Diasporic Iranian Women's Life Writing:

An Analysis Using a Transnational Feminist Lens

Farida Abla

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By: Farida Abla

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Signed by the final examining committee:

____Chair
Dr. Viviane Namaste

____ External Examiner
Dr. Eva Karpinski

____ External to Program
Dr. Rachel Berger

____ Examiner
Dr. Homa Hoodfar

____ Examiner
Dr. Sarah Ghabrial

____Thesis Supervisor
Dr. Gada Mahrouse

Approved by ____
Dr. Marcie Frank**,** Graduate Program Director

________, 2020 ____
Dr. Pascale Sicotte, Dean of Faculty of Arts and Science

ABSTRACT

Diasporic Iranian Women's Life Writing:

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Farida Abla, Ph.D.

Concordia University, 2020

This thesis examines fourteen diasporic life writing in English by Iranian women who mainly reside in North America (the United States and Canada), with a particular interest in *how* and *why* they write about their lives. The women authors bring to the fore questions of home, nation, identity and belonging in narratives where the public and the political are deeply intertwined with the personal. The thesis provides an analysis of the authors' responses to the events that impacted their lives, their use of English, and their dynamic process of identity construction, as manifested in their narratives. Recognizing the growing circulation of life writing by Iranian women in the United States, the study also investigates how these life writing deconstruct and/or reinforce Western stereotypes about Iranian women.

I argue that the authors successfully cross borders and boundaries by adopting the life writing genre, an interdisciplinary feminist medium, in their quest to share knowledge about their experiences in their home country, Iran, as well as their lives in Diaspora. And by doing so, it is an act of transnationalization of their narratives and a call for human as well as women's rights. I also assert that their life writing not only reflect the feminist slogan *the personal is political* but show as well that the political is personal in the life of these women authors who probe the region's history and its geopolitical trajectory.

Furthermore, the study confirms that these life writing came in waves in response to socio-political as well as historical events in Iran and the host country such as, the Islamic Revolution (1979), the 9/11 tragedy (2001), the Iraq War (2003), and the 2009 Iranian presidential elections. Moreover, the findings show that these life writing articulate what Homi Bhabha refers to as "hybrid" and "ambivalent" identities. The women authors—living in what Brah (1996) calls a "diaspora space" —carve complex, multifold identities that draw upon Iranian cultural values and practices, as well as those of the host countries. They also construct hybridized spaces—that defy strict categorization—both for themselves as well as other women in the diaspora.

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Introduction

Brought up in Lebanon during the civil war and among contradictory gender ideologies, my journey as a woman in Diaspora in North America started in 2002 when I won a Middle East Studies (MEST) scholarship to study a Masters of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) in Translation at the University of Arkansas, U.S.A. I had already started my immigration process to Canada but thought an American terminal degree would be an asset to access the Canadian job market. Moreover, despite the fear of the consequences of the 9/11 tragedy, I was determined to make the best of this opportunity. In the U. S., my interest in immigrant women literature sparked and I enrolled in an Arab-American Literature class where I read the memoirs *Children of the Roojme: A Family's Journey from Lebanon* (1997) by Elmaz Abinader and *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States* (1997) by Evelyn Shakir among others. These memoirs spoke to my heart and soul and I knew I had to find a way to contribute to fighting stereotypes about immigrant women. In fact, the women characters in these memoirs faced many struggles to establish themselves as immigrants in the U.S., something I could relate to on a personal level. Like them, I also longed for my home country but knew I had to persevere in order to put down roots in North America. Years later, when I settled in Canada as a first generation immigrant, I became interested in life writing by Iranian women in Diaspora. I read the Iranian Canadian author Marina Nemat's *Prisoner of Tehran: A Memoir* (2006)—that is subject to many controversies—and was introduced to her activism in the field of human rights. I was deeply moved and fascinated by her courage in sharing her story, her drive to have the voices of Iranian women heard, and her determination to bring justice to political prisoners in Iran. Nemat's book led me to seek out other autobiographical writings in English by Iranian women in Diaspora, and I discovered a surprising number of them. The more I read, the more I wanted to know the reason for their upsurge, as well as the unique commonalities and differences that distinguished the writings of this unusual group of authors. When I decided to pursue my passion for autobiographical immigrant women writings as a Ph.D. at Concordia, I tried to build a comparative study between the Lebanese and the Iranian women life writing in English in North America. I soon realized that it would be too broad of a project to cover in a thesis. Since the Iranian site—with its Islamic Revolution and the Islamic regime ideology that is restrictive to women—is more complex, I decided to focus on Iranian women life writing as subject of this thesis.

In 1979, the Islamic Revolution transformed Iran from a secular state into an Islamic Republic. Although some Iranians welcomed both the Revolution and the political and social changes brought by the new regime, many Iranian families of various religious backgrounds experienced them as both an individual and collective trauma. Some parents fled to the United States or Canada with their children. This meant that the children experienced the cultural dichotomy of being raised partly in Iran, and partly in North America. Some of the daughters of these families became the authors of their own life writing―writings in which they could explore their "hybrid" experiences as immigrants/exiles. These authors' writings bring to the fore sensitive questions of what really constitutes home and nation, identity and belonging, within narratives where personal experience is inseparable from contemporary, yet often still traditional, cultural norms, and the public and political arena. Not all the life writing, however, are the work of Iranian women who left Iran as children. Some of them, like Marina Nemat, fled political repression as adults. The life writing of the women who came as adults are also exploring issues

of identity, home and belonging, but they are overshadowed by the violent events they personally experienced that led them to flee their homeland.

Thus, this thesis focuses on the life writing of Iranian women in Diaspora mainly in the United States and Canada, with a particular interest in *how* they write about their lives. These life writing communicate how the authors see themselves, and how they want to be perceived by their readers. Consequently, they are written with intention. They are conveying specific messages, both personal and political, since it is impossible for their writers to divorce themselves from their Iranian backgrounds, or their usually traumatic reasons for living in Diaspora. Moreover, these women authors have been influenced by their diasporic state, their desire not only to have their stories heard, but also to market their life writing, and by their struggle to adapt to North American society.

Although the 1979 Islamic Revolution was the key historical moment that marked the lives of these authors and forced them to flee Iran either as children with their families or as adults, there were later events that spurred them on to write about their lives. Among them were the 9/11 tragedy (2001), the Iraq War (2003), and the 2009 Iranian presidential elections in which the doomed Green Movement[1] played so great a part. In the later twentieth century, and certainly into the twenty-first, Iran has come to occupy an increasingly significant position on the world stage. This has provoked considerable interest not only in Iranian politics, but also in Iranian culture, and specifically, in the role of Iranian women. Especially in the United States in the last few decades, there has been a growing attention to life writing by Iranian women. This flourishing body of literature has been studied by scholars in different disciplines—from literature, anthropology, history, to human rights. However, I have chosen an interdisciplinary approach which combines postcolonial theories and transnational feminism as the lens I use to study my selected life writing. My interdisciplinary research analyzes the overall historical context and the role of the Iranian Revolution within it, the manner in which these authors have chosen to share their stories, and what it says about both their individual identities and their place within the group as a whole.

This dissertation examines fourteen life writing by Iranian women in Diaspora, who are mainly in North America (in the United States and Canada). The writings were published between 1999 and 2011. I group them into two categories: first, the life writing by Iranian women who left Iran at a young age; and second, the ones by Iranian women who left Iran as adults.

This research examines the following main research questions: How do English language life writing differ in terms of those by Iranian women who left Iran as children, compared with those who left as adults, especially in regard to, but not limited to, the historical and situational context, style of writing, and author intentions? In what ways do these life writing either deconstruct or reinforce Western stereotypes about Iranian women? How do the texts under study reflect the sociopolitical conditions the authors experienced in their country of origin as well as their host countries? And how are these texts shaped by these very conditions? What are some of the reasons that prompted these women authors to share their life writing publicly? And who are their target audiences? And, why? How do these women authors articulate their different

[1] A political movement in which protesters demanded the removal of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from office and asked for annulment of what they regarded as a fraudulent election. The protests were the largest since the Iranian Revolution. For more details, refer to Chapter 1.

cultural attachments and allegiances? How do they represent the dynamic process of identity construction?

To answer these questions, I analyze each life writing, and compare it to others in each group. Further, in my Conclusion, I compare the two groups. This thesis contextualizes these fourteen life writing within their historical as well as their socio-political backgrounds in order to understand how, as Berryman (1999) suggests, each writer's struggle to achieve self-definition is at the core of her life writing. In making this analysis and comparison, I endeavor to reveal the writings' commonalities and differences. What is particularly interesting is that my study brings together into conversation these life writing, in light of the nature of life writing studies, with the field of diasporic writings, especially those of Iranian women. In fact, previous scholars who studied Iranian women diasporic life writing in English focus in their analysis on either the literary aspect or author's gender in their approach. The research I am proposing contributes to this nascent body of literature by combining literary *and* feminist approaches, adding a new perspective by contextualizing it through a transnational feminist lens. My thesis contributes to the field of life writing through the original analysis of generational differences (i.e., first generation, 1.5[2] generation, and 1.75[3] generation) of Iranian women in Diaspora in North America. It sheds light on three common subgenres (i.e., creative nonfiction life writing, the life writing of public figures written collaboratively with a co-author, and prison life writing) the women authors who flee Iran as adults resort to in their writing. Although my analysis for this thesis narrows on Iranian women in Diaspora, I do acknowledge the emerging of life writing by Iranian women in Iran as well.

Chapters' Outline

Chapter 1: Iran: A 20th Century Socio-Political Overview

In this chapter, I provide an overview of Iran's political upheavals that led to major political and social changes which had a significant impact on the status of Iranian women. This historical and socio-political overview starts with the late Qajar Dynasty (1785-1925) and comes forward to the current presidency of Hassan Rouhani (1948). I detail the events of the 1890 Tobacco Movement, the Constitutional Revolution (1905-11) and its aftermath, the ascent of Reza Shah Pahlavi to power and his reign (1925-1941), the complications during the Second World War (1939-1945), the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1941-79) and his White Revolution, and the uprisings against the Shah, and women's role in them, which led to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Then I shed light on the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988) and its consequences for women, before I give a synopsis of Iran's political history after Khomeini. I end the chapter with a timeline of the controversial American-Iranian relationship.

[2] 1.5 Generation or 1.5G: is a term coined by sociologist to refer to people who immigrate to a new country before or during their early teens. The immigrants earn the label the "1.5 generation" because they bring with them characteristics from their home country but continue their assimilation and socialization in the new country, thus being "halfway" between the first generation and the second generation.

[3] 1.75 generation: is a term that refers to children who arrived in the U.S. in their early years (before age 5) and are quickly adapting and absorbing their new environment; they behave most like second-generation kids born in U.S. territory. For more details, refer to https://www.thoughtco.com/first-generation-immigrant-defined-1951570.

The purpose for this chapter is to provide an understanding of Iran's push for modernization and its impact on the status of Iranian women in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. I believe that an understanding of these events illuminates the context of the life writing I analyze in Chapters five and six.

After setting the background by providing Iran's socio-political overview, I lay out the evolution in the field of life writing as well as its criticism.

Chapter 2: Autobiography: Evolution and Criticism

Engaging with critical studies by scholars including Marlene Kadar, Laura Marcus, Leigh Gilmore, and Eva C., Karpinski; I discuss the early history and basic definition of autobiography, and the differences between it, memoir, and life writing. Then I provide an overview of the early development of autobiographical theory criticism before I delve into autobiographies written by women, against their parallels written by men. I end by introducing the life writing of the Iranian Diaspora. Besides differentiating between the different terminologies, I explain my adoption of the term "life writing" for my research in order to be more inclusive of women's work on one hand, and to differentiate between it and autobiography and memoir on the other.

Chapter 3: The Life Writing of Iranian Women in Diaspora: A Literature Review

In this chapter, I review the research done in the field of life writing by Iranian women in Diaspora over the past five decades, highlighting the major studies in the field as well as explaining the contribution of my thesis to it. By identifying prior scholarship and its contribution to the field of life writing studies, I aim to show the evolution of life writing in English by Iranian women in North American Diaspora, while identifying the gaps in the previous research and pointing to avenues for further research. Hence, I start by defining "diaspora," before surveying the studies on Iranian diasporic writing, censorship in Iran, self-orientalisation, and the tendency to perceive certain individuals and/or their writings according to national/regional/cultural stereotypes. Then I situate transnational narratives in English, their hypervisibility and lack of recognition, and their perceptions as both "other and othering." I end this chapter by discussing various theses on Iranian life writing from 1998 to 2019.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I discuss my methodology and theoretical framework for this thesis. Hence, I explain my methodological approach in which I distinguish two groups within the life writing chosen for this thesis: the women authors who left Iran as children, and those who left as adults. For the sake of this thesis, I adopt Alissa Trotz's (2007) definition where she argues that "transnational" refers mainly to what Arjun Appadurai (1996) defines as "border-crossing flows of capital, technology/information and people"; "border-spanning/crossing activism"; and "a mode of critically apprehending the world" (p. 5-6). Thereafter, I define Transnational Feminism (TF), and I justify my choice of using a transnational feminist lens to study the life writing of Iranian women in diaspora. In my theoretical framework, I adapt Arjun Appadurai's definition of "transnational," Loomba's definition of "imperialism," Mohanty's definition of "colonization,"[4] Brah's definition of "diaspora space," and Bhabha's concept of "hybrid space" in order to

[4] "A relation of structural domination, and a suppression—often violent—of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question." (Mohanty, 1984, p. 333)

analyze the life writing that I have chosen. I start by defining the terms; then I discuss the theories, taking into account their criticism, how they fit into my framework and their links to the life writing I study. Agreeing with Loomba and Bhabha that the West cannot entirely produce the Orient, I argue that these life writing are the product of the women authors living in a "diasporic space" where they lack the notion of "home." And by applying Brah's definition of "home" to these life writing, I argue that their Iranian authors in diaspora critique discourses of origins while inscribing a "homing desire" (Brah, 1996, p. 193).

The women authors I study develop what Bhabha calls a "hybrid culture" that is both "eastern and western," living at the "border" between two worlds—both their old and their new. This liminal space, as Bhabha puts it, provides them with unknown dimensions of self-expression that are reflected in the way they write about themselves. Their identities are undergoing a continuous process of development, living both inside and outside their host society—sometimes in "inclusion," and other times in "exclusion."

Drawing on Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," I contend that the authors I chose for my thesis do not constitute a homogeneous group, nor can they ever be described as "victims." Moreover, I question whether their life writing aim to challenge the stereotypes/pre-conceived attitudes that they face in their host country. I assert that by recounting their memories, the authors carry out an "act of representation" (Agnew, 2005). As members of a diaspora, they "generate difference and challenge homogeneity" (Agnew, 2005, p. 13).

My combined framework briefly touches on Said's concept of "orientalism" while discussing its criticism. It addresses the orientalist characteristics in the life writing and the East (Iran)/West (U.S./Canada) binary. Having detailed my methodology and theoretical framework, I move to the analysis of the first cohort of life writing by Iranian women.

Chapter 5: Life writing by Iranian Women in Diaspora: How a Boom Began

The life writing I discuss in this chapter are Gelareh Asayesh's (1962) *Saffron Sky: A Life Between Iran and America* (1999), Tara Bahrampour's (1968) *To See and See Again: A Life in Iran and America* (1999), Firoozeh Dumas's (1965) *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America* (2003), Roya Hakakian's (1966) *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran* (2004), Azadeh Moaveni's (1976) *Lipstick Jihad: Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran* (2005), Marjane Satrapi's (1969) *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2004) and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (2005), and Jasmin Darznik's (1973) *The Good Daughter: A Memoir of my Mother's Hidden Life* (2011). I divide them according to their respective authors' generations. I provide a bio for each author along with a short summary of her life writing. Reading their life writing through a transnational feminist lens and in terms of their experience of the Islamic Revolution, I aim to answer the following questions:

- How do these English life writing by Iranian women in Diaspora differ in terms of context, style, choice of narrator, and format?
- How do the geopolitical context and diasporic conditions of the authors' lives shape the texts themselves? And how are these factors explored in the life writing?
- How do these life writing portray Iranian women in general?
- How do they deconstruct and/or reinforce Western stereotypes about Iranian women?

- How do the different generations navigate the invisible divide between the two cultures? How is it reflected in their life writing?

By comparing and contrasting this group of life writing as well as answering these questions, I shed light on their particularities and conclude that they differ in terms of context, style, choice of narrator, and format. Furthermore, the authors of this group, while trying to maintain their Iranian origins and assimilating into the host country, are carving their identity. They realize that their identity is multifold. Moreover, the authors construct their "hybrid space of belonging" (Fotouhi, 2010, p. 83), since they are "drawing on and emphasizing recognizable elements of both their home and host cultures" (Fotouhi, 2010, p. 86).

Chapter 6: Life writing by Iranian Women in Diaspora: A Way To Tell

The life writing I discuss in this chapter are Farideh Goldin's (1953) *Wedding Song Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman* (2003), Sattareh Farman Farmaian's (1921-2012) *Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from Her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution* (1992), Nahid Rachlin's (1947) *Persian Girls* (2006), Shirin Ebadi's (1947) *Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution And Hope* (2006), Azar Nafisi's (1948) *Things I've Been Silent About: Memories Of A Prodigal Daughter* (2008), Marina Nemat's (1965) *Prisoner of Tehran: One Woman's Story of Survival Inside an Iranian Prison (2007)*, and Shahla Talebi's (1957) *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran* (2011). I group them into three categories: creative nonfiction life writing, the life writing of public figures written collaboratively with a co-author, and prison life writing. As in Chapter 5, I offer a bio for each author along with a short summary of her life writing. I conclude that although they differ in terms of context, style, choice of narrator, and format, these life writing have in common the importance they attribute to education, the importance of family, and the complex gender relations in Iran that exist throughout all classes and religious backgrounds. All the authors of this group have a hyphenated identity in the host country, except for Shirin Ebadi. Despite the different reasons behind their leaving Iran, they each are in their own way resisting oppression on one hand and asserting their identities on the other.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, I compare the life writing from Chapter 5 with the life writing from Chapter 6. I find that although the 1979 Islamic Revolution is the key historical moment that marked the lives of the authors I chose for my thesis, and had them flee Iran either as children with their families or as adults, they decided to write about their lives only after later tragic events occurred. The 9/11 tragedy was a major impetus for their writing, as were the Iraq War which began in 2003, and the 2009 Iranian presidential elections that gave rise to the Green Movement. Hence, these life writing by Iranian women of the diaspora are being written in waves in response to the political changes occurring in Iran (the country of origin) and/or in the United States/Canada (the host country). Moreover, Iranian history (both before and after the Islamic Revolution) shows that the dominant narrative "exclude[d] people of religious and ethnic minority backgrounds … like the Jews and Baha'is, as well as those with alternative political beliefs" (Fotouhi, 2018, p. 65). In response to this "silencing," diasporic Iranian writers chose English, the language of their host country, as their medium for expressing themselves away from their home country, Iran.

My findings show that the authors of the first cohort tend to idealize their past in Iran, while both cohorts try to reconcile the “here” and “there.” They grapple with self-exposure, while at the same time satisfying the curiosity of their reading audience. They write to assert themselves, to respond to discourses inside as well as outside of their home and host countries, and they write as “scriptotherapy,” a way to make sense of their changing lives. Moreover, their life writing help them gain agency and make the personal political. My findings also show that the political is personal as well for these women authors who had to probe the region’s history and its geopolitical trajectory in their search to understand themselves as well as the evolution of their identities. Finally, the authors, by writing in English, expand the dimensions of their work far across national borders and cultural boundaries. Hence, they transnationalize their life writing and call for women and human rights.

Chapter 1
Iran: A 20th Century Socio-Political Overview

In the 20th century, Iran (known as Persia by the international community until 1935)[5] underwent multiple political upheavals, leading to significant political and social changes. These changes, with their push for modernization, had a profound impact on the status of Iranian women. This chapter presents a historical and socio-political overview of Iran from the late Qajar Dynasty to the Islamic Revolution in 1979. I include details of the twentieth-century American-Iranian relationship, the uneven course of Iranian democratization, and the overall effects both had upon the place of women in Iranian society. An understanding of Iran during this time of immense change helps the reader contextualize the events referred to in the life writing I analyze in Chapters five and six of this thesis.

The Qajar Dynasties (1785-1925)

The prolonged despotism of the Qajar kings (1785-1925) led to disintegration of the country's security, both internally and internationally, and caused opposition from democratically-minded intellectuals who asked for political independence and economic progress (Abrahamian, 2008, Chapter 1). The situation was compounded by the close relationship between the Qajar rulers and the prevailing Shiite institutions. Economic dissatisfaction was at the real heart of the opposition to the state. At that point, merchants (*bazaris*) suffered from high taxes. Some clergy lost their income from the religious taxes the *bazaris* were no longer able to give them, and the loss induced them to join the opposition. This situation led to the alliance of different social classes in what eventually formed the Constitution Revolution of 1905. There were two main reasons for the revolution. First, all the groups believed that Iran should be governed by a constitution and elected parliament, not by the sole power of the kings. Secondly, at the time of Nasser al-Din Shah and Muzaffar al-Din Shah, due to huge economic concessions to foreigners which fell hard upon citizens of all classes, there was an increasing demand for a constitutional monarchy. Later, a further movement towards republicanism became widespread.

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[5](Fishman & Garcia, 2010, p. 266; & Abrahamian, 2008, p. 86).

Tobacco Movement 1890

In 1890, Nasser al-Din Shah granted sole monopoly to a British company over the cultivation and sale of tobacco. While this incited a strong reaction from people of various classes, the *Bazaris* businessmen were the group most profoundly affected when the British were able to fix the price of tobacco. In December 1891, after receiving a letter from Sayyed Jamaleddin Assadabadi,[6] the clergy declared a religious decree (*fatwa*), making the use of tobacco *haram* (religiously unlawful) to Muslims as long as the British held the monopoly. The *fatwa* was enforced everywhere in Iran, even in the royal harem, where the women refused to smoke tobacco. There were also large demonstrations in urban centers against the tobacco monopoly. Women participated in these demonstrations and even led them. This fact does indicate that at this juncture, contrary to the popular myth of Iranian female repression, women were highly politicized and had a role in the public sphere. Moreover, several women were killed when the palace guards opened fire on the demonstrators (Keddie, 1965). As a result of this unified movement, the State had to cancel the tobacco agreement in 1892, paying a huge penalty for its default. This was one of the earliest signals of Iran's new political direction (Paidar, 1995, p. 51).

During the strikes and agitation in which Iranians were demanding a constitution, women participated in the opposition in the streets. To shame the shops that were not closed in sympathy with the constitutionalists, they attacked the shopkeepers verbally and sometimes even physically. The country's economic and political deterioration was in large part due to the influence of colonial powers who would lend money to the Shah and in return stake sole claim to Iranian resources—especially to Iranian oil and minerals.

Constitutional Revolution (1905-11)

The Qajar's attempt at modernization failed miserably (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 39). The influence of Western literature, translated into Farsi at that time, made "Iranians beg[i]n to see their own past as well as world history mainly through Western eyes" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 40). Moreover, the people's dissatisfaction with Nasser al-Din Shah, and his unjust and defective rule, was growing ever stronger. Finally, after some fifty years of domination, he was assassinated by Mirza Reza Kermani (1896), and his son Muzaffar al-Din Shah became king.

Although Nasser al-Din Shah (1831-1896) encouraged contacts with Europe, he was not interested in political reform, and often signed economic agreements that were to the disadvantage of the Iranian economy. The local merchants wanted to protect their industries from foreign competition (Abrahamian, 2008, p.40-41). As Abrahamian writes, "The revolution's long-term causes were rooted in the nineteenth century; its short-term ones were triggered in 1904–05 by an economic crisis brought about by government bankruptcy and spiraling inflation," and further, "Unable to meet government expenditures, Muzaffar al-Din Shah threatened to raise land taxes and default on loans from local creditors. He also turned to British

[6] Also known as Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani or Al-Afghani (1838/1839-9 March 1897): "an outstanding ideologist and political activist of the late 19th century Muslim world, whose influence has continued strong in many Muslim countries. Although for much of his life he claimed to be of Afghan origin, probably in order to present himself as a Sunni Muslim and to escape oppression by the Iranian government, overwhelming documentation now proves that he was born and spent his childhood in Iran." For more details, refer to: https://iranicaonline.org/articles/afgani-jamal-al-din

and Russian banks for new loans on top of the £4 million he had already borrowed from them" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 41). With more freedom to engage in the political domain, criticisms against the state were clearly expressed in the newspapers (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 41). People gradually became familiar with democratic concepts and were observing the results of democracy in the development and advancement of Western society. Nonetheless, the economic crisis caused "acute inflation" (which caused, among other things, a price increase of staples like bread and sugar) in Iran, which largely affected the women in their everyday lives and provoked them to demonstrate all the more ardently (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 42). It should be noted that it was largely women who were demonstrating, and few men. There were confrontations with the clergy,[7] who went to Qom, requesting the establishment of a House of Justice (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 43). The merchants joined the clergy, and the Shah signed the Constitution on August 5th, which is still celebrated today as Constitutional Day in Iran (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 44-45). The people wanted to diminish the absolute power of the king and masters, yet the definition of justice remained different for each group.

Women participated in religious and traditional meetings, some of which were in mosques. The meetings familiarized them with the political environment and enabled them to transfer these discussions to their own societies and meetings (Paidar, 1995, p. 52). They also took part in more serious activities, like secret information gathering and street protests, where they even sometimes carried weapons. A group called the "Women Revolutionary Committee" went so far as to send a threatening letter to the Shah, stating that they would kill him if he did not fulfill the people's request for the House of Justice (Paidar, 1995, pp. 53-54).

Despite the intellectuals—like Malkulm Khan[8]—who were encouraging the participation of women, "there was no mention of women, and lower-class and illiterate men were likewise excluded from the electoral register" (Paidar, 1995, p. 54). At that time no European or North American country had yet included women in its elections. Only New Zealand—the first country in the world to do so—had granted women the right to vote in 1893.[9]

Despite the changes in election laws with the Second Parliament, women were granted neither the right to vote, nor of being elected to public office. And it was not until 1911 that the representative Haj Mohammad Taghi (known as *Wakil Al Ru'aya*) defended women's right to vote. He got no support, however, from Parliament, and his speech was not allowed to be published in the parliamentary report (Afary, 1996, p. 207). Hence, women did not have any representation whatsoever in parliament. Yet in 1906, women supported the government by donating their jewelry to augment failing government funds when Parliament rejected the government's decision to procure loans from Russia and Britain (Paidar, 1995, p. 56).

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[7] "In June 1906, Sayyed Abdallah Behbehani and Sayyed Muhammad Tabatabai – two of Tehran's three most respected mojtaheds – led a procession of some one thousand seminary students to the sanctuary of Qom. Later accounts anachronistically described these mojtaheds as ayatollahs. In fact, the clerical title of ayatollah, as well as that of hojjat al-islam, did not gain currency until well after the Constitutional Revolution. At Qom, the two were joined by Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri, the other senior mojtahed. The three threatened to move *en masse* to Karbala and Najaf, and thus deprive the country of religious services unless the shah dismissed both Naus and the governor, resolved the Kerman crisis, stopped the bank construction, and, most important of all, established an Adalat Khaneh (House of Justice)" (Abrahamian, 2008, p.43).

[8] Mirza Melkum Khan - Joseph (Hovsep) Melkumyan (1834 - 1908), also spelled as *Melkum Khan*, For more information, refer to: (Ridgeon, 2005, p. 14; & Keddie et al., 2006, pp. 431-32) & https://biography.yourdictionary.com/mirza-malkam-khan

[9] http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/politics/womens-suffrage

Ultimately, the Constitutionalists won their fight, and their representatives forced Mohammad Ali Shah from the kingdom. His son, Ahmad Shah, took power, and some of the constitution's opponents were executed, which effectually ended the uprisings. The constitutionalists opposed the foreign powers (Britain and Russia) who were trying to interfere in Iranian national affairs. In 1911, Russia—seeing that hiring of the American, Morgan Shuster, to administer the financial affairs of Iran in the second Parliament of 1909 was against Russian interests in Iran—delivered an ultimatum to Iran. The Russians demanded not only that Iran fire Shuster, but that no American consultant would be brought in without the consent of Russia and Britain. If Iran did not accept these terms, Russian troops would cross the Alburz Mountains and occupy northern Iran. The threat was sufficient to make the Iranian government comply with the Russian ultimatum, fire Schuster, and close down Parliament.

In this era of change and disruption, women's participation took different forms. To save the country from having to take costly loans from foreign countries, the women gave their jewelry to the newly formed government to establish the Iranian National Bank in 1906 (Paidar, 1995, p. 56). Moreover, *Anjuman Mukhaddarat Watan*, a women's organization, sent a telegram to Parliament in which they reminded the representatives of their duties (Paidar, 1995, p. 59). Furthermore, women refused to use any public transportation managed by foreign countries—an effective strike, which caused the trains to be empty for four days (Afary, 1996, p. 206). Realizing the women's power, in an attempt to undercut their confidence, the Russians sent the women's organization a letter which assured them that they were pinning false hopes in the Constitution. The letter also stated that Iranian women should support the foreign presence if they wanted to gain the same sorts of rights as European women enjoyed. *Anjuman Mukhaddarat Watan*'s rebuttal to this ploy was stern: It stated that it was only the law that granted European women their rights, and not yet society as a whole. This answer reflected Iranian women's deep understanding of the Constitution and how they were not expecting immediate drastic changes (Afary, 1996, p. 205). Women also encouraged people to spend money on their children's education, a part of feminism that was opposed by the clergy, who held the power of invoking *Shar'ia* law over them. Although women were organized in *anjumans* (organizations), they had to stay hidden at first because there was doubt whether these societies existed in violation of *Shar'ia*. One of the vital aspects of these organizations was that women participating in them were mainly relatives of the men actively promoting the Constitution, and this proximity to intense political energies provided women with direct information about the most relevant political discussions of the day.

From the Constitution Revolution to Reza Shah Pahlavi (1911-1925)

Among the political factors affecting the development of socialist ideology amongst Iranian reformers were the 1917 Russian revolution and the establishment of the Iranian socialist and communist parties in 1920. The latter attracted many people, including women. Still, however, women's rights continued to be viewed as a *bourgeois* manifestation and were rejected (Paidar, 1995, p. 89). Nonetheless, the Iranian socialist groups were seeking women's freedom and their equality to men under the law. The socialists were also calling for the right of all Iranians to vote and to present themselves as candidates without limitation (Paidar, 1995, p. 89). This led the women to organize themselves into independent action in which they focused upon specific women's issues. Among their primary concerns were education, wearing the *hijab* (the veil), staying at home instead of working, marriage of children, and the ongoing question of legal

polygamy. During this period, women started publishing their own magazines: *Women's Language* (*Zabani Zanan)*, *Women's Universe* (*Alam Niswan*), and *Women's World* (*Jahani Zanan)*, etc. Although they came to the world of publishing much later than their counterparts in Turkey and Egypt, the content of the magazines indicates considerable politicization and articulation of their demands. Criticizing *hijab* was not tolerated and was a big obstacle to their participation in the public arena. For example, *Jahani Zanan* was abolished because it published a woman's letter stating that clergy were taking advantage of women's ignorance (Paidar, 1995, p. 94). The women's organizations had much influence in the women's movement, especially since they had close relationships with the communist and socialist parties. This was in large part because the socialists and communists defended the women's rights as equal citizens (even if only theoretically), and because they would accept women into their political organizations.

The 1917 Russian Revolution caused Russian troops to retreat from northern Iran. It also made the British government fear that communist ideologies would spread from Russia into Iran, which would probably make the Iranian government infinitely more powerful (Paidar, 1995, p. 80). The British government therefore facilitated Reza Khan's[10] ascent to power. He established a powerful central government in 1921, with the support of Sayyed Ziya Al-Din Tabatabai[11], who became his prime minister. In fact, the latter had earlier appointed Reza Khan as his war minister, since he had the capacity and drive to suppress the riots around the country. Reza Khan was a secular who believed in making the military powerful (Paidar, 1995, p. 80), and he attracted support from Parliament. At first, he wanted to establish a republic, but was discouraged by the clergy who disapproved of Mustapha Kamal Ataturk and his Turkish Republic, as well as the general development and secularization plan (Paidar, 1995, p. 81). Finally, in 1925, the Qajar Dynasty was brought to its end by Parliament, and Reza Khan established the Pahlavi Dynasty instead (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 65).

Reza Shah Pahlavi[12] (1925-1941)

Although Reza Shah promoted nationalism, and he had a passion for the advancement and modernization of Iran, he governed as a dictator and through military force. His motto was "Khoda (God), Shah, and *Mehan* (nation)" (Abrahamian, 2008, p.66). Although the goals of the new nation-state (i.e., central government, secularization of society, technological advancement, economic development, and women's freedom) were borrowed from Western models, they ignored individual rights and democratic principles (Paidar, 1995, p. 150). Reza Shah limited clergy power and included women in the overall concept of the nation, which transferred the patriarchy to himself as the Shah and reduced men's power within the family. However, the Shah

[10] A regular military officer from northern Iran.

[11] "Sayyed Ziya (Al- Din Tabatabai) (1889 –1969) Pro-British politician closely associated with the 1921 coup. An openly pro-British journalist, he was appointed prime minister by Reza Khan in 1921 only to be ousted a few months later. Returning to Iran in World War II after twenty years in exile, he made numerous attempts to become prime minister again – often with British support but invariably with Soviet and American opposition. He had regular private audiences with the shah until his death" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. xxiii).

[12] "Reza Shah Pahlavi (1878– 1944) Founder of Iran's centralized state. Born into a military family, he rose through the ranks to the Cossack Brigade – the country's main fighting force at the time. He led a military coup in 1921, and five years later crowned himself shah, replacing the Qajar dynasty with his own Pahlavi family. He ruled with an iron fist until 1941 when the British and Soviet armies invaded and forced him to abdicate. He died three years later in South Africa. He left to his son not only the crown but also a huge private fortune – considered at the time to be one of the largest in the Middle East" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. xxiii).

took away parliamentary immunity; he abolished independent newspapers and planted spies everywhere (Abrahamian, 2008, pp. 73-74). Reza Shah "created cultural organization to instill greater national awareness in the general public," such as *Farhangestan*[13] (Cultural Academy) (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 86). On one hand, with education now obligatory, women's situation improved. On the other, some women were excluded from the public arena because the Shah, who under pressure from the modernists and intellectuals as well as from the women's movement, made unveiling obligatory in 1936. The fundamental changes in the judiciary system's establishment of notaries (who registered documents, marriages, and divorces) decreased the authority of the clergy hugely (Paidar, 1995, p. 84 & Abrahamian, 2008, p. 88). Yet the patriarchal attitude towards women did not change fundamentally, since adapting civil and judiciary law to the western model did not apply equally to family law. However, he did raise the marriageable age to eighteen for men and fifteen for women, and he made marriage registration compulsory (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 94). Those were important changes, but they fell short of what women were demanding. They wanted to limit polygamy, as well as achieve more women's rights within marriage.

Under Reza Shah, newspapers and journals were extensively censored and the government's control of the media and political groups increased. The government suppressed many of the women's societies, and it either shut down their magazines or placed them under its control. Reza Shah (and later, his son after him) opposed any autonomous feminist or political activity. Therefore, in 1935, he established an organization called "*Qanun Zanan*" (Women's Center) that aimed to have activities regarding women's rights performed in that center and under government observation. His daughter, Shams Pahlavi, was honorary head of this center (Paidar, 1995, p. 104).

World War II (1939-1945)

During World War II, Reza Shah declared Iran neutral. Even so, the Allies invaded Iran (25 August-17 September 1941) because they wanted to secure the Iranian oil fields and insure their supply lines, since the Soviets were fighting against the Axis forces on the Eastern Front. In fact, the British considered Iran strategically important primarily for its Abadan Oil Refinery. The UK-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company controlled the refinery which produced eight million metric tons/barrels of oil in 1940. The tensions with Iran over its oil had been ongoing since 1931 when the Shah annulled the D'Arcy Concession that gave the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company exclusive rights to sell Iranian oil, while granting Iran only 10% of its profits.

Upon the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941 (the British and the Soviet Union were by then allies), Iran's railway became strategic, since it was an easy way for the Allies to get supplies to the USSR. On the other hand, the Soviets wanted to make Iranian Azerbaijan part of the Soviet Union and turn Iran into a communist state. The British and the Russians together applied pressure on Iran and the Shah, which increased tensions and sparked anti-British protests in Tehran. The Shah also refused to expel German residents and did not succumb to the Allies' demands. The Allies used this as an excuse to invade Iran without first declaring war. They claimed to be liberating Iran from possible Nazi destruction. The Allies had a speedy victory, especially since the Shah did not want the road and transportation networks to be destroyed. Four days into the invasion, he ordered the Iranian military to withdraw (Farrokh, 2011).

[13] It was a new organization modeled on the French Academy (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 86).

Upon the British and Soviet invasion of Iran, Reza Shah appealed to the American President Roosevelt on the basis of the Atlantic Charter, but Roosevelt would not interfere to stop the invasion. Blaming the pro-British Prime Minister Ali Mansur for demoralizing the military, the Shah ordered him to resign and replaced him with Mohammad Ali Foroughi, wanting him to enter into negotiations with the British and Russians. Foroughi did not negotiate for a favorable settlement but implied instead that both he and the Iranian people wanted to be "liberated" from the Shah's rule. He agreed with the British that, for the Allies to withdraw from Iran, the German minister and his staff must leave Tehran, the German, Italian, Hungarian and Romanian legations must close, and all remaining German nationals must be handed over to British and Soviet authorities. However, Reza Shah planned the secret evacuation of all German nationals via the Turkish border. As a result, the Red Army occupied Tehran on the 16th of September 1941, and many fled the city. Reza Shah announced his abdication, and his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi became Shah of Iran. Before he was able to leave Iran, Reza Shah was arrested and placed in British custody. He was exiled to South Africa where he died in 1944. On the 17th of October 1941, the Allies withdrew from Tehran, but Iran remained divided between the British and Soviets for the rest of the war (the Soviets were in northern Iran, while the British did not move beyond Hamadan and Qazvin).[14]

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941-79) and the White Revolution

Mohammad Reza Shah "continued after 1953 where his father had been forced to leave off in 1941" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 123). Hence, in order to "forestall the possibility of a military coup," the military continued to receive preferential treatment (Abrahamian, 2008, pp. 124-25). Mohammad Reza Shah amended the constitution by granting himself the authority to appoint the prime minister, and he increased the size of the *majles* (Parliament) to two hundred members (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 128). After the assassination of Prime Minister Ali Razmara, Muhammad Mossadeq[15] became Prime Minister in 1950. At that time, Mossadeq and the Shia cleric Kashani[16] were "allies of convenience," since Mossadeq thought that Kashani could mobilize the "religious masses," while the latter wanted Mossadeq to create an Islamic state. Kashani's Fadaiyan mobs often violently attacked the opponents of nationalization and opponents of the National Front government, acting at times as unofficial "enforcers" for the movement. However, by 1953, Mossadeq was growing increasingly opposed to Kashani, who

[14] For more information, refer to (Keddie et al., 2006, pp. 73-80).

[15] Or "Mossadeq al-Saltaneh (1881 –1967) The icon of Iranian nationalism. From a long line of notables, he studied in Europe and had a successful career in government service until forced into retirement by Reza Shah. Returning to politics in 1941, he gained fame first as an "incorruptible" deputy, and then as leader of the National Front campaigning for the nationalization of the British owned oil company. Elected prime minister in 1951, he promptly nationalized the oil industry and thus sparked off a major international crisis with Britain. He was overthrown by the military coup organized by the CIA in August 1953. Islamists distrusted him because of his deep commitment to secular nationalism" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. xxii).

[16] "Kashani, Ayatollah Sayyed Abul-Qassem (1885–1961) The main cleric who first supported and then opposed Mossadeq. A refugee from Iraq where his father had been killed fighting Britain after World War I, he was arrested by the British in World War II. He threw his weight behind Mossadeq when the campaign for the nationalization of the oil industry began. He broke with Mossadeq x). in 1953 avowedly because the latter did not implement the shari'a. His supporters vehemently deny that he actively supported the 1953 coup" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. xx).

was contributing to massive political instability. Kashani, in turn, berated Mossadeq (who was a firm believer in the separation of religion and state) for not "Islamizing" Iran.[17]

Mossadeq nationalized the oil industry in a parliamentary vote in April 1951. Since the oil industry was owned by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Britain took revenge by hitting the Iranian economy. It imposed an embargo and blockade against Iranian oil exports. The ensuing political uprising and support for nationalism led to the Shah's fleeing the country in August 1953 after a power struggle with the nationalist Mossadeq. The Americans and the British―who viewed both Iranian nationalism and democracy as a threat to their economic as well as political interests in Iran―orchestrated a coup with the help of the Shah's twin sister and a segment of Iranian political forces. They overthrew Mossadeq in August 1953. The Shah returned to Iran, and General Fazlollah Zahedi became Prime Minister. However, the dissatisfaction of Iranian citizens with the state of the economy and the regime continued.

In January 1963, the Shah instigated his modernization campaign. He called it the "White Revolution" for social transformation (1953-77). It was his attempt to modernize and industrialize the country through land and socioeconomic reforms (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 131). The Shah relied on the *SAVAK* (secret police) and illegal imprisonment of his opponents to silence them. He increased educational institutions, augmenting the literacy rate from 26 to 42 percent (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 134). Women won the right to vote, to run for elected office, and to serve in the judiciary (first as lawyers and then as judges) (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 134). The 1967 Family Protection Law restricted men's rights to divorce, to take multiple wives, and to obtain child custody. The Shah also increased women's marriageable age to fifteen (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 134). Literacy and health corps extended medical and educational facilities, especially birth control to women (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 134). However, since the use of the veil was discouraged in public institutions, some segments of society did not equally benefit from these developments.

Despite the reforms, social tensions ran high. They started with the intelligentsia and urban working class, since these were the people who were stripped away from organizations that represented them (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 139). Moreover, not meeting the people's expectations sparked political tensions (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 143). At that time, two main figures were influencing the Iranian people: the educated social scientist Ali Shariati[18], who was called the "ideologue of the Iranian Revolution,"[19] and Ayatullah Ruhollah Khomeini[20], the jurist

[17] https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/coup-detat-1953

[18] "Shariati, Ali (1933 –77) Considered the "real ideologue" of the Islamic Revolution. Studying in France in the 1960s, he was strongly influenced by theorists of Third World revolutions –especially by Franz Fanon. His prolific lectures – totaling some thirty-six volumes – aimed to transform Shi'ism from a conservative apolitical religion into a highly revolutionary political ideology competing with Leninism and Maoism. His writings influenced many of the activists who took part in the revolution. He died in exile on the eve of the revolution." (Abrahamian, 2008, p. xxiv).

[19] For more information, refer to (Vakili, 1991, pp. 30-37).

[20] "Khomeini, Ayatollah Sayyed Ruhollah (1902–89) Charismatic leader of the Islamic Revolution. Born into a clerical family, he spent his early life in seminaries in Qom and Najaf. He entered politics in 1963, when he denounced the shah for granting "capitulations" to American military advisors. Deported, he spent the next sixteen years in Najaf developing a new interpretation of Shi'i Islam. He drastically expanded the traditional Shi'i concept of velayat-e faqeh – from clerical jurisdiction over orphans, widows, and the mentally feeble to clerical supervision over all citizens. He also combined clerical conservatism with radical populism. Returning triumphant in 1979, he was hailed by the new constitution as Commander of the Revolution, Founder of the Islamic Republic, Supreme

who formulated the concept of *Velayat-e Faqeh* (Jurist's Guardianship) (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 143). Khomeini argued that the monarchy was pagan and denounced the Shah for his shortcomings (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 147). In the middle of the 1970s, tensions between the state and society reached breaking point, and secular opposition grew more radical (Abrahamian, 2008, p.148). In March 1975, the Shah dissolved the political parties and established a single state party, called the *Rastakhiz* (Resurgence Party), which intensified state control over the middle class (Abrahamian, 2008, pp. 149-150).

On the other hand, the Shah created a national organization for women's affairs and recruited women into the religious and literacy corps (Abrahamian, 2008, p.152). He also raised the marriage age to twenty years for men and to eighteen for women, and "expanded birth control clinics, and permitted abortion in the first twelve weeks" (Abrahamian, 2008, pp. 152). Finally, the *ulama* (clergy) reacted to the state party that restricted their control (Abrahamian, 2008, pp. 153-154). As the political situation deteriorated, the Shah and his family were forced into exile in January 1979.

The Uprisings and Women's Role

In 1977, the Iranian constitutionalist liberals showed the first signs of opposition. In fact, the middle class wanted the Shah to apply the rule of the Iranian Constitution of 1906 instead of the religious rule. Opposition groups and organizations emerged, among which were the Liberation Movement of Iran, led by Mehdi Bazargan[21] (liberal), as well as the National Front (more secular). The anti-Shah groups were operating from outside Iran (from London, Paris, Iraq, and Turkey), where their leaders' speeches were recorded on audio cassettes and smuggled into Iran. At that time, Khomeini was in exile in Iraq, where he was working on uniting all opposition—clerical, secular, liberal, and radical—under his leadership.

In Iran, the SAVAK savagely suppressed the Marxist groups, the communist Tudeh Party of Iran, People's Mujahedin of Iran, and the Organization of Iranian People's Fedai Guerrillas (OIPFG). The latter's aim was to use assassination and guerilla warfare to defeat the Pahlavi regime. Despite being repressed and factionalized in the first half of the seventies, they had an important role in the 1979 overthrow of the regime. Islamists were also divided into several groups, such as the Liberation Movement of Iran who wanted to use lawful political methods to oppose the Shah. The *bazaris* founded the Coalition of Islamic Societies. Due to the internal repression, the external opposition groups—the Confederation of Iranian Students and the foreign branch of Freedom Movement of Iran and the Islamic association of students—were important to the revolution.

The 1979 revolution was the result of several events in the seventies. Among them was the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire. It was extravagant (it cost around $120 million) at a time when many rural provinces were suffering drought. The oil boom of late

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Leader of the Islamic Republic, and, most potent of all, Imam of the Muslim World – a title Shi'is in the past had reserved for the Twelve Sacred Infallible Imams" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. xxi).

[21] "Bazargan, Mehdi (1907–95) Khomeini's first prime minister. A deputy minister under Mossadeq, he was much more religious than most of his National Front colleagues. In 1961, he founded the Liberation Movement, committed to the ideals of Iranian nationalism, Western liberalism, and Shi'i Islam. Secularists deemed him too religious; the religious deemed him too secularist. He resigned his premiership to protest the students taking over the US embassy in 1979" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. xviii).

1974 increased inflation, and the gap between the rich and poor was widening. The Shah was also spending hundreds of millions of dollars on American high-tech military equipment that necessitated skilled foreign workers to operate, which angered the nationalistic Iranians. Subsequently, the *Rastakhiz* party was created and became the only Iranian party. In a nod to the power of kingship, the Shah also changed the first year of the Iranian solar calendar from the traditional Islamic *hijri* to the ascension of Cyrus the Great to the throne in Persian antiquity.

When the Allies removed Reza Shah during WWII, the anti-religious atmosphere began to dissipate. Special branches for women, addressing women's rights, were established in the major political and democratic parties. Two new parties rose instead of the government-sponsored *Kanoon-e Banavan*: the Women's party founded by Safiyeh Firouz and *Jamiet Zanan* (the Women's League), aiming to educate and raise women's consciousness and improving their legal conditions. Due to the weakness of the Pahlavi government, women's organizations became more independent between 1941 and 1952, but women's groups started to attack each other along party lines. Although the women's suffrage movement had gotten started in Iran in 1911, Iranian women did not gain the right to vote until February 27th, 1963 (Sanasarian, 1982, pp. 82-83). On September 17th, 1963, six women were elected to the Majlis as deputies, and in 1965 two women were appointed ministers (Sanasarian, 1982, p. 83). Yet dissatisfaction with the Pahlavi government became more apparent in the late seventies: The Shah lost his credibility, and corruption prevailed. The atmosphere led to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, and with it, the revolution meant a return to authenticity and an assertion of Iranian identity. Women's mass participation in its grassroots form became "a challenge to the state ideology of Westernization and its accompanying notion of womanhood…The assertion of the rights of popular classes was considered as the new modernism and a sign of progress within the oppositional movement" (Paidar, 1995, p. 207).

The 1979 Islamic Revolution

The reign of Mohammad Reza Shah was under serious criticism for its economic and political dependencies, and the Islamic Revolution, when it came, "erupted like a volcano" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 155). The leftists gained followers and became more powerful. The clergy, seeing their power limited, agreed with the other classes that the Shah's dictatorship should either have fundamental reforms or collapse. On September 8th, 1978, called "Black Friday," the Shah declared martial law and banned all street meetings (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 159). In January, he left the country, and two weeks later, on February 1st, Khomeini returned (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 161). Khomeini had many followers, and he was swiftly named Supreme Leader, with constitutional powers unimagined by any shah (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 164). In a referendum, he renamed the country the "Islamic Republic of Iran," on April 1st, 1979. Moreover, a nationalization program was initiated under the first President, Abolhasan Bani-Sadr, who was elected in January 1980.

Khomeini argued that "the Islamic government being a divine entity given by God to the Prophet" could suspend any laws on the ground of *maslahat* (protecting the public interest) (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 165). "The voting age was initially put at sixteen years, later lowered to fifteen, and then raised back to sixteen in 2005." (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 166). Abrahamian (2008) states that the constitution promised "citizens pensions, unemployment benefits, disability pay, decent housing, medical care, and free secondary as well as primary education" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 167).

However, not everything was going smoothly. In fact, much blood was shed. Prominent political figures were assassinated, and political prisoners were executed. For instance, revolutionary courts executed 497 political opponents between February 1979 and June 1981 (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 181). But the event with the greatest impact upon the Iranian international image and Iran's relationship with the United States was the Hostage Crisis. In November 1979, Islamic students, demanding the return of the Shah, attacked the US embassy in Tehran and took fifty-two Americans as hostages for 444 days (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 168). In 1980, on the heels of the Hostage Crisis, the Iraq-Iran war began. Bani-Sadr was impeached on the 21st of June 1981: He fled to Paris where he received political asylum on the condition that he would abstain from anti-Khomeini activities in France. Hence, secularism lost out to religion, and "the ministry of Islamic guidance launched a 'Cultural Revolution' to combat 'Cultural imperialism'" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 177). The executions continued: the revolutionary courts executed more than 8,000 opponents between June 1981 and June 1985 (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 181).

Iranian women lost many of their rights, since the "new regime undid the family law, lowering the marriage age for girls back to thirteen and allowing husbands to divorce wives without court permission" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 177). Moreover, the "Islamic code of public appearance" was enforced (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 177). The regime went even further, as it censored media (newspapers, books, movies) and the airwaves. Textbooks were rewritten to eliminate any "favorable depictions of the monarchy and secular heroes." The use of European personal names was banned, and any references to previous monarchs were deleted (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 177). Curiously, the regime, unlike the Shah's, enjoyed a good relationship with the *bazaris* (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 178). It also brought benefits to the working classes, and the poorer population received subsidies (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 180). But with the banning of feminist activities, the women went back to their homes. With compulsory veiling, some lost their jobs, and women retreated from the public arena.

The Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988) and Its Impact on Women

The Iraq-Iran war started in September 1980 when Iraq invaded Iran. Border disputes were motivated by Iraq's fear that the 1979 Iranian Revolution would inspire the suppressed Shia majority in Iraq to revolt against the government's power on the one hand, and the fact that Iraq wanted to become the dominant state in the Persian Gulf on the other. Iran regained all lost territories by June 1982, but hostilities continued until August 1988.[22] It is said that Iran lost more than a million people from its population to the war (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 171).

Despite the long war, the borders remained unchanged. After many attacks on both sides for years, Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi president, threatened in mid-1988 to launch a full-scale invasion of Iran. Fearing for the Iranian community, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani convinced Khomeini to accept the UN ceasefire (Resolution 598). Both countries sent representatives to Geneva to negotiate a peace agreement. Khomeini accepted the UN mediation and ended the war. It should be noted that shortly after the end of the war, special courts were established in the main Iranian prisons, where more than 2,800 prisoners (including former Mojahedin, as well as leftists) were condemned to be hanged (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 181).

[22] https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/iraq-vii-iran-iraq-war

The war had political, economic, and social consequences that affected the lives of Iranian women who played a key role in defending their country. In fact, the war caused a change in the traditional social role of the Iranian women who had had both a direct and an indirect role in the war. Women in southern and western parts of the war zones fought against the enemy, made weapons, acted as scouts, took care of corpses of the martyrs, and collected public donations. Women also founded new social institutions. The Sisters' Basij Resistance Force and other military and militia organizations were formed to organize women's activities. Among the many roles women undertook during the war were helping to raise awareness, providing medical services (caring for wounded soldiers), and managing blood donations. Women also created and enriched the literature of war resistance in spoken and written form, depicting the general culture of war and the behavior, spirit, and attitudes of combatants.

Iran after Khomeini[23]

With the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, President Ali Khamenei (1939) became the new Supreme Leader, and Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani (1934-2017) the new President. During Rafsanjani's presidency (1989-1997), women's political involvement surged. Known for his pragmatic views on women's issues, Rafsanjani eased social controls. Moreover, women participated in international sports competitions, and there was an increase in the numbers of girls and women in the educational institutions. Rafsanjani is also known for launching a family planning program that curbed Iran's rate of population growth. However, in 1997, Mohammad Khatami (1943) was elected President with 70% of the votes, and reelected in 2001. Khatami's presidency (1997-2005) is known for his reforms. He eased censorship on political expression in newspapers, books, and movies. He also opened dialogue between people of different faiths both nationally and internationally. In fact, he reopened all European embassies in Iran. As for women, they achieved more rights in the legal arena. These included the official reintroduction of some modified parts of the suspended Family Protection Law. Women who were judges before the Islamic Revolution were assigned as "special advisors" in family courts, presided over by clerics. Parliament increased the marriageable age for girls from nine to thirteen in 2002. The ban on unaccompanied girls traveling on scholarships was lifted. There were more non-governmental organizations, some of which were focused on women's issues.

This more open approach to women's rights was not destined to last. In 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (1956) was elected President. While Ahmadinejad demanded that women bear more children, women were confronting his regime and demanding that they not be reduced to second-class citizens. In response, the government abolished their magazine, *Zanan* (Iran's leading feminist magazine), and women faced police brutality on the streets. In the 2007 elections of local councils, only 43 women were elected out of tens of thousands of seats. As for the 2008 parliamentary elections, the two reformist women were voted out. Only nine women were elected out of 585 women running for office (out of 7,168 total candidates). This negative and repressive climate led tens of thousands of women to support the two reformers, Mir Hossein Mousavi (1942) and Mehdi Karroubi (1937), in the 2009 presidential elections, in their attempt to back women's rights. It should be noted that this was the first time that women had ever taken

[23] https://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/womens-movement;
(Keddie et al., 2006, p.323);
https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/elections

part in advising and campaigning for presidential candidates. Mousavi announced that he had won the election shortly before Iran's elections headquarters announced that he ranked second after Ahmadinejad. The election results brought controversy: Mousavi and Karroubi's supporters contested the elections, believing them to be fraudulent and "rigged." Protests against Ahmadinejad and the government erupted. Millions of people took to the streets in demonstrations. Mousavi asked for a reelection, but the Supreme Leader refused. Although the protests were initially peaceful, the protesters clashed with the police, who responded with brutality. They used their batons to disperse Mousavi's supporters who were staging a sit-in outside the Interior Ministry. The demonstrations were described as the biggest unrest since the Islamic Revolution. They came to be known as the Green Movement (or Green Wave of Iran/Persian Awakening/Persian Spring), since Mousavi had chosen the color green as the symbol of his campaign. Several of the protest movements broadened in scope and spread all over the country. Iranian supporters of the Green Movement, wearing green symbols, rallied all over the world. But in Iran, the police and government militia brutally suppressed the protests, resulting in hundreds of people killed and thousands arrested.

