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Digital Feminism beyond Nativism and Empire: Affective Territories of Recognition and Competing Claims to Suffering in Iranian Women's Campaigns

Winner of the 2021 Catharine Stimpson Prize for Outstanding Feminist Scholarship

In February 2019, the founder and administrator of the Facebook page "My Stealthy Freedom," the most popular and controversial campaign against the compulsory hijab in Iran, tweeted "In praise of necessary anger."[1] Masih Alinejad was stating, in effect, that Iranian women could no longer be expected to maintain a peaceful and gradualist approach to campaigning for their rights while their lives and bodies were being attacked and violated by the government's regulatory gendered practices and prohibitions. Her comment referred to an internationally circulated video of the February 15 incident in Tehran where pedestrians removed a police car door in an attempt to defend two young women whom the morality police were trying to arrest and detain for not wearing "full hijab." The video sparked varying responses, ranging from enthusiastic support for the women to highly charged accusations that "diasporan" campaigns such as My Stealthy Freedom were disseminating a negative image of the country to Western media. As a transnational women's rights campaign, My Stealthy Freedom, founded on Facebook in May 2014, is no stranger to these intense emotional polarizations (Seddighi and Tafakori 2016).

In this article, I analyze the potentials and limits of building transnational solidarity around women's rights through examining how emotions operate both to enable and to block the recognition of injustices. In particular, I explore how emotions around women's rights mobilizations in Iran are mediated between "indigenous" or authentic and "diasporan" or inauthentic feminisms (Rostami-Povey 2012; CHRI 2019). By referring to emotions as "mediated," I mean that their impact on the recipient is shaped by the

Special thanks to Lilie Chouliaraki for her unstinting support, encouragement, and feminist care. I am also grateful to the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh, for the postdoctoral fellowship that allowed me to complete this essay, and to the editors of *Signs* for seeing the potential and for their invaluable feedback. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers, and, in particular, one reviewer for her engaged and incisive critique.

[1] Masih Alinejad, Twitter post [in Farsi], February 17, 2019.

[*Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 2021, vol. 47, no. 1]
 0097-9740/2021/4701-0007$10.00

interactive media environments and online social practices that communicate and generate them, contexts that tend to (though not inevitably or exclusively) favor instantaneity, repeatability, rapid dissemination, and frequently lack of nuance or restraint (Papacharissi 2015). I situate this dynamic in relation to competing conceptions of national and international terrains, in which the international is either figured as the realm of universal human rights or as dominated by Western imperialist agendas (Sedghi 2007; Abu-Lughod 2013). Among the most intensely angry exchanges online are those that juxtapose, and often counterpose, women's rights in Iran with the threat of Western-led economic sanctions, utilizing similar tropes of authentic versus inauthentic, "inside" versus "outside." Focusing on social media, with its rapid production and mass dissemination of information and opinions, I concentrate on the affectively charged oppositions between local and global that appear in posts and comments around two mobilizations with a strong online presence in Iran and beyond its borders, namely, My Stealthy Freedom and the Girls of Enghelab (Revolution) Street.[2]

Both these mobilizations have focused on the compulsory hijab as an affectively charged site where discourses around women's bodies and the nation, tradition and modernity, come into sharp contestation (Yeğenoğlu 1998; Sedghi 2007). Nonetheless, these movements have been framed very differently in Iranian social media. Controversy constantly surrounds My Stealthy Freedom, in connection with the diasporan or "outside" positionality that is often attributed to it. Meanwhile, the Girls of Enghelab Street are much more often represented as an indigenous movement and, on that account, "genuine."[3] Association with My Stealthy Freedom is repeatedly utilized to render suspect any form of activism around the hijab. Authenticity becomes dependent, in often binaristic fashion, upon territoriality. I explore the issues that these dynamics, in their affective and emotional dimensions, pose for transnational feminist solidarity, and how this solidarity could be thought (and felt) differently. In framing this dynamic as a problem of the territorialization of emotion, I argue that the alternative does not lie in pursuing lines of flight from the territorial (Deleuze and Guattari 1987;

[2] For an English-speaking audience, the term "Girls of Revolution Street" may carry connotations of revolutionary acts, but for Iranians, the Farsi denomination simply refers to the location of the first protests. The term "Girls" to refer to grown women is, of course, inherently problematic.

[3] The term "indigenous" has a particular lineage in these debates. Elaheh Rostami-Povey, for example, sees "Iranian-Islamic" culture as a broad framework within which the women's movement campaigns to change family and constitutional law and to widen access to employment and education (2012, 29). The compulsory hijab is downplayed as an issue in the volume in which Rostami-Povey's essay appears. For a critique of such approaches, see Moghissi (2011).

Khoja-Moolji 2015) but in finding ways of thinking and feeling local and global terrains differently, through regrounding or reterritorializing protest within its national contexts while reconfiguring the international in ways that do not simply restage colonial narratives of progress out of backwardness and toward liberal modernity (Fanon 1967). It is this twin process, I suggest, that will better enable acknowledgment and recognition of the affective claims of suffering and injustice that are staged in these emotional mediations.

My Stealthy Freedom began by inviting Iranian women to send in photographs of themselves unveiled in order to protest the state's imposition of the compulsory hijab. In May 2017, building on the campaign's success among Iranian women, Alinejad launched the White Wednesdays movement as a Twitter hashtag and also a Facebook page, which was later extended to Instagram.[4] Responding to criticisms that My Stealthy Freedom featured too many photographs of women unveiling in beautiful landscapes—in other words, that it was a spectacle without real effect (Batmanghelichi and Mouri 2017), White Wednesdays brought the campaign into cities and towns, encouraging women to wear white hijabs on a Wednesday or to walk unveiled in the street. The campaign urged women to film themselves using the hashtag #MyCameraIsMyWeapon. On December 27, 2017, a different initiative took shape, in which Masih Alinejad was not involved. A woman named Vida Movahed stood on a utility box in Enghelab Street, in the center of Tehran, holding her white hijab in front of her on a stick. She was detained and seemed to have disappeared, but the image of her action circulated online, prompting the Farsi hashtag #WhereIsShe? A month later, beginning on January 29 and 30, 2018, dozens of women (and some men) in Tehran and other cities imitated her action. This movement became known as the Girls of Enghelab Street, with a corresponding Twitter hashtag in Farsi. On International Women's Day 2018, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei connected protests around the forced hijab, which he dismissed as "tiny," with the failed attempts of Western "enemies of Iran" (CHRI 2018b). The state has responded harshly to the protests of the Girls, to a number of actions linked to White Wednesdays, and to other mobilizations, not only through arresting and detaining women but through imposing long prison sentences.[5]

[4] By May 9, 2016, its second anniversary, My Stealthy Freedom had achieved 1 million followers, a number that has remained steady since then. On the other hand, Alinejad's Instagram page had 3.8 million followers as of August 30, 2020, an increase of 1 million in a year. Much of this audience is international and non-Farsi-speaking: posts are translated into English and French.

[5] While this study focuses specifically on antihijab protests, the Iranian state has also taken action against young women posting videos of themselves dancing, forcing Maejeh Hojabri to

For many who saw the viral video of the removal of the police car door, which appeared on numerous Western media platforms, this was a sign that My Stealthy Freedom/Alinejad were playing a key role not only in exposing the injustice of these restrictions on the wearing of the headscarf but in mediating women's (and men's) legitimate anger around the issue. For others, even those who did not agree with the compulsory hijab, there was anxiety, suspicion, and often intense hostility concerning this event's mediation by a US-based campaign, a fear that human rights discourses could be instrumentalized in a context where the Iranian population was under renewed threat of comprehensive US economic sanctions, recalling a history of Western political, economic, and military interventions into the country and the region (Abu-Lughod 2013; Rastegar 2013; Shakhsari 2014, 2020). The contentiousness that has surrounded My Stealthy Freedom since its inception in Iran rarely appears in English-language outlets. In May 2019, the Center for Human Rights in Iran published a statement headlined "170+ Iranian Women Activists Condemn Sanctions and Threats of War" (CHRI 2019), which singled out "opportunistic celebrity activists" who are "cozying up to warmongers."

