

# Chapter 4

## Byron and the Aspects of Power in Persia

*This world is will to power—and nothing besides! And you yourselves are will to power—and nothing besides!...Knowledge functions as an instrument of power.*<sup>1</sup>  
Friedrich Nietzsche

*Language is always on the side of power; to speak is to exercise a will to power: in the space of speech, no innocence, no safety.*<sup>2</sup>  
Roland Barthes

### 4. 1. Introduction

The years from 1910 to 1930 are probably the revolutionary and golden period of travellers and travel writing in England. The impact of air transportation, which made travel faster, revolutionized travel and travel writing. Photographs entered into late nineteenth century travel writings, and travel magazines turned to be the ideal of travel narratives for the readers. This was the age of professional travel writers; they introduced new conventions into this genre, hence, modernising it. Like the Victorian travellers, many twentieth century travel writers were in search of the knowledge of history and art of earlier civilizations. Robert Byron, for instance, as an authority on Byzantine art, architecture and history throughout his travels to Greece, India, Tibet, Russia, Afghanistan, and Persia, revolutionizes this genre, dissociating it from traditional conventions of travel books. His writings are at odds with the objectives of the Imperial Eye/I by commenting on the decline of British imperialism, and challenged the Western discourse concerning the Orient. During the 1930s, one of the issues that influenced travel writing was the mutable political climate of the time. One of the crucial issues the travellers noted during this period, were the signs of the beginning of Westernization in nearly every part of the world, particularly the East.

When, in 1931 for the first time, the Persian Mosques were opened to the world, a revolution in art criticism was initiated, and the history of Persian influence on Islamic

architecture was unveiled. Therefore, Persia extensively stimulated the interest in Islamic art and architecture among art critics, and Byron was one among the first travellers who attempted to make such an architecture known to the world through his “finely trained eye” (*LH*: 215). The accounts of his journey to Persia appear in his masterpiece, *The Road to Oxiana*, a “modernist”<sup>3</sup> text, a remarkable reaction to the 1930s, the period when the British interest in the Middle East, the last spot for colonization, had reached its apex. One can trace the challenges of form and language, the relation between writing and colonialism as well as the “emphasis on global or local political”<sup>4</sup> crises. The structural coherence of the book provides the crucial recurrent motifs such as the dominance of power in the form of the Pahlavi regime, a critique of imperialism in the East, the rise of the Russian Iron Curtain and turning the Oxus really into an inaccessible Eldorado,<sup>5</sup> the quest for the origin and character of Islamic architecture, Persian masculinity and grandeur, through picturing Persia during Reza Shah’s tyranny. It indicates the potential for cultural rebirth and implicitly, directs the reader’s attention to the personal growth that can result from cross-cultural encounters.<sup>6</sup>

As an observant critic of his period, Byron uses travel writing as a genre to show the underlying elements within the cultures, signs and social life. Paul Fussell argues that Byron, from the outset of his arrival in Persia, through a critical gaze, begins “to notate his contempt for Reza Shah’s absurd, tyrannical attempt to westernize his country,”<sup>7</sup> which, I believe, is one of the *leitmotifs* in *The Road to Oxiana*. Persia is a very complex phenomenon and a land of frequent renaissances for the art historian. Byron puts emphasis on the grandeur of Persia, as a land different from other parts of the Orient, in terms of its social structure, its position in art and architectural history, and the Islamic world. Byron’s two travel books, *An Essay on India* and *The Road to Oxiana*, can be considered as a landmark work aiming to draw the Orientalists’ attention to the importance of dealing with the Orient not through a two-dimensional magnifying glass, since in the latter he illustrates the Orient, here Persia, differently from the Western discourse about the Orient. As Sykes remarks that:

Persia and India are absolute antitheses. India has an eternal problem of over-population, Persia is a land of empty spaces and tiny oases. Indian ideas are coloured by notions of caste; Persia has the most egalitarian society in the world. India is a sub-continent of Asia; Persia is like a piece of Europe which has fallen into Islam. Very few Indians indeed

learn to speak Persian correctly. Indians get the wrong end of every Persian verbal stick. [...] The word for “devil” figures in Urdu as the name of God. An extraordinary division, never explained fully, separates Persians from Indians, both in character and temperament.<sup>8</sup>

From one perspective, Byron is concerned with illuminating the effects of power on the people’s life. By means of descriptions, historical facts, personal commentaries and fragmentation, Byron illustrates different layers and different voices such as his own voice, as the narrator, commentator, traveller, observer, historiographer, the voices of people, places, buildings, Christopher, the Shah, the artistic monuments, the “peace of Islam,” and the “people’s clothes,” to name just a few. Manfred Pfister considers *The Road to Oxiana* as “an emphatically polyphonic text,”<sup>9</sup> since it contains

the self-confident voice of the cultural historian [...] the polemical voice of the spokesman of reason and fairness; the satirist’s voice ridiculing the complacency of British imperial diplomacy as well as the vain-glorious nationalism of imperial Persia or the blinkered pedantry of specialists; the nostalgic voice of the retrospective visionary lamenting human greatness long passed and long lost; the aesthete’s voice enthusing over some neglected piece of architecture; the self-ironical voice of the anti-heroic discoverer, the flippancy of a stylish raconteur of anecdotes or the reticence of the English gentlemen understanding his emotions and achievements.<sup>10</sup>

Byron’s travel books lead me to a general interpretation along three prominent axes. On the first level, he appears as a cultural critic—more precisely a Foucauldian critic *avant la lettre*—tracing the theories of power/knowledge in the social structure, deciphering and tracing the underlying elements and stratification within the stratum of each culture, as a means of domination of one class over another. In this regard, one can apprehend why Byron “constantly dissociates himself from British foreign and imperial policy as a critic of the Empire.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore, his travels and travel books follow his own quest rather than that of the Empire.

On the second level, he appears as an art critic proficient in architecture, searching for the origins of architecture, as a primary source for analysing the history of the lands, as a “form of knowledge and a form of power at the same time.”<sup>12</sup> Lucy Butler states that Byron “sought to understand each country he visited from studying the origins of its art and architecture” (*LH*: 1). Architecture is the object of his archaeological analysis. Description of architecture is Byron’s greatest achievement. “Byron, [Chatwin] wrote, scores over ‘experts’”<sup>13</sup> “with his uncanny ability to gauge the morale of a civilization

from its architecture, and to treat ancient buildings and modern people as two facets of a continuing story.”<sup>14</sup> Byron considers this dimension of his journey through Persia “the architectural side of the journey” (*LH*: 208).

On the third level, he appears as a Barthesian critic *avant la lettre*, focusing on the implied meanings behind the signs, attempting to decode them on the basis of his own insights, which are at odds with the blindness of previous travel writers. It is important to combine these three dimensions in an overall interpretation of Byron’s works and consider him as a modernist travel writer. Alternately, Christopher Sykes considers him as “a geistesgeschichtler, a recorder of the movements of mind and spirit in the past,”<sup>15</sup> Lucy Butler labels him “a connoisseur of civilization. An astringent protagonist of artistic truth,” (*LH*: 1) and David Talbot-Rice “treat[s] him as a Byzantinist.”<sup>16</sup>

In this chapter, I focus my arguments particularly on those aspects of Byron’s *The Road to Oxiana* through which he tries to trace, expose and analyse the aspect of power, as well as Byron’s position in this travel book, as a cultural critic and a travel writer, concerning the material he presents in contrast to other travel writers to Persia. For example, he evidences the Westernization of Iran by Reza Shah. Other travel writers have represented such a motif, directly or indirectly, throughout their books, without remarking on power relations. For instance, Ronald Sinclair, in *Adventures in Persia: To India by the Back Door* (1988), gives an account of the reconstruction of the Holy Shrine of Fatima-al-Masumeh in Qum. From that time until now, many people wanted the burial of their bodies after their death in Qum as a Holy city, which changed not only the face of the city, but also its economic situation and importance in the country. Sinclair describes the reconstruction of the Holy Shrine but gives no indication concerning the objectives of the dominant power, whereas Byron implicitly illustrates such power relations in every cultural and social sign.

During different periods, different tyrants engraved, engrafted and imposed their will upon the people’s life. To be more exact, the tyrants shaped new individuals with new behavioural patterns, codifications, desires, and a new horizon of expectations. This can be traced in the objects, architectures, arts, languages, beliefs, and historical texts, even in travel accounts, as a discourse and knowledge by means of which one can come to an understanding of oneself and the world. It is in this sense that Byron looks for the

underlying stratum of power relations, which formulate and constitute the organized networks and discourses in a social context. In this regard, I would like to show how Byron considers life or culture as a language or a system of signs, which is under the shadow of power. Each sign speaks to him and the “interpretation of other signs,” and a “great volume of novelty” in cultures “obtrudes itself at every footstep and at every word” (*EI*: 19) on him. To him everything is culture, as Roland Barthes argues: “from garment to book, from food to image [...] culture is everywhere, from end to end of the social scale”<sup>17</sup>; every sign provides the possibility of significations, and Byron believes that the travellers “must observe and record the fact[s] of an unfamiliar country” (*EI*: 19). In his attempts at cultural analysis, his focus is on the “system of races, religions, languages, social divisions, climates, architectures, landscapes, trees, animals, flowers, and fruits” (*EI*: 19-20). In Persia, for Byron, the signs and objects “boast a gleam of true invention; they suggest ideas, they utter a comment, with regard to other doorways” (*RO*: 188).

Finally, I will engage with Edward W. Said’s claim that “[no] production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author’s involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances.”<sup>18</sup> Metaphorically speaking, culture is like a text written by an author/tyrant in time and place. The language of each culture exercises a will to power and is not innocent, or neutral. The tyrant writes this culture/text directly or the cultural-content is dictated to him by the external powers. He reads the ancient or contemporary tyrannical texts, quotes them; then he copies, revises, edits or writes between the lines of the written culture/text. The end-result is a new text full of signs and quotations without quotation marks. Both culture and tyrant are not free from time and place, they are world-bounded; hence, their “worldliness.” Culture is a discourse, which consists of representations and institutional formations that serve to reproduce, confirm, and propagate a Nietzschean will to power. In this regard, Byron does not separate culture from its worldliness; rather he traces and shows the underlying elements and strata of the social structure in power relations.

