This paper provides a cultural critique of the concept of trauma by examining the generational narratives of *toromā* in the Iranian context and the psychologization of memory in the aftermath of the 1980s. It examines memory-work as a cultural and political resource for witnessing and historicizing the otherwise muted discourse of the Iran-Iraq War and the anomic of the 1980s Iran. The paper elaborates on the concept of rupture, as an alternative to trauma, for its recognition of the complexity, multiplicity, and diffusion of historical conditions and their afterlife. These narratives of rupture show how generations are constructed and negotiated, not temporally, but based on the political and emotional stakes of how, when, and what one remembers, thereby informing the identity politics of young Iranians and generating new socialities and cultural forms. The paper approaches the psychological afterlife of social anomic as both a clinical and a cultural/political experience and raises questions about the ethics of engagement with the two constructed concepts of “mental health” and the “Middle East.”

**Keywords:** mental health, war trauma, rupture, Iran Iraq War, psychiatry, Middle East, memory-work, generational memory.
Using anthropological and psychoanalytical frameworks, the book analyzes the generational memories of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, the 1980-83 Cultural Revolution, and the political and cultural double-binds of 1980s Iran. It illustrates how self-identified generations such as the “1980s generation” continue to remember, process, and work through cultural and political shifts that quietly inscribed ruptures in their experiences of the self and the world around them. In their generationally organized memories and subjectivity-work, I located emerging languages, cultural forms, and generational aesthetics that were acutely informed by psychiatric and clinical discourses. In their works of art, literature, and other cultural productions, online and offline, they refer to some of their experiences as toromā, a Persian term hardly translatable to the individual, singular, and universal concept of “trauma” as understood in Western scholarship. The experience of the double-binds of ordinary life in 1980s Iran, for example, is not easily translatable to individual trauma. Rather, it can be captured in the concept of rupture, which recognizes the complexity, multiplicity, and diffusion of historical conditions and their afterlife. I will elaborate on the concept and share some thoughts on the ethics of engagement with the two constructs of “mental health” and the “Middle East.”

Remembering is Our Gift: The 1980s and its Memories

Thirty years since it ended, the Iran-Iraq war continues to shape Iranians’ sense of the world around them. The longest trench war of the 20th century, officially dubbed “Sacred Defense,” resulted in over one million deaths on both sides. But to reduce the anomie of the 1980s to war experience would be myopic. I have elsewhere shown how the Iran-Iraq War was situated in broader experiences of postrevolutionary anomie and the 1980-83 Cultural Revolution that transformed public life by ideological propaganda, the institutionalization of new gendered and gendering moral orders and Islamic codes of dress and conduct, and consequential shifts in cultural policy (Behrouzan Prozak Diaries). The war and the Cultural Revolution transformed Iranian society by engendering new forms of civilian life, the significant impacts of which on children, parents, and the public sphere, and of school, educational policies, and school contexts, educational environments (in schools: ideological indoctrination, moral education, ideological indoctrination of students: educational policies, ideological indoctrination of parents, ideological indoctrination of teachers), and of the whole system of values, values, and values continued, depending on the child’s age, the momentous events of the 1980s, much of which has been largely overlooked.

Across the region in the coming years, the legacy of the Iran-Iraq War will continue to shape the political, ideological, and cultural landscape. The war’s impact on the political, ideological, and cultural landscape of the Middle East will continue to shape the political, ideological, and cultural landscape of the Middle East. The war and the Cultural Revolution transformed Iranian society by engendering new forms of civilian life, the significant impacts of which on children, parents, and the public sphere, and of school, educational policies, and school contexts, educational environments (in schools: ideological indoctrination, moral education, ideological indoctrination of students: educational policies, ideological indoctrination of parents, ideological indoctrination of teachers), and of the whole system of values, values, and values continued, depending on the child’s age, the momentous events of the 1980s, much of which has been largely overlooked.