How, then, can we understand these highly charged contestations? I argue here that the question of women's rights and the question of US and Western-led economic sanctions on Iran are intertwined questions that separately and together invoke hierarchies not only of gendered but of racialized suffering. Yet feminist claims to human rights are often associated with the Western-led and especially the US-led international order (Grewal 2005; Mahmood 2008; Abu-Lughod 2013), since the Iranian political frame is widely understood to render the suffering of women less worthy of recognition (CHRI 2018a, 2018b). The issue here, I argue, is the perceived incompatibility of recognition claims, by which I mean that demands to end the suffering caused by sanctions invariably point to the neocolonial and racial motivations behind the sanctions, while demands to end the suffering of women point to the Iranian state's drive to preserve and extend patriarchal domination; yet rarely, in these online exchanges, are race/coloniality and gender framed as problems that require addressing simultaneously. This incompatibility of recognition claims is central to the transnational operation of both Western and local(ist) discourses.

In Western political and media discourses, Iran is invariably essentialized as the other, nursing a dangerous hostility to Western values, whether this is manifested through its determination to pursue its nuclear program or its

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confess to this "crime" on television on July 7 (CHRI 2018a), which in turn prompted the hashtag (in Farsi) #DancingIsNotACrime.

lack of respect for women's rights.[6] These discourses frame Iranian state attacks on women's rights as only confirming the need for economic sanctions in order to curb its nuclear program (Pompeo 2018). There is a coloniality to these discourses, insofar as the issues of women's rights and sanctions become intertwined markers of a regression to Oriental backwardness and away from full membership in the "community of civilized nations."[7] If, shortly before 9/11, it could be stated that "the idea of 'civilized nations' has gone out of fashion," to be replaced by the term "liberal states" (Risse and Sikkink 1999, 8), since 9/11, the terms "liberal" and "civilized" have often been used interchangeably (Allain 2006). "Liberal," here, carries a sense of civilizational superiority, based on ideas of rights and values that are at once "universal" and located primarily in the West. Western nations draw on selective versions of these values, perceived as originating in the European Enlightenment, in order to justify extraterritorial interventions. It is in this sense, I propose, in tandem with other scholars, that the terrain of the "liberal international" is marked by coloniality (Chowdhry and Nair 2004; Gregory 2004; Rao 2010). The response to such colonial framings on Farsi social media, as I show, is to stage an angry retreat into a national-cultural particularism, based on "authentic" ideas of Iranian women and of women's rights. This polarizing dynamic, inevitably, is self-reinforcing (Rao 2010; Valassopoulos 2014). The problematic of the relation between national and international domains can be reframed, then, as a problematic of the communication of suffering and how this does or does not secure recognition. Across national borders, both racialized bodies and bodies gendered as female are consistently framed as less than fully human, yet the national frame purports to give the suffering of some Brown (Iranian) bodies a degree of recognition, while the international frame claims to recognize the suffering of all (including Iranian) women (Shakhsari 2014, 2020). Key to the communicative problematic is that the affects that mediate this suffering—the anger of women, the anger of Brown bodies—are themselves historical markers of these bodies' inferior status (Lewis 1990; Ahmed 2014). The angers that aim to secure recognition, then, are imagined as not only being in competition with each other but as finding this recognition on different and conflicting terrains.

[6] See Rastegar (2013), Shakhsari (2014), Duncombe (2016), and Seddighi and Tafakori (2016).

[7] On this phrase, see Gong (1984, 90). A recent example is a headline in a British political review: "Iran Has an Opportunity to Rejoin the Community of Civilised Nations" (Rafizadeh 2020).

By no means do I frame anger as the only emotion in play. Anger drives and makes vivid moments of contestation, and it is an emotion that frames experiences of oppression as injustice, but in campaigns of protest, frequently, "anger meets joy" (Ransan-Cooper, Ercan, and Duus 2018) and other emotions, some of them hard to define. In other words, emotions combine and are mediated in complex ways. Nonetheless, I understand the ways in which these emotions are communicated not as preintentional overflows of feeling but as "strategies of authentication" (Chouliaraki 2013, 51) whereby a political perspective is mediated as emotionally genuine with the aim not only to communicate suffering but to claim recognition of that suffering. Both My Stealthy Freedom and the Girls of Enghelab Street, I argue, aim for authentication, and hence recognition, through a performative visual language of individual self-empowerment that is frameable in terms of popular feminism as a digitally mediated global phenomenon (Baer 2016; Banet-Weiser 2018). As many Iranian feminists would point out, and as I discuss further below, this focus on individuals carries with it disadvantages, such as neglecting the development of collective structures and long-term political goals (Khorasani 2018, 2019). Where such an approach resonates affectively and politically, as I will show, is in its connection of personal embodied experience with the collective experiences of the women's daily lives. But this strategy of authentication falters, and invariably becomes the target of vituperative criticism on Iranian social media, when personal narrative becomes incorporated into liberal, Western-centric narratives of universal progress, involving a shift away from the national domain, especially if this involves the invocation of economic sanctions. In this connection, I discuss the case of one of the Girls of Enghelab Street who, after leaving Iran, spoke at a public event in Ottawa alongside Canadian parliamentarians, arguing for the reimposition of sanctions on selected Iranian government figures (Arnold 2018), thereby provoking controversy, including accusations of national betrayal. Thus, as I illustrate, along with these authenticating emotional strategies, there are also forms of anger that are part of strategies of deauthentication. These invariably dramatize the location of their target outside the country, if they have become part of the Iranian diaspora in the West, or else choose other ways of placing them outside the national space. In each case, as I show, an affective claim is staged for recognition of a particular suffering, a particular injustice. The nation's territory is made to signify either an oppressive situation for women or the havoc wrought upon the social fabric by foreign economic sanctions. Rarely do these two recognition claims coincide. Instead, each form of recognition seems to involve a derecognition of the other.

How can a feminist solidarity be developed, then, that avoids affectively reinscribing (only) local spaces as authentic or positing the international in

terms of a Euro-American civilizing mission? What I argue is that the work of transnational feminist solidarity means engaging in a dual affective recognition that connects these two forms of suffering and the emotions around them. This means recognizing the legitimacy of angers at these sufferings, or at least the possibility that such anger may be legitimate rather than simply an instrument of existing power structures. This would be part of a process of confronting the legacies of "affective injustice" that stem from experiences of racialized and gendered marginalization (Srinivasan 2018). But to engage in this process would involve an affective and conceptual reorientation toward both national and international levels and the relationship between them. Here I argue that a Fanonian perspective, based on a critical dialogue of national and international domains (Sajed and Seidel 2019), allows us to imagine and construct a terrain of recognition that engages with the bodily and psycho-affective injuries of gender and race inequality by acknowledging the forms of emotion, such as anger, that stage and protest these injuries. Such a spatial reimagining, in generating new strategies for the communication and authentication of embodied and emotional suffering, would permit an affective resignification or, to be more precise, an affective reterritorialization of both national and international spaces and the ways in which they interrelate. The perspectives and tactics of the "new generation of [women's rights] activists" in Iran (Khorasani 2018) are shaped by—and in turn shape—the affordances of social media, in other words, what these "technologies allow people to do" (Bucher and Helmond 2017, 235; see also Batmanghelichi and Mouri 2017). In mapping patterns of emotion around Iranian women's rights campaigning in transnational media environments, I have utilized multimodal techniques of discourse analysis that focus on identifying recurrent, emotionally resonant tropes and genres (Lomborg 2014) in visual and textual material—posts, comments, images, and videos—across mainstream media, campaign websites, Facebook pages, and Twitter accounts of campaigns and individual activists, as well as hashtags, drawing on sources in both Farsi and English. I have been archiving the social media output of Iranian women's rights campaigns since 2014 and have therefore only drawn on a small selection of material here, mainly pertaining to the two mobilizations that are the focus of my study.