Said argues, “[anyone] who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist,” and, I add, a travel writer, “either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist,

and what he or she does is Orientalism.”<sup>19</sup> Byron, in his trilogy, analyses three countries, India, Russia and Persia. In each book, he opens up and unmask the side of power in the East. He shows the hegemony of British imperialism in India, Bolshevik dogmatism in Russia and Westernisation in Persia. Consequently, I categorize him as an Orientalist writer, though entirely different from those writers who stereotyped Eastern and Middle-Eastern peoples. Such a stereotyping facilitated the colonization of vast areas of the globe by Europeans; i.e., it produced a discourse that “places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing.”<sup>20</sup> Implicitly, *The Road to Oxiana* interrogates the dominance and univocal deployment of the Western and colonialist narratives and discourses on the Orient, by emphasising the grandeur and virility of the Persian pre-Islamic and Islamic architecture, by commenting on the decline of British hegemony, illustrated, for instance, in the mishaps of Charcoal-Burners, and by showing Reza Shah’s attempts in Westernizing Persia, to name just a few.

#### 4. 2. A Road to *The Road to Oxiana*

Byron narrows down his cultural, artistic and social analysis in *The Road to Oxiana* and focuses his gaze on Persia with an eye to his quest, searching for the origin and character of Islamic architecture; therefore, at least through three momentous perspectives the book analyses Persia, each of which represents the presence of power but in different forms. First, it deals with the analysis of power, as a recurrent motif, in the East, Afghanistan and mainly Persia, and the Westernization of Persia by Reza Shah. Byron satirically focuses his gaze on Reza Shah’s dictatorship, solidified in the social structures, and wants to expose this information in a collage arrangement, through juxtaposition of conversations, art history, historical facts, and political commentaries, a diary form of writing, letters, anecdotes, and news clippings. In this regard, Pfister argues that the book is “political,”<sup>21</sup> in terms of the representation of “an awareness of historically specific and concretely manifest relations of power.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Byron puts stress upon the rise of Nazism and “Hitler’s seizure of power”<sup>23</sup> and its aftermath, which he witnesses in the form of another Exodus of the Jews. The Middle East and Central Asia, which moved towards the “dramatic processes of enforced”<sup>24</sup> Westernisation/Modernisation, suffered from a social, economic and political turmoil. Thus, *The Road to Oxiana* is politicised by

responding to the “crisis of colonialist expansionism,” and develops “a new kind of rhetoric reflecting these changed circumstances and devise[s] ways of responding to the Empire as a dying culture.”<sup>25</sup>

In the second perspective, the book shows Byron’s quest for the origin and character of Islamic architecture in Persia through various mausoleums, mosques, caravansaries, and monuments, which Christopher Sykes claims is the central theme of the book. Byron focuses his attention on the pre-Islamic and Islamic architecture and the implied will behind them. Associating architecture with the history of the nation and governments, Byron traces the interrelationships among various signs in the Persian culture. In the third perspective, Byron focuses his gaze on the patterns and conventions in the people’s life. He gazes at the Persian culture (which like a text is full of signs and has a structural coherence), and tries to decode the signs, to represent the beauties and masculinity of Persia, and to show how the Persian culture and architecture mythologize the signs, as well as the travellers who travelled to this country. In other words, by travelling to Persia and representing this country in their books, the travellers enter the history of travel accounts about Persia.

To see what Byron, in *The Road to Oxiana*, brings to light about Persia under a tyranny, let us have a brief look at the history of the country during the 1920s and 1930s by tracing Reza Shah’s life. This was the time when the British interest in the Middle East, the last area of British colonial expansion, had reached its climax. Amin Banani in *The Modernization of Iran* (1967), Baqer Aqeli in *Riza Shah and the United Armies* (1999), Homa Katouzian in *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis* (2000), Mohammad Gholi Majd in *Great Britain and Reza Shah* (2001), and Stephanie Cronin in *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (2003) deal with the history of Persia during Reza Shah’s accession to the throne in two decades. They argue that the period between 1921 and 1926, was a “transitional period of interregnum and power struggles”<sup>26</sup> in the midst of the forces of chaos. The forces opposing each other were those of the dictatorship of Reza Shah, later the arbitrary government, and the constitutionalists; a battle which Reza Shah “won by a series of successful operations, both political and military.”<sup>27</sup>

Throughout the history of Persia, the exercise of arbitrary power much depended on the personality of the ruler and his different institutions established in social life; this is perhaps the most imperative aspect in explaining the large and swift vicissitudes in the history of Persia. To trace the trend of frequent, swift and substantial discontinuities, one can refer to the rise and fall of various tyrannies throughout different periods in the history of Persia, from the first empire up to the present time. Each of these tyrannies engraved its codification on the social structure and the people's life.

Byron in 1933 encountered Reza Shah's Persia, a country that was moving towards Westernization/Modernization, a country that was at the threshold of parting from the traditional ways of life. To see how Persia reached such a historical phase, under the dictatorship of Reza Shah, I believe the essential point is to see what the pre-Pahlavi period was, who Reza Shah was, and to see how a ten-days-old-dead baby came to life and was destined to change ultimately the face of his country.

#### 4. 3. Reza Shah: Early Life and *Coup d'état*

Reza Shah was born on 16 March 1878 in a village (Savadkoh) in Mazandaran. His father, Abbas Ali Khan, a Persian known as Dadash-beyg of the Palani clan, was an officer in the Savadkoh brigade, and his grandfather, Morad Ali Khan Bavand was a trooper within the same brigade, who was killed in the war of Herat. His mother was the "daughter of one of the 'Muhajerin' (the refugee inhabitants of the Caucasian districts wrested by Russia from Persia by the Treaty of Turkomanchai), who preferred to emigrate to Persia rather than remain in their native land under Russian rule."<sup>28</sup> Abbas Ali Khan died ten days after the birth of Reza. After the death of his father, Reza's mother took him to Tehran accompanying a caravan to meet her brother, who was a dressmaker in the Cossack Barracks. During the journey, the child suffered from the harsh, cold weather, which turned his whole body dark, and his mother thought that Reza was dead. Consequently, she gave the dead body of her child to a shepherd to bury him. Nevertheless, the shepherd did not bury the child and left him in a stable. A few hours later, another caravan arrived there; they heard the cry of a baby, and found Reza alive, nourishing him they took the baby along their way to Tehran. When they reached the previous caravan, they told the story of the baby; on hearing this, Reza's



mother recognized her baby, who had returned from the dead, and took him back. Such a destiny ties him to the stories of heroes in religion and myth, like Moses or Oedipus.

Reza's maternal uncle brought him up and he received no formal education until he was fourteen years old. At the age of fifteen, his uncle enlisted him in the Cossack brigade in Savadkōh as a trooper. Tall and powerfully built, the young soldier, from the beginning, showed an uncommonly strong will, a remarkable intelligence, and a capacity for leadership. He was highly regarded by his seniors. Because of his intelligence, energy and military talent he rose through the ranks; at the end of the Great War he was an officer in the Persian Cossack. Reza Khan ascended to power gradually; first, he became the Army Commander, then the Minister of War in 1921, next the Prime Minister in 1923 and finally the Shah in 1925.

Reza Khan, like other tyrants in the history of Persia, emerged as a result of several internal movements and the national upheaval as well as external political changes. After centuries of misrule by its former rulers and the ravages of the war waged by the foreign belligerent powers, especially Great Britain and Russia, who had strong commercial and strategic interests in the country from 1914 to 1919, Persia was prostrate, ruined, and on the verge of disintegration. Ahmad Shah, the last of the Qajar dynasty, was young and incompetent, and the parliament was weak and corrupt. This situation led Reza Khan to decide on an attempt at putting an end to the chaos, the Qajar dynasty and foreign intervention by taking over power and forming a strong government, bolstered by an effective and disciplined military force.

The significant factors, both inside and outside the country, which paved the way for the rise of the new tyrant, were the incapability of the Qajar Dynasty in providing a strong central government for Persia, the corruption of the administrative machinery and the devastating financial situation by 1900. Furthermore, the Tobacco Boycott, the 1919 Agreement (a one-sided agreement and treaty with the foreign powers), and Constitutional Revolution, aimed at abolishing the previous arbitrary system and replacing it with constitutional norms. The "revolt of Khiyabani in Azerbaijan and the collapse of Vusuq al-Dawla's government"<sup>29</sup> further accentuated the unrest in the country. The Great War and the presence of the British, Russian, Turkish and German forces in Persia, and its consequences in the form of chaos manifested in politics,

journalism and public opinion, the growing unrest, rebellion and brigandage at the borders among the nomads and in the provinces were additional factors which exacerbated the situation.

Most part of the country suffered from the sway of various tribal, socialist or reactionary leaders, who paid no taxes to Tehran and ran their own well-equipped private armies. The nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, probably amounting to a quarter if not one-third of the total population, were virtually all independent of the government authority. Moreover, the "Bolshevik invasion of Gilan"<sup>30</sup> and their threat to Tehran, the changes in Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Afghanistan under King Amanallah, Central Asia under the Bolsheviks, and Iraq under the Sharifian officers were other crucial factors that intensified the upheaval and unrest in the country; in other areas one can trace the presence of British imperialism.

On 21st February 1921, Reza Khan, as an officer in the Persian Cossacks, at the head of the Qazvin and Hamadan detachment brigade, numbering 2000 to 3000 men, in collusion with a journalist named Sayyid Ziya Tabataba'i, occupied Tehran, launched the *coup d'état* that led to his becoming Minister of War a few weeks after. He took command of all the military forces, which was followed by his becoming Prime Minister of a government dominated by the Democrats in 1923. Consolidating his power during the succeeding years, he became the central figure in the Persian military, economic, political and social life.

