

**THE PICTURESQUE DOMESTICATION OF IRAN FOR AN AMERICAN
COUNTER-MODERN RETREAT**

by

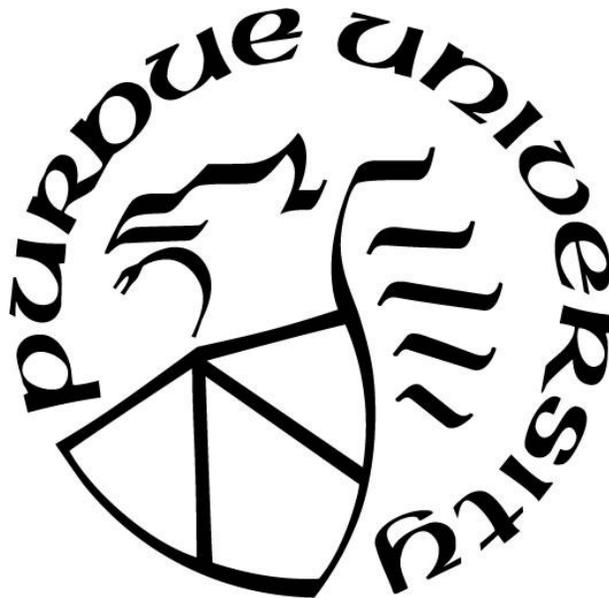
B. Whitney Laga

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**THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL
STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

Dr. Beate Allert, Chair

School of Languages and Cultures

Dr. Ahmed Idrissi Alami

School of Languages and Cultures

Dr. Charles Ross

Department of English

Dr. Stacy E. Holden

Department of History

Approved by:

Dr. Beate Allert

Head of the Graduate Program

To all of those who helped and supported me on my tortuous path with tireless patience, great advice, and hip waders to slog through the messes—Professor Stacy Holden for research advice and a tireless ear; my brother and peer-mentor, Derek Haderlie; my wife Andree Anne who defines the word tolerant; and my beautiful children: Jaxson, Estelle, Mae, Pearle, and Rubee.

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ABSTRACT

Author: Laga, B, Whitney. MA

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Title: The Picturesque Domestication of Iran for an American Counter-Modern Retreat

Committee Chair: Professor Beate Allert

This thesis examines one of the most fraught and distorted relationships—the association between the United States and Iran. Contemporarily, most scholars and professionals associated with this connection evaluate the relationship in terms of politics, religion, power, and national security. Far fewer, however, evaluate it from its roots—the cultures, relationships, and dependencies that ultimately produced the prickly relationship of these two countries today. This thesis utilizes American authored travel narratives from 1921- 1941, written primarily by recreational travelers, to contradict American contemporary and paternalistic views of the relationship with Iran. This thesis posits that a nascent and unsure America depended on a pre-modern Iran to ease her into an impending modern existence.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines one of the most fraught and distorted relationships—the association between the United States and Iran. Contemporarily, most scholars and professionals associated with this connection evaluate the relationship in terms of politics, religion, power, and national security. Far fewer, however, evaluate it from its roots—the cultures, relationships, and dependencies that ultimately produced the prickly relationship of these two countries today. This thesis utilizes American authored travel narratives from 1921- 1941, written primarily by recreational travelers, to contradict American contemporary and paternalistic views of the relationship with Iran. This thesis posits that a nascent and unsure America depended on a pre-modern Iran to ease her into an impending modern existence.

To understand America's interactions with Iran, I suggest framing it in three broad, yet distinct, modern periods:

1. 1921-1941 - the reign of Reza Khan and arguably the beginning of modern Iran
2. 1941-1979 - the reign of Reza Khan's son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, until his exile
3. 1979-Present Day – the reign of the Ayatollah

This thesis focuses solely on the first period, or the rise and rule of Reza Khan to Shah. His reign represents a distinct moment in Iranian history yielding rapid modernization and increased and independent contact between Iran and the Western world.

This period also marks a liminal moment between an arguably pre-modern Iran and the reign of the Shah's son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who more forcefully instituted modernization and Western imperialism through initiatives such as his "White Revolution." Furthermore, Reza Shah's reign predates more contemporary conversations surrounding Iran's Islamic State and the unique socio-political climate surrounding the Ayatollah. As a result of this more cultural-historical study of American's associations with Iran, I provide readers with a much-needed foil to contemporary Islamic State driven perceptions of Iran and a way to reframe current politically tinged understanding of the relationship.

As you might imagine, over the twenty years explored in this thesis there are only a few published travel narratives from Americans in Iran amounting to a total of nine. To the best of my current knowledge, these narratives constitute the sum or near sum total of all published and available American travel narratives to Iran between 1921 and 1941. The only significant absence is many of the narratives of Christian missionaries who spent time in Iran during the 20s and 30s (I have included only one in this work). While these materials would have been invaluable to this study (as most of these individuals were fluent in Farsi and spend a considerable time in Iran), most of these Christian missionaries were funded through their local churches and their writings remain unpublished, only loosely compiled, and mostly in the form of journals and correspondence with family, friends, and their sponsoring churches. This makes their experiences extremely difficult to obtain.

The nine travel narratives used as the basis of this study range wildly in purpose and traveler. For this thesis, I will discuss/use only six of the nine as the best representations of the breadth and diverse purposes for travel to Iran. While there is little known about some of these travelers, the following describes each generally to get a sense of their character and purpose:

- Rolla Edwards Hoffman: One of the many Christian medical missionaries to frequent Iran. Hoffman traveled to Iran with his family and spent more than 42 years working in hospitals in Iran. His travel narratives were often used to rationalize continued monetary support from his Christian congregation for his medical efforts in Iran.
- Rosalie Slaughter Morton: Another Doctor traveling to Iran for albeit very different reasons. Morton is a single woman traveling recreationally for what appears to be an interest in history. Iran is often seen as the “cradle to the human race,” and many travelers, including Morton, wanted to see the sites of the great Persian kings of the past.
- Hermann Norden: A wealthy upper middle-class man and would-be adventurer. Norden provides some of the most colorful depictions contained here. Constantly looking for the most “Picturesque” experience, Norden goes further than any of the other authors to create an anachronistic travel experience as a foil to America’s rapidly modernizing country.
- Major E. Alexander Powell: Perhaps our most well know traveler, Major Powell was as war correspondent in WWI and later a professional travel writer and adventurer. A straight shooter and adventurous spirit, Major Powell provides the more expected, over-confident voice of the West.
- Janet Miller: a young Doctor from Nashville, Tennessee who traveled the world in the 20s and 30s setting up clinics in places such as Japan and Africa. The original Doctors without Borders if you will.
- Paul D. Cravath: a very prominent and successful New York lawyer intensely

interested in foreign affairs and WWI. Provides a typical mid/upper class voice of the time.

Throughout this thesis, I regularly use an aesthetic tool called the Picturesque to help digest the material produced by the writers above. Many will find this an odd choice for a work dealing with travel narratives to Iran, an Oriental scene, since it was used nearly exclusively by Western writers, artists, and enthusiasts to describe their own landscapes and was no longer in vogue during the time period explored here. It began in the 18th century by the Reverend William Gilpin and remained popular during the romantic period arguably achieving its apex importance from 1730 to 1830.¹ The aesthetic mode originally stemmed from a method of rural English landscape painting and eventually branched out to include other mediums including prose and photography. To put in aesthetic context, it “Emerged as a third category of aesthetic pleasure beside the sublime and the beautiful” (Urban, 451).

Despite potential reticence in using the Picturesque unconventionally and the fact that most Middle Eastern scholars most likely have little or no understanding of it, the number of references to it by the authors used in this study demanded further investigation. While it may be new for many readers, I argue that this thesis hinges on its use and understanding (explored and explained further in Ch. 2). In the context of this work, it enables us to understand not only “how” America used Iran to help her understand her own modern moment, but more importantly “why” America used Iran of all places.

Through the Picturesque, we will ultimately see an affinity between the two countries—similarities that allowed America to use Iran as an ephemeral and anachronistic substitute to rejuvenate, escape, and reconnect with an easier, more pliable, and familiar past. The Picturesque “tool” provides a counter-explanation to American Iranian modern relationship.

¹ See Christopher Hussey’s, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View*, (1927)

CHAPTER 2. CULTURAL HISTORIES: THE PICTURESQUE, MODERNISM, AND IRAN

Throughout the century, a frequent defense of the Continental tour claimed that, like “culture” as the critics of utilitarianism described it, foreign travel readmits into human life the imaginative and moral energies—the poetry—sacrificed in a Benthamite workaday world...all travelers to Europe are ultimately “on the same errand” of seeking to recover that joyous sense of life which their routine existence has nearly extinguished. (James Buzard, 32)

Before diving headlong into the narratives, I want to dedicate a little bit of time to the necessary historical and contextual background. While this chapter seeks to provide sufficient background to facilitate understanding of my analyses, I am consciously not demanding complete comprehension and specialization of the subjects referenced. I recognize that my work does not constitute an encyclopedic, comprehensive data set of the subjects mentioned above, nor does it necessarily attempt to revisit and challenge historical readings of Iran or the United States. It does, however, hope to provide enough information to appreciate the analysis of the connection points between the two countries and provide new insights through the new way to see the connection.

The chapter is divided into three distinct sections:

1. We will begin by providing a brief history of the U.S. during its modernization—the issues surrounding technological changes, the social impacts of those changes, and the sense of loss that results. The point of talking about the U.S. first is to explain the social need felt by Americans in order to show how Iran filled that need.
2. Following the history of the U.S., we will explore modern Iran, particularly Reza Shah’s rise to power, with a focus on Iran’s structural transition from a pre-modern country to

modern state through modernization.

3. Finally, I will explain the Picturesque and the basic tenets of the aesthetic in preparation for their extensive use on the text in the remaining two chapters.

Again, neither the history of Iran, the U.S., or the Picturesque provided here are meant to be comprehensive but instead contextual and sufficient.²

Modernization and America

By the turn of the twentieth century, America found herself enthralled in what has come to be known as modernism. Like any time of ideological change, the Western world grappled with the major social, structural, and ideological changes and tried to make sense of a rapidly modernizing world that felt very different from the one they grew up in. For example, major changes in technology affected the type of jobs available resulting in revisions to traditional gender roles. Automobiles and railways changed the speed of transportation. Transportation capabilities necessitated new roads to improve mobility within cities as well as connect cities and previously less known rural-scapes (of course this also produced many new types of jobs). Communication through telephones became instantaneous and reliable. Education was more accessible than ever and underwent reform to accommodate environmental changes. The new technologies literally changed geography, interconnectivity, and arguably a sense of nationhood. In the end, these highly visible, life-altering changes were dizzying, exciting, and embroiled in discussions of their effect on culture, quality of life, and cultural superiority.

By the twentieth century, the modernizing forces within the U.S. had begun to make waves beyond her borders. Before and especially following WWI and WWII, the image of America began

² For a more complete history of Iran, consider Ervand Abrahamian's *A History of Modern Iran*, Elton Daniel's *The History of Iran*, or Karl Ernest Meyer's *The Dust of Empire: the Race for Mastery in the Asian Heartland*.

to change within the international community. Although increasingly recognized as a growing global participant during the time, we must be careful not to ascribe post-cold-war notions of the U.S. and its foreign policy to early 1920s and 30s. At the turn of the 20th century, the U.S. remained largely unproven and nascent international player and was therefore seen as less partial and colonial to “vulnerable” countries than Britain or Russia. The result, especially in the case of Iran, was to see the U.S. more as a country embodying modernization and independence without the colonizing intentions of older European countries.³

As a result, and despite contemporary political rhetoric, America and Iran once maintained a good-natured relationship fostered during the reign of Reza Shah. The Iranian government, it seems, perceived the U.S. to have different intentions compared to their Western counterparts and this enabled a special relationship between the two countries. Perhaps the best indicator of this special relationship is the use of Morgan Shuster and later Arthur Millspaugh as financial advisors and treasurers-general to the Iranian government. Contracted by the *Majlis* during the Qajar regime in 1910, Shuster only began his work developing an effective tax collection system before the encroaching Russian government demanded his dismissal in 1911. Contrarily, Millspaugh, commissioned by Reza Shah in 1922, was very successful during his five years in Iran and was even invited back in 1942. Even though Shuster proved largely unsuccessful due to Russian meddling, perhaps the most significant result of his work is a book entitled, *The Strangling of Persia*. His book, although scathingly critical of the pre-modern Iranian society in parts, outlines how foreign meddling constituted a large part of the Iranian difficulties. In the end, Iran entrusted

³ This, of course, excludes the idea of cultural imperialism, an idea feeding much of the discussion of America’s influence in Iran prior to 1979 and within the notion of the Shah’s increasingly “modernizing” practices. Americans undoubtedly levied cultural imperialism on Iran, but I would argue (even in light of the 1979 events) that it did not attempt to formally “colonize” Iran.

both men with the finances of the country (attempting to reduce Iranian debt to countries like Russia and Britain) and saw them, and America by extension, as friends without ulterior motives.