Affective (de)(re)territorializations

How can transnational feminist solidarity work be not only conceived but felt differently? Here, I propose that a rethinking of the territorial, especially the national territorial, is essential to the affective practice of solidarity. There has been a feminist suspicion of the territorial, in the sense of a physically located,

particular, and often rigidly demarcated terrain that has its roots in the ways in which gender oppression has been instrumentalized in the service of national agendas (Grewal and Kaplan 1994, 16; Yuval-Davis 1997). This has helped to drive feminist engagement with the transnational, and with border crossings and debordering, as crucial to the dimension of solidarity (Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Mohanty 2003; Rahbari 2021), with some postcolonial scholars envisaging deterritorialization as "a way out of [the colonial domain of] capture and containment" (Bignall and Patton 2010, 10). Deterritorialization, in a Deleuzian framework, is associated with affect as prediscursive, nomadic intensity, whereas emotion, in its engagement with discourse, is read as affect domesticated, tamed, and reterritorialized (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). In pursuing a discourse-analytical approach to the mediation of feeling, I do not construct a taxonomic distinction between emotion as discursive and affect as prediscursive. Rather, I follow Sara Ahmed (2014) and Margaret Wetherell (2012) in seeing feeling as discursively mediated through social communication. Nonetheless, I find it useful to think with the Deleuzian notion of emotion as territorialized and socially demarcated affective intensity, even if these phenomena exist on a graduated spectrum (Ngai 2005, 27). In that sense, I am interested in media affordances both as amplifying emotion and affect, and as enabling the delimiting or bordering of feelings associated with different and clashing conceptions of local and global spaces.

In its mode as "critical subversion" of "the norms of power" (Butler 2000, 741), deterritorialization has been taken up in feminist studies of affective practices that "exceed representations of national identity and cultural territoriality" (Manning 2006, 32; see also Gunew 2003). Shenila Khoja-Moolji (2015) reads binary discourses around Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani campaigner for Muslim girls' education, as affective reterritorializations that situate her life either as a journey from Eastern oppression to Western emancipation or from Eastern authenticity to Western imperial decadence. Yet reading Malala's autobiography against the grain, Khoja-Moolji insightfully argues, reveals complexities of her society that work to deterritorialize these discourses, to detach affective intensity from its familiar emotional moorings in national particularism or the liberal international's claim to universalism. My argument likewise contests these familiar territorializations of emotion that situate life journeys in terms of East and West, but it also, centrally, challenges the idea that affective lines of flight from the territorial are preferable to regrounding: for example, the notion that exile, in causing a writer "to abandon fixed positions of identity," enables "discursive originality" (Behdad 2005, 225–26). For Ahmed et al., regrounding "is not necessarily about being fixed," while transnational movement, likewise, should not romanticized

as "transcendence and transformation" (2003, 1). Central to the women's rights campaigns I will examine is this sense of remooring rather than unmooring, of locating one's protest within the national territory without the need to fix in place affective borders. It is this local-national situatedness that enables the social media strategy of authentication, which advances recognition claims and which, in Fanonian terms (Sajed and Seidel 2019), may open to a dialogue with the international, thus allowing recognition of a plurality of claims to suffering and injury. These affective reterritorializations would involve contesting twin forms of hegemony: that of nativism and particularism at the national level and that of the liberal order of coloniality at the international level.

Anger, injustice, and recognition

In order to situate my approach to emotion in this inquiry, I draw on feminist and decolonial scholarship on the unequal history and allocation of feelings. I focus, first, on anger as the emotion primarily associated with injustice in feminist scholarship and activism (Chemaly, Kaplan, and Mitra 2019; Kay 2019). The primacy of emotions has historically been associated with gendered and raced inferiority, while white male bodies are those most often designated as in possession of reason (Jaggar 1989; Ahmed 2014, 170). In liberal approaches, anger is necessary in order to register that an injustice has been done, but it becomes unhelpful to the social and political goal of securing justice (Nussbaum 2016), while rage oversteps the bounds of civil political discourse (Abrams 2011). Ahmed, however, frames feminist anger as an epistemology, a hermeneutics: it is "an interpretation that this pain is wrong, that it is an outrage, and something must be done about it" (2014, 174). Anger, then, is a social performance that assumes a reader—and the same is true, in most cases, of rage, even if rage is experienced or defined as anger's less controllable and more transgressive cousin. In other words, these emotions are not irrational—they are both interpretations and communicative acts. But what if the speech act of anger is "blocked" by the addressee (Ahmed 2014, 177–78)? This may occur, I argue, whenever feminist anger around the oppression of women in Iran is utilized in order to derecognize suffering under economic sanctions—and whenever anger over sanctions is utilized to block emotions around the injustices faced by Iranian women. In these cases, what we are confronted with is not only the refusal to recognize an injustice but the refusal to recognize an emotion that arises from an injustice—what Amia Srinivasan calls a "second-order" "affective injustice" (2018, 14). As I note above, however, this study does not focus only on anger, even if anger invariably informs the initial perception

of injustice that sparks affiliation with a campaign (Chemaly, Kaplan, and Mitra 2019). Prominent among the affects mediated in textual and visual form in campaigns against the compulsory hijab are joy, defiance, hope, fear, even love, as I will illustrate. According to Hedda Ransan-Cooper, Selen Erken, and Sonya Duus, while anger may play—often in unspoken or unacknowledged ways—"a central role in mobilising," it is "the combination of anger with joy which helps to sustain [a] movement" (2018, 635). "Positive" emotions, which arise through discovering solidarities, through "doing community" (637), and through valuing individuals, groups, and places that are deemed to be under threat invariably exist in combination with "negative" emotions such as anger or fear.

Our evaluations of speech acts are always affected by impressions about the presumed authenticity of the emotional content of a communication, even or especially in highly mediated environments such as social media—is it "genuine" or not? But as Ahmed (2014) argues, emotions are mediated social performances. The fact that a speech act (a post, a tweet) is performed for others does not render the communication "inauthentic." As Lilie Chouliaraki contends, the media theatricalization that attempts to communicate the authenticity of the scene of suffering should not automatically become an object of suspicion (2013, 36–53). In her argument, the theater and the agora, as the location of political debate among the citizenry, are intimately connected: mediated affective "strategies of authentication" (51) underpin the activity of politics, including practices of solidarity. She argues, then, that theatricalization is key to strategies of authentication involving the mediation of emotion such that one simultaneously claims and creates an ethical-political space. In what follows, I examine the strategies of authentication involved in the online mediation of anger, joy, and other emotions, but, I argue, these are also often intertwined with what I call "strategies of deauthentication" that deny recognition to others' articulations through, for example, questioning the sincerity or motivation of anger at injustice.

Women's rights, Iran sanctions, and the coloniality of the universal

To provide more specific context for my case studies, I first discuss the key problematic of the international terrain in affective discourses around Iranian women's rights. I develop my argument that a discursive coloniality characterizes the domain of the international through examining the ways in which Iranian women's rights and economic sanctions have been connected in the Trump administration's public statements and associated media coverage. It is in this context, I argue, that Masih Alinejad's February 2019 meeting with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo can be framed in terms of a colonial narrative

whereby the local requires validation from the universal in the form of global power. It is this framing that feminist activism needs to challenge, without falling into a discourse that fetishizes the local in the name of anti-imperialism.

The Trump administration, as media scholar Niki Akhavan puts it, has "weaponised" women's rights as a means of advancing its agenda of unilateral sanctions in Iran (quoted in Moaveni 2018; see also CHRI 2019). There is now a sizable feminist literature on the operationalization of human rights discourse, especially women's rights discourse, as a tool of Western (neo)colonial and imperial power.[8] This colonial framing, I suggest, imposes a particular territorialization of affect in relation to discourses of justice and rights, in that whiteness connotes rationality, judgment, and control over violent impulses, while Brown skin connotes excitability and proneness to violent extremes. Bernard Lewis writes of rage, for example, as a peculiarly Muslim problem, faced with Western modernity, which in its most intimate form involves "a challenge to his [*sic*] mastery in his own house, from emancipated women and rebellious children" (1990, 49).[9] "The Muslim," here, is of course a "he." The Trump administration invoked this rage, with its connection to the threat of violence, in its public pronouncements on Iran, linking women's rights to need for comprehensive sanctions, which had been partially lifted under the Obama administration in 2015 (Moaveni 2018). Secretary Pompeo's keynote speech of May 21, 2018, signaling this policy shift, also apparently references the protests of early 2018: "As seen from the hijab protests, the brutal men of the regime seem to be particularly terrified by Iranian women who are demanding their rights. As human beings with inherent dignity and inalienable rights, the women of Iran deserve the same freedoms that the men of Iran possess" (Pompeo 2018). By locating the United States as the defender of those universal rights which all Iranians, including women, have a right to enjoy, Pompeo is able to frame the unilateral reimposition of economic sanctions as part of a colonial "savior" narrative that portrays Brown women as principally under threat from brutal Brown men (Spivak 1994; Abu-Lughod 2013). These "men of the regime" are cast not only as violent but as inherently vulnerable and fearful, a characteristic exposed by their reactions to the hijab protests. This discourse is echoed in Benny Avni's *New York Post* article in the wake of Pompeo's speech, which also connects women's rights in Iran with the necessity of sanctions but does so specifically

[8] See Grewal (2005), Mahmood (2008), Abu-Lughod (2013), Rastegar (2013), and Terman (2017).