After February 14th, 2011, Mousavi and Karroubi remained under house arrest for asking their supporters to demonstrate in response to the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. In time, the Green Movement was suppressed, and Ahmadinejad continued as president for a second term. . Finally, in 2013, Hassan Rouhani (1948) was elected President and reelected in 2017. He is considered to have improved Iranian diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, despite Rouhani's promises for equal rights for women, the latter's situation has not improved under his presidency.[24]

The American-Iranian Relationship

The relationship between the United States and Iran had its inception during the later years of the Qajar dynasty, towards the end of the nineteenth century, when Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar appointed Mirza Abolhasan Shirazi as Persia's (now Iran) first ambassador to the United States (1856) (Lesch, 2003, p. 52). In 1883, the United States appointed Samuel G. W. Benjamin as its first official diplomatic representative to Iran. These appointments notwithstanding, the ambassadorial relationship did not actually begin until 1944. Under Nasser al-Din Shah, the Prime Minister Amir Kabir contacted the United States government directly to invite an American company to build a railway system from the Persian Gulf to Tehran.

After World War I, the Persians had requested financial assistance from the United States. However, the United States had no real interest in Iran until World War II (Alexander & Nanes, 1980). At that point, the relationship between Iran and the United States was amicable, especially since Iranians thought the United States would help Iran break free from British and Russian interference in their affairs. Hence, after the Constitutional Revolution (1909), the Iranian Parliament chose the American Morgan Shuster as Persia's Treasurer General. But the latter was forced to resign under pressure from the British and Russians, who wanted to protect their interests in Persia. In 1936, for about a year, Iran withdrew its ambassador from Washington thanks to the publication of an article criticizing Reza Shah. However, Reza Shah appointed another American, Arthur Millspaugh, as Treasurer General soon thereafter.

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[24] https://www.dw.com/en/irans-women-see-no-progress-under-rouhani/a-17495521; https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27099151.

The United States got directly involved in Iran's affairs from 1942 onwards, after its troops helped deliver Lend Lease supplies to the USSR through the route the Anglo-Soviet invasion (1941) had secured in deposing Reza Shah.[25]

Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, throughout most of his reign (1941-1979), had strong ties to the United States and maintained a pro-American foreign policy. It should be mentioned that the Shah sent many students to study in the United States. For its part, the American interest in Iran was due both to its mountainous border with America's Cold War rival—the Soviet Union—and the fact that Iran was the strongest country in the Persian Gulf, and therefore, a natural strategic ally. Moreover, there were the American technicians deployed to Iran to maintain the military equipment that the Shah had purchased from the United States. Until the start of World War II, the United States had had no active policy towards Iran (Kinzer, 2003, p.86), but when the Soviet Union wanted to separate Iranian Azerbaijan and Kurdistan into two states, the United States became fearful (especially as China was becoming communist and the Korean War was beginning) (Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004, pp. 201, 206, 212, 219, 204-5).

When Mossadeq nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), the British imposed an embargo on Iranian oil, causing a decline in the Iranian economy. The American President—Truman—pressured Britain not to invade Iran and to be moderate in its negotiations. Afterwards, Mossadeq visited Washington. Despite the American support for Mossadeq, (Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004, p. 273), the United States observed the British embargo (Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004, p. 243).

With tensions rising during the Cold War, the oil negotiations were delayed. When Eisenhower became the American president, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), with British collaboration, overthrew Mossadeq's government through Operation Ajax, a *coup d'état* operated out of the American Embassy. It took a second attempt for the operation to succeed, leading to the imprisonment of Mossadeq.

The United States helped the Shah (who had fled to Italy) regain power and supported his reign by granting him $145 million in emergency financial aid (1953-1957) (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 419). In 1957, the Israeli intelligence service, the CIA, and the FBI helped the Shah establish his brutal secret police under the name of *Sazeman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshavar* (SAVAK), whose members were trained by the CIA. Moreover, the United States signed an agreement with Iran called the civil nuclear cooperation agreement,[26] And the United States granted Iran its first nuclear reactor and nuclear fuel to start its nuclear program in 1957.[27] It must be remembered that all this occurred within the context of the Cold War, and the fear of imminent nuclear war.

However, problematic issues between the two countries were beginning to surface. When President Jimmy Carter took office in the late seventies, the United States began to harass Iran over its human rights violations. The Hostage Crisis occurred during Carter's presidency, and the relationship between the United States and Iran disintegrated. The United States cut off all diplomatic ties with Iran. Since 1979, the United States has continued to impose sanctions upon Iran on different levels: economic, trade, scientific, and military. In 1984, the United States

[25] For more information about the Iranian-American relationship, refer to (Bill, 1988; & Katzman, 2020).
[26] https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2020/01/world/us-iran-conflict-timeline-trnd/
[27] https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/09/18/440567960/born-in-the-u-s-a-how-america-created-irans-nuclear-program

declared Iran as a "state sponsor of terrorism."[28] In 1986, the United States approved an arms deal to Iran in an attempt to free the hostages taken by the Iran-supported militia *Hezbollah* in Lebanon. Then, in 1995, the United States imposed oil and trade sanctions upon Iran. It should be noted that Iran had helped the United States in its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan against Saddam Hussein and the Taliban.[29] However, in January 2002, President Bush gave a speech in which he denounced Iran as an "axis of evil" and a threat to world peace. "He accused it of aspiring to build nuclear weapons and of financing international terrorism directed at the United States" (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 192). And, in 2003, the United States became alarmed as traces of highly enriched uranium were found by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at a nuclear plant in Iran. In 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA),[30] or the Iran nuclear deal, an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program, was reached between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, plus Germany) together with the European Union. The JCPOA, a 15-year term agreement, regulated Iran's nuclear activities as well as the sanctions imposed on it. As a result of JCPOA, Iran committed to regular inspections, monitoring, and verification of its nuclear activities by the inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It should be noted that the United Nations, the United States, and European Union had previously imposed sanctions on Iran to halt its uranium enrichment, which cost Iran more than $160bn in oil revenue from 2012 to 2016. However, the JCPOA gave Iran access to more than $100bn in its frozen assets overseas, enabled it to resume selling oil on international markets, and use the global financial system for trade. However, Donald Trump, the American President, withdrew from the JCPOA deal in May 2018; and, in November 2018, he reinstated sanctions on both Iran and the states that traded with it. This caused an economic downfall for Iran as well as a drop in its currency. Although the United Kingdom, Germany, and France had set up alternative payment methods to help international companies keep trading with Iran without facing American penalties; Iran suspended its commitments under the agreement in May 2019. It gave the other signatories sixty days to protect it from the American sanctions. It they did not, it would resume production of highly enriched uranium. The UN sanctions currently remain lifted.[31]

Having covered Iran's socio-political evolvement from the Qajar Dynasty to recent events, I move to the evolution and criticism of autobiography as well as Iranian women's life writing in Diaspora in Chapter 2.

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[28] https://www.cnn.com/2013/06/03/world/meast/iran-fast-facts/index.html

[29] https://www.pri.org/stories/2004-10-28/us-and-iran-part-iv-hostile-relations

[30] For more information about Iran's nuclear program, refer to (Keddie et al., 2006, pp. 335-338); nuclear capability (Keddie et al., 2006, pp. 272, 284, 323, 324, 329, 330, 331, 334-41, 346); https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33521655; https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Timeline-of-Nuclear-Diplomacy-With-Iran; https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/09/18/440567960/born-in-the-u-s-a-how-america-created-irans-nuclear-program

[31] For further information on the progress of negotiations as well as events related to JCPOA, refer to the Arms Control Association Timeline of Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran (https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Timeline-of-Nuclear-Diplomacy-With-Iran).

Chapter 2
Autobiography: Evolution and Criticism

Life writing may be viewed strictly as a limited and limiting genre, as it was in the eighteenth century. At that time it was equivalent to 'biography,' and biography used to be considered more generally to include autobiography, and perhaps other kinds of autobiographical writing.

—Marlene Kadar, 1992, p. 3

Formalist criticism did not consider autobiography to be "literary" in the same sense as "creative" works were literary, and even within the hierarchy of "literary" versus "autobiographical"narratives, ethnic or immigrant autobiography was further marginalized as "aesthetically poor."

—Eva C. Karpinski, 2012, pp. 6-7

Introduction

For countless generations, human beings have felt the need to tell their stories. Early accounts often centered upon successful military exploits; for instance, the *Bābur-nāmeh,* the diaries of Babur, the first Mughal emperor (1483-1530), and direct descendant of the Turco-Mongol Emperor Timur (Tamerlane). Babur kept deeply honest diaries written in exquisite and highly readable prose that detailed the daily hardships he and his companions endured during long years as they sought to reclaim the empire of his ancestor. Not only diaries, but letters also supplied a way to tell an individual's story. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, wife to Edward Wortley Montagu, English ambassador to Turkey (1716-18), wrote fascinating letters from Constantinople, filled with vivid anecdotes and keen observation of her surroundings. However, Babur's diaries and Lady Mary's letters, remarkable as they are, were not intimate. They never disclosed their writers' souls, which is what we, as 21st-century readers, expect from autobiographies. Lady Mary's and Babur's works were the expression of a far more communal

understanding of each individual's place in society, and the personal remained largely a private matter.

Although different forms of autobiographical writing existed for centuries, there has been an increase interest in the study of autobiography as a literary form with scholars such as Marlene Kadar (1992 & 1993), Laura Marcus (1994), Leigh Gilmore (1994), and Charles W. Berryman (1999) to name a few. Some theorists relate this interest to evolving critical theories that define and construct the self. As psychological understanding has grown, the individual, though greatly constrained by his or her societal context, has received validation as being innately separate from it. Furthermore, the identity crisis of postmodernism and deconstruction that shifts the politics of race, class, and gender to the fore has created an environment in which autobiography seems an increasingly legitimate form of self-expression. The genre of autobiography is now being studied in direct relation to a definition of the self that is considered the center of its own political and social powers. In light of this understanding, and because I am a woman of the Diaspora, for whom the telling of personal stories is both identity-affirming and healing, I aim first to discuss the evolution of critical theories of autobiography in general, and then allow those theories to shed light on the writing of autobiographies by Iranian women in Diaspora in North America.

Early History of Autobiography

Autobiography has been considered a literary genre worthy of study for only a couple of centuries. As Marcus[32] writes, the genre of autobiography is "difficult to define and regulate," and, hence, "seminal autobiographies have come to dominate autobiographical criticism" (1994, p.1). In other words, criticism has not moved with the times, despite the modern explosion of autobiographical writing in various forms. The very word "autobiography" is of relatively recent origin. Some theorists argue that Ann Yearsley coined the term "autobiography" in the preface of a collection of Portuguese poems in the 18th century, but others assert that Robert Southey used it for the first time in English in 1809 (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 2; Berryman, 1999, p. 71; Marcus, 1994, p.11; Kadar, 1993, p. xi). However, Berryman (1999) claims that the term was invented by a linguist in 1797, and that it was Thomas Cooley who was the first to report how it was used in professional criticism in 1976. Hence, there is a gap of almost 200 years between the two mentions and no light had been shed on autobiographical accounts written by women in that time period. The reason for the latter is that women's writings were considered personal and less literary than the men's, which resulted in the consideration of men's writing as "seminal autobiographies" from mid 18th century to late 20th century. Moreover, women's autobiographical writings were "interrupted" by men's interference in order to prepare them for publication, to censor the responses of both readers and viewers, to subtly infiltrate them and to have them appropriated by men (Gilmore, 1994, p.49).

From a very different perspective, Marcus, in her explorations of the origins of the form, looks back to Augustine of Hippo, whose deeply self-revealing *Confessions* (ca. 400 CE) establish him as the "founding father of the autobiographical form." As Marcus states, this view is synonymous to the "claim that autobiography is in essence an aspect of Christian Western

[32] Laura Marcus is a Goldsmith's Professor of English Literature at the University of Oxford. Laura Marcus's research and teaching interests are predominantly in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature and culture, including life-writing, modernism, Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury culture, contemporary fiction, and literature and film. She's the author of Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice (1994).

civilization, and could only take shape and develop within this context" (1994, p. 2). One cannot but to refer to Gilmore (1994) who states with authority that "patriarchal ideology has denied women: a self-worth its history, a life worth remembering, [and] a story worth writing and publishing" (p.51). Hence, women's autobiography writings remained largely unnoticed and hidden until late in the 20th century, something I am trying to show here by referring to male autobiographical writings that were considered the canon in the field.

Such a view inevitably provokes rebuttal. Augustine seems far too removed from more recent conceptions of autobiography to bear such weight. Berryman disagrees with Marcus, and claims that *My Birth and Life*, written in the 17th century by Puritan minister Thomas Shepard, but not published until 1832 was the first autobiography to be written. Marcus counters that the actual first was penned by the Romantic poet, William Wordsworth, in 1805, where the poet asserts that it is "a thing unprecedented in literary history that a man should talk so much about himself" (p. 11). Wordsworth's sense of breaking through a societal barrier between public and private revelation is worth noting. Until the barrier began to come down, an individual simply did not unveil his or her interior life for all to see, and Marcus is right in drawing attention to it. She further contends that "modern" autobiography was inaugurated as a result of its separation from biography, constituting a hybrid form that "unsettles distinctions, including the division between self and other" and a "destabilising form of writing and knowledge" (1994, p.15). Moreover, autobiography's instability and hybridity are "linked to a problematic of selfhood and identity, with the boundaries between 'inner,' and 'outer,' 'private' and 'public' becoming the site of the greatest concern" (Marcus, 1994, p.15).

According to Folkenflik[33] (1993), the use of both "autobiography and its synonym, self-biography," started in the 18th century, but both were used in England and Germany in the 1770's, 1780's, and 1790's in "isolated instances." No evidence exists that either term seemed to influence the other (p. 5). Moreover, he asserts that until the twentieth century, the term memoirs (French, *les mémoirs*), not "autobiography, was commonly used to designate 'self-life writing'" (Folkenflik, 1993, p. 5). Ultimately, as Smith and Watson point out, autobiography flowered during the Enlightenment as a natural corollary to its emphasis upon individual experience and capacities for reason. Since then, Smith and Watson go on to say, the definition of autobiography as a genre "has been vigorously challenged in the wake of postmodern and postcolonial critiques of the Enlightenment subject" (2001, p. 3). It is very obvious, at least from these different opinions, that many points of view vie with each other without resolution. It is also clear that there has been a bias against women's autobiographical writing and that male ones were considered canonical. This fact silenced the voices of women within the field for centuries and my study aims to have the voices of Iranian women in Diaspora heard through the medium of autobiographical writings—a courageous choice on their behalf coming from a culture where the personal and private is not usually shared with the public. But before getting to the Iranian women's autobiographical writings as my case study, I will define autobiography, differentiate it from memoir, and shed light on its development and criticism for the last few centuries.

Definition of Autobiography

[33] Robert Folkenflik is a professor of English at the University of California at Irvine and the author of *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-Representation.*

So what constitutes the literary genre of autobiography? Theorists continue to differ in defining it. In fact, M. H. Abram defines autobiography as "a biography written by the subject about himself or herself, with a certain degree of 'objectivity'" (as cited in Kadar, 1992, p. 4). It should be noted that according to the OED[34], the great English playwright John Dryden was the first to use the term "biography" in 1683 (Kadar, 1992, p. 3). "Biography" has its roots in *bios,* the Greek word for life or vitality. When *bios* is joined to *graphia*, the Latin word of Greek origin for writing or field of study, to produce our English word "biography," its meaning is defined as writing that "treats a subject that is vital to the subject but the self of the author does not necessarily intrude into that subject… [and] it is preferable if the author remains 'objective'" (Kadar, 1992, p. 4). Biography itself has gone through many stages as a genre. Early instances of it often took the form of panegyrics or eulogies to powerful or holy individuals within their lifetimes, or directly after their deaths, and the writers often blurred or omitted facts that might tarnish their subjects' reputations, while embellishing more complimentary aspects of their lives. Not until the Enlightenment's scientific emphasis upon fact did this aspect of biography begin to fade. This new-found, more truth-telling attitude toward biography had its effect upon the developing critical regard for autobiography, and has influenced the evolution of its definition.

For instance, based on its Greek roots, Smith and Watson (2001, p.1) define "autobiography" as "self life writing." Lejeune[35] expands this definition, stating that "autobiography [is] the retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of his own existence when he puts the principal accent upon his life, especially upon the story of his own personality" (as cited in Smith &Watson, 2001, p.1). And Misch[36] defines autobiography as "the description (*graphia*) of an individual human life (*bios*) by the individual himself (*autos*)" (as cited in Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 113). Similarly, Winslow defines autobiography as "the writing of one's own history, the story of one's life written by oneself" (as cited in Kadar, 1993, p. xi). It should be noted that Kadar (1993) argues that "modern autobiography […] is above all a secular genre" (p. xi). Moreover, she attributes five distinctive characteristics to this genre. First, it is "an extended and connected narrative following some kind of chronological, historical, or other clear order." Second, it "is meant for the public eyes." Third, its narrator "usually assumes […] recalling the past with accuracy, and that there is much fact in the recollection." Fourth, its author "assumes the reader's interest in 'the life' because of the importance given to introspection or self-analysis." Fifth, it "is deemed to exhibit literariness" (Kadar, 1993, pp. xi-xii). More than a decade later, Naghibi (2016) states that autobiography is "[a] long retrospective lens on a life (usually of a known personality—often male), [and] connotes a thoughtfulness, an ability to observe and assess critically" (p. 5). In these more recent critical statements, there seems to be an increasing awareness of autobiographical writing as a self-reflective act, rather than a purely narrative one. This brings up the question: what is the difference between autobiography, memoir, and life writing?

Autobiography vs. Memoir & Life Writing

In "Coming to Terms: Life Writing from Genre to Critical Practice," Kadar (1992) discusses two ways of looking at life writing that have been used in the field before providing hers. The first way considers life writing as a "limited" and "limiting" genre in the 18th century

[34] Oxford English Dictionary
[35] Philippe Lejeune is a French professor and essayist, known as a specialist in autobiography.
[36] George Misch is a German philologist and the writer of the multivolume *History of Autobiography in Antiquity.*

when it was equated to biography (1992, p. 3). She adds that "life-writing"—the Anglo-Saxon rooted phrase—was "popular" for a part of that century before its Greek and Latin rooted words "biography" and "autobiography" became common (Kadar, 1992, p. 4). Moreover, she asserts that life writing is "a less exclusive genre of personal kinds of writing that includes both biography and autobiography, but also the less 'objective,' or more 'personal,' genres such as letters and diaries" (Kadar, 1992, p. 4). Yet, this version of life writing has two limitations: first, being "androcentric"; and, second, privileging "objective truth and narrative regularity" (Kadar, 1992, p. 4). The second way is "the most broadened version of the term 'life writing'" that the feminist literary critics use and is defined as "a kind of writing about the 'self' or the 'individual' that favours autobiography, but includes letters, diaries, journals, and (even) biography" (Kadar, 1992, p. 5). This version is disputable because, despite factoring in women's writing as well as its suppression, "it tends to privilege an idea about what constitutes 'the personal,' […] and may forget the complex configuration of the reader" (Kadar, 1992, p. 5). Kadar examines the term life writing through the dualism of "non-fiction (that is, autobiography) vs. fiction; and literary non-fiction vs. non-literary non-fiction" framed as high and non-high culture (1992, p. 6). Upon reflecting on feminism and postmodernism in relation to this genre, Kadar provides her own definition of life writing as,

> Life writing comprises texts that are written by an author who does not continuously write about someone else, and who also does not pretend to be absent from the [black, brown, or white] text himself/herself. Life writing is a way of seeing, to use John Berger's famous phrase; it anticipates the reader's determination on the text, the reader's colour, class, and gender, and pleasure in an imperfect and always evolving hermeneutic—classical, traditional, or postmodern. (p. 10)

As a critical practice, life writing "encourages (a) the reader to develop and foster his/her own self-consciousness in order to (b) humanize and make less abstract (which is not to say less mysterious) the self-in-the-writing" (Kadar, 1992, p. 10). Hence life writing is to include the narratives where the author "does not want to pretend he/she is absent from the text" such as "autobiography, letters, diaries, and anthropological life narratives" as well as the "fictionalized equivalents, including self-reflexive metafiction" (Kadar, 1992, p. 12). It should be noted that Kadar's (2005) recent approach about life writing is, to put it in Karpinski's words, "[looking] beyond the text, at images and fragments" (Karpinski, 2012, p. 16).

Marcus (1994) engages with the question of difference between autobiography and memoir and defines the first as an "evocation of a life as a totality," and the second as an "offer [of] anecdotal depictions of people and events" (p. 3). She is clearly thinking of memoirs as a narrative which focuses upon specific situations in a given timeframe, while an autobiography is far more reflective and open-ended. More than a decade later, Naghibi (2016) writes that memoir "focuses on a shorter period of time … or a single event in a person's life" (p. 5). She states that autobiography is "a more rational, balanced reflection on a person's life" whereas a memoir is "more emotional and impressionistic… less reliable" (Naghibi, 2016, pp. 5-6). However, she uses both terms interchangeably, as if she sees both aspects of "self-writing" as equally valid. Over time, primarily through the work of feminist scholars, there has been growing recognition that the traditional genre of autobiography is capable of many inflections, and, as it expands, it lends itself particularly to feminine self-expression in new and unusual ways. Let us examine it specifically as it applies to *l'écriture au féminin* in Canada.

In her critical assessment, Kadar argues that “life writing culminates […] in its combination of feminism and narrative, fictional or non-fictional, in what has come to be known as *l’écriture au féminin*” (1992, p. 158). She contends that in both French and Québécois feminist traditions that represent *l’écriture au féminin*, there is a will to stay away from the traditional term “autobiographical,” since “it does not tell the whole truth about either life writing or *l’écriture au féminin*" and “it has been used to dismiss women’s texts from the valued canon” (Kadar, 1992, p. 158). It is for this reason that I opt to use Kadar’s term, “life writing[37]”, in my thesis. Hence, instead of using autobiography and memoir interchangeably, I will be using Marlene Kadar’s term “life writing” to refer to both genres in order to be more inclusive, and as a feminist standpoint to value women’s texts in the canon[38].

Moreover, as Canadian Linda Warley argues,

> In the Canadian context, “life writing” has had much more currency than “autobiography.” As Marlene Kadar explains, it is “an umbrella term for a kind of personal or self writing” that accounts for diverse forms and genres, including experimental ones, and invites readers to see “generic forms and changes as historically influenced, and also as unstable, unfixed categories still affected by historical and social context and by changing reading patterns” (“Life Writing,” 660-61). The term “life writing” widens the field and makes it more inclusive; it also marks a deliberate intervention into the literary tradition of the lives of ‘great men’ and the criticism that refuses to consider anything outside of that literary tradition worthy of study. (Warley, 2005, p. 26)

Another reason for using “life writing” is to be consistent with autobiography studies on one hand, and with previous studies done on immigrant women’s narratives by scholars in Canada such as *Borrowed Tongues* (2012) by Eva C. Karpinski[39]. In fact, Karpinski’s choice of the term “life writing” over “autobiography” is also explained by the fact that the first “has been used to encompass non-canonical or hybrid form of autobiographical practices” in autobiography studies (2012, p. 230). Moreover, it should be noted that both the work and publication of life writing by Iranian women in Diaspora in English face multiple barriers. In fact, the female authors are asserting themselves in the language of their host country via a writing medium that has been controlled by men in the West (as discussed above) for centuries on one hand, and not part of their cultural heritage on the other. Hence, as Karpinski (2012) puts it, “writing as […] immigrant wom[e]n in th[is] genre means writing both in a borrowed tongue[40] and in a borrowed genre—grappling with a legacy of (or indebtedness to?) inherited models of androcentric or mainstream autobiographical representation” (p. 3). Moreover, sharing the personal within the public sphere has long been considered a taboo for Iranians in general, and women in particular. Hence, the Iranian authors I chose for my case study for my thesis are crossing all sorts of barriers by using the autobiographical writing to communicate their lives with an English-

[37] Kadar outlines 10 features of life writing. For details refer to (Kadar, 1992, pp. 159-160).
[38] I mean by the canon (as defined by the OED) “the body of works that are considered to be established as the most important or significant in a particular field.” Hence, by using this concept, I mean to destabilize the established male norms.
[39] Eva C. Karpinski is an Associate Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University in Toronto (Canada) where she teaches feminist theory and methodology as well as life writing.
[40] “The metaphor of borrowed tongues refers primarily to writing literally in a second language or a language which is perceived as not one’s own, a language “on loan” by migrants, immigrants, or various displaced subjects” (Karpinski, 2012, p. 3).

speaking audience and had I chosen to use autobiographies only, I would not have been able to include the memoirs that I find as important. For all of these reasons, the term "life writing" helps me broaden the scope of my study and be more inclusive.

The Early Stages of Autobiographical Criticism

The historical response to autobiography, and how it should be written, has undergone many changes. Like everything else, it has been shaped by societal consciousness in different eras. Berryman (1999) explains that it was necessary to have a revolution in the critical theory of literature and history to create interest in the study of autobiography (p. 3). William C. Spengemann attributes the surging interest in life writing at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries to three phenomena: first, the increase in life narratives that reach an interested public; second, the increase of critical essays on these narratives; and third, the effect of the German historian Wilhelm Dilthey who "defined the genre of 'autobiography' as 'the highest and most intrusive form in which the understanding of life comes before us' and called for its use in the writing of history" (Smith & Watson, 2001, pp. 111-112).

Smith and Watson point to Misch, who found "particular types of Western man in the self-representational strategies of each generation of autobiographers," arguing that Western history can be read in the lives of the leaders (2001, p. 113). Misch believed that for a life narrative to be successful, it must be grounded in the "writer's relationship to the arena of public life and discourse" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 114). Misch also argued that there is a division between the "high culture" of elite civilizations, and popular "low culture" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 114). His criteria are based on the German tradition of *Geistesgeschichte*[41] and influenced the critics of the first half of the twentieth century (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 114). The critics misread women's narratives and mis-labelled them as "inferior or trivial" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 118). Due to the influence of Misch's criteria, it became impossible to inquire into how women's narratives would intersect with or inform the "master narrative" of autobiography that took for granted that "the appropriate subject was white and male" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 118). In addition, critics were rarely to turn to "forms of self-representation outside the West in the great biographical traditions of China, Japan, India, and Persia; and they omitted the North African ancestry of [the] immigrant" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 118). Hence, innumerable texts of different people were excluded from study in the field. Based on the far-reaching influences of this first wave of autobiographical criticism, by the 1960s, a set of male-authored autobiographical texts attained canonical status in the West, influencing scholars' writing, professors' teaching, and students' reading. After Dilthey and Misch, scholars assumed that the narrator had a "representative status," meaning that they took for granted that despite the fact that the narrator speaks of his individual life, he was still representing "the norm" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 121).

James Olney attributes the second wave of autobiographical criticism to beginning in 1956, with French critic Georges Gusdorf's publication of his article, "Conditions and Limits of

[41] Explained by Smith & Watson as being, "the spirit of the historical moment" (2001, p. 114).

Autobiography" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 122). It was written in French, and William Spengemann argues that the work was not known in the English-speaking world before 1970. Olney and Spengemann identified a shifting perspective, in that the "critic's focus on self-narrating [is] the distinctive hallmark of autobiography" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 122). In order to understand this shift, Smith & Watson contrast how first-wave and second-wave critics address the "questions of the truth of autobiographical narratives and their mode of self-representation" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 123). In fact, they argue that new understanding of the key concepts of self and truth are necessary for any understanding of the autobiographical subject at all (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 123). As they say, in the early twentieth century, "the liberal-humanist notion of selfhood understood the 'I' as the universal, transcendent marker of 'man,'" but "radical challenges to the notion of a unified selfhood …eroded certainty in both a coherent 'self' and the 'truth' of self-narrating" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 123).

At the same time on the socio-political front, the Marxist analysis of class-consciousness defined the individual "as subjected to economic structure and relationships, rather than as autonomous agent" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 123). This viewpoint ultimately resulted in loss of agency where humans are defined as "perversely manipulated subjects" who will display "false consciousness" and be "interpellated by ideologies" according to the French philosopher, Louis Althusser (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 123). Later, on the burgeoning psychoanalytical front, Freud reconfigured the "'self'" as a struggle of forces occurring outside conscious control" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 124). Lacan viewed Freud's psychoanalysis as a challenge to the notion of an "autonomous self," while proposing "a split subject always constituted in language" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 133). Hence, the self is "split and fragmented" and not a unit but different "from itself at any other given moment" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 133).

After Freud, the post-structural and postmodern theorization about the subject of autobiography emerged along with the proliferation of the practices of postcolonial life narrative. This coincided with the re-conceptualization of subjectivity in general, as well as a sudden abundance of autobiographical writings. Both were, in part, a result of the debates in critical theory from the seventies to the nineties (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 132). At this point, different voices started to be heard in autobiographical writings as critics "discovered" a wealth of texts such as women's memoirs, letters, slave narratives, and Black narratives that had been previously ignored by the academy. It was no longer the norm to have autobiographical writing classified by literary critics as exclusive to the white western male.

For instance, post-structuralist criticism and theory, in its multitudinous explorations of the meanings and workings of self, truth, and language, had a profound impact on autobiographical criticism. Derrida[42] developed his notion of *différance* that represented how "language, whose meanings are produced by differences… tries to set up distinctions necessary for there to be meaning" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 133). Moreover, to put it in Karpinski's words,

> Both textuality and subjectivity are posited as effects of what Jacques Derrida calls *différance*, that is, of the continuous movement of difference and deferral in language, which destabilizes the work of signification and signature, making meaning plural and not reducible to the intentions of its presumed "originators" or signatories. (2012, p. 7)

[42] Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) was the founder of "deconstruction," a way of criticizing not only both literary and philosophical texts but also political institutions.(https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/derrida/)

Thus, meanings are evolving continuously and not fixed. Hence, the mind of an author of a piece of life writing remains in "flux" and evolving; given that premise, can he or she be considered to be telling the truth? Derridean and Lyotardian[43] critiques of "master" narratives deconstructed the "Truth" and "challenged the firmness of generic boundaries between fact and fiction" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 133). Foucault[44] emphasized the "discourses of identity" and critiqued "power," analyzing the "multiple, dispersed, local technologies of selfhood through which subjects come to self-knowledge in historically specific regimes of truth" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 133). Bakhtin[45] replaced the unitary "I" with multiple dialogic voices spoken due to his "concept of the dialogism of the word and the consequent heteroglossia of utterances" since the autobiographical "I" speaks in language that has "a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal-ideological and social belief-systems" (as cited in Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 134). These theorists and others dissected the evolution of the "I" in life writing in the West, and thus disrupted the firm ground that first-wave autobiography critics had built their canon upon into shifting sands, forever altering our understanding of the individual self and how it is articulated in language.

Furthermore, research in anthropology exposed critics and theorists "to ideologies of selfhood outside the West that challenge the universality and homogeneity of Western models." It also exposed them to "the ways in which the framing of human thought and language is determined by the culture in which that framing takes place, as mediated by investigators themselves" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 134). This means that the scope of life writing widened to be inclusive of non-western authors/theorists/critics shedding light on the importance of culture that influences the production of life writing. Additionally, with the growing inclusion of women's life writing, the genre became more inclusive in terms of gender.

As for the feminist theories of representation, they found that "experience" is problematic for being understood as "a transparent category of meaning" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 134). Moreover, they questioned the political aspect of the "personal," concentrated on the fact that "the body [is] a site of cultural inscription and practices of embodiment," and examined the differences between women to review the concept of a "universalized "woman"" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 134). However, while the multidimensional and various feminist voices were beginning to make themselves heard, other voices were insisting upon their right to be heard as well. In discussing the impact of Fanon[46]'s views about the emerging self-identity of many hitherto subjugated peoples in the post-colonial world, Smith and Watson (2001) argue that:

> Fanon's critique of the specularity of the colonial gaze reconceptualized relations of domination and subordination in formerly colonized regions and linked the subjection of colonial peoples to international racism at a moment when national

[43] Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) was a French philosopher whose best known was his 1979 *The Postmodern Condition*. (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/lyotard/)
[44] Michel Foucault (1926–1984) was a French historian and philosopher, associated with the structuralist and post-structuralist movements. (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/foucault/)
[45] Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895 –1975) was a Russian philosopher, literary critic and scholar who worked on literary theory, ethics, and the philosophy of language. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Bakhtin)
[46] Frantz Fanon (1925 –1961), also known as Ibrahim Frantz Fanon, was a French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher from the French colony of Martinique (today a French department), whose works are influential in the fields of post-colonial studies, critical theory and Marxism. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frantz_Fanon)

> liberation movements were disrupting the interdependencies of identity in colonial relationships between the West and its Others. (p. 134)

They also state that postcolonial, ethnic, and feminist studies had analyzed "the effects of discourses of identity" as well as the "cultural practices" on subjects who are minoritized and/or de/colonized, proposing enabling models of margins and centers (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 134). Later on gay and queer studies "criticized binary models of the organization of gender and sexuality" and "resituated subjectivity as performative" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 134). With the evolution of cultural studies in Great Britain and the United States, the critical focus "turned to popular, public, and everyday forms of textuality, including everyday practices of self-narrating in verbal, visual, and mixed modes" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 134). Alternative concepts of time started challenging "the primacy of notions of chronological and progressive time" and relativized "external and internal temporalities of history and of memory" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 135). Moreover, due to the interdisciplinary studies of memory and its encoding in the materiality of the brain, "new ways of understanding the processes of remembering and forgetting" as well as the effects of traumatic memories were offered (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 135).

This virtual avalanche of intellectual work and theorizing that touched upon one or another aspect of life writing and our understanding of it over the course of two decades (1970s-1990s) inevitably impacted the field of autobiography criticism. Berryman (1999) argues that in order to understand that the definition of self is at the center of autobiography, one needs to study the political and social powers, since any statement can be understood as a political act. He states that it was due to Sayre[47] that the study of autobiography evolved. For Olney[48], autobiography is a "metaphor of the self at the summary moment of composition," and the text is a "monument of the self" (as cited in Berryman, 1999, p. 5). Berryman (1999) also notes the importance of the critical revolution in the seventies, which helped the evolution of the theory of autobiography and assisted in its growth in the eighties. For example, Spengemann, in *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (1980), argues the connection of the self to history, philosophy, and poetry, and how each is a stage in the development of the autobiography as a genre (as cited in Berryman, 1999, p. 6). However, Spengemann does not distinguish between autobiography and fiction since he followed the trend of studying autobiography in terms of "symbolic action".

Perhaps Spengemann's unspoken connection between autobiography and fiction has implications beyond literary criticism. Does it point to the recognition that telling one's own story makes a human connection far deeper than mere factual narrative can ever achieve? It is no accident that the study of autobiography has dedicated "particular attention to race and gender" (Berryman, 1999, p. 6), and where else, except in the economic inequalities which often accompany them, than in the disparities of race and gender can the stratified and dehumanizing aspects of society be seen as clearly? Albert E. Stone, the editor of the *American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays*, describes autobiography as being "simultaneously historical and literary artifact, psychological case history and spiritual confession, didactic essay and ideological testament" (as cited in Berryman, 1999, p.7). He finds that the self in autobiography is at the same time "actor and author" (as cited in Berryman, 1999, p.7). This provides powerful

[47] Robert F. Sayre (1933) is the author of *The Examined Self* (Wisconsin Studies in Autobiography) (1988).
[48] James Olney (1933) is the author of *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical & Practical* (1980).

motivation for an individual to tell his or her story – in an authentic and distinctive way. The latter opens up the potential for autobiographical expression as an art form in itself, while retaining its explorative, scientific, truth-assessing capacity.

Berryman (1999) explores this ambivalence of autobiography between science and art, fact and fiction, before highlighting the importance of the study of memory in the evolution of autobiography as a genre. He states that "if memory is […] a creative act, then the record of experience in a memoir or autobiography is a mixture of design and truth that cannot be unraveled because the past is available only in new forms of present imagination" (Berryman, 1999, p.7). Misch[49] had initiated the scholarly study of autobiography in the beginning of this century. As significant as he was, his understanding was constrained by the social mores of his day, and he may not have perceived the creative potential, or the implications of memory in autobiography. Nonetheless, today, all around the world, there are departments at universities that are dedicated exclusively to the studies of autobiography as a genre, mirroring advances in many areas of cultural theory, literary criticism, literature, history, design and truth (Berryman, 1999, p.8). The study of autobiography has come a very long way.

The Critics Who Have Brought Us Here

According to Smith and Watson (2001), the "first-wave critics were preoccupied with the "bios" of the autobiographer because they understood autobiography as a subcategory of the biography of great lives and excluded other modes of life narrative" (p. 123). Among the early critics of autobiography was the Frenchman, Gusdorf[50], whose 1956 essay, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," defended autobiography as an art and declared it representative of the best minds of its time because it "recomposes and interprets a life in its totality" (Smith & Watson, 1998, pp. 7-8). Even so, Smith and Watson (1998) assert that like Misch in his *History of Autobiography in Antiquity* (1950), "Gusdorf configured autobiography as unquestionably white, male, and western" (p. 8). Hence "the artist and the model coincide, the historian tackles himself as [an] object… he considers himself a great person" (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 8). Around the same time, in 1954, Shumaker[51] discussed some women's autobiographical texts in his history of autobiography in England, yet ascribed "feminine" qualities to them, which marginalized their contributions to the development of the genre (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 8). All three early critics could not accept autobiography as a valuable genre unless it met the white, male, and western criteria.

Then, at the end of the 1970s, Philippe Lejeune's theory of "The Autobiographical Pact"[52] emerged. Lejeune's **Autobiographical Pact** is "a declaration of autobiographical intention, an explicit project of sincere truth telling; a promise to the reader that the textual and referential 'I' are one" (Brodzki & Schenck, 1988, p. 47). With this pact, suddenly the old constraints began to diminish, and slowly doors began to open to the stories of individuals who existed outside the traditional realm. Later, James Olney's collection of essays, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (1980) was published, and the doors opened further.

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[49] Georg Misch (1878-1965) was a German philosopher. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Misch)
[50] George Gusdorf (1912-2000) was a French philosopher. (https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges_Gusdorf)
[51] Wayne Shumaker (1910) is the author of English Autobiography: Its Emergence, Materials, and Form (1954).
[52] "Lejeune defines the relationship between author and reader in autobiographical writing as a contract: "What defines autobiography for the one who is reading is above all a contract of identity that is sealed by the proper name. And this is true also for the one who is writing the text" (Quoted in Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 8).

According to Smith and Watson (1998), "throughout the 1980s feminist critics intervened in what they saw as traditional reading practices that assumed the autobiographer to be male and reproduced cultural stereotypes of differences between men and women" (p. 8). Mary G. Mason and Carol Hurd Green's *Journeys: Autobiographical Writings by Women* (1979) mapped a skeletal canon for women's autobiographies. Mason's essay, expanded as "The Other Voice" in Olney's collection, became the basis for much later theorizing about women's autobiography. In these theories, "[T]he self-discovery of female identity seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another consciousness, and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some 'other'" (as cited in Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 8). This was a significant realization, which few women – or men, for that matter – had ever been aware of before. They had simply lived with it unconsciously.

Smith and Watson (1998) argue that later critics such as Friedman[53] expanded "Mason's argument for relationality by appeal to psychoanalytic theory and multicultural texts" (p. 8). The first anthology in the field of women's autobiographies was published in 1980. It was titled *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism,* and was edited by Estelle C. Jelinek. Jelinek argued that the differences between the sexes are manifest in both the content and style of autobiography, and may be ascribed to the long-term restriction of women to the private, personal world and the prevailing view that women's lives are too "insignificant" to be of literary interest (as cited in Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 9). For Jelinek, women's narratives mime the everyday quality of their lives – their life writing are "analogous to the fragmentary interrupted, and formless nature of their lives" (as cited in Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 9). Moreover, Jelinek claims that "emphasis on personal lives, interest in others, and fragmentariness—as opposed to public lives, individualism, and linearity and coherence in male-authored texts—constitute characteristic marks of the female autobiographical tradition" (as cited in Karpinski, 2012, p. 14). Smith and Watson (1998) state that "feminist critics claimed women's autobiography as a field of cultural study and went on to extended studies of the field or of particular autobiographers" (pp. 9-10). In fact, in 1987, Sidonie Smith's *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and The Fictions of Self-Representation* was published. A year later, in 1988, Nancy K. Miller's contribution of "influential theories of female authorship and the difference that "changing the subject" makes in the production and reception of writing," was followed by Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck edited collection *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography* and Shari Benstock's *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*. Brodzki and Schenck had the feminist goal to "filling historical gaps and gender omissions in the study of autobiography" whereas Benstock argued that the requirements of the genre being "a drive toward unity, identity, sameness" raised doubts about "the limits of gender" or to put it in her words "the fissures of women's discontinuity" (Karpinski, 2012, p. 14).

The second wave of critics was profoundly feminist and had two foundational tenets. First, they argued that women's lives "as inextricably embedded in patriarchy – understood as a general, ahistorical, transcultural system of social organization through which men maintained domination over women – informed the experiential model of women's autobiography" (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 10). Second, they considered "the egalitarian sisterhood of all women as a collectivity undifferentiated in its subordination," since it is "also evident in early analysis of

[53]Susan Standford Friedman (1943) is Professor of English and Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

women's autobiography, where the 'we' of women was asserted unproblematically" (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 10). But when did women's autobiography as a genre become important? And why?

Smith and Watson (1998) state that the "growing academic interest in women's autobiography may be the result of an interplay of political, economic, and aesthetic factors" (p. 5). They argue that "this interest in women's autobiographical practices as both an articulation of women's life experience and a source for articulating feminist theory has grown over several decades and was acknowledged as a field around 1980s" (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 5). Women are empowered through writing their lives (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 7).

But how is women's "autobiography" received by the public?

According to Smith and Watson (1998), "women read women's autobiographies as "mirrors" of their own unvoiced aspirations" (p. 5). The critic Patricia Meyer Spacks, in *The Female Imagination,* read the life writing analytically, exploring what she called "the characteristic patterns of self-perception" that "shape the creative expression of women." She also used autobiographies to probe what shapes the "female imagination" (as cited in Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 7). Brée[54]'s 1976 essay, "George Sand: The Fictions of Autobiography," made an early call for reading a woman's personal narrative as a separate genre and a means for a writer to autobiographically "think back through her mother's" (as cited in Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 7).

Miller[55] and Stanton[56] drew on the early work of Brée and "laid important groundwork for revising gender essentialism in the light of Second Wave theories of difference" (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 10). In "Toward a Dialectics of Difference," Miller "urged critics to read for difference in a 'diacritical gesture' and argued for reading as 'a movement of oscillation which locates difference in the negotiation between writer and reader'" (as cited in Smith & Watson, 1998, pp. 10-11). Other theorists of women's autobiography called for a primary focus on the genre of autobiography in order to read women's writing within, and against, the master narration of the west (Smith & Watson, 1998, pp. 11-12).

Autobiographies written by women

Hoffman argues that "women's personal narratives have been wrongly labeled 'nontraditional' literature, because they are only nontraditional in the sense of their exclusion from the literary canon" (as cited in Kadar, 1992, p. 6). Brodzki and Schenk (1988) argue that critics started speaking of women's autobiography only since 1980 (p. 66), which is when women, though often at great cost, began to claim their voices publicly. Notwithstanding, women were still considered "other" by everyone else who were referred to simply as "men" (p. 68).

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[54] Germaine Brée (1907–2001) was a French-American literary scholar, who wrote extensively on Marcel Proust, Andre Gide, Albert Camus, and Jean-Paul Sartre. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germaine_Br%C3%A9e)
[55] Nancy K. Miller (born 1941) is an American literary scholar, feminist theorist and memoirist. Currently a Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the CUNY Graduate Center, Miller is the author of several books on feminist criticism, women's writing, and most recently, family memoir, biography, and trauma. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nancy_K._Miller)
[56] Domna C. Stanton(1950) is an American professor, currently a Distinguished Professor of French at City University of New York (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domna_C._Stanton)

It is argued that "privileged women have not written autobiographies because they are dependent on men and restricted by men's plan for them" (Brodzki & Schenck, 1988, p. 65). The female autobiographers face various challenges. In fact, resisting the shape of male autobiography is only the beginning. The female autobiographer must also resist cultural pressure to remain silent. The pressure is all the more intense if she wishes to speak as a mother, for as recent feminist and psychoanalytic theorists have shown, the central project of our (patriarchal) culture necessitates the mother's absence and silence" (Brodzki & Schenck, 1988, p. 207). Obviously, this strikes at the heart of feminine consciousness and identity. Whether or not a woman is a mother, there is a part of her that draws its strength from her essentially relational nature.

Mary G. Mason states that the first important secular autobiography written by a woman in the West was by Margaret Cavendish,[57] a 17th century English noblewoman renowned for her gifted and unusual explorations into science, philosophy and literature, who "limns her own portrait in a double image, herself and her husband, the duke of Newscastle" (as cited in Brodzki & Schenck, 1988, p. 23). Margaret Cavendish was unique in her age. There were other women alive then as gifted and erudite as she, but few dared to express themselves as openly as she did. Perhaps because her husband encouraged and supported her in her gifts, she was freer than others to be herself in the eyes of the world around her. Her life certainly negates the statement that privileged women seldom have stories to tell.

In Carolyn G. Heilbrun's analysis of the autobiographies of women in England and America in the 20th century before Friedman, she states that:

> We discover voicelessness and oppression are linked among the privileged as well as among those oppressed by race and class. Patriarchal oppression interacts with race and class, and male violence, like oppressions related to religion or sexual preference, cuts across all races and classes.
>
> (Brodzki & Schenck, 1988, p. 63).

In writing their autobiographies, women's identities remain "grounded in relation to the chosen other. Without such relation, women did not feel enabled to write openly about themselves, even with it they did not feel entitled to credit for their own accomplishment, spiritual or not" (Brodzki & Schenck, 1988, p. 70). It should be noted that the "woman autobiographer loves herself being loved 'because unlike the male autobiographer, who tends to be narcissistic, the woman sees herself "as if she were being seen or looked at; her judgment is not sufficient. Someone else must look at her and approve" (Brodzki & Schenck, 1988, p. 124). Moreover, women autobiographers assumed that men are "representative" of their cultural group whereas women figured at best as "subgroup" (Brodzki & Schenck, 1988, p. 135). How could a woman tell her story authentically with such an attitude grafted into her being?

Women's Autobiography vs. Men's

Leigh Gilmore (1994) asserts that the question of gender "can usefully be enjoined at […] the level of each text's engagement with the available discourses of truth and identity and the

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[57]Margaret Lucas Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1623 – 15 December 1673) was an English aristocrat, philosopher, poet, scientist, fiction-writer, and playwright during the 17th century.https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Cavendish,_Duchess_of_Newcastle-upon-Tyne

ways in which self-representation is constitutively shaped through proximity to those discourses' definition of authority." Moreover, she confirms that "generalizations about gender and genre in autobiography naturalize how men, women, and the activity of writing an autobiography are bound together within the changing philosophies of the self and history" (Gilmore, 1994, pp. 12-13). Furthermore, to borrow Karpinski's words, Gilmore "questions the limits of gender as a category of analysis and offers a postmodern meta-critical examination of feminist theories of autobiographical production" (Karpinski, 2012, p. 14). Later, in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (1998), Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson highlight Estelle C. Jelinek's comparison of the context, life script, and temporality of the autobiographies written by men and women. In terms of content, Jelinek argues that women's autobiographies had personal and domestic details, and they describe connections to other people, whereas men's autobiographies concentrate on portraying their professional lives. As for the life script, she contends that women "seek to authenticate themselves in stories that reveal 'a self-consciousness and a need to sift through their lives for explanation and understanding,' employing understatement to mask their feelings and play down aspects of their lives." But men "aggrandize themselves in autobiographies that "idealize their lives or cast them into a heroic mold to project their universal import." Moreover, women's autobiographies are "disconnected" or "fragmentary" because the "multidimensionality of women's socially conditioned roles seems to have established a pattern of diffusion and diversity when they write." On the other hand, men "shape their lives into coherent wholes characterized by linearity, harmony, and orderliness" (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 9). More than a decade later, Karpinski (2012) argues that women "have consistently attempted to rewrite and remake autobiography, by "translating" the traditional project of autobiography into new forms and theories of self-representation" (p. 13). Hence, with these differentiations in mind, the rest of this study will be devoted to the unique perspective of women's autobiographies, and specifically, to the autobiographies of Iranian women in the Diaspora.

Women's Autobiographies of the Iranian Diaspora

Ramazani[58] (2008) argues that there has been a gradual trickle of autobiographies authored by Iranian women in the Diaspora (mainly the United States) and characterized by the tensions between tradition and modernity, and successful or failed attempts to reconcile the two. They vary in their nature and medium from graphic and humorous – Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, for example – to shocking, sad, or tragic. They discuss the difficulties of adapting to a life in exile, in a culture strikingly different from the one left behind. Still others, like Firoozeh Dumas's *Funny in Farsi*, address generational conflicts arising over appropriate or inappropriate behavior dictated by norms from a different time and a different place. Some wallow in nostalgia, while others – Marina Nemat's *Prisoner of Tehran* comes to mind – depict Iran as a giant prison, with no redeeming qualities and from which the only viable alternative for women is to escape and flee abroad. Some have political agendas, with vengeful diatribes against the revolutionary regime. Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* is one of these. Hence, they are criticized for promoting "selective memory" of historical events that encourage "collective amnesia" concerning the United States' action abroad (e.g., Dabashi's 2006 criticism of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*). However, some second-generation, Iranian-American critics find that these autobiographies are "unique forms of exil[ic] cultural production," for they embrace their diasporic state in describing their relationship to Iran while acknowledging the importance of

[58] Nesta Ramazani (1932) is a writer, lecturer, and founding member of the Iranian National Ballet Company.

being recognized in the socio-cultural milieu of the host country. It should be noted that for my research, I am choosing autobiographies of first generation Iranian women in Diaspora in the West.

So when did these autobiographies start to be published?

There are various theories about the starting of autobiographies/memoirs by Iranian American women in Diaspora. In fact, Goldin (2004), in "Iranian Women and Contemporary Memoirs," attributes the start of memoirs written by Iranian women to the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. She notes that these memoirs "are published not inside Iran… but abroad – not in Persian, but in English and French." In *Towards a Theory of Iranian American Life Writing*, Motlagh (2008) argues that Iranian/American women's autobiographical writings started flourishing after the September 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center and in the wake of the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003. Naghibi (2016) in *Women Write Iran,* finds that they are part of what Leigh Gilmore (2001) calls "the memoir boom," a late twentieth-century phenomenon in North America and Western Europe (p. 3), as well as of "the therapy-driven culture of confession" (p. 132). Naghibi also suggests that the "diasporic Iranian women's boom began in earnest with the publications of *To See and See Again* and *Saffron Sky* in 1999" (2016, p. 6). Fotouhi (2015), in *The Literature of the Iranian Diaspora: Meaning and Identity since the Islamic Revolution,* asserts that the rise of diasporic Iranian literature in English came in three waves "that coincide with significant social, political and historical events in the last three and a half decades (p. 7). Fotouhi tracks the first wave back to the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the subsequent American hostage crisis; the second one to the events during and after 9/11; and the third to the Iranian presidential elections of 2009, all of which were surrounded by intense controversy (2015, p. 7). According to Fotouhi (2015), this women's literature is a "historical response arising from silences that have historically dominated Iranian women's lives" (p. 8).

Although the 1979 Islamic Revolution is the key historical moment that marked the lives of the authors I chose for my thesis, and had them flee Iran either as children with their families or as adults, they decided to write about their lives after later tragic events happened. The 9/11 tragedy was a major impetus for their writing, as were the Iraq War which began in 2003, and the 2009 Iranian presidential elections that gave rise to the Green Movement.[59] It seemed as if the creative desire to tell their stories was awakened through these later horrifying though less personal traumas which the women shared with the world.

The various critical theories I have detailed offer important perspectives on this body of literature. They will provide guidance in my analysis and comparison of the life writing I have chosen. My research builds on these theories, confirming that these life writing of Iranian women of the Diaspora are being written in waves in response to the political changes occurring in Iran (the country of origin) and/or in the United States/Canada (the host country). The more I examine these writings, the more convinced I am that women provide a unique world vision. To

[59] A political movement in which protesters demanded the removal of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from office and asking for annulment of what they regarded as fraudulent election. The protests were the largest since the Iranian Revolution. (adapted from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iranian_Green_Movement) Refer to Chapter 1 for more details on the Green Movement.

women, no matter how difficult the situation in which they find themselves, their relational nature draws them to identify themselves within the context of the lives of others.

Chapter Three
The Life Writing of Iranian Women in Diaspora: A Literature Review

> *The autobiographies of Iranian American women authors have mostly been appreciated as guides to Iranian society, providing American readers with authentic insights into the life of the Islamic Republic and its people.*
>
> — Sunčica Klaas, 2018, p.61

> *Public disclosure of any … aspects of a woman's life was considered an abuse of privacy and a violation of societal taboos … for which punishments … were many and varied.*
>
> — Farzaneh Milani, 1992, p. 46

While the previous chapter analyzed the evolution and criticism of life writing in general, the literature review in this chapter highlights the major studies done specifically in the field of life writing in English by Iranian women in diaspora. Furthermore, the review illuminates the contribution of my thesis to the work already done in this field. As the chapter offers analysis of various earlier works, the importance of my research comes clear: It is very evident that little attention has yet been paid to this topic in Canada and that the distinct and previously unexplored categories I recognize within the corpus of these life writing offer a new way of understanding them.[60] In order to situate my research in this field, I review the research from the past five decades, and I identify specific areas of prior scholarship, placing each source within the context of its particular contribution to the understanding of these life writing. My aim is to analyze the relationship of each source to the others that I have selected, identify new ways to interpret it, shed light on any gaps in the previous research, and point the way forward to further research.

My research builds on the theories discussed at length in Chapter Two. It is very clear that the life writing I have chosen have been written in waves,[61] in response to the political changes occurring in Iran (the country of origin) and/or in the United States/Canada (the host

[60] My methodology and theoretical framework are discussed in length in Chapter 4.
[61] As discussed in chapter two of this thesis, for more information on the three waves see Fotouhi (2016, p. 108; 111 and 116; 2012a, p. 36).

country). In order to contextualize this research, I start by examining various definitions of the term “diaspora.”

Definition of Diaspora

Various scholars discern nuances in the definition of “diaspora.” Vertovec[62] (1998) defines diaspora as “any population [that] is […] deterritorialised or transnational—that is, which has originated in a land other than [that in] which it currently resides, and whose social, economic, and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe” (as cited in Vertovec & Cohen, 1999, p. xvi). Tölölian[63] (1991) states that “the term now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community” (as cited in Vertovec & Cohen, 1999, p. 216). Mostofi[64] (2003) explains that “a diaspora consists of a group of people (a nation, an ethnic minority, a transnational community, or a displaced peoples) who have been forced into mass migration. Leaving their homeland for any number of years, maybe even the rest of their lives, these immigrants construct a new identity abroad through the use of imagination, nostalgia, and memories” (p.685). In more detail, Safran[65] (1991) defines diaspora as having six characteristics:

> . . . expatriate minority communities” (1) that are dispersed from an original “center” to at least two “peripheral” places; (2) that maintain a “memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland”; (3) that “believe they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host country”; (4) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right; (5) that are committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland; and (6) of which the group’s consciousness and solidarity are “importantly defined” by this continuing relationship with the homeland.[66]

While all these definitions have their relevance, I find that Safran’s definition is especially applicable to the Iranian diaspora, which comprises the six characteristics he outlined―but with a slight difference. In fact, Iranians in diaspora in the United States and Canada—especially second generation and after—have accepted their life in diaspora and do not plan to go back to Iran. Mostofi (2003) notes that “many of the first-generation

[62] Steve Vertovec is the Founding Director of MPI-MMG and Honorary Joint Professor of Sociology and Ethnology, University of Göttingen. Previously he was Professor of Transnational Anthropology at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford, Director of the British Economic and Social Research Council’s Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), and Senior Research Fellow at Linacre College, Oxford. For more information refer to : https://www.mmg.mpg.de/steven-vertovec

[63] Khagic Tölölian (1944) is an Armenian-American scholar of diaspora studies. For more information refer to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khachig_T%C3%B6l%C3%B6lyan

[64] Nilou Mostofi is an Iranian-American scholar.