Questions of the 1980s and its Memories

For children of the 1980s, much of collective memory is shaped, depending on their age, by their childhood experience of double-binds and internalized anxieties in the face of not only war conditions, but also contradictory obligations, moral policing, ideological imperatives (in school, educational paradigms, the media, and the public sphere), and significantly, witnessing their parents’ hurried transition into the new era. Whether consciously or unconsciously, witnessing their parents’ hurried transition into the new era, whether actively participating in or passively observing the transition of grown-ups, the transformation of grown-ups’ lifeworlds remained an impenetrable experience for children. As sweeping tides drew ideological and cultural winds, children were left to grapple with the complex, multiplicitous, and diffuse nature of the historical conditions and their afterlife. The war and the Cultural Revolution transformed Iranian society by engendering new forms of civilian life, the significant impacts of which on children, parents, and the public sphere, and of school, educational policies, and school contexts, educational environments (in schools: ideological indoctrination, moral education, ideological indoctrination of students: educational policies, ideological indoctrination of parents, ideological indoctrination of teachers), and of the whole system of values, values, and values continued, depending on the child’s age, the momentous events of the 1980s, much of which has been largely overlooked.
明显的经验，常常在他们的集体成年思维中占据中心位置。

同时，战争时期的补偿结构和身份类别，如jānbāz（残废退伍军人）的创建，在战后时代产生了后果：虽然为一些退伍军人及其亲属提供了认可和照顾，但这些标签继续受到冲突的解释。许多退伍军人在社会中返回后，经历了怨恨、忽视或对过去的革命理念的哀悼；其他人可能因随着年份的推移而被拒绝资格，或者对被标记为有污名的补偿有所保留。一些人发现自己在文化和政治上的距离，从他们的孩子和已经从战争时期的价值观——节俭、坚忍和平等主义转向了自由化（Behrouzan, Prozak Diaries）。

值得注意的是，我们在战后社会政治和文化转型时未能将这些隐形伤口纳入我们的心理健康讨论中。这些隐形伤口逃脱了精神障碍诊断和测量工具的量化和诊断测量——《精神障碍诊断与统计手册》（DSM）。

在我们对战争伤亡的评估中，我们常常依赖于某些精神障碍诊断的统计数据（Behrouzan, "Medicalization as a Way of Life"）。但这些统计数据需要批判性地解读，考虑到它们不能揭示的内容：这些诊断类别和标准的文化意义，以及这些标准如何影响个体的经验。

在社会创伤的的心理后遗症中，替代历史被书写。这些替代历史和情绪状态创造了持续至今的文化形式，超越了战争和危机。一种这样的文化形式是代际身份的创造，这些身份超出了危机，持续影响着社会的福祉。我关注这些代际形式的复杂性，以及对童年内化记忆的持续存在，这些记忆在年轻人的生活中、在夜夜、在文化和艺术表达和/或症状中存在。我用创伤理论的这一现实来强调这一概念的局限性。几个代际身份已经形成，具有对1980年代的独有参考，造成了情感化身份政治，体现在年轻人对标签和纪念品的使用。


战争创伤与内化记忆，以及其对社会福祉的持续影响，需要我们重新考虑传统创伤理论的局限性。
The 1980s generation has created a particular generational aesthetic around 1980s cultural symbols and material memories (Behrouzan Prozak Diaries). The return of these conflicted pasts can be traced in cultural expressions as well as in toromāik nightmares, both of which serve to show how “trauma” as a framework fails to capture the nuances of such deeply wounded contexts and subjective experiences. Recurring dreams are common, “of crashes, airplanes crashing into our house,” and of episodes of fleeing or being stuck. As are hearing screams, sirens, or explosions, “most commonly, loud cries of a big crowd; chaos, chaos” or “waking with a racing heart, sweating, and a feeling of panic.” In these flashbacks the war is only one of the several identifiers of anxiety. Many, across ideological divides, recall anxieties in the face of the morality police, e.g., “being arrested for a loose headscarf,” or “losing my father in the battlefield,” or “memories of mourning ceremonies in school” or even the more semantically and double-bind of following carnivals in school, of even the more semantically and double-bind of following carnivals in school, of even the more semantically and double-bind of following carnivals in school. The quick transition from “I” to “we” is a common feature in these narratives. Such pluralization helps to ground one’s experience in a shared history and thus give it meaning. Generalizations about nasl-e mā (our generation) signify an unspoken know-what about a shared experiential identity. However, they are far from monolithic and are ideologically and socioeconomically diverse, at times even opposing, and yet what unites them is their rootedness in the psychological significations of a particular temporality. It is precisely the shared nature of these toromāik memories that should make us resist the temptation to pathologize and reduce these experiences to medicalized artefacts.

