

The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan
by Jenny Nordberg
Chapter Map by Anna Canning

Chapter Title & Focus	Topics, Quotes, & Page Numbers
PART ONE: “BOYS”	
<p>Ch. 1: “The Rebel Mother” <i>Azita, a few years earlier</i></p> <p>Introduces Azita Rafaat, female member of Afghan parliament and mother to Mehran, her daughter whom she has chosen to raise as a boy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing governments in Afghanistan (15) • Progress for women since 2001/Taliban’s influence (11) • Importance of having at least one son in family (13) • Azita’s choice to raise youngest daughter as a son named Mehran: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “I wanted to show my youngest what life was like on the other side” (15) • Changing children back to girls at puberty (15)
<p>Ch. 2: “The Foreigner” <i>Carol</i></p> <p>Introduces anthropologist Carol le Duc and historian Carol Dupree, expatriates living in Afghanistan and experts on Afghan culture/history. Details Nordberg’s initial investigation of female children raised as boys in Afghanistan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influx of international aid and “gender experts” focused on improving Afghan women’s lives (17) • Discusses “Uncle,” a woman from a tribal village who lived as a man and “enjoy[ed] a special status in the village” (20): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “In the small village, Uncle functioned as an intermediary between men and women, and served as an honorary male who could convey messages an escort other women when they needed to travel, posing no threat because she herself was a woman” (21) • Ethnic diversity in Afghanistan (23) • Children’s gender: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “the West may also be more obsessed with children’s gender roles than what Afghans are” (24)
<p>Ch. 3: “The Chosen One” <i>Azita</i></p> <p>Describes Azita’s marriage and journey to becoming a member of parliament. Discusses women’s rights in Afghanistan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of a woman’s reputation (27) • Acceptable dress & professions for women (27-28) • Azita’s experience as female member of parliament; death threats (29) • History of attempts to establish gender parity in Afghanistan: Soviets, Amanollah Khan, King Mohammad Zahir Shah (31-32) • Conservative backlash against progressive policies for women: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Power has always been held by those who manage to control the origins of life by controlling women’s bodies” (35)
<p>Ch. 4: “The Son Maker” <i>Dr. Fareiba</i></p> <p>Describes a maternity ward in a rural hospital located an hour outside of Kabul. Introduces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American military presence (38-39) • Celebration of boys’ birth vs. mourning of girls’ birth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “If a daughter is born, it is not uncommon for a new mother to leave the delivery room in tears” (40) • United Nations declares Afghanistan “the worst place in the world to be born. And the most dangerous place to be a woman” (40)

<p>Dr. Fareiba, a female physician who advises women on how to produce male instead of female children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternal death rate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “eighteen thousand Afghan women [die] each year of complications from childbirth; about fifty women per day, or one every half hour” (42) • Importance of sons (43-44) • Dr. Fareiba’s methods for creating sons (47) • Rationale for raising daughter as son: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “a made-up son is better than none at all” (48)
<p>Ch. 5: “The Politician” <i>Azita</i></p> <p>Provides background on Azita’s youth and her experience coming of age in war-torn Afghanistan. Describes how Western nation-building created the government in which Azita serves as a politician. Azita explains that her role in the public eye necessitates raising her youngest girl as a boy to bring honor to the family.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile of a Taliban fighter (50) • Taliban’s focus on controlling women (50-51) • Azita’s arranged marriage (51-54) • Western ““state building”” designs new Afghan government in 2001 (54): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Around the same time, the liberation of women began to be described by politicians in the United States and Europe as one more rationale for the war in Afghanistan, almost equal to that of fighting terrorism” (55) • A typical day in Azita’s role as member of parliament (54-60) • Interpretations of Islam/control of women (58-59) • Azita’s choice to raise Mehran as son: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “[In Afghanistan,] A girl who grows up in boys’ clothing is not an affront—in fact, it only confirms the established order, in which men have all the privileges” (61)
<p>Ch. 6: “The Underground Girls”</p> <p>With the help of her translator, Nordberg begins to discover stories of many more <i>bacha posh</i>, or girls living as boys. Includes vignettes of <i>bacha posh</i> to illustrate this wider phenomenon in Afghanistan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls living as boys “officially...do not exist, but one degree beyond the foreign-educated Kabul elite, many Afghans can indeed recall a former neighbor, a relative, a colleague, or someone in their extended family with a daughter growing up as a boy” (66) • Introduces <i>bacha posh</i>, which translates as “dressed like a boy” in Dari (67) • Role of social class and ethnicity in dressing girls as boys: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “A poor family may need a son for different reasons than a rich family, but no ethnic or geographical reasons set them apart. They are all Afghans, living in a society that demands sons at almost any cost” (70) • Acceptance of <i>bacha posh</i>, as long as children transition back to being girls at puberty (70)
<p>Ch. 7: “The Naughty One” <i>Mehran and Azita</i></p> <p>Snapshot of Mehran at school and how he has fully embraced his role as the family’s son by behaving like a boy. Discusses domestic violence including marital rape in Afghanistan and the West.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mehran’s behavior at school (73-76) • Children’s concept of sex & gender (76) • Azita’s shame after birthing two twin girls (77, 80-81) • Azita suffers domestic violence at from husband & mother-in-law (78-81) • Marital rape in Afghanistan & the West: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “A woman’s body is always available to her husband, not only for procreation, but for recreation as well, since male sexuality is seen as a good and necessary thing” (80) ○ “Predominantly Christian countries did not recognize marital rape as illegal, either, until fairly recently...” (80) • Expectation that <i>bacha posh</i> grow up to marry and have children (90)