This relationship is corroborated in the narratives explored in this thesis. Perhaps the most overt is in Major E. Alexander Powell's travelogue, *By Camel and Car to the Peacock Throne*. Powell narrates a situation where the "gate-keeper" at a town refused to let him pass until he had paid a sum despite his letters from high-ranking foreign officials allowing him to pass without payment. Instead of submitting to the gatekeeper and paying the sum, Major Powell finds the town *kalantar*, or town mayor, to sort out the problem. After initially refusing the help, Major Powell exaggerates his relationship with the Shah stating, "He will be very angry when he hears of the treatment you have accorded to Americans" (218). Powell then describes a very significant response and exchange with the *kalantar* demonstrating the different position of Americans in Iran:

"Is the sah'b an American?" the *kalantar* demanded, his attitude changing as though by magic from ill-concealed insolence to profound respect. "Why did not the sah'b so inform me in the first place? I had supposed him to be an Inglesi. That alters everything. Perhaps the sah'b knows Shuster sah'b, the great American whom the Inglesi sent away because he was Persia's friend? Yes? Then I am at the sah'b's command. Where is this miserable son of a toad who dared to annoy Americans? Let the sah'b lead me to him. Before the sun sets his miserable feet shall feel the bastinado." (218)

Although highly Orientalized, this quote corroborates overt American understanding of the influence and trust Iranians had in William Shuster and by extension all Americans.⁴ The actual

⁴ I understand that travel narratives can be contested sites of "truth." The quote demonstrates Major Powell's perception, but if at the very least we can say that it demonstrates how Americans rationalized their differential treatment, it still holds both resonance and relevance.

Persian sentiment is admittedly absent, but it is significant that by painting Americans as “Persia’s friend” through Shuster, authors of the travel narratives also hail themselves as such. In other words, while they posit that Iranian sentiment towards the U.S., they also assume the role of becoming a protective Iranian ally in contrast to a colonial benefactor.

Iranian trust in Americans directly correlates to modernization in America. It would be a mistake to see all modernizing advances and their resulting modernism as fixed and homogeneous. In his book entitled *Mutual Othering*, Ahmed Idrissi Alami explores the formation of modernism and the implementation of modernizing technologies in Morocco through travel narratives to and from Europe. As he so aptly points out in his book, it is imperative that we do not conflate the notion of modernity with modernization nor assume a homogeneous modernity across all cultures. For Alami, “It is essential that we see the concept of modernity as fluid, an idea that depends for its constitution on local social and material manifestations as well as historical events and interactions with other cultures” (3). This conditional definition is contingent on very local, individualized societies within certain moments and their interactions with others, modernization technologies, and processes. In other words, it necessitates a specific, nuanced view of a certain time, space, and relational position and works in complete opposition to traditional hegemonic (and ethnocentric) definitions of modernity. Such traditional, myopic views of modernity often refer to an inherently Western modernity indicative of the “Enlightenment project as a whole.... constituted by epistemological paradigms of evolutionary thinking, universal reason, and the spread of capitalism and imperialism” wherein the “non-European is excluded” (Alami, 3-4). Significantly then, when referring to modernity we refer to modernities as the material, procedural, and technological effects of modernization interact with different societies ideologically and relationally contained within a specific moment.

Alami's work to pluralize modernity becomes extremely relevant as we consider Iran in relation to the perceived impartiality of America through figures like Shuster and Millspaugh; the conscious formation of a modern state by the Shah; the pushback from Iranians on what version of modernity Iran would adopt; and how American travelers interacted with the Iran generally. The travel narratives explored here essentially poke at how Iran and her nascent modernity would react to unique American influences and, perhaps more interestingly, how America would rely on Iran to help her ease into a breakneck pace of America's own modernization.

By looking at modernism relationally and contingent on a certain time and space, travel narratives become formative in understanding individual conceptions of modernism for both the traveler and those living in the location of travel. Through travel, modernism becomes discursive and relational, being defined against an individual's respective "other." The greater the discrepancy between the traveler and the place/people traveled the easier it becomes to identify the travelers' conception of modernity, how the "other" compares to their "home modernity," and purpose of their travel in conjunction with their modernity or modernizing process. I cannot overstate this point for my claims contained in this thesis.

The result of this contact through travel goes beyond mere definitions and quickly and naturally spills over into notions of power (as we will soon see). For Western travelers, one's proximity to modernity and modernization becomes a tool of both ideological and material subjugation of the other for specific purposes. This assumed power peaks as we consider not only how Iranians fail to become "modern" in the eyes of American travelers, but also how the narratives actively place a ceiling on the level of modernity and modernization Iranians are capable of achieving in the eyes of the American public. This assumed and limited range of potential

modernity transfers into discussions of a perpetual Orientalizing of Iran for the benefit of Western consumption to rationalize American modernity.

A Brief History of Iran

As previously stated, this thesis exclusively explores Iran from 1921-1941. Iran's history is complicated, ideologically volatile, and highly contested from sources within and without the country. For the period explored in this thesis, Reza Shah—his ascension to power, modernization practices, relationship with Irani citizens, and communication with the Western world—constitutes arguably the most significant figure of his country for the given time period. For Iran, Reza Shah and his controversial actions irreversibly changed the country culturally, cohesively, and structurally through his modernizing policies, ruthless politics, and eventually their backlash.

Reza Shah was first and foremost a soldier. He came from a family with a strong military background and ultimately his ability to take over Iran's government was a result of his command of the Iranian Cossack brigade. On February 21, 1921 General Reza Shah took over Tehran with three thousand men and eighteen machine guns. His ability to stage such a coup largely stemmed from a combination of factors including a weakened ruler (Qajar Shah 'Ahmad' Shah) and Qajar ruling class as a whole; foreign encroachment and quasi-colonialism from Britain and Russia; and most importantly a decentralized, failed state.⁵ Although Reza Shah did not immediately appoint himself ruler when he took over Tehran, he lost no time making himself, in the words of the British legation, a "virtual military dictator".⁶ As the true power behind Ahmad Shah, Reza Khan shuffled

⁵ See chapter 2 in Ervand Abahamian's *A History of Modern Iran* for greater detail about the circumstances in Iran prior to the Shah's rule

⁶ British Minister, "Annual Report for Persia (1922)," FO 371/Persia 1925/34-10848.

through multiple titles including army chief, war minister, premier, and commander-in-chief before ultimately crowning himself monarch and Shah (“king of kings”) in 1926.

Essentially, Reza Shah, his coup, and his policies filled a political power vacuum that had been brewing for quite some time. The Qajar rulers that preceded him maintained very limited control confined to the capital itself. As one traveled beyond the capitol, weak state bureaucracy and a lack of a standing army forced the Qajar Shahs to “depend on local notables in dealing with their subjects” resulting in little authority unless endorsed by regional notables at the local level (Abrahamian, 9). Such limited control allowed local leaders an inordinate amount of power and control regarding taxes, local law enforcement, capital punishment, and association/bargaining leverage with foreign powers. This bifurcation between Tehran and the rest of Iran remains significant even as we talk about modernization of Iran and the attempt of the U.S. to hold on to a pre-modern Iran.

Furthermore, Iranians experienced a successful constitutional revolution on August 5, 1906 (still celebrated as Constitutional Day).⁷ Despite more democratic features, the changes and politics that took place in the Tehran leadership had a very limited trickle-down effect. Between 1906 and 1920 there were three different Qajar Shahs, a constitutional revolution, two state coups, and a civil war all producing very little overall national change beyond Tehran’s city limits. In other words, despite the constant power changes and democratic additions, concessions, and modifications, none of the rulers or democratic changes were able to consolidate Iran into a

⁷ Many without a significant education in the history of Iran believe that the Reza Shah and the Ayatollah came in and fundamentally changed the constitutional policies. In reality, Iran’s democratically controlled government created called for a constitutional monarchy and granted significant concessions to Islam and Shi’ism in particular exploited under the Ayatollah. The government created cabinet positions for religious leaders, allowed them to censor and ban content on moral grounds (for the country), provided a judiciary divided into state and religious courts, and power was given to ensure the legislature didn’t pass laws “that conflicted with the shari’a” (Abramian, 48). There was even a “Guardian Council” of senior clerics who would vet all legislation until Judgement Day. The seeds of 1979 were sown well before Reza Shah took the throne.

centralized state and as a result produced little to no national change. Those changes could only come about through a man on horseback who could unite Iran and establish a centralized government thereby calling all semi-autonomous quarters of the country to heel.

To further complicate and exacerbate Iranian state at the turn of the twentieth century, Iran teetered on the brink of becoming a colonized state from both Britain and Russia. For years, Russia and Britain had played a tug-of-war match with Iran vying for natural resources and power. As a result, Iran was forced into humiliating treaties with both Russia (Gulestan in 1813 and Turkmanchai in 1828) and Britain (Treaty of Paris in 1857). Said another way, the Soviets and British maintained a prickly on-again-off-again relationship that seemingly divided up Iran and her possessions, occupying land and politics without even feigning the consent of native leaders (Daniel, 126, 131; Abrahamian, 36).

By 1907, instead of vying and competing for power in Iran Britain and the Soviet Union decided upon an accord that would divide Iran up into three spheres of influence giving the Soviet Union control of the North including Isfahan and Britain the southwest with its rich oil reserves without consulting Iran's inhabitants. At hearing their own country had been divided among foreign powers, "the Persians reacted with absolute shock. News that their country had been dismembered coincided with a constitutional revolution meant to restore Persia's independence and self-respect" (Meyer, 60-61).

Despite gaining significant democratic power in 1906, a decentralized Iranian state could not compete with foreign powers. Fighting on literally all fronts, the next few years saw internal tussles for power between the Qajar rulers and liberals supporting a National Assembly, an all-out civil war by 1908, and by December 1911 Russia occupied their "zone" including Tehran and

made demands of their own. WWI further increased foreign occupation of Iran and following the war Britain nearly succeeded in making Iran an imperialist state.⁸

As if the problem could not appear bleaker, to compound the issues, “By 1900 government deficits were running at a rate of more than \$1 million a year” and “government bankruptcy and spiraling inflation” posed a significant problem (Abrahamian, 38). With a decentralized state too weak to enforce higher taxes, the Qajar state was forced to sell a series of concessions with Russia and Britain as well as secure additional loans to literally keep the Iranian government afloat. “Mines, railways, tramways, dams, roads, and industrial plants” as well as oil and fishing in the Caspian Sea were forfeit and the already hungry foreign powers continued to sink their claws into Iran geographically, politically, and now financially (Abrahamian, 41).

By 1920, a vision of an independent Iran seemed to be slipping away. Foreign encroachment had nearly taken over Iran’s tenuous autonomy. The recent civil and global war in conjunction with bad harvests, cholera and typhus epidemics and an influenza pandemic had wiped out as many as 2 million Iranians including a quarter of the rural population. The Iranian political state was fraught with corruption, bankruptcy, and a loss of the right to many natural resources due to concessions. As a classic failed state, Iran was ripe for change and takeover and that is exactly the vacuous state filled by General Reza Khan.

Although many see Reza Shah as a great reformer or even secularizer of Iran, “The legacies he left behind were byproducts of this single-minded drive to create a strong centralized state” (Abrahamian, 72). Reza Shah utilized his military knowledge and might to bring the country, and the many rural factions, to heel. Four years after his military coup he had nearly doubled the

⁸ Following WWI, Lord Curzon rewrote a new Anglo-Persian Agreement essentially making Iran a British imperial state. He fronted 160,000 pounds to Vossuq al-Dowleh, then Iranian prime minister, to help the deal get passed through the Majlis. The deal completely backfired as both men misunderstood Iran’s sentiment towards Britain and resulted in the death of four of al-Dowleh’s associates.

number of military men and by 1941 the military force was nearly six times larger. With military might behind his command, Reza Shah had the ability to consolidate his power, enforce taxes and generate revenue, implement new social reform, modernize the country, and ensure that the changes occurred among urban and rural populations alike.

With a military force large enough to enforce compliance nation-wide, Reza Shah generated sufficient revenue for the bureaucratic machinery necessary to maintain a centralized state. Much of this needed revenue came from taxes: creating new taxes on consumer goods like sugar, tea, tobacco, cotton, hides, and opium, charging higher custom duties, and targeting tax delinquents. Especially in terms of the latter of those three, Reza Shah used the situation to gain control, crushing several dissident forces, quasi-independent rulers, and families long used to being in charge in their local and often rural towns. Under the fragmented Qajar regime, local rules and powerful rural families-controlled tax collection (and often tax use), law enforcement, and even deals with foreign powers. Reza Shah's ever-growing military forced these independent figures to pay back taxes, concede oil rights to the state, and essentially concede power to the Shah.

These scuffles not only consolidated power within Iran to the Shah, but also sent a strong message to Russia and Britain. Soon after his coup, Reza Shah signed the Soviet-Iranian Agreement in which the Soviets agreed to withdraw from Gilan and abandon all financial claims on Iran and her natural resources except for the Caspian fisheries. Respect from Britain proved harder fought. When pressed to pay taxes and concede oil rights to the central government, a local leader and British protégé, Sheikh Mohammareh Khaz'al, looked to the British for intervention on his behalf. In Elton Daniel's book *The History of Iran*, he describes the confrontation as a pivotal moment between Reza Shah and the British. In the end, the British threatened military action if Reza Shah did not desist from his pressure on Khaz'al. "Unintimidated, Reza Khan called the bluff

and marched on Mohammareh in person” and forced his payment (Daniel, 134). Daniel notes that "probably no other event so enhanced Reza Khan’s reputation as his willingness to confront the British lion in one of its chief lairs” (Daniel 134). His ability to collect taxes not only raised revenue and displayed military power, but it communicated to foreign powers that Reza Shah was in charge in Iran. With a military force able to enforce taxes and together with oil royalties, Iran now had the resources to fund projects that would further help centralize the state and limit the need to lean on countries like Britain and Russia for loans.