These returns and flashbacks create anxiety, helplessness, and at times PTSD-like symptoms. While enacting psychoanalytical notions of repression, displacement, dissociation, and belated retellings, they also convey a historically grounded intuition that shapes people’s sensory perceptions and emotional states. Several generationally recognized references to the 1980s return and reflect the embodied cultural sensibilities of each generation. Such cultural embodiments are not always conscious, but can reveal the historical and ideological resonance of childhood experiences. Cultural embodiments are not always conscious, but can reveal the historical and ideological resonance of childhood experiences.
The abundance of jokes found on Iranians’ 1980s-themed blogs and social media groups reminds us of the dangers of myopic pathologization and the importance of understanding psychological and linguistic processes that individuals mobilize in acts of remembering and meaning-making, especially when the remembered past is rendered absurd. Narrative strategies like humor are significant for their psychological functionality, as is the psychoanalytical notion of dissociation, for example when remembering intense experiences “as if we were not there.”

The (cultural) details of experience, too, are important in these recollections. Cultural symbols from the 1980s are increasingly circulated in cultural productions and the media inside and outside of Iran, each demarcating carefully organized generational aesthetics. They include material reminders of wartime austerity and sanctions or the moral policing of the 1980s (e.g., ration coupons, changing school uniforms, or the domino shampoo brand Darugar, the latter holding a special place in sensory memory for its deep yellow color and distinctive smell) as well as sounds (e.g., the siren reminding of missile raids, or religious chants routinely recited in schools). I have elsewhere provided a sensory reading of these evocative objects and material remains (Behrouzan Prozak Diaries), each provoking a host of feelings, from nostalgia, anxiety, and fear, to a compelling sense of the uncanny: one would not want to go back to the reality of the 1980s, but one cannot resist the pull of nostalgia either.

It is tempting to interpret this persisting memory-work as mere self-indulgent nostalgia; sometimes even such indulgence can itself be ethnographically and psychologically significant. However, through objects and imageries, these mini-generations are also writing alternative histories of a decade of anomie that they perceive as unaccounted for in official discourse. This urge for keeping alive one’s own, marginalized, version of history is at the heart of these recollections. Creating new forms of kinship, this communal memory-work is a call for recognition and accountability. These aspiring “diagnosticians and historians” performatively engage in memory-work, online and offline, contributing to broader political processes of recognition and accountability. Their Facebook profile pictures of the (cultural) details of experience, the green wristbands they wear, and the scattered tweets with hashtag #1980sdarugar remind us of the endurance of the pre-revolutionary years in the democracy of the presidential elections of 2009 and the green wave of change that swept Iran in the aftermath of the presidential elections of 2009, the Green Movement. Even the term “martyr,” which until then belonged to the official and state-sanctioned vocabulary of the Iran-Iraq War, was now being reclaimed and re-appropriated by a new generation of political activists.
young Iranians across revolutionary and secular ideological divides, gaining new meanings in reworked wartime anthems and revolutionary discourse. The Afterlife of Ruptures