- “Mehran has a few more years before the life of an Afghan women begins. For now, she is on the side of privilege” (91)

PART II: “YOUTH”

<p>Ch. 8: “The Tomboy” <i>Zahra</i></p> <p>Introduction to Zahra, a <i>bacha posh</i> who continues dressing like a boy into her teenage years. Zahra’s dress is a source of concern for her family because most <i>bacha posh</i> transition back to living as girls around puberty. Nordberg also discusses fashion’s role in communicating gender, both in Afghanistan and in the West.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fashion as a way to communicate class, gender, and power: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “In Afghanistan, gender and power are one and the same. A pair of pants, a haircut, a right walk, and a teenage girl can reach for all kinds of things she is not supposed to have” (98) • Rules against women dressing as men in the West (98) • Dress codes for women in Afghanistan (98-99) • Dress codes & sex: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “The hidden body is all about sex...In an environment where sex is never discussed, where men and women are strictly separated, sex is, ironically and perhaps unfortunately, on everybody’s mind all the time” (101) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “As a woman, you must shrink both your physical body and any energy that surrounds it, in speech, movement, and gaze” (101) • Dress & the Koran (102) • Zahra argues, “<i>women can be men</i>, too. Like me” (105) • Varying interpretations of Koran and Bible (107) • <i>Bacha posh</i> practiced “before Islam even came to Afghanistan” (114)
<p>Ch. 9: “The Candidate” <i>Azita</i></p> <p>Azita prepares for upcoming campaign and discusses her feelings on how foreigners crusade for women’s rights in Afghanistan. She then tells Nordberg about her own experience as a <i>bacha posh</i> and explains in more detail her rationale for dressing Mehran as a boy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azita’s nickname, “the Lioness of Badghis,” a reference to Ahmad Shah Massoud, a mujahideen commander (116) • Azita poses for campaign photos (116-118) • Foreigners’ interest in women’s rights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ““The foreigners think they are helping women in Afghanistan...They think it’s all about the burka. I’m ready to wear two burkas if my government can provide security and rule of law”” (120) • Legacy of Soviet/Communist occupation (121) • Azita reveals that she was also a <i>bacha posh</i> (124-125): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Above all, masquerading as a boy gave Azita <i>access</i>” (126) ○ “The way she sees it, her boy years have helped her all her life. They made her more energetic. They made her strong” (127) • Azita’s view of <i>bacha posh</i> as a subversive act: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “To Azita, <i>bacha posh</i> is less about a preference for sons and more a symptom of how poorly her society works...And sometimes, she argues, you have to think of temporary solutions while you try to slowly change something bigger”(128-129)
<p>Ch. 10: “The Pashtun Tea Party”</p> <p>Discusses parents’ wish to instill strength and confidence in girls by raising them as <i>bacha posh</i>. Nordberg</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces Sakina, the upper-class wife of a Pashtun general who lived as a <i>bacha posh</i> in her youth (130): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Being a <i>bacha posh</i> should not be seen as anything other than a useful and character-strengthening education” (130) • Sakina’s daughter, a <i>bacha posh</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “There are sons in the family, but their mother wants to instill some strength in the girls by raising them as boys first” (133)