[9] This trope is discussed in relation to the "war on terror" by Mahmood Mamdani (2005).

through a story on Masih Alinejad, headlined "The Woman Whose Hair Scares Iran": "some of [Alinejad's] followers, bearded men, habitually post threatening video clips on her Instagram accounts. Yet most on Alinejad's timeline are women, proudly posting defiant videos despite the danger involved" (2018). In this optimistic narrative, the "mullahs'" "regime" is "crumbling" as much because of these peaceful protests as "because of any other threat." Here, it should be noted, it is White Wednesdays, associated with Alinejad, rather than the Girls of Enghelab Street, that is specifically referenced as a key driver of regime change.

The figure of Alinejad, then, plays a particular role in this discourse. In the wake of the reimposition of US sanctions in late 2018, she had a well-publicized meeting with Secretary Pompeo on February 4, 2019. By her own account, Alinejad demanded that the United States impose selective sanctions on key regime figures rather than comprehensive sanctions on the Iranian people (Shahrabi 2019). None of this, however, appears in the official statement by the State Department, in which Alinejad is thanked for her courage in campaigning against human rights abuses and receives a pledge of continuing US support: "the United States calls upon the international community to join us in condemning the Iranian regime for suppressing its own people" (US Virtual Embassy Iran 2019). The arrest of twenty-nine women by Iranian authorities in February 2018 is mentioned, but, again, only White Wednesdays is mentioned by name. The key point, I argue, is that Alinejad positions herself, and is positioned, in relation to the United States as the universal (and therefore exceptional) nation, in keeping with its own self-imagining (Grewal 2005; Puar 2007). In her account, the United States maintains the same relation to Iran, "whether under Trump or under Obama" (Shahrabi 2019), one that seemingly consists in overseeing the journey of the Iranian people toward freedom and modernity. The main difference between the two administrations, in her argument, is that the former dealt with an illegitimate representative of the Iranian people, namely Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, whereas Pompeo is meeting with an Iranian who can at least claim legitimate support from her large following, which actively represents itself both via social media and in the person of Alinejad.[10] This connects with larger trends in digital politics, including the phenomenon of popular feminism (Baer 2016; Banet-Weiser 2018),

[10] Alinejad has stated: "I only represent that part of the Iranian people who have trusted my media activities in support of human rights in recent years. I do my best to represent these people. My motto has always been: We must not wait for an oppressor government to represent us; we must not wait for the reformists and other such groups to represent us; we, ourselves, must

which I examine below as key to understanding the potential and the limits of Alinejad's campaigning.

For now, I return to the problematic of territorializing the universal in this way. As Rochelle Terman and Eric Voeten point out in their detailed study of diplomatic discourses on rights, "states will shame one another to promote their own interests, not the universality of human rights" (2018, 5). For those who would frame the US state as the defender of Iranian human rights, I would observe that the problem is precisely its apparent unconcern with the rights of those who suffer and die as a consequence of sanctions. Sima Shakhsari has argued that, "as a trope, the 'people of Iran' constitute a population which is [both] produced through the discourse of rights and for which death through sanctions and/or bombs is legitimized within the rhetoric of the 'war on terror'" (2014, 103). As studies of the multilateral sanctions under Obama (2010–15) have shown, for these sanctions to "be effective" against the Iranian state (defined as forcing it to the negotiating table), the Iranian population had to suffer "pain" (Nephew 2017, viii). Comprehensive sanctions were "indiscriminate" in their effect on the Iranian population, affecting "family remittances, education of Iranians abroad, . . . the availability and cost of imported goods . . . [and] transportation, as well as manufacturing" and medicines (Gordon 2013, 974; see also Moret 2015). Farhad Rezaei (2017) has mapped rising levels of suicide, prostitution, STDs, and family breakdown as a consequence. In Western/US media discourses on Iran, little acknowledgment is made of the extensive suffering caused by sanctions to Iranian women, although they have been disproportionately affected by the attendant job cuts alongside rising food, health, housing, and study costs (Kokabisaghi 2018; Tahmasebi 2018; Alikarami 2019). This is a population whose ontological status as fully human becomes insecure, or whose lives are rendered less "grievable," in Judith Butler's terms (2009). Accordingly, economic sanctions can be thought of as both a biopolitical and necropolitical strategy—the management of life through the threat of death—in that this policy targets a population that is discursively imbued with rights and, hence, is potentially salvageable for liberal modernity, yet this same population is stripped of rights as the dangerous Muslim other that threatens the liberal order (Shakhsari 2014, 2020). This biopolitics instrumentalizes a particular geopolitics through invoking the West and the United States as the universal and Iran as the nonuniversal, as willfully separating itself from the international norm

represent ourselves. This is the age of communication and now ordinary citizens have the power" (quoted in Shahrabi 2019).

through its violent enmity and declaring itself as ineligible for membership of "the community of civilised nations" (Rafizadeh 2020).

The affective strategies of My Stealthy Freedom: Potential and limits

This framing of the international, American-led order in terms of a trajectory of civilized progress constructs an unequal affective spatiality, I contend, that renders problematic My Stealthy Freedom's campaigning approach. In this section I argue, first, that the campaign's affective impact should not be dismissed as a resource for feminist politics. In conceptualizing My Stealthy Freedom as popular feminism (Banet-Weiser 2018), I explore both its potential and its limitations. As associated campaigns, My Stealthy Freedom and White Wednesdays insistently and effectively employ affective strategies of authentication around individual self-empowerment. These foreground the recognition of Iranian women's suffering by focusing on the theatricalized and locally situated body, reimagining national space. But in My Stealthy Freedom's orientation to US and Western media and political channels, the considerable social capital accumulated around its local intervention constantly risks being dissipated as the brand lays itself open to deauthentication. My Stealthy Freedom, I argue, brings the international-universal to bear on the Iranian national scene in a way that fails to address the coloniality of dominant Western discourses that connect economic sanctions with Iranian women's rights.

My Stealthy Freedom can be regarded as the perfect site (in the sense of location or place but also of "website") for the convergence of two concerns among Western commentators on the Middle East: media and women. First, media connectivity is closely related to modernization in linear narratives of the region's development (Matar and Bessaiso 2012). Within this framework, social media is portrayed as a tool of modern women's self-empowerment and autonomy, against "traditional" practices (Gheytanchi 2015). Likewise, in Manuel Castells' account of the 2011 Arab Spring, social media technology permits "a culture of autonomy" where people are transformed "into subjects of their own lives" (2015, 258). This focus on social media as a weapon of individual autonomy interweaves conveniently with a Western concern with the Islamic veil as emblematic of the obstacles facing Iranian women on their path to modernity.[11] In this context, I suggest, the frequent association of Iranian women's struggles with the social media presence of a particular celebrity—Masih Alinejad—fits with neoliberal narratives of individual progress from backwardness to modernity and into the

[11] See Yeğenoğlu (1998), Sedghi (2007), Mahmood (2008), and Abu-Lughod (2013).

global media "economy of visibility" in which individualized, popular feminism participates (Banet-Weiser 2018, ix).

