Constructing an Axis of Evil: Iranian Memoirs in the "Land of the Free"

Seyed Mohammad Marandi
and *Hossein Pirnajmuddin*

Abstract

A major phenomenon in recent decades within Orientalist discourse is the indigenous Orientalism that can be seen in the works of some scholars, writers, and thinkers. These writers are sometimes referred to as "captive minds," "brown sahibs," or what Malcolm X would call the "house Negro."[1] Defined by their intellectual bondage and dependence on the West and, at times, likened to pop psychologists in their writings about the "natives," their western counterparts believe them because, as native informants, they are seen to be in a position to produce authentic representations of the Oriental psyche.

This paper offers a brief study of memoirs written by members of the Iranian diaspora in western countries over the past decade, particularly in the United States. Among these writers are Azar Nafisi, Marjane Satrapi, Roya Hakakian, Afshin Molavi, and Azadeh Moaveni, and others. A few books with thriller-like titles, such as *Prisoner of Tehran* (Marina Nemat: 2008) or *Living in Hell* (Ghazal Omid: 2005), will not be studied. In the eyes of many Iranian intellectuals, such writers are often viewed as examples of the Iranian intellectual comprador class or members of the *gharbzadeh* (a term made current by Jalal Ale-Ahmad, the Iranian critic and intellectual, that can be rendered in English as *westernized*, *west-struck*, or *westomaniac*), rather than as intellectuals.

Seyed Mohammad Marandi is an assistant professor and head of the North American Studies Department, University of Tehran, Iran. Hossein Pirnajmuddin is an assistant professor in the English Department, University of Isfahan, Iran.

Introduction

Over the past few years, and partially as a result of the success in the United States of Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, a whole genre of memoirs has been created by a number of writers mostly from the Iranian diaspora in the West and especially in the United States. In this article, special focus will be placed on memoirs written by Iranian female "exiles" who have written what they claimed to be their experiences in Iran both before and after the revolution.

The consideration of these texts is complicated because, from political as well as literary perspectives, they are widely regarded as truthful representations of Iran in the western media and among many western intellectuals who are considered to be experts on Iran. The western or westernized supporters of these diaspora writers trust them, or seem to do so, often because they are either western-educated or at least influenced by the West, which apparently provides them with the tools to view Iran "objectively" and "judiciously." This inclination is also reinforced because these texts fall within the framework of the dominant discursive practices on Iran in the West and because they conform with the existing latent Orientalism specific to Iran, an issue dealt with by Edward Said in *Covering Islam* (1997) and Hamid Dabashi in *Iran: A People Interrupted* (2008), (even though some think that they too, at times, are entrapped in the same discourse). Most of these writers adhere to a major feature of Orientalist analysis that consistently confirms the thesis that the Oriental, and specifically the Iranian Muslim, is primitive, irrational, violent, despotic, fanatic, and essentially inferior to the westerner or the native informant, as Ali Behdad points out.[2] Enlightenment can take place only when "traditional" and "reactionary" values are replaced by "contemporary" and "progressive" ideas that are either western or western-influenced.

With this analysis, we hope to show a convergence in these texts, which is the common culture and ideology intrinsic to the discursive practices through which they produce "knowledge" about Iran, interwoven with social and power relations that are associated with a particular trend within the Iranian minority culture, particularly in the United States. Despite this tendency, the discourse within which they work is neither static nor resistant to the admission of internal contradictions.

Here we look at a number of memories mostly written by Iranian women. In *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, Nafisi displays an unusual amount of contempt toward anything that has to do with Islam or Iran, as Dabashi points out.[3] This, it seems, is at least partially because her family was part of

the country's elite during the Pahlavi dynasty. She calls the Shah's last prime minister an extremely "democratic-minded and farsighted" person,[4] even though during his brief premiership thousands of people taking part in demonstrations throughout the country in support of Ayatollah Khomeini were killed on the streets. Interestingly, Shirin Ebadi (*Iran Awakening*) called Reza Shah "a wise dictator" who set about emancipating women "by banning the veil, the symbol of tradition's yoke."[5]