In 1925, there were no impediments in the way of Reza Khan's accession to the throne. Apart from Mudarris (a religious leader) and his group, the majority of the parliament was on his side, and especially the army supported him. In October 1925, the parliament deposed Ahmad Shah Qajar, who had left the country, and declared Reza Khan to be the new Shah. By the end of 1925, Reza Shah put an end to the parliament. In April 1926, Reza Shah crowned himself as the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty and decreed that from then on the foreigners were to call Persia by its proper name of Iran, "Land of the Aryans."<sup>31</sup>

The next five years from 1926 to 1931 were a "period of growing dictatorship and autocracy, when the Shah became absolute ruler."<sup>32</sup> Reza Shah's dictatorship turned into an autocracy and arbitrary rule in 1928. During his accession to the throne, the British

legation remained neutral but sent reports to England about the change, collected in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*. It had been the long-term plan by the British government to be involved in the coup, and the 1933 Oil Agreement was an example of such an involvement. From the outset of his accession to the throne, Reza Shah exercised harsh repression, which led to secrecy, fear and isolation, imprisonment, an atmosphere of sporadic terror, bribery, threats, outright deception, trickery and death as well as bureaucracy, as his main means of power. No independent activities or institutions were permitted to exist in society.

#### 4. 4. Reza Shah's Major Objectives: Westernizing/Modernizing Iran

Before 1920, Persia was a totally Oriental nation; neither Western technology nor Western ideology had yet made any deep impact upon the country. Westernizing/Modernizing Iran, as the principal theme, and creating the state monopoly were at the core of Reza Shah's policy and objectives. Percy Loraine, the British ambassador in Tehran, remarks, Reza Shah was "I think, genuinely anxious to have his country reformed and to see it stand on its own legs, but I fear that he relies too much on the army as the instrument of its regeneration, and through lack of general education and experience, rather discounts other essential factors in that process."<sup>33</sup> Because of the virtual occupation of the country during the Great War by British, Russian, German and Turkish forces, and its consequences such as the prevailing tribal disorder, the modernization of the army and the re-establishment of the authority of the central government over the country took priority over all other contemporary concerns of the time. Reza Shah prioritized reforming military training and education and creating a strong, defensive army modelled along European lines, which he put forward after becoming Minister of War in early May 1921. He considered the army as the pillar of modern secularism, and aimed at extending and maintaining the authority of the central government by means of it.

He was determined to centralize the power of government throughout the country, to put an end to the Qajar aristocracy, looting robbers, leftist movements, Shi'ite clergy, forces of the Opposition and tribal chiefs, to disarm and pacify the civilian population, to introduce a new codification to the social structure, to make the country independent of

the “foreign sources of supply [...] to set the country firmly on the path towards a modern, industrialized society,”<sup>34</sup> and ultimately to establish internal security. Two crucial steps were taken to fulfil his objectives concerning the army. The first was to force the conscription bill through parliament between 1923 and 1925, and the second was his plan to send Iranian officers to France to receive military training and to buy a large number of rifles and munitions from Europe, which was achieved in the summer of 1923. By the early 1920s, while reconstructing the army and pacifying the tribes, Reza Shah was persuaded to import an air force from the British Royal Air Force.

Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality* (1990), argues that, “power [is] bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, making them submit, or destroying them.”<sup>35</sup> Moreover, power “is not concentrated in a few centres,” rather “it is dispersed throughout society in a series of discontinuous networks.”<sup>36</sup> Byron exemplifies the presence and dominance of Reza Shah’s network of power embodied in two “kinds of police: the Nasmiya, which controls the towns; and the Amniya, which controls the roads and such of the hinterland as admits the law” (*RO*: 157). They were both Reza Shah’s armies for controlling the country, “the best of Marjoribanks’s innovations” (*RO*: 158). Through such a well-equipped army, Reza Shah was extremely successful in advancing his programmes and achieving his objectives.

To legalize his programmes, Reza Shah’s next step was to reshape, to secularize and to centralize the judicial system of the country based on European models, aiming at neutralizing the clergy and *ulema* (educated Muslims trained in religious law and doctrine and usually holding official posts). He appointed Ali Akbar Davar, who had been educated in law at the University of Geneva, as Minister of Justice and later Finance Minister. Davar was “openly advocating the need for a dictatorship in his newspaper.”<sup>37</sup> He reformed the judicial departments and the courts. The new structure he introduced to the judicial system was at odds with the existing traditions. Three separate legal codes based on European models were introduced: in 1925 a commercial code, in 1926 a criminal code, and in 1928 a civil code, quoting European laws without quotation marks.

Disarmament of the civilian population, or in Foucauldian words, “the disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population,”<sup>38</sup> was Reza Shah’s other prominent step, which he was determined to fulfil, because he considered the armed population a

turbulent force that threatened his programmes. Disarming, pacifying and settling the tribes took priority over other military operations. In a series of successful campaigns, started in spring 1921, with his reorganized and revitalized army, he broke up and suppressed the political and tribal revolts in Azerbaijan, Bakhtiari, Luristan especially the tribes of Bayranvands, Kurdistan, Baluchestan, Turkoman, Khorasan, the Arabs of Khuzestan and the Qashqai in Fars by means of imprisoning, executing, exiling or incapacitating many of the more powerful chiefs of the tribes. His aim was to pacify them and bring them under his complete control, as well as to destroy the rebels and those who did not recognise the central power. He was successful in subjugating the leaders of these tribes either by means of military operations or less violent means.

After having disarmed and pacified the leaders of the tribes, Reza Shah was determined to control society by transforming or terminating the tribal codes of life and behaviour, which resulted in a brutal treatment and, in some cases, genocide of the nomadic tribes in Luristan, Fars, Khurasan and Azerbaijan. He settled these tribes and made them build houses, cultivate their pastures, and submit to the same rural system of administration as elsewhere. Power “functions in giving rise to new forms of behaviour,”<sup>39</sup> thus, Reza Shah’s next step was to impose new conscription laws on the peasants and nomads. It transformed them to mere subjects and instruments of power. Tribal clothes were banned, and people were forced to adopt Western forms of dress: jacket, trousers and on top of all these the “Pahlavi hat,” a stiff round felt hat with dome-shaped crown and narrow brim, a kind of bowler hat.

Having reorganized Iran’s economic system and mobilized the resources for his purposes, including modernizing the army and equipping it with modern weapons, the new transportation network—that was building roads and railway—was his next step. In addition to the process of reshaping Iran, the civil bureaucracy and official hierarchy were expanded to monitor the people’s life, in a new panoptical system. Byron encountered such a bureaucratic system when he wanted to buy a Morris car, and that “obliterated four days” of his journey (*RO*: 74).<sup>40</sup> New modes of domination, combinations of discourses and practices were introduced into the social structures, which constituted new forms of subjugation. Both through body and mind Reza Shah practiced the methods of control throughout the country.

The educational system was an apparatus through which Reza Shah imposed and engraved his desires on the social structure. During the 1921 coup, the educational system was underdeveloped. The Shah saw education as a means of undermining the influence of the reactionary religious classes, and was determined to secularize the schools and create modern universities. More precisely, he intended to revolutionize the system of education and change it from the traditional *maktabs*—where pupils learned the basic knowledge of the Quran, Islamic texts, Persian and Arabic—into a modern system as well as to accelerate the women's participation in education, which was a revolution from above.

During the 1920s, the educational system saw a noticeable growth in the number of public and private schools: a school of the Ministry of Justice with the aim of training a bureaucratic cadre, a military academy with the aim of training high-ranking government officials and guaranteeing that the national security and a strong defence were established. Furthermore, schools of medicine, pharmacy, agriculture, commerce, dentistry, political science and a school of technology and engineering were established. During the 1930s, the Academy of Art, the Military College, the American and French schools, the colleges of medicine and veterinary, and the University of Tehran were established.

Reza Shah felt the need for foreign teaching expertise, which was another step towards Westernization of Iran; therefore, the employment of foreign instructors persisted. In 1928, ten French instructors started to staff a newly founded Franco-Persian school in Tehran. The French teachers and instructors were hired to teach at the agricultural college, at the schools of medicine, pharmacy, and law. In the same way, the German, Russian and American professors taught in the technical school, in the school of dentistry and in the field of anatomy respectively. One of the outcomes of such an intervention, worthy of being noted, was that a large number of foreign words entered into Persian, as P. C. R. Dodd, the British Lieut.-Colonel in Iran, on January 16th 1932 reported: in Majlis "it was stated that a large number of foreign words were now creeping into the Persian language, and this fact was deplored by certain Deputies."<sup>41</sup> Such was the situation when Robert Byron undertook his journey to Iran.

#### 4. 5. The “mediaeval tyranny of modern sensibility”: Reza Shah’s Panopticon System

Through his panopticon system—a network consisting of the Nazmiya, the Amniya, his secret police, the civil bureaucracy and judiciary system—Reza Shah decided on subjugating and controlling them by means of various apparatuses of observation. He was determined to bring the effects of his power to the most minute and distant parts and elements in the country and to put the people under his continuous surveillance; therefore, his power was dispersed throughout the country in a series of discontinuous networks. It penetrated different parts of the country through the military, educational, economic, penitentiary networks to produce a disciplined, subjected and docile society. His technique of subjection shaped new individuals, as the bearer and target of a new form of power. By controlling all institutions and means of culture, Reza Shah governed the culture and made it his own; the whole country turned into a body manipulated and trained according to his will. Metaphorically speaking, he considered the whole country as his laboratory, where he began to conduct his experiments to alter the people’s behaviour and to train or correct them.

Through his episodic diary form of representation, which consists of descriptions of the people and places, historical and political commentaries, Byron portrays Reza Shah’s Westernization/Modernization of Iran. Between 1933 and 1934, during his ten months’ journey from Italy through Palestine and Syria to Iran, and ultimately to Herat and on to Mazar-i-Sherif and India, with a scholarly objective in his mind, namely to search for the origins of Islamic architecture, Byron directs the course of his descriptions towards a recurrent motif, to unmask Reza Shah’s policy of Westernizing Persia. Byron shows that those countries under the rule of dictators have at least one point in common with each other, the presence of surveillance, as a network in the social structure.