My Stealthy Freedom is careful to situate itself, at the top of its Facebook page, as a nonpartisan resource where women inside Iran can post material.[12] Nonetheless, as of August 2020, over three-quarters of the posts were reposted news stories on Iran, not all were about the hijab, and only a minority were posts of women without the veil (and some of these may have been re-posts). Many posts have some reference to Alinejad. The social media presence of My Stealthy Freedom/White Wednesdays/Alinejad, moreover, frames individual acts of protest as part of a personal communication with her: messages and cell-phone videos from Iranian women usually address Alinejad personally, invariably using her first name. This personal interfacing has undoubtedly been part of the affective appeal of Alinejad's interventions for her Iranian and international audiences. In recent years, for example, Alinejad's own Instagram page has attracted many more followers than the My Stealthy Freedom Facebook page: 3.8 million as compared to just over 1 million (the latter number has not increased much since May 2016). Since early 2018, on the other hand, several mobilizations have emerged that were not initiated by Alinejad, including the Girls of Enghelab Street protests; #DancingIsNotACrime; and most recently, since early August 2020, the eruption of #MeToo in Iran. It appears that the continuing increase in Alinejad's audience has less to do these days with new campaigns initiated by her and more to do with the momentum around the affective and intimate public she has generated (Papacharissi 2015; Dobson, Robards, and Carah 2018).

Masih Alinejad herself, as a media figure, projects a passionate authenticity, from the emotion that informs her media statements to her large amount of hair (Avni 2018). As she puts it, "the [Iranian] government thinks I have too much hair, too much voice, and I am too much of a woman" (2016). These mediatized performances signal a readiness to overstep imposed boundaries and to challenge limits on personal freedom in a manner that is the opposite of "stealthy" and hence is set up as an object of aspiration for women inside Iran. Authenticity, as Sarah Banet-Weiser notes, relates to the "need to believe—that there are spaces in our lives driven by genuine affect and emotions" (2012, 5). Both anger and admiration, then, accumulate around the notion of Masih Alinejad and My Stealthy Freedom as authentic, since the

[12] To avoid being identified, "participants through Facebook directly submit photos and stories to Alinejad, the creator and administrator of the page. She verifies that the photo is taken in Iran and posts it to the page" (Khazraee and Novak 2018, 10).

promise of the authentic, in the sense of personally vouched for "truth," underpins trust in the brand even if distrust is always present in the background, since the brand to which one attaches may sell out (Banet Weiser 2012). Self-branding always, then, involves strategies of reflexive (self-) authentication, which lend themselves to emotional polarization.

In such a framing, the online presence of Alinejad/My Stealthy Freedom can be viewed as a form of diasporic self-commodification, where political oppositionality is turned into cultural and social capital (Shakhsari 2011) and particular campaigns become faces of a "social media brand," where one individual is the "gatekeeper" and leading figure (Khazraee and Novak 2018, 10). Iran-based feminist activist Noushin Khorasani (2018) has argued that campaigns initiated by individuals (she does not name Alinejad) do not allow for the collective input of activists around structures and goals, which, in turn, leaves these individuals exposed to the pressures of various "political agendas." While Khorasani regards this personalization as inescapably informing the outlook of the "new generation of activists" like the Girls of Enghelab Street, she interestingly links this blurring of the boundaries between the "civic and the personal" to the erasing of distinctions between "inside and outside" (the country) and between "local and global," to the extent that such movements risk having "foreign" political agendas imposed upon them (Khorasani 2018).

In my argument, these mediated and affective deborderings, or deterritorializations, pose not only risks but also the possibility of political openings, forms of emotional connection—and reterritorialization—that were not so vividly graspable before. These campaigns employ strategies of affective authentication that are grounded, first of all, in national space, in the sense of the embodied experience of being a woman in a particular locale. "For politics to take place, the body must appear," notes Butler (2011). This being granted, it is important where it appears. The most commonly disseminated genre of image in the early period of My Stealthy Freedom (2014–16) was the woman letting her scarf fly out in an Iranian landscape, often in an elevated setting, an affective image of joy that was criticized as a spectacle without political effect or commitment (Batmanghelichi and Mouri 2017). Nonetheless, the body does appear in these images, and it does so in a mediated public space, in a physical location. The political affect/effect here arises from combining a joyful moment of self-determination with participation in a reimagined national collectivity. Below one such image (fig. 1), on the second anniversary of My Stealthy Freedom, Alinejad posted a comment that staged this affective reterritorialization in a way that mediated positive and negative emotions—love, joy, anger, defiance: "We love Iran and we want to show you the beautiful face of Iran, the uncensored face of Iran. Let's be

برای همین دغدغه کوچک هزینه کردند و با گشت ارشاد و باتوم زنان را تحقیر و و ادار به زیست دوگانه کردند ...سپاس از تک تک زنان و مردان خوب این صفحه که چهره زیبا و بدون سانسور ایران را به دنیا نشان دادند....

It is the Second anniversary of My Stealthy Freedom campaign....We are reaching one million followers . We love Iran and we want to show you the beautiful face of Iran, the uncensored face of Iran. Let's be loud and say NO to forced hijab. This is the first step towards full equality....

#SeeYouInIranWithoutHijab

#MyStealthyFreedom

#آزادی‌یواشکی

En français / In French:

#IRAN #LIBERTE #FURTIVE #FEMININE

C'est le deuxième anniversaire de la campagne de My Stealthy Freedom ....On approche du million d'abonnés. Nous aimons l'Iran et nous voulons vous montrer son visage magnifique, le visage non-censuré de l'Iran. Parlons fort, disons NON au hijab imposé, c'est le premier pas vers l'égalité complète ...

#SeeYouInIranWitoutHijab

#MyStealthyFreedom

See Translation

Figure 1 My Stealthy Freedom. Facebook post with photograph and text in Farsi, English, and French: "It is the second anniversary. . . ." May 9, 2016. A color version of this figure is available online.

loud and say NO to forced hijab." Protest at gender discrimination is affectively authenticated here in its individual, embodied, and collective-national dimensions. As Butler points out, "constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine" (2004, 26). Not only do social media enable "the citizen . . . politically through a private media environment" (Papacharissi 2010, 131), but these online campaigning tactics amplify and build on the connection between the personal and the political already made by the Iranian state, in that women's bodies have become matters of public concern. "Popular feminist" culture on social media, then, may be seen as Janus-faced. On the one hand, its individualism can be aligned with neoliberalism in its framing of the body as "a key site of identity, empowerment and control," a focus that has only been intensified through the use of digital media for self-representation (Baer 2016, 19). On the other hand, in staging resistance against structural blockages to individual empowerment, popular feminism displays a potential for building collectively imagined (trans)national communities based on the perceived connections between personal and political, private and public, mediation and embodiment.

The sense of personally, affectively embodied location in the national territory, which finds its (trans)national reflection in posts on My Stealthy Freedom/White Wednesdays or on Alinejad's own pages, is key to the collaborative strategies of authentication that these pages dramatize. As Charles Taylor observes, the modern sense of the "authentic," which is one's "own original way of being," applies to the national as well as the personal domain (1992, 30–31). For Fanon, writing on nations of the global South, an opening to the nation was the condition for an opening to the international: "it is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness establishes itself and thrives" (1967, 199). For Alina Sajed and Timothy Seidel, "national consciousness . . . in Fanon's vision [bridges] . . . the local terrain of national liberation and the larger/transnational terrain of anticolonial solidarity and connectivity" (2019, 586). It was through the creativity of struggle, the reality of which brought the "new humanity" of the nation into being on an everyday basis, that connections with other global struggles became possible (Fanon 1967, 198; see also Rao 2010, 135–38). This autopoietic aspect can be characterized as performative in the sense that the "truth" the performance brings into being is created through the performance itself (Butler 1997; see also Chouliaraki 2013). I relate this to Ahmed's account of how, in moving from individual pain to the creation of a language for the expression of anger concerning the injury, one moves outward toward politics (2014, 176). Performed anger, even joyful anger, may be part of the self-creation of which Fanon speaks, in its opening of the personal to the national, and thence the international, terrains.