Similar claims can be stated about almost all the other authors of the memoirs published in the United States. Afschineh Latifi's (*Even After All This Time*) father was a senior military figure in the Shah's elite "Guard'e Shahanshahi" who quickly grew wealthy because of his position; but more importantly, he was allegedly involved in the killing of unarmed demonstrators.[6] Christopher de Bellaigue, a western reporter who wrote *In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs* and the only "non-Iranian" writer discussed here, is married to a wealthy western-educated Iranian woman whose family was among the elite during the reign of the Shah.[7] Roya Hakakian, author of *Journey from the Land of No*, was from a rather well-off Jewish family who seems to have had little interaction with other segments of Iranian society beyond the country's small Jewish community. Shirin Ebadi was from a privileged landowning background and grew up with numerous servants at her service.[8] Azadeh Moaveni (*Lipstick Jihad*), an American journalist who was born in the United States, came from a family that was among the upper classes, many of whom were wealthy landowners.[9]

Afshin Molavi (*The Soul of Iran*), a reporter for Reuters and the *Washington Post* and who now works for the New America Foundation, was born in Iran and, like Firoozeh Dumas (*Funny in Farsi*), he left the country as a child several years before the revolution.[10] Marjane Satrapi (*Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*) had a rather different history, but she too went to a French school before the revolution.[11] Tara Bahrampour (*To See and See Again*) went to an international school in Tehran and, for the most part, grew up in the United States.[12] The same is true about Gelareh Asayesh, who wrote *Saffron Sky*.[13]

Most of these writers were not educated in Persian-speaking schools, unless "forced" to do so. Latifi first went to a private Jewish school with the help of her father's military connections and later went to the German school, because her mother was determined to provide the kids "with the best of everything."[14] De Bellaigue's wife went to the French school because, as he puts it, "You didn't send your child willingly to an Iranian school."[15] Hence, almost all of these writers come from extremely privileged backgrounds (not

necessarily a point of contention), which led almost all of them to choose a "western" lifestyle and worldview over Iranian culture and beliefs.

Nafisi, who was raised and educated in Europe and the United States, shows a clear bias throughout her book in favor of anyone with a western education. She speaks of her "sophisticated French-educated friend Leyly" and states that her "magician" uses "his British training" when reasoning with her.[16] Nafisi sees salvation for Iranians as possible only through English literature and western thought, values, and education. She even views an American green card as "a status symbol."[17] Moaveni and Molavi make similar claims.[18] Nafisi thinks a great deal "about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,"[19] which is, significantly, one of the most famous phrases in the American Declaration of Independence. Her true love was Ted, who "gave me *Ada*, in whose flyleaf he had written: To Azar, my Ada, Ted."[20] Her hero was Henry James, who, as she concedes, wrote "war propaganda" in 1914-15, appealed to America "to join the war," and, according to her, "had endless admiration for the simple courage he encountered, both in the many young men who went to war and in those they left behind."[21] Ironically, throughout the book she depicts Iranians who effectively did the same thing, during their war with Iraq, as fanatics and zealots.

Essentially Different: The Orientalist Dichotomy

One salient feature of this spate of memoirs published in the last decade is essentialism, often of a very crude sort. Iranians are irrational, fanatical, cruel, and so on. Typically, Nafisi believes that Iranians are essentially different from Americans, thus repeating essentialist claims made by Orientalists over the centuries:

> We in ancient countries have our past – we obsess over the past. They, the Americans, have a dream: they feel nostalgia about the promise of the future.[22]

Indeed, Nafisi is not alone in declaring that Iranians are stuck in the past and therefore inferior. Christopher de Bellaigue believes the same when he attacks Tehran's former mayor:

> I don't think the former mayor … who built this and most of Tehran's other freeways, listened to foreign experts when he was drawing up his ideas on public transport. Had he done so, he would have learned …[23]

Although de Bellaigue is definitely not a specialist, it seems that as a westerner he knows enough to pass judgment on Iranians, who, in his view,

do not have the sense to make wise decisions without the aid of westerners like himself. Indeed, he can see into the soul of an Iranian merely by looking at a picture, an amazing feat for someone who has spent only three years in the country.[24] He constantly guesses and even "assumes" what Iranians are thinking or even dreaming about.[25] This, presumably, is possible because he is a westerner with a western education, which gives him the ability to gaze at Iranians from above. Such a belief can be seen in *Lipstick Jihad* as well, where Moaveni states:

> I had stepped into this Iran, partly as an Iranian, reading the grinds of coffee cups, burning esfand to ward away the evil eye, but also as an American, constricted by the absence of horizons (of so many sorts), genuinely shocked by the grim ordinariness of violence and lies.[26]