In return for new and higher taxes and a virtual military dictatorship, Reza Shah built infrastructure and essentially modernized the state. Under the Shah’s regime, 1,000 kilometers of paved roads and 5,000 kilometers of gravel roads were constructed. The number of motor vehicles jumped from literally one in 1900-1906 to around 20,000 in the 1930s (Schayegh, 201). Military outposts and checkpoints made Caravan roads safer facilitating trade and transport. By 1938, most cities had some form of electricity and the cities themselves underwent significant renovations: roads were widened, old gates demolished, homes and businesses rebuilt, schools constructed, and factories created. The changes were so extensive that most historians, like Daniel, often take the opinion that, "[his] goal as ruler can be summed up in one phrase: to complete the job of making Iran into a modern nation-state" (Daniel, 135). Reza Shah inherited a feudalistic-like state and transformed it into a modernized country. Whereas only years earlier the only way to transport goods was on the back of a donkey or camel, Iran now had railways, roads, motor vehicles, and even airplanes. A pre- modern Iran had found and entered a modern age at a breakneck pace.

Much like the modernization of the U.S., Iranian modernization came at significant cost. Arguably, his most contested modernizing (and arguably Westernizing) policies for Iranians and for American travelers alike were cultural. The Shah mandated a variety of policies to essentially

eradicate a heterogeneous Iran and instead create a sense of national unity, allegiance, and solidarity with the new Iran (and himself).

National unity not only involved a strong military and central government, it also required the obliteration of competing ethnic, regional, and religious identities. Thus, there was a pronounced effort to build up a pervasive sense of Iranian nationality by glorifying the pre-Islamic periods of Iranian history and holding up Persian language and culture as normative. Archaeological work was encouraged, a special cultural institute attempted to purge Persian of its borrowings from Arabic grammar and vocabulary, classical authors like Ferdowsi who were regarded as Iranian nationalist in spirit were singled out for special celebration, and the use of minority language like Kurdish and Turkish was discouraged in numerous ways. (Daniel, 136)

Perhaps the genesis of cultural redesign began with the military. Using the military as the central cog in his new national machine, the Shah instituted military conscription in 1925 for all abled-bodied young men. Serving for two years in active duty and four years in reserves, conscription brought about Iran's first birth certificates and mandatory family names (with an emphasis on Persian names). It also forced young Iranians from across the country to speak Persian, intermix with others from dissimilar backgrounds, and pledge allegiance to the country and the Shah. According to Abrahamian, "Two-thirds of the conscripts spent their first six months learning Persian. In fact, the draft was designed in part to turn peasants and tribesmen into citizens" (77). The military through conscription essentially unified the population from the inside out, culturally redesigning youth and exposing them to modernization, Persian, and an environment drastically different from their native homes at a formative moment of their lives.

The Shah also instituted change among the general population. Persian became the official language, making it necessary for the general population to learn it in order to participate in public and legal actions. The shah instituted the metric system and a standard time for the whole country. The solar calendar replaced the Muslim lunar calendar. Months were renamed and last names required for all families. The Shah himself took the name of Pahlavi, forcing the family who already had the last name to change it.

The educational system also underwent a complete overhaul. American tax and infrastructure consultant to Iran, Arthur Millspaugh, estimated that there were no more than 650 total schools in 1923 and no female students attending state schools (Millspaugh, 100-112). By 1941, there were more than 2,577 schools excluding religious schools and 4,000 female students in public schools (Menashri, 110). By the end of his reign, religious schools were nationalized and only taught in Persian. Secondary education changed, too. The six total universities in Iran were combined to create the University of Tehran. The Shah also encourage studying at European Universities. The Shah closely monitored schools and much like military conscription used them to influence the younger generation creating a more centralized, unified, and modernized state.

None of the reforms, however, were quite as visually divisive as the Shah's mandated dress code. Again, used to create a sense of solidarity, unity, and modernity, the shah banned traditional clothing for all but state "registered" clergyman. Men were required to wear Western-style trousers and coat along with the "Pahlavi cap" and later a felt-brimmed fedora. Men were encouraged to shave or at most maintain a modest mustache and religious leaders alone reserved to right to wear a turban. These decrees also affected the women. Police were instructed not to harass women appearing in public without a veil or talking to unrelated men without a chaperone. Although initially encouraged—rather than obligated—to discard the veil, by the end of his reign the Shah

outright outlawed the use of the chador in public and “ordered ordinary citizens to bring their wives to public functions without head coverings” (Abrahamian, 83-4, 95).

The public reacted to the Shah’s dress decrees with mixed emotions. For many young women comprising the new intelligencia, they welcomed the de-veiling of women. Others saw the mandates as a direct attack on their conservatism. The wife of one governor committed suicide rather than relinquish the veil while others took to wearing long scarves and high collars. Shaving and going without a hat violated taboos among male societies, too, not to mention the difficulties of observing prayers while wearing a brimmed hat.

In all these new cultural practices, the Shah attempted to develop greater unity among Iranians nationally and muscle culture into a modern design much as he attacked Iran’s pre-modern infrastructure. Conservative, rural, more religious populations were resistant, and Tehran continued as the location quickest to absorb and demonstrate new change. We can see the reign of Reza Shah as a liminal moment between the pre-modern and modern era in Iran. His son and successor, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, would continue to push and enforce cultural and structural modernizing policies well beyond what the Reza Shah accomplished. For American travelers to Iran, the period from 1921 to 1941 was transitional and perceived as the last chance to see a not-yet modern image ready to sink below the horizon. We might sum up the history of Iran during Reza Shah, then, as the signaling of a new Iran; the establishment of a central government; and a latent tension between what was, what is, and what Iran should be.

The Picturesque

I previously made some very strong claims regarding the Picturesque and its importance in this thesis. Due to its pivotal role, let’s spend some time to fully understand this aesthetic mode, its history, and most importantly why it should factor into this thesis.

Travel narratives spend a great deal of time describing a location, people, and cultures. All the narratives in this thesis utilize the Picturesque, both in name and form, to describe Iran. This is hardly surprising since the Picturesque is a colloquialism by this point helped largely by the fact, as stated by aesthetician John Conron, that it was “The first American Aesthetic” (xiv).

But what is the Picturesque? Unfortunately, the Picturesque is a somewhat slippery term to define. It is defined relationally between the beautiful and sublime. In his article “Mechanical Aesthetics: Picturesque Tourism and the Transportation Revolution in Pennsylvania,” Will B. Mackintosh states that, “Burke and Gilpin had taught British and American travelers to identify and analyze discrete Picturesque scenes, each one of which had a unique combination of beautiful and sublime components, and each of which needed to be ‘[delineated] in pen and pencil’” (100). Although the Picturesque remains a unique aesthetic mode, it is defined as a certain combination and/or absence of the sublime and beautiful. The subjectivity of knowing the right combinations, however, has given rise to multiple definitions, phases, uses, and revisions that can prove extremely difficult to navigate especially in a contemporary context when all versions continue simultaneously albeit selectively.

Luckily, the 1992 issue of *Nineteenth Century Prose* was dedicated entirely to the Picturesque and helps even out some of the subjective bumps. Admittedly, this thesis leans heavily on the 1992 publication and more specifically on Picturesque scholar, Carrie Tirado Bramen. Bramen is perhaps the foremost and most prolific scholar on the Picturesque and represents the most credible source for the aesthetic mode. As the highlight piece in the issue, Bramen published an article titled, “The History of the Picturesque” wherein she maps out, among many things, the transitions and changes made to the Picturesque. According to Bramen, there are two (and I would

argue three⁹), significant periods for the Picturesque. The first is “in the last decade of the eighteenth century, when Gilpin’s guidebooks inspired a generation of tourist to explore ruined abbeys, the river Wye, and the Lake District equipped with a Claude glass and a sketchbook” (Bramen, 5). To get a better sense of how Gilpin (and the first phase of the Picturesque) separated the Picturesque from the sublime and beautiful, consider a quote by Dennis Berthold in his article “Charles Brockden Brown, ‘Edgar Huntly’, and the Origins of the American Picturesque”:

As Gilpin explained, to see nature Picturesquely meant to judge and admire actual landscapes as one would painted landscapes. They might be tame and beautiful, like the pastoral meadows of Claude Lorrain, or bold and sublime, like the banditti-infested mountains of Salvator Rosa; either way, they were Picturesque if they fulfilled certain criteria of visual interest, predominantly roughness, variety and irregularity, chiaroscuro, harmonious composition, and the power to stimulate the imagination. (67)

The Picturesque, then, ranges in what type of nature explored (both wild and domestic) and engenders many of the qualities of both the sublime and beautiful. Essentially, however, the aesthetic is cautious of the harmony between the beautiful and the sublime in order to produce the Picturesque—never indulging in an excess or overwhelming presence of either. Additionally, there is a sense of novelty arising from the constant “irregularities” and “variety” that often results in a sense of “mild surprise” very different from the “shock” of the sublime and the excessive training “necessary to detect beauty” (urban, 451). And finally, and perhaps most important of all, the Picturesque always represents a sort of “roughness” indicative of this delicate combination of the sublime and beautiful. In a way, we might say the Picturesque offered a more approachable, lay-

⁹ I would consider the urban Picturesque and colloquial uses of the term in more contemporary usage constituting the third.

man's version of popular aesthetics without the finesse and perfection required through exhaustive training.

This first phase of the Picturesque was aimed squarely at a lay audience. Gilpin envisioned the Picturesque as “an amateur's aesthetic, a way to enjoy nature by imagining it framed as a painting” (Bramen, 5). As a result, the Picturesque took on a very domesticating hue early on and inspired many to try the aesthetic for themselves. As cited earlier, through his guidebooks Gilpin reached a wide audience in Britain and sent many common folks scampering around the countryside to find the “roughness” through the middling aesthetic they could understand. Predictably, “The Picturesque, which relies on novelty, variety, and irregularity, quickly evolved into a habitual mode of seeing...[and] became a victim of its own success. By the 1790s, hundreds of guidebooks and sketchbooks appeared, promising to teach their readers how to find the curious, the distinct, and the different in the midst of the ordinary” (Bramen, 1). In other words, the ubiquity of the Picturesque and popularity among all strata of society (and especially among those often left out of contemporary aesthetic conversations) caused the Picturesque to lose favor at the turn of the 19th century.

This ubiquity of the Picturesque through the “first phase” is precisely why it remains such a factor in the narratives explored here and a commonplace utterance even today. When authors of travel narratives write Picturesquely or name the Picturesque directly, all strata of readers of the time period understood, at least in essence, what was meant regardless of the application since the aesthetic regularly applied the core teachings to various mediums and uses. If we did not explore the Picturesque in this work, passages utilizing the aesthetic to express meaning become essentially misunderstood and unanalyzed by the contemporary reader. By bringing this meaning back to consciousness contemporarily, we can better appreciate and theorize the changes that have

occurred in the relational connections between the U.S. and Iran as well as understand why the relationship unfolded in the manner that it did.

Despite waning interest, the 19th century saw a revival of the Picturesque constituting Bramen's second phase (Bramen, 1). In stark contrast to Gilpin's Picturesque, theorists Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight took the visual aspects of the Picturesque and applied them beyond mere landscape paintings in an attempt to reconcile a growing modernism. This new application, "Made the pursuit of novelty seem superficial, and at worse, ethically cruel. Its practitioners had to confront head-on an issue that was largely side-stepped in its eighteenth-century incarnation: the relation of the Picturesque to modernity" (Bramen, 7). Although the new generation of the Picturesque still remained defined "in terms of imperfection, irregularities, variation, and roughness," there is a noticeable change in purpose that caused a visually noticeable transformation and a "shift in focus, from distant 'figures' to human faces, reflect[ing] changing attitudes toward modernization" (Bramen, 2, 7). These "changing attitudes" assume a variety of forms ranging from moral disgust at those "bearing the brunt" of modernity to an ennobling of the destitute "other" and otherwise fringe members of society.¹⁰

This second-generation change, well utilized by our Iranian travelers, brought about much more sophisticated uses for the Picturesque as the aesthetic became more overtly critical and politicized.¹¹ The change in sophistication also brought about a conscious change in audience as Knight and Price, "Sought to make the Picturesque more credible and 'serious' by making it more elitist" (Bramen, 5). For Price and Knight, "The Picturesque *aficionado* had to be properly trained in the canon of landscape painting in order to appreciate nature" (Bramen, 5). As a result, the

¹⁰ Discussion generated by Ruskin and Turner as well as top moralists of the time.

¹¹ See Kim Ian Micasiw's "Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque."

Picturesque assumed a more guarded feel in the 19th century as lay members were consciously left out of discussions and participation of the new developments of the aesthetic.

Although Bramen's article essentially stops after the second phase, as alluded to earlier I feel there is yet a third distinct phase of the Picturesque taking place around the twentieth century and continuing to the present showcased by this thesis. This third phase is marked by a multivalent definition created when Price and Knight reclaimed the Picturesque from lay users. While Picturesque scholarship continued in academic circles, amateur practitioners continued to indulge in a more outdated and colloquial practice. As a result, and much like the previous discussion of modernity, scholarship today could in no wise claim a homogeneous view of the Picturesque but rather we must see definitions as contingent on users, time, application, influence, and purpose. Depending on its use, the Picturesque represents the modern and antediluvian, playful and serious, urban and rural, and wild and domesticated. In this way, the Picturesque assumes what Sidney Robinson in her book *Inquiry into the Picturesque* a "postmodern quality" and "a playfulness that should not be entirely trusted" (Robinson, 85). It is precisely this playfulness that I would define as the hallmark of the third Picturesque phase and perhaps the best yet. In this phase, the Picturesque assumes greater complexity and necessitates that the user and the observer to empathetically and impossibly understand one another. The result is always unsettled, not completely understood, wanting, and frustrated.