[65] William Safran (1930) is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Colorado Boulder. For more information refer to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Safran

[66] As cited in Vertovec & Cohen, 1999, pp. 217–8 ; Mostofi, 2003, p.685; and Safran, 1999, p.365.

immigrants have also established "roots" in the United States and are not willing to leave their children or grandchildren behind. It appears that 1.5- or second-generation immigrants, who have been raised in the United States, have a desire to visit their ancestral home but have become too "Americanized" for relocation" (p. 686). Furthermore, after examining the individuals in this Iranian diaspora, Mostofi (2003) concludes that the "Iranian immigrants in the United States are not homogeneous; they come from a variety of religious, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds" (p.683). In other words, Iranians both in Iran and in diaspora represent a multiplicity of cultural, religious, and ethnic identities. There is not one over-arching factor that distinguishes them as "Iranian" beyond their origin in the land itself. This is important to my study, as I have selected life writing by Iranian women of different backgrounds, and their individual backgrounds have a profound influence upon the way the women perceive their diasporic lives and write about them.

Iranian Diasporic Writing

According to Fotouhi[67] (2018), Iranian diasporic writers in English have authored some 300 books of fiction and memoir since the beginning of their mass migration, following the 1979 Islamic revolution (p.63). Among these, a third were written by Iranian women in diaspora in "an attempt […] to overcome and address issues of migration and resettlement" (Fotouhi, 2016, p. 107). Fotouhi emphasizes their unique contribution to world literature in English. In contrast to the prevalence of women's voices reflected in Iranian diasporic writing, Milani[68] (1992) claims that women's voices had been silenced for many decades in Iranian literature, which tended to be of "a predominantly masculine character," due to the practice of "veiling" and the segregation of men's and women's worlds in Iran (p. 1). This had clear implications for women still in Iran, for, as Milani (1992) adds, women writers there faced many challenges because of the Iranian ideal that to be "feminine [meant to be] silent, immobile, and invisible" (p. 2). Yet this was not unique to Iranian culture. One can argue that other cultures have long been restrictive of women's voices. For instance, well into the nineteenth century, women had to use masculine pseudonyms in order to be published in western cultures where men dominated the canon—the Brontës in England and Georges Sand in France immediately spring to mind. Moreover, as it was discussed in Chapter 2, women's autobiographical writings had to be "mediated" by men before they could be published. Nonetheless, the restrictive attitudes towards feminine writings persisted in Iran long after women's writings were accepted as valid in the West.

This is certainly implicit in the absence of women's autobiography in Iranian society. However, there is another factor at work here, besides the restrictions upon feminine writings. *All* Iranian autobiography was considered culturally taboo. Farzaneh Milani describes it as

> Perhaps the logical extension of a culture that creates, expects, and even values a sharply defined separation between the inner and the outer, the private and the public. Perhaps it bespeaks a mode of being and behavior

[67] Sanaz Fotouhi is a writer, filmmaker and director of Asia Pacific Writers and Translators. Dr. Fotouhi's book, *The Literature of the Iranian Diaspora: Meaning and Identity since the Islamic Revolution*, is a pioneering study of diasporic Iranian writing in English. For more information refer to: https://jlflitfest.org/adelaide/speaker/sanaz-fotouhi

[68] Farzaneh Milani is (1947) is an Iranian-American scholar and author. She teaches Persian Literature and Women's Studies at the University of Virginia. For more information refer to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farzaneh_Milani

> that is shaped, or misshaped, by varying degrees or types of censorship, both external and internal. In short, it could be one more manifestation of strong forces of deindividualization, protection, and restraint. (1990, p.2)

However, Milani was writing in 1990, at a turning point in Iranian society. Her claim can be debated, since, despite the censorships in Iran, Iranian women took to the streets in huge numbers in the Islamic Revolution as well as in the 2009 upheavals which led to the Green Movement. In claiming public voices, their private lives began to merge into their newly embraced public roles. They ceased to accept the culturally ingrained division between public and private. Hence, for example, even though segregation practices in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region try to restrict women's participation, Iranian women have proven on multiple occasions that they insist upon speaking out.

On another note, Milani (1990) argues that Iranian society is both politically and culturally opposed to [the genre of life writing], since the Iranian regime suppresses "the autobiographical impulse" through its "policing of the public sphere as well as by a culture of privacy and shame" (as cited in Klaas, 2018, p. 33). She attributes the disfavouring of the autobiographical narrative form in Iran to the fear that shared information may be used against the author (Milani, 1992, p. 209). This could be applied for both men and women. Thus, the fear of telling became a "self-tradition" where, "avoiding voluntary self-revelation and self-referentiality, most Iranian writers have turned their backs on autobiography" (Milani, 1992, p. 202). In terms of women's silence in this literary realm, she asserts that sex segregation is the reason for the absence of autobiographical narratives by women in Persian, as the latter are "erased from the public scene and privatized" (Milani, 1992, p. 201). She adds that autobiographies of Iranian women could not flourish due to the inability of the Iranian women to assertively share "self-attention and self-display" in a sexually segregated society (Milani, 1992, p. 201). There was certainly a dichotomy between the sexes here, for, despite this fear, Iranian male writers did write autobiographies, but omitted details of their private lives and restricted the subject matter of their writing to their public personae (Fotouhi, 2015a, p. 206). An example of this is shown in Azar Nafisi's *Things I've Been Silent About*, where she writes that her father was advised to eliminate personal details from his memoirs and restrict his subject matter to his public persona as Mayor of Tehran.

Beyond the powerful cultural insistence upon maintaining personal privacy, there is another equally powerful factor that has led to the unpopularity of the genre of autobiography and life writing in Iran. This is the political "silencing" the authors have had to face. In one form or another, this has existed in recent Iranian history both before and after the Islamic Revolution, and it is a product of the accepted dominant narrative of the time. As Fotouhi shows, the dominant narrative "exclude[d] people of religious and ethnic minority backgrounds … like the Jews and Baha'is, as well as those with alternative political beliefs" (Fotouhi, 2018, p. 65). But this very silencing in their home country gave impetus to diasporic Iranian writers who chose English, the language of their host country, as their medium for expressing themselves. Fotouhi (2018) argues that "women of minority background and those with alternative political beliefs" who were "doubly marginalized and silenced" found English to be "a promising tool for self-expression and for regaining their sense of subjectivity" (p. 65).

I find this to be very true for the first group of writings I discuss in Chapter 5, as well as for the prison life writing in Chapter 6. These women authors have relied on the medium of life

writing in English because it provides them with the space and tools to rebel against being silenced. English offers them a new medium, with its expansive language capacity, in which they cease to be constrained by either Iranian cultural norms or political domination. With its vast and eclectic "word hoard," English has the words to express thoughts and experiences across the intersections of many different dimensions. These include the deeply personal and self-revelatory. Hence, the authors are "writing out and writing through [their] traumatic experiences in the mode of therapeutic reenactment," and their life writing are a "kind of therapy" (Fotouhi, 2015a, p. 208; 2012a, p. 28).

I completely agree with Fotouhi. These English life writing offer a way for Iranian women life writers to make the private become public (Mostofi, 2003) and to claim their identity in both their new and old worlds. In fact, in *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony and Women's Life Writing,* Henke[69] (2000) argues that life writing helps authors gain their voice, while being "influenced by language, history, and social imbrication"[70] (p. xvi). Iranian women in diaspora who use English as the language of their narrative, are able to recount the history of Iran through the perspective of English in their attempt to analyze the historical events and social implications they have endured. The language itself is freeing, and it releases the writers from old constraints. Henke (2000) explains that through the memoir, authors are able to "reassess the past and to reinterpret the intertextual codes inscribed on personal consciousness by society and culture" (p. xii).

Hence, the authors regain their agency to rebel against the forces that had been silencing them, making the writing a healing process, or what Henke calls "scriptotherapy." In Henke's words, scriptotherapy is "the process of writing out and writing through traumatic experiences in the mode of the therapeutic reenactment" (2000, p. xvii). Hence, I believe that by recalling their past, and especially how the trauma of the 1979 Islamic Revolution affected their lives, the Iranian women authors in my thesis are reflecting on their experiences and sharing them with their audience as a way to resolve their pain. In addition, writing in English not only helps to integrate them into the host society, but also it makes their writings accessible to an English speaking audience. This is a vital part of the healing process, as many of them have faced huge difficulties in resettling in a host country like the United States, where they have been haunted by memories of the hostage crisis[71] and tropes of Iran as an "axis of evil." As Klaas[72] (2018) explains,

> With the hostage crisis etched in American national memories, these narratives figured as vehicles for negotiating the trauma of violence and betrayal at the hands of formal allies, translating it into images of threatened and deceived womanhood fighting for the restoration of personal and political integrity (p. 28).

[69] Suzette A. Henke is an English Professor at University of Louisville. Her teaching areas are Modern British and American Literature as well as Trauma Narrative and Post Traumatic Fiction. For more information refer to: https://louisville.edu/english/people/emeritus/henke.html
[70] Layering.
[71] Details about the hostage crisis and the American-Iranian relationship are discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis.
[72] Sunčica Klaas is a Professor of American Literature and Culture at University of Potsdam. For more information refer to: https://www.uni-potsdam.de/de/iaa-amlc/academic-staff/dr-suncica-klaas

Or as Whitlock (2008) phrased it, "the Western market [is] intrigued by lives of exotic others and tantalized by trauma narrative" (p. 8).

In other words, Iranian women in diaspora have had to face a whole new array of constraints. They are writing in the face of the stereotypes they face in the United States, and are only too aware of the power relations between the home country (Iran) and the host country (the United States). Moreover, Americans, as Whitlock[73] (2007) asserts, are "eager to know about Iran and primed for the stories of disenchantment by exiles" (p. 65). This constitutes its own kind of identity-suppressing attitudes. Consequently, Iranian life writing in English by women in diaspora in North America is a medium where, as Henke says, the authors "rebel against the values and practices of the dominant culture and [...] assume an empowered position of political agency in the world" (p. xvi), no matter whether the dominant culture is Iranian or American.

Censorship in Iran

In "Commodification of Censorship in Iranian Writing in English," Fotouhi (2016) engages with the discourse concerning the commodification, censorship, and banning of cultural products emerging from and about Iran in the West, as well as the illusion of having overcome the censorship/oppression by virtue of having appeared in the West. She contends that for the last five decades, cultural products in Iran have all been censored, including books, films, news production, etc. (Fotouhi, 2016, p. 100). She describes three types of censorship: political; religious; and social, familial and individual—in other word, self-censorship. Political censorship is described in Chapter 1 of this thesis, as it occurred in both the Shahs' regimes and in the Islamic regime. As for religious censorship, Fotouhi (2016) argues that since Islam has been the dominant religion in Iran since the seventh century, it has had a critical impact on Iran's social life, especially upon gender relations and public/private boundaries, to the extent that it has transformed the country into a "gender dichotomous society," in which men are in the public sphere and women in the private (p. 103). However, this is another point to be contested, especially when one looks at the women's movement in Iran in modern times. As Milani (1992) contends, the old domain of the Iranian woman was limited to the family circle, "a private world," which required that the "woman's body be covered, her voice go unheard, her portrait never painted, and her life story remain untold" (p.46). Moreover, Fotouhi (2016) avers that it is the concept of veiling that so affected cultural practices in Iran, leading to the importance of the privacy of Iranian women's lives, with the censoring of any "expression of their private experiences" (p. 104). Or as Milani (1992) puts it, "the public disclosure of any [...] aspects of a woman's life was considered an abuse of privacy and a violation of societal taboos [...] for which punishments [...] were many and varied" (p.46). Fotouhi (2016) draws on Milani's external restrictions and concludes that it created a polarization between the individual and the family, leading to a "self-censorship that separated the individual [...] from the rest of the family by a veil of silence" in order to protect one's self and family from "potential harm and social disgrace" (p. 104). Hence, there are two realities: inside Iran, where one either abides by the censorship or tries to defy it (Fotouhi, 2016, p. 105), or outside Iran, where Iranians keep trying

[73] Gillian Whitlock is Professor Emeritus at the School of Communication and Arts at the University of Queensland, Australia. Her area of research is Literary Studies. For more information refer to: https://communication-arts.uq.edu.au/profile/353/gillian-whitlock

to overcome “cultural, social and individual self-censorships,” without being “shy to highlight and address censored issues in Iran directly without alluding to imagery or euphemisms” (Fotouhi, 2016, p. 106). I agree with Fotouhi’s argument that as Iranian women in the diaspora are physically distant from Iran and from the different types of censorship they experienced there, they produced life writing “in response to censorship,” in their capacity as women who are either politically active and/or of minority backgrounds (Fotouhi, 2016, p. 107). These life writing are, as Whitlock (2007) puts it, “framed and re-framed according to the context into which they are emerging” (as cited in Fotouhi, 2016, p. 107).

In fact, Fotouhi (2016) asserts that there is a direct relationship between these life writing that represent the “repressive and censored lives of women in Iran and the commodification of this idea as a selling point in relation to the specific period in which the books [are] published” (p. 109). Hence, the importance of the titles given to these life writing (especially in the United States), at a time when Iran is virtually closed to the world. Moreover, by narrating the “traumas, oppressions and censorships they suffered” in Iran on one hand and the “new sense of self in their host communities” on the other, these female authors are gaining agency and regaining their subjectivity in both the home country (Iran) and the host country (the United States) (Fotouhi, 2016, p. 115). However, one needs to be aware of the implicit “sense of superiority of the West” and the “hyper politicization” that mark these life narratives and the way they are framed (Fotouhi, 2016, p. 116). Fotouhi advises reading the life writing of Iranian women in diaspora in English “as a commodity” and “against the grain of the frame into which they are placed” (2016, p. 117). Although I find both Milani’s (1992) and Fotouhi’s (2016) claims to be valid, I have to note that my findings show that the diasporic Iranian women’s life writing consistently reflect how the authors have broken free from these censorships, defying and revolting against what was imposed on them by describing personal experiences that are culturally difficult to share (e.g., being molested, sexually related scenes, etc.). An exception remains the women public figure life writing (discussed in Chapter 6) that show evidence of self-censorship. In these particular narratives, the women never develop their spouse’s image, nor their relationship to them.

Self-Orientalisation and Emphasis on Stereotypes

Two other aspects vital to my thesis involve self-orientalisation and the emphasis upon stereotypes. When studying the socio-political and historical contexts of Iranian women’s life writing, Fotouhi (2012a) argues that they are causing further “self-orientalisation” while claiming to be platforms free of orientalist stereotypes. In fact, she argues that the position of Muslim women in general reinforces these stereotypes (Fotouhi, 2012a, p. 27). With the imposition of the veil on women by the Islamic regime in Iran, compounded by the conflict with the West and the high number of human rights’ cases in Iran, people in the West have become fascinated by narratives about Iran, especially those portraying the lives of women. Americans are especially attracted to these life writing, since they “revisit and fold the events of the Islamic revolution and its aftermath into the present one more time” (Whitlock, 2007, p. 163). Rahimieh (2003) discusses the concept of “self-orientalisation” in her essay entitled **“**Overcoming the Orientalist Legacy of Iranian Modernity: Women’s Post-Revolutionary Film and Literary Production,” in which she details how post-revolutionary Iranian women writers and film makers critique Iranian gender relations, while remaining linked to the “intellectual movements enabled by and developed after *Orientalism*” (p.149). For my part, I find that the authors I discuss in Chapters 5 and 6 do not resort to “self-orientalisation” in their depiction of their lives. It is rather

the American perception of these life writing that renders them "orientalist" in the American mind.

Whether self-orientalism is derived from Iranians themselves or from the image of Iranians projected upon them from outside is a matter of question. Fotouhi (2012a) draws on Rahimieh's concept of "self-orientalisation," and describes the politics of Iranian writers, whether they are "pro-government" (that is, Iran-educated diasporic writers), or writing in defense of women's rights, especially Iranian women memoirists (p. 32). Hence, Fotouhi (2012a) agrees with Said (1978), who describes self-orientalisation as "the modern Orient … participat[ing] in its own Orientalizing" (p. 32). Not only that, but descriptions of Iran and Iranian women remain replete with Orientalist terms, for Iran "had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscape, [and] remarkable experiences" (Said, 1978, p. 15). Westerners, "fascinated and repelled by the veil" as well as by the situation of women, asserts Fotouhi (2016), are vulnerable to the conventional idea that "veiled women were necessarily more oppressed, more passive, more ignorant than unveiled women" (p. 109). These stereotypes lead to the exaggerated idea that the women are virtual prisoners in the Orient (Fotouhi, 2016, p. 109). Hence, as Fotouhi (2016) contends, there has been a direct relationship between the portrayal of women in Iran as repressed and censored, and its commodification as "a selling point in relation to the specific period in which the [life writing] were being published" (p. 109).

Whitlock (2007) asserts that, in addition to emphasizing self-orientalisation, these life writing feed the fantasy that the reader will somehow gain access to the "hidden and gendered spaces of the 'Islamic World'" (p. 58). In fact, they attract the "Western imperial gaze, offering Westerners a glimpse into the presumably forbidden world beneath the veil" (Whitlock, 2007, p. 81). Hence, it is easy for Westerners to assume that Iranian women are "oppressed and imprisoned behind the veil" in need of the western readers/values to attain their liberation from their social imprisonment (Fotouhi, 2012a, p. 31). Fotouhi's (2012a) contention that the "origin of [such] representation" can be linked to, and explained by, the study of the socio-historical and cultural backgrounds of the authors of these life writing is undeniable (p. 31). Whitlock (2007) also studies and analyzes Middle Eastern life writing and concludes, much like Fotouhi, that it is socio-political events in the West that are driving readers' interest in, production, and consumption of these particular works. I would add that it is the vexed American-Iranian relationship as well as the socio-political events in the United States that spike the American readers' interest in Iranian commodities and the perception of them as "exotic."

Transnational Narratives in English

Transnational Feminism (TF)

Albrow (1998) traces back the first usage of the term 'transnational' to the study of international relations in regards to the growth of international organizations and especially relations between non-governmental bodies (Vertovec & Cohen, 1999, p. xx). Alissa Trotz (2007) argues that 'transnational' refers mainly to what Arjun Appadurai (1996) defines as "border-crossing flows of capital, technology/information and people"; "border-spanning/crossing activism"; and "a mode of critically apprehending the world" (pp. 5-6). But what is Transnational Feminism (TF)? In order to answer this question, I draw from Grewal and Kaplan's *Scattered Hegemonies* (1994) and Alexander and Mohanty's *Feminist Genealogies,*

Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures (1997) where Transnational Feminism (TF) is portrayed as a framework based on feminist theories and activism that involves the effects of both globalization and capitalism on people in the world through the intersection of nation-state, race, gender, class, and sexuality. Transnational Feminism (TF), which draws on postcolonial theories, addresses how colonialism, on the one hand, has been shaping oppression in the world on the social, economic, and political levels (Grewal & Kaplan 1994; Alexander & Mohanty 1997; Vertovec & Cohen 1999). In response, it promotes human rights, democracy, and gender equity. In the works mentioned above, the theorists use TF to discard binaries like "First/Third Worlds" and "Us/Them" that are evident in such postcolonial approaches as Orientalism. TF is also used to study the lives and works of individuals in diaspora. Hence, analyzing the life writing by Iranian women in diaspora via a transnational feminist lens helps me shed light on their "activism," as well as the transnationalization of their demands for human rights on one hand, and their "agency" and fight for gender equity on the other.

In her article, "From Tehran to Tehrangeles: The Generic Fix of Iranian Exilic Memoirs," Whitlock (2008) disputes the opinion that "a transnational approach to contemporary women's life writing suggests some more expansive possibilities in thinking about generic precursors for this upsurge of Iranian women's memoirs" (p. 8). In fact, like the memoir boom by Chinese women in diaspora, after the Cultural Revolution in China, the life writing by Iranian women in English in diaspora are more properly characterized by their "subjective engagement with historical revision, trauma and loss, and cataclysmic social changes" (Whitlock, 2008, p.8). Hence, in Chapters 5 and 6, I discuss how the authors are rewriting Iranian history from their own perspective while portraying their feeling of loss and trauma.

More specifically, Iranians in the diaspora are writing in English from the hybrid place they occupy and "are aware of the multiplicity of their condition" (Fotouhi, 2018, p. 62). In fact, those writers know that "diaspora signals an engagement with a matrix of diversity: of cultures, languages, histories, people, places, times" (Kuortti, 2007, p. 3). Hence, this awareness in describing their diasporic situation/condition involves them, to use Paranjape's words (2003) "in a cross-cultural or cross civilization passage" (p. 239). Similarly, Fotouhi (2018) studies the importance of language for Iranian diasporic people who are writing from their marginal position at "the cross section of multiple identities and realities," and are employing their writing as an "empowering exercise" (p.63). In fact, Fotouhi (2018) argues that language allows these writers, who were unable to make their voices heard either in their home country or in the host country, "to speak of their experiences" (p. 63). Even more significantly, she adds that the other aspect of language as "a carrier of culture" allows them to combine English with their "own cultural and linguistic background, to create unique literary spaces that reflect their hybrid and diverse experiences and cultures" (Fotouhi, 2018, p. 63). With English as their medium of expression and mixing both English and Persian words and thought patterns, the life writers are constructing their "hybrid space of belonging" (Fotouhi, 2010, p. 83), since they are "drawing on and emphasizing recognizable elements of both their home and host cultures" (Fotouhi, 2010, p. 86). In so doing, these Iranian women writers in diaspora are overcoming their "sense of national and cultural unhomeliness" (Fotouhi, 2010, p. 83). There is no doubt, as Fotouhi says, that diasporic Iranian women succeed in making their voice heard via their English life writing. In fact, by combining Persian and English in their narratives, they reflect the multi-layered aspect of their identities, educate the host country about them, and find their new "space."

I would add further, as Bhabha puts it, that their "unhomeliness [is a feeling that] captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place" that "creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow and suddenly you find yourself…taking the measure of your dwelling in a state of 'incredulous terror'" (as cited in Fotouhi, 2010, p. 82). Moreover, these life writing by Iranian women in diaspora are, as Bhabha (2004) argues, a step towards "newness," for they are not "part of the continuum of past and present … [but] an intervening space derived from hybridization of Iranian and host-country culture and literature… [an] 'inbetween' space that interrupts the performance of the present" (p. 9).

Hypervisibility and Lack of Recognition

Being "hypervisible in the Western media as religious fanatics and hostage taking mobs," the Iranian writers in diaspora after the 1979 Islamic revolution were not recognized by their host countries (Fotouhi, 2010, p. 85). Drawing upon Oliver's[74] concept of recognition by others as the requirement for writers to recognize themselves "as subjects or active agents" (2001, p. 4), one can argue that these Iranian diasporic writers need to be recognized by others in order to value themselves. Before they wrote in English, they were unknown, invisible, and could neither be valued nor value themselves. Moreover, their choice to write in English, "the dominant language," is, as Ashcroft[75] (2009) argues, "to have the imprimatur of the center and a share in its pervasive cultural power" (p. 42).

It cannot be emphasized enough that the diasporic Iranian writers have the opportunity to become known, whereas they would have been somehow silenced, banned, or censored in Iran. In fact, Fotouhi (2018) argues that they deliberately write in English "in response to historical and social oppressions in Iran as well as abroad, where individual subjectivities and powers were taking away through silencing, denial of access to the dominant language, or even through stereotyping" (p. 64). Significantly, she asserts that the majority of the writings by Iranians of the diaspora in English are by Iranian women who come from either ethnic minorities or from differing systems of social, political, or religious belief from the Iranian majority (Fotouhi, 2018, p. 64). These are the women who in their home country were up against the most stringent forms of "silencing" of every kind. Their struggle for personal identity continues into diaspora. Whitlock (2008) adds that these women narrators "reveal little of the professional or personal life of the "I," the diegesis of the memoirs is fragmentary, contracted to memory and loss, and the work of recovery and reconciliation understood in terms of hybridity, process, [and] transnationalism" (p. 14).

I must agree with Whitlock (2008) that there is a striking comparison between the literature of the Iranian diaspora and Grewal's concept of multiculturalism. Grewal cites the writings of middle class Asian, Indian, and American subjects in the 1990s as arguments that "at the end of the twentieth century gender, ethnicity, and consumer identity became entangled in transnational formations [which] suggests some of the wider ideoscapes that surface in this memoir boom." In other words, Grewal asserts that there "has been a convergence amongst

[74] Kelly Oliver (1958) is an American philosopher specialized in Feminism, Political Philosophy, and Ethics. For more information refer to: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kelly_Oliver
[75] Bill Ashcroft is an Emeritus Professor in the School of English, Media and Performing Arts at UNSW, Sydney. For more information refer to: https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/our-people/bill-ashcroft

struggles for liberal democratic rights, consumer culture and powerful imaginaries of 'America' and the 'American way of life' indicat[ing] some wider influences on the generic fix of Iranian exilic memoirs" (Whitlock, 2008, pp. 22–23). I agree with Whitlock (2008) that drawing on Grewal's work, one would have "wider questions about [exilic] memoirs' travel[ing] as a commodity embedded in discourses of feminism, empowerment, pleasure, and consumer cultures in late modernity" (p. 23), and they are indeed "ethnoscapes," in the words of Appadurai (as cited in Whitlock, 2008, p. 16).

Furthermore, in "Unhomeliness and Transcultural Spaces: The case of Iranian Writing in English and the Process of RE-Representation," Fotouhi (2010) finds that diaspora Iranian women's life writing in English demonstrates that "language and the culture attached to it, can be one of the basic principles for opening up a transcultural and transnational space of belonging as a way for overcoming one's sense of national and cultural unhomeliness" (p. 83). After all, as mentioned earlier, these authors belong to a "transnational community, or displaced peoples who have been forced into mass migration … [and] construct [their] new identity abroad through the use of imagination, nostalgia, and memories" (Mostofi, 2003, p. 685). At the end, besides being a transnational space for the voices of Iranian diasporic women, these life writing form "kinship networks" which portray and reflect the links for accessing the information shared in these texts and the various traditions and cultures of Iranians (Whitlock, 2008 & Fotouhi, 2015a).

Other and Othering

One of the most salient characteristics of the life writing of Iranian women in diaspora is their sense of "being othered." In fact, Oliver argues that the female author's "sense of herself as a subject and agent" as well as her "level of […] subjectivity" are affected by "being othered, oppressed, subordinated or tortured" (as cited in Fotouhi, 2010, p. 82). Hence, they are rendered as "other," and by speaking out about their oppression, these "othered can begin to repair their damaged subjectivity" (as cited in Fotouhi, 2010, p. 82). In fact, in "Who We Are: The Perplexity of Iranian-American Identity," Mostofi (2003) analyzes the tendency of Americans to consider immigrants as the "other" in general. She points to a dramatic example where Iranian immigrants in southern California felt the problem so deeply that they tackled this "othering" by creating a "mainstream Iranian identity" via television media, leading to a "main source of Iranian identity formation in the United States" (Mostofi, 2003, p. 683). They have achieved this by constructing their new identity "through the use of imagination, nostalgia, and memories" (Mostofi, 2003, p. 685). Hence, these Iranians "transpose the Iranian culture to their offspring" via the media (Mostofi, 2003, p. 686). Others, I would add, achieve the same end through their life writing. In fact, as Iranian-Americans, their diasporic identity (besides being "other") is a "dual/hyphenated/split identity" (Mostofi, 2003, p. 696). I argue that in their life writing they assert their identities as "other," an othering they embrace in their awareness of their differences, their identities, and their space.

Drawing on Hall's concept of identity (1996, p. 345), one can argue that the identity of Iranian-Americans is "split," "never absolutely stable," and "subject to the play of history over time and the play of difference." Or as Appadurai (1996) puts it, these life writers have a dual/split identity as immigrants (as cited in Mostofi, 2003, p. 696). Moreover, as "other," these life writers' identity dwells in a "collective memory, vision, or myth of their homeland," which could only too easily result in a failure to integrate "or accept other possibilities of having a sense of identity beyond an attachment to their homeland" (Mostofi, 2003, p. 682). As for the

narrators in the life writing by Iranian women in diaspora, they "are ideally placed to appeal to a wide readership: just "Other" enough to represent her subject authoritatively, and at the same time familiar enough not to alienate her audience" (Whitlock, 2008, p. 14).

Lastly, these life writing bear witness to the mourning and trauma their authors experienced as daughters (within the family), with their "focus on the recollection of child narrators license or naturalise a limited grasp of political and ideological dimensions of the revolution and the republic" (Whitlock, 2008, p. 14). The reason for having a child narrator—typical in most of the life writing in diaspora—is to "accentuate further the tropes of nostalgic memory" (Whitlock, 2008, p. 13). In regards to the child narrator, she is present in varying degrees in my chosen life writing by Iranian women in diaspora, except for the public figures' writings, where the adult narrator predominates. More than just nostalgic memory, however, as mature individuals know from experience, harking back to childhood is an essential component of any journey in search of personal identity. Childhood is where one starts from.

Theses on Iranian Life writing

Persis Maryam Karim (1998), in her Ph.D. thesis entitled *Fissured Nations and Exilic States: Displacement, Exile, and Diaspora In Twentieth-century Writing By Women*, dedicates the third chapter to a discussion of two narratives by Iranian women, who portray their exile after the 1979 Iranian revolution. She argues that these texts are of "an emerging genre … that is both autobiographical and exilic," representing Iranian women's shift in self-representation in the twentieth century (p. 94). She calls this genre "Iranian women's writing in exile" and argues that these texts "challenge traditional conceptions of autobiography […] and raise questions about the discursive effects of Iranian women's autobiography and self-writing" (Karim, 1998, p. 95). She asserts that using the term "exile" in the naming of this category of writing is reflective of the authors' "exilic experience" on the one hand, and how they are "enabled and impeded by [their] experience of [exile], language, and culture in their quest for textual representation" on the other (Karim, 1998, p. 97). Although Karim's thesis advances the discussion about the "exilic" aspect of the writings by Iranian women, she does not address other categories, like their immigrant status, their experiences as children in diaspora, nor any other subgenres. In fact, she analyzes Goli Taraqqi's *Khatereh-ha-ye-Parakandeh* (which she refers to as "scattered memories") and *Daughter of Persia: One Woman's Journey From Her Father's Harem Through The Islamic Revolution*, by Sattareh Farman Farmaian, by focusing on the psychological and sociological themes expressed in these works, as well as the ways in which they "narrate and comment on the Iranian revolution and the period after the Islamic Republic is established and the Iran-Iraq war begins" (Karim, 1998, p. 99). Hence, she compares a work of autobiographical fiction to a memoir, arguing that they both "engage the autobiographical 'I' and offer up the usual narratives about childhood memories, adolescence, adulthood, motherhood, and finally, migration and exile" (Karim, 1998, p. 100). She focuses on their self-representation to conclude that both texts "transgress and manipulate the autobiographical genre," but differ in their "techniques to represent themselves and to capture different audiences" (Karim, 1998, p. 178). According to Karim (1998), the author of *Scattered Memories* reflects how it is almost impossible to constitute a self in exile, using "complex techniques of multiple subjectivity [to portray] "scatteredness;"" whereas Farman Farmaian's co-authorship of her memoir depicts her "unified self," recollecting both her own past and that of the nation as well.

In fairness, it should be noted that Karim's intent is to cover writings by 20th century women in diaspora, which allows her to cover multiple writings of various origins in different chapters, with only one dedicated to Iranian women. Moreover, she focuses on only a few characteristics of the readings. She wrote her thesis before the boom in the Iranian women diasporic life writing, which might explain her choice.

From another angle, and almost a decade later, Theresa A. Kulbaga focuses her study on American autobiography. In her Ph.D. thesis, entitled Trans/national Subjects: *Genre, Gender, and Geopolitics in Contemporary American Autobiography*, Kulbaga (2006) argues that the "recent 'memoir boom' provides a unique opportunity to examine how ethnic women authors take up or take on national claims, rights claims, and identity claims in various self-representational acts" (p. ii). What is relevant to me in this thesis is the ethnic aspect of self-representation and identity. In fact, she examines how "ethnic women autobiographers position themselves […] as they transform the genre to acknowledge multiple and flexible citizenships constructed in the context of global capitalism"; how these narratives' "production, circulation, and reception of gendered identities and narratives [cross] cultural and national borders" (p. iii). While she advances the research in regard to these aspects, she includes only one Iranian-American author, Azar Nafisi. In her conclusion, she discusses the popularity of Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* in the United States and its reception in Iran. She suggests that "the autobiographical becomes particularly salient. US popular culture, constructed through a nationalist rhetoric of trauma and victimization after 9/11 […] become[s] heavily invested in and anxious about concepts of 'truth'" (p. 203). Although Kulbaga succeeds in bringing to the fore the American sense of victimization, she does not address the socio-political situation of the home country.

In another Ph.D. thesis, entitled *Writing Outside the Veil: Literature by Women of the Iranian Diaspora*, Jasmin Darznik (2007) offers a close reading of Iranian women diasporic writing in English. She considers the authors' position with regard to Iranian religion and culture, the challenges they face, the reception of their works, and the type of "homes" they "envision for Middle Eastern women living in contemporary Western societies" (Darznik, 2007, p. iv). She dedicates her first chapter to early memoirs of the Iranian diaspora, the second to return narratives of their second generation, and the sixth to Marjane Satrapi's graphic memoirs. She claims to be conducting the "first study to trace the development of literature by women of the Iranian diaspora from its beginnings to" the present (i.e., 2007), with an emphasis on the "literary qualities" of the works she has selected for her thesis (Darznik, 2007, p. 2). These works negotiate two extremes: their native culture and their adopted one (Darznik, 2007, p. 8). Darznik (2007) argues that memoirs, such as Shusha Guppy's *The Blindfold Horse* (1988) and Sattareh Farman Farmaian's *Daughter of Persia* (1992), seek to "rehabilitate the idea of a lost Persian empire in the face of the increasing characterization of Iranian culture as essentially, and problematically, Islamic" (p. 10). For this reason she asserts that they erase Iranian history "in favor of reconstructing the mythology of pre-Islamic "Persian" life" (Darznik, 2007, p. 10). Moreover, she contends that return narratives, such as Tara Bahrampour's *To See and See Again*, Gelareh Asayesh's *Saffron Sky*, and Azadeh Moaveni's *Lipstick Jihad*, long for both "the fabled empires of the diasporic imaginary" and the demand in the West for ""authentic" life narratives from the Middle East" (Darznik, 2007, p. 10). Finally, Darznik (2007) studies the "veil imagery" in Satrapi's graphic memoirs (p. 12). While Darznik succeeds in tracing the trajectory/evolution of the life writing by Iranian women in diaspora, she restricts herself to the study of their literary

aspects without taking into consideration the socio-political context in both the home and the host countries.

A few years later, Leila Pazargadi, in her Ph.D. thesis, *Mosaics of Identity: Reading Muslim Women's Memoirs from Across the Diaspora* (2012), groups in one collection those Middle Eastern women writers who published in the United States, Australia and Europe after 9/11. By doing so, she does not recognize the differences in the contexts in the three continents, nor does she recognize the impact of the situation in the home country. She investigates their life writing by focusing on the "modes of self-representation in Middle Eastern women's narratives," while "paying careful attention to the narrative strategies they use to negotiate art and meaning within memoir" (p. ii). In one chapter, Pazargadi (2012) studies only the use of humour and satire in the memoirs of Firoozeh Dumas and Marjane Satrapi. Moreover, she does not refer to any other narratives by Iranian women in diaspora. She concludes that Firoozeh Dumas and Marjane Satrapi "use humor to create a mask of sorts, one which allows for a careful selection of autobiographical disclosure. They use humor to ease cultural tensions and reconcile political differences […] to create an innovative language" (p. 240). Pazargadi does not tackle the differences between the lives of Satrapi and Dumas in terms of upbringing, social background, or political involvement. It should be noted also that the two memoirs belong to two quite different subgenres. Yet Pazargadi (2012) does advance an understanding of the stylistic use of humor in the narratives.

In another Ph.D. thesis from 2012, Sanaz Fotouhi's *Ways of Being, Lines of Becoming: A Study of Post-Revolutionary Diasporic Iranian Literature in English* (2012), the reader learns about writings by Iranians in diaspora after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Fotouhi subsequently published her thesis in book form under the title, *The Literature of the Iranian Diaspora: Meaning and Identity Since the Islamic Revolution* (2015b). For my thesis, I will be referring to the book form. Fotouhi (2015b) examines narratives of the past, the use of poetry, the memoirs by Iranian women in diaspora as being "double-edged" narratives, mother-daughter relationships in these memoirs, Iranian men's hypervisibility/invisibility, and Iranian women's self-Orientalization. She asserts that these women life writers in diaspora idealize the pre-revolutionary past, and they have in common the fact that the Islamic Revolution disrupted their lives (p. 24). Moreover, they identify with their "cultural heritage instead of Iranian that englobes 'nationalistic connotations,'" since their diasporic identity is based on "historical consciousness" (p. 29). She gives as example of such historical consciousness Farman Farmaian's use of "Persia" in the title of her book, *Daughter of Persia*. She argues that all the women writers share essentially similar experiences in their life writing, and that they maintain their connection to the past. She asserts that their choice to write in English is a "conscious decision, a strategy that allows them to speak against the oppressive historical forces of their home and host cultures" (p. 37). She claims that the second generation Iranian diasporic writers as well as those who left Iran when young face the challenge of "tapping into and drawing on elements of history [which] is about projecting and negotiating a new vision of the future in response to historical representation both in their host and home countries" (p. 51). Moreover, she finds these life writing are a form of "scriptotherapy," their way to "rebel" against the dominant cultures, and to assume agency (p.98). Fotouhi (2015b) adds that their diasporic experiences englobe "dispersal and fragmentation" of their identities and the split of allegiances between two cultural identities, which, as Stuart Hall affirms, "is part of the history of all diasporic experience[s]" (p. 110). Fotouhi's (2015b) perceptions have advanced the discussion on Iranian women life writing on many levels. Although she does acknowledge the disruption caused by the Islamic revolution,

she does not, however, differentiate its impact in terms of class, religion, and backgrounds. I would add to Fotouhi's valuable insights that the writers' choice of writing in English is their deliberate way of representing the multiple strands of their identities, as well as being their tool to educate their audiences about themselves.

In Ina C. Seethaler's doctoral dissertation, *A Rhetoric of Home: Place, Identity, and Human Rights in Immigrant Women's Life Writing* (2013), we see a study of the memoirs of a Mexican woman (*Journey of Hope* (2007)), a Korean woman (*Language of Blood* (2003)), and an Iranian (*Persian Girls* (2006)), to show that they "critique gender oppression, demand education as a human right, and promote citizenship laws that eschew racial and cultural differentiation" (p. 1). Seethaler claims that by doing so she is helping readers to understand "people's transnational movements," reveals "women's political agenda," lessen ignorance about their lives, leading to a comprehension of their migration process (Seethaler, 2013, p. 2). Her analysis of *Persian Girls* tackles the themes of migration/border-crossing, collective autobiography, trauma, patriarchy, and self-actualization. She argues that the Iranian author Rachlin is aware of the criticism of the memoirs by Iranian-American women of "confirming mainstream stereotypes about Iran and celebrating western civilization"; and avoids such criticism by "being less political […], more personal and emotional in her writing" (Seethaler, 2013, p. 111). Seethaler (2013) asserts that Rachlin paints the women who are close to her in her writing as "constitut[ing] different versions of herself" (p. 112), and "challenges generic rules to portray how women defy gender roles and laws that perpetuate gender roles" (p. 113). She says that Rachlin's memoir "opens up a space for non-European immigrant women," and that their autobiographies are a mixture of Western and non-Western values, or "hybrid texts" (Seethaler, 2013, p. 125). Seethaler (2013) concludes that the memoirs are "political teaching tools" that help readers gain an understanding of and compassion for "silenced communities," bringing "inter-ethnic and inter-cultural awareness" by shedding light on traditions and cultures and changing our perception of minorities (pp. 185–186). However, I must disagree with Seethaler's (2013) theme analysis in *Persian Girls*. I find that Rachlin succeeds in revealing a wide spectrum of differences in the women she portrays, from her aunt Mariam, to her mother, to her sister Pari, and finally, to herself. Moreover, Seethaler does not note that Rachlin has been a published writer (mainly fiction) before opting to write her memoir.

From an entirely different point of view, in her doctoral thesis, *Where I Am—Between Two Worlds: The Graphic Khaterat of Taj Al-Saltaneh and Marjane Satrapi*, author Firouzeh Dianat (2013) studies the graphic depiction of the authors' adventures in the form of *khaterat*[76] of a Qajar princess (written in 1914 but not published until 1969) and Satrapi's *The Complete Persepolis* (2007). Dianat argues that the two writers' views of Iran are fundamentally different: the first portraying "a traditional world," and the second showing Iran under the Shah's rule and the Islamic Revolution. Yet both "describe how a female is constructed by the other girls and women around her, but from contrasting vantage points" (p. 8). Despite the difference in the subgenres (i.e., *khaterat* and graphic) Dianat succeeds in advancing the study of autobiography by Iranian women through the realization of this concept. Hence, they both use Iranian culture to make their hybrid medium of writing the autobiography (p. 10). The two authors "replicate and extend Persian stories of heroic quests" (p. 14). Dianat compares the two authors to Shahrzad (the queen in *One Thousand and One Nights*) in terms of playing multilayered roles, illustrating

[76] "A Persian form of life narrative, characterized by definitions of the self that are community-dependent and reliant on individual and collective memory" (Dianat, 2013, abstract and p. 10).

the power of women in both the private and public realm (pp. 17–18). She argues that their writings are a "form of protest," and the fact that they "experience hardship and anguish" is reflected in their works (p. 19). She asserts that their stories are a shift between "privilege" and "risk," moving back and forth between "locations of daring and safety" (p. 21). Dianat shows how their writing is an act of "unveiling" and a resistance to patriarchy.

Finally, in her M.A. thesis, *Writing Women's Experiences: Twelve Memoirs of Life in Iran and Abroad Since the 1940s*, Kayla Abercrombie (2019) surveys twelve memoirs by Iranian women exiles, studying their identities within the context of politics and history. She groups these memoirs into three cohorts in which she compares the lives of her subjects under the Shah's regime, the Islamic Republic, and in their exile. She concludes that these authors are characterized by "disappointment and frustration with Iranian's tumultuous history in the twentieth century" (p. 78), and she asserts that they connect their painful personal life experiences with Iranian politics. Nevertheless, she sees that they have a sense of patriotism, and they continue to love their Iranian identity, regardless of their struggles with the government, and desire to share with their readers their own perspective on their country's history. However, she calls attention to the differences they illustrate in terms of generational gaps which affect their perspectives, and their individual experiences of exile. Good as her understanding is, Abercrombie (2019) does not examine the differences in the authors' class, religion, background, and education. With her focus upon politics and history, she limits her study to only these aspects of the life writing.

In conclusion, previous analyses of Iranian American women's life writing have divided the writings into two types: in the first, the author is recalling her own memories of events experienced in Iran before migrating to North America; in the second, she uses "post-memory," recalling events told to her by her parents or community. There is a good deal of truth in this twofold division. The first is the case in most of the life writing I study, whereas the second is the case in *The Good Daughter*. However, I have observed that most previous scholars who studied the life writing focus in their analysis on either the literary aspect, gender, or historical context. I feel that though these are all vital to the life writing, they do not offer a full enough picture for in-depth understanding. More is wanted, and I believe that by combining literary and feminist approaches, I add a new perspective, contextualizing it through a transnational feminist lens. Hence, I analyze the life writing of Iranian women in terms of their format, context, language, choice of narrator, and style, while drawing on theories of life writing by women in general, and by Iranian women, in particular. In this manner, I attempt to fill in the gaps in the knowledge through the methodology and theoretical framework that I discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 4
Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Methodology:

My research draws on a three-tiered methodological approach:

1. Close textual analysis of primary sources
2. Historical contextualization of both primary sources and broader socio-cultural historical and political sources
3. Interpretation of primary texts through theoretical frameworks which include postcolonial and transnational feminism studies.

Several literatures come together in my thesis: postcolonial theories, the history of life writing by women,[77] and transnational feminism. Their intersection with one another offers compelling insights into the Iranian women's life writing under examination. I draw from recent inquiries into these literatures, and my thesis contributes both to each in turn, and to them all as an interrelated whole.

Through textual analysis of my primary sources, I analyze modes of self-representation in the selected life writing of Iranian women in diaspora, taking into consideration how they negotiate their identities and meaning through their narrative strategies. I examine their similarities and differences, paying close attention to the political, cultural, and social background of each author. Moreover, I study how they portray their lives before and after the 1979 revolution in Iran, their lives in Iran, and the conditions of their lives in the host country (United States/Canada) of their diaspora. Hence, besides the authors' writing styles and the issues they raise, I explore their personal journeys, their communication with the broader public/audience, and how their writings have been received.

Among the major themes are the following: the mass migration of Iranians after the Islamic Revolution (1979); the waves of crisis (the 1979-1980 Hostage Crisis, the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, the 2001 9/11, and finally the political upheaval of the 2009 presidential election in Iran); the formulation of the authors' identities; the "veiling" of the authors and the characters

[77] The history of life writing and its evolution is discussed in Chapter 2.

they portray in their life writing; their idealized sense of the past; their relation to “home”; and their life writing as their resistance to everything they have experienced in both their home and their host countries.

As the literature review chapter has explained, self-exposure through life writing brings the personal and private into the public sphere. In earlier times, both in Iran and elsewhere, only public figures (both men and women) were able to use this medium. When they did, they focused only on their public lives. Long after this tendency began to dissipate in the West, it remained strong in Iran, where the whole idea of self-exposure was culturally taboo. While this taboo applied to both men and women in the East, in the Western mind it particularly applied to Iranian women, where it was consonant with Western stereotypes of Eastern veiled and repressed femininity. Thus, Iranian women, who embraced the chance they found in diaspora to write about their personal lives, were breaking the traditional (or expected) code of privacy both at home and abroad.

Life writing by Iranian women in diaspora have sparked in waves as responses to national and international crises. They have also sought to rectify the stereotypes the women face in their new situations. Iranian women in diaspora in North America have experienced two extremes: the culture of their home country (Iran), and the culture of their host country (the United States/Canada). This dichotomy has made their identity “split” and “multicultural.” They become Iranian-American, a hyphenated state where they are torn between the Iranian traditions they want to portray and the American customs they try to understand and adapt to. In this journey, they tend to idealize their Iranian past, with its built-in sense of identity, while trying to reconcile themselves to the present reality of living between “here” and “there,” where they have to create their own self-definition. This means they must grapple with the taboo against self-exposure, while satisfying the curiosity of their audience. But they also write to assert themselves as individuals, to respond to discourses inside as well as outside their home and host countries. In doing this, they write as “scriptotherapy,” to make sense of their changing lives. Taken as a whole, their life writing help them gain agency and render the personal political, and the political personal.

Using several different methodologies―an interdisciplinary one (ranging from postcolonial theories to feminist theories, to theories of life writing), an intersectional one (making connections between ethnicity, class, religion, and background), and, finally, a transnational (following women’s movements between Iran and North America)―I undertake a comparative project in this dissertation. Through my interest in the production and negotiation of cultural meaning—illuminated by my analysis of these life writing by Iranian women in diaspora—I try to bring issues of culture, language, voice and identity into the same framework. Secondly, I elaborate on how these women use their life writing as a medium for alternative forms of agency. Thirdly, I address the characteristics of these life writing according to whether their authors left Iran as children (Chapter 5), or as adults (Chapter 6). Through a transnational feminist approach to reading these life writing of Iranian women in diaspora, and focusing on their immigration experience, especially in reference to the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, I hope to answer, among others, the following questions: How do English language life writing differ in terms of those by Iranian women who left Iran as children, compared with those who left as adults, especially in regard to, but not limited to, the historical and situational context, style of writing, and author intentions? In what ways do these life writing either deconstruct or reinforce Western stereotypes about Iranian women? How do the texts under study reflect the

sociopolitical conditions the authors experienced in their country of origin as well as their host countries? And how are these texts shaped by these very conditions? What are some of the reasons that prompted these women authors to share their life writing publicly? And who are their target audiences? And, why? How do these women authors articulate their different cultural attachments and allegiances? How do they represent the dynamic process of identity construction?

While I am aware that the life writing I have chosen cannot capture the complexities and experiences of all Iranian women in diaspora, I regard these particular life writing as case studies that offer insight into the women's varied experiences as members of certain classes, religions, and backgrounds during a relatively brief, though very chaotic, span of modern history. Despite their differences, their underlying connections are strong, and it is these connections that I want to explore.

My methodology draws particularly on the claims by feminist critics of life writing discussed in Chapter Two. My work takes the existing feminist methodologies along with postcolonial theories to prove that analysis of life writing written in English by Iranian women in diaspora cannot be separated from the intersecting markers of identity and culture. I am interested in how the authors use their voices to challenge the common stereotypes about who they are, while remaining the "other." In their writing, they embrace this status to carve a unique space for themselves. In other words, essentially cut off from all that framed their original identities, or sometimes profoundly scarred by their experiences in a disintegrating traditional world, and confronting strong but often ignorant expectations in their new circumstances, they set out to claim who they really are.

Reading these life writing through the lens of transnational feminism reveals common patterns among them. One of the most crucial patterns derives from their critique of women's oppression, whether in the micro or family level, or the macro one as the state. Written as they are from the perspective of women who are not only an ethnic minority, but also first generation/second generation aliens, the writings bring awareness of these issues to their audience. They explain what it is like to be "othered" in all the various aspects of their lives. Through the various characters portrayed in their life writing, they do not limit their writing to themselves. They also reflect their communities. Hence, they give voice to the "silenced" women in Iran. They show how their roles are impacted by migration and patriarchy, how their identities are fluid and multi-layered, and how they are or are not emotionally pulled back to their home country. In other words, my analysis examines the authors' identities within the socio-political contexts in which they write.

Theoretical Framework

I adapt Arjun Appadurai's definition of "transnational," Loomba's definition of "imperialism," Mohanty's definition of "colonization,"[78] Brah's definition of "diaspora space," and Bhabha's concept of "hybrid space" to my analysis. First, I define these terms. Then, I discuss the theories behind them, taking into account their critical points of view and how they fit within my framework, and showing their links to the life writing in this study.

[78] "A relation of structural domination, and a suppression—often violent—of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question." (Mohanty, 1984, p. 333)

Although Iran was never a colony under a foreign power, the women authors I chose for my thesis have experienced something similar to colonization. The fact that they have lived under the oppression of the Iranian regime, which imposes its view of gender relations and morality upon women, implies constraints upon individual and social freedoms much like those endured in other countries under colonial powers. Along with the Islamic Revolution, this experience of constraint and loss of social autonomy led the women to leave Iran and ultimately, to resort to writing as a form of political agency in order to show their resistance.

In agreement with Loomba and Bhabha that the West can never entirely encompass the Orient, no matter how well-intentioned, I argue that these life writing are the product of the women authors living in a "diasporic space" where they lack any real notion of "home." And by applying Brah's definition of "home" to these life writing, I argue that their Iranian authors in diaspora critique discourses of origins while inscribing a "homing desire" (Brah, 1996, p. 193).

In response to living at the "border" between two worlds, their old and their new, these women authors have developed what Bhabha calls a "hybrid culture" that is both "eastern and western." This liminal space, as Bhabha puts it, provides them with unknown dimensions of self-expression that is reflected in the way they write about themselves. Their identities are developing in a continuous process, living both inside and outside their host society—sometimes in "inclusion," and other times in "exclusion." Thanks to this process, the authors of these life writing are free to explore new directions, writing styles, and modes of expression that make their writings unique. In many ways, they elude strict categorization within the corpus of modern feminist literature.

Drawing on Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," even though they share some common patterns, my chosen authors can never be seen as constituting a homogeneous group, nor can they ever be described as "victims." Moreover, I question whether the aim of these life writing is to challenge the East versus West stereotypes and pre-conceived attitudes that the writers face in their host country. Instead, by recounting their thoughts and memories, the authors carry out an "act of representation" that enables them to view themselves as separate from constraining societal images of any kind (Agnew, 2005). As members of a diaspora, they are thus able to "generate difference and challenge homogeneity" (Agnew, 2005, p. 13).

My combined framework will also briefly touch on Said's concept of "orientalism," while discussing it critically. It will address the orientalist characteristics both within the life writing, and the East (Iran)/West (U.S./Canada) binary.

Transnational Feminism

Two terms, "transnational" and "transnational feminism" (TF), are essential to this study. Both require definition, and scholars have defined their nuances in slightly different but important ways. As Conway (2019) puts it, the term transnational emerged as "a way to name the dramatically increasing flows of people, things, images, and ideas across the borders of nation-states in an era of 'globalization'" (as cited in Zerbe Enns et al., 2020, p. 1). For the purposes of my dissertation, Alissa Trotz's (2007) definition seems more pertinent. Trotz argues that "transnational" refers mainly to what Arjun Appadurai (1996) defines as "border-crossing flows of capital, technology/information and people"; "border-spanning/crossing activism"; and "a mode of critically apprehending the world" (pp. 5-6). That last statement is especially relevant. Where the meaning of transnational expands into the realm of feminism, Zerbe Enns et al. (2020)

argue that “transnational feminist perspectives focus on the diverse experiences of women who live within, between, and at the margins or boundaries of nation-states around the globe” (p. 1). Furthermore, and this is particularly applicable to my study, they

> include the experiences of immigrants, refugees, displaced persons, those who have experienced forced migration, members of a cultural diaspora who may be dispersed across multiple regions, as well as those who identify themselves as third-culture persons and persons who are attempting to integrate multiple cultural identities. (Zerbe Enns et al., 2020, p. 2)

The central features of transnational feminisms, to put it into the words of Zerbe Enns et al., “include efforts to foster transnational solidarity and collaboration between feminists who are from different countries or the diaspora and who value difference as a foundation for activism” (2020, p. 2). According to this definition, the crossing of ideas in the life writing by Iranian women in diaspora is an act of transnationalization of the women authors’ experiences. I find that the Iranian women authors of these life writing are integrating “multiple cultural identities.” Furthermore, they have agency as advocates for women’s rights, which I consider feminist.

I also draw from Grewal and Kaplan’s *Scattered Hegemonies* (1994) and Alexander and Mohanty’s *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (1997). In both, Transnational Feminism (TF) is portrayed as a framework based on feminist theories and activism that shows the effects of both globalization and capitalism on people throughout the world. Wherever globalization and capitalism go, they affect the prevailing concepts of nation-state, race, gender, class, and sexuality. Transnational Feminism (TF) also intersects with postcolonial theories, as it addresses how colonialism has shaped women’s oppression in the world on social, economic, and political levels (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Vertovec & Cohen, 1999). On the other hand, Transnational Feminism also promotes human rights, democracy, and gender equity. In the works cited above, the theorists use TF to discard binaries like “First/Third Worlds” and “Us/Them” that are factors in some postcolonial approaches (Orientalism, for instance). Finally, TF is frequently used to study the lives and works of women in diaspora.

Mason (2017), in her chapter, “Transnational Feminism,” in *Feminist Issues, Race, Class, and Sexuality,* defines transnational feminism as “a framework that can be used to address the challenges of working toward gender equality globally,” and one that is “concerned with how colonialism and imperialism map onto current forms of global gender inequality” (2017, p. 62). Furthermore, she argues that “transnational feminists are concerned with how stories are told” (p. 69). Her transnational feminist emphasis upon women’s stories and the way they are told is especially relevant to the life writing in this study.