Regardless of whether the second half of the sentence is in any way a credible claim or not, the writer sees an essential dichotomy between being Iranian and being American. Iranians are irrational and superstitious, while Americans are the opposite. Significantly, Asayesh writes in similar terms when she states that America is a land of "lofty intellectualism" while Iran is a "simple land."[27] Hence, in such a violent, dishonest, and irrational country Moaveni can claim: "It was my American side that helped me cope with Iran."[28] She goes even further and makes the incredible claim that even the Persian language is essentially different from the English language, which "was unpolluted by the brutality of the things I heard and spoke about in Farsi, like arrests of activists and the killing of dissidents."[29]

Despite the presence of American and NATO troops on almost all of Iran's borders and American attempts to destabilize the country by supporting brutal terrorist groups like the Mujahedden-e Khalgh Organization (MKO), disrupting the economy, and funding pro-American television and radio stations, websites, and political organizations, one could easily claim that Iran, with all of its shortcomings, is still by far the most politically open country in the region. Unlike the regional countries allied to America, in Iran there are bitterly fought presidential elections, parliamentary elections, local and city council elections, and elections for the body that chooses and removes the country's leader. In the country, women drive, vote, teach at top universities, work as parliamentarians, sit in the president's cabinet – there is even a woman vice-president.

However, for someone like Moaveni – who knows Los Angeles and the violence associated with it quite well, has heard of Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, secret CIA prisons, officially approved techniques for torture, and extraordinary rendition – to make such claims is amazing. It is also rather

disturbing and quite revealing to see that she played a central role in writing the memoirs of Shirin Ebadi, the Iranian Nobel Peace Prize recipient.

While Iranians are generally portrayed as irrational, religious Iranians, in the eyes of de Bellaigue, are especially so. This apparently monolithic body of people, he claims, cannot tolerate those who "erred towards rationalism."[30] This irrationalism is also probably why Iranians have a "tendency to blame foreigners for domestic catastrophes."[31] Hence de Bellaigue had reason to be "resentful at the way the Iranians thought they knew best,"[32] for how could they know more than he, as they were neither western nor had the benefit of a western education? The idea of the irrational Iranian is also repeated in Bahrampour's work. She believes an irrational "passion" that is allegedly a part of the Iranian psyche was the possible cause of the revolution,[33] rather than the brutality and corruption of the Pahlavi regime.

However, de Bellaigue, like Nafisi, finds an Iranian to admire. She is Parastu Forouhar, who speaks "fluent German" and, in her youth, isolated "herself from the ugliness around her," which was Iran. Indeed, for her, "Persian was no longer a language of everyday communication. (That was German, the language of her family, her thoughts, and, increasingly, her dreams)." This was obviously because in this inferior society words like "rights" and "accountability," he alleges, belonged to the "unfamiliar, Western lexicon." She is unlike religious women and men who have been "relieved of the part of the brain that wants explanations and receipts." Thus it is somewhat understandable why he believes that almost any story or accusation made against the revolutionaries was "what happened" even if there is "little, if any, documentary evidence" to support these claims.[34]

Perhaps that is why Afshin Molavi, who spent roughly a year in Iran as an adult, in *The Soul of Iran* (an extraordinary feat, by any standards, to grasp the 'soul' of one of the most ancient nations in the world just in the course of one year) constantly quotes "highly respected" and "eminent" western Orientalists when explaining the country and its past. On rare occasions when he does quote an Iranian scholar, he is a professor at an American university.[35] Molavi too seems to believe that the "West" has a monopoly on rationality, scholarship, and objectivity. Such beliefs are echoed by Moaveni, who, like Ebadi,[36] claims that "All the exceptional people have left" the country and that

> Many of the U.S.-educated Iranians who had returned to Tehran were there because they had been mediocre in the West, and preferred to be big fish in a small swamp.[37]

There are apparently well over 70 million small fish in the Iranian swamp, and even those who are mediocre in the West are superior compared to Iranians.

