

Abstract

This paper explores grief through both a personal and cultural prism, specifically focusing on the Iranian context. Intertwining together personal narratives with scholarly discourse, it aims to illuminate the nuanced relationship between individual experiences of sorrow and the broader fabric of collective memory. Notably, it is examining how artistic practice and the visual culture of grief intersect, tracing my own journey through studio work that melds traditional and contemporary representations of mourning. This investigation is bolstered by insights drawn from psychology, sociology, and cultural studies, offering a comprehensive, multidisciplinary understanding of mourning practices in addition to their profound impact on personal identity and resilience.

Keywords: Muscle memory, grief, collective memory, mourning rituals, Iranian culture, artistic practice, visual culture.

The Sea of Sorrow Has No Shore:

A Note on Grief and the Radical Practice of Grief

دریای غم ساحل ندارد:

جستاری بر غم و تمرینی بر سوگواری

by

Fatemeh Kazemi

فاطمه کاظمی

B.F.A, University of Tehran, 2014

Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Studio Arts.

Syracuse University
May 2024

Figure 1. From Fatemeh's family album, all three photos were taken in 1996 on the same day and date.

Acknowledgments

This journey through the landscapes of grief, both personal and collective, would not have been possible without the steadfast support of my friends and the broader community. Your stories of resilience have been a source of inspiration, guiding my exploration of grief as an act of resistance. I am deeply grateful for the guidance and encouragement from my advisor and the faculty at Syracuse University. Special thanks to Mohammadreza, Zelikha, Elham, Ghazal, Yalda, Muheb, Rumpelstiltskin, Negin, Yasmina, and many others, whose names may inadvertently slip my memory. Your solidarity and shared vulnerability have been sources of immense comfort and strength, unveiling the transformative potential of communal mourning.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the resilient women of Iran, the steadfast resisters in Rojava, and the enduring people of Palestine. Your courage in the face of adversity and unwavering pursuit of justice have illuminated my exploration of grief. Your experiences and narratives have not only enriched this work but have also laid the groundwork for a broader conversation on loss, resilience, and the transformative power of shared mourning.

I intend to commence my paper with lines from the opening of Rumi's[1] Masnavi:

1. Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, or simply Rumi (30 September 1207 – 17 December 1273), was a 13th-century poet. Rumi's works were written mostly in Persian, but occasionally he also used Turkish, Arabic, and Greek in his verse. His Masnavi, is considered one of the greatest poems of the Persian language.

The Song of the Reed

"Listen to the reed (flute), how it is complaining!
It is telling about separations,
(Saying), Ever since I was severed from the reed field,
men and women have lamented in (the presence of) my shrill cries.
(But) I want a heart (which is) torn, torn from separation,
so that I may explain the pain of yearning.
Anyone one who has remained far from their roots,
seeks a return (to the) time of their union.
I lamented in every gathering;
I associated with those in bad or happy circumstances.
(But) everyone became my friend from their (own) opinion;
they did not seek my secrets from within me."

(Gamard, 2011, p. 18)

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

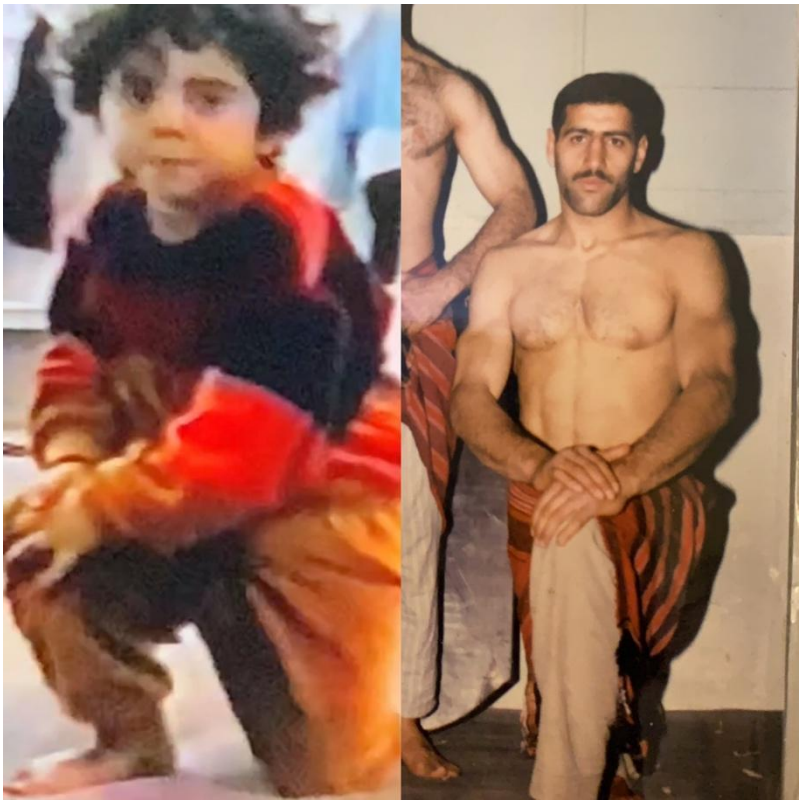


Figure 2. The photo on the left is a still from the video "Curse Be Upon The Hope of Those Hopeless People", 2020 (A family footage from my grandpa's archive,1994). The photo on the right is a picture of my father doing a Pahlvan of champion pose.

The first time I saw a video of myself in the "«زورخانه» (/zurxɑne/) the house of strength"[2], it was shocking for me to accept being in such an environment and forgetting that moment. I was raised in my grandfather's house, where the wrestling ring and the interpretation of being strong or a

2. The traditional gymnasium in which /varzeʃ -e Bastani/ is practiced is known as the /zurxɑne/ (Persian: زورخانه), literally the "house of strength". These gyms have a very specific and unique architecture and are covered structures with a single opening in the ceiling, with a sunken 1m-deep octagonal or circular pit in the center (/goud/). Around the gaud is a section for the audience, one for the musicians, and one for the athletes.

“«پهلوان» (/pæhlɛvɑn/) champion”[3], were highly masculine and a mere referral to men. watching my moving image in that space was a physical experience, I stood in the middle of the wrestling pit with my father and uncles, and voices from the background were calling out to mimic my father, shouting towards me:

“Fatemeh, well done! Sit on both feet. Put your hand on your left knee.”

One of them shouted, “Look at Ali; see, he's performing it correctly.”

There was hearty, masculine laughter in a low-quality VHS video, filling the entire frame. Suddenly, the camera angle tilted, and for the last few seconds, we only had an image of the ground and my father's voice: "Well done, this is it!".

“«زورخانه» (/zurxɑne/)” rituals are rooted in values of strength and chivalry. Over time, the sport evolved to take on heightened religious significance. Seeing my three-year-old self in a space like a wrestling ring, repurposed a single-gender environment in a moment that vanished in my body and the history of the space —easily in terms of lack of —attempting to mimic my father's heroic display, left me feeling melancholic.

3. The concepts of /pæhlɛvɑn/ and /zurxɑne/ rituals is the name inscribed by UNESCO for /varzeʃ -e pæhlɛvɑni/ (Persian: آیین پهلوانی و زورخانه‌ای, “heroic sport”) or /varzeʃ -e bɑstɑni/ ("ancient sport"), a traditional system of athletics and a form of martial arts originally used to train warriors in Iran (Persia), and first appearing under this name and form in the Safavid era, with similarities to systems in adjacent lands under other names. Outside Iran, /zurxɑne/ can now also be found in Azerbaijan, and Afghanistan, and were introduced into Iraq in the mid-19th century by the Iranian immigrants, where they seem to have existed until the 1980s before disappearing. It combines martial arts, calisthenics, strength training and music. It contains elements of pre-Islamic and post-Islamic culture of Iran (particularly Zoroastrianism, Mithraism and Gnosticism) with the spirituality of Persian Shia Islam and Sufism. Practiced in a domed structure called the /zurxɑne/, training sessions consist mainly of ritual gymnastic movements and climax with the core of combat practice, a style of folk wrestling called /koʃti-e pæhlɛvɑni/.

I wondered how my body deliberately had managed to erase all those memories. It must have had to do something with shifting perceptions around fatherhood and masculinity during that time. Certainly, I am not the first woman to have been present in that space, However, my body's intentional erasure of this moment from my muscle memory, led me to contemplate how, on that particular occasion, entrenched notions of masculinity or manhood permeated various aspects of our lives, such as the customary settings for mourning, weddings, or other socio-cultural events.

The trauma of this erasure is further explored in the context of cultural memory and womanhood, with a focus on the need for women to reclaim their narratives and their grief. The normalization of the reproductive female body as a burden further reinforces these patriarchal norms. My reflection on my experience in the "«زورخانه» (/zurxɑne/)" thus serves as a critique of the systematic erasure as well as the objectification of female body in Iranian society. While the topic of grief has been extensively explored, the stark contrast in perspectives between outsiders and those indigenous to the experience introduces profound challenges. This dichotomy, marked by external perceptions versus the intrinsic understanding of grief, has captivated my interest, leading me to a deeper investigation. I aim to uncover and articulate aspects of this wandering spirit of mourning from both angles, endeavoring to bridge the gap between these viewpoints—a spirit that echoes across diverse cultural landscapes. This journey is not merely academic but a deeply personal quest to grasp the complex nature of grief, its manifestations, and how it is perceived by different segments of society.

2. "«غم» (/qæm/)" Between Fingers: Sketches of grief

"And every sorrow that its return leads to joy, do not count it as sorrow."

Excerpts from "Qabusnameh"[4]

Grief "«غم» (/qæm/)" and mourning "«سوگواری» (/sugvɑɾɹi/)" encapsulate an enigmatic imagery. Sigmund Freud, in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), posits that mourning is the reaction to the loss of a loved person or the loss of an abstraction taking its place, such as one's country, liberty, or an ideal. Although, my intricate exploration of grief, rooted in a nonlinear and sub-narrative approach, extends beyond the Western gaze and delves into the cultural and linguistic realms, particularly within the context of Iranian society. The nuanced portrayal of grief in Persian not only mirrors the complex nature of sorrow but also invites deeper engagement with the ways grief is experienced and articulated across different cultures. My reflection on these dynamics, especially concerning cultural memory and the female body, aims to critique the systematic erasure and objectification prevalent in societal norms.

2.1. A Pocket Size Glossary for Grief

In Persian, the word "«حزن» (/hʊzn/)" holds synonymous meanings with "«اندوه» (/ænduh/)", "«غم» (/qæm/)", and "«غصه» (/qʊsɛ/)", all of which encapsulate the profound essence of 'sorrow',

4. (Keikavus, 1080, p. 14); A Mirror for Princes, the Qābūs Nāma, by "Kai Kā'ūs ibn Iskandar", Prince of Gurgān. This precious document is full of historical information and folklore from earlier periods in Iranian history.

‘grief’, and ‘mourning’. While these three words, “«غصه» (/qʊsɛ/)”, “«غم» (/qæm/), and “«حزن» (/hʊzn/)”, share similar emotional connotations, they bear nuanced differences in their application and underlying intentions within the Persian language. Remarkably, all three words trace their origins back to Arabic roots. “«حزن» (/hʊzn/)”, akin to a shadow cast upon happiness, represents its antithesis. “«غم» (/qæm/)”, signifies an act of veiling or covering. “«غصه» (/qʊsɛ/)”, on the other hand, vividly denotes something lodged in the throat, invoking a sense of choking and constriction.

Within the Persian language, the concept of grief is characterized by intricate layers. A massive portion of this complexity derives its essence from the fertile grounds of literary expressions, while a significant portion has grown under the shade of Iranian-Islamic culture. Alongside these paradigms, one encounters the profound and intensely personal experience of grief, a facet of human existence that has, intriguingly, never been formally institutionalized or subjected to the rubrics of religious governance. This enduring enigma of individualized grief remains perpetually fresh and susceptible to exploration, despite the passage of years. In the panorama of my life, a persistent undercurrent of grief propels me towards cultivating insight and wisdom from the depths of the emotional abyss.

This glossary encompasses 10 terms associated with grief, reflecting the non-linear narrative of mourning explored in my research and artistic practice. These terms are unique to Iranian grief culture, each carrying specific meanings or resonances within my multidisciplinary approach to the expression of grief and visualizing the ritual of mourning. It’s crucial to recognize that I am reclaiming and re-navigating the examination of these words within my alternative lexicon, creating my own unique interpretations and visual associations.

It’s worth noting that all the definitions in this lexicon are from Ali Akar Dehkhoda’s [5]Persian-to-Persian dictionary, alongside my interpretation of these entries. Moreover, all the phonetic transcriptions provided here are based on the IPA[6] chart.

2.1.1. غم‌آور /qæmɑvæɹ/

The word-by-word translation of “«غم‌آور» (/qæmɑvæɹ/)” is “sorrow bringer”, but its equivalent in Persian to English dictionaries are “mournful” and “grievous”.

In Ali Akbar Dehkhoda’s dictionary, this word is defined as: “*That which brings sorrow and causes grief*”. However, in my pocket-size glossary, I endeavored to explore other meanings and alternatives for the word, while considering the nuances and contingencies within its semantic scope. For me, linking grief with action imbues this word with dynamism. In my lexicon, it frequently coexists with verbs such as “witnessing” and “bearing”, signifying the encounter with an event or circumstance that engenders the resurgence of grief, a grief that is freshly and vividly construed. Another interpretation that resonates with me for this word involves carrying grief and sharing it. Additionally, there exists an aspect of corporeality and performative nature within the amalgamation of “grief” and “bringer”.