In addition, many of the interactions of this third phase also begin to invade the urban space while continuing to address individuals of significantly different cultural and/or economic background from the observer. As a result of modern development, a number of new urban jobs became available luring many rural people to either make the move to urban spaces or emigrate from their respective countries with the hope of a better, modern life. The result was pockets of

low income and culturally/ethnographically distinct neighborhoods living in often deplorable, cloistered conditions. This historical moment led America particularly to envision itself as the proverbial “melting pot,” showcasing a heterogeneous society that, while diverse, didn’t always mix in the beginning yielding places like little Italy, Chinatown, and ethnographically distinct “quarters.” A wealth of familiar American Picturesque literature stems from this moment including Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck, William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*, and numerous stories by Ernest Hemmingway.

Much of the modernist American Literature canon arguably represents a transformed Picturesque that capitalizes on the diverse cultural experiences found within the city and only a walk away from people’s homes. As a result, several writers and guides alike engaged in what has been describes as “intra-urban walking tours” wherein readers and walkers are guided through unfamiliar and culturally charged areas of the city that present exotic cultures and spectacles without the necessity of exotic, exhaustive travel. In other words, the exotic and Picturesque experiences could now become even more domestic and quotidian as they were only a walk away from the urban home.

Among one of the writers examining and theorizing this historical phenomenon, Bramen wrote two other articles beyond the one previously cited: one entitled “The Urban Picturesque and the Spectacle of Americanization” and the other, “William Dean Howells and the Failure of the Urban Picturesque.” In the first article, she demonstrates intra-urban walking tours (much like city tours in Iran) as affluent walkers essentially “slum” or visit the unknown “ethnic” or “other” quarters of a city. According to Bramen,

Just as the eighteenth-century Picturesque traveler was not interested in the small farmer who was working hard to maintain a modest crop but in the peripatetic

figures of the countryside, the late-nineteenth-century urban Picturesque traveler was not intrigued by the economically mobile immigrant family, moving from their downtown tenement to their Brooklyn home. Nor were they generally curious about the working classes. The urban Picturesque tended to represent the *Lumpenproletariat*, which only seems appropriate given that *lumpen* means “rags and tatters” (453-454).

Essentially, this third phase sought out and maintained the subaltern. As a result, the viewer must wrestle with the competing needs to consume the image and capture it (even photographically at this point), sympathize and/or reason with it, and impossibly understand and communicate with it thus drawing it out of subaltern status. The Picturesque walker might employ a variety of Picturesque techniques depending on his or her orientation to and awareness of the depth and history of the aesthetic, and as a result the analysis of an experience becomes much more consciously contingent on one’s subject position, knowledge, and history with the aesthetic.

The travel narratives examined in this thesis comfortably fall into this third phase, and it is precisely because of the Picturesque’s contemporary fluidity that I am drawn to the aesthetic and feel that it significantly enriches and revolutionizes multiple academic discourses simultaneously. Each narrative explored here demands nothing less than a contingent, post-modern view of the Picturesque that will inherently change with each author. Mapping the Picturesque onto travel discourses allows readers to become aware of the slipperiness of the narratives, transfer unique meaning, trace cultural assumptions, and filter out motives. It also helps to revitalize the Picturesque itself. In 1992, Kim Michasiw primed aestheticians on a new age of discussion around the Picturesque in his essay entitled, “Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque.” Michasiw questioned, “What, after all, happens to the Picturesque adept when he is sent out to rule the

colonies?" (96). Michasiw's prompt remained unanswered arguably until this thesis where we get a glimpse into what a new chapter of the Picturesque might look like. This new unorthodox application of the Picturesque has the power to revitalize these conversations by finally discussing the Picturesque in conjunction with populations long beyond the scope of American academics such as Iran, the Middle East, and East Asia generally.

CHAPTER 3. THE PICTURESQUE DOMESTICATION OF IRAN FOR AMERICAN ESCAPISM FROM MODERNITY

In this chapter, we begin to utilize the Picturesque as a tool to analyze travel narratives in Iran. We will see authors use the aesthetic to create clear boundaries between their modern, Western selves and the anti-modern, Eastern Iranians to ultimately create an escapist holiday from a Western, overactive modernity. Being borne out of landscape painting, the Picturesque functions expertly in controlling environments by “framing” boundaries much like a painter would a painting.¹² The power to choose and manipulate boundaries “add[s] a controlling aesthetic vision—a native landscape,” superimposing a controlled, “native” view onto whatever non-conformist aspects the viewer might find (Michasiw, 77). Such framing power allows the viewer to selectively see and portray an Iran reflective of common Western perceptions of the time. When Iran and the Picturesque come too close, grow too conscious, and/or too similar to the observer, the observer merely manipulates the boundaries to create greater ideological space to preserve a desired image.

We repeatedly see this frame “fixing” as travelers attempt to contextualize or downplay the growing sense of modernization in Iran. In her travelogue, *A Doctor’s Holiday in Iran*, Rosalie Slaughter Morton attempts to illuminate Iran’s growing modernism while simultaneously framing and rationalizing Iran in both a Picturesque and Orientalized way. Early on in her introduction, Morton delineates between Iranian modernism and American modernism stating that, “Smoothly Oriental in texture as always, the Iranian national life is gradually, but very definitely, altering its course to conform with the world-wide social revolution, without, however, losing that pungent

¹² “Contrary to the sublime, which suggest ‘infinity’ and a ‘boundless ocean,’ the Picturesque depends on borders or what Uvedale Price describes as the ‘shape and disposition of its boundaries’” (Urban, 452).

tang of the East with which history has always associated the name of Persia” (Morton, vii). While Morton’s description clearly indicates a growing sense of modernization in Iran, she cannot help but differentiate it from her own American modernism using orientalist charged language.

In many ways, we might see such a definition as enlightened by allowing for greater nuance, fluidity, and ulterior definitions of modernism that do not necessitate a homogenization and/or imperialism from the U.S. Although, the manner Morton describes the difference as a “pungent tang of the East...always associated with the name Perisa” feels far from enlightened and lacks specificity necessary to mitigate its own Orientalist “tang.” Additionally, Morton’s use of the absolute “always” leaves little room for deviation and self-creation for Iranians. As a result, maintaining an Orientalist flavor made evident through Picturesque descriptions creates greater disparity between Morton, as the modernized viewer, and her Picturesque subject that, despite some modern elements, still predominantly reside and represent the Picturesque. In the end, by pointing to the difference in Iranian modernization Morton can reframe Iran throughout her narrative to emphasize the Picturesque qualities, or “tang of the East,” and to interpret even modern Iran as Picturesque.

In all the narratives explored here, there is a delicate interaction between American travelers seeking a Picturesque experience and the acknowledgement of an encroaching modernism fiercely imposed by the Shah. Morton writes that, “Riza Shah is what Ammon Ra was to Egyptians. His rise wipes out Iran’s Dark Ages in one life span” (101). If we remember from the first chapter, Reza Shah stopped at nothing until he created a centralized state with a distinct by-product of modernization. According to Morton, even the Shah was aware of the tug-of-war in Iran between the Picturesque and modernization:

When a high official ventured to suggest that the tribal way of living was very Picturesque and that it would be a loss if Iran should become just like all other countries, the Shah's answer was: "We are not here to be Picturesque. We must have improvement in education, in health, and in the production of food for our people. Dreamy poets, philosophers and artist will always be in Iran." (Morton, 107)

As the Shah so aptly phrases it, modernism was often seen as the main threat to a Picturesque Iran. And for the Shah—unlike our travelers—this was not a negative thing. If the world recognized Iran as a modern country, services and life for the Iranian people might improve but the Picturesque would likely be a casualty.

Embedded within a compilation of stories entitled, *Classic Tales of Travel and Adventure from National Geographic*, public servant and traveler, Harold F. Weston, writes an article called "Persian Caravan Sketches." In the article, Weston relates through "word pictures" a very predictable experience that we would expect from a contributor to *National Geographic* outlining a Picturesque Iranian experience. The introduction to Weston's inclusion, however, says perhaps more concerning the American sentiment towards the Picturesque in Iran than Weston could accomplish with his visual prose:

As Weston, 25 years old, sketched and photographed and jotted notes, he may not have known that he was seeing the last of old Persia. Soon Reza Khan would become shah, impose modernization, and build the foundations of modern Iran.... The word pictures he penned for the accompanying article are as vividly intense as his sketches and paintings, bring this long-vanished world momentary back to life. (86)

This introduction laments the passing of the Picturesque like an endangered animal species that lost its last specimen. It communicates a deep sense of loss since the Picturesque can only continue with intense, rural poverty, tough lives, and living anachronisms.

The writer of this introduction is not alone. This prevailing lament is almost ubiquitous among American travelers to Iran. In Hermann Norden work entitled *Under Persian Skies: A Record of the Travel by the Old Caravan Routes of Western Persia*, he echoes this lament as he exclaims at the end of his own caravan trip:

And more and more I realized how soon such travel for pleasure will be an anachronism. How soon railways and motor-trucks will be used for the transporting of goods, and the camel, like the horse in Western lands, will find its occupation gone. Speed and efficiency, and something of comfort, will have come at the cost of Picturesqueness, and the yet greater cost of intimate knowledge of the country crossed. (208)

Likewise, Janet Miller, in her book, *Camel-Bells of Baghdad*, mourns the impending modernism in Iran:

I grieve to think of the passing of this old quarter of Tehran, especially as they are substituting small Western buildings with corrugated tin roofs for the lovely tile-decorated, flat-roofed houses that are being torn down. The iconoclastic designs of the present Shah are sweeping all the beauty and pleasing charm of Teheran before them. Not one relic of the former glory of this semi-desert city is he leaving worth making a pilgrimage to see. (146)

Much like the introduction and Norden above, Miller grieves at the thought of losing the Picturesque architecture of Tehran for the more utilitarian designs implemented by the Shah.

Interestingly, she even comments that the new buildings are Western, using the term negatively in comparison to the “lovely” native architecture. At the expense of calling her own culture promulgated in Iran “small” compared to Picturesquely “lovely,” we must ask why America and the West generally lament and grieve over the perceived passing of the Picturesque consumed by modernism in Iran? Why is it so important that Iran remain in an antiquated and anti-modern state?

The answer lies, in part, in the fundamental connection between America ideologically and the Picturesque. As cited earlier, although America was not the first to develop the Picturesque, it represents, “The first American Aesthetic” (Conron, xiv). In order to understand why American travelers are generally so overwhelmingly adamant about maintaining the Picturesque in Iran or at least seeing it portrayed in Iran, we must first understand a little bit about the Picturesque within the U.S.

With its colonial beginnings, America was long considered a frontier location with an abundance of wild and rugged features in its landscape, society, and culture. Citing Thomas Cole’s “Essay on American Scenery” (1836), Carrie Bramen explains how America’s “wildness” came to essentially embody the Picturesque in its “purest state” in contrast to a “‘Civilized Europe,’ whose land is largely ‘cultivated’ and whose ‘rugged mountains have been smoothed’” (Bramen, 12-13). The Picturesqueness of America defined what it meant to be American both as a landscape and a people and essentially articulated the differences between America and the rest of the Western world. It was and arguably is an essential piece of an American identity: rough, full of potential, sublime, beautiful, and earthy.

However, the onset of modernism with its increased modernization technologies began to seriously threaten the wildness traditionally associated with the United States. Roads made most Picturesque landscapes easily assessable, smoother, and irrevocably altered. Traditional modes of

living faded as old technology was phased out, replacing plow-horses with tractors, farming jobs for industrial careers, and stagecoaches with trains. Such drastic changes to America did not pass unnoticed and despite his pride in America's roughness, "By the end of [Thomas] Cole's manifesto, the future seems grim. The 'wilderness' of American scenery will soon resemble the cultivated landscapes of Europe: 'I cannot but express my sorrow that the beauty of such landscapes are quickly passing away'" (Cole, 17; Bramen, 13). As modernism transformed modes of living and the wilderness faded and became less wild, it threatened to take—and we could argue took—the Picturesque aesthetic with it. This marks the loss not just of an aesthetic mode, but arguable the stable notions of American identity embodied in and through the Picturesque as well. The result was general insecurity and a sense that the Picturesque, and therefore traditional American life, were quickly fleeting or in most ways had already passed.

As a result, many Americans fought in opposition to the modernist movement. Transcendentalist proponents including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller actively advocated a simpler life in contrast to the busyness of modernism. Warren G. Harding won the 1921 presidential election on the slogan of "Return to normalcy" largely resonating with the many Americans feeling a sense of loss as traditional ways of life, moralities, and cultures that had begun to change as a result of modernism. Essentially, America experienced an identity crisis as modernism challenged many of the traditional beliefs and American identities they came to depend on.