The same can be seen in Nafisi. When the favorite uncle of Yassi, one of her disciples who lives in the United States, comes to Iran for a vacation, he puts new ideas into the girl's head. He is unlike anyone else in the family and has a very positive influence on the girl. His exceptional personality, rationalism, and moral influence are clearly linked to the fact that he lives in the United States. He is the superior westernized male who benevolently puts "ideas into Yassi's head" in order to raise her mind to western standards.[38]

The logic seems to be that those Iranians living in the country must be inferior, otherwise they would have had the sense to move and live in the West. Indeed Moaveni must be one such exceptional person, as she is able to understand the "Iranian mind" perfectly and "to unlock the mystery of Iran" in the course of her two-year stay in the country, which ended when she was only twenty-six years old – an incredible achievement for someone who is not even fluent in Farsi.[39] Of course, she fails to inform the reader what the mystery of Iran actually is or to explain what is so enigmatic about it in the first place. However, the statement does bring to mind the Orientalist notion of the exotic, backward, and mysterious East.

As a self-declared specialist on Iran, Moaveni can safely state that "Iranian culture valued women through their marital status, and rated their respectability according to the success or failure of their marriage" and that this culture "considered divorced women criminals."[40] She attacks her "westernized mother" for saying that women who have premarital sex were morally compromised, but that men must be forgiven for doing the same. Moaveni states that her mother offered for men "an explanation worthy of an Iranian villager: They can't help themselves."[41] The author, like Ebadi,[42] is thus capable of explaining the characteristics of an apparently monolithic community of millions of Iranians. This essentializing of a monolithic Iran can also be seen in Molavi, who believes that Iranians, in general, look with awe at those who are professionals in the West.[43] According to Asayesh, too, it seems that Iranians consider themselves to be less capable and intelligent as well as racially inferior to westerners.[44]

This alleged characteristic is linked to another Iranian trait that de Bellaigue supposedly reveals. He claims that before the revolution, when the Americans had a heavy presence in the country, "Every Isfahani girl had a crush on a US Air Force officer … In the bazaar, among butch porters, blond

American boys were all the rage."[45] This love for Americans, apparently, exists today as well, as Moaveni explains:

> When I first walked the streets of Tehran, during the war in Afghanistan and, later, during the war in Iraq, people were thrilled. When will it be our turn, they would ask me eagerly, eyes gleaming …[46]

Iranians with "gleaming eyes," it seems, were impatiently waiting for large doses of shock and awe.

Interestingly, in a poll jointly carried out by three American organizations in 2007 (Public Opinion in Iran and America on Key International Issues), 65% of Iranians viewed the United States very unfavorably, 11% somewhat unfavorably, 17% somewhat favorably, and 5% very favorably; 84% view the Bush regime very unfavorably and 9% somewhat unfavorably; 67% view American culture very unfavorably and 11% view it somewhat unfavorably. Whether Iranian attitudes are just or unjust is beside the point here. What is important is that many of the claims made about Iranian society in these texts do not even conform to data gathered by American experts.

Nafisi's pride in her father was due to his affiliations with the West, westerners, and western culture,[47] and in her attempts to liberate the minds of young Iranians, she fittingly alludes to great western writers, including the works of nineteenth-century authors such as Jane Austen. Ironically, the author is very backward in her ideas. As a professor of English literature, she must have known only too well that it is widely acknowledged nowadays that nineteenth-century English literature is deeply implicated in colonialism. Neo-Orientalist writers who write on Iran, like their predecessors who wrote travelogues of the East, can be blind indeed. Thus her frequent allusions to such authors, meant to "authorize" her views, are acts of appropriation.

This is probably why an abusive Moaveni calls former President Khatami, "the benign face of"

> a long line of slatternly, corrupt, unworldly clerics, with village accents and scant ambitions; they had held meetings on the floor, sat slouched before the cameras, and mumbled about foreign enemies.[48]

This, she implies, is at least in part because he studied western philosophy.[49] Regardless of the fact that most Shi`i religious scholars study philosophy, including western philosophy, one wonders why western philosophy is essential for real progressiveness. Elsewhere, she claims that the reformist clique contained one-time revolutionaries who had undergone a change of heart and decided they now liked freedom, and, of course, freedom to Moaveni means the West.

She states that progressive and intellectual Iranians are necessarily opposed to the revolution and pursue "western" ideals such as freedom. However, she states, even these "intellectuals" have, for the most part, only a superficial understanding of "notions such as the right of the individual" and even then, they are largely insincere.[50] This alleged failing is probably linked to what she claims earlier about Iran being a small swamp. Hakakian too speaks the same language when she states that only a "cabinet of Western-educated ministers" can keep Iran "safe from zealots."[51] Such an idea can only be reinforced by Bahrampour's claim that during the revolution, Iranians believed they could see Ayatollah Khomeini's face in the moon.[52]

Feminist Orientalism

In this battle for the hearts and souls of young Iranians, Nafisi shows little respect even for Iranian university students and professors. According to her, the only university in the country which was in any way progressive was the Allameh Tabataba'i University, as other universities did not have any worthy professors or "minds."[53] This claim, perhaps, was due to the fact that she taught there; otherwise, it is difficult to see how such a judgment could be passed on hundreds of different public and private universities throughout the country. As in many other instances, the memoir here becomes a venue to air personal grudges.