5. A prominent Iranian literary writer, philologist, and lexicographer; he was the author of the Dehkhoda Dictionary, the most extensive dictionary of the Persian language published to date.
6. International Phonetic Alphabet

2.1.2. غم‌باد /qæmbɑd/

"«غم‌باد» (/qæmbɑd/)" literally translates to "wind of sorrow," but its Persian equivalents in English dictionaries are "goiter" and "swelling" which are said to be brought on by grief.

From a more clinical standpoint, "«غم‌باد» (/qæmbɑd/)" or "Globus Hystericus", delineates a condition where the soul, steeped in grief and sudden emotional tumult, finds itself ensnared in the grip of an intangible weight. In my lexicon, "«غم‌باد» (/qæmbɑd/)" emerges as a testament to the intricate dance between mind and body. It whispers of a connection forged in the crucible of despair, where the physical and the emotional converge in a delicate balance of pain and poignancy.

«به سوگواری مویت سلام برغم باد سیاه چشم حریف منی، غمت کم باد»

Your mournful hair (the blackness of which is poetically used as a metaphor for mourning) greets the wind of grief,

O dark-eyed rival, may your sorrow diminish.[7]

2.1.3. غم‌انگیز /qæmængiz/

Translating to "sorrowful" or "heartrending", this term is used to describe situations, stories, or events that evoke deep sadness and empathy. Narratives or poems labeled as "«غم‌انگیز» (/qæmængiz/)" are those that touch the heart deeply, often leaving the audience with a profound sense of empathy and shared sorrow.

[7]. (Rahmani, 2008), translateed by the author.

The term “«غم‌انگیز» (/qæmængiz/)” unfurls with nuance, distinct from “«غم‌آور» (/qæmɑvæɪ/)” which roots its essence in the corporeal, manifesting through performative states. “«غم‌انگیز» (/qæmængiz/)” inhabits a realm where silence and a subdued hum serve as its cradle. In my exploration of grief, I find this word in moments when one is drawn to the sanctuary of familial photo archives; the initial resonance that emanates from those captured visages whispers “«غم‌انگیز» (/qæmængiz/)”. Similarly, an auditory tapestry or a narrative woven from the threads of friendship can conjure the alchemy of melancholy within the vessel of the self. Confronted with this sensory tableau, one encounters a hum—a spectral presence—that allows “«غم» (/qæm/)” to transmute into a tangible echo within the flesh.

2.1.4. غم‌افزا /qæmæfzɑ/

Directly translated to English as “sorrow increasing" or "aggravating sorrow," this word is applied to circumstances or actions that intensify feelings of grief. It can describe a piece of music, an event, or a memory that adds to the weight of sorrow being carried.

To understand this term, I preferred to imagine a scenario, where passive grief turns into active grief, or in other words, enters the stage of becoming “«غم‌افزا» (/qæmæfzɑ/)”. A feeling of sorrow has made its home in the chest. A familiar sorrow, neither too small to fit in a pocket nor too large to bring tears to your eyes. News arrives, the colors intertwine, suffocating, “«غم افزا» (/qæmæfzɑ/)”, breeding darkness. Worries obstructed the path of breath. Darkness rained down upon hearts and alleys.

2.1.5. غم‌خور /qæmxoɹ/

Metaphorically, “«غم‌خور» (/qæmxoɹ/)” refers to a person deeply affected by sorrow, often silently bearing and internalizing their grief. It portrays the image of someone who 'eats' their sadness, processing it internally without much external display. Translating to "eating sorrow" this word holds significant importance for me among the vocabulary used in combination with “«غم» (/qæmxoɹ**),** sorrow” in Persian. The metaphorical state it signifies speaks of distance, longing, and vulnerability. Beyhaqi, in describing the people of Iran, interprets them in this way: “They have consumed much sorrow” (Beyhaqi, 2011, p. 458). Also, this word is frequently used to describe a lover in the absence and separation from the beloved, as surely in love there is separation and unattainability.

In contemporary Iranian literature, this word is used to describe a mother and self-sacrifice, referring to someone who, out of love, affection, and selflessness, "eats" the sorrow of another and is concerned for their well-being.

2.1.6. غم‌گسار /qæmgosɑɹ/

In Persian literature, the term “«غم‌گسار» (/qæmgosɑɹ/)” holds a profound place, signifying an individual who shares and empathizes with the sorrows and griefs of others, endeavoring to lessen their burdens. This beautifully complex word merges “«غم» (/qæm/)”, encapsulating sorrow or grief, with “«گُسار» (/gosɑɹ/)”, which means to alleviate or empathize, reflecting the depth of human compassion and the ethical dimensions of empathy.

The classic story "Samarqand" by Amin Maalouf[8] offers a vivid narrative of Omar Khayyam's life, the esteemed poet, mathematician, and philosopher. "Samarkand" intricately weaves fact with fiction, showcasing the pivotal role of empathy within its pages. A striking illustration of such empathy is observed in the dynamic between Omar Khayyam and Hassan Sabbah. From the outset, Hassan, a childhood companion of Khayyam and a figure of historical significance who later led the Ismaili sect, embodies the essence of a “ غم‌گسا» (/qæmgosɑɹ/)”. He is a beacon of support and understanding, aiding Khayyam through life's trials and tribulations, and offering a spiritual anchor during pivotal moments.

In my own artistic exploration, “ غم‌گسا» (/qæmgosɑɹ/)” transcends its literal meaning to embody the spirit of friendship and active collaboration. It signifies not merely a companion who dispels sorrow but a profound relationship where grief is understood and shared, freeing one from its grasp. This concept allows for a redefinition of grief that transcends rationalization, free from censorship and the constraints of a monolithic perspective. This notion has repeatedly infused my work with meaning throughout my artistic journey, guiding and reshaping my creative endeavors. The most resonant experience of “ غم‌گسا» (/qæmgosɑɹ/)” in my recent practice has been the collaboration and sisterhood fostered with Zelikha Shoja during our three years in Syracuse.

During a reflective journey to Rochester on February 20th, Zelikha shared an insight that profoundly impacted me: “*We are all nonsensical and hysterical in their eyes.*” This made me think of when Eve Tuck said, “I am using my arm to determine the length of the gaze” (Tuck & Ree, 2013, p. 640).

[8]. (Maaalouf, 1989)

This revelation invites contemplation of our collective and individual existences. It probes whether we have truly shared dreams with our sisters and "«غم‌گساران» (/qæmgosɑɹɑn/)", not just in a collective longing for fleeting hopes but as a shared experience of "«غم» (/qæm/)" that reverberates across our diverse dreamscapes and within our unique beings.

This notion lingers, suggesting that our sorrows and joys, regardless of their intensity, are mere echoes in the vast expanse of time. It prompts a realization that, in the grand scheme, we might only be seen as transient actors, our stories etched briefly in the annals of history, ephemeral and soon forgotten.

2.1.7. غُمام /qomɑm/

Not commonly used in contemporary Persian in a direct context related to grief, "«غمام» /qomɑm/" could refer to clouds or a metaphorical expression of overshadowing sorrow or difficulties that loom over one's life, similar to how clouds cover the sky. It evokes the image of clouds, referred to as "«غمام» (/qomɑm/)", shrouding the sun and sky, evoking the sentiment of "We have placed clouds over you (Quarn. Surah 2:57, P.8)".

2.1.8. زاری /zɑɹi/

This term specifically relates to loud mourning or wailing, often used in the context of funeral ceremonies or commemorative events in mourning. "«زاری» /zɑɹi/" signifies the vocal expression of grief, a common practice in many cultures to outwardly express deep sorrow and loss.

The verb "«زاری کردن», (/zɑɹi kæɹdæn/), wailing" is derived from the root "«زار», (/zɑɹ/)" and means to cry out loudly and despairingly. In contemporary Iranian history, this term has been used negatively, signifying a form of weakness, and is condemned by the male-dominated society as a sign of madness, uncontrolled anger, and hysteria. However, from my perspective within the feminine ecology, this term is reinterpreted differently.

"«زاری کردن», (/zɑɹi kæɹdæn/)", is a performative way of expressing sorrow, a method with historical precedence. It's a form of resistance found in the Shahnameh[9] in characters like Katayoun[10], Farangis[11], and Tahmineh[12], link their grief with their anger. From my point of view, this performance is carried out in opposition to male expansionism—an expansionism closely tied to war and destruction.

9. The *Shahnameh* ("The Book of Kings"), is a long epic poem written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi between c. 977 and 1010 CE and is the national epic of Greater Iran. Consisting of some 50,000 distichs or couplets (two-line verses), the Shahnameh is one of the world's longest epic poems and the longest epic poem created by a single author. It tells mainly the mythical and to some extent the historical past of the Persian Empire from the creation of the world until the Muslim conquest in the seventh century. Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and the greater region influenced by Persian culture such as Armenia, Dagestan, Georgia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan celebrate this national epic. The work is of central importance in Persian culture and the Persian language. It is regarded as a literary masterpiece, and definitive of the ethno-national cultural identity of Iran.

10. Katayoun is a female figure in Shāhnāmeh and Iranian mythology. She is married to Goshtāsb and the mother of Esfandiār. In the Shāhnāme, she is the daughter of the Kaiser of Rûm, while in both the Avestā and in Pahlavi texts, she is called Hutaosā and identified as an Iranian girl and a descendant of Nowzar.

11. Farangis or Frigis, is a female character in the Persian epic Shahnameh. She is the eldest daughter of Afrasiab, king of Turan. She is also the wife of Siyâvash, the saintlike prince of Iran, and mother of a legendary hero and later Shah of Iran, Kai Khosrow. Although a Turanian by birth, Farangis shows loyalty to her husband's kingdom and dynasty. She accompanies her son when he leaves Turan in the hopes of gathering an Iranian army to avenge Siyâvash.

12. Tahmine is a female character in the story Rostam and Sohrab, part of the 10th-century Persian epic of Shahnameh. Her name is mentioned as the wife of Rostam and as the daughter of Samanganshah, the sovereign of Samangan.

2.1.9. غم‌نامه /qæm-nɑme/

The term “«غم‌نامه» (/qæm-nɑme/)” translating to “a letter of sorrow” or 'epistle of grief'—historically encompasses poems or prose that articulate deep sadness or lamentation. These writings could be personal letters mourning a loss or poetic compositions delving into the nuances of grief. In the Persian literary tradition, the term 'elegy' particularly refers to narratives of love, set within a refined and sophisticated framework. This genre employs a richly poetic language, crafted to resonate uniquely with the intended recipient, thereby engaging a distinct audience.

However, the aspect that resonates most profoundly with me is the exploration of memory and the process of writing and recalling through post-memory—especially at those moments when recollections are no longer vivid. As our sorrow matures, it often becomes a form of written expression that presents a hazy depiction of an emotional declaration, portraying a memory that now feels foreign. Here, the concept of separation extends beyond traditional romantic notions between lovers to include separations from friends and familiar environments. This form of expression does not revel in the lofty ideals of sublime, mystical love but roots itself in the mundane and quotidian aspects of life.

2.1.10. غم غربت /qæme-qorbæt/

The English equivalent of the term “«غم غربت» (/qæme-qorbæt/)” could be the word “nostalgia”, often described as a wistful longing for the past, which encapsulates more than just a simple yearning for bygone days. It embodies a complex emotional state where personal memories and

historical moments intersect, evoking a sense of loss for the irretrievable past and an appreciation for its beauty. This sentiment, deeply influenced by political and social dynamics, serves as a powerful lens through which individuals reflect on change, loss, and the passage of time. In the realm of literature and art, nostalgia finds diverse expressions, with poets and artists leveraging unique symbols and narratives to convey their individual and collective reminiscences. Themes such as childhood, homeland, separation from a beloved, exile, and collective memories define modern nostalgia in Persian poetry and literature. Notably, in the context of Neo-Persian poetry, figures like Forough Farokhzad[13], and Mehdi Akhavan Sales[14] have adeptly utilized nostalgia as a thematic conduit, articulating personal and communal sentiments.

[13]. Forugh Farrokhzad (28 December 1934 – 14 February 1967) was an influential Iranian poet and film director. She was a controversial modernist poet and an iconoclastic, feminist author. Farrokhzad died in a car accident at the age of 32.

[14]. Mehdi Akhavan-Sales, (March 1, 1929 in Mashhad, Iran – August 26, 1990 in Tehran, Iran), pen name "Mim Omid" (meaning M. Hope) was a prominent Iranian poet. He is one of the pioneers of Free Verse (New Style Poetry) in the Persian language.

3. The Path/My Practice on Mourning

When you disregard me, I experience a profound sorrow that morphs into a poignant ache within the confines of my tongue. It lingers in my heart, much like a vandal who once carved the face of their lover in history to obscure the past before themself.