In addition to outright dismissal of many modernist tendencies, many sought a way to attenuate the growing pains caused by modernism through travel. In his article, "A Continent of Pictures: Reflections on the "Europe" of Nineteenth-Century Tourists," James Buzard explains

how many utilize travel to combat the “anomic and fragmented” consequences of a modern life and for a moment bask in the “wholeness” associated with a more Picturesque existence (34):

Throughout the century, a frequent defense of the Continental tour claimed that, like “culture” as the critics of utilitarianism described it, foreign travel readmits into human life the imaginative and moral energies—the poetry— sacrificed in a Benthamite workaday world.... all travelers to Europe are ultimately “on the same errand” of seeking to recover that joyous sense of life which their routine existence has nearly extinguished. (32)

Although Buzard resorts to more typical Picturesque travel with a European destination, his message communicating how travel revitalizes modern travelers is very clear. Modernist life, although comfortable, convenient, and progressive also inherently fractures and causes a spiritual, existential, and “wholeness seeking” anemia. In order for modern people to reconnect and rediscover wholeness, even for a moment, they traveled to simpler places offering a distinctly Picturesque experience.

In this way, travel made the transition to modernity easier allowing travelers to reconnect, even momentarily, to a life before modernism through locations like Iran. Essentially, they hoped to reconcile the past and glean all they could before the old ways of life slipped away for good. Nothing could more perfectly demonstrate this point than Rosalie Slaughter Morton’s stated reason for visiting Iran:

Perplexed by many half-developed experiments in living, defeated by finding no end to the paths of thought which wind and wind, I longed to go back to tribal origins, to try to find how the essentials in the old-time living have woven through the patterns of modernity, where we lost the way and evolved expedients to cover

our bewilderment; where we found green pastures and new caravan routes to link our endeavors with others traveling the road of life. (Morton, 2)

Morton travels to Iran to reconnect to the past and retrace her steps hoping that her journey will yield a better way to integrate the “whole” Picturesque past with the fractured modern present and future. She essentially asks, “What have I lost that causes me such bewilderment in my present condition and how can I get it back the second time around?” Iran then, becomes a place to regroup and reevaluate life as it represents an archetype of the old American way of life prior to modernization. It essentially allows travelers to relieve their stress caused by modernization knowing that they can repeat the process as often as they visit, gleaning everything from the Picturesque lifestyle they wish they would have remembered prior to modernization. If Americans could somehow salvage and maintain the Picturesque through Iran, they could preserve a bridge to past American identity, too.

Considering this rationale, it is not hard to see why Americans remained so protective of the Picturesque in Iran even at the expense of perhaps morally questionable voyeurism of poverty and disingenuous framing of the growing modernism within Iran itself. As a counter- modern aesthetic, the Picturesque “resisted the homogenizing pressures of modernization, which John Ruskin described in terms of “the frightful and monotonous present” (Ruskin, 5:369; *History of Art*, 7). Iran reminds readers of the heterogeneous flavor of the old world without having to endure the permanent discomforts associated with it. It essentially becomes the perfect counter-modern retreat offering respite from an increasingly blander yet more convenient and comfortable world. In the words of Dennis Berthold, it “Provided Americans with a congenial, respectable, eminently civilized standpoint from which to study and enjoy the wilderness” (Berthold, 69).

Predominantly, it provides a way to consume and relive the past without having to sacrifice the perceived advances of modern life resulting in a more “civilized” existence.

Ironically, however, the very presence of Western travelers causes a growing consciousness in Iran to the modern changes occurring throughout the world. Even with invested interest in maintaining a Picturesque oasis, most travelers eventually admit that Iran is changing and becoming more modern. Essentially, they must admit that even their Picturesque vacation will be speckled with moments of modernism at best or a constant vein of modernism at worst. In his book *The Open Road in Persia*, John Richards aptly captures this constant blending of modern and Picturesque in Iran: “Persia to-day is a land of contrasts. The peasant labours to till the soil, following in the wake of the patient oxen yoked to the wooden plough, while heavy motor lorries hurry by, raising clouds of dust” (Richards, 15). At least by 1933 when Richards published his narrative, he makes plain that the Picturesque scene in Iran inherently and hopelessly blended with the modern.

This modern/mediaeval cocktail comes as a major blow for many seeking to travel to Iran for some Picturesque R&R. However, it also serves to enhance and facilitate the Picturesque experience as travelers come to expect easy access and well-maintained Picturesque locations. In an essay entitled, “Mechanical Aesthetics: Picturesque Tourism and the Transportation Revolution in Pennsylvania,” Will B. Mackintosh explains how mechanized and cutting-edge transportation served to enhance the Picturesque experience for traveling reverend John Alonzo Clark. Mackintosh explains that for Clark, “The experience of riding on mechanized transportation repeatedly served to heighten and dramatize the beautiful and sublime aspects of the landscapes Clark traveled through” (Mackintosh, 95). Although Mackintosh doesn’t explicitly state the Picturesque here but merely references it by evoking both the beautiful and sublime, throughout

the essay Mackintosh makes quite clear that for Clark, certain modes of transportation could enrich or diminish his Picturesque experience.

Many narratives explored here also use how they travel as a conduit to their Picturesque experience to either facilitate, enhance, or ruin it. Janet Miller, for example, recognizes Iran's modernizing transportation system stating that, "There are now about six thousand miles of motor-roads in Persia. All the large cities are connected by roads now passable for motor-traffic" (Miller, 180). However, she also remarks that despite her quest for a Picturesque experience that the roads "are rough and none too pleasant to travel on" (Miller, 180). In other words, she wants a Picturesque experience, *and* she wants it to be convenient and comfortable. If modernism is to taint her experience, it had better provide the comfort she has come to expect from it.

Likewise, in a description of the unique colors in Iran Major Powell states that, "It is true that the city gates and the walls of most of the palaces and public buildings are decorated with glazed tiles of charming colors, but the effect is ruined by the fact that many of the tiles have fallen off and have not been replaced, thus producing an atmosphere of decay and dilapidation" (Powell, 250). For the many travelers like Powell and Miller, Iran remains imprisoned in a liminal space between the Picturesque and the modern. In the quote above, Powell essentially criticizes Iran for not having the ability to maintain their public structures and therefore a modern sense of cleanliness, state mandated order, and national cohesion and advancement. For Powell, this represents a country not yet arriving at an ordered modernity even if it has some old and colorful aspects, like ancient tiles, sprinkled throughout giving a potentially more modern space a distinctly Orientalist appearance. Essentially, Powell wishes there were a better-kept Oriental and Picturesque image maintained through modern practices. Instead, Powell experiences a Picturesque image lacking the funding, organization, and governance to maintain itself. The

resulting “decay and dilapidation,” attributes of the Picturesque Powell himself dislikes for being incomplete, signposting for his readers that Iran remains incapable of maintaining Picturesque symbols through modern practices on the one hand and is no longer completely Picturesque on the other.

Rosalie Slaughter Morton continues to navigate this bifurcated scene by limiting Iran’s modern transition to Tehran, the capitol, and highlighting an extreme transition to modernization compared to the West:

The Picturesqueness of the road which bridged the transition between the new and the old is heightened by contrasts. Automobiles dash through the streets of Iran’s modernized capital, and camels lumber along the caravan routes. There have been no covered-wagon or iron-horse eras; from camels to airplanes was the transition!

(Morton, 49)

Morton references a very blended Picturesque with interspersed modern moments. She also hints at the differences between the capitol and the rest of Iran. Even after Reza Shah created a more centralized state, Tehran continued to develop and adopt modernism much faster than the rest of the country. As a result, Morton isolates modern elements to a concentrated city and emphasizes the fact that the transition is extreme, abnormal, and violently abrupt. As a result, American readers would inevitably feel a sense of relief at the speed of their own modernization by comparison. Essentially, this creates the feeling of a more gradualist approach to modernization in America compared to the Eastern modernization shock method witnessed in Iran.

In addition to a soothing gradualist feeling for Western readers, Morton also marks modernization efforts in Tehran as an anomaly. Later in her narrative, she describes the majority of the country as firmly Picturesque in contrast to Tehran stating that, “It is no exaggeration to say

that today there is, in appearance, at least three hundred years between Tehran and Isfahan” (Morton, 80). Additionally, she claims that, “Ways change slowly in villages; it is a gigantic task to bring isolated people from the feudalism of the Middle Ages into the cooperative citizenry of the twentieth century” (Morton, 58). Essentially, she downplays the modernist effort in Iran through isolation thereby facilitating the ability to easily differentiate modernization in Iran from the more “normative” and “correct” modernization of America. Maintaining this difference steadies the distance between the viewer and the subject as discussed earlier, but it also comfortably brands the other and demarcates the Iranian modernist limit allowed, by the narrator, to exist in the minds of American travelers.

Morton is certainly not alone in her claims. Janet Miller also states that, “I am conscious of Persia here in Isfahan for the first time. I feel as if I were living in the Middle Ages, a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth” (Miller, 176). By isolating Tehran as distinctly different in its modernization from the rest of Iran and placing as much as “three hundred years between Tehran and Isfahan” (or perhaps every town outside of Tehran), authors preserve the possibility for Picturesque consumption for many years to come the moment one steps outside of Tehran. Essentially, Morton and others hint that the Shah changed only the easiest place to modify, the capitol, while he left the more “isolated people” and the “gigantic task” of modernizing the rest of the country for another distant day. Such selectively and myopic concentration of modernity leaves a hint of an ephemeral change in its infancy. As a result, even if travelers were to admit that Tehran is becoming more modern, that in no wise signifies that Iran or the cultural other has become more modern in sum. Instead, it merely points to a modernity too incomplete or weak to affect the entire country and protects it for continued American consumption.

Perhaps the most ardent attack on Iran's modernism comes from Hermann Norden. He claims not only that the concentration of modernism is in the capitol, but also describes the type of modernization evident in Tehran as overstated and hopelessly inferior to a Western standard. Upon arriving in Tehran by way of his self-formed caravan, Norden transitions to a more modern form of travel: he sells his caravan, pays his employees, and rents a car for the remainder of his journey (234). Already feeling nostalgia for his Picturesque experience, Norden states that "I should find no more Persia north of Isfahan....In Teheran I should see, not the bits of daily life that had captivated me along the way, not the remnants of ancient Persia miraculously preserved in the present, but the trend of the country, mediaeval Persia lamely struggling toward modernism" (235). As easily the most wistful and committed Picturesque aficionado of the travelers explored here, Norden casts serious doubts about the modernization of Tehran.

Although the first to admit that Tehran certainly does not embody the Picturesque, as seen in the quote above, Norden does not see Tehran in equally modernist terms seemingly adopted by his fellow travelers. By including Tehran with the rest of Persia "lamely struggling toward modernism," Norden also comments that, "The city [Tehran] is essentially old. Notes of modernity seem accidental, anachronistic, not even prophetic" (236). In addition to framing much of Tehran out of his travelogue by mere space (a mere 14 pages on Tehran compared to the 37 pages spent explaining his caravan), in the quote above Norden also paints the modernization efforts in Tehran as unconscious and equally out of place. Essentially, Norden says that Iran is not modern anywhere and if any attempt is being made, it is "accidental," "lame," and hopeless.

Published in 1928, Norden's unwillingness to give up the Picturesque even in Tehran exemplifies American's seemingly essential need for a Picturesque substitute. But, consider a contemporary of Norden who lived in Iran for more than 40 years as a medical missionary. Dr.

Rolla Edwards Hoffman in his work *Pioneering in Meshed, The Holy City of Iran: Saga of a Medical Missionary* provides a different description of the modernization efforts within and outside Iran. Hoffman writes with a different purpose and for a less popular audience, mainly his benefactor church members to report on his work done in Iran:

The main highways were straightened and graded. Wide, straight avenues were cut ruthlessly through the maze of narrow, winding alleys in the cities. The many graveyards in Meshed were simply destroyed. The bones of centuries were shoveled into wheelbarrows and dumped into unmarked pits, the gravestones being used for street curbs and sidewalks. The largest cemetery, adjoining the Shrine, was turned into a park. (Hoffman, 100)

Less attached to the Picturesque and more motivated to explain the advances in technology to his church, Hoffman demonstrates a very conscious even painful modernization process drastically changing the functioning as well as the physical appearance of Iran. Such a differing opinion written near the same year demonstrates Norden's conscious framing towards the Picturesque and away from modernization. For Norden, and indeed for most Picturesque driven or aware travelers, in order to maintain American identity and perceived superiority, Iran needed to remain Picturesque both outside of modernization and within it. A rapidly modernizing Iran would only add further stress to the modernizing world and close off yet another Picturesque escape from an ever more bland, homogenous, and sterile modern world.

In fact, with the right stimulus even the more objective Hoffman actively encourages a Picturesque view of Iran among the American members of his church. At one point during his long career in Iran, Edwards and his family were invited to give presentations in the U.S. about Iran. In response,

Helen Hoffman (Dr. Hoffman's wife) set up the miniature exhibit of Persian life which she had been assembling, a dozen dolls in typical costumes, miniature furniture, utensils, donkeys and camels with saddles. Filling a large trunk, this exhibit was a feature of the coming furlough, and was shown in many churches in the United States. (106)

Even though Hoffman readily admits that many modernization efforts are taking place in Iran, transforming the architecture, dress (as we will see later), and transportation, when asked to present in "many churches in the United States" his wife decided to ascribe to the more Picturesque imaginations of her viewers as she included "donkeys," "camels," and "typical costumes." It appears that even Hoffman at times frames Iran through the Picturesque to create a foil to the unyielding modernization of America.