Of course, Nafisi is not the only person to recognize the inferiority of Iranian scholars, thinkers, and universities; Molavi gives us reason to believe that Iranians cannot communicate with one another without western help. He says:

> Former president Khatami often talked about "dialogue of civilizations," but from my experience, Iranians needed some coaching in "dialogue of Iranians." It seemed, at times, as if Western journalists were the only ones talking to all sides.[54]

Among the many people whom Nafisi caricatures in her book are respected and well-known university professors. Of course, like everyone else in the book, including the majority of Iranians who for whatever reason support the Islamic Republic and participate in general elections, political rallies, and other public events, they are left without voices, except for the ones she has imposed upon them. She claims that professors at other universities, such as the all-woman al-Zahra University, were utterly ignorant.[55] The students at al-Zahra University, she claims, are mostly disturbed young

women "who never had anyone to praise them for anything."[56] This extraordinary claim means that Iranians as a nation do not value girls. Dumas too implies that in Iran women cannot pursue their hopes and dreams,[57] while in Bahrampour's memoir it is said that "In Iran a girl does not go out alone."[58] However, it remains unanswered how millions of female students go to school and university every day.

Throughout many of these texts the writers use, or misuse, the feminist cause to strengthen the perception of their text's authenticity, a point well explained by Roksana Bahramitash's article in *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*.[59] It would probably come as a surprise to many in western countries that in Iran before the revolution, a small percentage of all university students were women, while today 64% of the country's undergraduate student population is female. This dramatic rise was partially due to an affirmative action law passed by the government after the revolution that made it mandatory for at least half of all new students in certain fields to be female. It was also partially due to the fact that successive administrations after the revolution advocated and implemented universal education in a country where roughly three decades ago almost half of the female population was illiterate.

The Dishonest and Decedent Iranian

Molavi describes elements that he claims to recognize in the Iranian character. Iranians are "evasive, tell half-truths, and lie outright."[60] On more than one occasion, Bahrampour effectively makes the same claim.[61] Moaveni too claims that "lies are natural for people here."[62] In fact, she even goes further and has a chapter of her book titled "My Country is Sick."[63] In this chapter, she declares that low-grade depression was a national epidemic and that

> Most Iranians who were not opium addicts or alcoholics had some expertise in spiritual restoratives … but in modern-day Iran, it had become common to keep Islam at arms length.[64]

De Bellaigue takes this alleged sickness a few steps further and declares that in Iran "there is self-flagellation" and that Iranians "lick their lips, savour their misfortune."[65] Such claims seem to show an extraordinary misreading of the major impact that Islam and events such as those linked to Karbala have on Iranian culture. He also characterizes Iranians as irrational, dishonest, hypocritical, violent, filthy, and lazy.[66] Indeed, when describing *ta`aruf*, a form of Iranian etiquette, de Bellaigue again misreads Iranian cul-

ture and claims that "Iran is the only country I know where hypocrisy is prized as a social and commercial skill."[67]

The Erotic Oriental

One indispensable ingredient of Orientalist discourse, old and new, is the eroticizing of the East. And to be sure, in the neo-Orientalism of these memoir writers, it is there galore. According to Nafisi, it seems that all religious men, such as the uncle of Nasrin (another disciple of hers), are rapists, child abusers, sexually obsessed, "perverts" and that their female counterparts are just as evil and carry out "sexual assaults."[68] In their religious ceremonies, Nafisi can feel "a wild, sexually flavored frenzy in the air," and when the millions of Iranians who took part in the funeral ceremony of Ayatollah Khomeini were sprayed at intervals with water to cool them off because of the extreme heat, Nafisi claims that "the effect made the scene oddly sexual."[69]

However, it is not just all the religious men and women in Iran who are perverts, for Iranian men who live in the United States are almost just as bad: I shunned the company of the Iranian community, especially the men, who had numerous illusions about a young divorcee's availability.[70] These lines seem to give new meaning to Nafisi's claim that "our culture shunned sex because it was too involved with it."[71] These claims of deviant sexuality leave her vulnerable to the accusation that they reveal more about her than anything else.