It is in this connection that I would contest the kind of argument that lines up an "authentic" national community, one that constitutes a "serious" political public and milieu, against an audience that is dilettantish, diasporan, and self-dramatizing. Emad Khazraee and Alison Novak, for instance, note critically that the media performances of Alinejad/My Stealthy Freedom target not only Iranian women but a "distant audience—the Western media" (2018, 10), thus increasing their theatricality, which seems to be counterposed to authenticity. There is frequent suspicion, indeed, among Iranian feminists of this theatricality, as both unserious and Western oriented. The photographs that women send to Alinejad/My Stealthy Freedom have been described as amounting to a "highly stylized" "staging" of temporary "acts of civil disobedience" that attract "voyeuristic responses" "across the web" rather than promoting "fundamental policy changes in dress code." Instead, the posters, in this account, "move on with their lives, not really putting in the real-world work involved in changing state policies" (Batmanghelichi and Mouri 2017, 63–64). I question the assumptions implicit in these sorts of arguments, following Chouliaraki (2013) in arguing that theatricalization is key to strategies of authentication. My Stealthy Freedom's focus on mediating the often flamboyant defiance of individual women is, then, a strategy of authentication that simultaneously communicates an affective politics and claims and creates interlinked political spaces, at both local and transnational levels.

To the extent that its campaigning foregrounds the experiences of Iranian women, My Stealthy Freedom's campaigning, on and offline, has demonstrated a capacity to disrupt and subvert the ways in which emotions around the hijab demarcate national borders while simultaneously displaying a potential to reconnect a local experiential terrain with that of the global. Yet, I argue, in not fully engaging with colonial histories and the coloniality of the present, particularly the violence of sanctions, this form of activism plays a part in recementing territorial fetishisms—of the national as "authentic" culture and of the "international" as the space of Euro-American narratives of modernity as liberation, thus blocking a dialogical relationship between the two terrains, which could provide the basis for affective recognition of twin injustices. Further, these unequal spatial power dynamics are encapsulated in the outsized decision-making capacity of one individual in relation to My Stealthy Freedom and associated campaigns.

The Girls of Enghelab Street: A different kind of authentication?

I now move to focus on the Girls of Enghelab (Revolution) Street and to compare their protests with My Stealthy Freedom in terms of their affective

tactics of authentication and the spatialized dynamics of power they involve.[13] The Girls can be viewed as a more "indigenous" or "authentic" movement and set of tactics, in that they were not directly led or guided by My Stealthy Freedom or other diasporic campaigns.[14] Their protests can therefore be framed, I argue, as powerfully regrounding the affective discourse of women's rights in a way that My Stealthy Freedom could not manage to do.[15] The wide impact of such methods was, if anything, demonstrated by the counter-discourses on social media, discussed below, which targeted precisely this effect of authentication. In December 2017 and January 2018, several women successively developed a courageous new tactic of publicly unveiling while standing on utility boxes in Enghelab Street and elsewhere in Tehran and other cities: their images were disseminated via the Twitter hashtag (in Farsi) #GirlsofEnghelabStreet. Vida Movahed pioneered this form of protest on December 27, 2017. Beginning in late January 2018, dozens of individuals imitated these actions in Tehran and in other cities. These women's interventions were, if anything, more challenging than the original fairly brief unveilings, many of them enacted away from the public gaze and anonymized, that were mediated through My Stealthy Freedom. In its turn, the state response to such public challenges was harsh—often involving arrest, detention, and imprisonment, and sometimes physical violence. Narges Hosseini (2018), the second woman to protest in this way (on January 29), stated soon afterward that she was inspired by Movahed's action but not by My Stealthy Freedom or White Wednesdays: "I did not want to protest on a Wednesday. I wanted to disassociate my actions from Ms. (Masih) Alinejad's campaigns. I chose Monday, because for me Mondays continue to be Green. The Green Movement was a nonviolent movement. I tied a green ribbon to my wrist with the aim of declaring that I am not associated with anyone [campaign or group], and if there is an association with any movement, then it is with the Green Movement." In associating herself with the Green Movement, which was fraudulently denied victory in the presidential elections of 2009 and whose candidate was placed under house arrest amid severe repression

[13] I use the terms "strategies" and "tactics," which normally refer to different scales, rather interchangeably here, but I note that the boundary blurring of which Khorasani (2018) speaks seems to indicate the difficulty of separating scales and levels in these highly mediated environments.

[14] As an anonymous Iranian woman commented in her video posted on the White Wednesdays Facebook page, "'that girl' [meaning Vida Movahed, the first Girl of Enghelab Street], who stood and waved her scarf on a stick, was not linked to our movement" (January 2, 2018, in Farsi).

[15] For example, Khorasani (2018) welcomed "a new generation of social activists"—the Girls—without mentioning White Wednesdays or My Stealthy Freedom.

(Dabashi 2011), Hosseini is claiming another, more authentic and organic lineage of dissent, unconnected to foreign intervention.

This powerful testimony notwithstanding, I question the absolute, binary distinction drawn by some Iranian feminists between the nationally rooted "authenticity" of the Girls and the "inauthentic" campaigns of Alinejad. For example, some of the Girls' actions may be connected with White Wednesdays in that the scarves they waved on sticks were also sometimes white.[16] The White Wednesdays campaign also seems to have acted as a transitional space, in some aspects, between the "stealthier" methods of My Stealthy Freedom and the defiantly "unstealthy" actions of the Girls, in that many of the videos posted to the White Wednesday pages in 2017 show women walking unveiled through city streets. It seems plausible, then, that the bodily focus of the Girls of Enghelab Street's protests, the visual and performative character of these actions, can be situated in relation to the set of strategies and tactics developed through My Stealthy Freedom and White Wednesdays. It is also clear that having protested, having had their protests disseminated in this way, and having suffered arrests, imprisonment, and harassment, the Girls could not simply "move on with their lives," as feminist critics have remarked about the women who sent videos and photographs of their unveilings to My Stealthy Freedom (Batmanghelichi and Mouri 2017, 63).[17] Again, this points to the futility of absolute distinctions between "serious" and "popular" feminisms (see also Baer 2016) or, indeed, between "indigenous" and "diasporic" feminisms. In contrast to these territorializing and bordering binaries, I point to an emergent potential for a kind of reterritorialization without bordering, a situatedness that is also an opening.

This twin sense of regrounding and opening is articulated in the Girls' chosen mode of protest, I argue, in that it stages an affective challenge to the audience to recognize the other's suffering. In each protest, the motionless, elevated female figure assumes a symbolism and spatial presence that partakes of the genre of a public statue or memorial associated with national-historical narratives in public spaces. In this case, Enghelab Street is at the

[16] Shaparak Shajarizadeh, one of the Girls who, like Movahed, waved a white scarf during her protest on February 21, 2018, has highlighted that she became an activist through White Wednesdays (Mahtani 2020). Azam Jangravi, who protested on February 15, 2018, has refused either to support or denounce Alinejad (Twitter account, February 15, 2018). Vida Movahed has never made any comment either way.

[17] White Wednesdays activists have also increasingly been subject to arrest and imprisonment. Six women were given harsh prison sentences in August 2019. One of them, Saba Kord Afshari, had her sentence increased from nine to twenty-four years in May 2020. Again, to speak of these activists as "mov[ing] on with their lives" would be inappropriate.

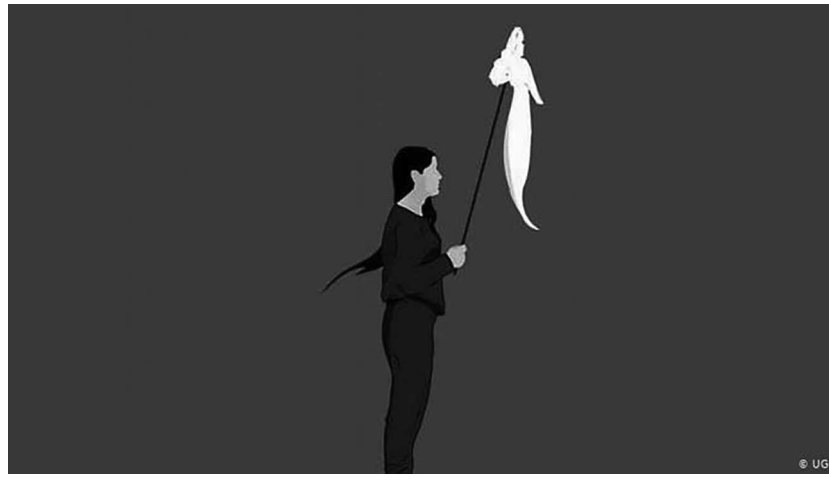

Figure 2 Anonymous. Image based on photograph of Vida Movahed's protest on December 27, 2017. Circulated on various online platforms. A color version of this figure is available online.