In addition to seeing Iran as a blend of modernism and the Picturesque, the modernization process within Iran also assumed a Picturesque hue. Instead of accepting the end of the Picturesque when modernism eventually took over, travelers merely adjusted their focus and assimilated Iranian efforts to modernize into an updated form of the Picturesque. In this way, the Picturesque "sought to make modernity less terrifying by making it familiar through a gradualist approach that linked old concepts with new phenomena. Its hackneyed language promised to turn the urban realities of class disparity and ethnic heterogeneity into potentially pleasant aspects of the modern experience" (Urban, 444). By refocusing Iran's modernization as Picturesque, the authors inherently assisted American populations ease into their own modernization by othering and Orientalizing even the modernization of Iran. Now, not only does Iran offer a perpetual Picturesque retreat, but it appears to apply a never-ending supply of soothing balm to the rapid and continued modernization of the Western world as well.

With the inclusion of modernism into the Picturesque, we begin to see an even lower ideological ceiling for the amount and type of modernization recognized in Iran by the Western world. To accommodate this more limited modernism, again narratives were used to frame, refocus, and essentially manipulate the modernism observed. As we will soon see, modernism in Iran is often downplayed, shown as inferior to both the West and the Picturesque, and almost always indicative of the Oriental “other.”

In Paul D. Cravath’s travelogue, *Letters Home from Persia, with Observations on Palestine and Southern Russia, 1936*, he demonstrates this lower modernization ceiling through his sharp criticisms of Iranian dress and decoration:

The appearance of the crowds in Persian village has lost all its Picturesque qualities since the disappearance of the turban and fez and oriental costumes generally. Both women and men wear feeble imitations of European attire. I have never seen crowds containing so many badly dressed women and so many ragged men. I presume in the old days, the abba (outer robe) concealed a multitude of rags which the modern Persian villagers now seem to take pride in exhibiting to passers-by. (34-5)

Cravath demonstrates disdain for the liminal state of Iranian modernity demonstrated in their dress. On the one hand, Reza Shah has outlawed traditional dress at the time of Cravath’s publication (1936), and he laments the lack of Picturesque due to absence of Oriental symbols like the turban and fez. His frustrations in this regard similarly demonstrate the type of time machine tour outlined by Morton that he expects. Essentially, we can read Cravath like he feels that he has been cheated out of a good show of Picturesqueness and Orientalism—an expectation hardly the responsibility of Iranian residents.

On the other hand, Cravath is quick to cite the inferiority of the Iranian's modern dress and their "feeble imitations of European attire." Cravath's comment assumes a binary division discussed earlier between himself, the viewer, and the Iranian Picturesque subjects. By positing a homogenous way to dress modernly, to Cravath it appears that a person can either dress as an Iranian, that is to say in a Picturesquely Oriental fashion, or a person must observe the proper modern dress of the Westerner (European or American). Functioning under such a simplistic dichotomy, Cravath easily differentiates himself from his Iranian counterparts and essentially makes complete modernization impossible so long as it does not resemble European modernization and dress exactly. In fact, Cravath goes so far as to call the Iranian imitation clothing "rags" in a direct reference to the rag pickers constantly cited within the aesthetic as the epitome of the Picturesque subject.¹³ Under this binary logic, exact replication given different cultural histories is arguably impossible, and therefore Iranians remain doomed to a Picturesque modernity when compared with their American counterparts.

Cravath continues this same criticism with regard to Iranians adopting some styles of European decorations, furniture, and architecture:

I have never visited an oriental palace where the attempt to adopt European decorations and furniture was not a dismal failure, but this Persian palace was certainly the limit of ugliness. The remains of mediaeval Islamic architecture in Persia, chiefly mosques and madrassahs, are so superlatively beautiful that it must be that the Persian palaces of the same period were beautiful before the East began its fatal attempt to copy the domestic art of Europe. (Cravath, 31)

¹³ See Urban citation page 453-454.

In scathingly critical terms, this quote demonstrates both Cravath's homogenizing conceptions of modernity as well as his inability to accept the possibility of a new blended aesthetic on equal footing with American modernism. Cravath finds value in the old and Picturesquely beautiful architecture. But, as soon as Iran attempts to copy the "domestic art of Europe," they embark on a "fatal" attempt that cannot hope to produce anything beautiful, meaningful, or arguably equal to European culture and design but rather inevitably ends in "dismal failure." In other words, he would rather a building stay Picturesquely old and dilapidated than attempt a feeble and "inferior" modern restructuring.¹⁴ For Cravath, Persia has only two choices moving forward: remain Orientalized and Picturesquely beautiful or modernly ugly and hopelessly inferior to the true modernists, the West. In such a binary driven choice, an ideological ceiling firmly grips Iran in order to maintain an inferior, othered, and Picturesque position.

Although most travelogues sharply criticize attempted modernization, a more charitable description of the difficulties associated with the modernization process can again be seen from medical missionary Rolla Edwards Hoffman as he sees boundaries and a modernization ceiling quite differently. After considerable time in Iran, Hoffman narrates how the modernization efforts of the Shah has finally reached the health care system to the benefits and successes of his work. As a result, Iranians built a hospital and borrowed materials from Hoffman's clinic to demonstrate the success to the Shah at its completion. Hoffman narrates the result:

His Majesty came to Meshed for the grand dedication. Those in local charge borrowed from us bed linen, wash basins and towels to equip a few beds for show. Much of the construction had been so shoddy that pipes leaked, floors caved in

¹⁴ "We stopped at an interesting village called Natanz to see a mosque, which seemed to me to be the most charming building I saw in Persia. It had the charm of being partially in ruins and having escaped restoration" (Cravath, 32).

and roofs leaked. But a start had been made, and over the years came improvements. (Hoffman, 104)

Although Hoffman does not hesitate to show the deficiencies in the modernization process, unlike the previous travelogues he leaves the possibility for future success and improved modernization open. Despite showing that the boundaries placed on Iranians surrounding health care modernization remain and demonstrate an inferior imitation of Western modernization, Hoffman's boundaries do not insinuate an indefinite permanence. No efforts to modernize are successful from the beginning, a fact that perhaps Western travelers more interested in the Picturesque conveniently forget. Hoffman's criticisms do not appear derived from ethnic, Orientalized, or identity focused reasons but rather from more charitable, logistical ones. Hoffman himself has invested interest in successful change, an argument he must make to his church to receive the funds to stay in Iran. Due to his different purpose and audience, then, Hoffman adds a valuable counterpoint to understand the extent most travelers make to frame the modernism of Iran.

Although Hoffman's unique view of the modernization process is more charitable, it also subtly posits an incompatibility of Iran and modernization. Also speaking of modernization efforts, Janet Miller notes that, "Persia is not an industrial nation. Modern machinery is anathema to her. Many attempts have been made to finance Persian industries with foreign capital, always without success. Manufactures of gas, glass, sugar, matches, and cotton textiles have been tried, but have failed so far" (240). Like Hoffman, Miller charitably recognizes that there might still be a modern future for Iran, but for the moment, at least, modernization seems incompatible and impossible. The subtle question for Miller, it appears, is how long modernization must be tried in order to call a culture incompatible with its tenets. Of course, this line of thinking assumes a homogenized modernization, but we can see how even the most charitable authors appear to cast

serious doubts on Iran's ability to modernize or at the very least place a limit on their expectation of the amount and type of modernization achievable for a place so inherently Picturesque.

By governing the modernism limits in Iran, travel narratives exploring the Picturesque essentially assume a controlling, domesticating demeanor. Throughout most of the narratives and despite its modern aspects, travelers consistently paint Iran as counter-modern, wild, archaic, but counterintuitively essentially harmless. The journey through Iran becomes a sort of Wild West experience where the characters look dangerous but couldn't possibly present any real danger to the power of the Western world.

Major Powell best represents this domesticating, taming tenet in his narrative. After repeatedly warned of the dangers on the road due to thieves who often stopped cars and stole from or killed passengers, Major Powell and his party appear far more excited than fearful. In overly nonchalant narration, Powell states that, "There was an air of suppressed excitement about it all which showed that the danger of attack was by no means imaginary, and which brought home to us in vivid fashion the thrills of railway travel during Indian days on our own plains" (213). Interestingly, Powell relates the threat from Iranian highway robbers somewhere between genuine peril and perhaps the recently forgone era of Indian pageantry like the Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. For Americans in the 1920s and 30s, the era of Indian raids, train robberies, and actual assault by Indians had since moved to the realm of kid's playtime, wireless programs, and bedtime stories. Evoking an Indian scene on the plains of America only further reinforces the Picturesque imagery and romanticism effectually downplaying the actual danger for travelers. In this way, although the dangers may be real, the images and emotions elicited from readers are much more playful, harmless, and reinforcing of Western superiority and cultural consumption.

This is only further reinforced when Powell finds real trouble on the road. After running into a roadblock, Powell and his fellow travelers and assigned “guards” brandish rifles visibly out of the windows of the cars as they confront the Iranian men responsible for the interruption. Powell confidently states that, “...On the seat beside me lay a tube of cold blue steel with six through tickets to paradise neatly packed in its magazine” (243). Subsequently, he narrates a scene that paints the road-blocking men as clownish amateurs who present little to no threat. After demonstrating superior and modern firepower,

They [the robbers] were so naïve about it all, and so obviously disappointed at having drawn a blank, that after they had posed for a picture I bestowed a few krans upon each of them, whereupon they salaamed again and called down upon us the blessings of Allah. I think that Sherin was disappointed that the episode ended so tamely, for he had spent four years as a gun-layer on the western front and was secretly hankering for excitement. (227)

Powell converts real danger into harmlessness and even humor. In a very real way, he tames the roughness of the Iranian Picturesque turning it into an object of Western enjoyment by tackling the most threatening scenario and rendering it more comical than dangerous amounting to mere mild shock. Any interpreted notions of real danger engendered through Powell’s “suppressed excitement” in anticipation of trouble completely dissipate as Powell portrays Iranian highwaymen incapable, inept, and pathetic. In a sense, he makes the Picturesque of Iran more real yet far removed from any danger to the Western traveler.

In fact, far from frightened Powell’s servant, Sherin, secretly wishes that something more “exciting” would have transpired in the exchange. Sherin exemplifies the absolute confidence of the Western traveler and Western world in overcoming the archaic and Picturesque manifestations

of the Iranian world, demonstrating the inherent superiority of modernity. Far from a war zone, Sherin's extreme brand of excitement functions as perhaps a more sublime element. In this way, the exchange securely positions Iran and the interactions one might have traveling through Iran as securely rough yet tame, sublime yet safe, and exciting yet manageable. Sherin makes Iran consumable and domestic by transforming an inherently dangerous and rough experience into something that elicits "mild surprise" rather than repelling, wild, and dangerous fear.

Mimicking the popular interurban walking tours of big cities and displaying tenets of the urban Picturesque, Powell essentially, "Invoked the Picturesque as a way to tame the wildness of the other by inscribing foreignness within the aesthetic parameters of cultural peculiarities. By converting the exotic into a mild curiosity..." (Urban, 456-457). For travel writers like Powell, employing methods of the Picturesque allowed him to subdue danger and excessive wildness that, like the urban Picturesque curator, allowed his readers "to find pleasure in the seemingly frightening areas" due to his "dauntless manner" that inevitably "put the reader at ease" (Urban, 456). Evoking the Picturesque in Iran, then, makes the experience even more consumable, authentic, and safe describing a travel destination, culture, and country easily subdued and boundlessly open to commodification.

In the end, we begin to understand how American travelers carefully negotiated the interplay between the Picturesque and modernism within Iran to maintain the country as an escape from their own modern world and stay connected to a Picturesque ideal that defined America. They framed, focused, and verbally air-brushed a Picturesque Iran that either sidestepped modernist tenets completely or utilized modernism to amplify, domesticate, and perpetuate a Picturesque get-away.

CHAPTER 4. THE 3RD PHASE OF THE PICTURESQUE: MORALITY, DISTANCE, AND THE SUBALTERN

In the previous chapter, we saw how and why American travelers framed a Picturesque Iran, controlling what readers could see to maintain a getaway from American modernization. This chapter dives deeper into conversation around the Picturesque aesthetic itself and showcases how American travel narratives to Iran revitalize and significantly add to what we know about the Picturesque.

While the Picturesque has long since been a part of the Western aesthetic canon, the aesthetic's theorist and observers have been largely silent for the past ten years perhaps dismissing the Picturesque as past the need for further discussion. The Western academic realm is often tardy to apply ways of thinking beyond the Western world, and this chapter demonstrates that such canonical myopia leaves many important discoveries on the table.

As the Picturesque collided with modernity, aestheticians wrestled with the moral obligation of the observer. As the Picturesque collided with modernity, it included not just nature-scapes but also people embodying the same characteristics of the rugged, novel nature originally advocated by William Gilpin. As a result, the Picturesque assumed a type of poverty and "other" voyeurism that causes an inherent moral uneasiness, essentially requiring the observer to relish and enjoy the novelty and roughness borne out of poverty and exclusion. As previously cited, Bramen calls such a Picturesque "superficial, and at worse, ethically cruel" (Bramen, 7). Despite the Picturesque's traditionally approachable vocabulary and tools used to appreciate the natural world, something more sophisticated would need to be employed to combat sharp ethical arguments and criticisms that cast serious doubts on the aesthetic.