Not to be outdone, Moaveni states that in Iran "everyone was addicted to talking about sex."[72] She also declares the complete moral and sexual bankruptcy of what appears to be a monolithic clergy. She makes the extraordinary claim about a health club she used to frequent:

> … the Farmanieh, Tehran's first post-revolutionary, posh health club, was born and kept exclusive enough that the masses could not see how the clerics were living it up with their money.
>
> Many of the women there were obviously the mistresses of these rich men because they were too young, breathtakingly beautiful, and middle class to afford the place otherwise. They carried themselves with a defensive, haughty brazenness that only kept women would think to affect.[73]

However, she is unable to provide a single name or explain how these imaginary clerics allowed a *Time* magazine journalist regular access to this

"exclusive" club. One may claim that this addiction and obsession to thinking about and "to talking about sex," or even what she describes as her psychological problems, are what make her think that the cleric in Qom had immoral intentions.[74]

Interestingly, the fact that Nafisi, too, often describes herself as someone who has psychological problems does not decrease the authenticity of the "memoir" in the eyes of many western critics.[75] She can make wild and often contradictory accusations and still seem authentic to much of her western audience. For example, Nafisi tells a story that she claims to have heard from her disciple Nasrin, a former member of the dreaded MKO, the Mujahedeen-e Khalgh terrorist organization. This terrorist/cult organization was based in Saddam Hussain's Iraq for well over two decades and came to be a tool in the hands of the Bush regime. The story is about a girl who was supposedly held in an Iranian prison.

> They kept her for over a month and repeatedly raped her. They passed her from one guard to another … They married the virgins off to the guards, who would later execute them. The philosophy behind this act was that if they were killed as virgins, they would go to heaven.[76]

However, if this is true, one wonders why the prison guards supposedly shot and killed the twelve-year-old girl that "was running around the prison grounds asking for her mom."[77] Did Nafisi or the jailers forget about the aforementioned fundamentalist's "philosophy"? Both Ebadi and Bahrampour make an identical claim, but Bahrampour later adds that she has heard that after being raped these women are "stoned for their resulting loss of virginity."[78] Satrapi's version of this "philosophy" is somewhat different. According to her, "it's against the law to kill a virgin so a guardian of the revolution marries her and takes her virginity before executing her."[79] In her dedication, Hakakian claims that these alleged rapes take place because the guards "alleged that killing a virgin was a sin in Islam."

The "ideological" reasons why girls are allegedly raped in prison differ from one another in these texts. However, it makes no difference as there is no necessity to provide evidence that such "sayings" or rapes actually existed. These texts work within a single western Orientalist discourse of demonization, where Iran is guilty until proven otherwise.

Gayatri Spivak, in "Can the Subaltern Speak?," writes about how the British campaign against *sati* was a colonialist attempt to save "brown women from the brown man."[80] While these works play on the West's long-time attention to Oriental tales of female slavery and defilement, the above argument seems to apply here as well, except that such executions and acts

of rape never took place because such a philosophy only exists in the minds of Satrapi, Nafisi, and others like them. What we have here is a sort of modernized version of the old Orientalist fantasies about the depraved East, say, à la Byron. In fact, the twenty-one-volume *Saheefeye Noor* series, where all of Ayatollah Imam Khomeini's written texts as well as the transcripts of all of his public speeches are gathered for researchers to use, contain numerous occasions where he speaks about how the MKO's prison detainees should be treated and, of course, there are no signs of this alleged philosophy.[81]

While Bahrampour refers to human rights groups reports as evidence for her claims, she ignores the fact that the groups she refers to are based and funded in western countries and, more importantly, are ideologically bound to the "West." Over the past three decades they have regularly used evidence and testimonies against Iran that have been provided by terrorist organizations based in Saddam Hussein's Iraq that are still funded and supported directly and indirectly by North American and European governments. These claims also contradict the statements made in *Saffron Sky* by the young female medical student Elham, who was a former member of the MKO terrorist organization and a friend of Gelareh Asayesh. According to Asayesh, "Elham spent four and a half years in prison" and spoke of how, contrary to what she expected when arrested, she was treated with humanity and respect after being arrested and sentenced.[82] Contrary to the extraordinary claims made in works like *Prisoner in Tehran*, *Persepolis*, *Iran Awakening*, and *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, there was no rape or execution awaiting the young Elham and, even more important, there was no sign of a mad ideology or philosophy justifying such acts.