heart of the city of Tehran, with many cafes, art venues, and university buildings. The first Enghelab Street protester in December 2017, Vida Movahed, wore no discernible expression during her protest, as if to convey that her very action had more than sufficient affective impact. In the various photographs, one can read her expressionless face as conveying a seriousness and dignity, one appropriate to a memorial or monument; in the most frequently circulated image of her, the face becomes a blank (fig. 2). Photographs of other protesting individuals mediate a similar solemnity, in the main.[18] One protestor, "Setareh," interviewed two weeks after her action on January 29, described experiencing excitement and nervousness before staging her protest, along with other "unfamiliar feelings." But while her feelings and her sense of the situation were not entirely clear to her, what did become clear during her half hour of standing on an elevated platform, holding her scarf on a stick, was the varied reactions of the spectators, ranging from warm encouragement, through perturbed or excited ambivalence, to muted or angry criticism. Her statue-like immobility seems to have both elicited and challenged this range of reactions: "I did not listen to anyone, I just held my gaze to the front" (in Rezai 2018). Setareh agentively offers herself as an embodied text for spectators to reinscribe,

[18] However, photographs of the protest of Shaparak Shajarizadeh on February 21, 2018, to which we will return, showed a smiling face, mediating joy and defiance, in the vein of videos and photographs posted on My Stealthy Freedom and White Wednesdays, of which she had been a supporter.

but her vulnerability functions as a metaframe for these reinscriptions, confronting the audience with an ethico-political choice: whether to accept or reject her corporeal narrativization of oppression and resistance.

If the Girls' embodied and mediated protests exhibit a potential for affective territorialization, then, in Fanonian terms, they can be framed as opening both to a national space and an international terrain. The courageous and risky grounding of these protests in urban locales, I suggest, was crucial to their impact at both local and transnational levels—by their very means, the protests theatrically draw attention to this grounding and hence to their authenticity. In remaining separate from Alinejad and yet situating their actions in a recognizably similar framework, that of personal, embodied experience, the Girls could draw on support from different sections of the Iranian public. Many of the Girls also became celebrated as heroic individuals who (literally and metaphorically) made a stand, in the mode of popular feminism, yet very few became media celebrities in the sense of forming an intimate public around themselves.

Selling the *vatan*

Nonetheless, this double opening, effectively simultaneous to local and global terrains, could not escape the colonial framing of narratives of women's "progress" toward emancipation, an issue that has become more urgent and yet remains unresolved. This colonial framing acquired particular affective resonance around another journey from East to West—not that of Alinejad, this time, but that of one of the Girls of Enghelab Street, Shaparak Shajarizadeh. It was Shajarizadeh's participation in a particular event that prompted what I call a "spatial politics of deauthentication" on social media. She left Iran in July 2018, after being targeted and harassed by the authorities (CHRI 2018b; Mahtani 2020) and seemed to have disappeared from public life. Yet on December 10, 2018, she appeared with Canadian parliamentarians to call for sanctions on nineteen Iranian state officials deemed responsible for human rights violations, citing Iran's attacks on human rights (Arnold 2018). Like Alinejad in February 2019, she did not call for comprehensive economic sanctions, but this did not prevent an outburst of anger on social media.[19] Subsequently, the following tweet, composed of

[19] One viral tweet, after Shajarizadeh was nominated as one of "BBC 100 Women 2018," characterized her as "the hollow hero of empty alleys" (hence no risk is deemed to attach to her protest) and further opined: "she is a liar and thief who has stolen the social movement of #GirlsofEnghelabStreet" (Arash Ashourinia, Twitter post, March 7, 2019).

image and text, was widely circulated (fig. 3).[20] The heading ran: "An excuse for selling the homeland [*vatan*]." The caption reads: "The irony of the situation is that one *vatan*-seller with the excuse of the lack of human rights in Iran goes to Canada and asks for sanctions for her own nation. This means being ready to trample the rights of 80 million of her fellow *vatan*-dwellers in order to get her illegitimate rights. For this kind of people, freedom means that only they themselves are free and the rest are under sanctions" (December 11, 2018). The image (fig. 3) shows Shajarizadeh standing on a structure in a Tehran street, juxtaposed with an image of her smiling face, as if to stress her present enjoyment of Canadian life and her lack of integrity, in spite of her life-altering confrontation with the Iranian state in February 2018 (Mahtani 2020).

The word *vatan*, or "homeland," is crucial to the operation of affective bordering that this and other posts materialize. *Vatan* is an idea of the homeland as intense, personal attachment, an attachment that is both a right and responsibility for Iranians (Najmabadi 2005). It is territorial but also something one always carries within oneself, which makes its capacity to draw affective borders all the more powerful. Shajarizadeh is represented as "trampling" on this attachment. The question of human (women's) rights in Iran thus becomes entangled within an intensely polarizing discourse, the affective impact of which is communicated through the ubiquitous social media genre of visual montage, with its affordances for striking contrasts and comparisons. For Erin Manning, "when the body departs from a sovereign, territorialised, bounded space [and] . . . leaves the (imaginary of the) state, the body begins to create other bodies, other worlds" (2006, 63). The imaginary of the state, however, does not so easily leave the body. What happened in this case, I suggest, was that, in seeking validation from the Western international-universal, in the form of the Canadian Parliament, Shajarizadeh's action, far from deterritorializing or subverting national-particularist discourses, was quickly resignified and resituated by both opponents and supporters of the Iranian government as indicating her positionality on the "outside" of the *vatan*.

This affective reterritorialization rapidly expanded beyond the emotional territories of feminists and those generally supportive of women's protests. Indeed, it was channeled by those who wanted to discredit the Girls' protests more generally, so that the Girls became associated with betrayal of the *vatan*. In figure 4, also dated December 11, 2018, the popular image of Vida Movahed discussed above (fig. 2) has been altered to show her holding a spear that impales a map of Iran through the heart and draws blood.

[20] The image first appeared on Instagram but was quickly shared on Twitter and Telegram.

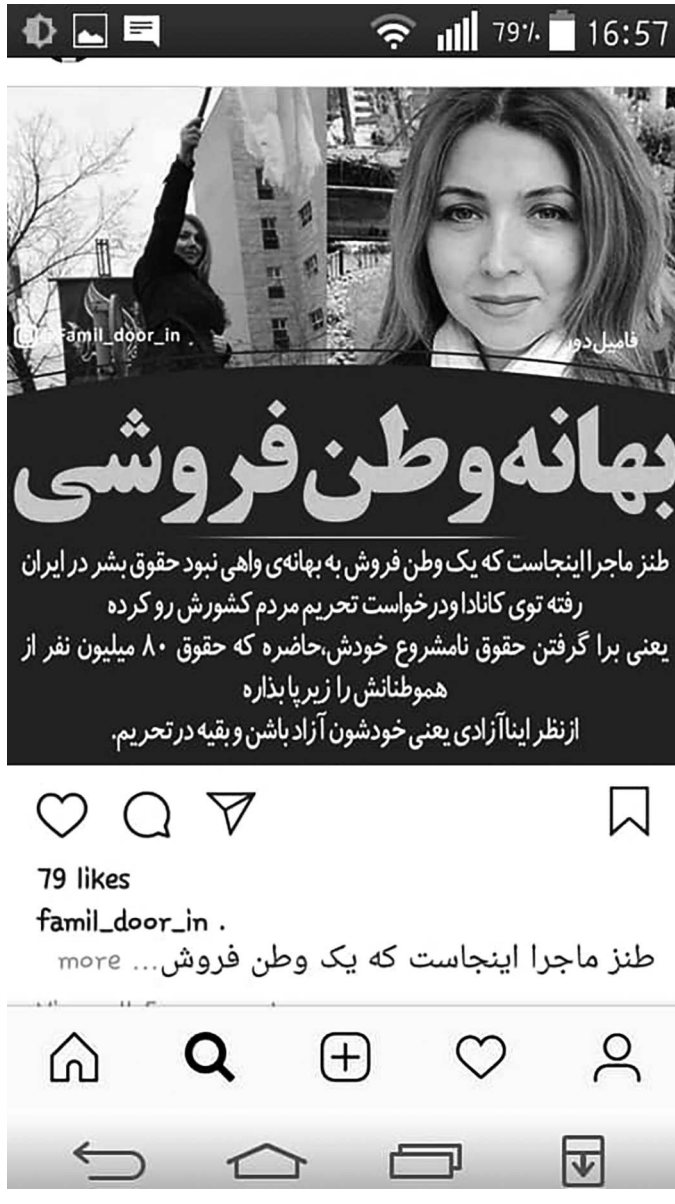

Figure 3 Anonymous. Twitter post in Farsi, beginning "An excuse for selling the homeland," with photographs of Shaparak Shajarizadeh. December 11, 2018. A color version of this figure is available online.