In “*SYRIA: Damascus, September 12th*,” (RO: 26) Byron and Christopher Sykes come across a group of persons. They were talking Persian and gazing at Robert and Christopher. Christopher whispered and asked whether “he had said anything derogatory to the Shah or his country” (RO: 27). This is a sign that shows the Shah’s particular tyranny, which Byron calls a “mediaeval tyranny of modern sensibilities,” (RO: 27) reminding us of the confusing and often contradictory picture of a mediaeval society

attempting to re-structure itself politically and economically. Foucault argues, “each gaze would form a part of the overall functioning of power”<sup>42</sup>; i.e., the party is a part of Reza Shah’s “disciplinary apparatus,” which enables him to “see everything constantly.”<sup>43</sup> The “party” pays close attention to *what* is said, and *who* says it. The party listens to *what* is said, and pays attention to *what* and *whom* it gazes at, since the party’s gaze seeks for something; metaphorically, the members of the party gaze through their ears. Reza Shah’s disciplinary gaze was a part of his power, through which he was determined to gaze at everything constantly. The party’s gaze, the fear of informants and the presence of the Shah’s tyranny everywhere forced Sykes, as an outsider, to whisper, and to obey what was dictated in Persia. Simultaneously, Byron and Sykes were the object of gazes and observations, as they gazed at the objects, signs and cultural context.

Elsewhere, Byron makes the same point, for instance on November 9th one of the Bakhtiari chiefs dined with them in a private room and warned them about the secrecy of his connection with the foreigners. Reza Shah’s panopticon system kept the chiefs of the tribes in a “sort of unofficial captivity. They can live in Teheran. [...] But they cannot return to their own Bakhtiari country” (*RO*: 74). The Shah was determined to “break their power by settling them in villages under control of police and depriving them of their leaders” (*RO*: 74). At another place, Byron shows another sign of surveillance when Shir Ahmad, the Afghan ambassador in Tehran, explains that his argument with “Mullahs” about the people’s weeping and smacking their chests during “Mohurram-time” (*RO*: 140) has been reported to Reza Shah. Moreover, Reza Shah’s presence is manifested in his statues all over the country, which act as his eye/I, a lookout, an authority whose presence is “absent but full.”<sup>44</sup> Reza Shah’s sovereignty is present through his statues all over the country, even if he was not physically present; as an example, Byron in Tabriz encountered one of the “Marjoribanks’s” “bronze statue [...] in a cloak” (*RO*: 55).

Each change in the Persian social life was a copy, an imitation of the original model, or a comic quotation without quotation marks. From the original model to its copy, there is, of course, a reduction in proportion and perspective. The comical copy that manifests itself in various forms, the Pahlavi hat, for instance, is an encoded message. As Roland Barthes claims, “a sign is what repeats itself. Without repetition there is no sign, for we could not *recognize* it, and recognition establishes the sign,”<sup>45</sup> hence, the people’s



garment becomes a sign for Byron. Entering the cities, Byron remarks on the people's appearance in relation to the prevailing power. For him, the present Persian dress code under Reza Shah's dictatorship is a "slur on human dignity" (*RO*: 87). In Herat, Afghanistan, one of the first signs which attracts his attention, is the people's garment. There "a few, the officials, wear European suits, surmounted by a dashing lambskin hat. The townsmen too sport an occasional waistcoat in the Victorian style, or the high-collared frock-coat of the Indian Mussulman. But these importations, when accompanied by a turban as big as a heap of bedclothes, a cloak of parti-coloured blanket, and loose white peg-top trousers reaching down to gold-embroidered shoes of gondola shape, have an exotic gaiety, like an Indian shawl at the Opera. This is the southern fashion, favoured by the Afghans proper" (*RO*: 87-8). It signifies that Afghanistan, similarly, was moving towards Europeanization, which transforms the people's life; thus, their garment becomes "a slur on human dignity."

From the moment of their arrival in Persia, at Kirmanshah, September 29th, Byron comments on the "indignity of the people's clothes"; and asks, "[why] does the Shah make them wear those hats?" (*RO*: 41) Byron satirizes the Shah's social reforms and improvement through forcing the people to adapt themselves to Western dress; i.e., he derides the Shah's programme in Westernizing Iran. The possible significations that can be traced in Byron's remark are as follows: he shows that a kind of "indignity" is engrafted on the people's appearance; in other words, Reza Shah's social reforms include compulsory adoption of Western dress, hence, the individuals are forced to appear publicly as shaped by the Shah's desire and will. It signifies that the Shah inserts his discourse into the social structure of Persia. This new form of clothes, which originates in the Shah's dominating ambition in Westernizing Iran, makes people seem ridiculous to the outsiders. People can no longer wear the traditional flowing garments of the past; therefore, the garments have to be replaced by the European dress. This is an end, at the same time a beginning, an exclusion from a long tradition and an entry into a new style, codification and system of life; i.e., it is a transformation in the Persian national heritage. Byron traces the underlying factors in the people's life, desires, hopes, appearances, thoughts, and ideas, which were under the Shah's dictatorship. The Pahlavi

hat is a “battered symbol of Marjoribanks’s rule,” it is a butt, the “parody of a French képi,” (*RO*: 83) a quotation without quotation marks.

From the beginning of his accession to the throne, Reza Shah attacked the people’s traditional beliefs. He enforced men to wear the European bowler hat and prohibited women’s *chadur*—a long clothes which the women wear to cover their bodies— and scarves. Men of all rank and class had to cover their heads at public and formal occasions. The “people’s clothes” and the “Pahlavi hat” signify Reza Shah’s preponderant will, his presence, which no one dared to protest against publicly. Moreover, Reza Shah’s military cap, adapted from the French military and police cap, was an attempt to change the appearance of the army and the country in accordance with his will. Mukhbir al-Saltana, the previous prime minister, stated briefly Reza Shah’s main motive in changing the men’s hat:

on an occasion following the change of hats the Shah revealed his real motive for the compulsory order to Iranian men to wear the European bowler hat: ‘In an audience, the Shah took my [bowler] hat off and said, Now what do you think of this. I said it certainly protects one from the sun and rain, but that [Pahlavi] hat which we had before a better name. Agitated, His Majesty paced up and down and said, *All I am trying to do is for us to look like [the Europeans] so they would not laugh at us.*’<sup>46</sup>

The Shah also ordered the women to take off their *chadurs* and scarves and wear the imported European hats. The Shah prescribed what was to be “licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden”; in other words, the Shah was the one who pronounced to define good and evil. Like every society that has a “regime of truth,” Reza Shah introduced his general politics of truth, a type of discourse which functioned as truth and forced individuals to distinguish true from false based on the Shah’s new codifications. The Shah’s will defined and ordered the law, taboos and censorship. His discipline and training reconstructed and produced new gestures, habits, and skills, and ultimately a new kind of people. Byron, indirectly and satirically, remarks on this will to power, this will to truth, originated in and engendered by the Shah.

#### 4. 6. A Pseudonym: Why “Marjoribanks”?

Similar to Reza Shah’s use of the army, and his son Mohammad Reza Shah’s use of U.S. and Israeli-trained secret police known as *SAVAK*, as their major apparatuses in

controlling the country, nowadays the whole world registers and monitors the individuals through a modern electronic, computerized panopticon system. This system turns the whole world into a small controlled village for the imperial power. It trains, normalizes and controls the individuals and makes them behave according to a particular norm and system, albeit there are various ways to resist such a panoptical system. One of the strategic apparatuses by means of which Reza Shah made every effort to control the country was surveillance. This forced the people to enter into a game of master/slave, and demeaning nicknames. For instance, Byron uses pseudonyms for the tyrants in Iran, Russia, Italy and Germany.

At Kirmanshah, September 29th, Christopher warned him not to use the word “Shah out loud”:

‘Sh. You mustn’t mention the Shah out loud. Call him Mr. Smith.’

‘I always call Mussolini Mr. Smith in Italy.’

‘Well, Mr. Brown.’

‘No, that’s Stalin’s name in Russia.’

‘Mr. Jones then.’

‘Jones is no good either. Hitler has to have it now that Primo de Rivera is dead. And anyhow I get confused with these ordinary names. We had better call him Marjoribanks, if we want to remember whom we mean.’

‘All right. And you had better write it too, in case they confiscate your diary.’

‘I shall in future.’ (RO: 41-2)

Like Russia, Italy or Germany dominated by a tyrant, Iran was dominated by a dictator, the Shah; and in these countries there existed an aggressive censorship everywhere. Sykes, in *Four Studies in Loyalty* (1946), states that he advised Byron it would be prudent not to refer to the name of Reza Shah in his diary in the future: “[rejecting] the well-worn sobriquets of Brown, Jones, or Robinson, already squandered on the Western dictators, he referred to Reza Shah as ‘Marjoribanks,’ claiming that the traditional pronunciation of this surname as ‘March-banks’ evoked the Emperor’s ideals briefly and conclusively.”<sup>47</sup> From now on Byron uses this name in his diary in order to illustrate a sense of humour in Reza Shah’s ludicrous, comical and absurd personality.

Analysing “March-banks,” the first part of the word, “march,” means moving in a rhythmical, steady, military manner of a body of troops, which suggests Reza Shah’s manner, his way of appearing publicly, and showing his authority, since he was a military man from his early life. The pseudonym might also suggest Margaret Oliphant’s novel

*Miss Marjoribanks* (1866), in which Oliphant represents a “strong-willed, independent daughter of the town’s doctor.”<sup>48</sup> Miss Marjoribanks’s attempts at climbing the social ladder, which “raised [her] in the highest echelons of metropolitan nonconformity in a style quite undreamed of by her grandparents,”<sup>49</sup> might be compared with Reza Shah’s personal ambition in climbing the social ladder. His attempt at modernising Persia is, in some cases, similar to Miss Marjoribanks’s decision to “revolutionise society in Carlingford,”<sup>50</sup> as she had “by nature some of the finest qualities of a ruler.”<sup>51</sup> A few words about Reza Shah’s personality might show his ambition in climbing the social ladder. Homa Katouzian in *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis* (2000), describes Reza Khan as:

[A]n intelligent, hard-working, forthright and ruthless man, with an astonishingly powerful memory and a high degree of self-confidence that, with success, degenerated into arrogance. He was essentially a nationalist, who was pragmatic and ruthless in using whatever method he thought necessary to achieve personal and national objectives. [...] He successfully combined a short temper and directness to the point of rudeness, even obscenity, with an ability to hold views, plans and even personal grudges very close to his chest. He had no time for freedom, but before becoming Shah pretended to operate within a framework of law and order. [...] Like his main rival and adversary, Sayyed Hasan Mudarris [...], he was contemptuous of the old nobility and regarded them as incapable of saving the situation.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, Percy Loraine characterises him as “the most striking character on the Persian political stage.”<sup>53</sup> Loraine described him as “a powerfully built, well set up, big boned man, well above his average height, with a quiet voice and a direct manner of speech which is most unusual in a Persian. [...] He was really getting his shoulder to the wheel to lift his country out of the ever deepening rut into which it has sunk owing to the incapacity and folly of its rulers.”<sup>54</sup>

Other possible meanings residing in “Marjoribanks” can be traced through analysing the word; the first three letters “mar” in Persian means snake, connoting an evil, brutal, oppressor and usurper. The first four letters “marj” means a blaze or smokeless fire, which in its negative connotative meaning suggests destruction and decay. Even though Byron’s Persian was not excellent, the name also reminds us of one of the mythical characters in the Persian myth, King Zahhak, known as Mardosh (snake upon his shoulders), whose shoulders the devil kissed, which resulted in two black snakes springing up from the same spots upon his shoulders.<sup>55</sup> To feed the snakes, at least two

men had to be sacrificed and their heads had to be offered to the snakes to eat their brains each night.