To move beyond trauma, the collective mind and recognize the complex interplay of trauma and politics, it is crucial to understand how trauma is recontextualized. By focusing on the collective trauma and the interplay between trauma and politics, this outlook helps us better understand how events are culturally significant for guiding memory. This outlook is partially succincted in the realm of PTSD, which is often considered as a single traumatic event localized in a single frame. Even though it is invoked in the literature, the term PTSD is more often than not used to refer to the immediate and short-term effects of trauma. However, the long-term impact of trauma on society and how it is inscribed into everyday life is still underexplored. The Persianized term toromā cannot be assumed to be a direct translation for trauma, even though it is informed by public psychiatric discourses of the 1990s. This term, which the 1980s generation refers to, is constructed in the intimate space shared by the "I" and the "we." It is hardly locatable in a single traumatic event. It is culturally significant for guiding how generations construct themselves, how history is psychologically imprinted and reconstructed in the collective mind, and how trauma becomes a cultural and political resource. It also becomes a channel through which to interpret and articulate emotions and memories that were perplexing in the child's mind and/or silenced by institutional dogma. Locating pathology in the individual brain (in clinical concepts like toromā) and thus seemingly de-politicizing historical experience, these renditions of toromā nonetheless create a new generational politics that is committed to justice, while simultaneously endeavoring to work through and make sense of the past experiences of the 1980s, from the perspective of trauma. But as long as the trauma of the war is not addressed, as long as the war is not historians, and the Palestinian war is not reconstructed, the paradigm of trauma falls short in capturing generational experiences and memories of the 1980s, partly because it individualizes loss and detaches it from its sociocultural meaning, and partly because it universalizes trauma and takes it for granted, and thus privileges only certain forms of therapeutic intervention. A purely clinical outlook defines (individual) normative stages, demarcates "normal" and "pathological" reactions to an event, and aims to get rid of excessive disturbing memory. This outlook is hardly sufficient when individuals insist on remembering and historicizing their collective memory (Das Life and Words; The Act of Witnessing). Indeed, macro-events such as the war are inscribed in people's consciousness (Kleinman; Kitanaka; Scheper-Hughes; Fischer). The Afterlife of Ruptures

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ize or individualize trauma and privilege certain forms of knowledge. However, these critiques are situated in their own cultural contexts. Firstly, they risk overlooking both the enormity of psychological pain and the agency with which people may internalize and mobilize diagnostic categories in order to inhabit their experiences of loss. Secondly, they often assume a top-down biomedical apparatus imposing itself on people's interpretations. Iranian public discourses of mental health, however, were not merely the outcome of hegemonic biomedical interventions upon passive recipients, but grew out of a long history of Iranian psychiatry and historical conditions and institutional (medical, psychiatric, and governmental) discourses that were performatively and actively mobilized by people toward specific political and clinical ends (Behrouzan Prozak Diaries). There is little room in prevailing critiques of trauma for such performative mobilization of clinical discourses by ordinary people.

These critiques also risk overlooking the complex ways people pragmatically combine various cultural resources and epistemologies that are far from mutually exclusive. A cultural investigation into the symbolism that underlies Iranians’ interpretations shows the importance of understanding the historical and emotional trajectories of their affective structures in relation to Shi’ism and mysticism (Good et al.; Fischer, Iran; Fischer and Abedi; Beeman), as well as more recent histories of post-revolutionary anomy and double-bind (Behrouzan Prozak Diaries). Finally, when problematizing the dominance of “trauma” in mental health discourses, scholarship has hardly provided alternative frameworks that can speak to both clinical realities and cultural particularities. This is where anthropological and psychoanalytical listening can complement each other in examining Iranians’ generational narratives of past toromā, as these narratives demand close attention not only to content, but also to modes of sharing and interpretation as well as the intense emotional reactions they evoke. Understanding their cultural symbolism is as important as understanding psychological [coping] mechanisms (Behrouzan, Prozak Diaries). Key here is the necessity of a marriage between the psychological and the political; i.e., the recognition of the very real psychological burden of experiences that are nonetheless socio-politically configured.