> Instead, they picked me up at two P.M. and I sat there until eleven at night. Then they took me to a room and talked to me. It's true that it was prison, but in reality I came out of bondage. I had time to think.[83]

Given the market for memoirs from or on Iran, the more sensational the tales the better from the viewpoint of these tellers of tales or "memories" no matter how baseless and self-referencing.

What makes the bizarre accusations of Nafisi and her imitators especially significant and dangerous is that they associate them with Islam and the ideology of those whom they oppose. She does not feel the need to provide evidence to support her accusations, and neither do her western critics. She writes about her unambiguous and absolute "love" for "moral imperatives," her fundamentals as well as her moral principles.[84] Therefore, evidence for such shocking accusations must exist in the religious texts used by these supposed "monsters" for this supposedly "principled woman" to be

able to make such claims. However, it seems there is no need for her to provide evidence of this supposed "philosophy," as there is no need to provide proof where Orientals and specifically religious Iranians are concerned.

Of course, other writers such as de Bellaigue do not make identical accusations, but the end results are the same. He makes the bizarre claim that "Hezbollahis" "threw acid in the faces of women who were inappropriately made up."[85] Moaveni, too, makes a strange claim about the Basij:

> "The Basij are the bad guys." I said. Everyone hates them. They don't protect people, they abuse them … They sell drugs, take bribes, and run rackets.[86]

When the antagonists are described as monsters anything is believable, even when the claims seem completely detached from reality, as we see when she speaks about her encounter with the komiteh. She states that "The komiteh were different from the Basij but performed the same functions."[87] However, the komiteh, whatever their function, ceased to exist well over a decade before Moaveni even set foot in Iran.

Moaveni frequented parties where drugs were used, constantly watched satellite TV, surrounded herself with extremely secular English-speaking friends, and learned about Iranian politics in the BBC Tehran office.[88] Hence, it is no wonder that she would say, "Iranians felt a harsh contempt for the clerics" or that they were all absurd,[89] as if they were a monolithic entity. Her isolation from and ignorance about Iranian society is also probably why she concludes that "people relish making their distaste for Islam known" and "observing Ramadan was in bad taste."[90] Interestingly, in the poll jointly carried out by the three American organizations in 2007, 62% of Iranians primarily saw themselves as members of their religion (Islam) before anything else.

Nafisi's hatred is so deep that she does not even bother to reference the numerous quotes that she uses from Ayatollah Khomeini, almost all of which are inaccurate, misleading, or altogether nonexistent. For example, the outrageous claim about curing a man's sexual appetite "by having sex with animals…" among others.[91] There should be no need to point out that like all other major Islamic scholars, Ayatollah Khomeini believed any sexual act outside of marriage is a major sin. This is a rather curious point for someone like Nafisi, who sees herself as "too much of an academic."[92] This problem also exists throughout all of the memoirs discussed so far, such as in Hakakian,[93] and is true about other Iranian officials as well, such as de Bellaigue's distortion of an account in General Shirazi's memoirs.[94]

Making big and often absurd claims without considering it necessary to provide the least evidence, as well as gross factual errors, are the hallmarks of these texts. Nafisi, for example, states that at her university there were two student organizations, one of which was called "Islamic Jihad."[95] However, there has never been an organization active in any Iranian university with that name. Islamic Jihad is the name of a Palestinian organization that is fighting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land; it is difficult to understand how she links this name with Iranian universities. If not meant as a blatant distortion of reality, this reveals the extent of her ignorance about campus life. Elsewhere, she states that the Council of Guardians chose Ayatollah Khamenei as the new leader after the demise of Ayatollah Khomeini.[96] But as Article 107 of the constitution clearly states, the Council of Guardians has no role to play in the constitutional process of choosing or removing the country's leader.