The name also suggests marjoram, a kind of aromatic herb, which tastes warm, slightly sharp, bitterish, and has a healing effect, which can be associated with Reza Shah's characteristics, who attempted to put an end to the chaos and pacify the country through his reorganized army. If we associate these connotative meanings with "Marjoribanks," we can see to what extent Byron satirizes the Shah's personality and represents a comical picture of Reza Shah. In any case, by associating Reza Shah—his desires, ambitions, maltreatment of the tribes and his opponents and later of his loyal officials, his attempt to put an end to the 'chaos' throughout the country, and his characteristics as a military man—with Miss Marjoribanks's ambition in climbing the social ladder, with Zahhak's brutal massacre of individuals, with the healing effect of marjoram, and eventually with the aggressive features of snakes, Byron's "Marjoribanks" suggests the picture of a fully-fledged tyrant.

Byron was forced to use the pseudonyms for dictators in order not to be arrested or to keep his diary from being confiscated; thus, he entered into the game of master/slave. Sykes's emphasis on "[you] mustn't mention the Shah out loud," indicates that whatever was not in accordance with the Shah's will was doomed to be censored by the government. Every voice had to utter and propagate the Shah's voice and will, which would tolerate no other oppositional voices. The people under the pressure of the Shah's will were forced to appear publicly in a way he desired. Reza Shah's sovereign power prohibited, confiscated, and destroyed what his sovereign judgment pronounced illegitimate. Christopher's warning shows the censorship which existed in Persia. This was a period of strict censorship; Mohammad Gholi Majd, in *Great Britain and Reza Shah* (2001), quotes from Arthur Chester Millspaugh's<sup>56</sup> *Americans in Persia* that: "[fear] settled upon the people. No one knew whom to trust; and none dared to protest or criticize."<sup>57</sup>

Metaphorically speaking, for Byron, the Persian culture is a language full of signs and codes, which reveal themselves to a critical observer like him. Alternately, the beauties and greatness of Persia attracted his attention: "At Kasr-i-Shirin we stopped another hour, while the police gave us a permit for Teheran. Then indeed the grandeur of Iran

unfolded" (RO: 42). The "grandeur of Iran" refers to the natural beauties, woven into the history of Iran; in a sense, it refers to a "different Persia" (RO: 50) which "so many travellers fell in love with" (RO: 164). He continues:

Lit from behind by the *fallen sun*, and from in front by the *rising moon*, a vast *panorama* of rounded foothills rolled away from the *Sasanian ruins*, twinkling here and there with the *amber lights of villages*: till out of the far distance rose a *mighty range of peaks*, the real ramparts at last. [...] On the other side was Karind, where we dined to the *music of streams and crickets*, looking out on a *garden of moon-washed poplars* and munching baskets of *sweet grapes*. The room was hung with *printed stuffs depicting a female Persia* reposing in the arms of Marjoribanks, on whom Jamshyd, Artaxerxes, and Darius looked down approvingly from the top of the arch at Ctesiphon. (RO: 42, my emphasis)

Byron's gaze at the beauties in Persia such as "the fallen sun", "the rising moon", "a vast panorama", "the amber lights of villages", "the music of streams and crickets", "a garden of moon-washed poplars" and "baskets of sweet grapes" turns to the history of the country. For him these beauties are alive, romantic and full of life, but there is the Shah's will over them. His gaze turns to the "printed stuffs depicting a female Persia reposing in the arms of Marjoribanks, on whom Jamshyd, Artaxerxes, and Darius look down approvingly from the top of the arch at Ctesiphon." For Byron, the butt is Reza Shah's tyranny. Byron satirizes the present situation in Persia in which everything, every aspect of the culture is under the shadow and impact of one power and has meaning in relation to that power. Such a satirical description derides the present situation in Persian history, which has to speak "approvingly" about the Shah from the Achaemenid and Parthian kingdoms to the Sasanian dynasty. It ridicules Reza Shah's authority through caricaturing "a female Persia reposing in the arms of Marjoribanks." Such a tableau—Reza Shah's ridiculous exaggerated depiction in the "printed stuffs"—is a parody of the classical dynasties of Persia, the Achaemenids, the Parthians and the Sasanians. The Shah considers himself equal to these tyrants even above them since he reserves himself the title of "Shah-in-Shah" (RO: 162), the King of kings. Moreover, Byron documents his view about history, which gives the impression of will to power, through such "printed stuffs."

In his analysis of the Persian social life, Byron evidences that the language of the "people's clothes," history, "printed stuffs," or public opinion, in such a context is not innocent, neutral or objective, but a language, which is always involved in "social

ideology.” Such a language has something to signify apart from its literal use. As Foucault states, “there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives”<sup>58</sup>; hence, this painted language and discourse, which is “marked in the light (or the shadow) of power,”<sup>59</sup> dominates and reflects the Shah’s personal values, interests and objectives. Such a discourse, produced by the Shah and imposed on the people’s life “transmitted and produced power; it reinforced it, but also undermined and exposed it, rendered it fragile and made it possible to thwart it.”<sup>60</sup>

Byron’s use of a ridiculous epithet like “Marjoribanks” for the Shah or other nicknames for other dictators, suggests that Byron—as an outsider, within these cultures, social situations and contexts—cocks a snook at the Shah. In other words, Byron does not follow the same discourse that is used in such a situation. When one speaks, paints a picture, or constructs an architecture, etc., one has to use a discourse, which in itself is in favour of the idea and objectives of one voice, one meaning, one truth, or one centralized will. Here in Persia, that one voice, that one truth, that one will is the Shah’s, his desires, and his will in Westernizing Persia.

#### 4. 7. “Right of Death and Power over Life”: Reza Shah’s “royal boot”

Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality* (1990), states that “the sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring. The right which was formulated as the ‘power of life and death’ was in reality the right to *take* life or *let* live.”<sup>61</sup> Fear, as one of the apparatuses in “Marjoribanks’s” tyranny in ruling the country, begins from the bottom of his pyramidal state and ultimately reaches his “royal boots” (*RO*: 47). The Iron Heel shows its presence everywhere, through weapons, fear and ultimately death as Reza Shah’s terminal form of power. Whoever is against his laws is sentenced to die. The biased law, which supports the tyrant, is a discourse—“marked in the light (or shadow) of power”<sup>62</sup>—dictated for and imposed on the people’s life. Exile, imprisonment, court and death define justice in a way that serves the Shah’s specific values and interests. The dominant power, here Reza Shah, redefines and codifies justice and punishment. Byron exemplifies how “power subordinates knowledge and makes it

serve its ends or how it superimposes itself on it, imposing ideological contents and limitations,”<sup>63</sup> through the death of Teimur Tash:

News arrived this evening that Teimur Tash died in prison at ten o'clock the night before last, after he had been deprived of all comforts, including his bed. Even I, who was in Moscow during his reception there in 1932, find it sad; those who knew and liked him as the all-powerful vizier are much affected. But justice here is royal and personal; he might well have been kicked to death in public. Marjoribanks rules his country by fear, and the ultimate fear is that of the royal boot. One can argue that this is to his credit in an age of weapons that deal death from a distance. (RO: 47)

Foucault affirms that the death penalty “was for a long time the other form of the right of the sword; it constituted the reply of the sovereign to those who attacked his will, his law, or his person.”<sup>64</sup> The death of Teimur Tash in 1933, “the all-powerful vizier”, “the Shah’s alter ego and right-hand man”<sup>65</sup> in prison, was the outcome and “reply” of the tyrant to him. Reza Shah’s dictatorship showed its ominous signs. Teimur Tash is put to death because Reza Shah suspects him of treachery; i.e., Reza Shah defines what treachery and a treacherous person mean, and reserves himself the right of “killing in order to go on living,”<sup>66</sup> which is the “principle that defines the strategy of states.”<sup>67</sup> This suggests the vicissitudes of the concepts in a language and their meanings throughout the history of discourses; hence, there is no knowledge without the signs of power in it. V. A. L. Mallet, the British ambassador at the time in Iran, reported it was

difficult still to know what was the real cause of the Shah’s bitter and unrelenting hatred against his former friend, the man who had done more than all others to create modern Persia. [...] Rumours are, of course, spreading fast that Teymourache was murdered. It is remarked that the Shah left next morning for Tabriz, but this was probably pure coincidence. Possibly, the former Minister of the Court was the victim of slow poisoning, more probably of disease and distress of mind; in any case it has long been felt that he would never leave prison alive.<sup>68</sup>

Similarly, Mohammad Gholi Majd states that:

[Teimur Tash] had been shunted aside, and the oil negotiations, once his exclusive domain, had been taken out of his hands. [...] Shortly after his dismissal, he was arrested, tried on numerous charges, and sentenced to ten years’ solitary confinement. In early October 1933, it was announced that he had died of heart failure while in prison.<sup>69</sup>

The death of Teimur Tash is an irony in which his perception about and devotion to Reza Shah comes back to haunt him. Teimur Tash fails to recognize the outcome of his loyalty.



There is a congruity between his expectation and Reza Shah's power as a reality, which manipulates and controls Teimur Tash's life. To some extent, Reza Shah toys with the people. The outcome for his former friends is death. Sardar Assad was put to death in the same way, "[the] rumour went round that Sardar Assad has 'died' in prison" (*RO*: 142).