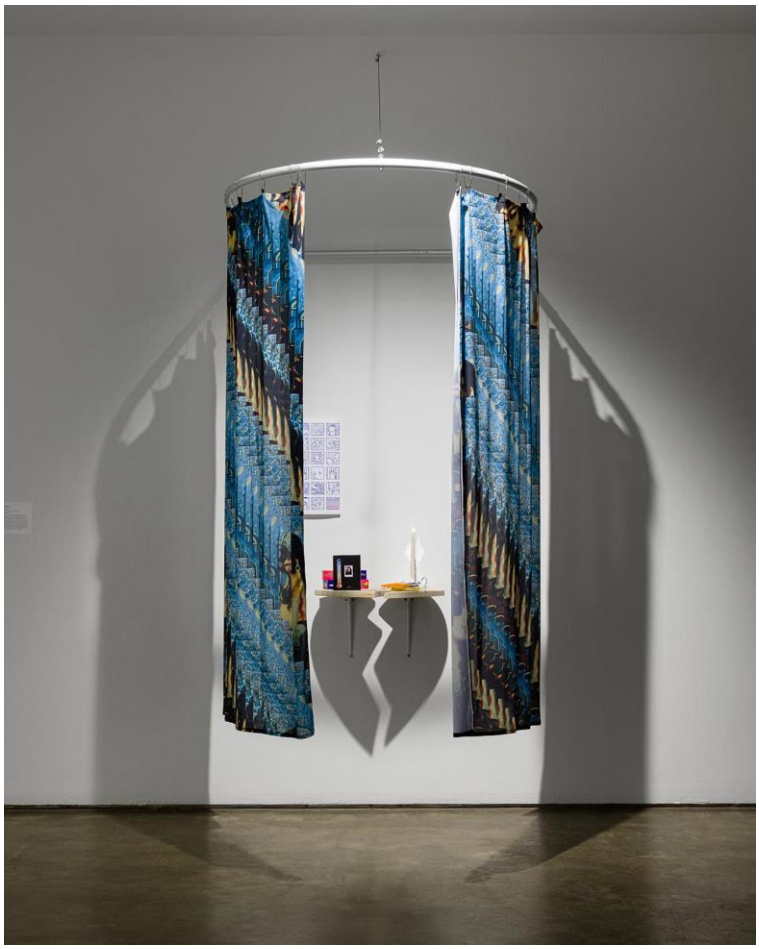


Figure 3. Despair and Die, an alter for the book, Digital Printed Zine, wooden Shelf, Digital Print, edible print, LED Candle, custom printed curtains, Steel Rod, various sizes, 2022

3.1. Despair and Die-«ناامید باش و بمیر» (/nɑ-omid-bɑʃ-o-bemiɹ/)

In 2019, grappling with grief and oblivion, I embarked on a collaboration with my father. He had meticulously assembled photo albums containing snapshots from his youth—moments shared

with friends in various settings. This stack of albums served as inspiration, prompting the inception of my artist book, "Despair and Die-«ناامید باش و بمیر» (/nɑ-omid-bɑʃ-o-bemiɹ/)" in 2020. The book unfolds a nonlinear fictional visual narrative exploring mourning, drawing from my family's visual archive and post-internet material. It delves into the labyrinth of memory that ensnares us.

In the first chapter, titled "«غم‌نامه» (/qæm-nɑme/), Elegy", I curated an extensive list of Persian sentences from diverse Iranian sources—slang, kitsch, and middle-class language associated with grief, mourning, love, and loss. These short and long phrases, borrowed from films, songs, books, everyday people, as well as my walks through marketplaces and flea markets, are arranged in a random order, forming what can be perceived as a fragmented and uncanny poem.

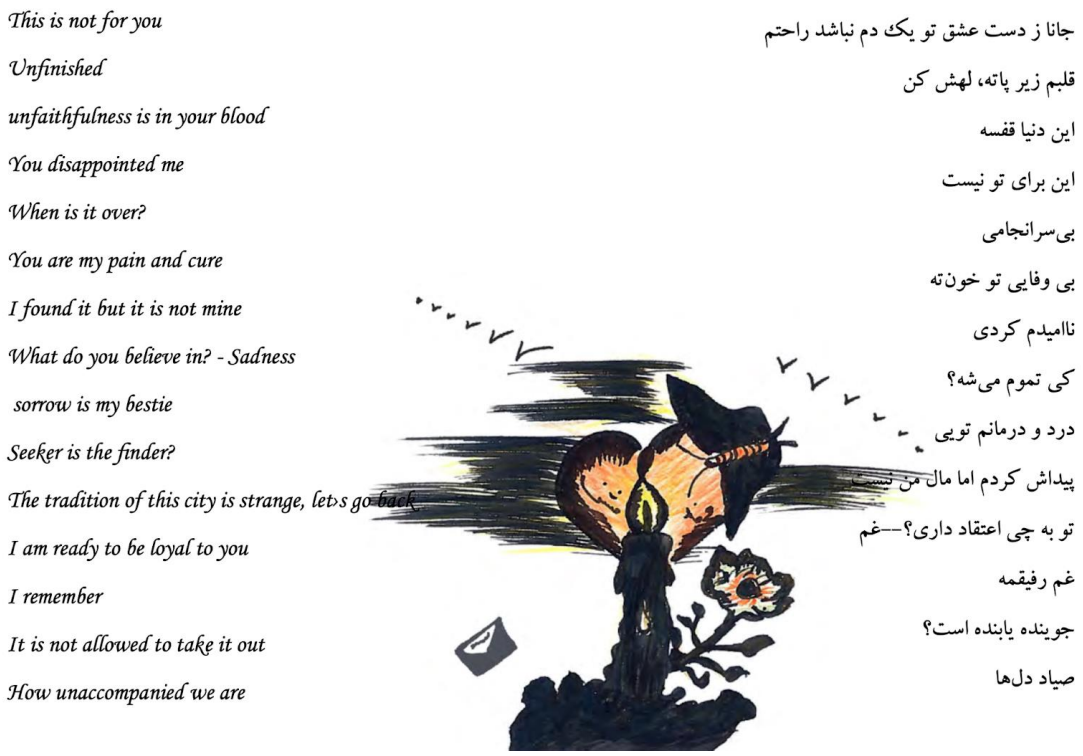


Figure 4. Pages from the book "Despair and Die", chapter one (Elegy), 2021.

The second chapter "«جزیره/ غربت» (/dʒæziɹe-qorbæt/) (Exile)" reflects on my relationship with my father. I have come to realize that he raised me "like a man" – instilling in me strength and self-sufficiency. However, as I entered puberty, our dynamics shifted, and physical closeness became less acceptable. My father, though not conforming to the stereotypical "man's man" archetype – lacking authority and practical skills while expressing his emotions openly – remained bound by his father's legacy of upholding this version of masculinity without ever questioning it. The rules are masculine, stemming from the father's policies, including participation and socializing with males, the absence of any female friends or companionship, as well as being the core of the family economy and generating wealth.

It's essential to acknowledge that, despite these strict norms, instances of tenderness among men exist. They engage in activities like wrestling, communal baths in "hammams" (both Turkish and Persian lexicon for public baths), and even openly holding hands in public. These gestures of intimacy, while prevalent among men, also exist among women. However, due to the lack of documentation and the segregation of social spheres, they are not as easily traceable in women.

This backdrop of narratives and stories unfolds further in this labyrinth of the second chapter, where I weave a visual narrative through the amalgamation of images and words. This form of visual storytelling binds the myriad layers of my experience, presenting a canvas where my rebellion against imposed femininity and the sorrows that besiege me take center stage. The selected images, a collage of internet finds and snapshots from my wanderings, capture the paradoxes of life against a tapestry of cultural contexts. Each captured moment is an endeavor to freeze a fragment of life's contradictions, securing it as a memory etched within the confines of my mind.

Figure 5. Pages from the book “Despair and Die”, chapter two (Exile), 2021.

Figure 6. Pages from the book “Despair and Die”, chapter two (Exile), 2021.

Afsaneh Najmabadi in the book "Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity". insights into the realms of gender and sexual anxieties within Iranian modernity offer a scholarly backdrop to these personal reflections. She delineates the complexities of male homoeroticism and the impact of societal transformations on gender perceptions, further complicating the narrative with the hetero-sexualization of love and its ramifications on homosocial relationships. "*The nineteenth century marked a shift in Iranian male sensibilities. The young, beautiful male adolescent to whom the adult man was attached had turned from a figure of celebration into one of abjection*" (NajmAbadi, 2005, p. 94).

This object-oriented and gender-centric perspective views society as a product of gender segregation. A society that sees both men and women as products of desire. Najmabadi says:

> *"Some of the currently accepted 'typologies' of male homosexuality in Islamicate cultures assume the hypermasculinity of "active" and the femininity of "passive" males involved in homosexual practices. This typology is itself a consequence of the modernist hetero-sexualization of love. The hetero-sexualization of love and bringing love into the domain of marriage not only changed marriage from a sexual procreative contract into a romantic contract…but also radically transformed love. Friendship/love/sexuality had been located in the homosocial domain (within which that of men could be publicly celebrated)".* (NajmAbadi, 2005, p. 59)

In our collective memory, interactions between men and women are often constrained by numerous restrictions across various domains, particularly within the traditional family structure. This phenomenon was further exacerbated in the early years following the 1979 Revolution, during which such relationships faced even tighter constraints. According to NajmAbadi, this proposition is based on the heterosexual presumption that active female sexuality is perpetually seeking a

phallus. Without this presumption, institutions of gender segregation would struggle to contain and control it. This segregation gave rise to a set of alternative spaces, effectively creating separate social spheres and interactions predicated on gender binaries. As Torab (2006) contends in "Performing Islam: Gender and Rituals in Iran," single-sex rituals are a dramatic means of reinforcing gender distinctions and correspond to the pervasive separation of the sexes in many spheres of social life. During the *Qajar* era, this separation significantly intensified, and the term "*Andaruni*," which was derived to denote the women's section of mosques, analogous to the term "*Shabestan*," legitimized this divide. The ceremonies and rituals held in these spaces ranged from celebrations and weddings to mourning rituals. It should be noted that initially, this space was utilized by those with privilege and wealth, but gradually it became more common in urban spaces as well and could be observed in religious ceremonies as entirely female-centric rituals, such as *Moloudi*[15] and *Roze-khani*[16].

In weaving together these threads of visual and textual narrative, the second chapter becomes a rebellion not just against the confines of traditional femininity but also a confrontation with the sorrow that has shadowed my path. It is a journey through the maze of collective memory, cultural backdrop, and personal rebellion, mirrored in the snapshots of life's paradoxes captured along the way.

The third chapter, titled "«آن رفیقی که به هنگام غم‌ام دور نرفت ؛ زیر شمشیر غم‌اش رقص کنان خواهم رفت» (The Companion Who Stood by Me in the Shade of Grief; Under Their Sword of Grief, I Shall Dance Forth)", represents, in my view, the most vital segment of the work due to its vivid imagery. This section intimately explores photographs of my father, many of which were captured not by him

15. Celebratory religious gatherings
16. Religious mourning sessions

but through the lens of his male friends, alongside a limited number of pictures featuring my mother.

Figure 7. Pages from the book “Despair and Die”, chapter three (The Companion Who Stood by Me in the Shade of Grief; Under Their Sword of Grief, I Shall Dance Forth), 2021.

It brings to light family photos that have become scattered pieces, revealing the nuances of the environment, the language of body gestures, and the concealed narratives within our family. On one notable page, I recount a dream involving my father. At the age of five, rather than seeking refuge in his embrace, I found myself gravitating towards the arms of his friend. In this dream, I express to him my conviction that I am too much of a woman to merely blend into the background of his and his friends' gatherings. I speak of my physical changes, which delineate a boundary between us, propelling me towards a segment of the landscape that diverges significantly from the conventional body narrative depicted in these images.

Figure 8. Pages from the book “Despair and Die”, chapter three (The Companion Who Stood by Me in the Shade of Grief; Under Their Sword of Grief, I Shall Dance Forth), 2021.

Further, within this photographic narrative, there exists an enigmatic frame. In this picture, my father sits beside two other friends. A picture frame, showcasing a portrait of my father’s friend Mehdi, is strategically placed in front of my father’s knee and the other person in the photo. In the original photo, their heads are visible, but in the book, I’ve chosen to crop their heads, leaving only Mehdi’s portrait visible. This act conspicuously omits their corporeal presence from the event, underscoring Mehdi’s status as a martyr. This absence and the context of the photo coincide with the e’a of the Iran-Iraq war.

Figure 9. Pages from the book “Despair and Die”, chapter three (The Companion Who Stood by Me in the Shade of Grief; Under Their Sword of Grief, I Shall Dance Forth), 2021.

Black (2010; as cited in (Homayounpour, 2023)) asserts that the Iran–Iraq War has been labeled the “Forgotten War,” despite being one of the longest and bloodiest of the twentieth century. The armed conflict between Iran and Iraq began in 1980 when Iraq invaded Iran, concluding on 20 August 1988 when Iran accepted the UN-brokered ceasefire. Motivated by the desire to replace Iran as the dominant state in the Persian Gulf, Iraq feared that the 1979 Iranian Revolution would incite its Shi’ite majority to rebel against the Ba’athist government. By the end of the war, eight years later, more than a million people were dead, leaving both countries deeply wounded. The agonizing conflagration witnessed the deployment of numerous men and unnamed women to the perilous frontlines. Tragically, this confluence of events resulted in the irrevocable

loss of friends and beloved kin, casting a pervasive pall over countless social and familial assemblies.