<p>unsuccessfully interviews an Afghan activist about <i>bacha posh</i> as a human rights issue, which further demonstrates the complexity of this issue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “She will follow a long tradition of women in her family who have become excellent wives and mothers. As a bonus, she will have spent her youth cultivating an assertive, confident kind of womanhood” (134) • Nordberg discusses the recognizable “steady gaze” of former <i>bacha posh</i> (134) • Rights of children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “There are few universally recognized rights for children on gender. The word itself is not mentioned once in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child...The concept of a ‘childhood’...is a fairly new one” (138) • Nordberg attempts to discuss <i>bacha posh</i> with Dr. Samar, foreign minister on women’s affairs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “I wonder if the complexities of <i>bacha posh</i> may simply be too controversial for a politically savvy Afghan to touch...As with sexuality here, gender determines everything. But one is never supposed to talk about it, or pretend it exists” (139)
<p>Ch. 11: “The Future Bride” <i>Zahra</i></p> <p>Zahra struggles with the expectation that she transition to womanhood. Nordberg uses Zahra’s story to illustrate how difficult it is for some <i>bacha posh</i> to reconcile their identities with their roles as women in Afghan society. Nordberg speculates that gender identity disorders may be created when children live in such complex circumstances.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zahra attempts to hide her menstruation for fear of being forced to transition back to a girl (140-141): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “It may be less that Zahra desires to be a boy, and more that, like so many other <i>bacha posh</i>, she merely wants to escape the fate of womanhood in Afghanistan” (143) • Zahra fights with her mother over her resistance to womanhood (143-145) • Question of when a <i>bacha posh</i> should transition back to a girl: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “As soon as she can conceive, she must be shielded from all men until she meets her husband for the first time. That responsibility, to keep a young girl pure in a culture of honor, is entrusted to the male members of her family” (146) ○ “A woman’s honorability depends only to a small degree on her own chastity. It has much more to do with ‘gossip’” (146) • Pillars of Pashtunwali (147) • Gender identity disorder (147-150)
<p>Ch. 12: “The Sisterhood”</p> <p>Describes the <i>khastegari</i> process of courting, as well as a traditional Afghan wedding celebration. After attending a wedding, Nordberg draws parallels between patriarchal practices in Afghanistan & the West.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Marriage is a core component of the patriarchal system” (152) • Honor & shaming: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “No group can be truly suppressed until its members are trained and convinced to suppress <i>one another</i>. To hold the system of patriarchy in place, a woman could always further prove herself a chaste and proper person by shaming those who fell short of the mark...” (153) • Afghan <i>khastegari</i> process and wedding celebration (153) • Girls muse about future romances and marriages (154) • Mothers gossip about girls as potential wives for their sons (156-158) • Sex & procreation (158-159) • Nordberg compares patriarchy in Afghanistan & the West by invoking Kate Middleton’s marriage to Prince William, Duke of Cambridge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “From this point onward, Kate Middleton’s body owes payment to

	entities and a tradition more important than herself and her husband” (160)
PART III: MEN	
<p>Ch. 13: “The Bodyguard” <i>Shukria</i></p> <p>Tells the story of Shukria, who has learned to project a female persona after living for much of her life as a boy. Discusses gender as a social and cultural construct and applies this theory to Shukria’s experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces Shukur/Shukria, who marries after living as a man for “longer than most” (164) • War: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “In Kabul, everyone has experienced their own horrors, and most have seen a violent death” (165) • Shukur’s role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “It is common in an Afghan family to assign older siblings to take care of the younger ones. But Shukur had an even more specific task. She was to follow the family’s most precious asset—their son—at all times, as his guardian” (167). • Muhahideen approves of Shukur dressing as a boy (170) • With Taliban’s arrival, Shukur’s family decides she should marry for her own safety (170-171) • Shukria struggles to adapt to life as a woman & adopt new female persona (172-175) • Theorist Judith Butler on gender as social and cultural construct (176) • Gender construction (176-177): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “With time, nurture can <i>become</i> nature” (178) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shukria explains, ““Becoming a man is simple. The outside is easy to change. Going back is hard. There is a feeling inside that will never change”” (178)
<p>Ch. 14: “The Romantic” <i>Shukria</i></p> <p>Shukria discusses her complex relationship with sex. Nordberg explains the role of sex in Afghanistan and explores how Western ideas compare. Includes discussion of homosexuality as it relates to <i>bacha posh</i> and more generally. Nordberg concludes chapter by exploring ideas about romance in Afghanistan and universally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shukria struggles with her sexual identity (183) • Sexual orientation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “In Afghanistan, sex is a means to an end, of adding sons to the family. But nowhere in that equation is a sexual orientation or preference a factor for women... To identify as either <i>heterosexual</i> or <i>homosexual</i>, and define what that means, can be very difficult for an Afghan woman, who is not even supposed to be at all <i>sexual</i>” (184) • In the West, hysterectomies as “cures” for sexual women (184) • Masturbation (185) • Homosexuality (186-190): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Female (186-187) ○ Male (187-188) • <i>Bacha bazi</i>/ “boy play... in which young boys are traded as dancing child entertainers and also kept as sex slaves by military commanders and other powerful men” (188) • Romance (190-192): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Anthropologist Helen Fisher’s theory of different forms of love (192)
<p>Ch. 15: “The Driver” <i>Nader</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nader continues to live as a boy under Taliban’s rule (194-195): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Like most everyone else in Kabul, her father had only disgust for the Taliban, and Nader’s cat-and-mouse game was their private little