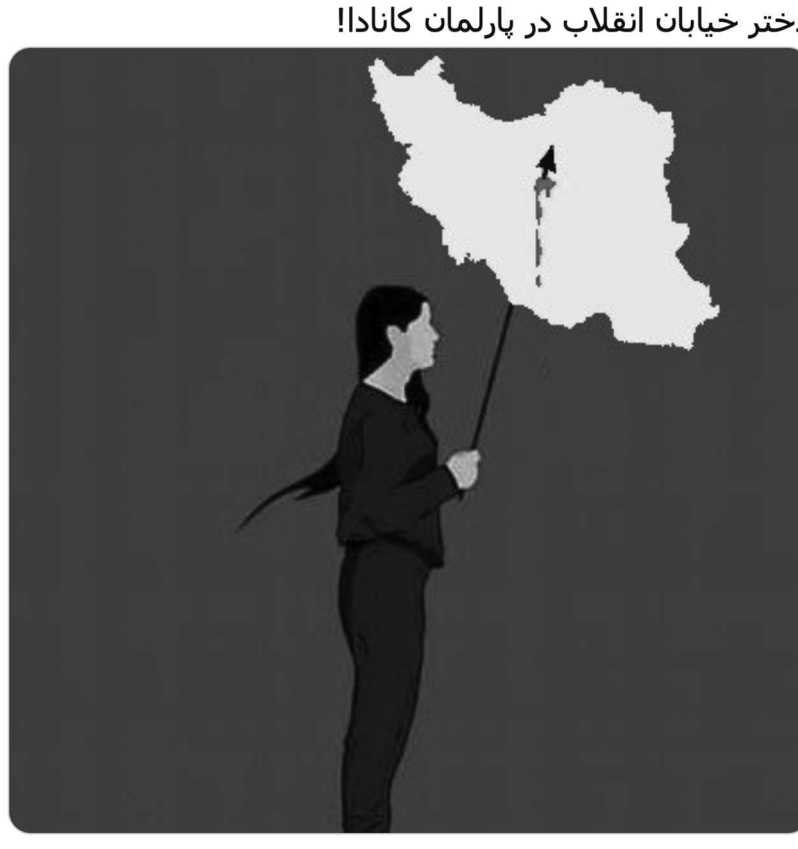

Figure 4 Anonymous. Image of Vida Movahed piercing Iranian territory with spear. Caption [in Farsi]: "The revolutionary girl in the Canadian parliament?" Circulated on various online platforms, December 11, 2018. A color version of this figure is available online.

Here the white of the scarf becomes the white of the homeland's injured body. Again, the national audience and grounding of the Girls' actions is implicitly admitted, but crucially, Movahed now stands outside (below) the nation's boundaries. Previously, her body, with its scarf removed, embodied the oppression of one half of the nation; now, the scarf itself is reterritorialized as the body of the nation. The caption simply reads, in Farsi: "The revolutionary girl in the Canadian parliament?" Shaparak Shajarizadeh is now associated with Movahed, in such a way as to cast doubt on the authenticity of the Enghelab Street Girls' performative resistance.

It is important to highlight, nonetheless, that the attempted deauthentication of the Girls of Enghelab Street—through guilt by association—was

passionately contested by many Iranians. In a tweet on December 11, 2018, the day after Shajarizadeh's appearance with Canadian parliamentarians, the prominent actor and self-identified feminist Taraneh Alidoosti celebrated Vida Movahed, the first protestor, writing: "Like millions of her sisters who live in this country, she only wanted her individual freedom, even though she didn't reappear. You, however, Mrs Shajarizadeh, are too tiny for such a[n] honorable fight" (this tweet, in Farsi, received seven thousand likes as of December 2018).

Notably, in this statement, the actions of the Girls of Enghelab Street can only be reclaimed by reterritorializing and regrounding their struggle within "the country." Paradoxically, this struggle is framed simultaneously both as "individual" and as common to millions of women. Khorasani (2018) had worried that the "new generation," as represented by the Girls, was framing politics in overly personalized terms. But this very individualization is highlighted and dramatized, here, in order to authenticate and ground the Girls' struggle in national terms, in a way that separates it from the "imposed" (Western) political agendas that characterize Alinejad's form of personal branding. Nonetheless, this staging of the individual—a global popular feminist trope—in distinctively "Iranian" terms also points to the entangled relationship between local and transnational terrains.

Conclusion: What kinds of solidarity?

In this concluding section, I consider the implications of these mediated spatial politics of emotion for transnational feminist solidarity. What my comparison of the affective discourses around Masih Alinejad/My Stealthy Freedom and the Girls of Enghelab Street shows, first, is the significance of using social media to connect individual experiences of place and body with similar emotional and bodily experiences across the national territory, thus reclaiming national space as a form of affective reterritorialization (Ahmed et al. 2003). In theatricalizing the power of one many times (Chouliaraki 2013), the Girls of Enghelab Street developed a more confrontational form of regrounding than My Stealthy Freedom and the White Wednesdays campaign. In framing the anger and defiance mediated by these mobilizations as political openings from private to public (Ahmed 2014), I have argued that they had a Fanonian potential not only to open toward the national space but beyond it, to the international (Sajed and Seidel 2019) and thereby to reinscribe these terrains as interlinked sites of injustice and its contestation (Srinivasan 2018). On the other hand, the association of economic sanctions with the international terrain limits such possibilities in that it invites a

binary opposition between national-local and international-global, following a logic of coloniality in which both regional and global powers, North and South, participate. The trajectories of activists such as Masih Alinejad and Shaparak Shajarizadeh are constantly read in terms of journeys from East to West, from oppression to freedom—and this liberal narrative is often contested in the terms of a narrow national-cultural particularism, as a journey from rooted authenticity to rootless inauthenticity. These binaristic discourses, in their different ways, forestall affective authentication and thereby the recognition of suffering personhood and of injustice. As performative derecognitions, such discourses are in themselves gendered and racialized affective injustices, that is, second-order injustices. They operate as affective territorializations of a particular kind.

Rather than responding only with a focus on *de*territorialization, or critical subversion of territorializing discourses, which would be of limited political efficacy, I contend that the task of solidarity would consist in helping unfold women's claims to both national and international terrains, through reimagining, reinscribing, and bringing these terrains into dialogue as complementary spaces of struggle *affecting* each other through mutual critique (Fanon 1967; Sajed and Seidel 2019). It is within such a framework that campaigns against gender oppression can be systematically linked to the work of decolonization, through the theatricalization and authentication of embodied feelings around suffering and resistance. While not fetishizing the territorial, then, this approach focuses on the work of affectively reterritorializing and resignifying relations between the local and the global, in ways that reframe the political practice of solidarity.

So what would a Fanonian decolonial feminism look like in its approach to affective (in)justice? For Tavia Nyong'o and Kyla Wazana Tompkins (2018), "a radical incivility [often labeled as 'rage'] makes space for the fullness of the presence of pain and anger" in connecting "individual pain to structural analysis." In a similar spirit, a feminist work of regrounding would address the anger of female activists confronting gendered forms of violence within national territories such as Iran, but in confronting patriarchy, it would also actively connect these affects to the anger of women in the United States and the West. In so doing, it would take account of imperial and colonial histories that shape the international sphere and how these affectively shape lives within the borders of particular nations such as Iran. Finally, it would critically engage with the affordances of the internet and social media as enabling affective challenges to both national and international reterritorializations. This would mean, I argue, mobilizing affect to create solidarities, across and within borders, even at the risk of the "inauthentic" that is inherent in the online mediation of emotion. If feminist anger is an opening to the political,

as Sara Ahmed (2014) suggests, it opens to the political in both its local and transnational dimensions.

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