This sounds uncannily familiar for it is exactly where we find ourselves in 2023.

These irreparable losses provoked a series of mourning rituals, within which these specific images assume profound significance. They served as my initiation into a multifaceted narrative of intricate and nuanced concepts. One layer reveals the striking absence of any women within the frame, confronting me with a poignant reality: the lack of presence and recognition of feminine grief in these male-dominated gatherings. The mothers, who should rightfully occupy the roles of mourners and express their sorrow over the loss of their sons, are conspicuously absent.

This absence is a stark reminder of the unequal gender dynamics within these spaces of mourning, where men predominantly hold the center stage. In reflecting upon this gender disparity, I am reminded of the profound of Varzi's (2006) insight that *"a martyr and a photograph"* are essential components for establishing the space of death. Varzi's observation underscores the significance of memorialization through photography in the context of martyrdom.

In these male-centric gatherings, the act of memorialization often centers around male figures, such as the archetype of Imam Ali in Shia Islam and his son Hossein, whose murder served as the catalyst for developing Shiism, However, the absence of women's presence and their unique experiences of grief highlights an aspect of mourning that remains underrepresented and under-recognized. Memorialization, as Varzi (2006) aptly notes, is indeed incomplete without a photograph, but it is equally crucial to acknowledge and include the voices and experiences of women in this narrative of grief and loss.

3.2. «حُمیفا» Afimoh[17]

The deep resonance inherent in feminine expression transcends temporal and geographical boundaries, echoing beyond the confines of Iranian society. For me, numerous literary examples highlight women navigating grief and challenging patriarchal norms, with Antigone standing as a prime archetype. Her story of sacrificial devotion and defiance in the face of profound grief, particularly in her confrontation with her uncle over the burial of her disobedient brother, exemplifies this theme and resonates deeply with my exploration of these dynamics.

Parallel to these literary depictions, understanding domestic grief becomes crucial. Ritualized mourning, a topic I find relatively unexplored, reveals a complex spectrum of behaviors and practices that intrigue me. In the realm of popular music, the exploration of these intimate forms of bereavement holds particular significance. Iranian Musician Masoumeh Dedeh Bala, known as Haydeh, embodies grief not only from romantic separation but also as a reflection of divine sorrow and everyday struggles, mirroring my fascination with the interplay of personal and universal narratives of sorrow. Her transformative interpretation of verses authored by male luminaries such as Saadi[18], Rumi, and Sheikh Baha'i[19], coupled with the infusion of her distinctly feminine vigor, stands as a testament to her artistic prowess. Enduring almost 20 years of forced exile before

17. The reason of not mentioning an English equivalent for «حمیفا» (/homejfɑ/) is that this word could not be translated due to its essence which is untranslatable.
18. Saadi Shīrāzī better known by his pen name Saadi (born 1210; died 1291 or 1292), was a Persian poet and prose writer of the medieval period. He is recognized for the quality of his writings and for the depth of his social and moral thoughts. Saadi is widely recognized as one of the greatest poets of the classical literary tradition, earning him the nickname “The Master of Speech” or “The Wordsmith” or simply “Master” among Persian scholars. He has been quoted in the Western traditions as well. His book, Bustan has been ranked as one of the 100 greatest books of all time by The Guardian.
19. Baha al-Din Muhammad ibn Husayn al-Amili (18 February 1547 – 1 September 1621) was a Levantine Arab Twelver Shi'a scholar, poet, philosopher, architect, mathematician, and astronomer who lived in the late 16th and early 17th centuries in Safavid Iran. He was born in Baalbek, Ottoman Syria (now Lebanon) but immigrated in his childhood to Safavid Iran with the rest of his family. He was one of the earliest astronomers in the Islamic world to suggest the possibility of the Earth's movement before the spread of Copernican heliocentrism. He is considered one of the main co-founders of the School of Isfahan.

passing, her story reflects the challenges faced by artists under the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, where women have been prohibited from singing solo in public or having their solo singing voices recorded due to concerns about the immoral thoughts or actions they might inspire in male listeners.

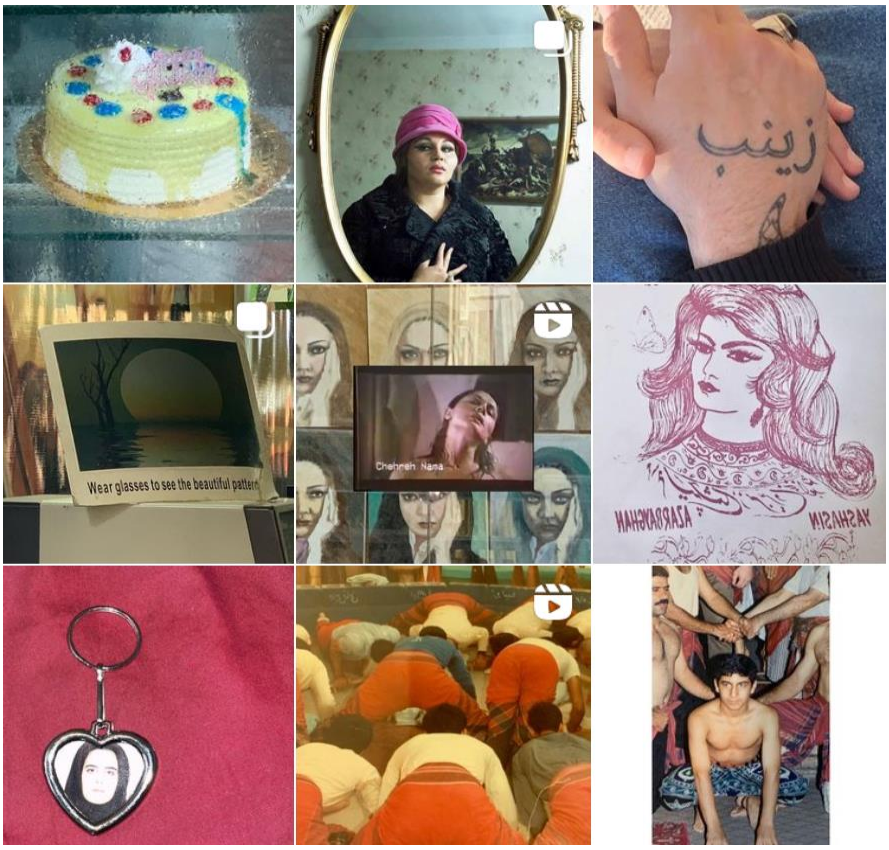


Figure 10. Screenshot of content posted on Afimoh's Instagram account in 2018.

While Shia mourning rituals are inclusive, I have observed that the formal public sphere often privileges male voices and experiences. This is evident in the predominance of male clerics leading *majlis*[20] and the absence of women there.

20. /madʒlis/, is an Arabic term meaning "sitting room", used to describe various types of special gatherings among common interest groups of administrative, social or religious nature in countries with linguistic or cultural connections to the Muslim world.

How do we interpret this absence or lack thereof? It's not simply about the absence of sorrow or women's mourning rituals; it's about the failure to formally acknowledge and record these events or the refusal to allocate space and acknowledge the genuine identity of this grief, which is crucial to recognize.

In many religious ceremonies, especially those during Muharram[21], and even in modern retellings of historical events like *Ta'zieh*[22] performances, female representation is notably absent. Instead, important female figures like Zaynab[23] are portrayed by male actors labeled as 'female-imitators'. This exclusion extends to collective grieving rituals, where women and children are relegated to the sidelines, despite their integral historical connection in Iranian society to motherhood. Their marginalized presence often leads to their experiences being overlooked and underrepresented in official records. Furthermore, the marginalization of the female body and the censorship it faces contribute to the suppression of feminine grief in the visual narrative of these communal spaces of sorrow

This starkly contrasts with my exploration of grief through female perspectives, like those of Haydeh or the missing part of the Battle of Karbala[24], Zaynab. Zaynab serves as the storyteller

21. Muḥarram is the first month of the Islamic calendar, and one of the four sacred months of the year when warfare is banned. The tenth of Muharram is known as Ashura, an important day of commemoration in Islam. For Sunni Muslims, the day marks the parting of the Red Sea by Moses and the salvation of the Israelites, celebrated through supererogatory fasting and other acceptable expressions of joy. By contrast, Ashura is a day of mourning for Shia Muslims, who annually commemorate the death of Husayn ibn Ali, grandson of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and the third Shia imam. Husayn was killed, alongside most of his relatives and his small retinue, in the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE against the army of the Umayyad caliph Yazid ibn Mu'awiya (r. 680–683). The Shia rituals span the first ten days of Muharram, culminating on Ashura with mourning processions in Shia cities..
22. Religious epic theatre, *ta'zije* or *ʃabih*, continues to be performed in areas with large Shi'a populations: Iran, Iraq, Southern Lebanon and Bahrain.
23. Zaynab bint Ali (3 August 626 – 682), was the daughter of the fourth Rashidun Caliph and the first Shia Imam Ali bin Abi Talib. She is the third child of Ali ibn Abi Talib and his wife Fatima
24. The Battle of Karbala was fought on 10 October 680 between the army of the second Umayyad caliph Yazid I and a small army led by Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, at Karbala, Sawad. Prior to his death, the Umayyad caliph Mu'awiya I had nominated his son Yazid as his successor.

and much like Antigone is the survivor, weaving grief with personal narratives of loss, defiance, and identity.

This exercise embodies a radical vitality for me, especially within the intricate and purposeful societal structures governed by a patriarchal ethos that emphasizes grief and martyrdom. Within this socio-cultural milieu, there is a discernible aversion towards the expression of feminine and ritualistic grief, rendering this endeavor an act of defiance. As with Haydeh's perception of remaining in exile and being a voice for grief as acts of resistance, and reminiscent of Antigone's act of burying her brother's body and shedding tears upon his grave as an act of defiance against paternal authority, grief within this framework transforms into an emblem of resistance.

The deliberate choice and ritualistic modulation of this grief emerge as an institutionalized manifestation of feminine rebellion, underscoring a nuanced act of defiance within contemporary contexts. By exploring similarities between Antigone, Haydeh, and Zaynab alongside the systematic exclusion of the women from public mourning, I have created a personal artistic persona, “Afimoh”, dedicated to understanding grief. Through ritual and visual culture, this persona refuses to rationalize everyday sorrow. This form of resistance within a patriarchal society that often silences feminine expressions of grief reflects my own lived experiences of struggle and defiance.

Figure 11. Screenshot of content posted on Afimoh Instagram account in 2019.

Afimoh, to me, is a complex, multi-layered persona inspired by these figures. With a subtle feminine overtone, Afimoh's identity open the space for reflection on gender fluidity. Much like Zaynab, Afimoh narrates with boldness, reimagining lost moments—a practice that I find deeply personal and reflective. Echoing Haydeh, Afimoh's expressions resonate with middle-class sensibilities, creating a sense of familiarity and shared experience that I strive to convey through my work. Similarly, Afimoh channels Antigone's articulation of grief and resilience, engaging in the craft of tragedy, a narrative thread that I weave into my artistic endeavors.

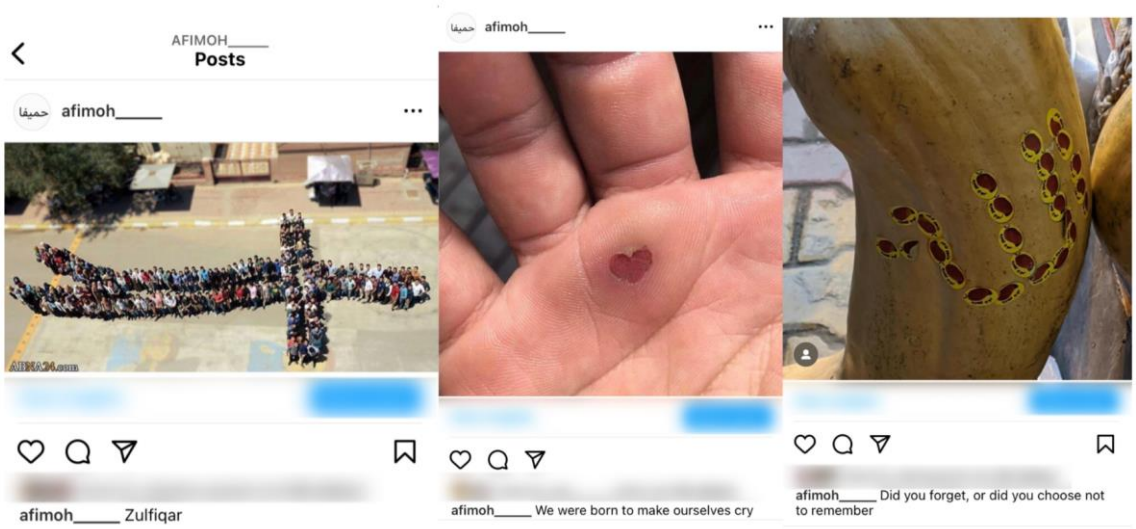


Figure 12. From left to right: The first screenshot depicts a crowd of people arranged in the shape of a sword(Zulfiqar). The second screenshot shows a heart carved on the skin.