<p>Explores the experience of Nader and others who continue to live as men into adulthood. Nordberg provides a brief history of parallels to the practice of <i>bacha posh</i> around the world and argues that <i>bacha posh</i> is a necessary form of resistance in patriarchal societies.</p>	<p>resistance movement” (195)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At age 35, Nader continues to live as a man and has avoided marriage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “There is an expression sometimes used for <i>bacha posh</i> who have aged themselves out of the marriage market. She is <i>mardan kheslat</i>: “like a man” (197) • Other women who hold the role of “honorary man:” Forty-five-year-old Amir Bibi, fifty-year-old Hukmina, and others (197) • History of Western and Eastern women living as men (198-199): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Triaria of Rome, Zenobia (Syria), Hua Mulan (China), Joan of Arc (France), cross-dressing women in the medieval Catholic Church, Ulrika Eleonora Stalhammar (Sweden), Hannah Snell (India/England), Genevieve Premoy (France), etc. • European women who live like men today, as “sworn virgins” (Albania & Montenegro) (199-201) • The necessity, in patriarchal societies around the world, for some adult women “to live as socialized males” (201)
<p>Ch. 16: “The Warrior” <i>Shahed</i></p> <p>Describes Nader and Shahed’s friendship and analyzes narratives of war and gender in the West. Nordberg discusses the concept of freedom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces Shahed, a friend of Nader’s, who is a member of an elite paramilitary police force (202): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “For her to bear arms confuses the entire concept of honor, where it is women who require protecting” (206) • Social class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shahed explains, “ ‘If my family had been rich, I would have been a woman’ ” (208) • Shahed and Nader “are slightly unsure about what they are, and they do not define themselves as one definitive gender. It was a survival strategy that with time grew into an identity” (208) • War & gender in the West (209): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “despite a legacy of female warriors, women are still traditionally seen as those who should be protected” (209) ○ Anthropologist David D. Gilmore’s concepts of masculinity (209) ○ Women = 15% of troops on active duty in U.S. military, despite not being officially allowed in “ combat positions” (210) • Concept of freedom: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Afghan women often describe the difference between men and women in just one word: <i>freedom</i>. As in: Men have it, women do not” (211) ○ “Between gender and freedom, <i>freedom</i> is the bigger and more important idea. In Afghanistan as well as globally. Defining one’s gender becomes a concern only <i>after</i> freedom is achieved” (212)
<p>Ch. 17: “The Refusers” <i>Nader’s Boys</i></p> <p>Offers a discussion of the physical bodies of women as they relate to a sense of power and potential, as well as how</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nader’s tae kwon do protégés, a group of <i>bacha posh</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “in this small underground space, Nader coaches both tae kwon do and her own brand of organized resistance” (217) • Rise of women’s sport / conflict in patriarchal societies (217-219): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Women and sports are a classic conflict in a culture of honor, similar to that of war” (218) ○ “A woman who feels her own physical strength may be inspired to