Moreover, “transnational feminisms seek to examine gendered experiences both within and across Northern and Southern regions, analyze their interdependencies, and build linkages and coalitions around the world that are based on shared goals” (Zerbe Enns et al., 2020, p. 6). Zerbe Enns et al. (2020) cite Chandra Mohanty (2003) who “recommended implementing a transnational solidarity approach that does not presume the existence of identical priorities or common identity but focuses on concrete interconnected and interrelated issues” leading to “productive activism and alliance-building across borders” (p. 6). On another note, Fernandes (2013) argues that “dominant paradigms of multiculturalism often continue to cast transnationalism as another marker of identity so that the inclusion of transnational perspectives simply means the inclusion of one more category of the ‘other’” (p. 168). And since transnational feminisms, as Zerbe Enns et al. put it, “emphasize interactions across boundaries

and the spaces between national boundaries, including the borders and realities faced by refugees, diasporic communities, displaced individuals, and mobile populations" (p. 7), I find it essential for all these reasons to use a transnational feminist lens to study the life writing by Iranian women in diaspora.

Postcolonialism

Depending upon various scholarly interpretations, the definition of postcolonialism is equally nuanced. The term used to be written with a hyphen between "post" and "colonialism" in order to signify chronology, conveying "a historical-material change in the political status of a country: 'after colonialism'" (Nayar, 2015, p. 122). However, since the 1980s, the term without the hyphen serves as "a way of reading and interpretation, a theory and a methodology, that examines the nature of Euro-American nation's conquest, domination and exploitation of countries and cultures in South America, Asia, Africa and regions like Canada and Australia" (Nayar, 2015, p. 122). Nayar, (2015) adds that

> It represents a theoretical approach on the part of the formerly colonized, the subaltern and the historically oppressed, in literary cultural studies informed by a particular political stance, using the prism of race and the historical context of colonialism, to analyze texts, even as it seeks to produce critical commentary that serves an act of cultural resistance to the domination of EuroAmerican epistemic and interpretive schemes. (p. 122)

Loomba (1955) argues in her study, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (2005), that postcolonialism is the result of a Western school of thought. She analyzes the contribution of this "imported" discourse to the understanding of Third World literatures and cultures. Loomba (2005) defines colonialism as "the takeover of territory, appropriation of material resources, exploitation of labour and interference with political and cultural structures of another territory or nation" (p. 11). This is especially important for the Iranian women writers as they encounter powerful anti-Western cultural and genders norms at home, and the very reverse in diaspora. As for imperialism, it is "a global system" and "an economic system of penetration and control of markets" (Loomba, 2005, p. 11). It should be noted that imperialism, according to Loomba (2005), can exist without formal colonies (p. 12). Hence, although Iran was never a colony, it was nonetheless impacted by the British hold over its economy and natural resources. Later, after the 1953 attempt to nationalize the oil industry in Iran, the Americans and British organized a coup to oust the legitimate prime minister. They brought back the exiled shah, with his modernizing, Western-leaning ideas, to his throne. After this, America became the major imperial power dominating Iran. The American/Iranian political relationship is frequently brought forward in the life writing by Iranian women in diaspora. An example of this is *Daughter of Persia,* by Sattareh Farman Farmaian, who recounts the story of her life as it was interwoven with the political events under both the Shah and the Islamic regimes in Iran.

The results of postcolonialism have not all been negative. Like Loomba, Nayar (2016) argues that scholars have been finding "connections and mutually influential exchanges between East and West" (p. 2) since the 1980s. Furthermore, Nayar (2016) argues that due to postcolonialism in academia, there has been a proliferation in the "writings from the formerly colonized nations, indigenous people, and marginalized communities, making the genre both commercially profitable but also a source of not inconsiderable cultural capital" (p. 6). Hence,

there has been a birth of the “postcolonial exotic” and the “re-orientalism” which results in “ethnographic fictions, authentic ‘marginal’ cultures, and literatures produced by the formerly colonized people themselves” (Nayar, 2016, p. 6). It is argued that this is the reason why migrant and diasporic writings first became widely published (Nayar, 2016, p. 6). Nayar (2016) also argues that it is due to postcolonialism that the writings of contemporary minority, marginalized and migrant authors “fit” themselves into First World demands upon such “Third World writers” (p. 6). Postcolonialism certainly caused such life writing in North America to “fit” into the First World demands. Nevertheless, my analysis of the life writing in Chapters Five and Six show that although the authors have wanted to market and publish their life writing, they are keen to confront the stereotypes they face in the host country―which is certainly far from “fitting” into the host country’s demands.

Hybridity

Iranian women of the diaspora find themselves caught between worlds. This inevitably splits their cultural identity. How much this is affected by colonialism/postcolonialism is open to question. In the process of writing their stories, the Iranian women are attempting to reconcile these conflicting identities to form a personal identity, which belongs to both their cultural ones, and yet to neither. According to Bhabha (1994), when a cultural identity derives from two or more cultures, it creates a “hybrid” identity that is ambivalent. He argues that the reason for this ambivalence is the quest for agency, as the individual is suspended between the underlying components of this new identity. For Bhabha, the hybrid is in a “third space.” In *The Location of Culture* (1994), he disputes that hybridity is merely the result of different forms of colonization. He defines the “hybrid” as a “mutation,” or where "[t]he trace of what is disavowed is […] repeated as something *different*" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 111).

Bhabha’s work, *The Location of Culture* (1994), has triggered new ways of thinking about nationalism, representation, and resistance. In fact, in it, he stresses the "ambivalence" of "hybridity" as a characteristic of colonial contestation. For him, it represents a "liminal" space in which cultural differences are articulated. Moreover, he argues that the latter produces imagined "constructions" of cultural and national identity. As Bhabha (1994) attempts to “rename" postmodernism from a postcolonial perspective, he pays attention to the ways in which race, gender, community, and nationality merge (p. 175), and presents poststructuralist challenges to stable or fixed identities. Furthermore, he contributes to theories of cultural production and identity by closely examining these various intersections. His ideas are manifest in the Iranian women writers, who are clearly trying to make sense of their lives as they write from places of multiple, and often conflicting, intersections. However, they are also finding that liminal spaces are doorways into new, unknown dimensions of self-expression, and that is reflected in the way they write about themselves.

By definition, something liminal is in a “place between.” It is never static. Bhabha (1994) stresses the “in-between” state of culture in general. By that, he refers to spaces between individuals and cultures where their identities are undergoing a continuous process. It should be noted that for Bhabha (1994), “cultural diversity is an epistemological object―culture as an object of empirical knowledge―whereas cultural difference is the process of the enunciation of culture as 'knowledgeable,' authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification” (p. 34). However, the process of forging a personal identity within an authoritative collective identity, when one is inhabiting a liminal space, is very difficult. For Easterners dominated by Western culture, it is even more so. Bhabha asserts that it is assumed

that people who are socially and culturally privileged have the elite language of theory, and that the academic critic should belong to the imperialist or neo-colonial West (Bhabha, 1994, p. 19). I agree with Bhabha that the Iranian women writers in diaspora in North America are “culturally privileged” to be able to publish their life writing, which, as women, they could never have done in Iran. So I argue that these life writing in English have two effects: On one hand, written in the language of the privileged Western elite, they help in reinforcing the “Other”; yet, on the other, they fight the stereotypes the West has about them.

Bhabha’s “precondition for the articulation of cultural difference” is fulfilled by the space of ambivalence (1994, p. 38). As negative as it sounds, it can actually be a creative space. According to Bhabha (1994), “hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities…the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal” (p. 159). He stresses that “colonial hybridity is not a *problem* of genealogy or identity between two *different* cultures…[it] is that the difference of cultures can no longer be identified or evaluated as objects of epistemological or moral contemplation” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 114). Further, he contends that the hybrid, “though unrepresentable in itself…ensures that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity” (p. 37). It should be noted that despite the fact that the existence of the hybrid implies the existence of cultural categories, it rejects the notion of a “pure” identity. Moreover, it is important to understand that Bhabha’s “hybridity” embraces colonial conditions of identity and cultural difference. I can extend Bhabha’s concept of hybridity to the Iranian women authors in diaspora who are writing in English despite the fact that they have not experienced colonial conditions. In other words, these authors do not have a “pure identity,” but rather a “hybrid” one that embodies the cultural differences between their home culture (i.e., Iranian culture) and their host culture (i.e., North American).

Furthermore, Bhabha (1994) promotes new ways of thinking about identity born from “the great history of the languages and landscapes of migration and diaspora” (p. 235). For him, living at the border necessitates “a new ‘art of the present.’” McLeod expands this notion to argue that this depends upon embracing the contrary logic of the border and using it to rethink the dominant ways we represent things like history, identity and community (McLeod, 2000, p. 21). Going back to Bhabha (1994), who is primarily concerned with British colonialism in India, “the beyond is neither a new horizon nor a leaving behind of the past… we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (p. 1).

According to Loomba (2005), theorists of postcolonialism tend to universalize the conditions of their own countries. In fact, Loomba (2005) criticizes Bhabha on this point and argues that it “derives partly from the fact that in it colonial identities and colonial power relations are theorized entirely in semiotic or psychoanalytic terms” (p. 179). Yet Loomba agrees with Bhabha in his claim that the West cannot entirely produce the Orient. Furthermore, she argues that knowledge always results from a contact, negotiation, and "transculturation" of both colonialist and indigenous ideas (Loomba, 2005, p. 68).

Despite this tendency in Bhabha’s work to universalize the condition of his own country, as Loomba suggests, I find that I can extend Bhabha’s notion of “inclusion and exclusion” and apply it to Iranian women in diaspora in North America. Frequently, in their life writing, they portray what it is like to live both inside and outside their host society—sometimes in “inclusion” and other times in “exclusion.” This concept helps me decipher how the authors of

these life writing have lived at the "border," how they live simultaneously in both the past and present, and how their identities evolve in response to this liminal space. It is particularly important in helping me differentiate between the two groups of life writing I have chosen—those of the women whose childhood was spent in Iran, and those who came to the West as adults. Each group offers unique patterns for analysis, either regarding the question of identity, or to issues of politics, cultural and gender stereotypes, or textual understanding.

As a criticism, Agnew (2005) cites Grewal and Kaplan (1997) who argue that hybridity "remains enmeshed in the gaze of the West; Westerners see themselves alone as the ones that sort, differentiate, travel among, and become attached or attracted to the communities constituted by diasporas of human beings … Western culture continues to acknowledge difference primarily by differentiating the 'exotic' from the 'domestic'" (p. 12). Agnew (2005) asserts that in the post-colonial era, producing and representing the self as a subject "can be a laborious process that involves taking an inventory of the many facets of gender, race, class, and other socially significant criteria embedded and encoded in one's identity" (p. 12). Enveloping all these criteria is the implicit postcolonial westernizing lens that may, in fact, dominate but also distort an Eastern individual's view of personal experience. When Agnew, referring to Radhakrishnan (1996), argues that for the postcolonial subject, "[hybrid identity] can often […] be an expression of extreme pain and dislocation" (p.13), her words reflect that agonizing confusion of viewpoint. She goes on to stress that questions about "voice, representation, and perspective" arise from hybridity (p. 13). She critiques the "diasporic/ethnic" location and finds it "ghostly," just as Radhakrishnan (1996) does (Agnew, 2005, p. 13). In fact, this location, Agnew (2005) states, is "where the political unreality of one's present home is to be surpassed only by the ontological unreality of one's place of origin. This location is also one of painful, incommensurable simultaneity … that promises neither transcendence nor return" (p. 13). I have certainly discovered this to be true in the writings of the Iranian women of the diaspora, many of which express great discomfort, if not downright suffering, as they navigate between two worlds which can never fully meet.

Diaspora

The word "diaspora" carries heavy, often tragic connotations. In *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home*, Agnew (2005) states that "the word diaspora was originally used to describe the forced dispersal and displacement of the Jewish, Armenian, and Greek peoples" (p. 3). She cites Clifford's definition of the main characteristics of a diaspora as "history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, and alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship" (as cited in Agnew, 2005, p. 3). She refers to Anthias' (1998) defining criteria of diaspora "as dispersal and scattering, collective trauma, cultural flowering, a troubled relationship with the majority, a sense of community transcending national frontiers, and promoting a return movement" (Agnew, 2005, p. 4). Moreover, she asserts the diaspora's "ability to recreate a culture in diverse locations" (Agnew, 2005, p. 4). She contends that

> Diasporas can thus denote a transnational sense of self and community and create an understanding of ethnicity and ethnic bonds that transcends the borders and boundaries of nation states. Yet, the individual living in the diaspora experiences a dynamic tension every day between living 'here' and remembering 'there,' between memories of places of origin and entanglements with places of

residence, and between the metaphorical and the physical home. (Agnew, 2005, p. 4)

Clearly, to be part of a particular diaspora has powerful personal as well as cultural significance. In *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, Brah (1996) argues that everybody lives in a "diasporic space" inhabited by the migrants themselves, their descendants, the indigenous and those who stayed in the same location. She contends that border crossings take place not only in the dominated/dominant binary but also within and between dominated groups which are not only controlled by the dominant culture(s), but also from within. Brah's concept of "diaspora space" recognizes the ways its possibilities are contested by established discourses of power which attempt to organize people into communitities of "us" and "them." Hence, her concept of "diaspora space" can be applied to these life writing. It helps the reader understand how these women authors are organizing the remembered communities of the past in their writings, while they are simultaneously attempting to belong to the different communities of "us" and "them" in the present.

Brah (1996) defines "diaspora space" as the "intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes. It addresses the global condition of culture, economics and politics as a site of 'migrancy' and 'travel' which seriously problematizes the subject position of the 'native'" (p. 181). She stresses the fact that "each diaspora must be analysed in its historical specificity" (Brah, 1996, p. 183). According to her (1996), "the identity of the diasporic imagined community is far from fixed or pre-given. It is constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; [it is]… in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively" (p.183). Therefore diasporic identities are characterized by "a combination of the local and global" (Brah, 1996, p. 195).

Brah (1996) goes on to assert that thinking in terms of 'minority' identities being located at the periphery of something central reinforces "the hegemonic relations that inscribe this dichotomy" (p. 189). She calls for engaging "with complex arrays of contiguities and contradictions; of changing multilocationality across time and space" (Brah, 1996, p. 190). For her, "structures of class, racism, gender and sexuality cannot be treated as 'independent variables' because the oppression of each is inscribed within the other—is constituted by and constitutive of the other" (p. 109). In other words, there is no fixed, central reference point, much as people desire one to exist. The idea of "home" relates to this longing for something utterly reliable—a tangible, emotionally secure geographical place in which our identities are safe. As Brah (1996) states, "home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination … a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'" (p. 192). Moreover, she contends that "home is […] the lived experience of a locality" (p. 192). Hence, she concludes that "the question of home […] is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances. It is centrally about our political and personal struggles over the social regulation of 'belonging'" (p.192). As we shall see in Chapters Five and Six, this subjective experience of belonging and not belonging to "home" shapes the Iranian women who are recording their struggle to define the many facets of their identities.

Orientalism

Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is a key scholarly work for postcolonial frameworks. It questions the representation of the "Orient" in the West as well as its social construction as the

"Other" in Western history, literature, art, music, and popular culture. *Orientalism* discusses "the colonial discourse," representing the Orient as the "Other." It represents a "systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post Enlightenment period" (Said, 1978, p. 3). In other words, Said argues that Orientalism is a Western tool that controls its product—the Orient—via power relations through its representation in literature, art, media, and travel writing, all as aspects of cultural and political appropriation. Hence, the "Orient" is a European (mainly British and French) invention created in binary opposition to the Occident. Said (1978) asserts that the European and American interest in the Orient is political, but that "it was the culture that created that interest, that acted dynamically along with brute political, economic, and military rationales to make the Orient the varied and complicated place that it obviously was in the field [he calls] Orientalism" (p. 12). He suggests that as European Orientalism reached the United States, it has been increasingly reflected in American foreign policy.[79]

One should note the relationship between culture and imperialism that Said establishes in *Orientalism* (1978), where he shows that it is an academic discipline used to approach the Orient "systematically as a topic of learning, discovery and practice" (p. 73). This idea of an academic discipline implies a pedagogical impulse. Undeniably, the life writing in my thesis serve as a way to teach the host country population about Iran. But this is a narrow way of looking at them.

Loomba (2005) states that Said's concepts of "orientalism," as inspired by Foucault, "are Euro-centric in their focus, and of limited use in understanding colonial societies" (Loomba, 2005, p. 52). Moreover, she (2005) agrees with the critics who accuse Said of ignoring "the self-representations of the colonized" and of focusing "on the imposition of colonial power rather than on the resistances to it" (p. 49). In fact, she believes that Said ignores the presence of colonized people as agents in the colonial encounter, for he considers that colonial power is capable of constructing the Orient as an object of knowledge.

Women everywhere derive strength from their capacity for subjectivity. While it can be viewed as a weakness, it is also the vehicle for understanding and conveying deeply felt experiences and relationships, especially memories. Memories, both personal and cultural, are powerful forces. According to Agnew (2005), "Memories that are documented in narratives, life writing, and autobiographies represent individuals and groups with a specificity and particularity that eschew homogeneity and generalizations" (p. 7). Moreover, she cites Giles (2002), who argues that "Memories play a role in the individual's struggle to construct a social and personal identity in a world in which subjectivity is both fragmented and fractured" (as cited in Agnew, 2005, p. 7). Agnew (2005), contending that "memory is an act of representation and performance" (p. 7), asks about its "relationship […] to 'fact' and whether memories are 'real' and 'authentic' interpretations of self, home, and history" (p. 7). According to her, identities—a social construct "contingent on time, place, and social context" (Agnew, 2005, p.12)—are "fluid and unstable." As people seek to understand their memories from the vantage of different contexts, the significance of past events tends to change. Something seemingly negligible may suddenly assume life-altering—or identity-making—proportions. This is frequently apparent in

[79] For details of the American foreign policy refer to Chapter One, where I detail the American-Iranian political relationship.

the selected life writing, where the authors may fix upon some small detail of memory, important only to themselves, and discover that their whole understanding of life emanated from it.

Agnew cites Code (2000) in stating that since defining diasporic identities is a complex process, scholars should use the term “hybrid” to refer to what is “neither indigenous nor exogenous” (as cited in Agnew, 2005, p. 12). Moreover, she refers to Bhabha’s “hybridity” as a concept coming “through constant change and adaptation, and from being marginalized” (Agnew, 2005, p. 12). Agnew takes issue with some of Loomba’s ideas, who in turn, debates Bhabha’s work.

My Combined Framework

To understand the life writing by Iranian women in diaspora, I follow Loomba’s (2005) insistence on analyzing theories critically, and not taking them at face value. She stresses the importance of applying the theories of different disciplines in order to understand postcolonialism in its entirety (p. 181). Hence, I adopt her solution of "dense contextualization" (p. 181), arguing that separating the experiences of nations, sexes, and classes would bridge the gap between a "universal" postcolonial theory and different local practices. She also proposes a "productive synthesis" (Loomba, 2005, p. 240) that challenges the binary opposites of different schools. I also agree with both Loomba (2005) and McLeod (2000) when they attribute the flaw in postcolonialism to the institution and not to the theory itself (McLeod, 2000, p. 292). In fact, this is a critical point because it provides me with a foundation to look at these life writing through a variety of different lenses—nationalism, gender, class, etc.—which help me think about the political issues surrounding them, as well as the question of stereotypes which inevitably miss reality.

Loomba (2005) defines colonialism as “conquest and control of other people’s lands and goods” (p.8), and imperialism as the dependency (cultural and economic) as well as control over people and land that ensures that labor and markets are opened to imperial powers (p. 11). Again, although Iran has never been an American colony, these Iranian women life writers in diaspora in North America are providing literary texts as “raw materials” from their country, as McLeod (2000) argues (p. 288). The writings are imported by the West to be “processed,” as postcolonial theory would have it, “with resulting intellectual product slipped back to erstwhile colonies for academic consumption.” In other words, the writings become a form of intellectual tender, where they are appropriated for use by the host country.

Even if this is so, for the women writers themselves, the writings remain personal expressions of their struggle to find their balance in a world in which they have no real place. According to McLeod, “to be migrant or to live in a diasporic location is to live without or beyond all notions of being at ‘home’ or securely in place” (2000, p. 244). The Iranian women in diaspora in North America bear out McLeod’s concept at every turn. In their life writing, they grapple constantly with the meaning of “being at home,” and they frequently portray their uncertain and sometimes desperate search for security. Marina Nemat’s *Prisoner of Tehran,* as it depicts living without ever feeling the longed-for security of home, is a good example.

In view of the Iranian women’s stories I have gathered, I must agree with Agnew (2005) that “diasporas produce multiple consciousness, histories, and identities that generate difference and challenge homogeneity” (p. 13). In fact, Agnew speaks from the stand of “double consciousness in order to address questions related to deterritorialized identities, gender, class, racism, ethnic origins, and home (2005, p. 13). I have certainly seen this “double consciousness”

at work in the women's narratives, and Agnew's concept helps me to answer my research questions about them. Moreover, as I stated in the introduction, I adapt elements from Said's concept of "Orientalism," Bhabha's concept of "hybridity," and Brah's concept of "diasporic space." In fact, I find that in order to analyze the life writing of Iranian women in diaspora in North America, I need the postcolonial theories of all these scholars. Together, they address the implication of "orientalism" in these narratives without imposing a binary divide between the East and West. As I have come to understand them, the authors of the life writing are both "eastern and western," for they develop what Bhabha calls a "hybrid culture." Moreover, their "ambivalent" identity grows as a product of living at the "border" (Bhabha, 1994) between two worlds, their old and their new. Hence, as Brah (1996) argues, these narratives remain in a "diasporic space," limited by a discourse of power that never quite succeeds in organizing people into distinct communities of "us" and "them," no matter how hard it tries. While ethnic groups in diaspora frequently choose to create their own communities, they need not be as separate as they often are, even though the separating forces come from both within and outside the community.

A chief outside force derives from the postcolonial opposition of West and East. Said (1978) contends that though the "East and the West […] are symbiotically intertwined and interdependent" (p. 67), the Orient is Orientalized through a "process that forces the uninitiated Western reader" to accept "Orientalist codifications" as "the true Orient"(p. 67). For an individual from the East, this constitutes an incredibly limiting belief, and it is one that is too often carried into diaspora in the form of stereotypes. I explore how the authors of these life writing, who are both Eastern and Western at the same time, present themselves in the midst of Orientalist representation in North America, adopting the Orientalist discourse to some extent while maintaining their "hybrid" identity from living in a "diasporic space" (Bhabha, 1994; and Brah, 1996). I shed light on how these life writing are a feminist medium to portray and rectify the political, cultural, and historical prejudices their Iranian authors face on the one hand, and to transnationalize the Iranian feminist movement on the other. By doing so, I attempt to answer my research questions. I find that, by stressing the binary of East/West, these life writing written in diaspora are creating an ideal "Other" that is a hybrid in its identity, for it struggles with what Brah (1996) calls the notion of "home―here and there." In fact, for Brah (1996), "home" is a mythic place of desire in diasporic imagination―a place of no return (p. 192). Even when it is possible to visit the geographical territory (i.e., the place of origin), it remains linked to processes of "inclusion or exclusion" (Brah, 1996, p. 193). And by applying Brah's definition of "home" to these life writing, I argue that their Iranian authors critique discourses of origins while inscribing a "homing desire" (Brah, 1996, p. 193). I agree with Loomba (2005) as well that the question remains, "whether dominant language, literature, culture, and philosophic ideas can be turned around and used for subversive purposes" (p. 91). As Loomba (2005) points out, they have all "been central to postcolonial, feminist and other oppositional discourses" (p. 91).

In conclusion, I find, as Grewal (2005) does in *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms*, that these life writing are a feminist medium to make the ideas of their authors travel widely. Even using a language that is not their primary mode of speech, and living in a land that is foreign to their early experiences, they explore new ways of maintaining their "culture" (Grewal, 2005). Taken as a whole, this entire theoretical framework seeks to reveal and elucidate the complex issues contained in the Iranian women's life writing I examine.

Chapter Five
Life writing by Iranian Women in Diaspora: How a Boom Began

The Shah embraced the West and rejected Islam. The mullahs have done the reverse. My country is a house divided, and people like me, who seek a middle ground, must pay the price.

—Gelareh Asayesh, *Saffron Sky*, p. 148

Some memories come back only in the presence of other memories, like a series of locked doors. Opening one allows you to open another, which in turn opens a window through which to view your past.

—Tara Bahrampour, *To See and See Again*, p. 357

When my parents and I get together today, we often talk about our first year in America. Even though thirty years have passed, our memories have not faded. We remember the kindness more than ever, knowing that our relatives who immigrated to this country after the Iranian Revolution did not encounter the same America.

—Firoozeh Dumas, *Funny in Farsi*, p. 36

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide content analysis of my first group of life writing in English by seven Iranian women who have been living in Diaspora since their infancy, childhood, or youth. According to Naghibi (2016), the “diasporic Iranian women’s boom began in earnest with the publications of *To See and See Again* and *Saffron Sky* in 1999” (p. 6). I chose these writings

because, like the titles Naghibi mentions, they seemed to me to capture the essence of the early life writing by Iranian women in Diaspora and its evolution from 1999 to 2011. The life writing I discuss in this chapter are Gelareh Asayesh's (1962) *Saffron Sky: A Life Between Iran and America* (1999), Tara Bahrampour's (1968) *To See and See Again: A Life in Iran and America* (1999), Firoozeh Dumas's (1965) *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America* (2003), Roya Hakakian's (1966) *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran* (2004)[80], Azadeh Moaveni's (1976) *Lipstick Jihad: Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran* (2005), Marjane Satrapi's (1969) *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2004) and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (2005)[81], and Jasmin Darznik's (1973) *The Good Daughter: A Memoir of my Mother's Hidden Life* (2011). All the authors in this group currently live in Diaspora in the United States except for Satrapi, who lives in France. Unlike Satrapi, who left Iran as an adult and is considered a first generation French immigrant,[82] the remaining authors in this chapter arrived in the host country before the age of five or before/during their early teens except for Moaveni who is born in the United States. In this chapter, I provide a bio for each author along with a short summary of their life writing.[83] Based on what they self-identify as in interviews and/or in their life writing, I am referring to them as "exiles" (like Hakakian and Satrapi); "immigrants" who go back and forth between Iran and the United States and write "return narratives" (like Asayesh and Bahrampour); "Iranian-American" (like Dumas and Darznik); and "American-Iranian" (like Moaveni).

Reading their life writing through a transnational feminist lens and in terms of their experience of the Islamic Revolution, I aim to answer the following questions:

- How do these English life writing by Iranian women in Diaspora differ in terms of context, style, choice of narrator, and format?
- How do the geopolitical context and diasporic conditions of the authors' lives shape the texts themselves? And how are these factors explored in the life writing?
- How do these life writing portray Iranian women in general?
- How do they deconstruct and/or reinforce western stereotypes about Iranian women?
- How do the different generations navigate the invisible divide between the two cultures? How is it reflected in their life writing?

In Chapter One, I have already discussed the sociopolitical background of Iran as well as the American-Iranian political relationship. However, in order to provide a bit of historical context here, it should be noted that all the authors in this chapter, except for Moaveni, experienced the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran during their childhood. Moaveni, while living in Iran as an adult (2000-2002), witnessed the reform movement and the opposition during the presidency of Khatami.[84] Moreover, the women's political references from before the Revolution include the reigns of Reza Shah (1925-1941) and Mohamed Reza Shah (1941-1979), the coup against Prime Minister Mossadeq (1953), and Black Friday (September 8th, 1978). Furthermore, the authors

[80] I am including Hakakian's life writing in this chapter because she is part of the boom of life writing by Iranian women in diaspora; however, due to her history of leaving Iran at the age of nineteen, it could also fit in chapter 6.
[81] I am including Satrapi's life writing as a paradigmatic narrative of the Revolution seen through a girl-child's eyes.
[82] According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, first generation can either be an "American of immigrant parents" or a "foreign born" who is naturalized American (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/first-generation).
[83] For detailed summaries of the life writing discussed, refer to the appendixes.
[84] Mohammad Khatami was Iran's Minister of Culture (1982-1992) and served as the fifth Iranian President (August 3rd 1997-August 3rd 2005). For more information, refer to Chapter 1.

interweave their personal memories with stories of the lives of their families and surroundings through flashbacks, pictures, or simply through direct narration. They bring to the fore questions of home and nation, identity and belonging in a narrative where the public and the political are deeply intertwined with the personal. I argue that by using English as their narrative language, the authors show the interconnectedness of issues they struggle with, despite their varied religious, ethnic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. They succeed in crossing borders and boundaries by adopting an interdisciplinary medium in order to share knowledge about their country of origin, Iran. I assert that they articulate what Homi Bhabha defines as "hybrid" and "ambivalent" identities. I add that these life writing call for solidarity among and between these women and others like them to fight the stereotypes they grew up with as a result of the East/West divide—what Chandra Mohanty calls the "discursive colonization."

Authors' Bios and Summaries of Their Life writing

Gelareh Asayesh (1962-present)

Gelareh Asayesh was born in Iran to a Muslim family. When she was 8, her family left Iran to settle for two years in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in the United States. They returned to Iran only to come back to the U.S. five years later for good, when Asayesh was 15. She currently lives in St. Petersburg, Florida. As a journalist, she has taken multiple trips back to Iran since the eve of the 1992 Gulf War.

Saffron Sky (1999)

Saffron Sky A Life Between Iran and America is the story of Asayesh's passion to construct an American life while maintaining the spiritual beliefs and Iranian cultural rituals that constituted her life in Iran before her family's immigration to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, when she was fifteen years old. She recounts her transitioning to life in the United States both when her parents were studying for their graduate degrees as well as when they returned to settle permanently. She writes about her coming of age in the United States, her trips back to post-Shah Iran with her first trip on the eve of the Iraqi attack on Kuwait; her frustration, during later trips, with "the sisters," the regime's female enforcers of women's modesty; her marriage to Neil (an American), becoming a mother and having a family. The narration of her multiple visits to Iran includes flashbacks to her childhood intertwined with political references. She fluctuates between her yearning for her life in Iran and her fear of losing the peace of her life in the United States. The memories are not in chronological order, and they are interrupted by stories of encounters with friends or colleagues both in Iran as well as in the United States. The writing is beautifully meshed with details, and the author supplies date and location indicators at the beginning of each part and subpart to help the reader navigate the events in her chronicle. Ultimately, *Saffron Sky* is a book about the American immigrant experience, the yearning for one's origins, and the carving of one's identity in a new world.

Cover: picture of a kitchen

Dedication: to her mother, father, and Neil

Tara Bahrampour (1968-present)

Tara/Taraneh Bahrampour was born in Iran to a Muslim Iranian father and an American mother. She made multiple trips between Iran and the U.S. with her mother and siblings so that

her mother could record songs. In 1994, as an adult, she took a trip back to Iran after 15 years in the US. In the recording, "Open Books: Alternative Voices,"[85] Bahrampour states that her family was "apolitical," and that by 1999, she had been to Iran four times. She narrates that her grandfather was a landowner in central Iran.

She holds a BA in English from the University of California at Berkeley and an MS in Journalism from Columbia University. She lives in Washington, D.C., where she works as a journalist for the *Washington Post*.

To See And See Again (2000)

To See and See Again: A Life in Iran and America (1999) is a chronicle of Bahrampour's childhood in both Iran and the U.S., her coming of age in the U.S., her return visit to Iran as an adult, and her return to the U.S. Born to an Iranian father and an American mother, she is a *dorageh*[86], and thus different from the other Iranians in my group of women writers.

While her narration is chronological, it is full of flashbacks. She tells about her father's family's wealth in Iran; the political upheavals in Iran leading to the Islamic Revolution; the religious beliefs and the rise of Khomeini; her integration at school in the U.S. and how, in telling her experience of the Revolution, she became popular; her studies at Berkeley; as well as details of immigration and its multifaceted impacts. She also explores Iranian political events, like the nationalization of Iranian oil; the land reforms by the Shah; events like the "demonstrations and unrest" (*sholooghi*[87]) starting in Tehran which led to the Islamic Revolution; the Hostage Crisis; Black Friday[88]; and the Iran-Iraq war.

Firoozeh Dumas (1965-present)

Firoozeh Dumas was born in Abadan (Iran). Her parents migrated to the U.S. in 1972 when she was 7 years old. In an interview with Frederick W. Marrazzo for his show "Cronaca" in 2004, Dumas asserted that the reason for her writing *Funny In Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America* (2003) was that she was following in her storyteller father's footsteps and wanting her kids to know what it had been like to grow up Iranian-American. Her book was translated into Farsi (in 2005) and was well received in Iran. Dumas attended the University of California at Berkeley.

Funny in Farsi (2003)

Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America (2003) is a humorous rendition of Dumas's memories. They do not follow a chronological order. Dumas explores the themes of intergenerational conflicts, being Iranian in the U.S. before and after the Islamic Revolution, identity, inter-ethnic marriage, and Iranian customs and culture. Dumas is a master of satire and uses puns as her way to show her comfort, integration, and belonging to the American culture, a unique style not explored by the other authors. Her father, Kazem, had taken

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[85] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IiIzpV7R1dI

[86] *Do-rageh* "means two-veined, or two kinds of blood in one vein, and whenever people say it [she] think[s] of [her] two bloods swirling together like a two-colored lollipop" (Bahrampour, 2000, p. 48).

[87] "*Sholooghi* means messiness or disorder" (Bahrampour, 1999, p. 95)

[88] Friday, September 8, 1978: The turning point for revolutionaries and historians, for on that day the Shah's army surrounded and fired on a peaceful demonstration of people who were not aware that martial law had been declared earlier that morning.

his graduate degree in engineering in the U. S. He became fond of America, where he tried to embrace American culture. Unlike her father, her mother was only "briefly educated." Not knowing English, Firoozeh and her mother had to rely on Kazem to translate both the language and the culture. Later, Firoozeh became her mother's interpreter, accompanying her everywhere and being praised by Americans who were astonished to see a seven-year-old who could translate easily between Farsi and English. Many of the chapters focus upon Kazem and offer only a little information about her mother. Faced with her father's financial struggles, thanks to the Islamic Revolution and Hostage Crisis, Firoozeh worked multiple part-time jobs before she resorted to writing funding applications to pay for college. She changed her name to Julie, and eventually met and married François Dumas (a Frenchman she met at college). Throughout her entire experience, she was struggling between integrating into American society and maintaining her Iranian cultural roots. Whenever someone mispronounced her name, she wrote that she was reminded of being "an immigrant with a foreign name."

Dedication: To my father, Kazem, who loves to tell stories. And my mother, Nazireh.

Roya Hakakian (1966-present)

Roya Hakakian was born in Iran to Jewish Iranian parents. In May, 1985, at the age of 19, Hakakian immigrated to the U.S. for political asylum. In an interview in "Conversation With History: Identity, Freedom, and Revolution" (May 28, 2010), Hakakian said that she waited two decades to produce her life writing, *Journey From the Land of No* (2004). She explained that among the reasons for her life writing was her happiness that "this gender minority that is suppressed in Iran had voice;" that "the history of Iran has been written in a certain way… that is important … to create reports of violation of Human Rights;" and that "her memoirs are so filtered through the prism of nostalgia." She added that the "NO" in the title came from the fact that "much of [her] experience in Iran is being told No; sort of being negated." Her father, a poet, inspired her, and she fell in love with writing. "Embrace writing as a sanctuary as well," she added. She stressed the fact that at the time she was living in Iran, there were no Jewish ghettos but only upscale neighborhoods in which Iranian Jews dwelt. Nevertheless, these upscale neighborhoods were a form of enclosure, where Jews were "exercising what they are behind closed doors." For them, "Muslims were outsiders," and she was on her best behavior near them. But around Jews, "[one] didn't have to worry the language used would offend someone else." She concluded that she became a writer as a result of the Iranian Revolution because it was also a literary revolution. She added that she thought "primarily with Iranian head," making things beautiful through metaphor and her drive to be as simple, concise, and clear as an American. Moreover, by writing, she felt "very strongly to do something for current generation in Iran." In another interview by Bill Moyers in the NOW, Hakakian related that she wrote because "[she] wanted all readers [to] fall in love with Iran… [that] everybody loves the period that made [her] the person that [she is] today." She hoped she could "remind the world of the history of Iran."

She studied psychology at Brooklyn College.

Journey from the Land of No (2004)

Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran (2004) is Hakakian's collection of memories from her childhood to her adolescence in pre-revolutionary Iran. It is the story of her growing up as a Jew, a minority in Iran, alongside her Muslim neighbors as their ally. She is the only daughter among three sons who are sent to the United States to protect them from being involved in the opposition as well as to continue their

education. Her father, a school principal and a poet, values his children's education and is highly esteemed by his community. Hakakian meshes the details of her family stories with the social, economic, political, and religious events leading to the rising of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution. With the Islamic fundamentalists taking over religious minority schools, she witnesses the gripping clutch of the regime, becomes a rebel at school, and expresses her thoughts about the Iran-Iraq war in an essay. Her teacher scolds her, yet spares her from being questioned by the fundamentalists. The latter had lost her university status due to such writings. Hakakian also portrays the changes in society, the restrictions enforced upon women, and the segregation imposed on the Jewish community. The book ends with her father's burning her diaries, books, and magazines, sparing only her dictionaries, in an attempt to protect her from the authorities if they come to search their home, and his declaring that it is time for them to leave Iran and go to the United States.

Cover: woman's eyes only showing from veil

Dedication: Between 1982 and 1990 an unknown number of

Iranian women political prisoners were raped on the

EVE OF THEIR EXECUTIONS BY GUARDS WHO ALLEGED THAT

KILLING A VIRGIN WAS A SIN IN ISLAM.

This book is dedicated to the memory of those women.

Azadeh Moaveni (1976-present)

Azadeh Moaveni was born in Palo Alto, California to a Muslim family: her father was a Marxist and her mother took up Hinduism and other religious affiliations at different stages in her life. Her parents left Iran in 1976 and divorced shortly after her birth. She grew up in San Jose, California. In an interview with John Bersia for the "Global Perspective," Moaveni portrays growing up Iranian-American as "[feeling] a bit bewildering… irreconcilable culture… what is private and what is not… most of the time a struggle… during the 80s Iran was embarrassing to be from." She describes her life writing, *Lipstick Jihad* (2005), as "a book of reportage of Iran's younger generations and their coming of age under the Islamic Republic." She adds that she "came up with title to show how young women are pushing the boundaries in daily life… Jihad is a struggle, is a fight… [the young women] are pushing the boundaries of what was acceptable within the state's dress code, trying to have some individuality in the dress, trying to push back against the State's expectations that women would be model Islamic citizens while you had women who practiced Yoga and were on the Internet. They made 60% of University students. It's a cosmopolitan generation of women who were top best sellers, who were producing films and they're trying to change things internally in what we call civil disobedience." In another interview by Michal Lumsden (published online on MotherJones.com on March 9, 2005), Moaveni comments on the Iranian American political relation and on growing up as an Iranian-American:

> You have these two countries that have had this really fraught relationship for almost 25 years now. It's very charged. Being another hyphenated American, I imagine, is charged racially. But this is a political charge, you're in the shadow always of this relationship. The hostage taking, for America, was a uniquely

> traumatizing event, and we were so immediately linked to that. So there's a lot of baggage.

She studied political sciences at the University of California. She is a journalist, and she has been reporting on the Middle East for the last two decades.

Lipstick Jihad (2005)

Lipstick Jihad: Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran (2005) describes Moaveni's life between Iranian and American cultures as well as the stories of other Iranian youths. Moaveni shares her growing up in the Iranian Diaspora in Palo Alto, California. She struggles with her identity—a Persian at home and an American at school—and the anxiety it causes her. This clash of cultures sets her off on a search for her identity. After graduating from college, she wins a Fulbright scholarship to learn Arabic in Egypt, where she re-connects with being Iranian and decides to move to Iran. In 2000, she arrives in her home country after the demonstrations in Tehran University and witnesses the reforms and presidency of Khatami. She experiences life as Iranian youths do, trying to live like a local, yet she is always perceived as an "outsider." She takes the reader on a journey to observe the daily life of the younger generation in Iran, their preoccupations and acts of resistance to the regime. In her two years in Tehran, she fluctuates between calling the Iranian community "sick" and being hopeful about higher literacy for women and the increasing secularism of the middle class. She reflects on the relationship between men and women and tries her luck at dating. As a journalist, she is pressured to reveal details about her writings to Mr. X.[89] It becomes too much for her, and she decides to leave Iran.

Marjane Satrapi (1969-present)

Marjane Satrapi was born in Iran to politically active Muslim Marxist parents. In 1983, at the age of 14, her parents sent her to study in Vienna. However, faced with having to be there with no place to stay, and having contracted pneumonia, she came back to Iran where she studied visual communication and earned an M.A. from Islamic Azad University in Tehran. At 21 years old, she married briefly, but soon divorced and moved to France. Her parents encouraged her to stay in Europe for good.

Based in France, and French-Iranian in nationality, she is a graphic novelist, cartoonist, illustrator, film director, and children's book author.

The Complete Persepolis (2007)

The Complete Persepolis (2007) is the compilation of Satrapi's two graphic novels, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2004) and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (2005). The books recount the story of her childhood and coming of age in Tehran in the midst of the Islamic Revolution (1979) and the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988); her teenage years in Austria; her adulthood in her return to Iran; and her decision to self-exile at the end. Satrapi's parents are liberal Marxists who take part in demonstrations against the regime. She weaves political and cultural references through the stories of her personal growth—from thinking herself a prophet to deciding to be a Marxist. She idolizes her uncle Anoosh who tells her about

[89] An interrogator at the Ministry of Culture in Iran.

her Uncle Fereydoon's role in declaring the province of Azerbaijan a sovereign entity, and how he himself had to flee to the U.S.S.R. after Fereydoon's arrest, and how he was arrested while sneaking back to Iran and imprisoned for 9 years. Anoosh is arrested again and she gets to be his only visitor. A rebel at school, she confronts her teacher about the regime and is expelled. In another incident, she accidently hits the principal, which alarms her parents so much that they decide to send her to a French school in Vienna. In Europe, she struggles with her living arrangements, first at her mother's friend's house, then at a boarding school, and eventually at a friend's place.... Her teenage years are filled with disappointment, and experimentation with relationships and drugs that, at 18, renders her homeless for three months. Ill with bronchitis and pneumonia, she is hospitalized in Vienna. Returning home, she makes her parents promise not to ask about her last 3 months. After two suicide attempts, she starts going out again, and meets Reza to whom she gets married after two years of dating. The marriage doesn't succeed and they divorce. With the blessing of her family, she decides to move to France in 1994. Her mother asks her not to return to Iran.

Jasmin Darznik (1973-present)

Jasmin Darznik was born in Iran and came to the U.S. when she was 3 years old. She is the author of *The Good Daughter: A Memoir of My Mother's Hidden Life* (2011). On February 6th, 2011, at Politics and Prose, Darznik spoke about her book and revealed to the audience that she had changed both her mother's name and her sister's. She added that due to political and family reasons, she had not been in a hurry to have the book translated. Also, she shared that it was her mother who proposed to her that she should write the book and that they had worked on it together. For about a year, her mother recorded ten cassettes tapes for her to use in sharing her story. Darznik is an assistant professor of English at Washington and Lee University in Virginia. She holds a BA from the University of California Los Angeles (1994), a JD from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law (1997), a PhD in English Literature from Princeton University (2008), and an MFA from Bennington College (2014).

The Good Daughter (2011)

The Good Daughter: A Memoir of My Mother's Hidden Life (2011) is Darznik's rendition of the story her mother "Lili" told her in 10 cassette tapes after she had confronted Lili about a photograph of her in a wedding dress next to a man who was not Darznik's father. Following her father's funeral, Darznik started receiving the cassette tapes a few months after her return to her own place. By unfolding the stories of Lili's mother "Kobra," they revealed the mystery behind the photograph. They told of Lili's marriage at the age of thirteen, her first husband's abuse, her divorce, and her being compelled to abandon her daughter "Sara," who was still living in Iran. Darznik eloquently braids the narration of her mother's struggle to recreate her life through her striving to complete her schooling in Iran, and subsequent earning a degree in midwifery in Germany where she meets Darznik's father, "Johann." They come to Iran to marry and settle there until the Islamic Revolution forces them to immigrate to the United States. They move to California when Jasmin is three years old, and Lili devotes herself to raising Jasmin while running the run-down motel they have purchased. Whenever Jasmin annoys her mother, Lili threatens that she will return to her "good daughter." As she begins with a photograph, Darznik ends her book with her mother showing her photographs of Sara and her family in Iran and then following it with the news of Kobra's death.

Cover: woman in chador carrying a baby

Dedication: for my mother and grandmother.

Themes in the Life writing

Each author of these life writing has developed particular themes in her narrative according to her geopolitical context, diasporic conditions, class, race, religion, education, etc. An interesting common factor among them is that they all come from a modern professional and financially comfortable class. In *Women Write Iran*, Naghibi (2016) argues that

> **[…]** for those women whose families were financially secure and who enjoyed high social standing in prerevolutionary Iran, the revolution represented a cataclysmic loss of a safe and privileged world. That particular generation, and social class, is inclined to understand the revolution as a calamitous event, and as a result, the autobiographical narratives by women from privileged backgrounds typically unfold in two discrete parts: life before the revolution (often celebratory and idealized) and life after the revolution (usually fraught and conflicted). (p. 130)

In fact, all the authors in this chapter express this sense of loss. All portray the radical changes the Islamic Revolution caused in their lives through their illustrations of their immigrant/exile status and altered circumstances. In their narratives, each one of them incorporates political references within the details of her childhood and upbringing. Each includes cultural references too. On the other hand, they differ in context, style, choice of narrator, individual language peculiarities, and format. I will begin my evaluation of them by discussing their differences.

Context

Saffron Sky's (1999) Prologue, "The Dream," situates Asayesh's life with her American husband Neil in 1992 in Silver Spring, Maryland. Followed by a description of the change in her life after the birth of her daughter and their move to Maryland, Asayesh (1999) leads the reader to her context, "a reincarnation of past happiness" (p. x). She writes:

> The essence of my beginnings rose like sap, infusing my here-and-now with the scents of a childhood Eden. Suspended in illusion, I saw my past melding with my present. The boundaries of space and time were erased. My life felt whole. (p. x)

It is with this sense of "past melding with present" that Asayesh transports the reader to the Iran of her visit in October 1990, and that of her childhood memories. Having secured a green card, she decides to go back to Iran. It is both a physical and a personal journey that Asayesh undertakes.

"But my real terror came from an instinctive awareness that I was beginning a journey into the uncharted regions of my heart" (p. 2), she states. It should be noted that her first trip to Iran is on the eve of the Gulf War, a difficult and dangerous time. Yet she still takes the trip with her mother, Homajoon. In her visit to Mashad, she tries to "restore the contours of her identity" (p. 22). It is a search for her identity between the two poles: Iran and the United States. She feels the need to choose one or the other:

> I am convulsed by the contradictions of my life, straddling a fissure between two worlds that are immeasurably distant. My mind is always whispering for me to find a more stable spot. Pick one side or the other. Pick one world or the other. (p. 122)

In the end, Asayesh realizes that she has created a saving sort of distance that both frees her and causes her grief:

> All my adult life I have created distance, and distance brings me grief. Yet distance has also brought perspective. Distance has allowed me to make peace with myself and my heritage. It has allowed me to attempt to forge a life that is true to both my cultures, both my selves.
>
> This is America's true gift to me, its greatest opportunity. (p. 214)

With her recognition of that hard-won distance, she has become aware of the multiple layers of her identity, the shared duality of her several selves.

The context of *To See and See Again: A Life in Iran and America* (2000) is Bahrampour's childhood in Iran before the Islamic Revolution, her coming of age in the U.S., and her return trip to post-revolution Iran. Unlike Asayesh, who only refers to the Revolution a few times in her narrative, Bahrampour makes the reader live through the events she has survived—the political upheavals in Iran leading to the Islamic Revolution (pp. 107-115), the religious beliefs and the rise of Khomeini (pp. 101-102), and the fear Iranians faced. She even takes part in a demonstration at "Ashura, the national day of mourning for Emam Hossein, who died thirteen hundred years ago" (p. 103). Bahrampour's narration allows the reader to see and hear what she herself saw and heard at that moment. She states that a group of students were shouting, ""*Marg bar Shah*!" – Death to the Shah!" (p. 103). In the crowd were people holding pictures of Khomeini, and some holding pictures of Mossadegh, "a bald-headed ex-Prime Minister who Baba says was once so popular that he was able to make the Shah leave the country for few days" (p. 104). The demonstrators also hold black and white pictures of prisoners whom they want released or who they think are imprisoned but long lost from knowledge and sight (p. 104).

In *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America* (2003), Dumas sets a very different context for her readers. She locates it in her childhood in the U.S. before and after the Islamic Revolution and the Hostage Crisis. Although Dumas provides few political references, her narration remains focused on anecdotes about her Iranian upbringing in America, the cultural adjustments, her parents' language problems, and mainly her father's eccentric character. She finds the fact that they came to the U.S. before the Revolution made them have a different experience from the Iranians who came after: "We remember the kindness more than ever, knowing that our relatives who immigrated to this country after the Iranian Revolution did not encounter the same America" (p. 36).

In *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran* (2004), Hakakian offers an unusual context: the childhood of a Jewish girl before and during the Revolution. She positions herself as a "breed on the verge of extinction, a Jewish woman from the Islamic Republic of Iran" (p. 14). She describes the Jewish customs her family adhered to as well as the more-or-less mutually amicable and accepting state of living among Muslims, despite being a minority in Iran. Hakakian depicts the rising of Ayatollah Khomeini, the changes that

occur with the onset of the Revolution, and the Revolution's impacts upon the Jewish community. She constantly interweaves the personal with the political.

In *Lipstick Jihad: Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran* (2005)*,* Moaveni's context is post-revolutionary Iran, specifically the beginning of the presidency of Khatami, and her search for her identity as both Iranian and American. After accepting her family's state of exile in the U.S., and trying to deal with her struggle and anxiety as she straddles the two cultures, Moaveni recounts the story of her return to Iran as a young woman, where she becomes deeply involved with modern Iran young people, and their reactions to the Islamic restrictions. The narrative is given over to Moaveni's observations and reflections about the Iranian youth she encounters, and their ways of resistance, while she is on her personal journey to connect with herself and her roots during her two-years stay in Iran (2000-2002).

In *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2004) and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (2005), Satrapi situates her context as the title declares: her childhood in revolutionary Iran, and her return to her country as a young adult after four years in Vienna. In *Persepolis*, the reader witnesses the massive changes in Iranian society due to the revolution— which was first called a "cultural revolution"—as well as the impact of the Iraq-Iran war on the Iranian community, especially as it propelled the migration of people from the threatened border cities to Tehran. In *Persepolis 2*, besides her traumatic and desolate coming of age in Vienna, with all its complications and struggles, Satrapi portrays her return to Iran where she lives with her parents as a young adult. Ultimately, her terrible distress and disillusionment with the oppressive forces of the regime induce her, with her parents' blessing, to immigrate to Paris. During her return stay, Satrapi takes part in dangerous resistance. She continues to defy the regime by partying with her friends, until she is caught and dragged before the disciplinary Committee.

In *The Good Daughter: A Memoir of My Mother's Hidden Life* (2011), Darznik offers multiple contexts, all involving near family members, within her narrative. She passes from the life of her grandmother Kobra, to the life of her mother Lili, and then to her own life. Hence, she surveys the conditions of her family's life in Iran in the fifties and sixties up until her own birth, and the rise of the Islamic Revolution which caused her family's displacement to the United States where she grows up.

Style and Choice of Narrator

In *Saffron Sky: A Life Between Iran and America* (1999), as the title suggests, the author has to navigate the duality of her Iranian and American lives. Asayesh's style mirrors the life she experiences in each of the two countries. In fact, she captures the essence of Iranian culture by using transcriptions of Farsi words and in detailed descriptions of her surroundings in Iran, whereas in the American setting, her style is direct and straightforward. From the beginning, the narrator is her adult self, even when she is recounting childhood memories.

In *To See and See Again* (2000), Bahrampour's style is reflective, and it is consistently about the power of seeing and understanding anew. She reveals to the reader glimpses of her childhood both in Iran and the U.S. She uses even more Farsi words than Asayesh and explains them in English so her readers can understand. She tells her story in the first-person from the beginning of her book, but as she grows from childhood to adulthood, the reader becomes aware

of the increasing maturity of her voice. Hence, the childhood parts are narrated via Bahrampour's child voice and understanding, whereas her adult memories are told from the point of view and voice of an adult.

Dumas's style in *Funny in Farsi* (2003) is light and humorous, and it is full of puns, anecdotes, and satire. She rarely refers to life in Iran except for flashbacks about her father's upbringing, how, starting from a poor family, he managed to become a Fulbright scholar, and his family ties. Dumas's style is witty, and she employs American humor in a deft and masterful way to enhance the contrast of America to the Iranian topics she is exploring. Her adult persona is the narrator throughout the book. She rarely uses Farsi/Persian words except when she is referring to cultural customs, like her traditional Iranian wedding ceremony and its preparations.

As the title suggests negation, in *Journey from the Land of No* (2004)*,* Hakakian's style is a reaction to this negated state, a rebellious act. She uses direct language about her surroundings, Iranian customs, expectations and frustrations, and she does not hesitate to name things by their names. Although the narrator is the adult Hakakian, she portrays to the reader both the innocence of her childhood years, and her adolescent experiences. The progression of the plot is linear, and the events are chronological. She differs from the other life writers in this group by not referring to her life in the U.S. and limiting her narrative to her days in Iran, as the title implies.

As provocative as the title, *Lipstick Jihad: Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran* (2005), Moaveni's journalistic writing style is her own way of resistance/jihad against the repressive Islamic regime. Pragmatic about the struggle of Iranian youth against the regime, she offers her observations and analysis of the situation while she is working as a journalist in Iran, after a childhood in America. While there, she tries to live like the Iranian young people her age, yet she is always considered an "outsider." As a journalist, the narrator is the adult Moaveni who portrays the circumstances she encounters in Iran with unflinching realism.

The graphic novels, both written and illustrated by Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2004) and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (2005) are unique in every way. Through the medium of black-and-white illustration coupled with the words in the gutters between panels, Satrapi powerfully conveys both the factual reality of her life in pre- and revolutionary Iran, and its severe emotional impact. The narrator in *Persepolis* is Marji (the child narrator and Marjane's avatar), whom the reader witnesses growing up in *Persepolis 2*. The two books constitute a haunting testament to a child's capacity for endurance, anguish, rage, and hope.

Darznik's style in *The Good Daughter* (2011) is very particular to herself and suits the tragic and redemptive stories she recounts. In the way she tells the stories, she succeeds in capturing her grandmother's and mother's voices. The reader enters into each generation's struggles and experiences. The narrator is the adult Darznik who only learns the full story of her mother's mysterious life after her father's death. Her mother finally conveys it to her through the recording of ten cassette tapes in which she finally narrates the truth to Darznik.

Format

Due to the geopolitical contexts and diasporic factors of the authors' lives, the configuration of their texts differs widely. These factors are explored in the life writing themselves and mirrored in their formats.

Saffron Sky: A Life Between Iran and America (1999) is divided into chapters that do not follow a chronological order. The author's life between Iran and America is reflected in the chapters devoted to her homecoming to each country. Her geopolitical context, the eve of the Gulf War, situates her first visit to Iran and the beginning of her realization of her diasporic status of living "here" and "there." The chapters are interrupted by flashbacks, conversations, and events that Asayesh help the reader navigate by providing subtitles and date and time indicators. Hence, she layers personal reflections, memories, and anecdotes throughout her narrative.