The destiny of the intelligentsia and the literary men was the same, during and after this period. Censorship forced Sadeq Hedayat, a prose fiction writer, to leave the country and to write his novel *The Blind Owl* in Bombay. His stories—written entirely in a direct, everyday language with a purity of expression that was an artistic achievement—have been translated into many languages. They reflect the sufferings of living individuals; instead of dealing in literary clichés, they describe the distress and anxiety of a hopeless youth. The influence of Franz Kafka (some of whose work Hedayat translated) is perceptible in his writing, and he has a tendency towards psychological probing shared by many Persian writers. Mirzadeh Eshqi, whose poems were satirical, was assassinated by the agents of police. Abulqasim Lahuti, a poet whose left-wing political ideas brought him into conflict with the government, fled to the Soviet Union. Arif Qazvini, one of the first modern writers and poets, died of depression and destitution. Farrukhi Yazdi, a poet, spent many years in prison and was killed in 1939. Bahar—whose poetry, although written in an essentially classical Persian style, was unique in its expression of modern social ideas and criticism of the country and government, often in biting satire—was arrested and banished several times. Nima Yushij, the father of modern Persian poetry, virtually ceased to publish his poems during this period. Buzurg Alavi, one of the leading prose writers of twentieth-century Persian literature, was imprisoned because of his writings. After the fall of the Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddeq in 1954, Alavi left Iran and took a post as visiting professor at the Humboldt University of Berlin in East Germany. Death and exile was the outcome of Reza Shah's dictatorship; i.e., he marginalizes the intelligentsia as individuals who, in action and discourse, escape the 'norms' and do not "conform to the commonly defined rules"<sup>70</sup> of the state.

The series of deaths of Teimur Tash, Sardar Assad, Davar, and Firuz, the imprisonment and death of journalists and intellectuals, the gaoling and banishing of his previous faithful defenders and other leading characters as well as their dismissal from the government or the court are Reza Shah's punitive tactics and penal practices. Through

imposing his authority all over the country, the Shah creates a sense of absurdity even among the intelligentsia. The disarmament and pacification of the tribes and settling them in new environments, his attack on religious communities, the change of men's hat to the European bowler hat and the prohibition of *chadur* for the women, all pave the way for Reza Shah to bring the whole country under his Iron Heel. At the nexus of Reza Shah's state and institutions are the army, prison, and a sort of military discipline.

Byron considers Persian culture as a text, which is the reflection and manifestation of the Persian world. He does not read the rules of the government through the books of Law, but reads them through the Shah's decrees and treatment of the people. He reads first and above all these images, gestures and behaviours and they convey meaning to him; thus, he concludes that "justice here is royal and personal," which shows that justice is dispensed in the light of the Shah. Giving meaning to the words or devaluating them, the Shah legalises his ability to codify and solidify the language of each institution; i.e., justice and Law are engendered, defined, constructed and implemented according to his will. Not only does this refer to a tyrant like Reza Shah, but also to every tyrant. Reza Shah creates a situation in which truth, value and meaning are obscure, and existence is both anguished and absurd. The Shah creates a sense of absurdity even among the intelligentsia. The judicial system, secularized within a reformed ministry of justice, legitimizes whatever Reza Shah desires to do. It shows that the social norms are not neutral or objective, but develop, naturalize and maintain the interest of those with social power; hence, power makes the names of things into law.

The people's resistance against Reza Shah's law, police and governmental institutions indicates the implicit presence of power in the social life, i.e., when there is a resistance, there is a force behind it, which Byron frequently traces throughout his book. In Tehran, November 9th, they met one of the Bakhtiari chiefs, who

asked for secrecy because intercourse with foreigners is dangerous to one who has inherited the position of tribal khan. All these chiefs, in fact, are kept by Marjoribanks in a sort of unofficial captivity. They can live in Tehran and splash their money about. But they cannot return to their own Bakhtiari country. Marjoribanks is frightened of the tribes and is trying to break their power by settling them in villages under control of the police and depriving them of their leaders. They have been king-makers in the past too often. (RO: 73-4)

Silence and secrecy are the embodiment of Reza Shah's dictatorship. He neutralized the Bakhtiaris through the good offices of Sardar Assad III, his devoted follower among the first-ranking Bakhtiari Khans. Reza Shah sent the chiefs of these tribes into exile, forced them not to "return to their own country," broke their power, and paved the way to rule over the country. By means of exile and the disarmament of these tribes, Reza Shah dispersed them throughout Persia to prevent them from 'chaos' and 'rebellion.' By virtue of this strategy, the people forgot who they were, from where they came, what their norms and values were and what their traditional lifestyle was; even their way of reasoning changed. Gradually, a new mode and form of life was implanted in and engrafted upon the people's life. Reza Shah transformed the whole country into a docile society, and established a new dynasty; a modern arbitrary rule.

Surveillance originated in Reza Shah as soon as he accessed the throne and spread out all over Persia, creating suspicion among the people. The suspicion reached the Shah, consequently, "Marjoribanks thought himself threatened with a *coup d'état* [and a tribal] revolt. [...] [Dictatorships] always breed these rumours" (RO: 137). The result was the imprisonment of Sardar Assad, the Minister of War and chief of the Bakhtiari Khans. Sardar Assad and

his brothers, including Sardar Bahadur and Emir-i-Jang whom we met at tea with Mirza Yantz, are now in prison; troops and aeroplanes have been sent to the Bakhtiari country south of Isfahan. Meanwhile, suspicion has fallen on the Kavam-al-Mulk, a Kahgai magnate from Shiraz, who has hitherto enjoyed the dangerous honour of being Marjoribanks's chief confidant. He at present is confined to his house, and Miss Palmer-Smith, his daughters' companion, is in an ecstasy of apprehension about poison in the food. (RO: 137)

Reza Shah, as an authoritarian sovereign and dictator of Persia, tolerates no opposition against himself. Whoever shows signs of resistance against the tyrant's decrees either is imprisoned or meets a death. Reza Shah legitimizes his decrees by rumours, and tries to ascribe "the disgrace of the Bakhtiaris" to "their friendship with the English." "Dictatorships always breed these rumours" (RO: 137).

Going to the garage in search of transport to Kirman, I fell into conversation with an ex-deputy, who told me that Kavam-al-Mulk has been in prison, but is now released, while the fate of Sardar Assad and the other Bakhtiari brothers is still unknown. He was bitter against Marjoribanks, and I wondered why, till he recounted how his uncle, an old man of seventy-four and blind in one eye, has been two years in prison for refusing to let Marjoribanks

have his rice-growing estates in Mazandaran. That inimitable ruler has been seizing estates all over the country, and making a fortune out of them, since the other Naboths have not been so obstinate. I was astonished at the man's indiscretion. (RO: 203-4)

[...]

*Teheran, April 4th.*—Sardar Assad has “died of epilepsy” in the hospital at Kasr-i-Kajar. (RO: 209)

The penalty for Kavam-al-Mulk, Sardar Assad and the other Bakhtiari brothers was imprisonment. “Marjoribanks,” this “inimitable ruler” attempts to control the country by means of different institutions such as the prison, which stems from his panoptical system and overshadows the whole country. Even though Reza Shah's dictatorship spread all over Persia, there were small territories, which escaped Westernization.

There are no police in this small tribal market town, neither Amniya nor Nasmiya; the Governor's safety depends on a few soldiers. People dress as they will, the men wearing striped gowns, loose cummerbunds stuck with weapons, and black bun-shaped hats without brims. The Pahlavi hat is a rare exception. This at last is that other Persia which so many travellers fell in love with, and having found it I would willingly stay here a week if I could. (RO: 163-4)

Foucault declares, “where there is power, there is resistance,” therefore, the different forms of resistance, which are “present everywhere in the power network”<sup>71</sup> in Persia, reflect the presence of the Shah's power. The people's resistance against Westernization, Reza Shah's main objective, is manifested in their way of clothing. There, the people's will dominates, which Byron considers “that other Persia which so many travellers fell in love with,” a Persia without inferiority complex.

Byron ironically gives an example for Reza Shah's authority. It is represented in a sarcastic tone and to some extent is comic:

Not long ago, Marjoribanks paid a first visit to Sistan. To gratify his appetite for modern street-planning, the terrified local authorities built a whole new town, Potemkin-wise, whose walls, though festooned with electricity, enclosed nothing but fields. A lorry preceded him by a day, bearing children's clothes. Next morning, the school assembled dressed like a French kindergarten. The monarch drove up, stopped long enough to sack the schoolmaster because the children's clothes were backward, and drove on; but not before the clothes had been whisked off the children and bundled back into the lorry, to precede him at the next place. (RO: 83)

Because fear overshadows everything and is present everywhere in different aspects of the people's life, the “terrified local authorities” try to “gratify his appetite” by changing the appearance of the town superficially. In order to impose his authority “the monarch

drove up, stopped long enough to *sack* the schoolmaster because the children's clothes were backward, and drove on [my emphasis]." To implement the Shah's rules at least one person has to be victimized. Superficial appearances take priority over everything else; i.e., the authorities decorate nothingness. Byron focuses his ironical description on the situation in which the disparity is between appearance and reality. Sistan was (and is) one of the provinces in Iran bereft of the basic needs of life and the life style was (and is) simple and at the subsistence level. The Shah's presence at Sistan is not to solve the people's problems but to show and impose his authority.<sup>72</sup> The Shah visited the city to inspect and impose his authority. The "monarch" moves from nothingness toward nothingness; i.e., nothing is changed concerning the people's devastated life but the appearance, which conveys the absurdity of the condition. Each pattern of conventions, codes, mode of thinking and social production or event reveals a discourse to Byron. For instance, the "children's clothes," like the Pahlavi hat, are the symbol of the Shah's rule. Byron illustrates Reza Shah's programme in dress code as a comedy in which the people are forced to play a role.