By weaving these archetypes into a contemporary tapestry of internet-driven visual and linguistic expression like Iranian meme culture, Afimoh constructs a narrative encapsulating the essence of unresolved grief—a quest that mirrors my intergenerational grief. This narrative transcends traditional storytelling, navigating through everyday and post-internet visual culture to examine the impact of societal and institutional norms on the grieving processes, a journey that I am deeply invested in. The actions of "grasping" and "holding" are central to my exploration. This contemplation occurs within a multidimensional space, encompassing the imagery I generate, my conduct within the studio setting, my physical movements during collaborative endeavors, and even the linguistic exchanges occurring between my mother tongue and its translation.

The genesis of this enduring practice was rooted in a process-oriented, visual, and textual exercise. Its central identity gradually evolved through a nuanced exploration of the internet and grief as medium and the act of sharing fleeting images—a reflection on the concept of maintaining a visual repository, manifested in the format of a social media account. Initially, this visual journey

struggled to articulate the essence of grief contained within its depths. However, over time, a dynamic interplay began to emerge between the visual and textual elements—ultimately giving rise to a discourse embedded within the images themselves. These composite images took the form of collages, blending domestic snapshots, internet-sourced memes, and perhaps most significantly, a profound connection to references to grief and the formal expression of mourning in the Iranian context.

4. Auto-immune language

“We can remain stuck in a never-ending cycle of trauma.”

Excerpt From, Rest Is Resistance, Tricia Hersey

Regarding auto-immunity, the body's instinct for self-preservation runs deep, and it goes into overdrive to steer clear of the path to demise. While this definition of auto-immunity may lack a scientific basis, it provides significant insights for me when looking into the psychological analysis of the grieving process. The crux of this concept, as presented in the book *"Persian Blues, Psychoanalysis, and Mourning"* posits that auto-immunity originates from lingering grief within the body. This portrayal is not only poetic but also sad, holding multiple layers of meaning.

The body's immunity against the death drive and the sudden loss of it/oneself gets unleashed. I easily forgot how protective all of my symptoms can be, how useful for survival. Nevertheless, often surviving, paradoxically, is against living. The superb and original Swiss psychoanalyst Cordelia Schmidt-Hellerau has argued that Freud should have stuck to his first Drive Theory, in which the binary antagonism of the psychic apparatus was between the preservative drive and the life drive, as opposed to his second Drive Theory of Eros and Thanatos, the life and death drives. *(indirect quote from Persian Blues, Psychoanalysis, and Mourning).*

4.1 Tears of Jelousy («اشکِ رشک» (/æʃke ɹæʃk/))

On December 25, 2021, I made my landing in a new land. Upon my encounter with the border officer, I was officially recognized as an immigrant. This transformative juncture in my life has

had a profound impact on my artistic journey. For several months, I found myself in a state of wandering, and during this period of vagabondage, I confronted a novel challenge—a linguistic struggle. As I navigated through those early months, I found myself facing the initial signs of an immune disorder. A persistent swelling emerged in the eye's corner, akin to an obstruction by my tear glands, preventing the view of the radiant, heavy snow outside the studio.

My studio space in Iran, once the garment production business of my father and uncles, a legacy inherited from my grandfather, holds a deeply personal narrative. When I took over this long-abandoned building, as my father suggested, it became the site where a new chapter of my artistic practice unfolded, culminating in several group exhibitions and a solo show. This transition was not merely a change in location but a confrontation with the specters of patriarchy and tradition vividly recalled in my first encounter with my image in the "«زورخانه» (/zurxɑne/)". All the details from when I was a child and my father would take me to his workplace a few times a year so I could understand another aspect of his fatherhood, as well as the effort I saw in him to teach me the concept of money and business—hoping he could share the future of this business with me—until the space closed and turned into an abandoned area for me to pursue something that had never been defined as a job by my family. Migration prompted me to collect those remaining pieces of memories in that studio – a studio that showed no sign of familiarity with the space I once knew and led me into a bodily melancholic situation.

Placing myself in the new studio in Syracuse, at the Com Art building, first floor, room 028, at the starting point of my work in this new base, I began to write fragmented poems which more tied to visual language and failure of language as a form of my coping system with this strange landscape. The linguistic detachment and inadvertent silence penetrated deep within me. My endeavors to elucidate my identity and artistic practice to others became an act of resilience. I

adapted to it, although my body did not. The character Afimoh, which I wrote about earlier created from the confusion of images, memories, and stories, reached a paralysis in continuing in this new state.

– I met a new character in the distance!

My father would recite poetry to me every day and send me voice memos as a sign of expressing his longing. It always started like this: "Salam Fatemeh janam." Then, like TV programs that ask the singer to introduce themselves, he would say his name and then specify the time and location. The poems he recited were all very much from old and folk singers. This way of communicating was both interesting and unfamiliar to me; I was thrown into a world without recognition. For me, it was a metaphor for being stuck and not making it home. This constant non-seeing of one made me think of being a truck driver.

– Why a truck driver?

The exploration of the truck driver's character and his role in my artistic narrative begins with an understanding of the rich visual and written culture prevalent among truck drivers in South Asia, specifically in Pakistani and Punjabi regions, and how it resonates with Iranian truck drivers. Although more minimalist and with distinct visual nuances, the essence of this culture—where the truck becomes not just a vehicle but a space for living and a symbol of nomadism—parallels that of its South Asian counterparts. This observation of mobile living spaces helped me delve into the concept of fugitivity and the transformation of the notion of home, activating new concepts and actions within this unique environment.

The truck decoration serves multiple purposes: it beautifies the space, connects the driver with the surrounding environment, and acts as a dynamic canvas for personal expression through imagery, writing, and portraiture. In the elaborate and flashy Pakistani truck art, plant and animal

motifs are prevalent, drawing from popular culture and serving as a mobile gallery of personal and cultural identity. Texts on different parts of the truck are placed strategically, serving as communication tools with other drivers or as personal reflections of the truck owner, often imbued with themes of lost love or bitter humor.

Among the most notable writings on the truck's body is the crown or “taj” section.

> “*The decoration of the “taj”, the truck's highest part, involves various craftsmanship showcasing sacred images like Khānā Kābā, Masjid-i Nabvī, and holy words such as Allah and Muhammad (pbuh), Quranic Ayahs, phrases like māshā Allah, Subḥān Allah, Sufic images, as well as characters from Sufic allegories, due to their sacred value in Islam. Religious representations on trucks are a way to feel connected with Allah and express the truck owner's faith. Other religious interpretations can also be seen expressing the faith of specific Islamic sects, such as 'āAli madad,' which signifies the Shiite practice of seeking help from Ali Ibn Abi Talib. Quranic Ayahs are a direct manifestation of Islam, and Sufic poetic messages are other religious manifestations”.* (Sheikh, 2018, p. 1066)

All these are placed at the highest part of the vehicle due to their esteemed and venerated status. The character of the truck driver in my narrative does not start at a specific point but emerges from the confluence of these cultural observations and personal insights.

Inside me, a form of “«غم‌باد» (/qæmbɑd/)” manifested as an autoimmune physical response; my eyes swelled and burned. I could have cried with each voice memo my father sent me, but I didn't. I decided to introduce this autoimmune response into the body of the driver, as I discussed in the glossary section under “«غم‌باد» (/qæmbɑd/)”. This physical condition creates a type of autoimmunity in the body. One day, my father called me, lamenting his hand pain, and said, “I found this pain in my body after my mother's death and your departure”.

My driver's pain was discovered!

He had fingers that didn't match his masculine body, and after his lover left, he began to experience swelling and pain. This pain isolated him. This character, once enjoying golden days, now grapples with loss and physical pain—his swollen hand is a symbol of his suffering and a catalyst for his transformation. His journey away from his traditional masculine role and the resultant estrangement from his lover encapsulate themes of alienation and identity crisis. The pain leads to a deep disillusionment with his physical self, and the term "«غم‌باد» (/qæmbɑd/)" becomes emblematic of his wandering both physically and spiritually.

Figure 13. Photo from my visual board for an aesthetic inquiry into truck drivers: From left to right: Acrylic CNC Rounds. Middle top: a photo of a truck in Lebanon by Pavel Amir. Middle bottom: a photo of a bus on a street in Tehran by Minoo. A vinyl decal on a car in Iran (The text is associated with the Persian language, and it is not translatable).

The truck driver, an emblematic figure of both journey and displacement, becomes central to re-engaging with my work in a new landscape, reflecting my own experiences with grief and disembodiment. His story—of vibrant days now overshadowed by pain and transformation—mirrors the broader cultural and psychological landscapes that influence personal histories, making him a poignant figure in my artistic exploration. Through him, I delve into the interconnections between identity, mobility, and the continuous quest for meaning in a perpetually transient existence.

In the intersection of the melancholic truck driver's narrative and my own displacement in the new studio space, I employed the studio to materialize these fragmented identities, culminating in the creation titled "«اشکِ رَشک» (/æʃke ɹæʃk/) Tears of Jealousy". My studio practice has evolved into a realm of reflection and fabrication, where grief is transformed into tangible forms. Within this space, the murmurs of غم‌باد (gham-baad) inspire new narratives and artistic expressions. My creations, ranging from intricate embroidery to CNC-crafted small hearts, weave personal stories into a broader narrative of loss, love, and the pursuit of expression that transcends linguistic boundaries. I found myself compelled to collect words in both Persian and English—Persian to maintain the connection with my language and English to expand into the new—infusing the truck driver's persona with idiomatic richness.

Initially, fear inhibited me from entering the workshop and engaging with others. Viewing myself as fragile and disconnected, I mirrored the driver in my tale, secluding myself in my solitary refuge. I began to assemble and collage materials that felt less daunting, starting with plaster—the first material I dared to manipulate. The idea of creating a wearable element emerged; I envisioned crafting a belt or a chiffon piece that would embody the essence of either the driver's or my narrative within the installation. This was my first foray into such a deep engagement with

materials, prompting me to explore CNC round cutting. The logistical demands of my work soon became overwhelming, instilling a sense of physical and emotional exhaustion within me.

The heart-shaped plates, centering a weeping eye, became a recurrent motif, emblematic of distance and separation—an image often adorned on trucks and now resonant in my installation. The symbolism of the weeping eye harmonized poignantly with the installation's title, uniting all components to narrate the intertwined stories of migration, separation, and elusive connections. Upon first entering the studio, I encountered remnants left by the previous occupant, Aysha, a fellow student who had recently returned to Pakistan from America. Among these remnants were several ready-made ceramic plates, which I integrated into my installation, transforming them into metaphorical elements representing a communal table adorned with memories.

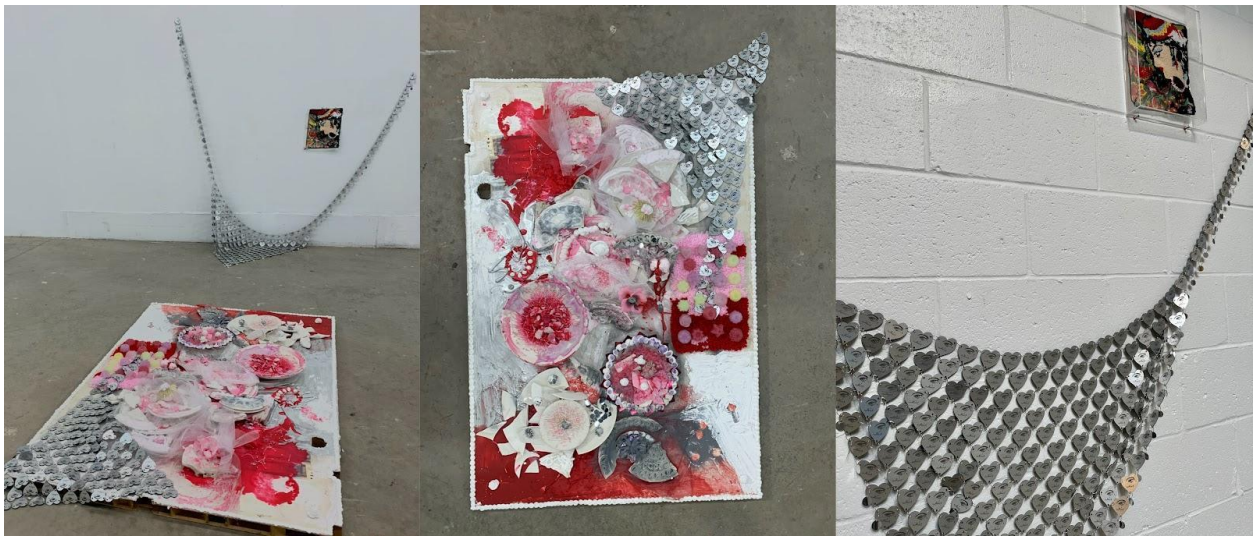


Figure 14. Tears of Jealousy, Acrylic CNC Rounds, plaster casts, silicon casts, resin, acrylic color, beads, pre-fabricated plates, rings, plexi glass box, handmade embroidery, fuzzy rugs, artificial rose petals, Various sizes, 2022

As I delved deeper into the materials, I felt an enveloping sense of sorrow, as if Aysha, the truck driver, and I were entwined in a speculative dialogue about grief and separation. Alongside arranging the physical elements, I began to articulate my emotions through poetry, establishing a

spectral connection with Aysha and the driver. This ghostly collaboration with these two figures—one a character and the other a past presence in room 028—ensnared me. The installation and accompanying poetry acted as a bridge linking my initial experiences in the studio with Aysha's final days, as well as the dialogues between the images and words presented by the truck driver's rich visual culture.