Bahrampour follows a diary-like format in *To See and See Again* (2000). She uses flashbacks to link the present with her childhood memories. In a semi-chronological order, and just like the diary she keeps of important events happening in Iran and worldwide, her narrative unfolds into chapters containing personal, political, social, and cultural references. She yearns for the days of her childhood in Iran, and her return trip is for the sake of seeing again the country of her memories. Though she has settled into the American side of herself, her diasporic conditions lead her to travel on a quest for what is missing in her life.

Dumas's format for her book, *Funny in Farsi* (2003) is unusual, and her tales are presented more as *feuilletons* than as formal narrative. The chapters are not chronologically ordered and can be read at random without missing any leads. There is no linear progression except for the chapters where she gets married and begins a family. She is anchored in America, having come there before the Revolution, and she has experienced the generosity of Americans. Nonetheless, the loss of trust and welcome the Hostage Crisis caused her family and other Iranians in the U.S. is something deeply felt and strongly portrayed in her writing.

Hakakian sets the scene in *Journey from the Land of No* (2004) by providing maps of Iran and a historical note at the beginning of her book. These bring to the fore the background and setting of her stories. From a flashback to her childhood, the reader can see Hakakian's growing up in her nuclear family, her neighborhood, and her country. She also provides a chronology at the end. Her writing reaches its crescendo with her father's declaration that it is time to leave to the U.S. As an exile, there is no return for her.

Moaveni's *Lipstick Jihad: Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran* (2005) unfolds into chapters with provocative titles like "We Don't Need No Revolution," and "I'm Too Sexy for My Veil." The first chapter sets her diasporic status, childhood, upbringing, and coming of age in the United States. The remaining eight chapters are about her homecoming to Iran and her observations there. As the title indicates, she is Iranian in America and American in Iran, a duality she cannot escape. Her diasporic status initiates in her the need to explore her Iranian side and results in her return trip to Iran, where she begins her search for herself.

Satrapi's *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2004) and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (2005) unfold into chapters that follow a chronological order. Satrapi uses time and date indicators to help the reader follow her timeline. She uses a few flashbacks at the beginning of *Persepolis*. It is easy for the reader to follow the illustrations, especially with the help of the explanations, commentaries, and statements Satrapi provides in the gutters. Satrapi's diasporic state is a defining factor in her writings: the two parts of *Persepolis* are divided between her childhood life in Iran, and her subsequent life in Europe. Not only does her diasporic state shape the epochs in her life, but it is also reflected in her narrative, her growing consciousness of the political climate, and her personal maturation.

In *The Good Daughter: A Memoir of My Mother's Hidden Life* (2011), Darznik provides the reader with a prologue where she explains the story behind the writing of her book, and how it all started with a photograph she found after her father's funeral. Then from the first chapter, she delves into the narration of the stories she heard in her mother's cassette tapes. Each chapter begins with her mother's words as epigraphs. The chapters are chronological, and the narration is linear. The reader witnesses her diasporic state in the last two chapters, torn between being good/Iranian as the Good Daughter, and American.

Analysis

Nima Naghibi (2016), in *Women Write Iran,* finds that the Iranian women life-writers are part of what Leigh Gilmore (2001) calls "the memoir boom," a late twentieth-century phenomenon in North America and Western Europe (p.3), as well as of the "the therapy-driven culture of confession" (p. 132). Moreover, to borrow Karpinski's words, these life writing "contribute[…] to our understanding of the relationship of the subject to language in that this relationship always has a political dimension and material consequences" (2012, p. 224).

Language

Gelareh Asayesh, Tara Bahrampour, Firoozeh Dumas, Roya Hakakian, Azadeh Moaveni, and Jasmin Darznik have chosen English as their medium because it gives them more freedom in expressing themselves than Persian (Farsi). It also allows them to reach American and English reading audiences globally, and in so doing, it is their way to protest the repressive government in their homeland of Iran. As Hakakian (2004) puts it:

> English sheltered the adult survivor, safely inside a lighthouse. I did not know how to use the language of the censors to speak against them, to use the very language by which I had been denied so much as a Jew, a woman, a secular citizen, and a young poet. The love of Iran was still in my heart, yet I could not return. (p. 15)

As Elahi (2006) points out, "Hakakian divides her "self" into two: the English-writing self is a historian and journalist who looks back and describes the life of the Persian-speaking self who is a lover and a poet…. Persian [is] past and American [is] present" (p. 475). With great insight, Elahi goes on to say:

> To reclaim a language is to reclaim that history, but to make that history understandable to an American readership requires the use of English. These writers face a dilemma. For themselves they want to reclaim a language that is like a family heirloom, a lost treasure, a tactile thing. On the other hand, to make their stories and histories accessible to an American readership, they must use the medium in which they now travel publicly. They carry fragments of Persian on the vehicle of English—fragments of personal memory in a publicly represented history. (Elahi, 2006, p. 478)

Hence, these authors resort to using English as the main vessel for their narrative but have the need to incorporate Farsi words to make the English-speaking reader understand the Iranian culture and their diasporic status. Moreover, to put it in Karpinski's words, they move from the "bicultural and bilingual models of immigration […] to plural modes of belonging and

identity that come closest to the examples of diasporic consciousness and creolization" (Karpinski, 2012, p. 226).

For instance, Asayesh writes, "As a child, I was fascinated with the English language. It seemed to me inconceivable that anyone could speak it. English was exotic, evoking unimaginable delights in a faraway land" (1999, p. 66). Later, "English became the language in which [her] sister and [her] communicated best" (Asayesh, 1999, p. 67). She would even write her journal in English (Asayesh, 1999, p. 62).

As for Bahrampour, she writes,

> My Farsi life swims darkly below my English life. It surfaces whenever I talk to anyone who is not from my school or my immediate family. The more I speak it, the more I notice I've picked up words I don't remember having learned. In fact, there are some words I only know in Farsi, words my family uses no matter which language we are speaking. (p. 50)

For Tara, language is also performative (Elahi, 2006, p. 471): For example, the game she plays with her brother Ali is called "fake Farsi," where they "make Farsi-sounding sentences, keeping all the same pauses and inflections" as "Iranian TV broadcasters who string together unending chains of complicated words to announce the news" (Bahrampour, 1999, p. 57).

As for Dumas (2004), she comments on the fact that Farsi has more "precise words for relatives than does the English language" (p. 96). Besides making fun of her parents' English and being the translator for her mother, Dumas does not comment on her use of English. It is in her mastery of American sarcasm that she shows her inclusion and her comfort with the language.

On the other hand, Moaveni (2005) states that in her Fulbright application she mentioned she wanted to learn Arabic in order "to prepare [herself] for researching women's rights in the region" (p. 32). She comments on using English to write about Iran,

> Writing about Iran as an American journalist, in language that did not get one banned from the country, meant effacing history from the story. It was, to read most written accounts of the political schism, as though real liberals—secular intellectuals, technocrats, and activists with no ties to the clergy—either did not exist or were too irrelevant to be counted as political realities. (p. 40)

She explains her fluctuation between English and Farsi,

> In truth, the language I was speaking directed my reference points, invoking a set of experiences and accompanying beliefs particular to an American or an Iranian context. In Farsi, the kitchen-table politics of my childhood rumbled quietly in the back of my mind; in English, the count-less tracts of philosophy and political science I had absorbed as a student. (p. 52)
>
> […]
>
> The very act of speaking English invoked a sense of freedom. It was the language in which I had fought many battles, but it was also the language of an alternate existence in which I had never felt fear. It was unpolluted by the brutality of the things I heard and spoke about in Farsi, like arrests of activists and the killings of dissidents. Of course I wrote about them in English, but exported across the border of another language, their horror was somehow muted. (p. 89)

She adds that “If more than a few days went by without a single conversation in English, my spirits shriveled […] I disliked myself in Farsi. I couldn’t debate philosophy, flirt with any originality, recount jokes properly, or spar in a formal interview” (p. 89). And when asked to write a eulogy about her grandfather in English, she responds,

> The language in which I loved Agha Joon was Farsi. To speak about my adored grandfather to an audience of American strangers in English was an obscene idea to me.
>
> “It’s out of the question. How do you expect me to write a tribute of grief to Agha Joon in an alien tongue?” (p. 241)

Lastly, Darznik (2011) shows the reader how she picked up English quickly and was praised by her mother outside for speaking it, yet at home, her mother yelled at her for trying to speak English:

> My mother prided herself on the ease and speed with which I picked up English. In public with Americans, she’d nudge me and whisper in Persian, “Show them how well you can speak! Even better than they can speak their own language!” At home, though, I could expect nothing but reprimands for speaking “that” language instead of “ours.” “Don’t use your big English words on me!” she’d chide. (p. 277)

It should be noted that Satrapi faced the same issue with French. That is the reason why she wrote *Persepolis* in French. It was only translated into English later.

Displacement and Nostalgia

All the authors discussed in this chapter have faced displacement early in life. The degree of nostalgia they experience for their home country varies, and for some of them, like Asayesh, Bahrampour, and Moaveni, it has led them to make return journeys to Iran as adults.

Asayesh (1999) realizes her displacement as an adult,

> My life, my culture, fit me like my skin. It was as impossible then for me to comprehend a day when I would be a stranger to myself as it is now, looking back over the years, to comprehend my own innocence. (p. 67)

She captures the feelings of immigrants wanting to fit in due to their displacement,

> Iranians in America, like many immigrants, are a troubled group. Take away the financial problems, language barriers, and emotional challenges of immigration, take away the political schisms that cause mutual distrust, and you are still left with the central dilemma of assimilation. The need to belong is a powerful thing. It pits those of us who are children of other worlds against ourselves and one another. (p. 210)

Asayesh (1999) describes her feelings once she was back in Iran after her parents completed their studies in the U.S:

> My classmates didn't know how grateful I was to be back in a place where I could belong. In those days it was Iran, not America, that held luster in my eyes. (p. 65)

After her trip to Iran once she had secured her green card, when she is back in America, she experiences nostalgia and longing for life in Iran:

> I am unraveling. I have come back to my house, my job, and my husband, but my life seems bleak to me. I ache for the blue sky over Gonabad. I think of my family gathered around the sofreh and my heart contracts with longing. I miss the talk, the squabbling, the laughter, the houses that were never empty. (p. 57)

Yet when she was in Iran, she longed for the peaceful life she had in the U.S.,

> Starting to pack for Mashad earlier today, I wished I were packing to return to America. I longed for my house in St. Petersburg, for the sun shining on the pines outside my bedroom window, for my washer and dryer. Yet when I was in St. Petersburg I dreamed of Iran, of the houses I grew up in, the mountains, the sky. I feel trapped in a cycle of futile nostalgia. (p. 175)

Bahrampour is aware of the difference of her post-revolutionary exile and that of other Iranians: "When we finally left, we were not immigrants to America … Landing in America, we went straight to Grandma and Grandpa's backyard swimming pool in the hills" (Bahrampour, 1999, p. 355). However, she still experiences displacement and dislocation during her adolescent years. She emphasizes the feeling of permanent loss and trauma Iranians of her age experience:

> Those young enough to have adjusted to America but old enough to still remember Iran seem to have the most difficulty choosing their cultural allegiances, perhaps because they were too young to have made their own decisions about staying in Iran or leaving. (p. 348)

At the end of her book, Bahrampour (1999) reflects on her friend's calling herself "expat,"

> Even if I had stayed in Iran that long, I don't think I would have called my life "expat." The word evokes aloof, wealthy outsiders; white-suited diplomats and archaeologists; people to whom the place they live in remains foreign no matter how long they stay. It is the opposite of "immigrant," which implies large families crammed into small apartments, perhaps not legal, hampered by their foreign accents and their dark skin (expat skin is simply pink and peeling from the sun). Immigrants miss their own country—maybe they didn't want to leave it in the first place; expats love the adventure of being away. "Expat" can always go home again. "Immigrant" is close to "refuge."" (p. 354)

Bahrampour is aware of her displacement, and she longs for "a connection to the cousins who might have been like extra brothers and sisters to me, and the aunts and uncles who might have taken me beyond what Baba taught me of Iran" (pp. 183-184). As she recounts her travels outside of the United States, she knows she is looking for what feels missing (p. 205).

Dumas (2003), however, does not refer to nostalgia or displacement at all in her narrative. I ascribe that to the fact that she was only seven when she arrived to the United States.

Hakakian (2004), on the other hand, shares a very different type of displacement and nostalgia. In fact, her narrative is all about her childhood in pre-revolutionary Iran. After the Revolution, her memories are painted with her family's loss of status as members of the Jewish community, a once largely respected minority who endured many changes under the Islamic Regime. She longs for her family to be reunited. When her eldest brother Albert has to leave Iran

swiftly and go to the U.S. because of his dangerous caricatures in the magazine *Tofigh*, she writes: "Genius were gone! Something in us, in the way we were together, changed thereafter" (p. 33). Later, when her two other brothers have also been forced to go to the United States to prevent them from participating in protests, Roya is left alone with her parents. On the rooftop of their house, while witnessing the shouts of their neighbors, she feels jealous of her friend Z. whose family is gathered around her (p. 112). She says, "I envied their togetherness, their certainty, their eager anticipation for nine o'clock to strike" (p. 112).

As for Moaveni (2005), she writes about her displacement, stating that she feels "empty" (p. 232). One cannot but note similarities to Bahrampour and Asayesh in this regard. Moaveni's stay in Iran for two years as a young adult made her more aware of her diasporic state, which manifested itself in her preoccupation with language,

> The urge to translate, this preoccupation with language I had dragged around with me, had been a resistance to the sense of foreignness I felt everywhere—a distraction from the restlessness that followed me into each hemisphere. If I could only have conquered words, purged from my Farsi any trace of accent, imported the imagery of Persian verse into English prose, I had thought, then the feeling of displacement would go away. Just as I didn't like to admit, even to myself, that the *shirini* here tasted better than in Tehran, I didn't want to accept that displacement was an inescapable reality of a life between two worlds. (p. 243)

Caught between two worlds, Moaveni—as the title of her life writing indicates—is Iranian in America and American in Iran. She asserts that her "bitter sense of displacement followed [her] everywhere" (p. 112). This feeling of displacement is present even more when she has a non-Iranian boyfriend,

> The intrusion of a non-Iranian, in the role of the boyfriend, shattered the illusion that we, the second generation, would grow up in our parents' image. It cemented our displacement, shook the exile stupor and brought us face to face with our California lives. (p. 195)

From the very opening of her introduction, Moaveni (2005) speaks of nostalgia,

> I was born in Palo Alto, California, into the lap of an Iranian diaspora community awash in nostalgia and longing for an Iran many thousands of miles away. (p. ix)

She relays her nostalgia to the experience of her parents, and she is torn between her two halves,

> We were on our own, as our parents struggled with their nostalgia and political anger. As a teenager I felt there was nowhere to turn, and I often felt invisible, alone with my two irreconcilable halves. (p. 26)

Later, she admits to having lived most of her life in nostalgia,

> Living most of my life under the spell of nostalgia, an emotion that disguises itself as healthy patriotism or a fondness for Iranian classical music or a hundred other feelings that are sincerely experienced as something else. (p. 44)

Satrapi's displacement and nostalgia are portrayed in *Persepolis 2* (2005), in which she spends four of her teenage years in Vienna. Satrapi tries to compensate for her displacement first by distinguishing herself in her studies: she becomes very popular for math (p. 11), and then, for drawing clever caricatures of her teachers (p. 11). Later, she becomes friends with a group of students, "an eccentric, a punk, two orphans

and a third-worlder, we made quite a group of friends" (p. 13). To avoid being asked where she was going for the holidays, she creates the reason of "reading" to give herself a role (pp. 19-21). She connects with her friend Julie's mother while staying at their place after being kicked out from the boarding house (pp. 26-27). At sixteen, she cuts her hair in punk style and starts smoking joints to fit in with her group of friends (p. 38). She comments,

> The harder I tried to assimilate, the more I had the feeling that I was distancing myself from my culture, betraying my parents and my origins, that I was playing a game by somebody else's rules. (p. 39)

Reassured and soothed a bit by her mother's visit, Satrapi connects with her mother, feeling her affection,

> I'm sure that [my mother] understood the misery of my isolation even if she kept a straight face and gave nothing away. She left me with a bag of affection that sustained me for several months. (p. 52).

She develops the habit of spending her weekends in the commune, "I didn't always like it, but I by far preferred boring myself with [Ingrid] to having to confront my solitude and disappointments" (p. 64). Devastated by her boyfriend's cheating on her, she spends months sleeping in the streets and at the train station, contracts severe bronchitis and is hospitalized, and finally decides to return to Iran.

Darznik (2011) portrays her grandmother's exile: Kobra had to go to her parents' house every time her husband Sohrab cast her out (p. 26). She also depicts her mother Lili's first exile from school when she got divorced after her marriage as a child (p. 117), then Lili's exile to Germany (in the chapter "Exile") where she completes her studies in midwifery. And lastly, she narrates the story of her family's displacement to the United States because of the Revolution. Darznik tackles her mother's longing to see her daughter Sara after the divorce from her abusive first husband, Kazem (p. 182). Darznik also describes Lili's longing for Iran when she sees Iranians in the U.S., "in those days a phrase of Persian overheard from a distance could fill her with terrible longing, and she'd follow them with her eyes until they disappeared" (p. 275). As for Darznik herself, she did not long for Iran,

> For years my Iran had been a place in California, a place made up of women and their stories. When I thought of my family's first years in America, it was mostly the sadness of these women that I remembered, the sadness that clung to them and then trailed their daughters as they made their own way in this country. That was Iran to me, and I wanted no part of that Iran. (p. 317)

One must admire not only the perseverance of these women writers, but also their creativity in taking everything they have at hand—experiences of suffering, displacement, and the loss of parts of themselves and their heritage—and using them to rebuild, in a new language, a way of life that does not deny the past, but incorporates it creatively into the present and future. In this, they are in the company of countless women who have done the same over the millenia.

Construction of Identity

Growing up, Asayesh (1999) was preached to by her father on the importance of retaining her identity (p. 109). She fears that she is not "Iranian enough … that […] in the heat of

American life, [her] identity is wisping away from [her]" (p. 122). Moreover, she is torn between the two poles, Iran and the United States,

> I am convulsed by the contradictions of my life, straddling a fissure between two worlds that are immeasurably distant. My mind is always whispering for me to find a more stable spot. Pick one side or the other. Pick one world or the other. (p. 122)

Bahrampour (1999) accepts her diasporic identity, which is reflected by the title of her life writing (i.e., the use of "and" suggests embracing the two cultures). Born to an American mother and an Iranian Muslim father, Tara is able to move between the borders of the two cultures easily. Her memories of her childhood in pre-revolutionary Iran are rustic. Yet she is aware of being the daughter of an expat, and that she is going to "end up in minidresses and tights like [her] mother" (1999, p. 354).

Dumas (2003) does not address her identity directly in her narrative. Yet she too is aware that she is an integral part of her family,

> Before I married Francois, I told him that I came with a tribe—a free set of Ginsu knives with every purchase, so to speak. Francois said he loved tribes, especially mine. Now, whenever we visit my relatives, all of whom dote on my husband, I realize that he didn't marry me despite my tribe, he married me because of them. Without my relatives, I am but a thread; together, we form a colorful and elaborate Persian carpet. (p. 103)

Having lived through the Iranian revolution as a child, Hakakian (1966) is consequently critical of both the Pahlavi regime and the Islamist one. As a woman, she is aware of the restrictions the Islamist ideology has imposed upon all dimensions of life (legal, educational, professional, and physical). She feels guilt for not being able to help her fellow Jews who stayed in Iran, and she writes about her time in Iran to make her story heard, the story of a "breed on the verge of extinction, a Jewish woman from the Islamic Republic of Iran living in the United States" (Hakakian, 2004, p. 14). She does not discuss her identity directly in her narrative, but she does provide the events and factors that shape her rebellion. As the leader of her class at school, she incites the insurrection against the new principal who refuses to grant the students their customary eight-day holiday:

> I climbed on a table and shouted, "We've had eight days off every year. This year is no different."
>
> Nazila completed my thought: "I say we teach the sister a lesson. Let's get out now and not come back until after the holiday."
>
> In a stampede, we chanted, "Down with Moghadam!" and took to the schoolyard. No one led anyone. No one followed anyone. For most of 1978, kept home from school, we had studied the rebels on the streets. We knew the look and sound of a revolution. And we were, at last, making our own. (p. 168)

Another incident concerns the essay she wrote about the Iran-Iraq war, and the way her teacher talks to her about it:

> Everyone, school staff included, has asked to see your essay. Do you know what would happen if I gave it to them?" She did not wait for my reply. "Your scrawny

> ass would be hauled away to prison, that's what! The topic of the composition was war. A patriotic one-pager would have done! Instead, you ramble on about how destructive it is. A genius I've got on my hands! Writing just what the Islamic Society is looking to find, day in and day out, to do away with your breed. (p. 213)

From the start of her narrative, Moaveni (2005) asserts,

> Growing up, I had no doubt that I was Persian. Persian like a fluffy cat, a silky carpet—a vaguely Oriental notion belonging to history, untraceable on a map. It was the term we insisted on using at the time, embarrassed by any association with Iran, the modern country, the hostage-taking Death Star. Living a myth, a fantasy, made it easier to be Iranian in America. (p. vii)

Yet with her experience of living two years in Iran and being considered an "outsider," she realizes the difference between the Iranian youth at the time and herself, a diasporic Iranian. Moaveni (2005) comments on her identity,

> All of us, Khaleh Zahra, Kimia, and I, had arrived in Tehran as Iranians of the imagination. We had Iranian identities, but they were formed by our memories and the Farsi-speaking parts of our soul—the part that responded, with years of accumulated references, when someone said "love" to us in Farsi, our first language of affection. But we could not navigate the Tehran of today, or share in the collective consciousness of the Iranians who never left. (p. 86)

At the end, Moaveni comes to terms with her "Iranian-American" identity, instead of "Persian-American," as she used to call herself before. She adds, "The search for home, for Iran, had taken me not to a place but back to myself" (p. 245).

Satrapi's identity evolves in the two graphic novels, *Persepolis* (2004) and *Persepolis 2* (2005). Going from the child narrator in the first book, the reader sees the teenager and the adult Satrapi in *Persepolis 2*. From the first to the second book, she evolves from the rebellious ten-year-old Marji to the young adult Satrapi. She is nourished by her parents' political activism, her uncle Anoosh's advice, and her grandmother's wisdom. She is outspoken and exposed to adult conversations from the beginning—like her father's explaining to her that her grandfather was the prince the Shah had overthrown and made prime minister (pp. 22-23), and the torture her parents' friends received in prison (pp. 50-52). At the end of her conversation with Anoosh about her family's political activism, her uncle says, "I tell you all this because it's important that you know. Our family memory must not be lost. Even if it's not easy for you, even if you don't understand it all." She replies, "Don't worry I'll never forget" (2004, p. 60). The night before her departure to Vienna, her grandmother advises her, "Always keep your dignity and be true to yourself" (2004, p. 150). That is the reason why Satrapi feels conflicted about her identity and is remorseful when she pretends to be French (2005, p. 41). Later, she shouts, "I am Iranian and proud of it," redeeming her identity (2005, p. 43). When she returns to Iran, she experiences a cultural shock for not fitting in with her friends. She states, "They all looked like the heroines of American TV series, ready to get married at the drop of a hat, if the opportunity presented itself" (2005, p. 105). After an identity crisis and an attempt at suicide, Marjane regains confidence in herself and becomes an aerobics teacher, "strong and invincible like this, I was going to meet my new destiny" (2005, p. 121). She resists the regime in her own way by going to parties (2005, p. 152), wearing red socks and being called before the regime's disciplinary Committee (p. 148),

and having a boyfriend and admitting it to her classmates (p. 149). At the end, even her decision to divorce him and go to France is Satrapi's way of regaining her identity and becoming free of all the restrictions imposed by the Islamic regime.

Darznik (2011) sheds light on her mother's construction of identity from her persevering journey to overcome her circumstances and fight for an education and a status. Lili goes from the lowly status of an uneducated, divorced woman to having a license in midwifery from Germany. As a child, Darznik was raised with the concept of what a good Iranian daughter was,

> Iranian daughters, like The Good Daughter of my mother's stories, were shy, quiet, polite, and modest. Some, but not all, of her friends' daughters were Iranian daughters. They addressed their elders with the formal *shoma,* never *toh.* They knew how to serve a proper tea. And when they laughed, they hid their sweet smiles behind their hands. (p. 295)

Growing up in the U.S., Darznik speaks of herself as being like her mother, "I was my mother's daughter; I didn't turn away. I was eleven years old and already I understood shame and secrecy, pride and resourcefulness" (p. 299). At her high school, Darznik wants to pass as an American,

> At my small private school there were just three other Iranian girls and we kept to ourselves and did our best not to call attention to the Iranian parts of our lives. We did our best to pass as American. I, in any case, did my best to pass. (p. 305)

After college, Darznik distances herself and behaves like Americans,

> I hadn't made a proper Iranian marriage and that had made everything else—graduate school, work, boyfriends, my daylong treks through New York—possible. I was not my mother's Good Daughter or even merely a good Iranian daughter. For days at a time no one in the world, and certainly not my mother, Lili, knew where I was. I'd go home only at school holidays, just like all my American classmates, and often not even then. (p. 315)

Hence, one of the main themes that emerged in the life writing by the authors of this group is how they carve their identity while trying to maintain their Iranian origins and heritage on one hand and assimilating into the host country on the other. In their quest for themselves, they realize that their identity is multifold. There is more to it than being torn between "home" and "host" countries. It is a hyphenated state that the women writers of the Diaspora experience everywhere they go.

A General Analysis of These Life writing

I argue that the authors of these life writing "question and destabilize monolithic categories of identity" via their use of language (Karpinski, 2012, pp. 226-227). Moreover, gleaning from Karpinski's findings, I affirm that the Iranian women life writing "reveal[…] complications of language, identity, and identification that confound such census-imposed categories as first language and second language, traditionally applied to immigrants in a new country" (2012, p. 226). Furthermore, they have developed what Bhabha calls a "hybrid culture," and are thus both "eastern and western." In fact, their "ambivalent" identity is a product of living at the "border" (Bhabha, 1994) between the two worlds. Hence, as Brah (1996) argues, these narratives remain in a "diasporic space" where there is a discourse of power that tries to

categorize people within communities of “us” and “them.” Moreover, being Western and Eastern at the same time, these autobiographers show themselves to be in the midst of Orientalist representation in the U.S., adapting the Orientalist discourse to some extent while maintaining the “hybrid” identity that results from their living in a “diasporic space” (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994; and Brah, 1996). In portraying the reality of their experiences, they aim to rectify the political, cultural, and historical prejudices and distortions hyphenated Iranian diasporic authors, like themselves, face. Furthermore, these life writing allow imperial western culture to travel from the U.S. back the Third World, using English (i.e., the language of the Empire) to become even more widespread. Most of all, however, and very movingly, these life writing written in Diaspora struggle with what Avatar Brah (1996) calls the notion of “home―here and there.”

Their primary audience comprises those individuals who understand English at first place and who are able to relate to the Western experience of these authors in exploring ways of maintaining their hereditary culture (Grewal, 2005).

Conclusion

Iranian-American women life writers face the challenge of arguing against widespread stereotypes about Iran. They are portraying themselves as both suffering and strong, capable of honesty and courage, but also of laughter and compassion, and they are anything but the stereotypical view of Iranian women as passive victims. Because they love their lost homeland, they are also resisting the demonization of Iran as synonymous with George W. Bush’s “Axis of Evil.” Due to the political climate in the United States in 1980, these women authors endured the feeling of cultural alienation when the Hostage Crisis erupted and anti-Iranian sentiment in the US ran high. Hence, separated from their own land, they have faced xenophobia in America, the country of their refuge.

Although I acknowledge the valid claims of self-orientalization in the life writing expressed by Whitlock (2007) and Fotouhi (2016) and discussed in Chapter 3, I have to note that I did not find evidence of self-orientalization in the life writing discussed in this chapter. However, I agree with Whitlock (2008) that the life writing by the Iranian women in diaspora I explored in this chapter are characterized by their “subjective engagement with historical revision, trauma and loss, and cataclysmic social changes” (p. 8). Moreover, I have illustrated that the authors of these life writing are writing in English from the hybrid place they occupy and “are aware of the multiplicity of their condition” (Fotouhi, 2018, p. 62). As Iranian-Americans, their diasporic identity (besides being “other”) is a “dual/hyphenated/split identity” (Mostofi, 2003, p. 696).

Furthermore, by using English as their medium of expression and mixing both English and Persian/Farsi, the life writers are constructing their “hybrid space of belonging” (Fotouhi, 2010, p. 83), since they are “drawing on and emphasizing recognizable elements of both their home and host cultures” (Fotouhi, 2010, p. 86). As Fotouhi (2010) argues, the life writers demonstrate that “language and the culture attached to it, can be one of the basic principles for opening up a transcultural and transnational space of belonging as a way for overcoming one’s sense of national and cultural unhomeliness” (p. 83). In other words, the authors in this chapter navigate the invisible divide between the two cultures by using the combination of English and Persian/Farsi in their writing, allowing them to move smoothly between the two cultures. This is also reflected via the flashbacks, the maintaining and observing of Iranian culture which is

possible through speaking of Farsi, and the determination to participate in cultural events such as Nowruz celebration. They want to capture the "here" and "there" in making a new identity that includes a combination of aspects of the usual Iranian life as well as the American. First, their writing help by making them feel more comfortable with the different layers of their identity, their dual existence, and their choice of what to incorporate in their life. Moreover, they help guide others who take part in shaping their new identities. These identities are neither the conventional stereotype of Iranian women nor of the imaginary American. Their English life writing are for an audience formed by their fellow first and second generation Iranian immigrants as well as those who came to the United States as children.

Finally, I have shown in this chapter that these English life writing by Iranian women in Diaspora differ in terms of context, style, choice of narrator, and format. Moreover, the texts are reflective of their authors' geopolitical context and diasporic conditions. In fact, I have demonstrated, through the comparison of the stylistic characteristics as well as the content of these life writing, that the authors portray the political situations in both their home as well as their host countries. I believe these factors are explored in the life writing through the choice of the narrator and the voice of the author. For example, Dumas captures both the recalling of the welcoming her family received in the United States before the Islamic Revolution on one hand; and, the misfortunes (e.g. her father not able to find a job) as well as the racism her extended family encountered when they arrived to the United States after the Islamic Revolution and the Hostage Crisis. Although Dumas does not directly criticize the Iranian regime (some claim that this is due to her wanting her book to pass the censorship in Iran), she does detail the consequences Iranians face due to the Islamic regime political choices.

Although I do acknowledge that a small sample of seven authors cannot represent all Iranian women, I assert that the life writing discussed in this chapter have successfully presented to their audience different aspects of the life of Iranian women of various classes, background, education, and beliefs. Not only did the authors share about themselves but they have incorporated in their narratives other Iranian women whether kin-related, fellow classmates, neighbors, etc. By choosing these life writing, I aim to shed light on their various representations of Iranian women.

I find that these life writing—despite the Orientalist claims that they reinforce western stereotypes about Iranian women—aim to deconstruct these stereotypes. In fact, each author discussed in this chapter has faced stereotypes about Iranian women whether at their arrival in the host country or even at their adult years at work. By sharing their experience with their audience, they acknowledge the existence of this stereotyping on one hand and fight against it on the other.

Finally, the different generations navigate with ease the invisible divide between the two cultures. This is reflected by their mastery of the host country's language, culture, and social mores without letting go of their Iranian heritage, language, and culture. In fact, they are able to reconcile the duality of their existence by creating an "in between" state/status, a third space, where they pick and chose what they want from each.

Having covered the first group of life writing, I now move to the second group that I analyze in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6
Life writing by Iranian Women in Diaspora: A Way To Tell

It is such a strong part of Iranian culture to never reveal private matters: we don't air our dirty laundry in public, as Mother would say, and besides, private lives are trivial and not worth writing about.

—Azar Nafisi, *Things I've Been Silent About*, p. xv.

Normally, no one bothered to teach women any skills at all, except those needed for housekeeping, husbandry, and weaving. In Iran, women are considered zaifeh, the weak sex, as frail in mind as in body, incapable of making important decisions. It was held to be futile and even dangerous to teach a girl more than she needed to be a pious, virtuous wife.

—Sattarreh Farman Farmaian, *Daughter of Persia*, p. 30.

I wanted to write a book that would help correct Western stereotype of Islam; especially the image of Muslim women as docile, forlorn creatures.
—Shirin Ebadi, *Iran Awakening*, p. 210.

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide content analysis of my second group of life writing in English. They are written by seven Iranian women who have been living in Diaspora entirely as adults. In fact, all but two of them have been living in the United States since they left Iran. The two exceptions are Shirin Ebadi (1947), who has chosen the United Kingdom for her exile destination, and Marina Nemat (1965), who immigrated to Canada. The life writing I discuss in this chapter are Farideh Goldin's (1953) *Wedding Song Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman* (2003), Sattareh Farman Farmaian's (1921-2012) *Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from*

Her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution (1992), Nahid Rachlin's (1947) *Persian Girls* (2006), Shirin Ebadi's (1947) *Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution And Hope* (2006), Azar Nafisi's (1948) *Things I've Been Silent About: Memories Of A Prodigal Daughter* (2008), Marina Nemat's (1965) *Prisoner of Tehran: One Woman's Story of Survival Inside an Iranian Prison (2007)*, and Shahla Talebi's (1957) *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran* (2011). I have chosen these life writing because they represent the variety of subgenres in the field, and I group them into three categories: creative nonfiction life writing (Goldin's, Rachlin's, and Nafisi's), the life writing of public figures written collaboratively with a co-author (Ebadi's and Farman Farmaian's), and prison life writing (Nemat's and Talebi's).

In this chapter, as I did with the authors in Chapter 5, I introduce each author with a biographical sketch and a short summary of her life writing.[90] In terms of each category, I study the context of each life writing, its style and choice of narrator, and its format. Despite the differences in their subgenres, these life writing share a great deal of common ground. While each author tells her life story, she weaves other stories, especially those of the women in her family and community, into her own. Furthermore, each life writing presented here responds to stereotypes of Iranian women in the United States, and all of them entwine the personal with the political. Each of them has its individual themes. Yet all the authors feel the need to share their stories with English-speaking audiences in order to educate these audiences about the Iranian women living among them.

Authors' Bios, Life Writing Summaries, and Dedications

Farideh Goldin (1953-present)

In 1953, Farideh Goldin was born to a Jewish family in Shiraz, Iran. Until she started primary school, her family lived in the *mahaleh*, or Jewish quarter. Later, they moved to a Muslim neighborhood. There, while she did develop friendships with Muslim neighbors, she also faced some anti-Semitism. She went on to study literature at Pahlavi University in Shiraz, where she felt "frustrated by living in two different worlds" (Goldin, 2003, p. 155). She dreamt of America, and in 1975, managed to move there where she finished her Bachelor of Arts degree at Old Dominion University (ODU) in Virginia, U.S.A. Shortly after graduation, she had to go back to Iran briefly, only to return to the U.S. in the fall of 1976 to earn a certificate in Women's Studies at ODU. She returned once more to Iran, but after the Islamic Revolution and the tightening grip on minorities in Iran, her family moved to Tel Aviv. By this time, she was married and had started a family. She waited for her three daughters to be older before she returned to ODU to earn her graduate degree in Humanities, as well as an MFA in Creative Writing (1995).

Wedding Song Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman (2003)

Wedding Song Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman (2003) by Farideh Goldin relates the story of Goldin's upbringing in a poor Jewish community in Shiraz, where her paternal grandfather is the great rabbi and communal judge for the Jews, in prerevolutionary Iran. Goldin lives in a house shared with her father's siblings and headed by his mother, Tavous. She first describes her childhood in the Jewish ghetto, and then, after the family's move to an all Muslim community, what it was like to grow up among Muslims as a Jew. She relates stories of Jewish

[90] For detailed summaries of the life writing discussed, refer to the appendixes.

traditions and customs—among them, the customary checking of the bride's virginity, the wedding preparations and celebrations, and what was expected from women—things she learned by accompanying Tavous to social commitments. As she grows older, towards the end of her university studies, the demonstrations against the Shah begin, and she witnesses a brutal encounter between the army and the students. Afraid of being forced into an arranged marriage, she goes by herself to claim the passport her father has applied for on her behalf. She then procures a visa to the United States and purchases a one-way ticket after convincing her father that she will only spend a month there. In the United States, she finishes her college studies at Old Dominion, and meets Norman, who proposes to her. Her father does not approve of Norman, and she is forced to return to Iran where she is introduced to various suitors. Refusing to succumb to her father's wish to marry one of them, Goldin persuades him to purchase her return ticket to the United States. Her father stipulates that she promise to wait for a year before deciding to marry Norman, and she keeps her promise.

Goldin dedicates the book to her family in deeply moving terms:

> This book is dedicated to my family:
>
> My husband Norman always believed in me and gave me "a room of my own."
>
> My daughters Lena, Yael, and Rachel were the first to pull the stories out of the family well, rich with tradition, life-giving, yet dark and hidden. Along with my siblings and their spouses, they were my first readers. They laughed and cried with me across all these years as I tried to transform my spoken stories into written words.
>
> My mother Rouhi, whose *rouh*, her soul, will forever be intertwined with mine. Maman, how could I ever try to forget you?
>
> My father Esghel, who gave to our extended family and the Jewish community until there wasn't anything left to give. Baba, *mehila* please forgive me. I love you.

Sattareh Farman Farmaian (1921-2012)

Sattareh Farman Farmaian was born in 1921 to a Muslim family in Shiraz, Iran. Her father, Abdol Hossein Mirza Farmanfarm (1858-1939), was a Prince of the Qajar dynasty. He had eight wives. Sattareh's mother was his third wife, and Sattareh was the fifteenth of thirty-six children, of whom eight were from her mother. She attended the Tarbiat School in Tehran (a Baha'i school) until it was closed by Reza Shah Pahlavi. She then entered the American School for Girls in the Presbyterian missionary compound in Tehran. She was the first Iranian to study at the University of Southern California where she earned her B.A. in sociology (1946) and her M. S. W. (1948). In 1948, she married Arun Chaudhuri (a student in film studies at the University of Southern California), and in 1949, they had a daughter, Mitra. Chaudhuri attempted to find work in India but failed. He deserted Sattareh who was able to divorce him in 1954. After working for the United Nations, Sattareh returned to Iran in 1958. She was the founder and director of the Tehran School of Social Work (1958-1979), the first school of social work in Iran. After the Islamic Revolution and her arrest by radical students who took over the School, she fled back to the United States where she worked for Children's Services at the Los Angeles County Department of Social Services (1980-1992). She received the Silver Achievement Award from the Greater Los Angeles YWCA in 1993.

Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from Her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution (1992)

Daughter of Persia (1992), by Sattareh Farman Farmaian, is the account of her life in Iran from the Constitutional Monarchy of Qajar, through Reza Khan and his son Mohammad Reza Shah, up to the Islamic Republic. Farmaian lived in her father's harem compound from her birth until 1930. Her father, who was the Qajar Minister of War, had eight wives and 36 children. She was educated at the American school where she was encouraged to continue her education in the United States. Sattareh became the first Persian to study at the University of Southern California where she specialized in social work. She married an Indian student (Aroon) and had a daughter (Mitra). After finishing her studies, Sattareh worked for a while in the United States before returning to Baghdad on a UN mission. After World War II, there were few health and educational resources in Iran (i.e., in 1945). Sattareh went back to Iran where she established and managed the School of Social Work (1958-1979) and helped many families and students. At times she was supported by those in power, and at others, she was hindered by them. After the collapse of the Shah's regime, radical students took over the School, and Sattareh was arrested in 1979. She was advised to leave the country, since, among other accusations, she was accused of collaborating with the Shah's regime. Fearful for her life, she fled back to the United States.

She dedicates her book to her daughter and grandchildren:

To my daughter, Mitra, and my grandchildren, Kayvon and Juni

Nahid Rachlin (1947-present)

Nahid Rachlin was born to a Muslim family in 1947 in Abadan, Iran. She immigrated to the United States in 1962 and became a naturalized citizen in 1969. She earned her B.A. in psychology from Lindenwood College in Missouri. She is married to Howard Rachlin, a professor of psychology, and they have a daughter, Leia. Rachlin attended the Writing Program at Columbia University on a Doubleday-Columbia Fellowship. Later, she attended Stanford University on a Wallace Stegner Fellowship. She visited Iran twelve years after she had left, which inspired her to write her first novel, *Foreigner* (1978). She has written essays, novels, and one life writing. Her work has been translated into Portuguese, Polish, Italian, Dutch, German, Czech, Arabic, and Persian. She teaches writing workshops both in the United States and internationally.

Persian Girls (2006)

Persian Girls (2006) is Nahid Rachlin's recollection of her childhood and coming of age in prerevolutionary Iran and her subsequent education in the United States. Until the age of nine, Nahid is lovingly raised by her maternal aunt Maryam, a barren widow, among a circle of Muslim religious widows. One day, Nahid's father suddenly shows up at her primary school and abducts her, forcing her to go back with him to Ahvaz where her birth family lives. The coldness of her mother, Mohtaram, and her siblings towards Nahid make her miserable. She keeps begging to be returned to Maryam, but her parents dismiss her requests. She does, however, become close to her older sister Pari, who introduces her to American movies. The movies become their escape from the restrictions of Iranian culture. They both revolt against the traditional roles imposed upon women by Iranian Islamic culture. Although she has promised Nahid to marry for love, Pari is coerced by her parents into an arranged marriage to a wealthy suitor. Pari soon asks her father for help in getting a divorce, since her husband is abusive.

Wanting to avoid the same fate, Nahid convinces her father to send her to continue her education in America. He chooses Lindenwood College in Missouri, where she finishes her studies. Though she encounters stereotypes about Iranian women there, she learns about American culture which she contrasts with the Iranian. When she receives the news of Pari's death, Nahid returns to Iran to try and resolve the mystery behind her sister's passing away.

The dedication to her book is simple:

For Pari, Manijeb, Farzaneh, Farzin, Maryam, and Mohtaram with love

Shirin Ebadi (1947-present)

Shirin Ebadi was born in 1947 to a practicing Muslim academic family in Hamadan, Iran. Her father was the head of Hamadan's Registry Office, and he was among the first lecturers in commercial law, as well as being a writer. Her family moved to Tehran when she was a year old. When she grew up, she studied law at Tehran University and then sat the entrance exams for the Department of Justice. She started serving as a judge in March of 1969, while earning her doctorate with honors in private law from Tehran University (1971). She was the first woman to serve as a judge in Iran. With the 1979 Islamic Revolution, she, along with other female judges, was dismissed from her post. They were relegated to inferior clerical duties because of the belief that Islam forbade women to serve as judges. Thanks to the women's protests, the authorities promoted the former female judges to the position of "experts" in the Justice Department. Ebadi, however, filed for early retirement, and her request was accepted. She was not able to get a lawyer's license until 1992 when she started her own practice.

Ebadi is married and has two daughters. She has written books and published articles in Iranian newspapers during her time of unemployment. She is a human rights activist and founder of the Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran. She had also taught at the University and had remained in Iran despite threats to her life. In 2003, Ebadi received the Nobel Peace Prize for her leading work for democracy and human rights, especially women's, children's, and refugee rights. Yet, since June 2009, she has been in exile in the UK because of increased persecution of Iranian citizens accused of being critical of the current regime.

Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope (2006)

Iran Awakening (2006) by Shirin Ebadi covers three decades of war and political upheaval— from 1970 to 2003—in Iran. During the worst of it, Ebadi found her name on a list of intellectuals and activists targeted for death by Iran's intelligence ministry. The book starts with the forward-thinking Mohammad Mossadeqh's loss of the premiership in 1953, due to the coup instigated against him by the secret manoeuvres of the British and Americans, and moves forward to the Islamic Revolution, and then up to the death of the Iranian-Canadian photographer Zahra Kazemi in Tehran's Evin prison in 2003. Ebadi was arrested for taping the testimony of a "lebas-shaksi" (i.e., a member of the plainclothes paramilitary) who was reporting his colleagues. She was imprisoned in solitary confinement for her political beliefs. Upon her release, Ebadi continued to take cases of gross violations against women and children. She defended a nine-year-old Kurdish girl who had been raped. According to Ebadi, the new penal code turned back the clock 1,400 years, since it mandated that a woman's life was only worth half that of a man's. Moreover, it stated that a woman's court testimony was only half as reliable as a man's, and a woman had to secure her husband's permission to secure a divorce. It should be noted that

Khomeini reinstated polygamy, gave men full rights to divorce along with sole custody of the children, and changed the marriageable age for women to nine years. Despite all the atrocities, Ebadi remained for years in Iran, though many members of the elite fled. She states that her experience motivated her to struggle harder for justice and civil rights.

A simple dedication:

> In memory of my mother and my older sister, Mina, both of whom passed away during the writing of this book.

Azar Nafisi (1948-present)

Azar Nafisi was born in 1948 in Tehran, Iran. Her father, Ahmad Nafisi, was the mayor of Tehran (1961-1963), and her mother, Nezhat Nafisi, joined the first group of women in the Iranian Parliament in the fall of 1963. At thirteen years old, her parents sent her to study in Lancaster, England, and then in Switzerland. She went on to earn a degree in English and American literature as well as completing her Ph.D. at the University of Oklahoma in the United States, but she returned to Iran just before the 1979 Iranian Revolution. She taught English literature at Tehran University for eighteen years but struggled against the implementation of the revolution's ideas and procedures. She was dismissed from the University for not wearing the veil. She moved with her husband and two children to the United States in 1997 and became a citizen in 2008. She is known for her book, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (2003).

Things I've Been Silent About: Memories of a Prodigal Daughter (2008)

Things I've Been Silent About (2008) by Azar Nafisi unfolds in thirty-one semi-chronological chapters where the author alternates narratives of her own memories with excerpts from her father's memoirs. In addition, Nafisi educates the reader about the wealth of Iranian ancient and modern literature, current politics, and culture. She has a close relationship with her father, who introduces her to storytelling as a child. Storytelling becomes their close way of communicating, but her rapport with her mother is taxing to them both because of Azar's character and her way of concealing her father's infidelities. Nafisi relates her mother's sorrow about her first marriage and inability to continue her education; her father's term as mayor of Tehran (1961-1963) and his imprisonment; her parents' divorce and her father's second marriage to Shahin; and her education in Europe, as well as her first and second marriages. She interweaves the personal with political details about Iran and the world as she spotlights the Friday gatherings at her family's house in Tehran. Azar becomes politically active in demonstrations while completing her degree in the United States, where she meets her second husband, Bijan Naderi. Upon completing her degree, Bijan and Azar return to Tehran where she teaches at the University until she is suspended for refusing to wear the veil after the Islamic Revolution. They decide to move to the United States with their two children.

Azar dedicates her book:

> In memory of my parents, Ahmad and Neshat Nafisi
>
> To my brother and my family,

Bijan, Negar, and Dara Naderi

Prison Memoirs

Marina Nemat (1965-present)

Marina Nemat was born in 1965 to a Russian Orthodox Christian family in Tehran, Iran. She was leading a normal childhood until January 15, 1982, when, at the age of sixteen, she was arrested and imprisoned for her views against the revolution. She had rebelled against the calculus teacher at school and written in the school underground newspaper. This put her on the principal's list of anti-revolutionary students and caused her arrest and imprisonment for over two years. During her imprisonment, she was tortured, converted under duress to Islam, and married to Ali, an interrogator at Evin prison. He was assassinated, and in his last words to his father, he adjured him to return Marina to her family. After her release, Marina continued her education and married André. They managed to escape with their son to Canada in 1991. In Canada, she had another son. She earned a Certificate in Creative Writing from the School of Continuing Studies at the University of Toronto where she now teaches memoir writing. She is the recipient of the inaugural Human Dignity Award from the European Parliament (2007), the prestigious Grinzane Prize in Italy (2008), and the Morris Abram Human Rights Award from the UN Watch in Geneva, Switzerland (2014). She is an Aurea Fellow at the University of Toronto's Massey College (2008-2009), and she is a regular speaker at high schools, universities, and conferences nationally and internationally. She also sits on the Board of Directors at the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT), as well as Vigdis, a Norwegian charitable organization that provides legal aid assistance to female political prisoners around the world. Moreover, she is the chair of the Writers in Exile Committee at PEN Canada, a member of the International Council of the Oslo Freedom Forum, and she has been a volunteer at her church's Refugee Committee since 2010.

Prisoner of Tehran: One Woman's Story of Survival Inside an Iranian Prison (2007)

Prisoner of Tehran: One Woman's Story of Survival Inside an Iranian Prison (2007) by Marina Nemat details her life before and after the Islamic Revolution, her imprisonment in the notorious Evin prison, and her move to Canada. Nemat is arrested at the age of sixteen. On the principal's list of rebellious students for walking out on the calculus teacher who preaches about the Islamic Regime instead of teaching them math, and because she has published a forbidden newspaper at school, she is wanted by the revolutionary guards. However, Nemat begins her story with her 1991 arrival with her family in Toronto, Canada, where her brother is already living. Once there, securely established as middle class, she starts having flashbacks about her life in Evin. After narrating the story of her arrest and torture by her interrogator, Hamehd, in Chapter 2, she provides a flashback to her childhood. In the next eighteen chapters, she alternates between memories of her upbringing and memories of her imprisonment. Sentenced to death, Nemat is sent before the firing squad only to be rescued by Ali, her second interrogator, who has fallen in love with her and is using his family connections to insure her pardon by Khomeini. Nonetheless, Ali threatens to torture Nemat's parents and friend if she refuses to marry him. Under such duress, Nemat converts to Islam and marries Ali, who is later killed by his coworkers. This leaves Nemat entrusted to Ali's father who honours Ali's dying request and returns her to her family. She is released, marries André, and leaves for Canada after giving birth to her first son.

Shahla Talebi (1957-present)

Shahla Talebi was born in 1957 in Iran to a non-practicing Muslim family influenced by Marxism. She was imprisoned twice: once under the Shah's regime; and the second time, under the Islamic regime in Iran. She was tortured in prison. She was married at the time, but her husband was also tortured and executed in prison. She lived through the 1979 Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war. She left Iran in 1994 for the United States where she continued her education. She earned her B.A. in social-cultural anthropology at the University of California-Berkeley (1999), her M. Phil. in social-cultural anthropology at Columbia University (2002), her M.A. in social-cultural anthropology at Columbia University (2004), and her Ph.D. in social-cultural anthropology at Columbia University (2007). She is an assistant professor of religious studies at the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies at Arizona State University.

Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran (2011)

Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran (2011) by Shahla Talebi is her account of her two imprisonments (under the Shah and the Islamic Regime) as well as the stories of her fellow inmates where she documents their friendships, their survival under all sorts of torture, and their resistance and agency. She weaves personal with historical facts, and she uses flashbacks to narrate stories of her childhood and upbringing. She also depicts the political atmosphere outside the prison, along with the international pressure on Iran regarding its prison conditions and torture, especially from the United States.

In 1977, at eighteen, Talebi is arrested by SAVAK for reading and sharing forbidden books. In six non-chronological chapters, Talebi chronicles her life in prison along with stories of her fellow inmates, like Roya, Fozi, Kobra, and Maryam. She speaks of torture and the 1988 execution of prisoners, among whom is her husband, Hamid. She also depicts the struggle of prisoners and how some become informants and take part in telling on their friends and torturing them. She describes how the prisoners battle to remain sane by supporting each other. After the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the Iranian government pressures the prisoners to sign a letter repudiating their "crimes" which will allow them to be temporarily freed. Requests by parents are also accepted. Hence, due to her father's interference, Talebi is granted a temporary release, and her family urges her to leave Iran. She moves to the United States where she continues her education.

Analysis of the Three Different Genres

Prison Life writing

According to Nima Naghibi (2016), the proliferation of diasporic Iranian women prison narratives written in English started with Marina Nemat's *Prisoner of Tehran* (2007) (p. 45**).** It was followed by the publication of Camelia Entekhabi-Fard's (2007) *Camelia, Save Yourself by Telling the Truth,* and the collection, *We Lived to Tell: Political Prison Memoirs of Iranian Women* (Agah, Mehr, and Parsi, 2007), Zarah Ghahramani's (2008) *My Life as a Traitor,* Haleh Esfandiari's (2009) *My Prison, My Home: One Woman's Story of Captivity in Iran,* Roxana Saberi's (2010) *Between Two Worlds: My Life and Captivity in Iran,* and Shahla Talebi's (2011) *Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran.* To capture the impact of this type of narrative, as well as examine its subgenres, I have chosen to analyze Nemat's and Talebi's works in this chapter. Despite both being prison narratives that depict the torture

received by the authors and their fellow prisoners, each belongs to a different subgenre. Each also differs in terms of style and voice. In fact, *Prisoner of Tehran* is a "captivity narrative,"[91] whereas *Ghosts of Revolution* is a "*testimonio*."[92] Yet they both share their experience of flashbacks and ongoing trauma, their need to talk about their imprisonment, their description of the torture they endured as well as that of their fellow prisoners, their resistance in prison, and their political as well as historical references to life outside the prison. Both Nemat (2007) and Talebi (2011) speak about their trauma after decades of their imprisonment. Their stories, as Schaffer and Smith (2004) argue, "formerly locked in silence, open wounds and re-trigger traumatic feelings once they are told" (p. 4). Moreover, drawing from Schaffer and Smith (2004), I argue that they

> invite an ethical response from […] readers […] have strong affective dimensions for both the tellers and their audiences, affects that can be channeled in negative and positive ways, through personal, political, legal and aesthetic circuits that assist, but can also impede the advance of human rights. (pp. 4-5)

Furthermore, I assert that they tell their stories "in order to work through the political and social, psychic and embodied residues of trauma and loss" and to "claim new identities and assert their participation in the public sphere" (Schaffer & Smith, 2004, p. 19).

Context

Prisoner of Tehran (2007) starts with Marina Nemat's disclaimer that her book is a work of "nonfiction." She also states that she has changed some names to protect the lives and privacy of her cellmates (p. ix). She adds,

> While working on this book, I had to rely on my memory, which, like any other, has a habit of fading and playing tricks. Some things I remember clearly, as if they happened a week ago, but others are fragmented and foggy; after all, more than twenty years have gone by. (p. ix)

She situates her arrival with her husband and son at Pearson's International Airport in Toronto, Canada on August 28, 1991 (p. 1). She then walks the reader through their settling into their new life, and how she talked herself through it:

> The past was gone, and it was in everyone's best interest that I put it behind me. We had to build a new life in this strange country that had offered us refuge when we had nowhere to go. I had to concentrate all my energy on survival. I had to do this for my husband and my son. (p. 2)

But in July 2000, haunted by memories of Evin, Nemat starts having difficulty sleeping, and flashbacks occur even during the day. In her growing stress, she begins to write her memories down:

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[91] "The captivity narrative can be traced back to an early modern Western literary tradition that reflects Western anxieties about colonial exploration and exploitation. North America is where the captivity genre originated and flourished, capitalizing on white settlers' fear of "Indians" and the physical threat they presumably posed to the vulnerable American or British female body." (Naghibi, 2016, p. 49)

[92] The term used by John Beverly (2004). It translates as testimony or the act of bearing witness to injustice: "*Testimonio* represents an affirmation of the individual subject, even of individual growth and transformation, but in connection with a group or a class situation marked by marginalization, oppression, and struggle" (as cited in Naghibi, 2016, pp. 67-68).

> My memories became words and broke free from their induced hibernation. I believed that once I put them on paper, I would feel better—but I didn't. I needed more. I couldn't keep my manuscript buried in a bedroom drawer. I was a witness and had to tell my story. (p. 2)

It is within this context of being a "witness" that Nemat feels the urge to share her memories. Thus, she transports the reader to Tehran of the eighties, first through recalling the night of her arrest on January 15, 1982 (pp. 9-10). Then she moves through flashbacks to her childhood, the story of her grandmother's life, her growing up and summer holidays on the Caspian Sea, and her first love—and also to details of her imprisonment and her life after her release, which lead to her immigration with her husband and elder son to Canada.