Each step forward, Reza Shah asserts his power in every aspect of the people's life; even the diplomats are not excluded. "Christopher was forbidden to leave the town. The order had come from Teheran and prevented him even from going into the surrounding countryside to shoot. Robert was outraged, assuming the cause to be fear of Christopher criticizing the regime in print."<sup>73</sup> At Shiraz, February 25th, he states:

Christopher is still here, but has now got permission to go on to Bushire, on condition he leaves Persia forthwith. [...] The authorities have not had the sense, from their own point of view, to placate him by producing a reason; Ayrum, the Chief of Police in Teheran, simply repeats that the order of expulsion has come from the General Staff, in other words from Marjoribanks himself. (RO: 175)

*Isfahan, March 13th.*—Christopher is now a prisoner in the Residency at Bushire, according to news from Teheran. Ayrum, the Chief of Police, still says it is the fault of the General Staff. The Minister of Foreign Affairs says it is due to Ayrum's personal orders. (RO: 192)

It shows the absurdity of the situation in which Christopher as a 'lonely and confused individual' is not able to trace the main reason of his imprisonment in such a bewildering situation. It is as if no one knows who is responsible, the absurd game moves from "Ayrum" to the "General Staff" and from the "Minister of Foreign Affairs" back to

“Ayrum.” Reza Shah considers everybody and everything as a potential threat to his throne.

#### 4. 8. *The Road to Oxiana* and the Imperial Eye/I

Imperial power is always multifaceted, omnipresent in different manifestations. All forms of its manifestations share the capacity of controlling, manipulating and legitimizing everything in accordance with power. It can control and rule a country through several procedures that I term the *imperial travelling power*; that is to say, imperialism moves in all directions and knows no boundary. It creeps into and invades the countries in different forms in the hope of capturing the resources of the land. Metaphorically speaking, imperialism stretches its tendrils all over the world; i.e., power travels from a central point and reaches the margins of the globe. One way is to appoint a governor to control the country under the imperial mandate. Another is to export different products to that country in order to make the people mere consumers of imperial products; such as the technological, educational, organizational, military, political, scientific, cultural, and food products, even the press and clothes, to name just a few. The other and the most strategic way is to exploit the resources and control the procedure of production in its entirety, both in the Western and the Eastern countries, and to subordinate the other countries to its objectives. By means of these and other ways, it changes the ways of the people's life, their views, thoughts, and ideas, and governs the people's behaviour. One of the ways through which the imperial power cunningly enters a country is a systematic instruction, like what British imperialism had done in India through English educational programme. For instance, in Jerusalem, when Byron “was sitting beneath an olive tree in the court of the Dome of the Rock, an Arab boy came to share the shade and repeat his lessons out loud. They were *English lessons*” (*RO*: 22, my emphasis). This is a sign and a form, which signifies the presence of imperialism in Jerusalem. The Imperial Eye/I needs assimilation of the people to its ideologies. It engraves its ideologies of superiority upon the people's mind, the idea that the West can think, understand, decide and create better.

Manfred Pfister considers *The Road to Oxiana*, as a “political book”<sup>74</sup> concerning its representation of power relations. He argues that the Middle East and Central Asia that “Byron travels through appears to be in nomadic movement, crisscrossed by conflicting

Russian, German, French, American and British interests, and disrupted by internal tensions between Greeks and Turks, Palestinians and Jews, Persians and Afghans, central governments and tribal centres of power.”<sup>75</sup> Byron, he argues, continuously “dissociates himself from British foreign and imperial policy,” more precisely, he is “a critic of the Empire,” whose “glory and grandeur [...] has gone [and] has become a spectacle.”<sup>76</sup>

From the beginning of his journey to the East, Byron portrays the presence and consequences of the imperial power in the Middle East. At Trieste the “Jewish refugees from Germany were leaving for Palestine” (*RO*: 5) and the “clouds” of the “Arab hostility” (*RO*: 26) against the Europeans overshadowed the whole area. James Knox states, “[their] boat, like the vessel which Robert had taken from Trieste, was crammed with Jewish refugees fleeing the anti-Semitic persecution in Germany, which had escalated since Hitler’s coming to power at the beginning of the year.”<sup>77</sup> This reminds him of the Exodus of the Jews in the Old Testament; it shows the presence of the oppressors and the oppressed, the vicissitudes of the governments from the earliest time up to now. The rise of Hitlerism in Europe and the Zionist maltreatment of the Palestinians remind us of “The Second Coming” (1921) written by William Butler Yeats, an Irish poet, dramatist, and prose writer of the twentieth century:

[...] Somewhere in the sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
The darkness drops again [...]  
[...]  
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,<sup>78</sup>

Recounting the history of Cyprus briefly, Byron shows the changing phases of power in the country, from 1450 B.C., when the “[dates] begin with an Egyptian notice” till 1914, when England “annexed it” (*RO*: 7). Each tyranny engraves its presence on the “coinage” to commemorate its victory. In addition, Byron comes across an atmosphere of distrust and uneasy hostility towards the Europeans:

The cloud on the horizon is Arab hostility. [...] The Arabs hate the English, and lose no opportunity of venting their ill-manners on them. (*RO*: 26-7)  
[...]

The Arabs hate the French more than they hate us. Having more reason to do so, they are more polite; in other words, they have learnt not to try it on, when they meet a European. (*RO*: 35)

The Arab hostility towards the British and the French, to some extent, stems from the Arab hostility to the Jewish immigration to Palestine, subsidized by the French philanthropist Baron Edmond de Rothschild. It dates back to the beginning of the clash between these two opposite worlds since the Great War and onward to the Nazi accession to power in Germany in 1933, and the widespread persecution of the Jews throughout Central and Eastern Europe, which gave a great impetus to Jewish immigration to Palestine. This Arab hostility was directed against the French-British secret agreement on Palestine after the Great War, which resulted in partitioning the country, and its aftermath, the British military administration in Palestine after capturing Jerusalem. The hostility was against the ambiguous treatment of the British local authorities, especially the military, who sympathized with the Palestinian Arabs, while the British government in London tended to side with the Zionists as, for instance, in the case of Lawrence of Arabia in all its ambiguities. The Arabs' inimical gaze at the British and the French and vice versa is that of the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy.

For Byron, each sign, symbol, object, or even the people's garments reflects a page in the history of the land in relation to power. He depicts how the "background of the essential commonplace, the occasional lounge suit, the cretonne frock, [and] the camera-strapped tourist" (*RO*: 17) dominate the image of the East. He points up that imperialism eventually will influence the East "immune as yet from the tide of lounge suits and horn spectacles" (*RO*: 16). The presence of the "camera-strapped tourist" suggests the presence of the Europeans in the East, as far as the tourists are considered as a means of colonisation. One might however refer to Byron himself, who is a "camera-strapped" traveller in the East, as a part and agent of British imperialism. No spot in the East is free from the mark of imperial colonial power; i.e., the underlying power which was determined to transform the East. Through different means, it penetrates the social structure, culture, history and every aspect of the people's life; thereupon, the deformed people begin to "wear shorts and topees, and answer, when addressed, with a Yorkshire accent" (*RO*: 17). Byron satirizes such an assimilation. New codifications enter the social life; both the authorities and the common people propagate and accept these new norms.



The modern “centurions [who] are here again” (*RO*: 17) obscured the previous cultural traditions.

Byron’s gaze turns to another sign of the presence of imperialism at Mosul, Iraq. Under the influence of nationalist activities in 1920, Emir Faysal I was proclaimed king of Syria; meanwhile, a group of Iraqi nationalists met in Damascus to proclaim the emir Abd Allah, older brother of Faysal, as king of Iraq. Under the influence of nationalist activities in Syria, nationalist agitation followed first in northern Iraq and then in the tribal areas of the middle Euphrates. By the summer of 1920, a revolt had spread to all parts of Iraq except the big cities of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra, where British forces were stationed. Byron illustrates the continuation of the “anti-British rising in Iraq in the summer of 1920,” which shows that the Iraqis tried to “put British rule there back on a firm footing.”<sup>79</sup> Because of the British intervention in administering Iraq during the 1920s and 1930s, internal dissensions soon developed. One of the incidents was the Assyrian uprising of 1933—a small Christian community living in the Mosul province. This small community was given assurances of security by both Britain and Iraq. When the mandate was ended, the Assyrians began to feel insecure and demanded new assurances. In clashes with the Iraqi troops, several hundred Assyrians were brutally killed. An “Air Force officer” reported that his “fellow officers had been ordered to bomb the Assyrians” and because of their bombardment “the aerodrome” was “strewn with bodies, mostly shot in the genitals; they, the British, had to bury them” (*RO*: 46). Nobody had permission to photograph the bodies or report the news of what he had seen. In other words, British imperialism tries to cleanse the “British face by the concealment of atrocities,” (*RO*: 46) at the cost of devastating the land.

Elsewhere, Byron recounts the story of Mirza Yantz (*RO*: 45) about the grey mare and the black mare, comparing these two with Germany and England respectively, which connotes the British farsightedness and policy that slowly but continuously, approaches its objectives, even though it seems weak and impotent. It penetrates the remotest parts of the world in such a way that no spot on earth can escape its impacts. Byron shows the presence of the British imperial eye/I in Persia. The Shah’s crown depended on the British Empire. Once the Shah told a few important politicians such as Musadeq, “the British brought me to power,”<sup>80</sup> and added, “I nevertheless served the country,” even

“they did not know with whom they were dealing.”<sup>81</sup> In the 1921 coup, a few British officers and diplomats helped him, while Reza Shah’s achievements were in the British interest. Mohammad Gholi Majd documents the hidden presence of the British in the coup:

The British insisted that they had no knowledge of or any part in the coup and Sahabi has declared that the British minister, Norman, ‘and the Legation, as well as the Foreign Office and the War Office, were completely in the dark about the planned coup.’ [...] It is perfectly apparent that the whole movement is of British origin and support, in furtherance of the scheme of forceful control of the country. [...] With the British financial assistance and the support of the British occupation forces, and having been given control of the domestic military and police forces by the British, Reza Khan quickly became the de facto dictator of Persia.<sup>82</sup>

Reza Shah, who paved the way for the Westernization of Persia, defined “his attitude towards England,” and “had frequently said to members of His Majesty’s Legation that he would do with Persian hands that which the British had wished to do with British hands, i.e., create a strong army, restore order and consolidate a strong and independent Persia. He has always asked us to give him time and to content ourselves with watching.”<sup>83</sup> Likewise, Percy Loraine reported:

Your Lordship will recognise that there is a great deal of force in these arguments, and that if the situation contemplated by Reza Khan could be brought into existence without injury to direct British interests, the state of affairs in this part of the world would have improved almost beyond recognition.<sup>84</sup>

[...]