The middle tray is set.

Noises,

The sound of a raindrop,

Ceiling heater.

You left a note for me.

You brought me something as a souvenir.

I said it was edible, then you swallowed my fear.

Annoying sound.

What pain you carry!

First of January, the luggage was lost in the air.

You're gone.

Your stuff remained in room 028.

A vulgar movie that goes hand in hand in school,

Like the ——— that has been seen many times.

Box of fruits and vegetables, or drugs?

He smuggles them from the port.

I look straight ahead.

There is nothing.

I think my work is like yours.

One eye and two eyebrows,

A thousand charms.

He whispers and turns up the volume.

I just tried to swallow.

Alas, what pain you carry!

Drifting up and down in hell.

You asked, "Do you go to the top of the hill?"

Everyone thinks I'm too rude.

But I only had my mouth open when the sugar cubes were scattered, and one fell into my mouth.

They tell me it tastes of happiness, and you must bite his hand.

You told me this is a legacy and must continue.

Suddenly, a big finger of honey comes into my mouth.

Staring at the road,

My hand hurts.

I stare at the movie and my hand goes into my pants, but I feel tired

Because one is bitten.

I do not know whether it is tears or envy.

I do not know whether it is edible or not.

I do not know if I wore it or not.

I do not know why he is so loud.

The sound of alas, the sound of weeping.

Why is she mesmerizing me with one eye and two eyebrows?

And every intoxicant is Haraam.

4.2. chambers of Grief: Poor Knee; [~~Loose Tongue~~]; Trigger Finger

In my practice, there had been always grief and melancholy, but I had unconsciously carried out this ritual within a collective setting, and suddenly, I realized that I was alone. I found myself in a displaced state without a shore for communal solace. Confronted by this turmoil, my sense of bodily identity was dismantled and a survival instinct emerged. During this time, I started writing, floating between words and navigating between my mother tongue and a foreign tongue that had seized my everyday life and my practice. It had stolen my shadow. In the act of defying the enclosed reality, the free association of writing added a new layer of exploration to my studio practice.

The grief depicted in my work may reveal a sense of disembodiment or a lack of a vessel to be contained in. Contained the truck driver in "Tears of Jealousy," who endures a perpetual finger-

ache that prevents him from fully embracing a complete masculine identity borrowed from the surrounding context of male dominance. He becomes a fugitive, and his body, or rather, his defined gender, loses its agency. However, the more I scrutinize the narratives centered around a protagonists predominantly perceived as men, depending on their labor and social class, the more I find myself lost.

I have traced most of the threads of grief and violence resulting from censorship within myself. Censorship has metaphorically transformed into a surreal nightmare within my body, recurring every night. Frequently, I am confronted with questions that demand a more detailed explanation from me, necessitating a solid framework for my material approach and a thorough study of grief's contextual landscape. This is while, many times, not only my body but also my work is subjected to censorship, underscoring the ongoing and progress-oriented nature of my practice. Now I ask you: How can a body that is censored daily and perpetually grieving articulate comprehensive practice?

In the summer of 2022, I returned to I, a trip steeped in both beauty and complexity, burdened not only with my belongings but also unresolved questions that manifested physically as sores in my mouth. These questions, growing ever larger, mirrored the escalating discomfort in my body, leading me into a state of profound introspection. Throughout my travels in different cities in I, I felt compelled to document every path I trod and every landscape I passed by car, capturing these moments with a low-quality VHS camera. These visual memoirs became the canvas on which I intended to paint a poetic narrative, a form of artistic correspondence with my experiences.

Figure 15. Still from the film “Poor Knee; [~~Loose Tongue~~]; Trigger Finger”, 2023 - Ongoing project

As my trip progressed, the mild discomfort of the mouth sores intensified alarmingly, prompting a deeper inquiry into their cause. It was then I uncovered a startling truth: I was afflicted with an autoimmune disease that had been my silent companion since birth. This condition, closely related to psoriasis and embedded in my genetic blueprint, was commonly manifested in body cavities such as the mouth, eyes, and anal area. The revelation came when my mother, in a rare moment of vulnerability, disclosed that she, too, had suffered from similar sores for many years but had chosen the path of concealment. This confession led me to reflect on my grandmother, who also battled psoriasis in silence, hiding her pain from her family.

Figure 16. Still from the film “Poor Knee; [~~Loose Tongue~~]; Trigger Finger”, 2023 - Ongoing project

This legacy of hidden afflictions and the cultural propensity towards concealment and restraint brought about a profound realization. The physical sores that afflicted my women were not just isolated symptoms of a disease but were emblematic of a deeper, metaphorical wound—a linguistic and existential dryness that permeated our lives. This metaphor of dryness and alienation became a central theme in my artistic explorations, influencing the narratives I crafted and the videos I captured. The sore that had once been a secret burden carried by my mother had now become a defining aspect of my identity, crystallizing in my mouth during my time in exile.

In grappling with this inherited pain, I found myself confronting the alienation and non-acceptance tied not only to my physical condition but also to my struggles with English language and expression. This internal conflict, mirrored in my artistic practice, urged me to delve deeper into the themes of concealment, pain, and the search for acceptance, both within myself and through the lens of my camera.

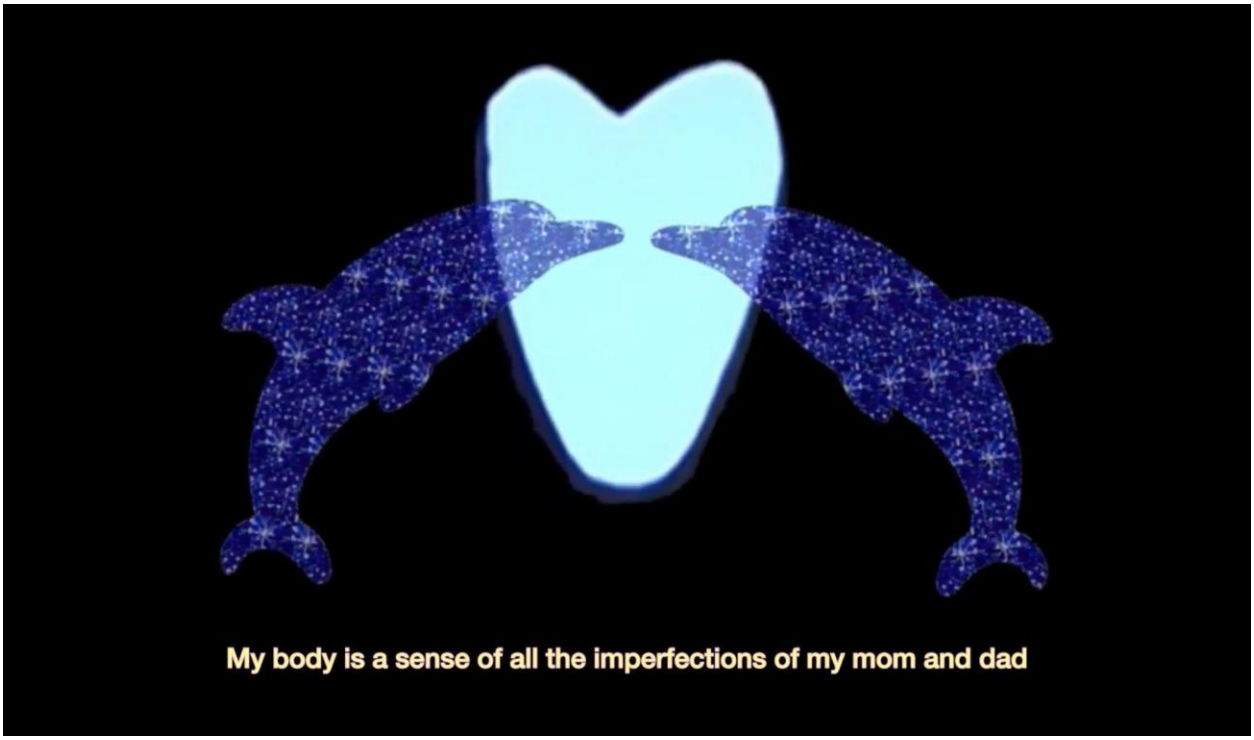


Figure 17. Still from the film “Poor Knee; [~~Loose Tongue~~]; Trigger Finger”, 2023 - Ongoing project

Figure 18. Still from the film “Poor Knee; [~~Loose Tongue~~]; Trigger Finger”, 2023 - Ongoing project

[If you are wondering that I am the same body, you are completely wrong. If you have not thought about the moment of my birth, then you have never kissed me/never hugged/never raised me (I am referring to my mother)].

listen

In my ear, a strange man from my paternal ancestors recited "*Aza'an/Adhan*"[25] at the time of my birth. He embraced me tightly. He touched me. You may think I have forgotten that moment, but I still feel his hands on my newborn.

—Years later in 2021, there is a narrative in a dream that becomes a moving image in my head.

I am a landscape of green and a tender, vibrant body simultaneously.

I have decided to be a mother, my mother.

The present taps you into the past<3

*{The narratives are nurturing public botanical gardens in our tongues} —>This is what I told myself when I was three years old in a park around my house<—

Have you ever shared dreams with your sisters? Not in a collective sense, but as a painful repetition of sorrow across diverse dreamscapes and within distinct bodies?

25. The adhan is the first Islamic call to prayer, usually recited by a muezzin at five times of the day in a mosque, traditionally from a minaret.

Figure 19. Still from the film “Poor Knee; [~~Loose Tongue~~]; Trigger Finger”, 2023 - Ongoing project

On August 7, 2022, I returned with footage from Iran and a shatterd narrative about my body and the story of pain. The videos and writings guided me toward a non-linear, fragmented visual narrative. I knew I didn't want a multi-channel installation, so I decided to reveal my entire story through a broken, drip-feed format. The title came to me before the project fully formed: “Poor Knee; [~~Loose Tongue~~]; Trigger Finger.” It signifies the link between the journey and the search for the meaning of home—a concept defined by its absence. This is a space where architecture and all objects merge in a haze of dreams and memories. These ideas and details led me to seek refuge in the digital realm, where I could bring this concept to life.

Figure 20. Still from the film “Poor Knee; [~~Loose Tongue~~]; Trigger Finger”, 2023 - Ongoing project

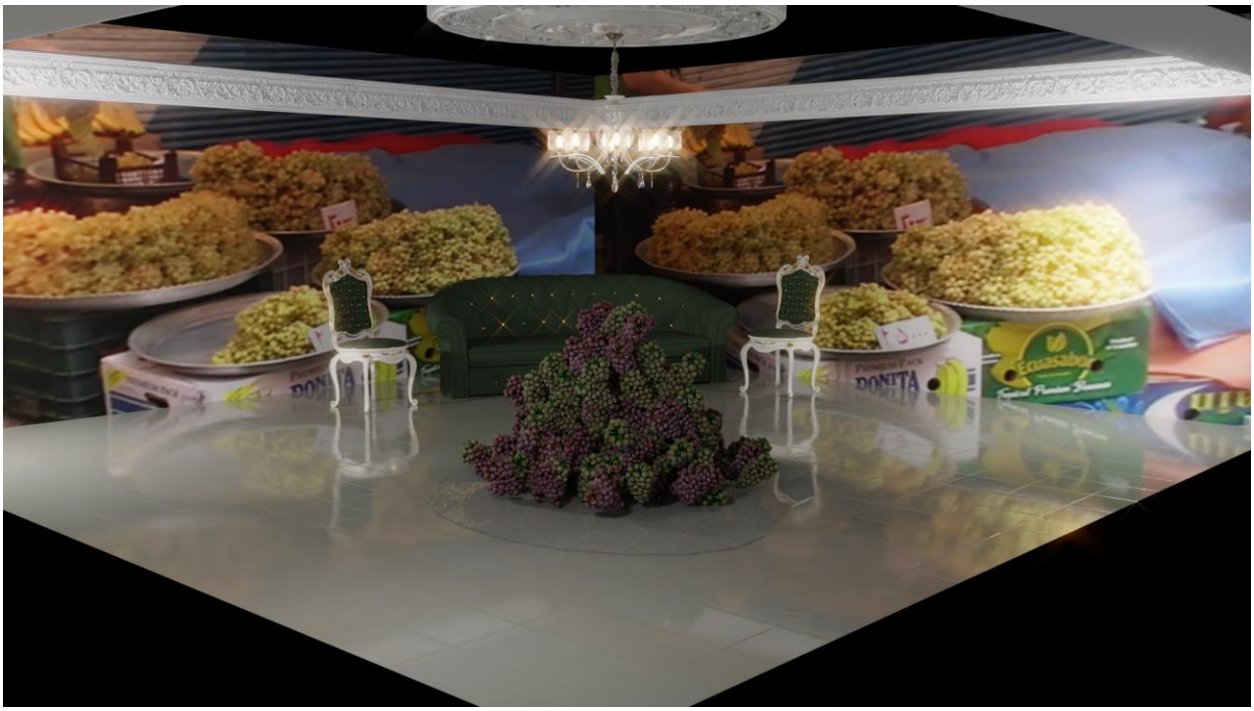


Figure 21. Still from the film “Poor Knee; [~~Loose Tongue~~]; Trigger Finger”, 2023 - Ongoing project

To create a setting where my videos and narrative could find their place, I designed three distinct rooms in Blender. The first, the Fountain of Tears, sets the tone for emotional release. The second, the Memory Room with Grapes, evokes a sense of nostalgia and loss, with symbolic references to separation. The third, a Chamber for Grief, is dedicated to communal sorrow, an echo chamber for shared pain and loss. In these spaces, my story emerges, exploring the complexities of home, displacement, and the fragmented memories that define our experiences.