Psychoanalysis maintains that unrecognized losses could be followed by hyper-remembering. Among young Iranians, the compulsive revival and mobilization of the 1980s cultural relics facilitates active historicization and witnessing to a decade of toromā that “took away” a generation’s childhood and to losses for which mourning was largely forbidden. Chief among those losses was the massacre of thousands of political prisoners, an unspoken tragedy that took over two decades to enter public discourse and that contributed to yet further generational formations among the survivors, many of whom were parents to the 1980s children. These contexts are utterly significant. In her Act of Witnessing, Veena Das argues that while individual lives are defined by their contexts, “they are also generative of new contexts” (Das: 210). These acts of remembering created dynamic cultural contexts, online and offline, in blogs and works of art, in dreams and waking life, where recursive processes of remembering or forgetting continue to produce new contexts, language forms, and generational sensibilities. This contextualized memory-work reveals the situatedness of both trauma and toromā in their particular cultural and historical trajectories.

Trauma theories (primarily North American) often assume trauma is an essential, singular, or total event. The influential work of Cathy Caruth (Caruth...
Unclaimed Experience), for example, follows Freud in arguing that psychic trauma is not locatable in one’s past, but rather “in the way that its very unassimilated nature... returns to haunt the survivor.” She maintains that trauma manifests in belated rearticulations of the traumatic event in one’s language and actions, in order to work through the incomprehensibility of what was not fully grasped at the time of its occurrence. This delayed narrative, in turn, becomes traumatic; turning into “…a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (Caruth Unclaimed Experience: 4). The theory also argues that there is an urge, an “inherent necessity,” for belated repetitions of experience that can in turn be further traumatizing. The reconstruction of traumatic memory will thus require a delayed dialogue, with the therapeutic aim of liberating the victim from the silence imposed (on language) by the unspeakability of the experience. There is shared ground here with anthropology’s awareness of the impossibility of history as a grand narrative.

However, anthropology remains acutely sensitive to the cross-cultural interpretations of this therapeutic encounter and inherent power relations between the so-called victim’s voice and the listener. In my work on listening to the compulsive repetitions of generational memories and the re-traumatizing effect of remembering (particularly in dreams), psychoanalytical frameworks have been extremely helpful. But a solely psychoanalytical focus would have failed in capturing two significant features. The first is the culturally generative capacity of such retellings—i.e., the generational, historical, political, and cultural meanings that individuals assign to their narratives and the cultural and political forms they create out of them. This argument is not a matter of normative judgement, nor is it undermining the psychological burden of experience; rather, it is about recognizing the complexity of a metaphorical grey zone and inhabiting the black and the white at once. Secondly, beyond unconscious repressive mechanisms, Iranians’ memory-work was also subject to other forms of inarticulation and silencing in the 1980s and belated articulation since the 1990s (particularly in the virtual space). For them, the psychoanalytical belatedness of articulation was intertwined with the silencing of censorship, culture wars, and intra- and intergenerational politics of legitimation or suspicion (Behrouzan Prozak Diaries).

Other psychoanalytical theories of trauma offer commonalities with anthropology and room for cultural analysis. The Laplanchian and object relations psychoanalytic theories, for example, shift the focus away from the traumatic event and towards processes of remembering and meaning-making (Laplanch and Pontalis). While for Caruth (or Freud) it is the traumatic event that returns and traumatizes and is eventually meant to be re-assimilated and recovered in the analytical process, for Laplanchian and British theories, it is the belated processes of association that render memory traumatic. This approach allows us to situate the experience in the social context in which remembering is enabled, forced, or forbidden. (What happens, for example, when grief endures over time for one whose child was executed in prison but whose death cannot be publicly acknowledged or mourned three decades later?). This approach is thus complementary to anthropological insight into the context of traumatic experience and memory-work (Das The Act of Witnessing; Life and Words).