The context of *Ghosts of Revolution* (2011) encompasses Shahla Talebi's two imprisonments, the first during the Shah's reign (1977), and the second during the Islamic Regime (1983-1992). She explains, "Both times, my arrest occurred after the harshest crackdown on opponents under each regime, yet at the beginning of changes in prison conditions" (p. 4). Like Nemat, Talebi feels the need to document her experience as a witness. She states,

> I hence write today for the sake of all those friends—whom I either knew personally or my soul knew of their spirit of resistance and desire for justice—whose refusal to submit to the power of money and violence cost their lives. It is in the spirit and for the sake of these always present friends—ghosts of justice and freedom—that I live. (p. 11)

Although Talebi left Iran in 1993 and went on to live in the United States from 1994 onwards, she continued to struggle with flashbacks to her imprisonment. She recognized the enduring trauma of her prison experience in her writing:

> My body relived prison experiences whenever I felt that an authoritative force was challenging the limits of my will. I dreamed of torture when I felt pressured even by the deadlines I set for myself while writing my doctoral dissertation, which led to my unconscious resistance to meeting them. (p. 19)

Talebi describes her two imprisonments in detail, while contextualizing her memories within the situation inside and outside the prison, as well as with historical, cultural, political, and literary references.

Style and Choice of Narrator

In *Prisoner of Tehran* (2007), Nemat's style is reflective of the literature she used to read, in the sense that it mirrors the "captivity narratives" where the capturer/investigator, Ali, falls in love with Nemat, the prisoner. Hence, the book reads more like a novel where the narrator keeps fluctuating between Marina, the child, and Marina the adult. In fact, whenever the flashback is about Nemat's childhood, the narrator captures her child's voice, excitement, and language. However, when the flashback is about her imprisonment, the narrator is her mature, suffering self.

In *Ghosts of Revolution* (2011), Talebi's style is far more complex than Nemat's. Being a "testimonio," Talebi's book reads like an adult's firsthand and very detailed yet reflective storytelling/witnessing of profound struggle. In fact, Talebi brings to the reader philosophical discussions where she refers to literary works, political entanglements, and her own analysis of

other characters. Despite the flashbacks to her childhood, Talebi maintains the adult narrator perspective when recalling her memories.

Format

In *Prisoner of Tehran* (2007), Nemat alternates chapters between her memories in Evin and her life before her arrest. The prison memories are in chronological order whereas her growing up memories are only semi-chronological. They also include her grandmother's story and memoir. Hence, Nemat braids the two sides of her identity (i.e., inside and outside the prison) by separating them into different chapters with specific titles to help the reader keep track of the flashbacks and the timeline.

In *Ghosts of Revolution* (2011), Talebi's narration is not chronological, yet it includes titles, subtitles, and dates to help the reader follow the events and situate them in time and place. The main goal of the author is to testify to the circumstances lived by the prisoners at the different prisons—Evin (in Tehran), Ghezel Hesar (in Karaj), and Gohar Dasht—as well as their resistance; and their friendships and survival. Hence Talebi's book reads like *feuilletons, with* each dedicated to a character but linked to the other through a net of common events (i.e., torture), place, and dialogue.

Language

In *Prisoner of Tehran* (2007), Nemat refers to speaking Russian with her grandmother as well as with her first love, Arash, and his grandmother. She does not justify her use of English for her narration in her book. However, she does refer to herself as an avid English reader, and she states that she would borrow books from the used books store. Furthermore, in her interview on CBC, Nemat stresses that she was "a Narnia type of girl," and that "reading these fairy tales prepared her" for her prison life.

In *Ghosts of Revolution* (2011), Talebi comments on her use of English for her narration. She states, "English, however, was not 'the language of forgetting' for me; instead, it offered me a distance from which I was able to reflect on my past" (p. 211). She adds, "I had left the country in which my voice was violently silenced, where many of my beloved ones' lives were taken from them simply over one word, *no*." (p. 211).

Collaborative Life writing of Public Figures

Context

As its title indicates, *Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from Her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution* (1992) situates the life of Sattareh Farman Farmaian from her childhood in her father's harem at the fall of the Qajar dynasty to her flight from Iran after the Islamic Revolution. At the beginning of the book, Sattareh addresses her reader directly in the section, "To the Reader," where she examines her life within the context of her father, Shazdeh, who was a "remarkable" man "born to power and privilege" (1992, p. xi). She then shares her twofold aim in writing her memories: first, to bring about a better understanding between her Iranian and American friends; and, second, to have her American friends reflect "on the consequences of their own well-meaning efforts to remake the world in their image" (p. xi).

Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution And Hope (2006) has a specific context: the ordeal of Shirin Ebadi's life in Iran, where she is haunted by the constant threat of assassination by the authorities (p. xv). While Ebadi does go back in time to chronicle her childhood, the main part of her narrative involves her adult life, in which she was striving to bring justice to the oppressed clients she represented as a lawyer, while trying to live a normal life and taking care of her family. With these intimate details about her human rights struggles, Ebadi sheds light upon the conditions of life for women in Iran, with particular reference to political uprisings and events. At the time this book was published, Ebadi had decided to stay in Iran despite the threats to her life. But in June 2009, she ultimately decided to go into exile in the United Kingdom.

Style and Choice of Narrator

Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from Her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution (1992) is the result of collaborative work between Sattareh Farman Farmaian and Dona Munker.[93] They had over a hundred hours of interviews, and an "oral history" project that Munker took four and a half years to record (and which she supplemented with "her own extensive research into Persian traditions and culture), Iran's modern history, and the causes of the Islamic Revolution" (http://www.storydriven.net/_u__b_daughter_of_persia__a_woman_s_journey_from_her_father_s_harem_through_the_i_40054.htm#STORY). Hence, whereas the narrator is the adult Sattareh Farman Farmaian, the actual writing style belongs to Munker. Munker's style of writing is direct: she uses simple language, mostly in the form of statements which, on the one hand, document the facts and events, and on the other, reflect the formal voice of Sattareh. Munker succeeds in portraying Sattareh's "politically neutral" stance (1992, p. 216). She also keeps the details of Sattareh's marriage vague, perhaps in an attempt to protect Sattareh's privacy and the formality of her social mores.

Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope (2006) is also a collaborative work between Shirin Ebadi and the Iranian-American journalist, Azadeh Moaveni.[94] Moaveni maintains her journalistic style of writing while capturing Ebadi's voice as her adult narrator. It is a straightforward narrative characterized by Ebadi's direct political stance and views, and her legal cases, as well as details about her personal life as a wife and the mother of two daughters. Hence, the book reveals the ways she interacts with her daughters, prepares their meals, etc. However, her husband is rarely mentioned and remains only a slightly developed character in the book.

Format

Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from Her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution (1992) is divided into four sections: "In Shazdeh's Realm," "Yengeh Donya," "Khanom," and "Earthquake." Each section is subdivided into chapters that follow a chronological order beginning with Sattareh's birth and upbringing in her father's harem, her education in Tehran and the United States, her work in the United States and with the United Nations, her return to Iran after ten years and her establishing the School of Social Work there, and her ultimate decision to return to the United States. Intertwined with these personal accounts

[93] Dona Munker is an American published author and lecturer. She is the writer of *Daughter of Persia*, which she coauthored with Sattareh Farman Farmaian. For more information on Munker, consult: http://www.storydriven.net/bio.htm#targetname

[94] For details about Moaveni, refer to Chapter 5 where I provide her bio.

are historical and political references ranging from the fall of the Qajar dynasty to the years following the Islamic Revolution.

Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope (2006) is divided into twelve distinct chapters that follow a chronological order. The chapters offer synopses of Ebadi's childhood, education, legal career, and family life. She uses the epilogue to discuss the case she brought against the Treasury Department in a federal court in New York (p. 212) before she could publish her book in the United States because of American sanctions against Iran. She states,

> When I received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003, I believed that at least in the West, in open societies that protected freedom of expression, I could publish a memoir that would help correct stereotypes about Muslim women. (p. 210)
>
> […]
>
> In Iran, the Islamic system censors books, casts up Internet firewalls, and bans satellite television in an effort to prevent Iranians from accessing information from the outside world. It seemed incomprehensible to me that the U.S. government, the self-proclaimed protector of a free way of life, would seek to regulate what Americans could or could not read, a practice that is called censorship when enacted by authoritarian regimes. What was the difference between the censorship in Iran and this censorship in the United States? (p. 211)

Analysis

Although *Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from Her Father's Harem Through the Islamic Revolution* (1992) and *Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution And Hope* (2006) differ in terms of their timelines, plots, styles, and formats, they share some common themes. Both insist upon the importance of education, family, and hard work. Both Farmaian and Ebadi are important Iranian female public figures—one in the field of social work, and the other in the legal realm. Both were initially supportive of the Islamic Revolution, but they soon realized its negative impact upon themselves personally, as well as upon Iranian women at large. Despite their arrests, they both continued to believe in non-violence and dialogue. However, in their writing, their approaches differ: the older Farmaian is careful not to mention any other women activists, whereas Ebadi refers freely to colleagues in the legal battle against the oppressive regime.

Moreover, Farmaian comes from a different generation and certainly a very different social class from Ebadi. She idealizes her father:

> […] what amazes me above all is that my father taught his daughters to ride, swim, and face down tempests. I am absolutely certain that no other Persian nobleman at that time had ever thought of such a thing. (p. 61)

She also praises his control over his property and the people who shared his household:

> […] for "family" in our small universe meant not only our father and mothers and brothers and sisters and other relatives who lived in and around the compound, but all the other people inside our walls: our nannies, our lalehs or male caretakers, the cooks, guards, porters, stewards, secretaries, artisans, old military pensioners, and everyone else father supported. They and we all belonged to him, and were fed, protected, and cared for by him. This supreme bond with our

> benefactor, which Iranians call "the bond of bread and salt," gave us all an indissoluble connection. (p.7)

On a completely different note, she is aware of making a change in the lives of her students and fellow Iranians through her School of Social Work in Tehran (1958-1979). She writes,

> Slowly but steadily my students and graduates were making themselves known for something that was all but unique in our country: complete honesty and a willingness to undertake even hard, dirty jobs to help other human beings. (p. 233)

In fact, Farmaian sets her students at the school a high standard of openness and an expectation of service above any other consideration:

> Our sole concern was to learn how to help our people and humanity. For this reason the School of Social Work would never concern itself with politics, neither our own government's nor any other's. Nor did the religion or ethnic origin of others matter to us. (p. 216)

It is tragic that despite Farmaian's apolitical stance, she would be arrested by her own students and accused by them: "You are with the oppressors. You were trained in the imperialist country of America. You are one of them, and this school has been serving the imperialists and the CIA" (p. 331). Swept away by the revolutionary doctrines, they wanted her to be executed by Khomeini. She knew then that she had no choice but to flee her homeland.

As for Ebadi, she never glorifies her family or her upbringing, and neither does she compare herself to her brother. She writes: "Throughout most of my childhood years—as is the way with children, whose family is the only world they know—I never observed that our household was special" (p. 11). Later she goes on to say, "In our house, my parents meted out attention, affection, and discipline equally. I never felt that my father cared about Jafar more because he was the only boy, or that Jafar was more special than I was" (p. 112). In this regard, Ebadi differs from Farmaian who had to fight for her father's attention. Moreover, like Farmaian but very much in her own way, Ebadi sees herself as different from traditional girls because of her egalitarian upbringing. She adds,

> It was not until I was much older that I realized how gender equality was impressed on me first and foremost at home, by example. It was only when I surveyed my own sense of place in the world from an adult perspective that I saw how my upbringing spared me from the low self-esteem and learned dependence that I observed in women reared in more traditional homes. (p. 12)

Despite her father's refusal to discuss politics at home, Ebadi starts being involved in protests at the University (p. 16). At twenty-three years old, after she has earned her law degree, she becomes a judge in March 1970 (p. 21). Regardless of the political unrest occurring in opposition to the Shah, who crushes all opponents, people keep their faith in the civil judiciary system. Ebadi writes,

> Even I, who was slowly starting to pay attention to the political chatter around me, put on my skirt suit each morning and drove to a Ministry of Justice I felt proud to represent. The shah's regime prosecuted its political opponents in military courts, and kept those kangaroo trials out of the public justice system. In

> the military courts, dissidents faced the vague umbrella charges—sabotage, jeopardizing national security, and the like—that repressive regimes reserve for any activity they view as threatening. But the legal system most Iranians appealed to for anything from divorce to fraud operated in parallel, and as a consequence remained largely fair and uncorrupt in people's minds. (p. 23)

Although Ebadi thought that she would remain free under the new regime, she soon realized that her marriage was being affected negatively by it. In fact, with the new Islamic penal code, she felt that her husband "stayed a person," but she "became chattel" (p. 53). Although she knew that her husband would never take advantage of the new laws, she resolved her fears by taking him to the notary office where he signed away the benefits and powers the Islamic Republic was conferring upon him (p. 54). Later on, when she was told a woman could not be a judge, she realized that in the revolutionaries' "hierarchy of priorities, women's rights would forever come last" (p. 56). Deprived of her judgeship, she was relegated by the regime to a lesser position as "specialist" in the Guardianship Office of Minors and the Mentally Ill. Due to the political climate, in which one's beliefs could lead to be persecution if not worse, Ebadi took precautions and burned all the questionable books she had in her home library (the writings of Marx and Lenin among them) (p. 66). A year after her second daughter was born, Ebadi became eligible for early retirement (allowable after fifteen years of service at the ministry), so she applied for retirement which was granted. She describes the situation in Iran at that time as follows,

> It was a time when you had to weigh your ambitions, sensibilities, and ethics, and decide how you were going to deal with the new regime. My indignation ran too deep and my personality was too rebellious for me to do anything but vent my scorn at every opportunity. Retirement was the only choice that made any sense. It never occurred to me to think of the career consequences, for in my mind the regime had already killed our careers. (p. 73)

Despite the high numbers of Iranians, including some of her close friends, who were leaving the country to start a new life abroad, Ebadi maintained that as "an ethical and political stand, I didn't believe in leaving Iran" (p. 79). A turning point, Ebadi states, was the execution of her brother-in-law Fuad in Evin prison (p. 89). In 1992, when it became possible for women to practice law again, she got her permit and opened an office, only to realize that she could not compromise her principles. Consequently, she decided to take only *pro bono* cases (p. 111). She became aware of the importance and impact of media, which she used to her benefit to showcase nationally and internationally the human rights cases she would defend. On June 28, 2000, Ebadi was called to court where she was taken to Evin prison because of her role in Amir Farshad's case (pp. 163-164). After her release, she kept being threatened, but she continued taking such dangerous cases as Zahra Kazemi's.[95] When Ebadi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her courageous work, she was welcomed home by a delegation at the airport in Tehran upon her return from France.

It should be noted that unlike Farmaian, the other public figure whose writings are examined here, Ebadi does not mention the Shah's decision to unveil women, nor does she mention the SAVAK, the Shah's notorious secret police.

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[95] Zahra Kazemi was an Iranian Canadian journalist who was accused of spying, tortured in an Iranian prison, and died under torture.

Ultimately, as their life writing demonstrate, the two women both made substantial contributions to the welfare of their country. Shirin Ebadi offered many constructive proposals to the members of parliament in order to make significant changes to the civil codes, whereas Farmaian helped in the creation of a system of social work and the promotion of public health in Iran. They both reflect in their books that without securing women's rights, any effort to establish democracy cannot succeed.

Creative Nonfiction Life writing

Context

Wedding Song Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman (2003) falls within the unusual context of Farideh Goldin's life as a Jew, a minority in Iran. At the end of the book, she states: "The purpose of writing this book, and publishing it, was simply to tell the truth as I knew it, my truth. I have changed names to preserve the dignity and privacy of many in this work of creative nonfiction" (p. 200). Goldin's context is knit carefully through the stories she narrates about the different characters and their relationships as Jews, first in the *mahaleh*, and then in the Muslim community her family moved to while she was growing up. It is in the context of an observant Jewish family, highly respected within their own community, since her grandfather was a leading rabbi and religious leader. It is also within the context of her mother's child marriage and its impact on her relationship with her husband's family. Traditionally, a young Jewish wife had to serve her husband's family. This situation created a lasting sense of friction and angst in Farideh, and it had considerable impact upon the choices she was to make in her own life. Goldin braids stories of the powerful family matriarch, her paternal grandmother, into her own.

The context of *Persian Girls* (2006) has a double focus: one is the author's life and the other, her beloved sister Pari's. Nahid Rachlin reveals how profound an impact Pari's life and death have had upon her. It highlights their upbringing in the traditional setting in Iran and their secret, shared yearning for freedom—Pari dreams of becoming an actress, and Nahid longs to be a writer. Only Nahid achieves her dream, as Pari's enforced and disastrous marriage and subsequent early death deny her any chance to follow her own.

Things I've Been Silent About (2008) has a personal, political, and literary context. It is Azar Nafisi's rendition of her childhood, coming of age, and adult life both in Iran and abroad. In it, she details her complex relationship with her mother and her cherished one with her father, and she goes on to write about her first and second marriages. Throughout these personal chronicles, she weaves references to her father's political work as mayor of Tehran, his later imprisonment, and his memoirs. She also incorporates her mother's political engagement in the Iranian parliament as well as the regular gatherings she leads in their home. As she weaves these various strands of her story together, Nafisi meshes them with proud references to ancient Iranian literary *chef d'ouvres*, like the Shahnameh (Book of Kings), which she gleaned through the love of storytelling she shared as a child with her father. She also includes more modern Iranian literature and poetry.

Style and Choice of Narrator

Farideh Goldin's style in *Wedding Song Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman* (2003) is straightforward and sincere, though it reflects some bitterness toward her traditional upbringing. This bitterness is especially evident in her relationship with her mother. While Goldin is the adult

narrator, she is nevertheless able to capture the essence of herself as a child, with all her childish excitement and natural behavior. Her own is not the only voice, however, that Goldin expresses. She also allows the voice of the family matriarch, her paternal grandmother, to shine through—for instance, when the latter is recounting memories of her own child marriage.

Nahid Rachlin's style in *Persian Girls* (2006) is remarkable in its rich details and the novel-like evolution of its plot. Rachlin, a long-time fiction writer, writes as if she is holding a camera at every moment and from every angle to record all that she has seen and heard. She also writes as if she is perceiving events through her older sister Pari's eyes. Moreover, she beautifully incorporates the most significant bits of dialogue that have impacted her life. All these literary techniques come together masterfully in Rachlin's writing, through the power of her voice as the story's adult narrator.

Azar Nafisi's style in *Things I've Been Silent About* (2008) can occasionally come across as a bit stilted and academic, especially when she is discussing famous Iranian literature. Yet, it does not fail to portray the personal as well through the words of her adult narrator, who is herself. Nafisi successfully relays her anger towards her mother, especially after her parents' divorce, which diminishes as she grows older. She is also skilled at capturing intense emotions, like those she experiences when she is abused.

Format

Wedding Song Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman (2003) by Farideh Goldin unfolds in six chapters followed by an epilogue. Each chapter is divided into subchapters with titles to help the reader navigate the memories Goldin shares. Goldin also provides photographs to offer a visual of the things that are important for her to remember as part of her family heritage (material things like jewelry), memories (like those of family gatherings), and travels (like her visit to the mausoleum in Hamadan).

Persian Girls (2006) has forty-one chapters followed by Rachlin's epilogue. The first part portrays her life in Iran until she leaves for the United States at age seventeen to continue her education. The rest alternates between Rachlin's life in the United States and the news she gets from her family in Iran up until the day she receives the telephone call informing her of her sister's Pari's death. In her determination to find the truth behind her sister's death, Rachlin returns to Iran for a visit and recasts her life there for a while. She incorporates letters and actual dialogues from amongst her cast of characters into her thread of personal memories.

Things I've Been Silent About (2008), by Azar Nafisi, is narrated in forty-one chapters grouped into four sections. They are followed by a suggested reading list concerning moments in Iranian history. It should be noted that beside providing chapter titles to help the reader follow the narrative, Nafisi also gives dates and references to specific encounters to bring clarity to her timeline. However, there is one chapter devoted to a very specific and unique topic. It is the chapter entitled "Rudabeh's Story," and it is Nafisi's retelling of the famous Iranian myth she learned as a child from her father's book of Iranian myths for children. She also weaves into her narrative parts of her father's memoirs. Hence, one can suggest that the book overall has an encyclopedic format.

Analysis

Wedding Song Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman (2003), *Persian Girls* (2006), and *Things I've Been Silent About* (2008) are creative nonfiction life writing where each author

depicts her circle of family, friends, and those whom she encounters in the greater world beyond them, her life in Iran as well as in the United States, and vital memories of events that have significantly impacted her life. It should be noted that all three authors were in the United States when they wrote and published their respective life writing. In personal interviews with these authors, each has mentioned that her book would not have passed censorship in Iran. However, although all three authors have become Iranian-Americans, they differ greatly in their attitude towards Iran. In fact, at the time of writing her book, Nahid Rachlin did not feel that she belonged to American culture at all. She had continued to experience "ambivalent feelings that had plagued [her] over the years in America, being neither here nor there" (p. 202). Despite having "finally found freedom in America," she states that "there was a hole inside [her], a lack. [She] didn't feel either Iranian or American" (p. 203). Yet in her interview with Suzanne Parker on Brookdale Television, Rachlin relates this feeling of "where do I belong?" to her childhood and the fact that her mother had given her over to her aunt Maryam as a baby. Having found that "sense of belonging" in New York, Rachlin adds that it is due to the fact that New Yorkers "feel a little like [she] does," since they come from somewhere else—something she could not feel at Lindenwood College where the students had never been "exposed to other cultures." In the interview, when asked if she sees herself speaking for Iranian women in general, Rachlin answers, "Not consciously." As for Farideh Goldin, in the interview, "Belonging Excerpt 1," she stresses the fact that she has not taught her daughters Persian, that "[she's] cut [herself] off Iran," and that she has "managed to find a place in between." For her, one needs "to choose from various cultures what talks to you and what nourishes your soul." She adds that she has found that, and that she is happy. In "Excerpt 2," she asserts that she has "faith in America. It's a country of immigrants." And for her, she is not "a citizen of one place…one country… [but] [her] country was [formed by] bits and pieces of each one." Azar Nafisi, in "On Iran's Revolution," states that she does not "want the world to see through [her] prism," for she believes that as a writer, her "duty first and foremost is the truth." In her interview on QTV, Nafisi relates that she has written *Things I've Been Silent About* (2008) in "response to her inner censor," and that she wanted to "challenge the place where [she] lived and [herself]." Finally, after reading their life writing and listening to their interviews, one cannot but highlight their commitment to share with the English reading audience their views and aspirations for Iranian women in both Iran and the Diaspora.

Conclusion

Despite the three different categories and their subgenres,[96] the life writing I analyze in this chapter have been written by authors who all have a hyphenated identity in America, except for Shirin Ebadi, who has chosen to live in exile in the United Kingdom. All but one of the other authors is Iranian American. Marina Nemat is the only Iranian Canadian. Regardless of their differences in context, format, style, and theme, the authors remain wary of their diasporic condition where they continually face stereotypes about Iranian women. And extending Karpinski's work to the Iranian women life writing, I argue that "these narratives offer performances of identity that […] can be described as translative, transnational, border-crossing, migratory, diasporic, and multiple" (2012, p. 28). Moreover, they have a real need to tell about

[96] I have grouped the life writing in this chapter in three categories: creative nonfiction life writing (Goldin's, Rachlin's, and Nafisi's), collaborative public figures' life writing (Ebadi's and Farman Farmaian's), and prison life writing (Nemat's and Talebi's).

the Iranian part of their lives. They are writing against the silencing they have faced. However, anomalous as their position is, they do not long to return to Iran. They have chosen to leave as mature adults. Several, like Farideh Goldin and Nahid Rachlin, left Iran because they were looking for both personal and political freedom and greater educational opportunities. Azar Nafisi wanted better opportunities for her family. And four of them left for the simple reason that they desired to remain alive. Marina Nemat, Shahla Talebi, Sattareh Farman Farmaian and Shirin Ebadi fled their homeland and made new homes abroad. Except for Farmaian, the daughter of a Qajar prince, they all belonged to middle or upper middle-class families in Iran. Common threads in all these life writing are the value of education, the importance of family, and the complex gender relations in Iran that exist throughout all class and religious backgrounds.

I assert that the authors write as a form of therapy, certainly as a way to deal with their present displacement, but more importantly, with the loss and angst of the past. This whole group of life writing is not about displacement and nostalgia, though elements of both are present in them, but, rather about the struggle to survive despite the limitations they experienced as children and adults in both the public and private spheres in Iran. The authors are carving a new space, a new existence, for themselves as well as for other women in Diaspora who have earned their way within the host country. As Karpinski (2012) puts it, these authors are

> […] caught up in relations of power, and unless [they] elaborate[…] strategies of resistance, [they] may run the risk of losing [themselves] in translation through language and techniques "borrowed" from the dominant culture, or through commodification of [their] "difference" by liberal discourses of plurality." (pp. 31-32)

They are calling for a better understanding of Iran despite all the suffering they experienced there. They try, each in their own way and writing style, to convey to their audience especially in the United States that one needs to distinguish between the Iranian state/government and the Iranian culture. In fact, the Iranian culture—just like other cultures—is evolving. Moreover, despite including restrictions, the Iranian culture maintains emotional connectivity and freedom. In the face of stereotypes of Iranian women they encounter, and in spite of the traumatic circumstances they have endured, they have carved a new identity, one that is multifold, which respects their Iranian culture, but also values the social peace their host country provides.

Conclusion

This dissertation studies fourteen life writing in English by diasporic Iranian women in North America. Analysis of the writings shows the authors' profound engagement with the socio-political circumstances, both at home in Iran and abroad, that have impacted their lives. Specifically, all these texts have been written in reference to the multiple upheavals in the contemporary history of Iran. The overwhelming political event shared by all of them is the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Some of the writers were young children—five years old or younger—when they fled Iran with their families (which makes them the current 1.75 generation immigrants), while others were slightly older children or in their early teens (making them the 1.5 generation immigrants). Still others fled as adults, which makes them first generation immigrants. No matter, however, at what age they came to North America, the Islamic Revolution left its mark upon them, either directly or indirectly. Gleaning from the findings of Naghibi (2016) and Karpinski (2012), I argue that while these life writing consider the revolution as "a calamitous event" (Naghibi, 2016, p. 130) on the one hand, they are "idiomatic testimonies"[97] on the other. Hence the women's lives before the revolution, as portrayed in their narratives, to borrow Naghibi's words, are "celebratory and idealized," but become "fraught and conflicted" after it (2016, p. 130). Moreover, as Karpinski (2012) puts it, these life writing "contribute[…] to our understanding of the relationship of the subject to language in that this relationship always has a political dimension and material consequences" (p. 224).

I also argue that in these life writing, the personal is political and that my findings show that political is personal as well for the authors. In fact, there has been so much debate about the feminist argument "the personal is political" in the last few decades. The catchphrase/statement/slogan "the personal is political" is coined by Carol Harnisch (1970, p. 76); and it has been used by feminists since then to denote, as Schuster (2017) puts it, "the close relationship between public and private aspects of feminist struggles" (p. 647). Despite the fact that Harnisch's essay was written during the second wave of the women's movement in the United States, "her slogan [the personal is political] reached feminists across the west and across generations" (Schuster, 2017, p. 647). Moreover, regardless of the differences in the aims, demands, and characteristics of the second wave of feminism and the third, "the personal is political" is still used by feminists who assert, following Budgeon's (2001) ideas, that women's personal experiences are political because all women share these experiences due to the patriarchal structures in society (as cited in Schuster, 2017, p. 648). With the reinterpretation of this phrase by third wave feminists (i.e., since the 1990s) and the attribution of more importance to practices of gender roles in the family, the meaning of *the personal is political* has become to signify "that individual practices are political if they promote feminist ideas and values" (Schuster, 2017, p. 649).

Thus, by applying this reinterpretation to the fourteen Iranian women in diaspora whose life writing I have explored in this thesis, I find that the authors are not only promoting feminist ideology but also are taking a political stand. In other words, for them, the personal is political on one hand; but also, on the other, my findings show that the political is personal for them. In fact, the authors—each in her own way and from her individual perspective—share how they lived

[97] Karpinski (2012) defines idiomatic testimony as "narrative accounts grounded in concrete singular and historical circumstances" (p. 224).

through the trauma of the Islamic Revolution, how the history of Iran impacted their fates and consciousness, and how the vexed Iranian/American relationship since the Hostage Crisis has shaped their image as hyphenated identities in the United States in particular and elsewhere in general. It is because the political is personal that they write about the multi-facets of their identities in response to political events that occurred in their country of origin, the host country, or worldwide, and which affect the geopolitical climate of both countries. Thus, the authors of both cohorts of life writing discussed in Chapter 5 and 6 share details of such events. The majority of them have the Islamic Revolution as their focal point (with the exception of Moaveni who experienced the reforms of the Iranian president Khatami during her stay in Iran). I argue that for these women authors to understand themselves and the evolution of their identities, they have had to probe the region's history as well as its geopolitical trajectory.

As Matte (2011) puts it, "the concept of transnationalization gives political meaning to solidarity that not only extends across borders but attempts to overcome our tendency to compartmentalize struggles" (p. viii). By expanding the concept of transnationalization to life writing, I mean that the authors give political meaning to their stories. Moreover, I argue that their agency is manifested by the act of telling their stories as well as by "naming and resisting oppression," as per the definition of agency by Zerbe Enns et al. (2020). Hence, the women authors of the life writing I discuss, in bringing to light the various forms of oppression they were subjected to in Iran, expand the dimensions of their work far across national borders and cultural boundaries. In fact, they write in English not only to extend their readership across borders, but also to move beyond their position in the host country as hyphenated individuals. They write in English because they want English-speaking people to know about the geopolitical situation in Iran, the impact of the Islamic Revolution upon their lives, and the ongoing oppression of dissident voices by the Iranian state. They also want English-speaking readers to grasp more fully what it means to be a woman in all the varied inflections of Iranian culture. Although in their life writing they call for the support of Iranian women, their voices remain unconnected to other women's movements. Theirs is a unique situation that demands its own approach. And since "transnationalization is also a process of stretching and contracting the scope of collective action" (Dufour et al., 2011, p. 3), I find that the authors have consciously engaged in this process of expansion and contraction when they choose to publish their writing in English. As a group, even though never a formal one, they are determined to make their stories known and their voices heard in the world of their diaspora.

Moreover, drawing on the concept of transnationalization of solidarities by Dufour et al.(2011), who define it as "the processes not only by which solidarities travel beyond established national borders, but also by which they are deepened among women or among feminists" (p. 4), I argue that these fourteen Iranian diasporic women authors, by forming "kinship networks" that portray and reflect the links for accessing the information shared in these texts and the various traditions and cultures of Iranians (Whitlock, 2008 & Fotouhi, 2015a), are transnationalizing their life writing. In fact, they are deepening the connections among them on one hand, and opening up a space for other hyphenated women.

According to Faist (2000), "transnational social spaces […] [or] transnationalization […] overlaps globalization but typically has a more limited purview" (p. 192). Moreover, Faist (2000) argues that the approach of "border-crossing expansion of social space" under the main predication of transnationalization results in "transnational syncretism: diffusion of culture and

emergence of new types—mixed identities" (p. 201). My findings show that the authors have multi-layered or mixed identities, and in their life writing, they promote the diffusion of their birth culture while concomitantly, they are making their lives fully in a very different foreign one. It should be noted that they are creating a hybrid culture which claims space for both the Iranian and American sides of their identities. They insist upon being known in both aspects of their identity. They do not cede their Iranian identity to their diasporic North American one. Their identity is thus a deeply intentional distillation of both. In all fourteen instances of life writing, the authors are highly educated women, and the theme of education is highlighted throughout their works. The authors have fought for their right to education. Their informed and thoughtful writing undercuts every stereotype of Iranian women as being submissive. These are women who feel called to speak up and give their stories to the world.

In Chapter 1, I began by setting these life writing into context by providing a socio-political overview of the history of Iran from the Qajar Dynasty (1785-1925) to the current presidency of Hassan Rouhani (1948). With this, I included a timeline of the controversial American-Iranian relationship. My rationale behind this chapter was to supply a simple summary of the events that impacted Iranians in general and Iranian women in particular, in order to illuminate the analysis of the life writing in Chapters 5 and 6.

Scholarship devoted to autobiography, along with essential criticism in the field, contributes to our understanding of the evolution of autobiography. It also illuminates the development of the genre of "life writing," which, though sharing similarities, is not the same as autobiography. Hence, in Chapter 2, I detail the history of autobiography as a literary genre from its inception in the 18th century and its various definitions since, before I define the differences amongst autobiography, memoir, and life writing. In this, I draw from scholars like Marlene Kadar, Laura Marcus, Leigh Gilmore, Eva C. Karpinski, and Nima Naghibi. Recognizing that "the term 'life writing' widens the field and makes it more inclusive" (Kadar, 2005, p. 26), and in order to be consistent with contemporary autobiography studies as well as research done on immigrant women's narratives (Karpinski, 2012), I adopt the term "life writing" to refer to the narratives by Iranian women in diaspora that I have chosen for my research. I also discuss the criticism of this genre, and the *rôle* gender plays in the production as well as the public reception of life writing. Moreover, much like what Brodzki and Schenck (1988) argue about the cultural pressure to remain silent which has always been imposed upon female autobiographers everywhere, the life writing I analyze in Chapters 5 and 6 show that their Iranian authors have faced this very same kind of cultural pressure and have learned to resist it.

Scholars have varying opinions about the origin of life writing by Iranian women. In fact, Goldin (2004) argued that the defining characteristic of these life writing was that they started with the 1979 Islamic Revolution, but were published outside Iran in either English or French. Four years later, Motlagh (2008) contended that the Iranian-American women's life writing were triggered by the 9/11 tragedy and the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003. More recently, Fotouhi (2015) asserted that the spur of diasporic Iranian literature in English came in three waves, coinciding with "significant social, political and historical events in the last three and a half decades" (p. 7). Finally, Naghibi (2016) attributed their flourishing to the "memoir boom" (p. 3) and "the therapy driven culture of confession" (p. 132). Although all these claims are valid, my readings of my chosen life writing, as well as the interviews with their authors, confirmed Fotouhi's argument most closely. Hence, I assert that the life writing analyzed in Chapters 5 and

6 were written in waves in response to various socio-political and historical events in Iran, the country of origin, as well as in the host country (mainly the United States). In fact, despite the differences in their respective contexts and each author's style of writing, these women life writers are consistently responding to the events that impacted their lives from the Islamic Revolution (first wave), to the events during and after 9/11 (second wave), to the 2009 Iranian elections (third wave).

In Chapter 3, I build upon previous research in the field of life writing in English by Iranian women in diaspora. Here I review the relevant literature over the past five decades. While acknowledging that the Iranians in diaspora in the United States and Canada (especially the second generation) do not plan to return to Iran, I have adopted Safran's definition of diaspora (1991). Moreover, I discuss the reasons for Iranian women in diaspora to author life writing in English in their attempt "to overcome and address issues of migration and resettlement" (Fotouhi, 2016, p. 107). I also debate Milani's claims (1992) that gender segregation had silenced women's voices for many decades in Iranian literature (p. 1), where the ideal persisted that "feminine [meant to be] silent, immobile, and invisible" (p. 2). In fact, despite these restrictions, Iranian women had long had their own organizations and journals/magazines, and they participated in huge numbers in the Islamic Revolution and the 2009 upheavals which led to the Green Movement. Moreover, autobiographical narratives in Iran, like the *Khaterat* of Taj Al-Saltaneh—the Qajar princess—started as early as 1914. Nevertheless, the fear of "self-attention and self-display," as Milani puts it (1992, p. 201), affected even Iranian male writers, who, in their autobiographies, regularly omitted details of their private lives and restricted their writings to their public personae (Fotouhi, 2015a, p. 206).

Drawing on Fotouhi (2018), I argue that due to the "silencing," especially of "people of religious and ethnic minority backgrounds" and of "alternative political beliefs," Iranian diasporic women life writers resorted to English as their "tool for self-expression and for regaining their sense of subjectivity" (p. 65). In fact, this is evident in the first group of life writing discussed in Chapter 5, as well as in the prison life writing discussed in Chapter 6. For instance, Gelareh Asayesh, Tara Bahrampour, Firoozeh Dumas, Roya Hakakian, Azadeh Moaveni, and Jasmin Darznik all used English both to protest this "silencing" and to give themselves more freedom of expression. As Hakakian puts it, she "did not know how to use the language of the censors to speak against them, to use the very language by which [she] had been denied so much as a Jew, a woman, a secular citizen, and a young poet" (2004, p. 15). As for Talebi (discussed in Chapter 6), she asserts that English "offered [her] a distance from which [she] was able to reflect on [her] past" (2011, p. 211). Moreover, by using English and Persian/Farsi, the writers are moving away from the "bicultural and bilingual models of immigration […] to plural modes of belonging and identity that come closest to the examples of diasporic consciousness and creolization" (Karpinski, 2012, p. 226). Following Karpinski's (2012) arguments for immigrant women's life writing, I demonstrate that the Iranian women authors I have analyzed "question and destabilize monolithic categories of identity" via their use of language (pp. 226-227). Moreover, again gleaning from Karpinski's findings, I affirm that the Iranian women life writing "reveal[…] complications of language, identity, and identification that confound such census-imposed categories as first language and second language, traditionally applied to immigrants in a new country" (2012, p. 226).

In fact, the life writing by diasporic Iranian women authors in North America, as we have seen in the two cohorts of Chapters 5 and 6, articulate what Homi Bhabha defines as "hybrid" and "ambivalent" identities. In other words, as Hall (1996) puts it, their identity is "never absolutely stable," and it is "subject to the play of history over time and the play of difference" (p. 345). Moreover, the authors are aware of the dynamic process of their identity construction. As children, the authors of the first group are cautioned about the importance of "retaining [their Iranian] identity" (Asayesh, 1999, p. 109); the dangers of losing their family memory (Satrapi, 2004, p. 60); the necessity of being good like "Iranian daughters […] shy, quiet, polite, and modest" (Darznik, 2011, p. 295), etc. Accordingly, they long to preserve their Persian/Farsi language and culture. For example, Asayesh (1999) tries to teach her husband and children Farsi, to take part in Iranian cultural celebrations, and to make them her family traditions. Yet, at the same time, the authors feel the need to adapt themselves to the host country. Hence, they are constantly carving their multifold identities―maintaining their Iranian origins on one hand and assimilating into the host country on the other. Moreover, they are aware in their life writing of the different layers of their identities, which are reflective of both the geopolitical context of their lives and their "diasporic space." I argue that, in the self-awareness they express through their life writing, they carve a new space for themselves as well as for their fellow women in Diaspora. This new space, in which they integrate elements of the Iranian as well as the host country's cultures, is where they create a culture uniquely their own.

Moreover by publishing their life writing in English, the authors have overcome all the different types of censorship endemic in Iran―political, religious, social, familial, and individual. By the act of writing their life stories, they are responding to these censorships. The authors in both cohorts are defying and revolting against what has been imposed on them from the outside, but often from inside too, where they encounter the subtler, intimate, and often more powerful bonds of family and tradition. They are sharing with their audience intimate details—something they could not have done without overcoming their individual censorship first and foremost. However, the public figures life writing by Farmaian and Ebadi (discussed in Chapter 6) still show evidence of self-censorship. Both of these writers continue to keep the image of their husbands and their marital relationships undeveloped in the narrative.

Although Fotouhi (2012a) generalizes that the life writing by Iranian women in diaspora cause further "self-orientalisation" while claiming to be free of orientalist stereotypes, I say that the fourteen life writing I have analyzed do not resort to "self-orientalisation" in their depiction of their lives. Rather, it is the American perception of these life writing that renders them "orientalist" in the American mind. Moreover, I contend that it is the Western reader who assumes that, by reading these life writing, they have access to a "presumably forbidden world beneath the veil." Furthermore, as Whitlock (2007) puts it, it is the socio-political events in the West that drive the reader's interest in these works. To my mind, it is the vexed American/Iranian relationship since the Hostage Crisis that makes the American readers perceive these texts as "exotic." This complex relationship is also the reason why these Iranian women authors—whether they consider themselves immigrants, exiles, American-Iranian or Iranian-American—argue against stereotypes about Iran. In fact, the authors fight such stereotypes about Iranian women by sharing with their audience the ones they have faced in their writings. Moreover, besides this stereotypical bias, as previous scholars have also argued, diasporic Iranian women authors have had to face other constraining factors, such as hypervisibility in the Western media, lack of recognition, and "being othered."

I demonstrate that through their writings, the authors assert their identities as "other," a state that they have deliberately chosen, while being aware of their differences, their identities, and their space. In fact, the two cohorts of life writing discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 both choose to be "other," and are aware of "being othered." Hence, building on Mostofi (2003), I assert that they "transpose the Iranian culture" to their audience through their life writing. Moreover, as Oliver puts it, their "sense of [themselves] as […] subject[s] and agent[s]" as well as their "level of […] subjectivity" are affected by "being othered" (as cited in Fotouhi, 2010, p. 82). These Iranian diasporic writers want to be recognized by others in order to value themselves, for before they began to write in English, they were unheard of and unknown. As Whitlock (2008) argues about the memoir boom among Chinese women after the Cultural Revolution, the life writing discussed in this thesis are characterized by their "subjective engagement with historical revision, trauma and loss, and cataclysmic social changes" (p. 8). Their writing is a way of activism and agency. I also argue that the authors are "writing out and writing through [their] traumatic experiences in the mode of therapeutic reenactment" and their life writing are a "kind of therapy" (Fotouhi, 2015a, p. 208; 2012a, p. 28), or what Henke (2000) calls "scriptotherapy." Indeed, both cohorts undeniably write as "scriptotherapy," to heal and to be heard. They call for their audience to bear witness to their experiences in both their home and host countries.

By examining earlier theses on Iranian life writing from 1998 to 2019, I have engaged with the growing body of research in this field. This has confirmed that my own research, by combining literary and feminist approaches simultaneously, is offering a new dimension to this literature. In fact, one of its major contributions is the way it points to the unexplored categories I have recognized within the corpus of these life writing, and suggests a new way of understanding them.

Through comparing the two cohorts of life writing, I demonstrate that the first one yearn for a "home," as the authors vividly recall their childhoods in Iran―as Bahrampour and Asayesh do―or live with their nuclear family within the boundaries of Iranian culture in the host country, as Moaveni does. Their "homing quest" leads to return trips to Iran in a thirst to relive childhood memories, as is the case in Gelareh Asayesh's (1962) *Saffron Sky: A Life Between Iran and America* (1999), Tara Bahrampour's (1968) *To See and See Again: A Life in Iran and America* (1999), and Azadeh Moaveni's (1976) *Lipstick Jihad: Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran* (2005). In fact, these authors reveal to their audience their search for something "missing" in their American lives. They have an ambivalent status. As the use of the conjunction "and" in the titles of their books, they are both "here" and "there," in a place both between and within Iran and America. As for Roya Hakakian's (1966) *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran* (2004), and Marjane Satrapi's (1969) *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2004) and *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (2005), the authors long for Iran but choose to remain in exile―the first in the United States and the second in France. As for Jasmin Darznik's (1973) *The Good Daughter: A Memoir of My Mother's Hidden Life* (2011) and Firoozeh Dumas's (1965) *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America* (2003) (whose authors consider themselves Iranian-American), they need to answer to the expectations of being a "good daughter" the Iranian way, and to be "Iranian in America."

The authors of the second cohort of life writing do not long to return to Iran. Having left as adults, they have made their own choice. They do not romanticize their memories of Iran. Whether they are creative nonfiction life writing, like Goldin's, Rachlin's, and Nafisi's, life writing of public figures written collaboratively with a co-author, like Ebadi's and Farman

Farmaian's, or prison life writing like Nemat's and Talebi's, their authors have left for better educational opportunities, freedom, or for the bare sake of remaining alive. They have made a new status for themselves in their host country. They have struggled to survive.

Finally, despite their varied religious, ethnic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, the authors share the common factor of coming from a modern professional and financially comfortable class in Iran. Farmaian, the daughter of a Qajar prince, is the sole exception. They also share the gift of storytelling, manifested in their personal need to tell their stories, as well as being a bonding ritual with their kin. By rebelling against stereotypes, they educate their audiences about themselves, their "diasporic space," and their heritage. Moreover, they pave the way for other diasporic women. Their shared audiences are the English-speaking communities, especially of the host country, as well as their fellow Iranian immigrants/exiles along with their children. They write to assert their personal identities, and in so doing, they call for women's and human rights. They protest the conditions they have survived, the situation in Iran, and what they have encountered in the host country. In a nutshell, whether explicitly or not, (and only Shirin Ebadi is explicit), their writings proclaim a call for transnationalization of women's rights.

Combined Framework

I have conducted this study from an interdisciplinary approach characterized by a combined framework of postcolonial and transnational feminist theories. Despite the fact that Iran was not a colony, I argue that the Iranian women authors have experienced indirect colonization in Iran through the oppression of the Iranian Regime, which imposes its views of gender relations and morality on women in much the same manner as colonial powers did upon their subjects. By analyzing the authors' work via a transnational feminist lens, I have come to realize that while they do not work toward gender equality globally, they are very concerned with the status of gender inequality in Iran. Moreover, I submit that Loomba's definition of imperialism can be applied to the United States in terms of its relationship as an "imperial power" to Iran. Moreover, my findings show that the life writing discussed in this thesis do not "fit" into the host country's reading demands and expectations, despite the efforts to market and publish them. They simply cannot be called, as Nayar (2016) puts it, "postcolonial exotic," and consequently, they fit into no accepted market category. In terms of hybridity, my findings show that the authors' identities are "ambivalent." Despite the fact that Bhabha is primarily concerned with British colonialism in India, I believe that his notion of "inclusion and exclusion" can be equally applicable to Iranian women in diaspora in North America—a fact that was confirmed by my findings. Furthermore, I have shown that the Iranian women life writers live in a "diasporic space" as defined by Brah (1996), which makes their identity "far from fixed" (p. 183) and characterized by "a combination of the local and global" (p. 195). Moreover, their identities "are fluid and unstable," to borrow from Agnew (2005, p. 12). I also propose that the authors portray McLeod's concept of "liv[ing] without or beyond all notions of being at 'home' or securely in place" (2000, p. 244).

Challenges

A major challenge I have faced in this thesis has been the difficulty in consulting sources in Iranian/Persian. Since I am not proficient enough in Farsi/Persian, I have had to rely on English sources and subtitled interviews. Hence, I had to restrict my study to English life writing

by Iranian women in diaspora in North America. This makes me wonder whether my findings would have been different had I been able to include life writing in Farsi/Persian by Iranian women in diaspora on the one hand, and by Iranian women in Iran on the other.

A second challenge was being unable to complete all the revisions I wanted to do, due to time restrictions and the impossibility of a further extension. For instance, including a chapter on the history of women within the political context of Iran would have helped to contextualize the Iranian women's movement, as well as its impact on the status of women in Iran. Moreover, I recognize that, having invested in the nation and postcolonialism that are premised on the inclusion-exclusion paradigm that transnationality can challenge; I may have incidentally re-territorialized the emergent transnational identities of my subjects—something that was not my intention. Hence, I must acknowledge that this thesis is a work in progress.

I would also like to have been able to include more of the subgenres of life writing by Iranian women in diaspora. Even with the subgenres in this thesis, I could not provide adequate space to elaborate more upon them. For instance, if one analyzed all the subgenres of prison life writing, it could be a thesis in itself. It should be noted that other subgenres, like autobiographical fiction, by Iranian women writing in English also exist. In fact, Nahid Rachlin is known for writing in this genre, but it was beyond the scope of my research to examine it in depth. However, it would be an excellent subject for future studies. Moreover, starting with a focus on life writing by Iranian women in diaspora, one could also explore literary biography, graphic biography, biographical memoir, and postmodern hybrid biography, to name only a few examples.

Future Research

Future studies could explore more the issue of language in these fourteen life writing in order to demonstrate linguistic hybridity; self-legitimation as competent narrators through the use of Farsi; translation and other linguistic mediations (especially in co-authored texts); and perhaps the differences between bilingual and translingual narrators.

Future research should also study more life writing by Iranian women in diaspora in Canada. Thus far, these have not been studied as much as their counterparts in the United States. Such research should explore the impact upon life writing by Iranian women in diaspora when they move to Canada versus the United States. In other words, what is the relationship between the Iranian women's self-representation in a multicultural country versus a melting pot? Is there a significant difference in the essential nature of their writings? If so, what does it derive from, and how can it be defined?

Personally, being proficient in French, I would like to incorporate French life writing by Iranian women in Canada. I would also like to conduct a comparative study between life writing by Iranian women in diaspora in North America and those in Europe. The questions to be raised are, for example, what thematic and stylistic characteristics vary in Iranian women's self-representation when their life writing shift from one language to another—in this case, to French? Does the socio-political and cultural environment of their specific host country impact their work and redefine it, giving it a uniqueness not met with in another host country? And if it does, then how does it do it? What are its manifestations? Thus, would the writings of an Iranian woman living in France reflect significant differences from those of a woman writing in the

United States or Canada? Would her approach be very different? Would she be encountering the same kinds of stereotypes and "othering"?

It would also be interesting to make a comparative study of the life writing of both Iranian and Lebanese women in diaspora in North America, for both have experienced the trauma of war—the Iraq-Iran war and the Civil War in Lebanon. For such a project, deepening knowledge of the nature of trauma would be necessary. However, studying the complex history of the Middle East, the colonization of Lebanon by France, and the Lebanese socio-political background would be essential to gain understanding of the Civil War and its outcome in the migration waves it impelled. As this dissertation has demonstrated, life writing by women in diaspora are impacted by complex factors, actions, and actors. While my research sheds light upon the socio-political events that affected Iranian women's life writing in English in the North American diaspora from the Islamic Revolution to current days, future research should explore the evolution of the Iranian women's movement, its impact on the Iranian women's life writing inside Iran as well as in diaspora, and their political participation nationally and internationally.

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Appendix I: Chapter 5 Long Summaries

Funny in Farsi (2003)

Funny In Farsi A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian In America (2003) by Firoozeh Dumas is a humorous rendition of Dumas's memories at different epochs of her life. It does not, however, follow a chronological order. Dumas organizes her recollections into unrelated chapters. Among the themes Dumas explores are generational conflicts, being Iranian in the U.S. before and after the Islamic Revolution, identity, inter-ethnic marriage, and Iranian customs and culture. Dumas is a master of satire and uses puns as her way to show her comfort, integration, and belonging to American culture, in a unique style not explored by other authors in the current study.

The first chapter, "Leffingwell Elementary School," starts with Dumas's narrating her family's move to the United States when she is seven (p. 3). It is a temporary move, due to her father's work as an engineer with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) which has assigned him to consult for an American firm in Whittier, California, and it lasts only two years (p. 3). Earlier, her father, Kazem, studied in Texas and California for his graduate degree, and he is fond of America, considering it "the Promised Land" (p. 4). Kazem tries to embrace American culture by joining a local bowling league, spending every Wednesday evening at the bowling alley and believing that he is a "gifted bowler"—to the extent that he tries his luck at *Bowling for Dollars,*[98] only to win seven dollars (pp. 14-15). Unlike her father, her mother is "like most women of her generation, […] only briefly educated" (p. 5). At seventeen years old, she married Kazem, who was a Fulbright scholar at the time (p. 5). Moving to the U.S., Firoozeh and her mother, who know no English, have to rely on Kazem to translate both the language and the culture (p. 8). He ends up not being much help since he is only proficient in engineering jargon (p. 9). Thus, Firoozeh, who learns English quickly, becomes her mother's interpreter, accompanying her everywhere. She is constantly praised by Americans who are astonished to see a seven year old translating between Farsi and English (pp. 10-11). As an adult, Firoozeh mocks both her parents' English (pp. 8-9,11), still inadequate despite the availability (30 years later) of Iranian immigrants who have brought Iranian media and businesses to America, and she gives up on encouraging them to improve it.

In many of the chapters, Dumas focuses on Kazem and offers only a little information about her mother. In the chapter, "In The Gutter," for instance, the reader learns that Kazem "grew up poor in Ahwaz, Iran," and that he is close to his siblings: "telling my father that his beloved older sister, Sedigeh, is angry with him is like putting a grown man in time out" (p. 13). In "Treasure Island," Dumas gives details about Kazem's growing up in Ahwas and his love for movies. Then she narrates how her father applied for and won the Fulbright grant to study in Texas (pp. 89-91), and how he survived orientation and was assigned a roommate there (p. 91-92). Suffering with loneliness nonetheless, he wrote a letter to the Fulbright office, and they assigned him an American hostess who accompanied him around town over the weekends for a few weeks. During the spring break of 1953, a professor asked Kazem to join him and another

[98] An American "game show that merged the fascination world of bowling with the thrill of Las Vegas. All contestant had to do to win the jackpot was roll two strikes in a row" (Dumas, 2003, p. 14).

professor on a trip to New Jersey to meet his teacher—who turned out to be Albert Einstein (p. 93)! Dumas closes the chapter with her father's dream to return to America and have his children educated there (p. 95).

Despite his American degrees, after the Iranian Revolution, Kazem faced difficulties finding a job in America (p. 100). In fact, after the Revolution, refineries were no longer being built in Iran, so Kazem's expertise was not needed. NIOC offered him other jobs, but they did not interest him. He requested early retirement, confident that he could find a job in the U.S. (p. 116). Barely transitioning into a job at an American company, he was laid off due to the Hostage Crisis (p. 117). Dumas states that Americans' hatred—not only of the hostage takers but of all Iranians—grew with each passing day (p. 117). She adds, "Vendors started selling T-shirts and bumper stickers that said 'Iranians Go Home' and 'Wanted: Iranians, for Target Practice.' Crimes against Iranians increased. […] Many Iranians suddenly became Turkish, Russian, or French" (p. 117). Moreover, her father's pension from Iran was stopped. The Iranian government told him that he had to be in Iran to collect it, but even if he had, the Iranian pension plan's value dropped. So, in order to make ends meet, he returned to Iran to sell their belongings (p. 117). When the hostages were released, Kazem found a job in an American company as a senior engineer but was paid half the salary he had before the Revolution (p. 121). Another outcome of the Revolution was that Firoozeh became concerned about being able to finance college, so she resorted to taking minor jobs like babysitting (p. 122).

Among the chapters that focus on Firoozeh herself are "The 'F Word'," "Girls Just Wanna Have Funds," and "The Wedding." In the first one, the reader gets to know about the difficulty in pronouncing Dumas's maiden name (that she doesn't reveal because her father asked her not to) and her taking an American first name, "Julie," in an attempt to fit in (pp. 63-64). Adding the American name helps her when she is looking for jobs after graduation (p. 65). After she gets married, her name becomes Julie Dumas, but her family and non-American friends keep calling her Firoozeh, which confuses her American friends and colleagues when they all meet together (p. 65). Whenever someone does not pronounce her name correctly, she is reminded of being "an immigrant with a foreign name" (p. 66). In "Girls Just Wanna Have Funds," Dumas details how at fourteen she resorts to hourly paid jobs in her neighborhood to save money for college: She does babysitting (pp. 122-125), cat sitting (pp. 125-126), cleaning silver ware (p. 127), and serving the concession stand at a movie theatre (pp. 129). Finally, she starts writing scholarship essays, which results in her having enough funds for college (p. 129). In "The Wedding," the reader learns about the first time Firoozeh's parents meet François Dumas, her French fiancé, (pp. 142-143), the invitations to their wedding (pp. 143-145), her quest to find a priest who will agree to officiate at a mixed wedding (pp. 146-147), preparing for the Persian ceremony (*aqd*) (pp. 147-149), and the wedding ceremony and reception (pp. 150-153).