<p>this self-confidence conflicts with patriarchal traditions. Nordberg again draws global and historical parallels with the practice of <i>bacha posh</i>, reinforcing her argument that patriarchy necessitates this type of resistance.</p>	<p>think she is capable of other things. And when an entire society is built on gender segregation, such ideas could cause problems for those who would like to hold on to wealth and power” (218-219)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bacha posh</i> as a “global phenomenon which remains mostly underground” (221-222): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “The <i>bacha posh</i> parallels throughout countries where women lack rights are neither Western nor Eastern, neither Islamic nor un-Islamic. It is a human phenomenon, and it exists throughout our history, in vastly different places, with different religions and in many languages... This type of resistance, discreetly executed by girls and women and parents where gender segregation exists, often in isolation and sometimes in groups, is not only global; it may reach back to the formation of the patriarchal system itself” (223)
<p>Ch. 18: “The Goddess”</p> <p>Nordberg traces the influence of Zoroastrianism in Afghanistan from the Sassanid period and suggests that the religion’s influence can be connected to patriarchy and the practice of <i>bacha posh</i> in places to which Zoroastrianism’s reach extended (see map on page 232-233).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of Zoroastrianism in Afghanistan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “The practice of <i>bacha posh</i> can be traced... at least to the ‘Sassanid time’ in Afghanistan, and with that the belief that such child will spur actual sons through ‘magic’” (224) ○ Shrines & fertility (226-227) ○ “It was also believed that the sex of an unborn child could be determined by eating certain types of food” (228) ○ Name for rainbow, “<i>Kaman-e-Rostam</i>, is a reference to the mythical hero Rostam from the Persian epic <i>Shahnameh</i>, which tells the history of greater Persia from the time when Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion and Afghanistan was part of the empire. The Persian epic even has its own <i>bacha posh</i>, the warrior woman Gordafarid” (229) ○ Nordberg points out that countries still influenced by Zoroastrianism share an important commonality: “girls continue to be born [in these] places where they are not always welcomed” (231)

PART IV: FATHERS

<p>Ch. 19: “The Defeated” <i>Azita</i></p> <p>Azita struggles after losing her seat in parliament. Kabul grows more violent, and Nordberg discusses American foreign policy in Afghanistan, especially the surge and subsequent withdrawal of troops. Azita loses influence and security in her family as a result of losing her seat in parliament.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fraudulent election leaves Azita without a seat in parliament, despite a seemingly successful campaign (237-239) • Supporters convince Azita to dispute election results (239-240) • Increasing violence (243-245): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “It is the bloodiest year yet of the war: American troop losses will reach new highs, and the war will claim the most civilians since counting of them began. In the capital, suicide blasts, kidnappings for ransom, and targeted killings are a regular occurrence” (244) • Effects of Obama’s “surge” of 30,000 troops and subsequent announcement of withdrawal by 2014 (244-246): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Paving the way for ‘peace talks’ with the Taliban became a favorite new diplomatic term in Kabul, and already in 2011, ‘soft’ issues, such as the rights of women, had been taken off any high-level agenda, according to several diplomats” (246) ○ Taliban spokesperson explains that when Taliban regains more power after U.S./allies withdraw, “<i>bacha posh</i> will immediately be
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	<p>banned... and women will be removed from universities, courts, parliament, and provincial councils” (247)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azita’s shifting family dynamic after she is no longer in parliament (253): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “If Mehran is stripped of her role as son, it will also remove Azita’s fragile status as a somewhat more important wife” (253)
<p>Ch. 20: “The Castoff” <i>Shukria</i></p> <p>Describes divorce practices in Afghanistan. Shukria struggles with the news that her husband wants a divorce and feels as though she is neither a woman nor a man.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shukria learns that her husband has another family and wants to divorce her (254-256): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “She had not only failed as a wife. She had failed at being a woman” (257) • Divorce in Afghanistan (257-261): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If an Afghan woman wants to divorce her husband, she needs his explicit agreement. She may also need to produce witnesses to testify that a divorce from her husband is warranted. A man can divorce for any reason, or for no reason at all” (257) ○ “a divorced woman in Afghanistan...is lowered to a caste where she is neither man nor woman, nor a respectable citizen” (260) • Shukria blames her former status as <i>bacha posh</i> for her failed marriage (260-261)
<p>Ch. 21: “The Wife” <i>Azita</i></p> <p>Azita continues waiting to return to her seat in parliament and tries to stay relevant by going on television. Nordberg examines the corruption and limited results related to foreign aid efforts in Afghanistan. Azita’s marriage sours as her husband demands more money and returns to beating her. She questions her decision to become involved in politics and worries that she chose her country over her children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azita appears on a “television program meant to get young Afghans—a majority of the population is under 25—interested in politics” (263) • Foreign aid in Afghanistan & corruption (264-267): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Afghanistan holds a spot at the very bottom of Transparency International’s corruption index...Of the aid contributed by U.S. taxpayers, for instance, as little as ten cents on the dollar may at times have reached its intended recipients” (266) ○ Aid focused on women (266-267): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Girls’ education: “But half of Afghanistan’s newly created schools have no actual buildings, many lack teachers, most students never graduate, and one-fifth of the registered students are permanently absent” (266) ▪ “In a single year, more than seven hundred ‘projects’ related to gender and improving the lives of women and girls in Afghanistan were also sponsored by foreign donors...women’s rights have increasingly become viewed as an elite and Western-backed issue by many in Afghanistan”(267) • Azita and her husband fight about money; he returns to beating her regularly (268-271) • Azita laments her decision to pursue a career & improve her country instead of leaving with her daughters (274)
<p>Ch. 22: “The Father” <i>Azita</i></p> <p>Nordberg and her translator travel to the village where Azita’s parents live. Nordberg</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nordberg describes the experience of foreign-born diplomats and aid workers in Afghanistan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “The benefits of being a foreigner in Afghanistan are well-known...no matter who they were in the outside world, or what social class they belonged to, in Kabul a foreigner instantly becomes a member of an upper, ruling class” (277)