Reza Khan’s policy, if carried out without unnecessary friction or disturbance, would relieve us of many responsibilities which we have hitherto borne, and would make Persia an altogether more comfortable neighbour; the only things we need be really anxious about are the safety of the oil-fields and the special position of the Sheikh of Mohammerah.<sup>85</sup>

[...]

His Excellency Serdar Sepah agreed, and repeated that he personally was convinced that Persia’s salvation lay in the maintenance of friendly relations with Great Britain.<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, in a letter dated 10 December 1925, Harold Nicolson wrote to Vita Sackville-West about his meeting with the Shah. Harold talked with Reza Shah “of the interest he aroused in England and how we hoped he would make a nice good kind Shah. He was pleased by these assertions, and relaxed.”<sup>87</sup> Therefore, whatever the British imperial power planned to do in Iran, Reza Shah fulfilled it. Accordingly, Reza Shah was the tangible result of the period of the British expanding interests in the

Middle East; he was not at odds with the objectives of the British power. What he aimed to fulfil in Persia was the result of the global political, economic and social conditions, from which he was unable to extricate himself. It shows how Reza Shah is like a product, which is produced in time and place; i.e., he is world-bounded, hence, his *worldliness*.

Byron shows that the whole of Persia was steeped in the Shah's will and ideology of Westernization. Reza Shah, as an arbitrary ruler, in his attempt of Westernizing Persia tries to shape the people's perceptions and preferences in accordance with such a process. Everything in everyday life depends on the Shah's objectives. The tyrant makes the people think, feel, see, and hear whatever accords with his desires. He enmeshes Iran's economy and social structure with the Western world.

Modern science and technology, as the crucial elements and products of Western civilization, were introduced and imported into the country; they were the means through which Reza Shah attempted to keep tabs on each spot of the country and the people's life as quickly as possible; at the same time modern science and technology show the presence of the growing interests of the imperial power in Persia through industrialisation:

In the bottom of the valley Marjoribanks's new railway was creeping up towards the plateau. There, after surmounting the second step of the Elburz at Firuzkuh by a tunnel in the form of a triple spiral, it should arrive at Teheran in three years' time. It can never pay. The taxation imposed by the first two hundred miles of it is already depriving the peasants of their only luxuries, tea and sugar. But its purpose is a question of psychology rather than economics. For the modern Persian it is the symbol of national self-respect; it provides at last a fresh diet for that unconquerable vanity which has subsisted during two thousand years on the exploits of Darius. (RO: 224)

Besides the above consequences of Reza Shah's modernization of Iran, his "ambitious programme of road construction," and the railway designing to transport "goods from the rural to the urban areas and *vice-versa*"<sup>88</sup> had its impact on the people's life. The imposed "taxation" deprived the "peasants of their only luxuries, tea and sugar." This attempt, Byron remarks, is considered as an "unconquerable vanity" originating in the Achaemenid period by the government. It shows that modernizing the country is a double-edged sword, which uproots the traditional way of life, and at the same time deprives the masses of their basic needs of life.

Byron's comments on the mishaps of Charcoal-Burners, which were to have taken him and Sykes to Afghanistan, emphasizes the decline of the British power on the one hand, and the growth of the American imperial strength, in the form of a Chevrolet, as an American symbol of modernization, on the other hand. The mishap and failure of the Charcoal-Burners, a new attempt by the British sovereignty, to carry out the expedition, signify the decline of the empire.<sup>89</sup> "Teheran, October 25th—A telegram from Rutter, which has been waiting for me, says the Charcoal-Burners were leaving [Beirut] on the 21st" (*RO*: 67). On November 6th, there was "[n]o word from the Charcoal-Burners. But the latest courier from Baghdad brings a rumour that the cars have finally broken down" (*RO*: 68).

James Knox repeatedly refers to the mishap of the Charcoal Burners that Byron mentions in his book; i.e., on 13th September, in Beirut, Byron wrote in a letter "the cars should arrive tomorrow," (*LH*: 191) but no news from them; he wanted to meet Boz, Goldman and Henderson, whereas, in Knox's words, "the only member of the expedition on board was Eldon Rutter, bringing with him a tale of disaster."<sup>90</sup> On 18th September, Byron wrote "the expedition has momentarily collapsed [...] it was obvious [...] that the charcoal plant was useless" (*LH*: 191-2). As Knox shows, "the lorries had reached Abbeville when the smaller one broke down. Another lorry was brought over from England and three days were spent installing the charcoal plant."<sup>91</sup> Elsewhere, Knox points out "the party returned in secret to England,"<sup>92</sup> or none of Boz's "vehicles any longer ran on charcoal,"<sup>93</sup> and eventually, "Boz and his fellow charcoal burners [are] dismissed."<sup>94</sup> Byron mentions the presence of "Wadsworth, the American First Secretary" (*RO*: 44) in Tehran, "Mr. Wylie, an American big-game hunter," (*RO*: 46) "Mr. Donaldson, the head of the American mission," (*RO*: 85) "Young, the librarian of the American College" (*RO*: 214) in Tehran and an American Hospital at Mashhad in which his "leg was cupped [...] with fascinating results."<sup>95</sup> Byron's use of an "open-topped Chevrolet,"<sup>96</sup> and the fact that ultimately, "their transport problems were solved by hiring a new Chevrolet lorry,"<sup>97</sup> suggest the rise and expansion of the American hegemony and interests that were escalating economically and culturally. Pfister argues that "the glory and the grandeur that was the Empire has gone. [...] The Empire has become a spectacle, 'a spectacle for complacent, boasting patriotism' [...] and, even

worse, it is making a spectacle of itself, of its lack of conviction in its own moral superiority.”<sup>98</sup> Such is the commentary on the situation during the decade; i.e. on the one hand the British imperial power was declining, and on the other hand, the American imperial economic and cultural power was growing. “The Imperial Bank of Persia in Meshed gave me rupee drafts on its branch in Bombay to use in Afghanistan. This morning I went to change one with the Shirkat Asharmi, the newly established State Trading Company” (RO: 103). “The Imperial Bank,” a British-owned institution, was in close connection with the Anglo Persian Oil Company, through which the British government supported Reza Shah financially during his coup. The presence of such an institution in Mashhad solidified the presence of the imperial eye/I in Persia.

People who abuse missionaries have not seen their medical work. The whole health of Khorasan depends on them. For this, not for their conversions, the authorities hate and hamper them; there is nothing to be jealous of in a religion which has no more appeal here than Mohammadan mission would have in Rome. The Persians have a talent for cutting off their nose to spite their face. They stopped the Junkers air service because it exhibited foreign superiority. They make roads, but their customs duties prohibited the import of motors. They want a tourist traffic, but forbid photographing because somebody once published a picture of an Iranian beggar, while conformity with their police regulations is a profession in itself, as I have discovered in the last day or two. Indeed *Marjoribanks-land* ablaze with *Progress* offers a depressing contrast with *Afghanistan*. I am reminded of the hare and the tortoise. (RO: 103, my emphasis)

Byron is comparing “Progress” in Persia with that in Afghanistan, which is a commentary on Westernizing the whole area. He points out that Westernizing Persia and Afghanistan did not follow the same path and was not at the same speed. In any case, the process of Westernization was changing and reshaping both countries in accordance with British interests.

In every “society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and dangers.”<sup>99</sup> Byron implicitly adumbrates such a point referring to the reciprocal interaction between Reza Shah and British Empire, and their attempt to bring the press under their control, which results in revising an article in *The Times* by its author. This shows both Reza Shah and the British government treated the press in a similar way; i.e., they controlled, selected, organized and redistributed and censored according to their will to truth:

This feeling has been strengthened by an article de Bathe wrote in *The Times* on his return to England, in which he described Marjoribanks's assault on the Turcoman jockey under the eyes of the Diplomatic Corps. The Persian press retorted that in England the King dare not leave his palace without a guard of 3000 men, while the Prince of Wales keeps 100 dogs that climb on to his bed by a special ladder and sleep there. Intimidated by these outbursts, the London Foreign Office persuaded *The Times* to make amends in a leading article, which compare the state of modern Persia to that of Tudor England, and the achievement of Marjoribanks to that of Henry VIII. (RO: 138)

Reza Shah tried to control the press outside Persia and wanted to make the English Foreign Office control the English press. James Knox remarks, "the Shah's blood pressure soared. According to Robert: 'The Persian Minister [in London] was in an awful state—his life is in danger, almost, because his filthy old Shah thinks that after 2 months he ought to have the English press under control.' Robert was obliged to write an explanatory letter to the newspaper to calm the situation."<sup>100</sup> The Shah wanted to show a beautiful picture of his country to the world and nobody had permission to report or portray it contrary to his will. As a result, he produced a painted and biased image and exhibited it to the people, reminding us of what Foucault asserts: "I must fashion my lecture or my course a little as one might make a shoe, no more no less."<sup>101</sup> Terror, suspicion, censorship, rumour, prison, and death were the means through which the Shah authorized such a process. Therefore, new knowledge is introduced to and accepted by the society, and Westernization, as a body of knowledge and a discourse, becomes an obsession among the masses even among the intelligentsia:

Another kink in the Persian mind is a mortal jealousy lest the Afghans should steal a march on them in the matter of Westernisation. On hearing I have been to Afghanistan, the educated Persian draws a deep breath, as though to restrain himself, expresses a polite interest in Afghan welfare, and enquires with feline suavity whether I found any railways, hospitals, or schools in the country. Hospitals and schools of course, I answer; all Islam has them; as for railways, surely steam is old-fashioned in a motoring age. When I told Mirza Yantz that the Afghans discussed their political problems frankly, instead of in whispers as here, he answered: "Naturally; they are less cultured than we Persians." (RO: 138-9)

There is a "war of meanings"<sup>102</sup> between the Persians and the Afghans concerning Westernization, even among different classes of the two countries. This "war" stems from a discourse, which is introduced into social life and makes individuals of all classes comprehend, interpret and accept the changes in the country differently. The tyrants, in both Persia and Afghanistan, possessed all the institutions and "means of culture,"<sup>103</sup>

which resulted in governing the people's mind. Consequently, what they thought and expressed, for or against Westernization, originated in the painted discourse engrafted onto their culture. In this way, the whole area was steeped in the process of Westernization.