Journey from the Land of No (2004)

Roya Hakakian's *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran* (2004) is not a linear collection of memories from her Jewish girlhood in Iran. In fact, it starts with her correspondence with David, a fellow journalist, when she has to cover the story of an African- American naval officer in 1999. She follows this with a flashback to her childhood where her brother Javid is telling her the story of "*The Little Black Fish"* (p. 19). This is the

story that she weaves through the details of all her family memories. The reader does not know exactly how old Roya is as she narrates each memory, but the events are signaled by important incidents in the life of the Hakakian family, like the departure of the eldest son (Albert) to study in the United States, and how their life, "the way [they] were together, changed thereafter" (p. 33). At the time, Roya is not told the reason for her brother's sudden travel, but she comes to understand it later as she searches the issues of the magazine *Tofigh* where his drawings were published. She figures that the magazine has been censored and banned (p. 36), and that is why it has become too dangerous for her brother to stay in Iran (p. 38).

Later, in the chapter, "The Baby Blue BMW," the reader learns about Jewish customs like cleaning the house for Passover (pp. 44-47). Hakakian shows the reader the social mingling of Muslims and Jews in Iran as she recalls her family's picnic in Darband with the Maroofs, where the spark between her uncle Ardi and Neela Maroof is ignited (pp. 54-57). Despite the fact that Ardi has many Muslim friends, when it comes to his decision to marry Neela in Qom (and possibly converting to Islam) (p. 64), his whole family resorts to extreme measures, including sorcery, to prevent it. His sister fears that no one will marry her daughter Farah if he dares marry a Muslim (p. 65). Leaving the house angry, Ardi speeds in his car to the Caspian Sea where he hits an old Muslim man by accident. Afraid of how the court may rule, Ardi leaves for Israel within forty-eight hours, having no time to say goodbye to anyone, not even Neela (pp. 65-66).

Another sociocultural fear is revealed in the chapter, "Farah," where the reader witnesses the panic of Farah's mother when she receives the call that her new son-in-law is not satisfied with the blood stain from the wedding night, which makes him doubt Farah's virginity. A forensic doctor is summoned the next day to examine Farah and deliver his judgement upon her (pp. 86-87). Farah's mother comes over to Roya's house, and she and Roya's mother, her sister, head to the hotel where the newlyweds are honeymooning. There is huge relief when the doctor confirms Farah's innocence.

The reader is then transported to an afternoon in October 1978 and memories of Roya's schooling, how her classmates choose her as their representative, her meeting with the Principal, her coming back home while the army is pursuing some university student rebels (pp. 93-94), and her meeting with her friend Zaynab (Z.). An awkward scene of closeness between Roya and Z. (p. 99) is followed by the two girls' fascination by Bibi's (Z.'s older sister) body when they watch her undress and shower (p. 102). Bibi becomes their amusement and they wonder when they will have a body like hers. Yet Roya does not have a direct encounter with Bibi until she and Z. are eavesdropping on Great Uncle and Bibi as they are listening to speeches on cassettes (p. 104). Bibi reveals to Roya that the speaker on the cassettes is Agha, "who'll set [them] free" (p. 106). At another time Bibi asserts, "Agha will divide bread and smiles equally among us. He'll not have cronies like that evil shah. He'll treat us all the same… Agha will make poverty history. We'll be free to say and write anything we want because when Agha comes, SAVAK will also be history" (p. 107). Finally, a few days later, Bibi reveals to Roya that Agha is Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini and that he has ordered everyone to go onto the rooftops and shout *Allah-o-Akbar* at 9 p.m. (p. 110). Since her two brothers have left for the United States to prevent them from participating in protests, Roya is left alone with her parents. On the rooftop of their house, while witnessing the shouts of their neighbors, she feels jealous of her friend Z. whose family is gathered around her (p. 112).

In the "Big Bang" chapter, Roya is with her family at her grandmother's house where her uncle A. J. asks everyone to be ready before he showcases the jewelry the demonstrators have brought him. A. J. advises Roya's father to sell his house because soon no one will be willing to buy from a Jew. A direct political reference to the Shah and how he has driven away his men is mentioned (p. 117) before detailing the shortage of kerosene due to the strike of anti-Shah workers in the National Oil Company. People are having to line up to get any kerosene. These events are intertwined with details of Roya's dinner with A.J. at her grandmother's, and a flashback to her father's birth. After the dinner, on their way home, Roya witnesses her parents' first fight. At the synagogue, she envies David Rohani, an eighth grader who leads the singing. She thinks she can replace him once he graduates, only to be shocked by the choirmaster's response. He shatters her dream, denies her request to sing, and tells her to ask her parents why it is impossible for her to sing (pp. 124-126). Devastated, Roya calls Farah who reminds her that they are females and promises to explain to her the next day about the restrictions on singing (p. 127). Faced with another parental fight, Roya goes to the rooftop where she thinks of committing suicide but thinks better of it. She writes a long note that she re-reads after she wakes up on the roof.

It is only in chapter 8 that the reader is provided with references to the revolution, the atmosphere after it, and the Iranian people's referendum when they vote to have an Islamic Republic (p. 141). These events are sandwiched between two scenes from Roya's 8th grade classroom where Mrs. Ebrahimi (the English teacher) is having Mitra (a classmate who stutters) and other classmates read a play. Mrs. Ebrahimi refuses to allow Roya to read even when Mitra begs for her to take her turn in reading…. At this point, Roya mentions that she and her parents have sold their house and moved to an apartment.

Another reference to social and sociopolitical changes in the revolution is detailed in Roya's encounter with her Muslim Principal at the school, Mrs. Moghadam. Roya, as the class representative, meets with the Principal at her office where she is asked to report on the behavior of her classmates. When the Principal announces to the girls that she will not grant them eight days off, but only a single day followed by the weekend, Roya leads her classmates into rebellion. They march through the classrooms and then leave the school without the Principal's permission (pp. 168-169).

In 1979, the Jewish community, alarmed by the changes imposed by the Revolution, form an ad hoc assembly of 6 men to visit Imam Khomeini and ask him for reassurance that the Jewish community is safe (pp. 154-157). Khomeini, after a long speech, consoles the group by saying, "Moses would have nothing to do with these pharaohlike Zionists who run Israel. And our Jews, the descendants of Moses, have nothing to do with them, either. We recognize our Jews as separate from those godless Zionists" (pp. 156-157). However, five years later, another group of six Jewish leaders visit Khomeini. This time, they are treated poorly. They relay to Roya's father, "Rest assured, Hakakian! This was not the same ayatollah we met in Qom in 1979" (p. 206).

In the next chapter, "The Dreamers," Roya fast-forwards to 1982 where she introduces Mrs. Ferdows, a widow with three daughters. Mrs. Ferdows is angry at her daughter Nazila for accompanying Roya on an early morning mountain climbing trip one weekend. The reader is given details about Nazila's and Roya's trip by bus to the mountain where they meet friends. They share poetry reading and reciting, only to be stopped by guards, taken to the police

headquarters by bus, and interrogated. The terror of having poems with them make the male friends opt to hiding the poems with Nazila and Roya, the girls in the group. At the headquarters, Nazila shouts that she needs to use the bathroom. Roya follows her and they dispose of the poems. Back in the investigation room, Roya laughs at Nazila's comments, which makes the officer call her to his desk. His assistant starts going through Roya's bag, only to realize after seeing the Jewish prayer card that she is a Jew. He asks her if the whole group is Jewish, and when she responds positively, they are all released (pp. 176-192). When she arrives home, Roya is surprised by her mother who is waiting for her in the street. She learns that Mrs. Ferdows had come shouting at her parents, demanding that her father not let Roya mingle with Nazila anymore. Outraged, Roya storms back to Nazila's house where she turns on all the lights in order to force Mrs. Ferdows to wake up and speak to her. She warns Mrs. Ferdows never to bother her parents again (pp. 193-194).

Fast-forward to "1984," when Roya has nightmares about killing Khomeini by injecting him lethally (pp. 196-198). At school she gets 19/20 on her essay about the war (the Iran-Iraq war) but gets reprimanded by her teacher who confesses that she was kicked out of university by writing an essay like Roya's (p. 213). Hence, to keep Roya from facing serious disciplinary problems and possible arrest, the teacher decides to claim that she has left the essay in a taxi (pp. 213-214). That day, on her way home from school, Roya goes to her old neighborhood to visit Z. She is surprised by Z. who is wearing full Islamic dress. When they go inside the house, Z. tells her about Bibi's imprisonment, her brother's paralysis, and her mother's psychological problems (pp. 215-219). Roya goes into denial when she finds out from Z. that the author of "The Little Black Fish," the story her brother had told her long ago, had not been killed after all: it was a hoax told by people to infuse hate against the Shah's government (p. 220). Roya walks back to her apartment where she discovers that her father has burnt all her diaries, books, and magazines. He has only left her a set of dictionaries (pp. 225-227). Her mother keeps telling her that her father has done this only for her own good. Her father then states that it is time for them to leave for America (p. 227).

Lipstick Jihad (2005)

Azadeh Moaveni's *Lipstick Jihad: Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran* (2005) is her rendition of growing up—as the title explains—between two cultures, Iran and the United States. It is also the story of the young Iranians she comes to know when she returns to Iran. Their stories are inseparable from hers. In the introduction, she states, "I cannot write about them without writing about myself" (p. xi). In the book's nine chapters, Moaveni explores the themes of intergenerational clash with immigrant parents, the exile experience, the cultural clash, and Iranian politics. In America, her family view themselves as exiles: "we were émigrés, exiles, mentally still in between" (p. 28). At the beginning of the book, Moaveni shares her growing up in the Iranian Diaspora in Palo Alto, California. She struggles with her identity—a Persian at home and an American at school—which causes her anxiety. "Growing up Iranian in America has been arduous and awkward," she states (p. 10). Until she reaches college, she struggles with some "ethnic ambiguity" (p. 10), but in college, she begins to accept "the joys of [her] own private Iranianness" (p. 28). When she moves to Iran, however, her sense of identity changes all over again. In 1999, during her study of Arabic in Cairo, she starts to embrace her heritage, and feels the call to go to Iran. In 2000, working as a journalist for *Time* magazine, she moves to

Tehran just when the student protests are flaring. Once she is there, she realizes that growing up on the "outside" has had many complications, and she asserts,

> You grew up assuming everything about you was related to that place, but you never got to test that out . . . You spent a lot of time . . . feeling sad for your poor country. Most of that time, you were actually feeling sorry for yourself, but since your country was legitimately in serious trouble, you didn't realize it. (p. 32)

In Iran, Moaveni lives through the reform movement and its opposition during the presidency of Khatami. She joins other Iranian young people in their struggle against the repressive regime as they wield "soft weapons"―wearing colored veils, nail polish, sandals, etc., to get their point across. Woven into her personal experience in Iran are her observations and reflections about the young Iranians she meets. She describes them as having "as if" lifestyles and behaviors (p. xi). In fact, she states, "They chose to act 'as if' it was permitted to hold hands on the street, blast music at parties, speak your mind, challenge authority, take your drug of choice, grow your hair long, wear too much lipstick" (p. xi). Later, when she arrives in Tehran with her relative, Daria, she reflects on their ignorance of that aspect of Iranian youths' strategy for living: they were living "'as if' the rules didn't exist, and took the skirmishes for granted" (p. 55). Moreover, she describes how the youth in Iran undertook their resistance:

> Women started wearing lipstick, exposing their toes and curves, wearing their veils halfway back, "as if" they had a right to be uncovered. Writers and intellectuals wrote vicious satire and stinging commentary, "as if" it was permitted to criticize the regime. People of all ages turned up music in their cars, caroused with the opposite sex, "as if" people could listen to whatever they wanted, "as if" young men and women had the right to go out for coffee. All of these "as if" acts became facts on the ground, and the authorities knew it would be foolish and impossible to stand in the way. While they were still happy to appear comical, hysterically condemning "decadent, immoral, Westernized ________[fill trivial noun in the blank, e.g.: poodles, CDs, ties]," over time they recognized cultural rebellion as a force beyond their control. (p. 62)

She experiences being looked at as an "outsider." Her life can be dangerous. She is nearly forced into an arranged marriage, and she is almost arrested while voting. She also dates and parties with other Iranian young people. After a stay in Lebanon, her mother visits her in Tehran where they get caught up in a demonstration.

Yet Moaveni's perceptions about Iran and its future are not static. In fact, they fluctuate between her calling Iranian society sick, and "spiritually and psychologically wrecked" (p. 101), to her discussing the revolution's accidental achievements, like higher literacy for women and the increasing secularism of the middle class. Hence, she shifts between despair and hope in her reflections about Iran.

As an Iranian living in Diaspora in America, Moaveni explains the feelings of nostalgia and the sense of personal grievance through the words of her friend, Siamak Namazi[99]: "If you are a nostalgic lover of Iran, you love your own remembrance of the past, how the passions in your own life are intertwined with Iran" (p. 45). On the other hand, she reflects on the way the culture of the revolution has affected relations between the sexes in Tehran: "Made neurotic by

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[99] Siamak Namazi is "a cocktail party acquaintance who quickly became one of my closest friends" (Moaveni, 2005, p. 44).

the innate oppressiveness of restrictions, Iranians were preoccupied with sex in the manner of dieters constantly thinking about food" (p. 71). An example of the impact she suffers from her state of being in-between the two cultures is her struggle to decide whether to wear the veil at a press conference for President Khatami at the U. N. (pp. 169-172). She has to talk herself through her decision whether to wear the veil or not, and she explains to the reader,

> First there was my opposition to the veil, inherited from both sides of my family, an heirloom value that every single one of us—monarchists, secularists, socialists, capitalists, dilettantes—held dear. We did not negotiate with the veil. It was the symbol of how everything had gone horribly wrong. How in the early days of the revolution, secular women wore the veil as a protest symbol against the West and its client state policies, and then had it imposed on them by the fundamentalist mullahs who hijacked the revolution and instituted religious law. My generation, Iranians who learned about 1979 at kitchen tables in the United States, absorbed this version of history as truth. Though most women in modern-day Iran might not consider the veil their highest grievance, they knew it symbolized the system's disregard for women's legal status in general. Mandatory veiling crushed women's ability to express themselves, therefore denying them a basic human right. (p. 170)

In Chapter 7, "Love in a Time of Struggle," Moaveni reflects on romantic relationships between men and women. To her, they "serve a far more vital purpose: taking a fragile identity and anchoring it in a situation or person." She adds, "In Iran, one has to find a partner who wants "the same sort of Islamic Republic experience" (p. 179). She describes the situation as "a tough climate" for young women, and how hard it is to recognize what is important to oneself, "what defined you deep down, if all those layers of family/peers/neighborhood/social background/trickle-down-dogma were stripped away" (p. 179). She ties this to the fact that those layers are in a constant process of transformation. Consequently, she calls it "a formidable task" to construct a "coherent personality out of all [that] chaos;" and she feels that is the reason why Iranian young people of her time are called the "lost generation" (p. 179).

In the last chapter, "Not Without My Mimosa," Moaveni shares with the reader the reason she left Iran. After 9/11 and President Bush's denouncing Iran as the "axis for evil," her job as a reporter becomes dangerous , and she is pressured for information by Mr. X,[100] an interrogator at the Ministry of Culture. Ultimately, at her grandfather's funeral, she comes to realize that "the search for home, for Iran, had taken [her] not to a place but back to [her]self" (p. 245) .

Her ending paragraph encompasses the experience of living in exile, longing for the history told by the previous generation, lacking "home" in both America and Iran (p. 246). For, as she writes, home

> was not determined by latitudes and longitudes. It was spatial. This, this was the modern Iranian experience, that bound the diaspora to Iran. We were all displaced, whether internally, on the streets of Tehran, captives in living rooms, strangers in our own country, or externally, in exile, sitting in this New York bar, foreigners in a foreign country, at home together. At least for now, there would be

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[100] An interrogator at the Ministry of Culture in Iran.

> no revolution that returned Iran to us, and we would remain adrift. But the bridge between Iran and the past, Iran and the future, between exile and homeland, existed at these tables— in kitchens, in bars, in Tehran or Manhattan—where we forgot about the world outside. Iran had been disfigured, and we carried its scraps in our pockets, and when we assembled, we laid them out, and were home. (p. 246)

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood (2004)

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood (2004) is a graphic novel written and illustrated in black and white by Marjane Satrapi. She divides her book into nineteen chapters that recount her memories in Iran from the time she was ten until she reached fourteen. The book starts with "The Veil": there is a panel of Marjane/Marji's avatar in her veil and a gutter stating, "This is me when I was 10 years old. This was in 1980" (p. 3). After introducing her friends in the next panel, all veiled at school, Satrapi introduces the revolution where unveiled women are demonstrating along with men: "In 1979 a revolution took place it was later called 'The Islamic Revolution'" (p. 3). Next comes a panel: "Then came 1980: The year it became obligatory to wear the veil at school" (p. 3). Satrapi portrays the girls' mischief at school: "We didn't really like to wear the veil, especially since we didn't understand why we had to" (p. 3). Then, in a flashback, she tells the reader that in 1979, she had been attending a French non-religious school where boys and girls were together. But now bilingual schools are closed because they "are symbols of capitalism… of decadence," and the country is in the midst of a "Cultural Revolution" (p. 4). She portrays demonstrations for and against the veil, and how her mother dyes her hair because while in a demonstration she is photographed by a journalist, and her picture is published in "all the European newspapers," and in an Iranian one as well (p. 5). In describing the way she feels regarding the veil, Satrapi states, "I really didn't know what to think about the veil. Deep down I was very religious but as a family we were very modern and avant-garde" (p. 6).

She also tackles the difference in social classes when she draws a panel where she is dining with her parents whereas the maid is in the kitchen. She states, "I wanted to be a prophet because our maid did not eat with us," and "because my father had a Cadillac" (p. 7). She references the revolution again through her father's words, "2,500 years of tyranny and submission," and he says that the revolution has awakened the people (p. 11). Satrapi mentions the burning of the Rex Cinema and how the Shah has been blamed in the events that have preceded the revolution (pp. 14-15). Through her conversation with her parents about taking part in demonstrations, the reader gets to know that it is dangerous to participate because people are being shot (p. 17). In another conversation with her father, Marji learns that "the father of the Shah who was a soldier organized a putsch to overthrow the Emperor and install a republic" (p. 19), that "[…] the republican ideal was popular in the region but everybody interpreted in his own way," like Gandhi in India and Ataturk in Turkey (p. 20), and that "the Shah wanted to do the same," but was "an illiterate low-ranking officer" (p. 20). She also learns of Britain's interest in Iran (pp. 20-21), and that her great grandfather was the emperor (p. 22). Later, her grandfather was named Prime Minister but was imprisoned and put in a cell filled with water (pp. 23-24). From her conversation with her grandmother, Marji learns how the latter struggled with the imprisonment of her husband (pp. 26-27), and that she took to sewing for others to support her family (p. 27). Marji also reads about the revolution (p. 32). She realizes why she is ashamed of

her father's Cadillac: "The reason for my shame and for the revolution is the same: the difference between social classes" (p. 33). Marji learns from her father that their maid Mehri cannot maintain a relationship with the neighbor's son because "in this country you must stay within your own social class" (p. 37).

In parallel with the personal memories are the political ones, like the reference to "Black Friday" (p. 39), to the Shah's trying "a dozen Prime Ministers" (p. 41), to people wanting "only one thing: [the Shah's] departure!" (p. 41), and to the people rejoicing when he left. She writes that "the day he left, the country had the biggest celebration of its entire history" (p. 42). On the international level, Satrapi refers to the U.S. President Jimmy Carter who "refused to give refuge to the exiled Shah and his family," and to Anwar Al-Sadat, the Egyptian President, who welcomed the Shah (p. 43). Her father explains to her that the latter and the Shah had "been friends for a long time. They both betrayed the countries of [the] region by making a pact with Israel" (p. 43). Satrapi incorporates reference to 3000 political prisoners who were liberated in March 1979 and that her family knew two of them: Siamak Jari and Mohsen Shekiba, both convicted for being communists (p. 47). Satrapi introduces direct and indirect references to the torture these men have endured in prison (pp. 50-51). She also draws the torture techniques she hears another friend, Ahmadi, has received (pp. 51-52). She is in the lookout for a hero in her family and is happy to welcome her uncle Anoosh who has also been imprisoned. During his stay at their place, Anoosh tells Marji about his uncle Fereydoon who with his friends "proclaimed the independence of the Iranian province of Azerbaijan" when Anoosh was 18 (pp. 54-55). Fereydoon "elected himself Minister of Justice of this little republic," and Anoosh became Fereydoon's secretary; but Fereydoon was arrested by the Shah's soldiers, and Anoosh had to flee through the Alborz mountains to his parents' house in Astara (p. 56). He could not stay there so he "swam across the Aras River and arrived in the U.S.S.R" (p. 57). A cultural reference about the status of unmarried women in Iran is mentioned through the meeting of Fereydoon and his girlfriend who visited him in prison and asked him to make love to her: "You know what it is like to be an unmarried mother in this country. You will be shunned. Life will be hell" (p. 58). Yet the reader gets to know through Anoosh that Fereydoon's girlfriend did get pregnant, left for Switzerland soon after, and had a son (p. 58). When Marji asks Anoosh what he did in U.S.S.R., he answers her: "First I went to Leningrad, then to Moscow, where I became a student. I have a doctorate in Marxism-Leninism" (p. 59). Marji shows off her knowledge by replying, "Dialectic Materialism?" and adds that she has read the comic book version (p. 59). Anoosh recounts to Marji how despite coming back to Iran in disguise, he was recognized and put in prison for 9 years. He says, "I tell you all this because it is important that you know. Our family memory must not be lost. Even if it's not easy for you, even if you don't understand it all" (p. 60). She reassures him, "Don't worry I'll never forget." Anoosh gives Marji a swan he made from bread in prison. During his stay, Anoosh had political conversations with Marji's parents regarding the Revolution and the referendum for having an Islamic Republic (p. 62). A friend of Marji tells her that his parents "say it's impossible to live under Islamic regime, it's better to leave" (p. 63). He goes to the U. S., while part of Marji's family immigrates to Los Angeles (p. 64). On their way back from the airport**,** Marji's parents exchange the following conversation:

Mother: "Maybe we should leave too…"

Father: "So that I can become a taxi driver and you a cleaning lady?" "Don't worry. Everyone who left will come back. They're just afraid of change" (p. 64).

Later, in a conversation with Anoosh, her mother (Taji) confesses that she is afraid, and he reassures her, “Don’t be Taji! It’s like this with all revolutions. This is just a transitional period…” (p. 65). Later, a series of executions take place: Mohsen is found drowning in his own bathtub (p. 65), and Siamak’s sister is executed by “Deliverers of Divine Justice,” but Siamak and his family manage to cross the border “hidden away among a flock of sheep” (p. 66).

Surprised that Anoosh does not come to pick her up, Marji asks about him and is first told that he has had to go back to the U.S.S.R. Then her father explains to her that Anoosh has been arrested. He is allowed only one visitor, and that he has chosen to see her (p. 68). When Marji visits Anoosh in prison, he tells her, “But you’ll see! One day the proletariat will rule!” and gives her another swan he has made of bread (p. 69). A few days later, the local newspaper headline is “Russian Spy Executed,” and Marji is devastated (pp. 70-71). The gutter down the page signals that “It was the beginning of the war.”

Another political reference is to the Hostage Crisis. Her father is reading the newspaper and announces, “They’ve occupied the U.S. Embassy!! … The fundamentalist students have taken the Americans hostage” (p. 72). A few days later they hear on TV that “The Ministry of Education has decreed that universities will close at the end of the month” (p. 73). The fundamentalist interviewed on TV explains,

> The education system and what is written in school books, at all levels, are decadent. Everything needs to be revised to ensure that our children are not led astray from the true path of Islam. That’s why we’re closing all the universities for a while. Better to have no students at all than to educate future imperialists. (p. 73)

The gutter specifies that the universities are then closed for two years, which devastates Marji who is looking to emulate Marie Curie: “I wanted to be an educated, liberated woman. And if the pursuit of knowledge meant getting cancer, so be it” (p. 73). Shortly after Marji’s mother is attacked by two bearded fundamentalist men on the street for not wearing the veil, the decree of veiling is announced on the TV. Satrapi comments in the gutter: “And so to protect women from all the potential rapists, they decreed that wearing the veil was obligatory” (p. 74). Satrapi explains how this decree impacts both women and men’s clothing: “In no time, the way people dressed became an ideological sign. There were two kinds of women” (in the gutter). In the panel, the reader sees two sides, the fundamentalist woman (a woman in chador) on one side, and the modern woman (wearing *manteau* and scarf) on the other. The gutter states, “you showed your opposition to the regime by letting a few strands of hair show” (p. 75). She explains in the same way about men being garbed as either fundamentalist (having a beard and their shirt loose), or progressive (shaved with or without mustache, and their shirt tucked in), and explains in the gutter, “Islam is more or less against shaving” (p. 75). In the next panel, Satrapi comments in a balloon,

> But let’s be fair. If women faced prison when they refused to wear the veil, it was also forbidden for men to wear neckties (that dreaded symbol of the west). And if women’s hair got men excited, the same thing could be said of men’s bare arms. And so, wearing short-sleeved shirt was also forbidden. (p. 75)

She adds, “There was a kind of justice after all” (p. 75). With all the changes, including their neighbors’ adopting the new Islamic code of clothing, Marji’s mother becomes afraid and asks her to say that she prays, whenever anyone asks her what she does during the day (p. 75).

As the story shows the family’s political stance, Marji’s mother is letting her take part in a demonstration. She asserts that Marji “should start learning to defend her rights as a woman right now!” (p. 76). At the demonstration, things escalate and Marji sees violence for the first time (a panel of Marji looking at a fundamentalist man stabbing a woman in her thigh). After this, the family runs away briefly (p. 76). They go on a vacation to Italy and Spain in September 1980, but the reader learns little about this trip except that “it was wonderful” (p. 77). Once back, Marji’s grandma picks them up at the airport and tell them that the country is at war with Iraq. She explains,

> They only officially announced it two days ago, but really, it’s been a month… The Iranian fundamentalists tried to stir up their Iraqi Shiite allies against Saddam. He’s been waiting for the chance. He’s always wanted to invade Iran. And here’s the pretext. It’s the second Arab invasion… (p. 79)

Satrapi portrays the Iran-Iraq war from the vantage point of the Iraqi migs bombarding Tehran (p. 80. Needing pilots to attack Baghdad (p. 82), the Iranian pilots are released to attack Baghdad (p. 84), and the Iranian market tumbles—goods are lacking at the supermarket and people are fighting over what is left (p. 87). There is also a shortage of gas (p. 88). Satrapi tackles the Iranian flight northward from border towns that have been attacked by Iraqi missiles (p. 89) through the experiences of her mother’s friend Mali and her family. In fact, Mali’s family has lost everything they own. They have been able to save only a bit of jewelry while fleeing to come to Marji’s place in Tehran (p. 90). They stay with the Satrapis for a week so that they can sell their jewelry and start over (p. 92). A sociological aspect of the war is revealed in the complaints of the women at the supermarket: “Since refugees have descended on Tehran, you can’t get anything to eat anymore” (p. 93). The Tehrani women are also afraid the northern women will steal their husbands (p. 93). Another sociological aspect is in the required mourning for the war dead at school (pp. 95-96). The students are made to beat their hearts while listening to chants. Marji starts making fun of these sessions, gets suspended from school, and her parents are called (p. 98). Another aspect of the religious fundamentalism and its impact on the population is what happens with Mrs. Nasrine (their maid) whose son is given a plastic gold-painted key at school and told, “If they went to war and were lucky enough to die, [the] key would get them into heaven” (p. 99). Mrs. Nasrine is perplexed and says, “All my life, I’ve been faithful to the religion. If it’s come to this… Well, I can’t believe in anything anymore …” (p. 99). Marji’s cousin Shahab, who serves in the military, visits and tells them that buses of male kids are arriving at the post where he is stationed, that one can tell they come from poor areas, that “they convince them that the afterlife is even better than Disneyland, then they put them in a trance with all their songs,” hypnotizing them before sending them into battle (p. 101). Despite the war, life goes on, and Marji is invited to her first party.

The Satrapis place strips of masking tape across their windows to prevent the shattering of glass, and they add black curtains for privacy. This is necessary to prevent their neighbors from calling them about their partying on Thursdays and having cards games on Mondays, things totally forbidden by the new regime (p. 105). In a gutter, Satrapi explains, “In spite of all the dangers, the parties went on. ‘Without them it wouldn’t be psychologically bearable,’ some said.

‘Without parties, we might as well just bury ourselves now,’ added the others.” (p. 106). The reader gets to know that her uncle makes wine in a lab in his basement with the help of Mrs. Nasrine, who crushes the grapes while saying, “God forgive me!” (p. 106). On their way back from her uncle’s party, they are halted by two armed men. Her father is questioned about drinking, but her mother intervenes and succeeds in having the family let go. Nevertheless, the two men follow them home and threaten to check their house to see whether they have alcohol there (pp. 108-109). When they arrive home, Marji and her grandmother swiftly get rid of all the alcohol, while her father manages to keep the men from entering by bribing them with a few bills (p. 110).

Marji continues to get into mischief. She has 14-year-old friends at school (two years her senior) who convince her to skip class, climb the school wall, and go with them to Kansas a restaurant on Jordan Avenue where teenagers from North Tehran gather (pp. 11-112). Marji’s mother receives a call from the school that Marji has skipped class. When Marji arrives home, her mother shouts at her, “…What are you going to be when you grow up?? In this country you have to know everything better than anyone else if you’re going to survive!!” (p. 113).

Satrapi refers again to the heated political climate when she recounts the way the people are thinking that since the Iranian army has retaken Khorramshahr, the war will end (p. 114). Satrapi details that although “… Iraq proposed a settlement and Saudi Arabia was willing to pay for reconstruction to restore peace to the area,” the Iranian government refuses peace, wanting to conquer Karbala, a Shiite holy city in Iraq (pp. 114-115). Satrapi comments, “They eventually admitted that the survival of the regime depended on the war,” and that “when I think we could have avoided it all… It just makes me sick. A million people would still be alive” (p. 116). Regarding the opposition, Satrapi says, “Those who opposed the regime were systematically arrested … And executed together” (p. 117). She adds that in July 1982, “…The internal war had become a bigger issue than the war against Iraq. Anyone showing the slightest resistance to the regime was persecuted” (p. 118). Her aunt’s husband, uncle Taher, had his third heart attack and was transported to the hospital. Upon the arrival of the Satrapis at his room, they realize that he needs open heart surgery immediately and should be sent to England. However, in order to be able to leave the country, he needs a permit from the hospital’s director to get a passport (p. 121). Marji’s aunt is shocked by the fact that the hospital’s director turns out to be her former window washer. She tells the Satrapis, “All that creepy window washer had to do to become director of the hospital was to grow a beard and put on a suit…” (p. 121). Marji’s father takes her with him to meet a man named Khosro who agrees to print a fake passport for Taher in exchange for $200 (p. 124). Unfortunately, the plan falls through, since Khosro must flee to Turkey when Niloufar, the communist girl he has been hiding in his basement, is spotted, arrested, and executed (p. 125). Three weeks later, Taher dies and is buried.

A year later, Marji’s parents get their passports and go on vacation alone to Turkey where they procure her all the forbidden items she has requested: a pair of 1983 Nike’s, a Michael Jackson button, a denim jacket, and two posters. They must hide the posters in her father’s coat lining so they can pass the Iranian customs at the airport (p. 129-130). When Marji, all dressed with these items, goes out to buy cassettes from the black market on Ghadhi Avenue, she is stopped by female guardians of the revolution who want to take her to their headquarters, the Committée, for not abiding by the dress code (pp. 133-134). Marji starts crying, pretending to

have a stepmother who will make her father put her into an orphanage if she is late, and luckily the female guardians let her go.

Satrapi makes a socio-cultural reference regarding Iranians and gossip: “We Iranians are Olympic Champions when it comes to gossip” (p. 135). Later, Satrapi mentions that the Iranian currency is losing its value (p. 138).

Another political discussion is about the Iraqi missiles over Tehran (p. 136). Tehran comes under attack, and many leave the city (p. 137). The Satrapis have Jewish neighbors, the Baba-Levys, who are among the few Jewish families who have stayed after the Revolution. Marji is friends with their daughter, Nada. One day, while out shopping with another friend, Marji is horrified to hear her neighborhood has been bombed and rushes home to find that her family is safe, but the bomb has hit the Baba-Levys’ house. Since it is a Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, her mother speculates that they must have been home (pp. 141-142). While looking at the rubble, Marji sees Nada’s turquoise bracelet. In a black panel, she states, “No scream in the world could have relieved my suffering and anger” (p. 142).

In 1984, Marji is 14 and a rebel at school: she has an encounter with the principal who is trying to take her bracelet, and she is expelled (p. 143). Though it is a struggle to find her another school, Marji’s aunt helps, since she knows “some bureaucrats in the education system” (p. 144). However, at the new school, Marji confronts the teacher about the status of political prisoners: “You say that we don’t have political prisoners anymore. But we’ve gone from 3000 prisoners under the Shah to 300,000 under your regime” (p. 144). Her father receives a call from the principal about that incident, which creates huge anxiety for her mother who worries that Marji will have to live the experience of Noulifar and end up executed (p. 145). In fact, since it is against the law to kill a virgin, a guardian of the revolution married Noulifar, took her virginity before executing her, and sent 500 tumans to her parents (equivalent to $5) (pp. 145-156). Marji loses sleep over the news about Noulifar, thinking “all night, […] of the phrase: ‘To die a martyr is to inject blood into the veins of society.’ Niloufar was a real martyr, and her blood certainly did not feed our society’s veins” (p. 146). A week later, even though the principal has not sent a report about the incident, Marje’s parents ask her to go to Austria where she can study at the French school in Vienna. They promise to follow her later (p. 147). “We love you so much that we want you to go,” they tell her (p. 148). Her father stresses, “Don’t ever forget who you are!” (p. 148). Marji calls her friends over to say farewell and give them her posters, “my most precious things, so that [they] don’t forget [her]” (p. 149). When her grandmother comes to spend the night so she can say goodbye to Marji, she gives her this advice:

> In life you’ll meet a lot of jerks. If they hurt you, tell yourself that it’s because they’re stupid. That will help keep you from reacting to their cruelty. Because there is nothing worse than bitterness and vengeance… Always keep your dignity and be true to yourself. (p. 150)

The next morning, her grandmother does not come with her parents to the airport. There are many people traveling, and the last thing her father says to her is, “Don’t forget who you are and where you come from” (p. 153). In the last panel, Marji turns to look at her parents one last time and sees her mother fainting in her father’s arms. Satrapi ends her book with the remark, “It would have been better to just go” (p. 153).

Saffron Sky (1999)

Gelareh Asayesh's *Saffron Sky* (1999) transports the reader to her memories through a flashback to summer of 1992 when, after years in North America, she has a dream about Iran, her home country, and she feels "[her] past melding with [her] present. The boundaries of space and time were erased. [Her] life felt whole." (p. x). On the eve of Iraq's attack upon Kuwait, Asayesh decides to visit her home country for the first time since she secured her green card:

> So this year, when a green card issued in my name granted me the freedom to travel to and from the United States for the first time since I'd left Iran, I knew what I would do. The decision was organic, flowing unalterably from the grief I acknowledged on that night before my wedding.
> I was going back to Iran. I was going to plumb the turbulent depths that overwhelmed me at unexpected moments in a life of surface tranquility. (p.2)

She narrates the stories of her subsequent visits to Iran, and she weaves memories of her childhood as well as political references through them. The memories are not in chronological order, and they are interrupted by stories of encounters with friends or colleagues both in Iran and in the United States. She recounts her adjustment to life in the United States as a child, when her parents were studying for their graduate degrees, as well as her life there when they returned to the United States permanently. The writing is beautifully meshed with details, and the author helps the reader transition between events with date and location indicators at the beginning of each part and subpart. The reader learns about Asayesh's parents' high status at work in Iran (she calls her father, Baba and her mother, Homajoon):

> Baba received deference not just because of his light eyes, of course. He had social stature as well. First of all, he was a doctor—the most prestigious profession in Iran. Second, as managing director in the Shah's Ministry of Health, he held a position of power. (p. 78)
>
> […]
>
> Homajoon also occupied a position of power and responsibility, if on a smaller scale. As head of the medical library in the health ministry, her fiefdom was confined to a handful of young women who wore too-short mini-skirts and too much makeup. (pp. 78-79)

The reader is also told about her father's political engagement and his poetry writing (p.107), and her paternal grandfather's three different arrests for his political engagement and leadership (pp. 92, 94). Asayesh details such political events in Iran's recent history as the Islamic Revolution (pp. 36, 80), the Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq's nationalization of oil in 1951 (pp. 92-93), and the CIA coup to overthrow him and return the Shah to power (p. 93). She remembers the anniversary of the Hostage Crisis (p. 38), and she recalls the Islamic dress codes along with her encounters with their enforcers in the Islamic regime. Asayesh reveals personal details about her life as an immigrant, and how until she began to write her book, her family would not talk about their first years in the United States. In an honest recollection of the way she had not fit in as a new immigrant at the American high school and later as a new employee, she describes the inner reality of diasporic experience in the United States:

> I was "well-adjusted/' "Americanized." They could not see the Iranian in me. But with each year I became more aware of an inner schism. Deep inside, I could not forget that I began life as an Iranian. (p. 106)

She fluctuates between her yearning for her life in Iran and her fear of losing the peace in her new life in the United States. She wants to maintain her Iranian culture and heritage by making changes in her American life—building an Iranian *takht* (p. 196), teaching her husband Farsi, talking to her daughter in Farsi, and taking part in Iranian celebrations at her house as well as in her American community.

The Good Daughter: A Memoir of My Mother's Hidden Life (2011)

Jasmin Darznik opens her life writing, *The Good Daughter: A Memoir of My Mother's Hidden Life* (2011), with a prologue. In it she describes her discovery of a photograph of her mother Lili in a satin wedding dress and veil next to a man, who is not Darznik's father. "Stunned," as she writes, Darznik sits in her mother's house—five weeks after her father's funeral—as she looks at that photograph. She keeps it for six months before confronting her mother with it. The story continues in a strange vein. While Jasmin grows up in the United States, Lili often tells her about her mysterious Good Daughter, threatening Jasmin that she will leave her and go to her good daughter in Iran: "If you become like the girls here […] I'll go back to Iran to live with my Good Daughter" (p. 3). When confronted with the photograph, Lili tells Jasmin that it has nothing to do with her, but weeks later, at her place on the East Coast, Jasmin starts receiving cassette tapes from Lili in California. On the tapes, Lili has recorded the true story of her early life. It is Lili's story that Darznik relates in her book.

The first tape starts with Lili's telling Jasmin that for her to understand Lili's story, she needs to know "about Avenue Moniriyeh, about [her] grandmother Kobra and [her] grandfather Sohrab, and what Iran was then. Because [they] couldn't just do what [she] do[es] here—forget [her] name and who [she] belong[s] to. [Their] lives were not like that. No." (p. 7). In her chapter, "Avenue Moniriyeh," Darznik transports the reader back to 1921 where her great-grandmother, Pargol Amini, is delivering her ninth child, Jasmin's grandmother Kobra. Her great-grandfather, Qoli Amini, who was addressed as Qoli Khan, was a rug merchant. As Kobra grows up, Pargol decides to send her to school to become a professional seamstress because she thinks Kobra will not marry (p.11). Kobra quickly learns the trade and becomes a teacher at Malakeh Khanoom's school two years later. Then, however, Kobra's fate takes a dark turn when her brother, Ali-Ahmed, promises her in marriage to his gambling opponent, Sohrab, to whom he has lost a large amount of money (p. 13). Hence, at the age of fourteen, Kobra becomes a bride, *aroos*. Sohrab, a high-ranking employee at Iran's national textile bureau, has been courting Simin, a chic, twice-divorced lady for years, but Simin cannot have children. He is glad to marry Kobra, young as she is, because he wants to have children. Kobra gives birth to a boy named Nader, and to Lili. But Sohrab is abusive. He refuses to take Kobra with him to parties. At the parties, he squanders himself on alcohol and opium. One night, returning home drunk and high on opium, Sohrab hits Kobra. She loses consciousness and is bleeding from her nose. When she awakens, she is sent back to her parents' house, while both Nader and Lili stay with Sohrab. His mother, Khanoom, his sisters, and his stepmothers in the house at Avenue Moniriyeh raise the children (p. 22). Kobra ends up coming back before the divorce can be finalized, and thus

nullifying it.[101] This is to be a cycle every few months. Due to Sohrab's gambling habit, they have ups and downs in their finances, but he borrows money to send Lili to the School of Virtue (p. 30). She is the first girl in her family to go to school, and she does not wear the veil that was outlawed by Reza Shah in 1936 (p. 43). In 1949, when Lili turns eleven, Sohrab moves to a new uptown apartment with Simin, his blue-eyed mistress. He does not respond to Khanoom's news that there is a suitor for Lili, and Lili's fate is decided by Khanoom and her two spinster daughters, the family elders, who are very religious.

After an initial visit by Kazem Kharrami's maternal grandmother (Ma Mère) who comes with a group of women to inspect Lili, the Kharramis give their approval of her as Kazem's bride ten days later, and preparations start for the formal gathering to ask for Lili's hand, the *khastegari*. The next day, Ma Mère brings Lili an emerald ring. Lili sneaks it to school to show her friends (p. 49). For doing this, Lili is expelled from the School of Virtue. Although Sohrab's condition for Lili's marriage is that she will continue her education, he cannot find any private school which accepts a child bride.

Reza Shad has increased the marriageable age for girls to sixteen, but if given a doctor's or midwife's note stating the girl is "mature," a girl can be married at thirteen. Lili's virginity is checked, and her three aunts bear witness to it as a proof for the groom's family (p. 51). Lili is forbidden from seeing Kazem until the *aqd konoon*, the first nuptial ceremony. Kobra, who has become pregnant again during one of the "reconciliations" with Sohrab, delivers a baby boy she names Omid in the spring (p. 54). Six months before Lili's birthday, her *aqd konoon* is scheduled and is conducted in a traditional fashion (with separate wedding parties for men and women) at the insistence of Khanoom. Lili sees Kazem for the first time without his fedora and all her worries are confirmed: "he was nearly bald" (p. 57). After the *aqd*, Kazem visits once a week, they have a meal together, and then spend half an hour alone in a sitting room to get to know each other according to strict rules of conduct that they are both aware of (pp. 57-58). The final wedding party/Night of Consummation is on the eve of Lili's thirteenth birthday. Neither Khanoom nor her daughters attend the celebration because the Khorramis have insisted that the company will be mixed (pp. 63-64). Beginning on her wedding night, Lili experiences rape and abuse from Kazem, and her whole life changes (pp. 57-69). Living with him at the Kharramis' compound, the servants help her to learn cooking (p. 72). Yet, for not washing the laundry properly as reported by Ma Mère, Kazem hits Lili (p. 73). When Lili's pregnancy is confirmed, Ma Mère asks Kazem to take her away, so they move to a two-room flat with no electricity and no window in the larger room (p. 75). Kazem gives Lili his wage, three hundred tomans, at the beginning of each month, asking her to manage the household, which includes the two hundred toman rent.

Despite the death of her little brother, Omid (p. 76), and Lili's pregnancy, Kazem repeatedly beats her (pp. 76-77). At a gathering, Lili hears Kazem's aunts talking about his sadism (p. 78) but does not realize the meaning. To escape her misery, when she is five months pregnant, she discovers "how to make herself disappear": she focuses all her attention on a chore until she disconnects from her worries and the surroundings enough to enter a peaceful state for an hour or longer (p. 79). Lily cuts the tip of her index finger while listening to Kazem

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[101] "In the days of Sohrab and Kobra's marriage, a woman living outside her husband's house could be claimed back within three and a half months, thereby nullifying the divorce." (Darznik, *The Good Daughter*, p. 26)

quarrelling with the landlord about the fact that he hits her. From that time on, Kazem makes sure to hit her in discreet places, and she is "too ashamed and too frightened to tell anyone" (p. 80).

Although Sohrab offers to get them a maid, Kazem refuses, believing that Lili should do all her tasks by herself (p. 82). When Lili delivers her daughter Sara, she goes to Khanoom who takes care of her after the delivery and helps her through the difficulty in nursing her baby (pp. 89-90). During her stay at Khanoom's, Simin visits Lili to congratulate her for having the baby (pp. 89-90). After the death of Ma Mère (p. 90), Kazem falls into a depression (p. 91). Once, on her way back from the hammam with Sara (p. 92), Lili arrives home to find Kazem with a knife and his forehead and cheeks bleeding (p. 93). After this incident, she realizes it is not safe for her to stay with him (p. 94). With Simin, she visits her father and tells him about Kazem (p. 98). Sohrab refuses to help her, and Lili takes opium that Simin offers her, overdoses, and is taken to the hospital (pp. 101-102). Sohrab worries about what to do with Lili, and he keeps her recovering at his place in Kobra's care. If he files for her divorce, she will be condemned to live as a divorced woman, and, "In the minds of many, nothing distinguished a divorced woman from a prostitute" (p. 105). Nevertheless, Sohrab files a divorce petition on behalf of Lili who is advised not to mention Sara's existence. She must give her up to Kazem's family (p. 108).

Yet Kazem refuses to divorce Lili (p. 109) until she is summoned to the courthouse where she signs her divorce petition and becomes free (pp. 110). In Sohrab's house (pp. 111-133), the reader learns about the second miracle of Lili's life that occurs with her father's help. Through Lili's memories, the reader gets to experience traditional Iranian culture, like the special house-cleaning before No Roz, the cooking of the *samanoo,*[102] preparing the *sofreh* "with the seven *seens*—the seven totems of spring—a Koran, and a bowl of plump goldfish with a tangerine bobbing above their heads" (p. 112). As she recounts her mother's story, Darznik also refers to political events of the time, like the confrontation between the Shah's soldiers and Mossadegh's supporters (p. 116). She also supplies historical references to Iranian oil:

> […] it was the British who first plunged a pipeline into it in the early 1900s. She might also have learned that for several decades Iranians had enjoyed scant revenue from their oil reserves but that two years earlier, in 1951, Iran's democratically elected prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, had finally nationalized the country's oil. And, finally and most critically, she might have discovered that the chaos in the streets had been started as part of an effort to force the country's oil revenues westward again. (p. 117)

Darznik also mentions the 1953 coup against Mossadegh, "Operation Ajax." Financed and executed by the CIA, its details were not revealed for fifty years (p. 117). At the end of the coup, Sohrab enrolls Lili in two schools and, with the help of her cousins and a dictionary, she studies and reads all the French and English literature books her father brings her (p. 119). Kobra collects leftover money from Sohrab's pockets and buys land in the countryside (pp. 123-124). At a party for one of her classmates, Mina, Lili meets her brother Farhad, who is planning to leave for the United States. He starts coming to the school door to see Lili and when he travels, he writes her letters, though he ends up shooting himself (pp. 127-129). Meanwhile, Kazem keeps on showing up to see Lili after the divorce. He shows her pictures of Sara, telling Lili that

[102] "A dense sugary paste made from germinated wheat." (Darznik, 2011, p. 112)

Sara asks about her (p. 130). Lili knows she cannot go to see Sara, much as she longs to, and that the only way is to have her aunt Zaynab sneak Sara to Sohrab's house. But Sohrab catches sight of Sara on this secret visit, and he decides to send Lili abroad (pp. 131-133).

In the "Exile" chapter (pp. 134-152), Sohrab sends Lili to her brother Nader in Tübingen (Germany) to continue her education. While Lili is settling into her boarding house, Kobra becomes no longer welcome at Sohrab's. She goes to her parents' but faces her sister-in-law's rudeness there and ends up renting her own place in Zahirodolleh Alley (pp. 138-139). Kazem visits Kobra and ranges through her place, looking for anything about Lili. In Germany, Lili is tutored in German, and Nader secures her a spot as an orderly at a hospital run by Catholic nuns (pp. 140-141). At the clinic, where Lili learns to take care of infants, she is discouraged from growing attached to them. When Nader announces to her that he needs to go back to Iran for few months, she does not understand until she returns to her room and sees from his note that Sohrab has passed away in a car accident (p. 144). After a few days of shock, Lili decides to accompany Nader to Iran, and they leave by car (pp. 144-148). At the end of the seven-day funeral, Simin claims Sohrab's properties as his creditor (p. 151). Since Sohrab was hit by the American attaché, Nader and Lili are summoned to the American Embassy to waive their rights to press charges against him (p. 151). Instead, the American embassy sends a letter to Khanoom's house containing a check of seven thousand tomans as Sohrab's blood money; but they do not cash it until Simin claims it (p. 152).

In the chapter, "Zahirodolleh Alley" (pp. 153-172), the reader learns how with the death of Sohrab, it becomes Lili's and Kobra's responsibility to support Nader's education in Germany. Lili borrows money from Khanoom, studies typing, and is looking for a job while Kobra becomes known for her sewing in the city. Sara, at six years old, runs away from her father's house and is found by a policeman who brings her to Kobra. From that time on, Sara is allowed to come and stay at Lili's every few weeks. One of Kobra's fancy customers, Nasreen Khanoom, after taking Lili with her once to a gathering, finds her a suitor, Mr. Fereydoon, her husband! (p. 163). One day while she is waiting in the street, an officer approaches her and offers to take her in his car to her place. But his driver takes them instead to a construction site where she struggles to avoid rape and has to run for her life. After this incident, she works as a voice over in a filming company until she saves enough money to go back to Germany (p. 171).

In the chapter, "Damad Farangi" (pp. 173- 195), Lili goes to Hamburg (Germany) to study midwifery after she has helped her brother finish his studies. While Lili is struggling with hunger and learning her ways at the clinic, Sara is told that her mother is a "prostitute," confronts Kobra, refrains from visiting her grandmother for a while, then comes back (pp. 178-179). Beside working at the clinic, Lili takes other weekend jobs. She looks after the granddaughter of an old Iranian couple, the Pakravans (p. 182), and she helps a young Iranian man whose polio has impaired his mobility (p. 183). All her extra work prevents her from studying the German she needs for her certificate, so she fails her theoretical exam and has a crisis of nerves (pp. 185-186).

Determined to succeed, Lili registers in a new school in Göttingen to repeat the academic part of her certificate (p. 186). One night, she meets a young railway engineer, Johann, whom she starts dating every Friday. At Christmas, she goes with Johann to visit his family in Hessisch-Lichtenau (pp. 188-190). After two months of dating, Johann consults with a Catholic bishop before proposing to Lili (p. 191). He writes a letter to Nader in Stuttgart to ask his

blessing, and the latter says that his sister is free to choose whom she marries (p. 191). Lili requests that Johann stop drinking and be circumcised. After questioning her about Islam, Johann accepts her conditions and undergoes circumcision at the clinic (pp. 192-194). After her graduation from the University of Göttingen, Johann resigns from his work; and they set off to Iran to marry in 1962 (p. 195).

In the chapter, "Peacock Throne" (pp. 196-256), Johann and Lili in Iran go on two tours: a Tour of Destitution and a Tour of Many Splendors, before going to the ministry where they receive a sixteen-point list of requirements they must fulfill so that they can apply for a marriage certificate. The last requirement is Johann's conversion to Islam (p. 202). After the preparations, the wedding takes place at Nader's apartment. A few days after the wedding, Lili asks Kobra to call the Khorramis so they can go see Sara. During their visit, Lili finds out that Sara does not go to school anymore, and that she is staying with her aunt (pp. 210-212). Lili teaches Johann Persian, calls a firm and schedules him an interview with the director, and Johann is hired (p. 214). They save money until they can afford a condominium in the same subdivision where Nader and Kobra live. Lili furnishes her apartment modestly, saving money (p. 217). Although Johann's family does not accept their engagement nor attend their wedding, they start visiting them in Iran. His mother visits first but falls and breaks her hip, and his sister visits then. Lili is valued at her job at the hospital and she works long hours. Johann befriends Otto with whom he enjoys a beer at their apartment.

Lili finds Sara a boarding school to continue her education, and Kazem accepts it, but only if Lili pays the fees (p. 231). With Sara's mischief at the boarding school, the director advises Lili to spend Saturdays with Sara, and so they do. Determined to have a second child, Lili visits fertility clinics in Tel Aviv, receives treatment, and becomes pregnant the next month. But she delivers a stillborn baby boy. Kobra keeps him in a large glass jar filled with alcohol (p. 235), only to bury him six weeks later (p. 236). They sell the condominium to establish a factory of ready mix-concrete. After helping deliver a poor woman in her home, Lili convinces her colleague, Mariam, to start their own clinic (p. 243). Along with her own success, Lili helps Kobra change careers: she registers her to study in a beauty school and hires a language tutor for her (p. 245). Then, Kobra is sent to Hessisch-Lichtenau for a year to get a foreign certificate. Meanwhile, Johann and Lili have to sell the factory because they lack a permit and cannot pay the bills, which spurs on Johann's drinking (p. 248). When she comes back to Iran, Kobra opens her own salon, "Lady Diola" (p. 250) and becomes a success. Lili, at the beginning of the seventies, visits another fertility clinic. Once her pregnancy is confirmed, she resigns from her hospital job and confines herself to bed rest until she is delivered of Jasmin in June of that year (pp. 253-255). The chapter ends with the family's visit to Mashad. From her birth onwards, Darznik starts telling her story in the first person.

Darznik tells about how she was raised in Tehran as a "*doh-rageh*, a two-veined child" (p. 257). Her mother would drop her at her grandmother Kobra's salon, Lady Diola, before heading to her work at the hospital. Darznik recounts visits to her grandmother's salon by a girl with long black hair who would play with her. However, Darznik does not know who the girl was. One day, when Darznik was three years old, she fell from the girl's hands and cut her lips open. Her grandmother reprimanded the girl who stopped visiting and no one would talk of her for twenty years (p. 260). In a flashback, Darznik depicts the relationship between her mother and Sara, Sara's marriage, Johann's drinking problem. Darznik also refers to Ayatollah

Khomeini, the socio-political changes in Iran, and the revolution. Lili tells Johann they have to leave Iran (p. 266) and they left to America. Darznik's father, mother, and her landed in New York where Johann bought a Buick sedan, heading south (p. 269). They settle in San Francisco where they bought a run-down motel, the Casa Buena, the Good House (p. 271). Darznik picked up English but would not feel she belonged. She states, "Nothing about me was right in America; nothing about me "fit" here" (p. 278). Darznik entwines memories in America such as her schooling with what was happening in Iran such as the Hostage Crisis (p. 278). Her father's drinking problem worsened and he would disappear for some time before coming back (p. 284). Lili devotes herself to raising Jasmin while running the run-down motel they have purchased. Whenever Jasmin annoys her mother, Lili threatens that she will return to her "good daughter." As she begins with a photograph, Darznik ends her book with her mother showing her photographs of Sara and her family in Iran and then following it with the news of Kobra's death.

To See And See Again (2000)

Tara Bahrampour's *To See and See Again: A Life in Iran and America* (1999) is a chronicle first of her childhood in Iran and then in the United States where she came of age, her return visit to Iran as a young woman, and her life back in the United States as an adult. Born to an Iranian father and an American mother, Bahrampour's experience is different from that of other Iranian women in diaspora in North America because she is a *dorageh,*[103] a person who comes from two cultures. Although, her narration is chronological, it is full of flashbacks. Among Bahrampour's major themes are her father's family's wealth in Iran (p. 13); the political upheavals in Iran leading to the Islamic Revolution (pp. 107-115); the religious beliefs and the rise of Khomeini (pp. 101-102); her integration into the American high school social scene, where she becomes popular through sharing her experience of the Revolution (pp. 124-125); her studies at Berkeley where she concentrates upon research about Iran; and finally, her approach to immigration and its multifaceted impacts.

Bahrampour's story begins with her family's arrival in the United States. After landing in Los Angeles, the family travels by car up the Pacific coast for over two months until they finally settle in Portland. They find a two-bedroom apartment in Timber Creek where her uncle Jamsheed is already living (p. 118). Her father's sister Massi with her husband Zia and their two daughters, Shireen and Haideh, join the Bahrampours and rent an apartment in the same compound. In the evenings, the two families gather in Tara's apartment to watch TV. Her father, who speaks English the best of them all (he studied in the U.S. earlier) (p. 121) translates the news for them.