<p>discusses a range of issues with Azita's father, including Azita's accomplishments, her marriage, and the difficulties of raising daughters in Afghan society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nordberg and her interpreter visit Azita's mother-in law (282-286); Azita's brother (286-287); and Azita's parents (288-292) • Nordberg meets Azita's father, Mourtaza, who explains why he arranged Azita's marriage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "It was not my desire or ambition to marry my girl to an uneducated person. But if you had been here [during the Taliban's rule], then you would have said I made the right decision. This was a question of life or death" (293) ○ "In [Afghan society], individual needs and achievement are secondary to those of the family, because they must be" (294) • Nordberg speaks to Mourtaza about Azita's abusive husband: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "Both he and his daughter are part of a system that he alone cannot change or even revolt against (295) ○ Mourtaza explains, "Our society is sick...I advocate freedom and awareness...That's how I grew up. But my children have been brought up with these stupid, <i>stupid</i> rules imposed on them by society" (295-296)
<p>Epilogue: "One of the Boys"</p> <p>Nordberg concludes by reinforcing the subversive nature of <i>bacha posh</i>, while drawing connections between patriarchy in the East and West. She discusses the potential for change in Afghanistan's patriarchal/patrilineal society, emphasizing that gender equality is affected by war and money. She argues, "Men are the key to infiltrating and subverting patriarchy" (303), which necessitates the inclusion of women <i>and</i> men in the quest for gender equality. Finally, invoking the work of Gerda Lerner, Nordberg asserts, "women—and control over them—were always at the core of conflict" (305). Ultimately, she concludes, gender equality is central to the evolution of human civilization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "<i>bacha posh</i> is a missing piece in the history of women...[it] is both historical and present day rejection of patriarchy by those who refuse to accept the ruling order for themselves and their daughters" (300) • "Some may call it tragic—that women 'are not allowed to be women'...and instead adopt the exterior of mien and men. But that is what <i>most</i> women, in <i>most</i> countries, have had to forgo in order to infiltrate male territory" (301) • "Afghanistan is the story of patriarchy, in a raw form. In that, it is also a story of Western history...By learning about an ill-functioning system in Afghanistan, we can also begin to see how most of us—men and women, regardless of nationality and ethnicity—at times perpetuate a problematic culture of honor, where women and men are both trapped by traditional gender roles" (301) • "War does away with ambition for change and even faith" (302) • "The value of women in society can be fully realized and accepted by men, women, and governments—only when they begin to achieve some economic parity" (302) • "research overwhelmingly shows that countries with increased equality are much less violent and more economically stable. In terms of 'national security' and foreign affairs, Afghan women, as well as women globally, should be everyone's concern...Countries that suppress its women are more likely to threaten their neighbors as well as other countries far away. So the more progress for women Afghanistan sees, the less of a threat the country is to the rest of the world" (304-305) • Gerda Lerner's work on patriarchy and gender (305) • "Someday in our future it may be possible for women everywhere not to be restricted to those roles society deems natural, God-given, or appropriately feminine...This possible future could only expand the human experience and be liberating to men and women alike" (305-306)