Moreover, this approach underscores linguistic and cultural symbolics and therefore the incommensurability of experiences across different factions of a generation. It thus helps to de-universalize trauma, providing another point of com-
plementarity with anthropological scholarship that explores the cultural contexts of mental illness (Kleinman Culture and Depression; Kleinman Illness Narratives; Good). Finally, by focusing on the interpretations and meanings forwarded by narrators themselves, it allows their voices to emerge (in all their complexity and contradictions) within their own cultural grammar and local contexts. This shift of focus to performativity provides a useful conversation with anthropology. And it is in this conceptual conversation that I situate the concept of rupture (as opposed to trauma) for understanding toromā. Conceptually, trauma is deemed universal, individual, and singular. Rupture captures the particular, shared, and fluid nature of memory-wounds; it takes our focus away from the external “event” and toward the consequent processes of sharing, remembering, and working through memory-wounds that are otherwise muted by either institutional memory or clinical classifications.

The historically informed modes in which Iranian youth reconstruct experiences of toromā underscore political and cultural hermeneutics. Toromā is hardly about a single traumatic event; it is scattered across historical occurrences and relays how history is psychologically lived by infusing itself into the present and the future. Persian vocabularies such as toromā, khoreh-ye ruhi (psychological canker-like wound), āsib-e ruhi (loosely, “psychological damage”), zarbeh-ye ruhi (blow to the soul), and feshār-e ruhi (distress and pressure on the soul/psyche) emerge within their own psychological grammar (Behrouzan Prozak Diaries). The concept of rupture conveys the diffused nature of these psychological experiences that are rooted in disturbing historical conditions and their aftermath. Ruptures manifest through cultural references, emotional themes, and, significantly, new language forms with which disturbing experiences are performatively internalized and interpreted. Understanding ruptures therefore necessitates understanding the cultural, linguistic, and psychological significations of the historical legacy they belong to.

Trauma is assumed to be experienced by the individual; ruptures, however, are intersubjectively interpreted, negotiated, legitimated, and reconstructed, ultimately informing generational demarcations. Ruptures continually seep into the social mind. Being shared is their condition of possibility. While trauma is assumed to be psychological and pathological, ruptures can be culturally generative, creating new socialities, communities, language forms, and cultural aesthetics. What differentiates them from a purely pathologized understanding of trauma is also the fact that, while they undoubtedly disrupt life and create psychological pain, they also paradoxically carry the possibility of working through themselves due to the cultural and political forms they can harness. This is additionally significant in terms of their representational ethics: “we are not victims,” young Iranians adamantly remind us.

These generational re-articulations help to anchor oneself in time and distinguish oneself from those who do not share their experience, thus mapping broader social and political discourses that shape one’s subjectivity. As if an attempt to make temporality intelligible as non-linear, incohesive, and eruptive, they make a historical claim toward a decade that marks for them the beginning and the end of times. Anchoring themselves in time is not a matter of chronology or eventfulness (or trauma for that matter); rather, it is about the pull of the evocations, the inner turmoil, projections, transferences, and displacements that a particular moment in their shared past evokes in them and creates a community of avid rememberers.
No word captures the viscerality of ruptures better than the Persian word *khoreh* (canker), the usage of which is situated in a particular literary and historical context. The idea that ruptured pasts invade the present like a “corrosive wound” or canker is often brought up by Iranians with reference to the oft-quoted words of Sadegh Hedayat in his seminal novella Blind Owl (Hedayat: 1). “There are certain wounds in life that, like a canker (*khoreh*), continue to gnaw at the soul and eat it away in solitude.” The word *khoreh* is also an old name for leprosy and is sometimes used to describe the invasive nature of cancer. *Khoreh* is not a scar, but a *zakhm* (open wound); not a lifeless remnant of catastrophe, but a consuming and venomous lesion, evoking Veena Das’s concept of “poisonous knowledge,” i.e., embodied knowledge of the past that cannot be unknown and that descends into one’s present (Das *The Act of Witnessing*). For young Iranians, the poisonous knowledge of the 1980s ruptures are incommensurable across generations; they are diffused, fragmented, unpolished, and incomplete, at times perceived as unacknowledged, unrecognized, and unaccounted for. The growing circulation of their recollections is driven in part by the inherent psychological necessity of retelling, and in part by a dynamic generational voice that feels compelled to make sense of history and to work through the pains of the past while moving toward the possibilities of the future.