It is important to note that these moral criticisms were rarely applied beyond Western landscapes and presupposed European or American subjects. Perhaps theorists at the time had less qualms about ethical arguments in more “colonial settings.” Whatever the reason, I am unaware of any other work that applies these theories/aesthetics on a non-Western society.¹⁵

The moral concerns largely stemmed from the proximity of the viewer to their object, be it nature, people, or society generally. Gilpin era aestheticians did cast groups as part of a landscape, but the artist allowed less focus on the individual and instead subscribed them as part of the whole. In other words, early Picturesque artists painted less detailed people often from a distance more to help set the natural, often rural scene rather than assume the focus of the painting.

With increased modernization and the popularity of modernism, the Picturesque changed its proximity and focus: “The poor as well as the cultural ‘others’ acquired a more prominent place in the pictorial composition than they had previously, a place that undermined the comfortable distance that was a prerequisite for the eighteenth century Picturesque” (Bramen, 7). This comfortable distance underscores the nineteenth century shift in focus from distant figures to individual faces. People and especially the anti-modern, poor, and “rough” characters gained both a more prominent place in compositions as did detailed descriptions of their faces. As the proximity between the viewer and viewed closed, there was an uncomfortableness with consumption of another human being’s misery and poverty. As a result, Picturesque users either had to reconfigure the aesthetic, embrace their proximity to misery caused in part by modernism (resulting in a different movement: modernist realism), or abandon the Picturesque altogether. Although it is safe to say that Picturesque users chose all three, the proximity of the Picturesque viewer to his/her

¹⁵ Kim Mickasew’s “Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque”

subject remains a fundamental moral issue for the aesthetic in the nineteenth century and contemporarily.¹⁶

American travel narratives to Iran from 1921-1941 exemplify this battle of proximity and push the Picturesque in interesting ways. In his travelogue, *By Camel and Car to the Peacock Throne* published in 1923, adventurer and travel writer Major E. Alexander Powell struggles with his proximity to caravanserais along the Persian road:

Just a word here about the caravanserais, so frequently mentioned in books on Persia. Many a time I have had friends exclaim, "How I envy you the experience of sleeping in a caravanserai. They must be so Picturesque and interesting." Now, I don't like to destroy illusions, but I might as well state that I have never passed a night in a caravanserai if it was safe or practicable to sleep in a blanket on the ground. A caravanserai is, as its name implies, a public building for the shelter of caravans and wayfarers generally...The courtyard, where the cooking is carried on over open fires or charcoal braziers, is always indescribably filthy; the care walls of the rooms are blackened with smoke; the bare floors littered with the leavings of previous occupants. One has to have an overpowering passion for the Picturesque to disregard the grunting of the camels, the braying of the donkeys, the interminable chatter of the guards and cameleers, the acrid smell of wood smoke, the stench of sweat-soaked leather and unwashed human bodies, and particularly the highly objectionable activities of small insect, well known to caravanserais, which in Persian bears the significant name of *gharib-gas*, or 'biter

¹⁶ While many would not say that they use the Picturesque today, contemporary versions spring up freely through the "foodie" movement, ecotourism, service holidays, and orphanage visits. While many of these efforts do help some people in need, they are much more designed for appeasing the guilt of privileged Westerners.

of strangers.’ The traveler in Persia who finds himself caught out at night between mission stations will do well to roll himself in his blankets and spend the night on the bosom of Mother Earth. (223-4)

Powell does two very important things here to merit the inclusion of such a long passage: first, despite his claims that he dislikes the Picturesque, he exemplifies the aesthetic perfectly. Powell describes the caravanserai using sensory charged language describing the noise from animals, guards, and cameleers; the filth on the smoke-stained walls; the smell of unwashed bodies and concentration of animals; and the type of bug that will welcome your stay. In essence, he perfectly skewers reader’s attention through Picturesque imaginations by creating a multi-sensory image that is prosaically Picturesque. Rather than “destroy illusions,” Powell demonstrates a knowledge and deftness in the aesthetic that heightens rather than “corrects” Picturesque assumptions. In reality, Powell’s Picturesque-correcting description only teases the wanderlust of his readers and evokes an image that causes readers to check themselves for bugs, feel the grunge from days on the road, become deafened by the bleating animals, and twinge momentarily with the strong, pungent smells. In the end, Powell shows rather than tells that at her heart Iran is the Picturesque.

The second thing that Powell does is attempt to put distance between himself and the caravanserai. Despite being published in 1923, Powell’s description and attempted distance from the caravanserai better reflects eighteenth century Picturesque sensibilities by insisting on as much space from the Picturesque object as possible. Powell advocates that instead of indulging in the unique and novel experience of sleeping in a caravanserai, travelers should instead, “Roll himself in his blankets and spend the night on the bosom of Mother Earth.” True to the eighteenth century Picturesque, Powell’s distance ensures limited or no direct contact with Picturesque subjects. Instead, Powell’s fellow native travelers remain faceless (out of focus) and never appear

individually. Powell defines them only by their contribution to the noise through “interminable chatter” and the smell with their plural, “unwashed human bodies.” By using narrative and physical proximity control, Powell “eliminates” moral guilt that may arise from taking pleasure from known misery and poverty by leaving the figures just out of focus.

Such rough, distant strokes of prose do not appease guilt for long, however, as they simultaneously carry severe homogenizing, Orientalist, and dehumanizing implications. Even if we charitably assume that Powell’s only problem with the caravanserai stems from its lack of hygiene, noise, bugs, and smells, it still produces an effect on readers. As the writer and traveler, Powell chose his (and by extension his reader’s) proximity to the caravanserai and thereby the relationship to it. Leaving the population out of focus but linked to the caravanserai forces readers to define Iranian travelers in the same, dingy light of the caravanserai and creates a homogeneity among all orientalist travelers. It is precisely because of the anonymity of Iranian travelers that makes the individual indiscriminate from the general populous and they all embody the caravanserai through their association with it. They become a Picturesque appendage of the locale described as dirty, noisy, archaic, earthy, poor, and simple. In the end, Powell’s distance does allow him and his readers to safely consume the novelty of a destitute “other” through the sensory imagery of the caravanserai, but it also makes serious moral trade-offs that appear as equally serious as knowingly consuming misery and poverty. As a result, such distance fails to provide an amoral appreciation of the Picturesque image by the time modernism was in full swing.

Not surprisingly, those ascribing to the second phase of the Picturesque saw a major overhaul concerning proximity. For some modern Picturesque theorists, they felt adjusting distance solved the moral dilemma arising in the nineteenth century. Again, citing Carrie Bramen’s essay on the history of the Picturesque, she describes the moral solution proposed by nineteenth

century thinker, John Ruskin. Ruskin proposed a change in distance and focus from indistinguishable figures to “faces and expressions in order to insist on the unconsciousness of suffering” (Bramen, 9). For Ruskin, this unconsciousness of suffering embodied the lynchpin for a moral solution to the aesthetic. In the words of Ruskin, “The look that an old labourer has, not knowing that there is anything pathetic in his grey hair, withered arms, and sunburnt breast” is unproblematic since the old labourer has no knowledge of an alternative (Ruskin, 6:14-15). “The laborer cannot harbor anger, elicit pity from the observer, or return the gaze in the defiant act of conscious resentment” since, as John Macarthur so aptly said, “The poor must thus be unaware of their plight...and the noble viewer must not speak with them” (Bramen, 9; Macarthur, 134). This new much closer focus insists on an interpretation by the viewer of facial features of the Picturesque subject. Significantly, however, such an interpretation cannot be facilitated through words since the mode generally advocated that the two subjects maintain a distance in order to preserve the “nobility” of the viewer.

This scenario, although perhaps more conditional and nuanced than that utilized by Powell, still presents formidable problems stemming from an uneven power dynamic between the viewer, who interprets the image and conveys the interpretation, and the Picturesque subject that must remain voiceless. This solution allows the viewer to minimize the distance, but results in the active subjugation of the other, assuming an unrealistically objective view from the observer controlling the power through voice. This “solution” to the moral problem appears very popular in travel narratives where constant movement arguably presents no time for discussion. But, as we will see, one cannot help but balk at the glaring subjectivity of any exchange clearly favoring the viewer and his/her “nobility” compared to a silent “other” captured “completely” by a single moment.

We see a great example of Ruskin’s solution in Rosalie Morton’s travel narrative:

I saw the stark human drama, the charm of simplicity, the courage of those who fight the desert, live on little, and are happy; in short, the life of the people and the happenings in the tiny villages and their surrounding fields. Along the modern roads of Iran I went, easily and pleasantly, back through two thousand years, and came to know people who are counterparts of their long-distant ancestors, and of those who, for intervening generations, have lived the same primitive lives as they. Evolution here is at a standstill; incentives for progress have been lacking as the people have had to meet only repetitious daily needs; their opportunities and expressions of life have remained the same through the centuries. (49)

Morton's description showcases the distance-causing techniques utilized in the Picturesque. To ease traveler's guilt and perhaps sympathy for antiquated figures, we again see the balm of Ruskin's solution easily implemented in the constant movement of travel narratives where the viewer looks closely, interpret images, and says nothing to their subjects. True to Ruskin's form, she portrays Iranians as living happily ignorant and primitive lives, unchanged for centuries and unaware that the rest of the world has changed (all this, ironically, despite people like Morton poking around). Essentially, Morton depicts the perfect Picturesque scene one can experience in transit and at a distance: unchanging, simple, rural, and feudalistic.

Morton's quote also demonstrates the familiar tendency explored in the last chapter to frame Iran around the Picturesque, purposely excluding modernist elements that serve to enhance Ruskin's solution through greater mobility. As we have seen, Morton evokes an extremely Picturesque, Orientalized, and consumable image of Iran where a traveler can escape modernism and relive centuries past. However, Morton unwittingly exposes her framing of Iran in her description of her mode of travel calling it "easy," "pleasant," and on the "modern roads of Iran."

Clearly, the modernization of Iranian roads under the Shah had made transformations to the countryside, but these changes had seemingly no effect on Morton's Picturesque focus. They do, however, serve to facilitate her moral solution to the Picturesque. With modern roads Morton can quickly consume and pass by her visual subjects before they could arguable disprove her belief that they are naïve to their present condition. Not unlike visitors who consume the wild through the conscious paths of a zoo, Morton provides a similar feeling as she rides "along the modern roads of Iran" framing each narrated scene like a Picturesque exhibit to selectively demonstrate an Iranian Picturesque par excellence and guilt free. The result is a frightfully disingenuous combination of just enough modernization to make the trip comfortable, quick, and accessible to Western viewers but never enough to impede upon the Picturesque and the ancient scenes for which "Evolution...is at a standstill."

But not all narratives fit so perfectly into Ruskin's solution. To demonstrate how travel narratives to Iran complicate notions of proximity outlined by Ruskin, consider a travel narrative by Hermann Norden entitled *Under Persian Skies: A Record of the Travel by the Old Caravan Routes of Western Persia*. Norden is a middle-aged, upper middle-classed man traveling recreationally. He regularly demonstrates an awareness of literature, history, global culture, and importantly the Picturesque. At first glance, Norden simply appears to apply the Ruskin-based solution to morality as he mingles with locals voicelessly from his car as he observes local people and their unawareness to their own roughness. In one instance, Norden observes a beautiful young girl carrying firewood up a switchback-laden road (see picture below, 124). Just as advocated by

Ruskin, Norden narrates a description of the girl that is both Picturesque in capturing her image and within close proximity to observe her expressions; in this case, even close enough and for long enough for a photograph. Interestingly, however, Norden records no interactions with the girl despite



Figure 1 Voiceless traveler on the road

obviously having sufficient time—he took a photograph—and despite unlocking the language barrier by taking an interpreter with him throughout his entire journey. This interaction seemingly typifies the Ruskin based solution to proximity. Norden captures a quotidian moment in time for the girl where she appears unaware of a world beyond her menial task and condition. He even notes that, “The tooting of the horn meant nothing to her,” insinuating complete unawareness of modern transportation (Norden, 124).

Despite his focus on the girl’s unconsciousness, as the writer and Picturesque viewer all control over the exchange remains in Norden hands. He completely controls what he and the reader see and hear as well as interprets what his subjects understand of their own condition. The result is an image (literally a photograph in this case) that can be interpreted however Norden sees worthy. He interprets the happiness, level of awareness, and satisfaction of the Picturesque subject despite the fact that the subject has the capacity to speak but lacks the opportunity to do so through Norden’s control. Essentially, the author turns her into a visually consumable subaltern: voiceless, controlled, and commodified. Much like the people vaguely mentioned by Powell, the girl merely becomes an extension of the Picturesque landscape itself even if in great detail. Readers don’t need

to know her name and, in reality, the photograph becomes superfluous because Norden simply frames an Orientalized type, picturesquely displayed without guilt since her face “says it all.”

Even though Norden slips into the moral trap only thinly veiled by Ruskin’s solution, his travelogue and Iranian travelogues generally provide much more than just another example of an unsolved moral dilemma in the Picturesque. As we saw above, Norden’s travelogue easily demonstrates the more contemporary use of the Picturesque as “a mode of social control” (Robinson, 85). Often seen through a Foucauldian lens,¹⁷ it isn’t hard to see why “the Picturesque is commonly understood as an extension of hegemonic control with imperialistic and conservative proclivities, which seeks to contain, control, and master otherness” (Bramen, 15). What remains unanalyzed, however, are instances where travelers purposely narrow or eradicate the proximity between themselves and their subjects, breaking traditional Picturesque wisdom, and still remain dominant. As Kim Ian Michasiw suggests, this subject represents the future of the Picturesque, answering the question, “What, after all, happens to the Picturesque adept when he is sent out to rule the colonies?” (Michasiw, 96). Among many things, other passages in Norden travelogue begin to answer that question and thereby furthers Picturesque theory itself.