As she relates her family memories, Bahrampour weaves into her narrative political events in Iran—like the nationalization of Iranian oil (pp. 18-19), the Shah's land reforms (p. 89), the events leading to the Islamic Revolution (like the "demonstrations and unrest" or

[103] *Do-rageh* "means two-veined, or two kinds of blood in one vein, and whenever people say it [she] think[s] of [her] two bloods swirling together like a two-colored lollipop." (Bahrampour, 2000, p. 48)

sholooghi[104]) and “fires at cinemas, banks, and liquor stores” which were starting in Tehran (p. 93), the Hostage Crisis (p. 131), Black Friday[105] (p. 163), and the Iran-Iraq war (p. 164).

Tara depicts the way that her family members try to hold onto Iranian culture and customs. For instance, her aunt, Ammejun, invites her over to dinner for an arranged meeting with her son, Mehdi (pp. 182-183). The family also joins to celebrate the traditional last Wednesday evening before the Iranian New Year, called *Chahar-shambeh-Souri* (p. 61), the *Noruz* (the Iranian New Year’s Day) (p. 62), and the thirteenth day of the new year, *Seezdeh-be-dar* (p. 63).

When Tara starts college at Berkeley, she discovers the university library “has a few books about the Iranian revolution” (p. 162). As she begins to read them, she is surprised by how early the people had started to demonstrate in Qom (as early as January 1978), “months before [they] ever noticed a hint of trouble” (p. 162).

The dilemma of the immigrant is a theme that Tara explores as well. She states,

> In Iran your place becomes empty when you leave and stays empty as long as you are away. But what if the one who leaves forgets about his empty place? What if, by living so long in America or England or France, he starts to become part of those countries and no longer remembers his original home? After college, I visited my uncle Parviz and got the feeling that something like this had happened to him.” (p. 194)

Tara chronicles the repeated journeys of her older relatives between Iran and the U.S., yet she’s aware that “thousands of young Iranians are denied entry to the United States” (p. 198). She observes her extended family gatherings at Noruz parties and weddings. “We arrive to find four generations sitting around the pool, drinking beer and Cokes and mixing English and Farsi,” she relates (p. 198).

After graduating from journalism school in New York, Tara is offered an internship at an American newspaper in Brussels. While she is there, she writes that she “got the call to go to Iran” (p. 206). When her father calls to tell her about her cousin Haideh’s upcoming wedding in Tehran, he urges her to go to the wedding (p. 206). Through the Iranian Embassy in Brussels, Tara procures travel documents that allow her into Iran (p. 208). Her father warns her not to show her American passport (p. 213) at entry into Iran. However, after being questioned upon her arrival at the airport by Iranian officials, who refuse to accept her travel documents, even when she insists she has traveled from Belgium, Tara confesses that her mother is American and hands in her American passport (pp. 2015-2016). Finally, she pages her uncle Zia, now living with his family in Iran again, who succeeds in getting her out of the airport, and who vouches to be responsible for her. The officials claim that she has escaped illegally, since there is no record of her having left the country. Furthermore, anyone who arrives without a passport goes to jail (pp. 216-217). Tara stays at Zia and Massi’s place in Tehran. She remains in high anxiety until

[104] “*Shoolooghi* means messiness or disorder.” (Bahrampour, 1999, p. 95)

[105] Friday, September 8, 1978. It was the turning point for revolutionaries and historians, for on that day, the Shah’s army surrounded and fired on a peaceful demonstration of people who were not aware that martial law had been declared earlier that morning.

she is issued an Iranian passport. Eventually, after multiple visits to the passport office and with Zia's interfering with the officials, they give her back her American passport (p. 239).

During her stay in Tehran, she attends Haideh's wedding which the *komiteh*[106] interrupts (pp. 225-227), visits the bazaar on her own (p. 255), and goes back to where she used to live as a child. She goes alone to visit the house her father was building in *Shahrak-e-Gharb* (pp. 274-276), and there she conducts some research with high school students with whom she gets to experience Iranian teenage life (pp. 269-274). She even gets to watch a *ta'azieh*[107] (pp. 293-295). Later she takes the bus to Esfahan where she stays at her cousin Roya's mother-in-law's house. She gets into trouble while visiting the Emam Mosque for mingling with two foreign male tourists, is interrogated by police, and is reprimanded after they call her host to make sure she is residing there. They ask Roya's mother-in-law to stop her from going out by herself (pp. 299-304). Her reaction to the police is to tell them, "I'm half American" (p. 302). Tara travels to her uncle Dadash's village where she stays with him and Leila Khanoum (pp. 308-339).

Back in the U.S.**,** Tara browses a website about Iranians in America. She is reminded of her own sense of dislocation two years earlier, after her return from Iran (p. 347). She compares her feelings to other Iranians who post on the website that they are looking for someone they knew in the past (pp. 348-349). One day, while playing soccer in a park with her friends, she comes across the picture of Carla Powers (a friend she had had at her nursery school in Iran) in the graduating class of a university yearbook. She contacts the school to get Carla's phone number. She calls Carla, and they meet over brunch (pp. 349-354). Carla calls herself an "expat," and Tara reflects, "Even if I had stayed in Iran that long, I don't think I would have called my life "expat" (p. 354).

Tara ends her book with a childhood memory in Iran with Carla, and a reflection on memories:

> Some memories come back only in the presence of other memories, like a series of locked doors. Opening one allows you to open another, which in turn opens a window through which to view your past. It was not until Carla began to talk about her last visit to Iran that I remembered, after seventeen years, the game we played at the German Club on that balmy, honeysuckle-scented eve of the revolution… (p. 357)

[106] Islamic Revolution Committees (1979-1991) was a law enforcement force in Iran acting under Ministry of Interior. The Committee was responsible for enforcing Islamic regulations and moral standards on social behavior. (Adapted from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_Revolution_Committees)
[107] "A passion play honoring the martyrs of Shiism" (Bahrampour, 1999, p. 293).

Appendix II: Chapter 6 Long Summaries

Daughter of Persia (1992)

Daughter of Persia (1992), by Sattareh Farman Farmaian, is the account of her life in Iran from the Constitutional Monarchy of Qajar, through Reza Khan and his son Mohammad Reza Shah, up to the Islamic Republic. Farmaian intertwines political references with events in her personal life. As a child, Farmaian lived in her father's harem compound from her birth until 1930. In fact, she lived a secluded life in the harem where her father did not allow his wives "to leave home often" (Farmaian, 1992, p. 6). Her father, who was the Qajar Minister of War, had eight wives and thirty-six children. In her narrative, Sattareh treasures her childhood and describes it emotionally in precise detail. She portrays the importance of family in her upbringing:

> … for "family" in our small universe meant not only our father and mothers and brothers and sisters and other relatives who lived in and around the compound, but all the other people inside our walls: our nannies, our lalehs or male caretakers, the cooks, guards, porters, stewards, secretaries, artisans, old military pensioners, and everyone else my father supported. They and we all belonged to him, and were fed, protected, and cared for by him. This supreme bond with our benefactor, which Iranians call "the bond of bread and salt," gave us all an indissoluble connection. (Farmaian, 1992, p. 7)

She attended the American school where she was encouraged to continue her education in the United States. Sattareh became the first Persian to study at the University of Southern California where she specialized in social work. She married an Indian student (Aroon) and had a daughter (Mitra). After finishing her studies, Sattareh worked for a while in the United States before returning to Baghdad on a UN mission. After World War II, there were few health and educational resources in Iran (in 1945). Sattareh went back to Iran where she established and managed the School of Social Work (1958-1979) and helped many families and students until 1979. At times she was supported by those in power, and at others, she was hindered by them.

Farmaian describes the political upheavals she lived through, like the constitutional revolution (p. 28). She also describes the status of women in Iran: She states, for example, that they had no choice in marriage, and "no one bothered to teach women any skills at all, except those needed for housekeeping, husbandry, and weaving" (Farmaian, 1992, p. 30). According to her, "in Iran, women are considered *zaifeh*, the weak sex, as frail in mind as in body, incapable of making important decisions" (Farmaian, 1992, p. 30). She also argues that it was considered "futile and even dangerous to teach a girl more than she needed to be a pious, virtuous wife." However, this was not the case with her father for whom education was essential (Farmaian, 1992, p. 30). Her father, Shazdeh, served in many official positions as a "commander-in-chief of the army in Persian Azerbaijan, governor of Kerman, governor of Kurdistan, governor of Kerman a second time, governor of the District of Tehran, minister of war, governor of Fars, governor of Kermanshah, and governor of Azerbaijan…" (Farmaian, 1992, p. 31). Sattareh details the agony caused by Reza Shah's injustices to Shazdeh and his subsequent imprisonment (Farmaian, 1992, p. 51).

However, Farmaian does not fail to portray the good achievements of Reza Shah as well. In fact, she goes into deep detail to describe his order to all citizens to take last names and be registered with a new national registry office. She tells how he compelled Iranian males to enlist for two years of military service, made children go to school, and built roads, telegraph lines, railways, etc. (Farmaian, 1992, p. 52). But Reza Shah's belief was in "Western-style society," and, as she says, the "King was quite prepared to send Iranians to drink from the well of Western-style progress at gunpoint, if necessary, and to do that he had, among other things, set out to break religion's hold over the common people, as Ataturk was doing next door in Turkey," which meant "reducing the power of [our] loosely organized Shiite clergy" (Farmaian, 1992, p. 53).

Farmaian (1992) also states that Reza Shah "was anxious to emancipate women—or rather, to create the appearance of emancipation" (p. 95). Consequently, he opened schools and professions like nursing and school teaching to women and forced "cinemas, restaurants, and hotels, on pain of heavy fines, to admit both sexes" (Farmaian, 1992, p. 95). Despite the fact that the Shah did not "give women the right to vote, run for political office, divorce their husbands, have custody of their own children, or even get a passport without their husbands'…," he was praised in the West for his "Western" views on women's rights (Farmaian, 1992, p. 95). In February 1935, the Shah outlawed the veil. Farmaian describes the effect it had on women like her mother who, along with all traditional people, "regarded Reza's order as the worst thing he had yet done" (Farmaian, 1992, p. 95).

She tells how Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh was running for a seat in parliament (Farmaian, 1992, p. 139) and the popularity of Mossadegh both as the head of the coalition party (p. 173) and in the United Nations (p. 178). At the same time, she takes the reader with her on a journey from Iran to India, and then to the United States where she goes to study sociology. She wants to help Dr. Mossadegh (p. 185), and on Mr. Jones' advice, she writes to her brother and asks him to tell Mossadegh that he should be more flexible in his talks with the American mediators (p. 187). She does not conceal her mistrust of the British (p. 188) and details the situation in Iran as it concerns Mossadegh's position (p. 189). In Mossadegh's trial, he is found guilty (pp. 196-197), and she decides that she cannot work for Mr. Jones anymore. Since the situation in Iran is so unsettled, she decides to take a UN appointment in Baghdad and send her daughter to boarding school. She returns to Iran after ten years (p. 199) and rejoices in her family surroundings. She recounts the days of Mohammad Reza Shah who used the secret police SAVAK to control his people (p. 207). Farmaian portrays the changes Mohammad Reza Shah introduced in his "White Revolution" (p. 250) and expresses her happiness for the health insurance, social security and rural hospitals (p. 250).

An incident where her students are arrested (p. 273) makes her begin to realize the actual nature of the changes taking place in the country. She portrays how the Shah has abolished the two parties (p. 279), and how he is being perceived by the American President Carter (p. 291). She also draws a clear picture of the demonstrations taking place in Qom (p. 292) and the growth in the popularity of Khomeini through the tapes the people are listening to (p. 293). She shows the increasing violence (p. 311) as the guerillas are taking over: for example, there is gunfire at her school (p. 313). During this upheaval, Khomeini arrives in Iran (p. 325), and she feels "a great rush of relief and hope" (p. 326).

Yet her hopes are rapidly destroyed as her own students come to arrest her (p. 331), and she spends a long time awaiting interrogation, not knowing what she has done. After the collapse of the Shah's regime in 1979, radical students have taken over the school. When at last her interrogators address her with their accusations, she learns that it is not Khomeini accusing her but her own students (p. 356). Despite the letter by Talagani—an Islamic cleric—who praises her work and attests to her good character, she is advised not to return to the school, for she will not survive the students mob (p. 368). She is further advised to leave the country, since, among other accusations, she has been accused of collaborating with the Shah's regime. Upon her release, she loses trust in people (p. 372), especially after other members of her family are arrested (p. 375). More than ever, she is determined to leave the country. She becomes suspicious that her phone has been tapped (p. 379). Fearful for her life, she procures a passport and flees back to the United States for good.

Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran (2011)

Ghosts of Revolution: Rekindled Memories of Imprisonment in Iran (2011) by Shahla Talebi is the account of Talebi's two imprisonments (once under the Shah in 1977, and again, under the Islamic Regime in 1983). In her prologue, Talebi explains that at "both times, [her] arrest occurred after the harshest crackdown on opponents under each regime, yet at the beginning of changes in prison conditions" (p. 4). She shares with the reader the reason why she is writing:

> I hence write today for the sake of all those friends—whom I either knew personally or my soul knew of their spirit of resistance and desire for justice—whose refusal to submit to the power of money and violence cost their lives. It is in the spirit and for the sake of these always present friends—ghosts of justice and freedom—that I live. (p. 11)

She had refused to succumb to the Iranian government's pressure to sign a letter repudiating her "crimes" in order to be temporarily freed. Yet, since requests by parents were also accepted, her father interfered, and she was granted a temporary release. In that short space of freedom, her family urged her to leave Iran. She agreed and moved to the United States, where she continued her education and ultimately published her life writing.

In six non-chronological chapters, Talebi chronicles her own life in prison along with stories of her fellow inmates, like Roya, Fozi, Kobra, and Maryam. She also depicts the struggles of the prisoners, and she tells how some become informants, betraying their friends and even taking part in torturing them. She describes how the prisoners battle to remain sane by supporting each other. She weaves personal with historical facts, and she uses flashbacks to narrate stories of her childhood and upbringing. She also depicts the political atmosphere outside the prison, as well as the international pressure on Iran, especially from the United States, regarding its prison conditions and use of torture.

She explains the reason for her imprisonment and subsequent torture. She was being punished for her "pursuit of banned books and dissident views" (p. 13), for "in Iran, under both the Shah and the Islamic Republic, any involvement in thinking, reading, discussing, and writing

about ideas other than those in agreement with the government was considered threatening" (p. 89). However, the fact that she was not connected to the guerilla movement, she thinks, was a "factor in easing [her] interrogation process, at least in that particular historical moment" (p. 13). In prison, she fluctuates between testing her endurance by pushing her nails into her skin "as hard and as long as [she] could to test [her] tolerance level, angry at [herself] for not knowing the limits of [her] endurance" (p. 14), and, talking to herself because she "needed to remember the poverty, discrimination, and all the injustices [she] had witnessed around her so the pain could not break [her]" (pp. 14-15). Talebi speaks about the continuing trauma of reliving her prison experience whenever she is stressed, long after her release and her flight to the United States:

> The temporary basis of this release also made it hard to feel a real sense of freedom. My body relived prison experiences whenever I felt that an authoritative force was challenging the limits of my will. I dreamed of torture when I felt pressured even by the deadlines I set for myself while writing my doctoral dissertation, which led to my unconscious resistance to meeting them. (p. 19)

The first thing she asks to do when she is released from her second imprisonment (after the end of the Iran-Iraq war) is to go to the cemetery to visit her husband Hamid's grave. He had been executed along with other prisoners in the mass execution of 1988. At the cemetery, she reflects on her loss:

> Suddenly, I was horrified as I realized that my Hamid and other loved ones had been denied not only their lives but also their deaths. They were being lost to the world, denied having ever existed in this world. I felt like I was losing them not simply because of their death but because their death was a forced erasure from the face of this land, from the face of life, and from history. (p. 36)

It is because of this realization that she writes, feeling the need to tell it to the world: "I did not submit, nor did I go crazy, but I felt the burden and the responsibility of giving voice to those who were, in one way or another, lost" (p. 52). And she realizes that telling her story cannot be done without incorporating "all these other voices and worlds, as giving voice to anyone else would inevitably involve [her] own story" (p. 53). She acknowledges that "the shade of [her] perception of the reality will dominate other shades," but that "[she] intend[s] to let others speak through [her] or, rather, let [her] multiple selves tell their stories" (p. 53). Hence, she recounts how in 1984, seventy prisoners, including herself, were taken from Evin Prison (in Tehran) to Ghezel Hesar (in Karaj) (p. 58). Talebi describes the torture they were subjected to and the status of the prisoner who resisted confession:

> The tortured person who resists confession, however, subverts all the rationale behind a normal response to the body in pain. If the normal response to severe pain is to avoid it through eliminating its causes, one's persistence in keeping silent, an act that results in continuous pain, could be categorized as abnormal. This abnormality manifests itself in the ways in which the tortured person takes pride in her or his strength to push the torturers into madness. One of the joyous moments that the most resistant prisoners experienced occurred when their torturers got furious at them,

> called them names, and beat them more severely; it meant that they had accomplished the goal of their resistance. Their torturers were unable to get from them what they were after. Yet isn't this behavior defined as sadomasochism in psychological terms, if one forgets the sociality of this resistance, its relationship to the other within oneself and the others? (p. 89)

According to Talebi, the main goal for torturing leftists arrested after 1982 was not to obtain information, but rather to "force prisoners into humiliation, self-annihilation through forced confessions and recantations" (p. 90). Talebi speaks of her fellow inmates' state due to torture. For example, Shakar is described as "totally repulsed by any suggestion of life. Her resentment toward [other prisoners] is because [they] remind her of the difference between who she was before and who she is now" (p. 93). Moreover, prisoners were whipped five times a day (at the appointed times of prayer) until they would say they were Muslims and agreed to pray (p. 94). She also portrays the prisoners' resistance as well as their routine:

> …in the evening, we ate our dinner, as on any other evening, explaining to ourselves that we should keep our spirits high and not let the guards think we were disheartened. We washed our faces in the mornings to hide our red, tearful eyes from the guards and each other, for we did not want our comrades to lose heart. We laughed, played games, and lived our lives as if nothing had happened. Yes, it was after all this, after hunger strikes, starvation, loneliness, and solitude, and after hearing our friends' cries when they were being beaten that I began to fear becoming indifferent, forgetting how to care. How distraught I felt even at the thought of it. (p. 96)

Not only does Talebi witness her fellow prisoners' torture, she is made to witness her husband's torture as well. Hamid, tied to a metal bed, is surrounded by four interrogators who are holding cable whips and beating him all over his body while he remains blindfolded and unable to see her (p. 98). Yet, when he feels her in the room, he controls his breathing, and she becomes confused about how to react. She asks herself, "Should I stay quiet and nonchalant in order not to give [the interrogators] […] power over my emotions, or should I resist watching my beloved being tortured in front of me? Should I stay calm and cold, or should I scream?" (p. 98). She is also subjected to psychological torture when Rahim (an interrogator) begins lecturing her about another prisoner, Soosan, saying that prisoners

> who pride themselves on maintaining their stand against the regime and act courageously among themselves are in fact cowards when facing the interrogators; that they do not dare to speak and stand up for their beliefs because their beliefs are based on fake materialistic ideals, which cannot endure the power of Islam and the brothers' lashes. (p. 106)

Moreover, after the guards are tired of torturing the prisoners, they crack the remaining clubs down on them as they pass to enter the ward. At these moments, Talebi feels "dizzy because of the beating and the physical and emotional exhaustion. [She] could not make sense of [her] feelings" (p. 109). Talebi describes the state of another prisoner, Roudabeh, as being in a "state of *barzakh*, where one is neither alive nor dead, unable to live or die" (p. 123).

Yet, Hamid, Talebi, and many other prisoners believed that surrendering to the regime and denouncing their past was "to allow [themselves] to be reduced to a merely organic life, a life in which one's survival comes at the cost of one's subjectivity" (p. 128). Hence, she could never

have been able to convince Hamid, as his sister had wished, to accept such a life. Talebi describes the "most terrifying experiences in prison" as the ones in which she had to "constantly encounter inmates who are seemingly alive yet utterly detached from life" (p. 200). She states that since her voice was "violently silenced, where many of [her] beloved ones' lives were taken from them simply over one word, *no*" (p. 211), she writes in English, the language that "offered [her] a distance from which [she] was able to reflect on [her] past" (p. 211).

Iran Awakening (2006)

Iran Awakening (2006), by Shirin Ebadi, covers three decades of war and political upheaval— from 1970 to 2003—in Iran. During the worst of it, Ebadi finds her name on a list of intellectuals and activists targeted for death by Iran's intelligence ministry. The book starts with the forward-thinking Mohammad Mossadeqh's loss of the premiership in 1953 (pp. 3-4), due to the coup instigated against him by the secret manoeuvres of the British and Americans. It then moves forward to the Islamic Revolution (p. 35), and then up to the death of the Iranian-Canadian photographer Zahra Kazemi in Tehran, who dies after being tortured in Evin prison in 2003 (p. 198).

Ebadi starts by telling the reader about her childhood. She states that she never "observed that [their] household was special" (p. 11). Ebadi only sees herself as different from traditional girls because of her egalitarian upbringing. She adds,

> It was not until I was much older that I realized how gender equality was impressed on me first and foremost at home, by example. It was only when I surveyed my own sense of place in the world from an adult perspective that I saw how my upbringing spared me from the low self-esteem and learned dependence that I observed in women reared in more traditional homes. (p. 12)

Later she goes on to say, "In our house, my parents meted out attention, affection, and discipline equally. I never felt that my father cared about Jafar more because he was the only boy, or that Jafar was more special than I was" (p. 112).

Despite her father's refusal to discuss politics at home, Ebadi becomes involved in protests at the university (p. 16). At twenty-three years old, after she has earned her law degree, she becomes a judge in March of 1970 (p. 21). Regardless of the political unrest occurring in opposition to the Shah, who crushes all opponents, people keep their faith in the civil judiciary system. Ebadi writes,

> Even I, who was slowly starting to pay attention to the political chatter around me, put on my skirt suit each morning and drove to a Ministry of Justice I felt proud to represent. The shah's regime prosecuted its political opponents in military courts, and kept those kangaroo trials out of the public justice system. In the military courts, dissidents faced the vague umbrella charges—sabotage, jeopardizing national security, and the like—that repressive regimes reserve for any activity they view as threatening. But the legal system most Iranians appealed to for anything from divorce to fraud operated in parallel, and as a consequence remained largely fair and uncorrupt in people's minds. (p. 23)

According to Ebadi, the new penal code turned back the clock 1,400 years, since it mandated that a woman's life was only worth half that of a man's (p. 51). Moreover, it stated that a woman's court testimony was only half as reliable as a man's, and a woman had to secure her husband's permission to secure a divorce. Although Ebadi thought that she would remain free under the new regime, she soon realized that her marriage was being affected negatively by it. In fact, with the new Islamic penal code, she felt that her husband "stayed a person," but she "became chattel" (p. 53). Although she knew that her husband would never take advantage of the new laws, she resolved her fears by taking him to the notary office where he signed away the benefits and powers the Islamic Republic was conferring upon him (p. 54).
Later, when she was told a woman could not be a judge, she realized that in the revolutionaries' "hierarchy of priorities, women's rights would forever come last" (p. 56). Deprived of her judgeship, she was relegated by the regime to a lesser position as "specialist" in the Guardianship Office of Minors and the Mentally Ill. Due to the political climate, in which one's beliefs could lead to persecution if not worse, Ebadi took precautions and burned all the questionable books she had in her home library (the writings of Marx and Lenin among them) (p. 66). A year after her second daughter was born, Ebadi became eligible for early retirement (allowable after fifteen years of service at the ministry), so she applied for retirement which was granted. She describes the situation in Iran at that time:

> It was a time when you had to weigh your ambitions, sensibilities, and ethics, and decide how you were going to deal with the new regime. My indignation ran too deep and my personality was too rebellious for me to do anything but vent my scorn at every opportunity. Retirement was the only choice that made any sense. It never occurred to me to think of the career consequences, for in my mind the regime had already killed our careers. (p. 73)

Despite the high numbers of Iranians, including some of her close friends, who were leaving the country to start a new life abroad, Ebadi maintained that as "an ethical and political stand, I didn't believe in leaving Iran" (p. 79). A turning point, Ebadi states, was the execution of her brother-in-law Fuad in Evin prison (p. 89).

In 1992, when it became possible for women to practice law again, she got her permit and opened an office, only to realize that she could not compromise her principles. Consequently, she decided to take only *pro bono* cases (p. 111). She became aware of the importance and impact of media, which she used to her benefit to showcase nationally and internationally the human rights cases she would defend. Ebadi took cases of gross violations against women and children. She defended the family of a nine-year-old Kurdish girl, Leila Fathi, who had been raped by three men who afterwards threw her body over a cliff. Although the case was not resolved, it made Ebadi famous as a "lawyer whose work focuses on the rights of women and children" (p. 116).

Ebadi was arrested for taping the testimony of Amir Farshad, a "lebas-shaksi" (i.e., a member of the plainclothes paramilitary), who was reporting his colleagues (pp. 159-160). On June 28, 2000, Ebadi was called to court where she was taken to Evin prison because of her role in Amir Farshad's case (pp. 163-164). She was imprisoned for her political beliefs in solitary confinement first at Evin (pp. 164-167), and then at another prison (pp. 168-175). After her release, she kept being threatened, but she continued taking such dangerous cases as Zahra Kazemi's.

When Ebadi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her courageous work, she was welcomed home by a delegation at the airport in Tehran upon her return from France. Despite all the atrocities, Ebadi remained for years in Iran, though many members of the elite fled. She states that her experience motivated her to struggle harder for justice and civil rights.

Persian Girls (2006)

Persian Girls (2006) is Nahid Rachlin's recollection of her childhood and coming of age in prerevolutionary Iran, and her subsequent education in the United States. It should be noted that Rachlin states in the author's note that she has "changed the names of a few people, institutions, and places for the sake of privacy." For instance, in the book, Rachlin calls the college she attended in America "Lindengrove," which is a fictitious name.

Nahid Rachlin expresses that she has never felt that she belonged to American culture. Even after years of living there, she experienced "ambivalent feelings that had plagued [her] over the years in America, being neither here nor there" (2006, p. 202). Despite having "finally found freedom in America," she states that "there was a hole inside [her], a lack. [She] didn't feel either Iranian or American" (2006, p. 203).

Until the age of nine, Nahid is lovingly raised by her maternal aunt Maryam, a barren widow, among a circle of religious Muslim widows. Rachlin states, "I was a gift to Maryam from her younger sister, Mohtaram, I was Mohtaram's seventh baby, her fifth living child (two had died)" (p. 4). Maryam, a Muslim who believed in destiny, tells Nahid, "It was your destiny to be my child. As soon as a baby comes into the world an angel writes its destiny on the baby's forehead. Sometimes if a person pleads with God, he might decide to tell the angel to change the writing" (Rachlin, 2006, p. 25). Later, the author refuses to accept this belief. She states that she "hadn't accepted [it] […] as a child, and now, too, [she] believed that it was [her] own sheer determination that had enabled [her] to come to America. [She] should be able to determine what [she] would do next" (Rachlin, 2006, p. 150).

One day, Nahid's father suddenly shows up at her primary school and abducts her, forcing her to go back with him to Ahvaz where her birth family lives (p. 7). The coldness of her mother, Mohtaram, and her siblings towards Nahid make her miserable. She keeps begging to be returned to Maryam, but her parents dismiss her requests (p. 9). She does, however, become close to her older sister Pari, who introduces her to American movies. The movies become their escape from the restrictions of Iranian culture. They both revolt against the traditional roles imposed upon women by Iranian Islamic culture. Although she has promised Nahid to marry for love, Pari is coerced by her parents into an arranged marriage to a wealthy suitor. The author does not hide Pari's reflections about the Iranian concept of marriage. She states,

> I wondered if Father and Mohtaram were evil. But my grandmother, whom I loved so much, had done the same to her daughters, had forced them to marry men she and my grandfather chose. They themselves were victims of the oppressive system that dictated to people how they should feel and live their lives. (Rachlin, 2006, p. 69)

Pari soon asks her father for help in getting a divorce, since her husband is abusive. He accuses her of being "under the influence of those American movies. Their idea of individual

happiness is selfish and it has hurt their sense of family life. That's why so many Americans are miserable, lonely, killing themselves with drugs and alcohol. What we have is superior; each person should think of the happiness of the whole" (Rachlin, 2006, p. 171).

Wanting to avoid the same fate, Nahid convinces her father to send her to continue her education in America. He chooses Lindengrove College in Missouri, where she finishes her studies. Though she encounters stereotypes about Iranian women there, she learns about American culture which she contrasts with Iranian. When she receives the news of Pari's death, Nahid returns to Iran to try and resolve the mystery behind her sister's passing away.

Rachlin (2006) succeeds in contrasting the Iranian culture, that requires women to conceal their beauty and reprimands them for not wearing the *hejab,* to the American culture at Lindengrove College where her classmates filled the bathrooms "checking their makeup, spraying perfume on their necks and arms, fluffing up their hair, and examining their dresses one more time" (2006, p. 149). She also describes the difference in the way the two cultures regard two women's desire for the same man. In fact, she shows the reader how she and her friend Mahvash became temporarily estranged from each other when both desired the writer Ardavani whom they encountered during his visit to her father. Later, Nahid observes her classmates' behavior when they prioritize a date over plans with their girlfriends (Rachlin, 2006, pp. 114 & 143).

Rachlin does, however, note similarities between the two cultures in regard to finding the right man for marriage. For example, her classmate Linda confides in her that her parents "sent [her] to Lindengrove to groom […] for the right kind of husband. The college is just a finishing school" (Rachlin, 2006, p. 154). Moreover, at Lindengrove, the author learns how to set a table and seat guests, and also "charm," something she finds "not much different from taarof in the Iranian culture. We should always say, 'Yes, ma'am,' she said, when addressing a woman older than ourselves; we should write a thank-you note to our hostess and it should be phrased in a certain way" (Rachlin, 2006, p. 142).

Moreover, Nahid is aware of her father's patriarchal influence over her life and relays it to her readers, saying, "He had had so much power over me, had forcibly changed the course of my life, but ultimately much of it had been for the good" (Rachlin, 2006, p. 242).

Finally, in various encounters, Rachlin faces American stereotypes about Iranian women. For example, the dean at Lindengrove insists that she wear her "native costume"—a chador—for Parents' Day, even though Nahid explains that she had not worn a chador back in Iran (Rachlin, 2006, p. 143). Moreover, when visiting with her friend Linda, the latter's mother says: "You're so much more refined than other foreigners" (Rachlin, 2006, p. 154).

Prisoner of Tehran: One Woman's Story of Survival Inside an Iranian Prison (2007)

Prisoner of Tehran: One Woman's Story of Survival Inside an Iranian Prison (2007), by Marina Nemat, details her life before and after the Islamic Revolution, her imprisonment in the notorious Evin prison, and her eventual move to Canada. Nemat is arrested at the age of sixteen. On the principal's list of rebellious students for walking out on the calculus teacher who preaches about the Islamic regime instead of teaching them math (p. 15), and because she has

published a forbidden newspaper at school (p. 142), she is wanted by the revolutionary guards. However, Nemat begins her story with her 1991 arrival with her family in Toronto, Canada, where her brother is already living (p. 1), in July 2000. Once there, securely established as middle class, she starts having flashbacks about her life in Evin. She states:

> This was when I lost the ability to sleep. It began with snapshots of memories that flashed in my mind as soon as I went to bed. I tried to push them away, but they rushed at me, invading my daytime hours as well as the night. The past was gaining on me, and I couldn't keep it at bay; I had to face it or it would completely destroy my sanity. If I couldn't forget, perhaps the solution was to remember. I began writing about my days in Evin—Tehran's notorious political prison—about the torture, pain, death, and all the suffering I had never been able to talk about. My memories became words and broke free from their induced hibernation. I believed that once I put them on paper, I would feel better—but I didn't. I needed more. I couldn't keep my manuscript buried in a bedroom drawer. I was a witness and had to tell my story. (p. 2)

After first writing about her arrest on January 15, 1982 (pp. 5, 9-10) and torture by her interrogator, Hamehd, who lashed her on the soles of her feet (p. 18), she recalls a moment in her childhood. In this flashback, she tells how her grandmother Bhaboo stood up for her, taking the blame for having broken her mother's favorite ashtray. She also introduces her father, Gholamreza Nicolai Moradi-Bakht, called Colya, and tells how he married her mother, Roghieh Natalia Fekri, during World War II. She goes on with more family details: how her mother went to Germany to study hairdressing in 1953, two years after her brother's birth, but how Marina herself was born much later, on April 22, 1965.

In the next eighteen chapters, she alternates between memories of her upbringing and memories of her imprisonment. In Chapter 4, sentenced to death, Nemat is sent before the firing squad, only to be rescued by Ali, her second interrogator, who has fallen in love with her, and who uses his family connections to insure her pardon by Khomeini. Then, in Chapter 5, Nemat recounts her memories of school and shares how she discovered the used bookstore where she would borrow English books. In Chapter 6, Nemat reverts to her life in prison. She is in her cell before being transferred to Building 246, where Sister Maryam, the prison guard, is in charge, and Soheila is the prisoner representative for Room 7. In Room 7, she finds her friend Sarah who tells her that their friend Gita has been executed.

Chapter 7 is another flashback to her childhood memories at the family cottage on the Caspian Sea. Nemat narrates how she met Gita the first time (p. 71) and her encounter with Arash whom she befriends, and how they meet every day while they are there. Once back in Tehran, they are supposed to meet in the bookstore, but he does not show up. She calls his family, and then visits them the next day.

In Chapter 8, Nemat shares with the reader the routine of life in prison. A girl tells Marina that she knew Marina was going to be executed, since, when they brought her in, her name was written on her forehead. Sarah is taken to the prison hospital to prevent her from self-harm.

In Chapter 9, Nemat reports how she saw on TV the demonstration Arash took part in. She calls his brother, and they head the next day after school to the TV station where they watch

the documentary again and are sure of Arash's death. Arash's parents thank Marina for finding out about his death. Chapter 10 tells about the day of visitation at Evin, Marina's celebration of her seventeenth birthday in prison, and Sara's suicide attempt. Chapter 11 is a flashback to her school in early 1980 when Marina challenges her calculus teacher, asking her to stick to teaching calculus. The teacher tells Marina to leave if she is not satisfied with the teaching. Marina leaves the class, and her classmates follow her. They remain on strike until the principal threatens to bring the revolutionary guards. After attending a protest and being attacked by revolutionary guards, Marina writes about what happened and posts it at school. The principal confronts her, and she is ordered either to attend Islamic religion class or provide religion marks from her church. She manages to procure religion marks from church.

Chapter 12 tells about Taraneh's execution. Chapter 13, four and a half months after Marina's arrest, a prison guard calls her name, and Nemat sees Ali, who proposes to her. When she refuses, he threatens to create a political *dossier* on her friend Andre, or force her parents to pay the price for her rejection. He gives her three days to think it over, but threatens that if she tries to harm herself, he will have Andre executed. Chapter 14 is a flashback to the first time she met Andre in church, and how he told her to join the choir. Nemat describes the evolution of their relationship and how she starts to fall in love with him. She decides to have her grandmother's story translated into Persian and asks Aram (Arash's brother) if he knows anyone who can do this. He introduces her to his late grandmother's friend, who agrees to translate it and returns the translation within twenty-four hours. Marina finds a resemblance between her grandmother's life and her own, since due to revolution they both lost their loved ones. Arash's family leaves Iran.

In Chapter 15, after Ali's proposal, Marina goes back to Building 246, but Marina asks Sister Maryam to move her downstairs so she will not have to meet her friends in Room 7. Maryam agrees, and Marina goes to a room downstairs, but for a few days she vomits incessantly. Suffering severe dehydration, she is transported to the prison hospital. She wakes up in the hospital where Ali tells her that the doctor has agreed that having some fresh air would be good for her. He helps her into a wheelchair, pushes her to his car, and they go for a ride. Once back, he takes her to a new cell for herself alone. The next morning, he brings her breakfast and takes her out. After a few days, he shows her the house he has bought for them. Ali tells Marina that his father will bless the marriage if she converts to Islam. Marina meets Ali's family, and his father reiterates that he will consider her as a daughter if she becomes a Muslim. Marina decides to convert to Islam, and there is a celebration held at the prison for her conversion. Later, during family visitation time, she tells her parents about her conversion. She asks Ali to take her one last time to the church to say goodbye to Andre, and he agrees. Accompanied by a friend, Mohammed, they go to the church, and the priest asks if he may call Andre and her family to come and see Marina. Ali again agrees and waits outside while Marina bids farewell to Andre, who promises to wait for her. The chapter ends with Ali and Marina on their way back to prison.

Chapter 16: the wedding day, July 23, 1982. Nemat recounts her wedding consummation (pp. 204-205) and how Ali and Marina stay at their house for a week. Marina invites her in-laws and her sister-in-law Akram to dinner. She has a conversation with Akram who asks her why she has married her brother… Ali receives a call from Evin that there have been assassinations of officials, so he decides to stay in Evin for a while. Back in her solitary cell, Marina asks Ali to help Sarah, and allow her to see her, and she also asks him to put young prisoners under

interrogation in her cell so she can be of help to them. Marina has her retrial, where she is sentenced to three years, out of which she has already served eight months. She moves back to 246 where she rejoins her friends. She continues seeing Ali in a solitary cell at night around three times a week, but she claims to her friends that she has been volunteering at the hospital. Sarah and Marina start working in the prison sewing factory.

Chapter 17 starts one night in February with Ali telling Marina that his sister (Akram) is pregnant, and she has invited them to her house. Ali asks Marina why she has not told him about the prayer she taught his sister… his family thinks it is a miracle that Akram has gotten pregnant. At Akram's house, Marina cannot stop thinking about her friend Sheida in prison, who has to send her son to live with her family while she is incarcerated. Marina shares this with Akram who proposes talking to Ali about Sheida in case he can help her.

Four months later, on Marina and Ali's anniversary, Ali's parents invite them for dinner. Ali tells his father that he is taking Marina to the Caspian Sea to his uncle's cottage as their wedding gift. On their first night there, Marina cannot sleep and goes for a swim. When she returns to the house, Ali is waiting for her, crying (p. 241). After five days, they return to Evin and the prison routine. Marian is feeling sick, so Ali takes her to his mother's physician who tells her she is eight weeks pregnant. Marina has conflicted feelings. They tell Ali's family, who rejoice over the news.

Once back in the cell that night, Ali tells Marina that he is quitting his job. On September 26th, they visit Ali's parents. On their way back to their car, a motorcycle with two men passes by and shoots at them. Ali pushes Marina aside, but he himself is shot and bleeds to death. By the time the ambulance arrives, Marina has lost consciousness. When she wakes up in the hospital, the doctor tells her that she has lost her baby. Ali's father, Mr. Moosavi, is by Marina's bed when she wakes up a few days later. He tells her he will arrange for her release from prison, and that Ali designated in his will that she should inherit everything he had. Marina, however, refuses to take anything. Akram delivers her baby early and calls him Ali. Back at Building 246 in Evin, Marina is greeted by a new woman guard who tells her that since Ali is no longer there to protect her, she will be treated like all the other prisoners. Two weeks later, Ali's father comes for Marina and takes her home for dinner. On the way, he tells her that Ali's assassination was an inside job, but there is no evidence to press charges against Hamehd, the guard who had tortured Marina. She asks Mr. Moosavi to take her to Ali's grave. A few days later, Mr. Moosavi, accompanied by Akram, takes Marina to Ali's grave. On March 26, 1984, Marina is released from Evin prison. Ali's parents, Akram and her baby are waiting for her outside. Mr. Moosavi tells Marina that he has asked the imam to procure her release from prison. He tells her that he is going to keep the money Ali left her in the bank for one year in case she changes her mind. He offers to take her to her family, but she decides to walk on her own to Luna Park where her family is waiting. In the rain, Marina walks until she reaches her parents at Luna Park. Andre is waiting in the car for them. In the car she learns that her parents have moved in with a friend, Zenia, and that Andre has been a great help to them.

In Chapter 18, after Marina is released, she goes back to studying on her own to earn her high school diploma, marries Andre, and leaves for Canada after giving birth to her first son.

Things I've Been Silent About (2008)

Things I've Been Silent About (2008) by Azar Nafisi unfolds in thirty-one semi-chronological chapters where the author alternates narratives of her own memories with excerpts from her father's memoirs. In the prologue, Nafisi says that it is not her intention to provide a "general recitation of historical times but rather in those fragile intersections—the places where moments in an individual's private life and personality resonate with and reflect a larger, more universal story" (p. xx). She adds that her book is "a response to [her] own inner censor and inquisitor" (p. xxi).

In part I, "Family Fictions," Nafisi tells the story of her mother's first marriage to Saifi, his sickness and absence, and how her mother projected the unresolved pain of her life upon Azar, her father, and brother. She would tell Azar that she had inherited her father's "rotten genes" whenever Azar did something to irritate her.

In counterpoint to her uncertain relationship with her mother, Nafisi's relationship with her father, especially their special bond of storytelling, is highlighted. Azar's father would tell her tales from the *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), the great Persian book of myths. Their special bond led to Azar's lying to cover for her father's infidelities, since he would often take her with him. She lied to baffle her mother's interrogations.

Much of the narrative involves events within the daily life of Nafisi's family, and the undercurrents that pervaded it. She describes Tehran (in chapter 3) and her errands with her mother―something that she cherished. In the "Coffee Hour," she describes her mother's gatherings with her friends at home. She presents her mother as a woman whose dreams had been stifled: Her mother had been denied the opportunity to study abroad, though her half-sister had had the chance to do so. In "Family Ties," she discusses her father's memoirs, his life in Esfahan, and how he had moved to Tehran, where he met and married her mother. She also shares how she herself was molested by Haji Agha Ghassem, an old man from Esfahan who was trusted by her parents, while he was visiting them in Tehran, and her anger against her mother for not protecting her. Part I ends with her maternal grandfather's death. He had been feeling guilty about not treating her mother well and offered to pay for the house her parents were building. But her mother refused to move to the house once it was built.

In Part II, "Lessons and Learning," Nafisi shares how her parents decided to send her to study abroad after her rebellious acts at school. Before her departure from Iran, Amoo Said (a relative and literary figure) gifted her with a copy of the *Shahnameh* from his library. Azar retells Rudabeh's story from the book and analyzes other heroines in Iranian literature and poetry.

She then shifts to her departure with her mother for London. On the flight, her mother tells her about her own mother's death. At Seatforth House, Nafisi describes their arrival and her mother's criticisms of everything. At first, Azar does not understand English well enough to keep up with her classes. Her mother helps to calm her and finds the list of new words in the dictionary. Azar recognizes that her mother wants for her daughter what she herself had not had. When Azar goes home for the summer holidays, she is welcomed at the airport by many people, even strangers.

Azar also refers to politics, the Shah, and Mossadegh. As she writes about her mother's constant dissatisfaction with her father's position, she interpolates a flashback to her father's diary. Her Aunt Mina affirms to Azar her mother's love for her father and explains her mother's inability to express it. On a later visit to Lancaster, Azar's father, who is the mayor of Tehran, does the round of the city every morning. He takes her with him to dinner with her Aunt Nafiseh, and she recounts other occasions where women are enchanted by her father. In "Rehearsal for a Revolution," she describes the unrest in Tehran, due to the bill, passed on October 8, 1962, allowing women the right to vote. She offers her analysis of the power of secularism and religion in the history of Iran's politics; the referendum of 1963; Khomeini's followers' demonstrations in the streets; and the June 5th uprisings. At a Friday meeting at their house, she meets Mr. Rahman whom her mother admires because of his ability to predict things from the Koran. Her father, however, suspects him to be a member of SAVAK. She recounts the discussions surrounding her mother's joining the first group of women in Parliament, and how many, like Ameh Hamdam and Mr. Rahman, try to dissuade her mother from it. Along with five other women, her mother ends up running for Parliament and takes office in the fall of 1963. At this point, Azar's parents decide to send her to l'École Internationale in Geneva to continue her education.

In part III, "My Father's Jail," Nafisi writes about her father's imprisonment and how he was dealt with as a common criminal. Nine months after his arrest, her father begins to keep a diary, which Azar later incorporates into her narrative. The real reason for his imprisonment remains hidden. Although various politicians visit him, none help gain his release. She describes her mother's days in Parliament and includes parts of her father's diaries from prison.

Then, she recounts her refusal to marry Bahzad Said, a family acquaintance, her falling in love with Mehran Osuli (her uncle Hussein's brother-in-law) with whom she goes mountain climbing, and her lies about visiting him, which makes her mother forbid her from meeting him. In "Women Like That," Nafisi writes about her first marriage to Mehdi Mazhari, who is studying engineering in the U.S. and agrees that she can continue her education after marriage as long as her family pays for it. Upon her father's release from jail, Mehdi—having graduated—decides to go back to Tehran without waiting for Azar to finish her education. In a heated fight, he slaps her, and she leaves the house and goes to New Mexico with her professor who is starting her career there. A year from his release, Azar's father stands trial and is acquitted. In a conversation with her father over the phone, she confesses that she wants to divorce Mehdi. When they both return to Tehran that summer, she agrees not to ask for alimony in return for the divorce.

In Part IV, "Revolts and Revolution," Azar recounts her summer break in Tehran where her father introduces her to Shahin, with whom he is having an affair. Shahin is one of her mother's protégées until her mother discovers Shahin's relationship with her husband. Her father leaves the house for a while, but her mother refuses divorce. Her father ends up returning home and staying with her mother for another decade, whereas Shahin marries a wealthy gambler who gives her no money.

Back in America, while Azar is taking part in student demonstrations, she meets Bijan Naderi, who is of the Baha'i faith, and the leader of the student faction in California. They end up getting married (in civil, Bahai and Muslim ceremonies) in the presence of her parents. Meanwhile, her brother comes to the U.S. for his graduate studies.

In "Revolution," Nafisi details how the revolution has transpired through the eyes of her cousins in Tehran. When they are back in Tehran, Bijan and Azar stay at her family's new house. There, they learn about her father's latest affair, which he is having with Ziba Khanoom, a married woman with a ten year old daughter. Nonetheless, Azar's mother invites her and her family to the Nafisis' house.

In "When Home Is Not Home Anymore," Nafisi, who is currently teaching at the University of Tehran, describes the changes under the new Islamic rules. Refusing to wear the veil, she gets suspended from teaching. Nafisi digresses to a weeks'-long discussion with one of her students at the Girls' College about women's conduct in novels. The student suddenly disappears and Azar wonders what has happened to her. Nafisi also mentions the upheavals against Khomeini by Shia clerics and their supporters in Karman. In "Reading and Resistance," Nafisi analyzes two modern novellas by Golshiri and Hedyat (two Iranian literary figures), the literary salons they held, and the way people are coping. Later, she mentions the arrests and executions taking place in Iran, before telling about her parents' divorce. Her father has built a three-apartment building for his wife and children. Her brother rents an apartment with his wife in Tehran and does not move in, whereas her mother, Azar and Bijan move into the apartments. Her father breaks up with Ziba Khanoom, the woman he left his wife for, and goes back to Shahin, his former secretary who married the gambler, and who is now a fashion designer. Just at this point, the Iran-Iraq war begins. Azar gives birth to a daughter (Negar) and later to a son (Dara). At the end of the war they go with her father to the Caspian Sea. Then her father marries Shahin, and her mother remains embittered.

When Azar gets her fellowship, she, Bijan, and their children leave for America. Before leaving, Azar takes a collection of photographs from one of her mother's suitcases. Her mother gives her a file where she has kept all Azar's articles and letters. Azar's mother asked her to bring family papers from the property she had owned with her father, but Azar cannot bring herself to confront her father. In "The Last Dance," her mother dies, and Azar, grieving, lies in bed, looking at pictures of her mother. Her family is alarmed, and at one point, her children join her in bed and look at the pictures with her. This chapter ends with Azar's trying to imitate her mother's voice as she tells the story of her first meeting with Saifi…

In "The Perils of Love," Nafisi describes her busy life and how her father keeps calling her and leaving messages, and her sometimes calling him back. They have a family reunion in London after her brother remarries. Her brother has hoped to bring their father to live with him, but their father falls sick, is hospitalized and dies a day after the doctor clears him for travel. They try to keep contact with Shahin, but she is hostile to them and refuses to send Azar some of her father's paintings and poems.

Wedding Song Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman (2003)

Wedding Song Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman (2003) by Farideh Goldin relates the story of Goldin's upbringing in a poor Jewish community in Shiraz, where her paternal grandfather is the great rabbi and communal judge for the Jews in prerevolutionary Iran.

In the book's prologue, "Iranian Memoirs," Goldin narrates the "one defining moment" in her Iranian life—waking up one Friday in the fall of 1968 to a "scorching odor" which turned out to be the smell of her books that her father is burning in their mud stove. Her father warned

her about reading the week before, after her aunt had told him, "Everyone in the community knows that your daughter reads nonstop, corrupting herself, giving us all a bad name" (p. 1). Goldin's father thinks he is saving her by "indoctrinating [her] with the community standards" (p. 2). She ends her prologue by expressing her yearning "to acquaint [her] Western readers with the essence of Jewish life in the shadow of Islam, the magnetism of Western freedoms, culture, and technology against the lulling effect of Persian thoughts, customs, and ethics" (p. 4).

The first Chapter, "Blood Lines," begins in the spring of 1966, with Farideh telling her mother about starting her first period, and her mother's angry reaction, "You'll suffer" (p. 5). Farideh recounts how other women in her family ask for her help to "pour water" over their hands over the toilet in order to purify their rags and underwear from the period's blood (p. 6). She has to learn the restrictions/rules on menstruating women in her Jewish culture—"the separation, the untouchability, the fatigue, and the blood" (p. 7).

Later, she tells about her lineage from both her father and mother (pp. 10-13) before she recounts how her father had looked for a bride (p. 15), her mother's version of the story of her marriage (pp. 16-19), her father's version of their story (pp. 20-26), and their new married life in Shiraz (pp. 26-31). The chapter ends with Farideh narrating how she, after living in the United States for over twenty years, finally meets her maternal aunt, Aziza (pp. 31-37).

In the next chapter, "My Grandmother's House," Farideh recounts the story of her birth in January 1953 and tells about the Iranian customs of accompanying women in labor (pp. 38-39). She mentions that in the same year electrical lines were stretched in Shiraz, Jews were migrating from the ghettos to the new State of Israel, established only five years earlier, and the political situation with Mosadegh and the coup broke loose (p. 41). Later, she recounts a trip to the hammam with the women in her family that coincides with the visit of a bride who has been brought to bathe there. Another cultural activity Farideh witnesses is when her grandmother takes her along for the customary inspection of a bride's virginity before the wedding (pp. 53-59). Later she describes the preparation of the dowry for her paternal aunt Shekoofeh's wedding. The chapter ends with her father scolding her mother and pretending to want to divorce her because Farideh told her grandmother what her mother had said to the women helpers while doing laundry.

In chapter 3, "My Education," Goldin relates the fear the women in the household live with due to her grandmother's scary stories about the attacks on the *mahaleh,* or Jewish community (p. 71). Goldin also portrays the importance of the month of *Moharam* (the mourning month for Shiaa) and the procession of Muslims passing by their neighborhood, and the night of Ashura (pp. 72-75). She adds the story of the *Imam Zaman* (the last shii imam) (p. 76). That year, though she is the right age, Farideh cannot begin school because it is full for the year, so she spends her time either at home or playing with her father's first cousin's daughter Mahvash, who is a bad influence on her. In fact, they once steal money from a blind beggar and another time steal from the grocery money to buy candy. Around this time, her paternal aunt Fereshteh is admitted to medical school. Another story her grandmother Tavous, whom they called khanom-bozorg tells Farideh is about her betrothal when she was nine and how she ran from her in-laws' house multiple times until they returned her to her family. When khanom-bozorg falls sick, they bring the soothsayer to discern who has cast the evil eye on her.

The next year, Farideh attends first grade at Mehrayeen School, and her father and uncle buy land far away to build a modern house. Her father walks her to school in the morning, and his apprentice Mehdi fetches her home. In return for giving her dried fruits, Mehdi asks Farideh to hug and kiss him. One day a stranger catches them and tells her father. After denying that Mehdi has been bothering her, she learns of Mehdi's death when he falls into acid at her father's workshop. The family moves to its new home in an all Moslem neighborhood where Goldin learns that Moslem girls are suspicious of the Jews (p. 119), and they refer to Jews as being *najes* (impure). On the other hand, her father mistrusts Moslems (pp. 121-122). In the new neighborhood, the shopkeeper tries to touch Farideh (p. 122), and her mother struggles to buy groceries because of being a Jew (p. 123). Yet Goldin tells about her friendship with Paree, a Moslem girl (p. 123), and how she wanted Paree's mother to be hers (p. 124). Her family rents the second floor of their new house to an American couple. Farideh states the expectations for a girl: "a female's destiny was marriage, and what did a girl have to offer but a good name, beauty, and physical flawlessness?" (p. 127). Faced with such expectations, her father travels to Israel with her sister Nahid so that she may undergo surgery to correct her physical disability. Once back in Iran, Farideh teaches Nahid the curriculum for the first grade (pp. 134-135). Goldin asserts her family's dissociation from Judi, the language spoken by Iranian Jews, in their attempt to integrate into the larger community (p. 140). The chapter ends with Farideh's dream of America.

In chapter 5, "Marriage: A Woman's Dream," Farideh recounts how Tavous' first marriage lasted for only two years, since she was divorced at age twelve for running away to her family so many times. Her second marriage, though, was to Farideh's grandfather, a widower with three sons. The marriage lasted until his death, and they had eight children together. Goldin writes about her first *khastegaree* (marriage proposal) at age twelve (p. 148), and how girls are expected to be displayed for marriage at the synagogue (p. 150). Another cultural event Goldin shares with the reader is her cousin Ziba's marriage preparations—like the coming of the *bandandaz* (woman who removes body hair with a thread) to prepare the bride (p. 153). In a flash-forward, Farideh acknowledges that years later, she excludes all parts of her heritage from her marriage ceremony to an American (p. 154).

Goldin expresses her frustration of "living in two different worlds" by studying literature at Pahlavi University in Shiraz (p. 155). She also depicts the patriarch at home, the revolution, and her assessment of its reasons (p. 156). In chapter 6, "My New World," Farideh portrays the political and socio-political changes in the community (p. 158), and the political unrest at university (p. 159). She writes about her mother's and her frustration and anger when her uncle Morad deliberately opens the bathroom door on them while they shower, as revenge for an argument he has had with her father (p. 160).

All of these cultural constrictions result in Farideh's rebellion against the situation. Afraid of being forced into an arranged marriage, she goes by herself to claim the passport her father has applied for on her behalf. She then procures a visa to the United States and purchases a one-way ticket after convincing her father that she will only spend a month there (pp. 161-162). In the United States, she finishes her college studies at Old Dominion, and meets Norman (the brother of her pen pal friend), who ends up proposing to her (p. 163). Her father does not approve of Norman, and she is forced to return to Iran where she is introduced to various suitors.

Farideh depicts the uprisings against the Shah as told to her by her friend Taraneh, and she describes the growing anti-Semitic sentiments (p. 167). Now that Farideh is back in Iran, her grandmother continues to tell her family stories. Tavous relates how her great-grandmother Bibi Zaghee married Esghel Ghalgeer (p. 174), and the death of her favorite daughter Bagom-jaan on her wedding night from cramps (p. 175). Emotions overwhelm Farideh, who asks her grandmother to let her visit Bibi's room (pp. 177-178). Refusing to succumb to her father's wish to marry one of the suitors, Goldin persuades her uncle Jahangeer to sponsor her for a visa to America (p. 188). The book ends with her father purchasing her a return ticket to the United States. Her father stipulates that she promise to wait for a year before deciding to marry Norman, and she keeps her promise.