Moving Beyond Trauma and Towards New Representational Ethics

That the “Middle East” is increasingly misrepresented and often reduced to studies of conflict or trauma has political and clinical ramifications. Institutional narratives of both politics and public health often gravitate towards binaries of heroism and victimhood, of “trauma” and “resilience.” Lived experiences, however, surpass time and space and reside somewhere in the messy grounds of ordinary life, in unending negotiations and choices that emerge out of the mundane. These experiences are continuously interpreted and re-interpreted, emerging in the public sphere and inside communities in the lived exchanges of narratives and discourses. The power to make sense of trauma is also political, and the ways in which the past is remembered, online and offline, serves an ideological function beyond the psychological or clinical.

Moving Beyond Trauma, a collaborative project for a cultural critique of current mental health discourses in the region, aims to address problematic assumptions in scholarship, research, policy, and practice. It focuses on the representational assumptions of terms such as “Middle East” and “mental health,” the psychologization and de-politicization of conditions that are rooted in political disorder, the scarcity of interdisciplinary, intercultural, and comparative approaches to mental health, and the privileging of narratives of trauma over narratives of hope and resistance. The project seeks to re-socialize and re-politicize the otherwise silenced critical discourse of the Iran-Iraq War and the anomie of the 1980s (Behrouzan *Prozak Diaries*).

Narratives of rupture also show how generations are constructed and negotiated, not temporally, but based on the political and emotional stakes of how, and what, one remembers. They inform the identity politics of young Iranians and generate new socialities and cultural forms. The psychological afterlife of social anomie is thus both a clinical and a cultural one, and investigating it is situated in a crisis of representation. What ethics of engagement does this representational impasse engender? In 2014, I started the initiative “Beyond Trauma”, a collaborative project for a cultural critique of current mental health discourses in the region. It aims to address problematic assumptions in scholarship, research, policy, and practice, and to seek situated approaches to wellbeing (Behrouzan *Beyond Trauma*). It focuses on the representational assumptions of terms such as “Middle East” and “mental health,” the psychologization and de-politicization of conditions that are rooted in political disorder, the scarcity of interdisciplinary, intercultural, and comparative approaches to mental health, and the privileging of narratives of trauma over narratives of hope and resistance. The project seeks to re-socialize and re-politicize the otherwise silenced critical discourse of the Iran-Iraq War and the anomie of the 1980s (Behrouzan *Prozak Diaries*).
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plinary work due to rigid conceptual and methodological boundaries, and the dominance of specific clinical frameworks in public health debates. It underscores, through collaboration among scholars, policymakers, and practitioners, the diverse ways in which psychological well-being is conceptualized across the region and encourages bottom-up qualitative research in historical, cultural, and clinical domains.

Commonly, “mental health” in the region is evaluated in terms of individual diagnoses such as PTSD. Such an isolated clinical outlook reduces psychological wellbeing to the absence of mental illness, obscuring the sociopolitical reality of ruptures, and reifying social memory into a clinical symptom that ought to be cured and cleansed. It pathologizes memory at the expense of other various aspects of experience that not only generate new forms of life and cultural prospects, but that can also lead to new therapeutic potentials.

The point here is not to undermine the burden of the pathological, but to better understand it by situating it in its broader political context and to challenge a black-and-white representation of pathology itself.

Scholarship and practice of mental health primarily focus on the individual and the inner pain; social sciences and humanities underscore the outer, the sociopolitical, the collective. In a nuanced investigation of psychological wellbeing, neither focus should come at the expense of the other. Combining clinical and cultural sensitivity can enhance both inquiries. This requires understanding the variety of psychological medicalization in each cultural context, for creating a meaningful life.

Beyond Trauma

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Modern Arts of Memory

Chapter 5

Medicalization as a Way of the Unconscious

Prozak Diaries

Behrouzan’s Prozak Diaries

Medanthrotheory.org/issue/17

The Prozak Diaries

Notes
See Footnotes 13 and 14.

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See Footnotes 13 and 14.