The process of building and designing these rooms felt like excavating memories and my personal history, imbued with profound emotional weight. I viewed all these objects and the three-dimensional space as my "emotional assets." Constructing the 3D space was an enjoyable task, yet I remained vigilant about merging technology with storytelling, ensuring it didn't clash with the artistic economy in which I operate, nor reduce the narrative and imagery to mere aesthetics. My choice of editing software and applications always reflected my need for compatibility with image production sourced from the internet and free access to tools. This guided me to select Blender. During this process, I had the fortune of meeting a friend named Mehran, who was instrumental in helping me craft the assets.

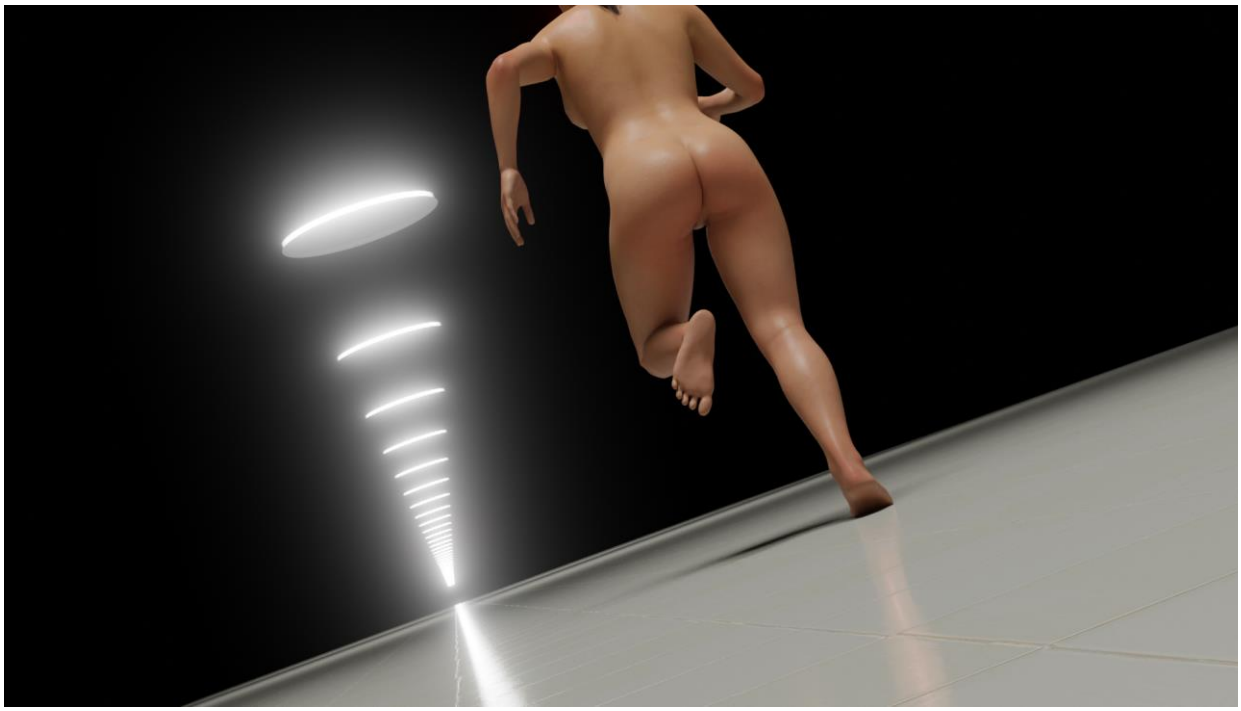


Figure 22. Still from the film “Poor Knee; [~~Loose Tongue~~]; Trigger Finger”, 2023 - Ongoing project

Figure 23. Still from the film “Poor Knee; [~~Loose Tongue~~]; Trigger Finger”, 2023 - Ongoing project

4.3. The World: A World Full of Lies

"Time ago I too could recall

those moon-lit nights,

wine on the Saqi's roof—

But Time's shelved them now

in its niche, in

Memory's dim places."

Excerpt From: Rooms Are Never Finished, Agha Shahid Ali

In crafting the second room concept, I aimed to weave a narrative that would not only explain the recurring motif of grapes but also introduce a third character into my storyline. During a recent trip to Iran, I embraced the practice of walking through urban landscapes, capturing snapshots along the way. It was during one of these excursions, while exploring a bustling fruit market, that I encountered a visually striking display of grapes carefully arranged by a vendor. This first photograph ignited my curiosity about grapes, prompting me to notice them in various contexts throughout Iran. I observed them on plates, as part of home decorations, in golden necklaces displayed in jewelry stores, and elsewhere.

Figure 24. Photo from my visual board for an inquiry into grapes.

In Iranian mythology and literature, grapes symbolize abundance, fertility, and divinity. Their byproducts, particularly wine or "Mey", frequently appear in classical Persian poetry and Sufi writings, where they represent spiritual ecstasy, the dissolution of boundaries, and a bridge between the earthly and the divine. However, following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, with the prohibition of alcoholic beverages, the drinking culture and its associated practices went underground. While alcohol was previously taboo in Iranian society, restricted to private gatherings, and discussed primarily among men, the underground movement created new dynamics. In classical Persian poetry, particularly in Hafez's[26] poems. The sāqi («ساقی» /sɑqi/)

26. Khājeh Shams-od-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥāfeẓ-e Shīrāzī, known by his pen name Hafez ('the memorizer; the (safe) keeper'; 1325–1390), was a Persian lyric poet whose collected works are regarded by many Iranians as one of the highest pinnacles of Persian literature. His works are often found in the homes of Persian speakers, who learn his poems by heart and use them as everyday proverbs and sayings. His life and poems have become the subjects of much analysis, commentary, and interpretation, influencing post-14th-century Persian writing more than any other Persian author.

character plays a crucial role. This figure, often depicted as a beautiful young man with feminine traits or as a young-looking girl with long hair and unicorn eyebrows, is central to visual storytelling in Persian miniature[27] art and other literary forms. The sāqi is celebrated in a genre called "Sāqi Nameh", a series of couplets where the poet addresses the sāqi with themes of death, the instability of worldly life, and wisdom. While the sāqi is typically male in traditional contexts, the modern interpretation extends beyond this framework.

Figure 25. The paintings by Mohammad Tajvidi from Khayyam's Rubaiyat, photos from the Shahr-e Farang website.

27. A Persian miniature is a small Persian painting on paper, whether a book illustration or a separate work of art intended to be kept in an album of such works called a muraqqa. The techniques are broadly comparable to the Western Medieval and Byzantine traditions of miniatures in illuminated manuscripts. Although there is an equally well-established Persian tradition of wall-painting, the survival rate and state of preservation of miniatures is better, and miniatures are much the best-known form of Persian painting in the West, and many of the most important examples are in Western, or Turkish, museums. Miniature painting became a significant genre in Persian art in the 13th century, receiving Chinese influence after the Mongol conquests, and the highest point in the tradition was reached in the 15th and 16th centuries. The tradition continued, under some Western influence, after this, and has many modern exponents. The Persian miniature was the dominant influence on other Islamic miniature traditions, principally the Ottoman miniature in Turkey, and the Mughal miniature in the Indian sub-continent.

In popular culture, the sāqi descends from its grand position, becoming more of a job than a deliberate choice, often taking on a more masculine and macho persona. The alcoholic drink it serves is known as “araq, «عرق» (/ælæq/)”," derived from the distillation of fermented raisins. This process is more intricate than winemaking, involving multiple stages, yet it is often cheaper and more potent, appealing to the broader middle class and beyond.

So, who is my sāqi?

My sāqi shares common ground with the truck driver and Afimoh. they take refuge in the underground due to their fear of society, but at the same time, they continually challenges themself to venture into the city for long walks. they love for grapes leads them to explore different methods of preserving this fruit. All their knowledge about grapes and distillation is experiential. they have become a poet out of love for this fruit, but their fear sharing their work with friends.

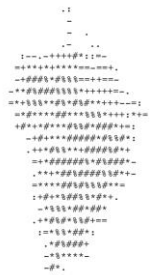
In researching and developing this character, I explored traditional and unofficial methods of preserving grapes. Two methods stood out: “ساخُشک (/sɑxoʃk/)”, a technique used in Iran, particularly in Malayer, involves suspending grapes clusters on structures to allow them to dry naturally, utilizing sun and air circulation to create raisins. This method concentrates the fruit's sweetness while extending its shelf life. The other traditional preservation technique from Afghanistan, “کنگینه (/kængine/)”, involves storing grapes in clay pots with layers of straw or ashes to maintain moisture and freshness. The clay pots offer insulation, keeping the grapes cool and safe from external elements.

Figure 26. Photo from the raisins fermentation process in my basement, 2023.

I wanted to understand which type of grapes or raisins was suitable for producing araq, and how many days it took for raisins to ferment and prepare for distillation. In this process, I became much like the sāqi in my story, exploring this journey on my own.

I picked the grapes,

I hooked the grapes,

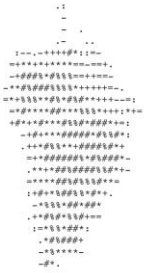


I dried the grapes,
I cleaned the grapes,

I dusted the grapes,

I stored the grapes,

And in my tongue/language; it fermented,



I spat it in the air,
It became an extract,
I distilled it in the kitchen,

The fermented substance was presented through a performative installation, sharing the distillation process with my curious classmates for the first time. This entire endeavor was deeply

symbolic, reflecting the metaphorical liberation of my grief. Wasn't the sāqi supposed to bring joy? I aimed to find my joy and free myself from grief. However, the journey didn't end there. I decided to distance myself from the direct link to the sāqi and focus more on the visual representation of grapes.

Figure 27. Saghi/Saqi, 2023, aluminum cast, aluminum chain, hooks, distillation vessel, hand-crafted small chair, fermented raisins, 11 inch monitor, pink cotton fabric cloth, beads, string, prop mini shoes, fish tank, beaded trim, various sizes.

Figure 28. Saghi/Saqi (installation detail), mini shoe prop, freshly distilled alcoholic beverage(Vodka), size for shoe prop: 32” x 45”, 2023.

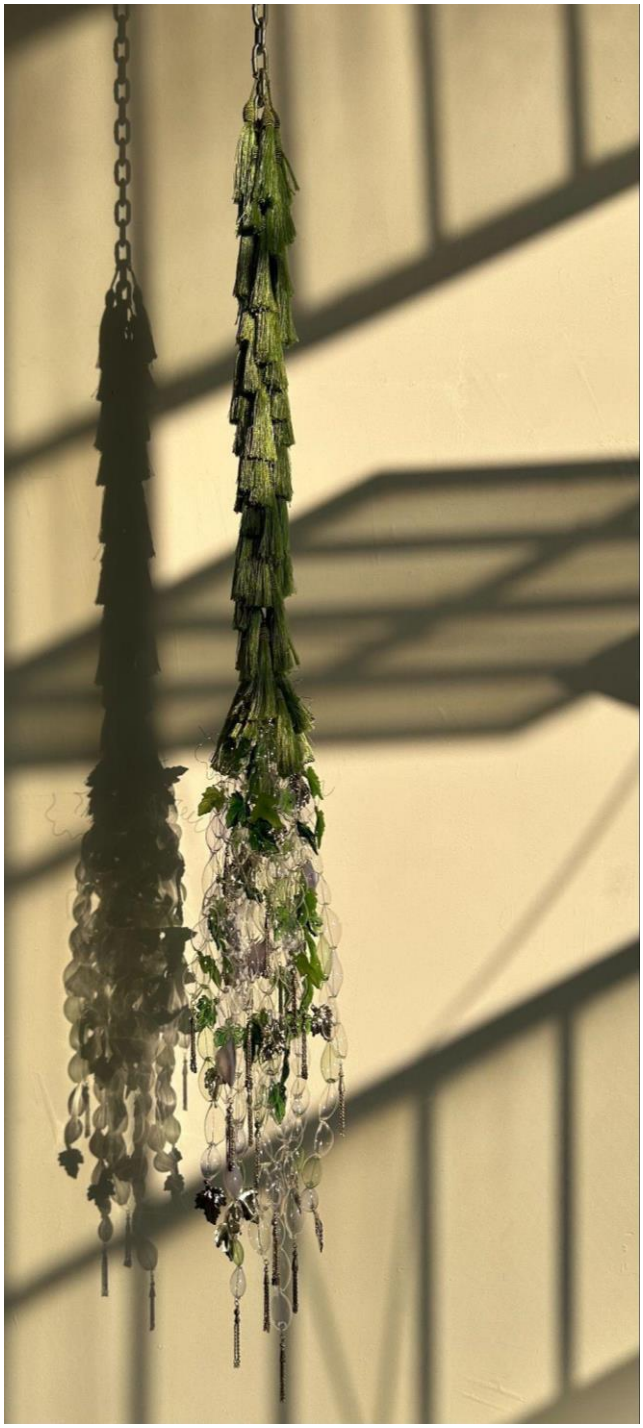


Figure 29. Untitled , 72” x 10” x 8”, fabricated glass beads, wire, chain, tassels, prefabricated plastic leaves, metal rosary, 2023.