A little more than halfway through his travelogue, Norden becomes overwhelmingly fascinated and charmed by the caravans he passes in his car and decides to take his Picturesque scene to the next level by creating a caravan of his own:

It was not a dream, not a picture, but a thing of the present, and in which I had a place. Later I would have my own caravan. I would take a part in that slow-moving, endless pageant that has crossed the mountains and the deserts of Iran through the centuries. The whirr of our motor seemed an anachronism. Across the

¹⁷ See Heydt-Stevenson’s article “The Pleasures of Simulacra: Rethinking the Picturesque in Coleridge’s Notebooks and ‘The Picture; or, The Lover’s Resolution’”

clear air came the tinkle of the camel's bells, and the loud jangle of the larger ones on the donkeys. (Norden, 121)

Unlike many travelers before him, instead of merely observing the Picturesque from a distance Norden decides to close the gap between the aesthetic and himself. He doesn't merely want to hear the "tinkle of the camel's bells" for a fleeting moment above the whirl of the car motor but wants to jump headlong into a seeming anachronism, a place where modernity doesn't exist.

In many ways, Norden's travel choices served to amplify his Picturesque experience (as we saw in the previous chapter).¹⁸ Soon after beginning his trip, Norden can hardly restrain his excitement and success in amplifying the Picturesque through his mode of travel: "I felt heartily sorry for the few people who whizzed past in cars. It was so much more pleasant to be a part of this slower life of the road. I was happy in the thought of being a part of the great endless caravan, made up of many small caravans, moving across the highways of Western Asia" (Norden, 168). Supremely satisfied with his choice, he obviously feels he has found the true Picturesque experience. However, now that Norden has effectually narrowed the proximity between himself and his Picturesque subjects, how will this affect the way he sees Picturesque subjects and how he maintains the "nobility of the viewer"?

Almost immediately after forming his caravan, Norden demonstrates both a heightened sense of the Picturesque and arguably a greater awareness of his fellow traveler's condition:

Dependent on mud villages for my nights' lodgings, I was to travel the road worn by the feet of men, camels, horses, and donkeys for hundreds of years; even before the great Alexander passed that way.... Didn't I know in what century I was living? Animal caravans were still used for the transport of goods, and by travelers who

¹⁸ Will B. Mackintosh, "Mechanical Aesthetics: Picturesque Tourism and the Transportation Revolution in Pennsylvania"

could not afford to shun the slowness and the hardships of the antiquated mode of travel. (165)

Despite Norden's hardly restrained giddy for a newfound "deeper Picturesque," he also begins to see past the mere tinkle of camel bells and awe evoked by the aesthetic and his excitement. He sees hardship and poverty, a dynamic not merely shouldered by the poor unconsciously but borne out of their inability to afford anything else. In other words, unlike Ruskin's assertion that the people are unaware of their plight and therefore the observer is absolved of moral responsibility because of their ignorance, Norden gives us a glimpse into the consciousness of his fellow travelers as to their own deplorable situation thereby exposing the problem of trying to interpret consciousness through a momentary glance or photograph. It isn't that they do not know another way to transport goods and remain ignorant of the modern world. Instead, they remain consciously aware of their poverty and do not modernize their travel because they cannot afford to. They are conscious that their situation has other options, but they lack the ability to obtain wealth and essentially choose.

I admit that such whispers of awareness are slight, but when we consider the author, his control over discourse, and his dedication to the Picturesque, such whispers are perhaps more telling than more overt declarations. Significantly then, we can see how the moment the narrator narrows his proximity to the "other," he begins to see, albeit perhaps reservedly, the awareness of his voiceless subaltern to his/her situation, poverty, and pathetic existence. As a result, Norden must decide to either engage with his Picturesque subjects and allow them to transcend the figurative boundaries placed upon them or label himself immoral from his apparent giddy as he consumes their consciously miserable state. It is here that the Picturesque breaks new ground as we analyze how the aesthetic reacts to a new environment, a closer proximity, and a genre of travel.

Norden's narrative certainly does not disappoint as he creates an impromptu solution in an attempt to save himself morally. As distance between his Picturesque subjects narrows, his descriptions of an increasingly anti-modern Iran increase in intensity. Instead of more normative Picturesque descriptions of things like camel trains, girls carrying wood, and Oriental dress, Norden describes "pictures" increasingly more "vivid in [his] memory." Some of such images include "A woman travelling in a hammock slung between two donkeys" and "An entire family journeying forth into the world, seated on what looked to be a garden bench securely fastened to the back of the mule" (142-3). Norden descriptions of anti-modernity even border at times on the gruesome: "The Ghevam-ul-Mulk follows in state with the executioner, red clad and with the instruments necessary for crucifying and whipping tied on his mule. This mediaeval pageant of horror is not an anachronism in present-day Persia" (156). Although Norden may be closer than ever to his Picturesque subjects and aware of their consciousness, by continuously providing a barrage of mediaeval images, he creates an ideological gulf between himself, the modern traveler, and an archaic Iran. In other words, despite closer physical proximity, Norden constantly differentiates himself from his subjects on the grounds of modernity. He communicates that although he may be part of the Picturesque today, his stay is temporary and fundamentally different than the subject's relationship to it. In so doing, effectually the distance and differentiation remain as Norden defines himself through his perceived proximity to modernity and against the non-modernized "other." They may be conscious of what they do not have and why, but they are hailed¹⁹ as fundamentally different from Norden due to their exclusion from modernity. For Norden, this enables unrestricted distance despite physical proximity since the viewer will always be modern and the subject Picturesque irrespective of consciousness.

All the authors here, and especially Norden, demonstrate how the Picturesque gains new life when explored in a non-Western context. Authors are forced to get creative to maintain an appropriate distance and morality while word-painting Iranian subjects. While the authors certainly don't avoid moral missteps in their use of the mode, they certainly create a new era for the Picturesque that is ripe for further analysis on subjects well beyond a Western background.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This thesis revisited past scholarship and theoretical concepts in order to create new insights into the relationship between Iran and the United States. It heavily relied on the Picturesque, an aesthetic nearly forgotten but virtually untapped in its usefulness to look beyond Western borders. By deeply investigating the Picturesque, we began to understand how travelers utilized the aesthetic and why it figured so prominently in nearly all the American travel narratives to Iran during the period. By understanding the Picturesque, this thesis essentially captured new meaning, exposed subject positions, and discovered dependencies that would have been otherwise lost to the contemporary scholar and reader.

This thesis not only revitalizes the Picturesque and new travel sources, but it metaphorically turns the page for both. Little has been written about the Picturesque since the 1990s. Before the relative silence felt contemporarily, most scholarship focused on travel to Europe, the history of the American Picturesque, or most recently the urban Picturesque. This thesis opens the door to a new realm of Picturesque theory exploring the interrelation between Western travelers and colonial and/or pre-modern societies. It begs the Picturesque to consider subjects of power, colonialism, modernity, imperialism, and subjugation. As a relational aesthetic with multiple phases and changes, the Picturesque also assumes a postmodern quality that makes it playful and infinitely fractured depending on location, user, and use. In the end, it possesses the potential to extract new understanding from past scholarship that can completely change the way we see historical moments and relationships.

As was hopefully apparent, this thesis also exposes the fact that the Picturesque and aesthetics generally control as much as they visually capture. In his essay “Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque,” Kim Ian Michasiw forcefully makes this point, pointing to the fact that the

controlling aspect of aesthetics is always present whether recognized by theorists, readers, and politicians or not:

The first of these is the cultural materialist project of discerning the ideological force and function of those discursive practices that announce themselves as above the political and historical. The aesthetic is a range or register no less determined and determinative ideologically than any other, and this relatively late-blooming recognition has spurred a variety of investigations of the politics of aesthetics. (76)

Although Michasiw insightfully looks through the theoretical looking glass towards future research for aesthetics and the Picturesque, few theorists have moved beyond the moral implications of the Picturesque. This thesis attempted transcend mere conversations of morality and lay bare some of the national identities associated with the Picturesque that caused visual consumption of Iranian subjects, appeasing political and identity-driven needs.

In addition to the significance of this thesis for the Picturesque, it also explains why orientalism and othering occurred(s) in Iran. This work makes very clear that the power-driven relationship between the U.S. and Iran existed long before 1979, the ascension of the Ayatollah to power, or the formation of the Islamic State. Instead of echoing the charges that Iran and the U.S. fundamentally disagree over Israel, nuclear programs, geography, or terrorist organizations, this thesis posits that the fundamental cause of mutual othering between the two countries stems from deeper-rooted historical and cultural issues. The Picturesque demonstrates a sense of globalization and mutual dependencies for national, cultural identities that provides a much better rationale for why both countries remain so invested in controlling their ideological relation to one another along with their participation in modernity. This more fundamentalist approach better articulates the

deep-seeded investment for both countries as well as the competing, reactionary rhetoric that has passed back and forth between them since 1979.

Through the discussion above, it is easy to see how a thesis treading in cultural analysis easily leads to understanding political actualities. Despite the fact that this thesis focuses on the period of Reza Shah from 1921 to 1941, I consider this work a mere starting point to a greater study that would trace aesthetic and cultural impacts on the formation of modern Iran and its relationship to the U.S. The policies implemented by Mohammad Reza Shah, after assuming power from his father, were even more socially controversial. Mohammad Shah pushed Iran in a modernist, Western direction that some welcomed, others tolerated, and the Ayatollah ultimately struck down. In essence, Iran experienced a cultural and aesthetic volatility from 1941 to our contemporary moment that has remained, largely, under-analyzed but extremely relevant for understanding an important cultural history not to mention contemporary political utility.

Likewise, contemporary Iranian conditions simply begs a theorist to explain America's more contemporary behavior towards Iran beyond mere simplistic, rhetorically driven rationale. What ideological functions drove/drive political policies resulting in the Iran we know today? How did permanently losing a connection with Iran in 1979 affect the U.S. identity? What cultural underpinnings would benefit both U.S. and Iranian foreign policies? These questions remain unanswered, and the misunderstanding of Iran by the U.S., her politics, culture, and policies, only point to the necessity of further scholarship.

This thesis, however, does not strive simply to produce political questions and deliverables. As first and foremost an academic work, this thesis also transcends traditional boundaries for historical, cultural, aesthetic, and Middle Eastern scholars. This thesis represents unabashed interdisciplinarity and non-canonical travel narratives. I am sure that many disciplines will

inevitably balk at the fleeting examination of history, aesthetic background, or theoretical breadth espoused here. Admittedly, this interdisciplinary work cannot, for the sake of time and research, reproduce fully every disciplinary requirement simultaneously.

On the other hand, this thesis blends aesthetics, history, cultural theory, politics, and literature in a way that enables a more complete picture of both the interplay between these forces and their collective effect. Where this thesis might lack depth, it delivers in both breadth and in the ability to identify problems and trace their inception, incubation, and outcome.

Instead of perfectly articulating a single piece to a puzzle, this work examines the puzzle as a whole and direct individual pieces, even if still a little fuzzy, to fit into their respective places. It sees a bigger picture with a roving eye always looking for new elements that help make sense of the collective image.

Similarly, the use of non-canonical travel narratives in this thesis provided an opportunity to see a bigger Picturesque and prove the canonical theoretical maps we currently trust. A literary canon can often provide a false sense of understanding and security in what we supposedly “know.” It often seems to be the case in Middle Eastern studies that as scholars apply current, proven theories to Middle Eastern texts, they discover additions or major missteps due to myopic, Western assumptions. Ahmed Idrissi Alami’s work on modernism cited throughout this thesis provides an excellent example as he forces us to consider a plural, contingent modernity rather than a more homogeneous one.

This thesis likewise applied current theoretical principles to, frankly, obscure travel texts. The result was wonderful additions to modernity to complement those of Alami, describing modernity as a site not only contingent on a location, moment, and relation, but also on notions of power, subjugation, and aesthetic framing. For example, those controlling the narration or voice

could essentially refocus the modernization to assume a drastically different meaning either in line with Western modernization or the polar opposite, representing the Picturesque.

As such, the Picturesque as it applies to the travel texts explored in this thesis, also assumed a relational definition. Depending on the context of the quote and the author, the Picturesque in Iranian travel narratives might mean a traditional rural scene or an Iranian form of modernism. It might mean sufficient distance from an image or direct contact close enough to experience the pungent animal smell and feel the bite bedbugs. Like modernism, the travel narratives outside the canon forced the Picturesque to assume greater flexibility and fluidity, resulting in a significantly altered conception of the aesthetic.

In the end, this thesis demonstrates how the use of travel narratives says as much about the writer and his/her culture as it does about the traveled location and people.

Although the authors constantly utilize the Picturesque to describe their travel experiences, this thesis has effectually pulled back their Picturesque lens to expose the motives behind their use of the aesthetic. For the writers explored here, it established America's need for Iran to provide a Picturesque refuge to their daily, modern lives that had left them fractured, lost, and spiritually disconnected.

What readers initially see as an image-capturing, middling aesthetic between the sublime and beautiful quickly becomes a tool to wield incredible ideological control. As the Picturesque quickly faded from the American frontier, Americans created a controlled "other" to fill the gap. By so doing, readers maintain a Picturesque oasis in Iran, we can see the Picturesque not just as a method to visually capture Iran, but rather a controlling mechanism to limit the amount and kind of modernism she can obtain.

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