I chose glass as the medium for my grapes sculpture, even though I had no prior experience with glassblowing and torchwork. Through research and basic workshops, I became familiar with the material, spending a month producing 800 tiny transparent glass bubbles, forming them into beads and stringing them onto a chain to create my grapes structure. This process was my way of getting closer to the sāqi character, whose essential substance was grapes, yet who could no longer bring joy to others. My goal was to continue the sāqi's narrative.

Many relationships and complexities in my narrative occur in interactions with friends and small communities. Similarly, much of my work in the studio is inspired by unclear memories from the past. For months, I had no name for the glass sculpture hanging in my studio, and I struggled to reconnect with it. One of my friends, Mohammadreza, sent me a song by Selda Bagcan titled “Ah Yalan Dunya”. This confusion coincided with news blackouts about Palestine and daily updates that heightened my fear and anxiety. None of my characters are introduced without the landscapes they inhabit, and as a companion to them, I, too, feel deeply connected. This feeling of uncertainty, along with the song's somber tones and Selda Bagcan's sorrowful voice, created a new narrative layer of speculative grief.

The final installation, titled “The World: A World Full of Lies (Dunya Yala Dunyasi)”, emerged from this fear and confusion. It became a deeply personal space for my small community and the sāqi in my story, where they could find solace by leaning on each other's shoulders and weeping. This installation explores the fear and dread we face when confronting the words and images we encounter daily, a fear that has become integrated into our narrative and life.

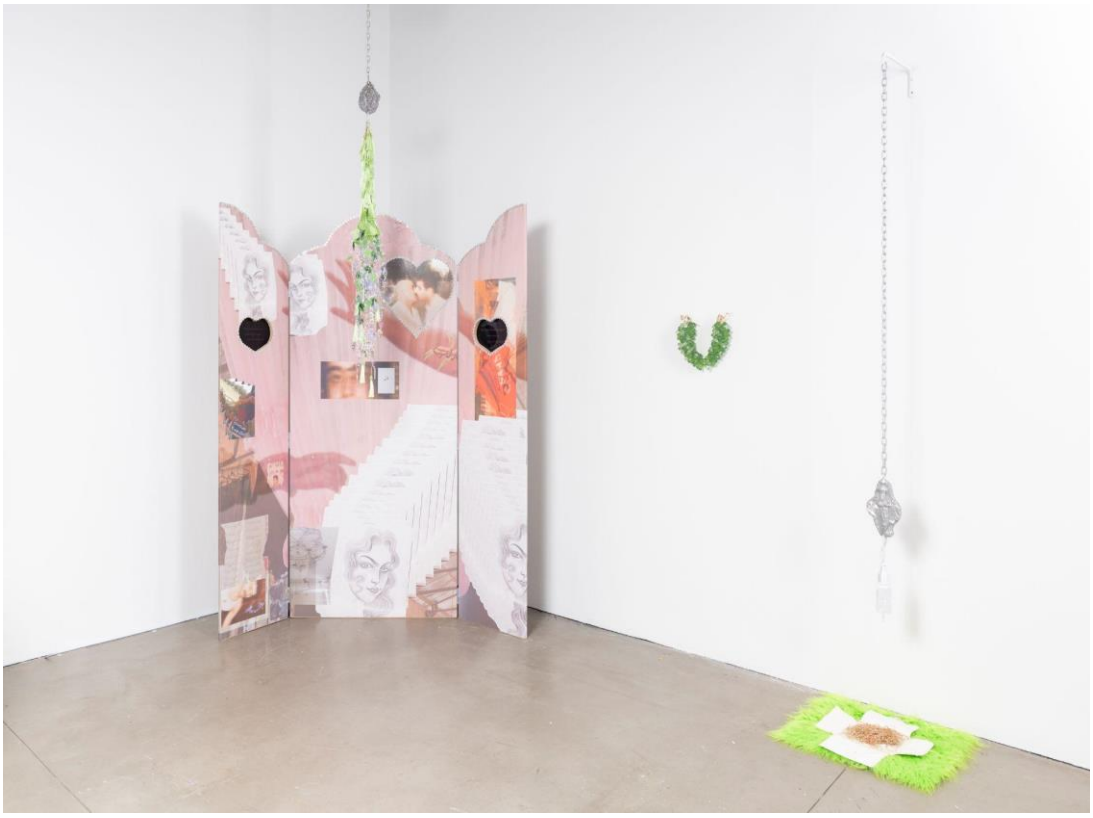


Figure 30. The World: A World Full of Lies(Dunya Yalan Dunyasi), CNC MDF, 2 Monitors with looped moving images, Fabricated glass beads, Aluminum Casted Tiles, Chains, Tassels, Pre-fabricated plastic leaves, metal rosary, Bracket, Props grapes, Fuzzy Rug, Various sizes, 2024

The installation comprises various components: two monitors with looping videos and a poem by Agha Shahid Ali[28], a photo of two men kissing on the lips that I found in my father's album—an image with hidden narrative potential that was concealed in my dad's albums and perhaps its anonymous photographer didn't intend to capture—like many forgotten and undocumented moments in our history.

[28]. A Kashmiri American Muslim, Agha Shahid Ali is best known as a poet in the United States and identified himself as an American poet writing in English.

Figure 31. The World: A World Full of Lies(Dunya Yalan Dunyasi), installation detail, 2024

Long chains hooked from the ceiling. One chain holds a glass grapes sculpture, and the other has an aluminum-cast tile. If you look closely, you can see a sword embedded within. Two cheap grapes props are bolted to the wall in the shape of a heart that I found in a local bazaar in Tehran and brought with me. These elements create a space where you can sit with familiar and unfamiliar symbols, fertilize memories, and question the artificiality of constructed narratives, evoking a sorrow devoid of joy, with no return to joy—just an intimacy with grief.

Figure 32. The World: A World Full of Lies(Dunya Yalan Dunyasi), installation detail, 2024

5. Conclusion: Our grief is seeding the future

"The invisible landscape promises the sight of a visible landscape."

Excerpt form Invisible Cities, Italo Calvino (1978)

In my speculative narrative of grief, I have reached a point where I find myself enveloped in a bigger circle of kinship that extends beyond biological relations and Iranian society. It encapsulates a fusion of repressed selves and the enduring sorrow left unshared, or perhaps the creation of a collective facade. This grief isn't confined to individual bodies; rather, it's interconnected within a temporal and geographic framework, recurrently manifesting to escape the confines of a common structure and shared experiences of embodiment. This is as simple as the act of touching, embracing, and acknowledging a shared sorrow.

> *"The profound sense of being alive intensifies through grief, horror, and a moral clarity expressed as love for the world, embracing its potential for justice, coexistence, and empathy. This ecstasy, intertwined with the mourning process, transforms into a collaborative lament."*
>
> (Joudah, 2021)

In this shared frequency, I mourn not only the lost object but also my own subversive identities and the well-being of humanity. The more somber the tone, the more potent the cry of pain, transcending individual sorrow to portray collective suffering, loss, and despair that touches everyone. Contemplating my grief within the broader context of global violence and historical injustices, as skillfully depicted by Sara Ahmad, proves to be a challenging endeavor.

"*These are stories of separation and loss. These are stories of pain. My response is emotional: it is one of discomfort, rage, and disbelief. The stories hit me, hurtle towards me: unbelievable,*

too believ-able, unliveable and yet lived. Knowing that I am part of this history makes me feel a certain way; it impresses upon me, and creates an impression. Of course, these impressions are not only personal. It is not just me facing this, and it is certainly not about me. And yet, I am 'in it', which means I am not 'not in it'. Here I am, already placed and located in worlds, already shaped by my proximity to some bodies and not others. If I am here, then I am there: the stories of the document are shaped by the land I had been taught to think of as my own. ”

(Ahmad, 2004, p. 36).

The intensity of anger, sorrow, and relentless grief I face every day feels boundless. This grief is deeply connected to the circumstances of violence and the comrades who emerge within this context. You might never have met these comrades, whether they're sisters or resisters, but you share a common shore of inherited grief. As I look to the future, I envision my practice expanding beyond the confines of traditional visual art practice to embrace a broader role as a cultural practitioner. This transition signifies a commitment to fostering collaboration and engaging more deeply with ground visual culture. It is here, in the interplay between art and cultural practice, that I see the potential for re-navigating my work toward a more holistic understanding of grief.

The path forward is paved with opportunities for collaboration with other artists and “«غم‌گساران»

(/qæmgosɑɪɑn/)” that transcend cultural and disciplinary boundaries, allowing for a richer, more nuanced exploration of grief. In the end, as we stand on the shore of this boundless sea of sorrow, we find solace not in isolation but in the shared experience of grief. It is through these shared moments that we build a future grounded in resilience, empathy, and the radical practice of embracing our sorrow. This is the ultimate goal of my work: to create a space where we can mourn, heal, and find new narratives that resonate with our collective experiences of loss.

Bibliography

Ahmad, S. (2004). *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (first ed.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd.

Ali, A. S. (2003). *Rooms Are Never Finished.* W. W. Norton & Company.

Beyhaqi, A. F. (2011). *Tarikh-e Beyhaaqi* (Vol. 1st). (A. A. Fayaz, Trans.) Tehran, Iran: Hirmand Publication.

Black, I. (2010, September 23). Iran and Iraq remember war that cost more than a million lives. *Guardian*. From https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/23/iran-iraq-war-anniversary#:~:text=Iran%2C%20with%20a%20population%20of,and%20250%2C000%2D500%2C000%20for%20Iraq

Calvino, I. (1978). *Invisible Cities.* Mariner Books Classics.

Freud, S. (1957). *Mourning and Melancholia* (Vol. 14th). (J. Strachey, Trans.) London: Hogarth Press.

Gamard, D. I. (2011). *Rumi and Islam: Selections from His Stories, Poems and Discourses—Annotated & Explained.* (D. I. Gamard, Trans.) SkyLight Paths.

Hersey, T. (2022). *Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto.* Little, Brown Spark.

Homayounpour, G. (2023). *Persain Blues, Psychoanalysis and Mourning* (first ed.). London: Routledge.

Joudah, F. (2021, June 7). My Palestinian poem that the New Yorker wouldn't publish. *Los Angles Review of books*. From https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/my-palestinian-poem-that-the-new-yorker-wouldnt-publish/?fbclid=PAAaapj8XEEbPo1tm6rOjZp7emL8f9wiYUi-xH1sQiCJmyfZL4F6OFauC19p8_aem_Ad1b8XW1jylRq_ncJMurZhocbBOxSLdKbmhKP18LPmQMhPhPSuBZRG3kxPog13mbVw8

Keikavus. (1080). *Qabus-nameh.*

Maaalouf, A. (1989). *Samarqand.* London: Hachette Digital.

McLoughlin, K. (2010). Introduction. In E. Anderson, A. Maddrell, K. McLoughlin, & A. Vincent, *Memory, Mourning, Landscape* (Vol. 71, pp. IX-XIV). Rodopi.

NajmAbadi, A. (2005). *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity.* Los Angles , California: The Regents University of California.

Rahmani, N. (2008). *Koli-e Vahshi* (Vol. 1). Tehran: Negah Publication.

Sheikh, S. Z. (2018). Impact of Truck Art, as Popular Culture on Pakistani Society. *International Journal of Multidiciplinary and Curent Research, 6*, 1061-1070.

Torab, A. (2006). *Performing Islam, Gender and Ritual in Iran* (3 ed., Vol. 4). Brill Academic Publishers.

Tuck, E., & Ree, C. (2013). A Glossary of hunting. *Ghosts in motion pictures*, 639-658.

Varzi, R. (2006). *Warring souls: Youth, media, and martyrdom in post-revolution Iran.* Duke University Press.

Vita

Fatemeh Kazemi فاطمه کاظمی (She/They) was born and raised in Tehran, Iran in 1992. She is an interdisciplinary artist/ visual cultural practitioner/ curator/ co-founder of ROSVÂA Magazine. Fatemeh earned her Bachelor's degree in Painting from the University of Tehran in 2014.

Her achievements in the arts are highlighted by several prestigious accolades and professional engagements, including her role as a finalist for the XENO Artists Book at Franklin Furnace Archive and her participation in the Turner Residency organized by Syracuse University and Angels Gate Cultural Center. She has received a prestigious fellowship from the College of Visual and Performing Arts, at Syracuse University. Fatemeh has also curated exhibitions and screenings, such as "Kicking The Air; Folding Index Fingers" at Everson Museum Plaza and "Female Bodies Speak" in partnership with Women Under Influence and ROSVÂA Mag. Notably, her book Despair and Die was presented at Printed Matter's New York Art Book Fair.