Nafisi seems to have lived a rather secluded life while in Iran, as she seems to know little about people and events other than those she sees or hears about in her small circle. She admits her extraordinary ignorance about Iranian and Islamic culture when she tried to shake hands with Mr. Bahri. Even in the book, when she tries to explain the word *namahram*, she still gets it wrong.[97] She is one of the few people in the world, including Saddam Hussain, who claim that the Iranians were the "perpetrators" of the war.[98]

Iranian Irrationality and Savagery

Moaveni, too, says, "The freshly minted regime immediately went to war with Iraq."[99] De Bellaigue, however, does not seem to be able to make up his mind on this particular point; rather, he seems to see Iran to be the main culprit rather than Saddam.[100] According to Satrapi, the Islamic Republic actually "admitted that the survival of the regime depended on the war,"[101] though she never reveals who did the admitting and when. Somewhat similarly, Ebadi, speaks of "the Islamic Republic's romance with its war."[102]

Nafisi makes the ludicrous claim that during the war ten- to sixteen-year-old Iranian military combatants carried out "human wave" attacks and were promised "keys to a heaven where they could finally enjoy all the pleasures from which they had abstained in life."[103] Ebadi, who admits that none of her "relatives had gone to the front," also makes the bizarre claim that the "Iranian command used … young recruits as human minesweepers…"[104] Similar fantastic claims about keys to heaven are made by Molavi, Hakakian, Ebadi, and Satrapi.[105] Ebadi actually has the audacity to claim that

every night Iranian television showed footage of "young recruits, wearing red bandannas and their keys to heaven around their necks, boarding buses for the Iraqi battlefields. Many were barely in their teens…"[106] According to Satrapi, the family maid's son was given a plastic key painted in gold at school. The kids were told "that if they went to war and were lucky enough to die, this key would get them into heaven."[107] Her cousin, who is supposedly a soldier, says:

> It's awful. Every day I see busses full of kids arriving. They come from the poor areas, you can tell … First they convince them that the afterlife is even better than Disneyland, then they put them in a trance with all their songs … It's nuts! They hypnotize them and just toss them into battle. Absolute carnage. The key to paradise was for poor people. Thousands of young kids, promised a better life, exploded on the minefields with their keys around their necks.[108]

What is disturbing but also revealing about the discursive practices on Iran and Islam in the "West" is that Satrapi's animated cartoon film based on this book actually won an award at the Cannes Film Festival.

De Bellaigue dedicates many pages to making all sorts of outrageous claims about ignorant Iranian combatants, Revolutionary Guard commanders, and seminarians,[109] and falsely claims that a book called *Zahr-al-Rabin* "was written by seminary teachers over the course of several generations."[110] He claims the Iranian forces were "a gigantic army that prided itself on its ignorance of military affairs."[111] He continues and claims:

> You had Basijis who were incapable of thinking on the battlefield. They didn't know – perhaps they didn't care – that measures existed that would increase their chances of staying alive. Somewhere, through the pride and obfuscation, there ran a line – between what was moral and Islamic, and what worked. That line ran from the front all the way to Tehran, through Khomeini's office, the President's office and the Foreign Ministry. It affected everything.[112]

He can speak about all this as a western authority despite the fact that he knows nothing about warfare and weaponry, as is made clear when he speaks about basijis regularly throwing themselves onto rocket-propelled grenades that had landed in crowded trenches.[113]

As veterans of that war, in which Saddam Hussain with the backing of western powers invaded Iran and used weapons of mass destruction against civilians and combatants, we would like to see some of these keys, television footage, or other evidence to support these absurd claims. Indeed, the

absurdity of such claims can be regarded as one of the features of Iranian native Orientalist discourse. It seems that such people are so sure of the unexamined reception of anything even smacking of opposition to the Islamic revolution and Islam in general or any kind of hype about Iran that they do not deem it necessary to give at least a touch of credibility to their claims. Critics often do not even ask themselves how an Iran that was prevented by the so-called "free world" from even acquiring gas masks could have stood up to a brutal regime that was armed to the teeth, unless its military tactics were extremely sophisticated and its soldiers competent.

In her so-called memoir, Nafisi authoritatively speaks on behalf of all Iranians and claims that "We" Iranians "living in the Islamic Republic of Iran grasped both the tragedy and absurdity of the cruelty to which we were subjected" by the government.[114] However, she contradicts herself elsewhere and states that there were many students, all of whom are dehumanized by the author, who were "fanatical."[115] Ebadi has a similar problem when she calls the Islamic Republic "unpopular" and claims that it is "despised" by Iranians and then elsewhere admits that many millions of Iranians mourned and attended Ayatollah Khomeini's funeral.[116]

According to Nafisi, these "fanatical" students can only be redeemed if they read "works of Western thinkers and philosophers" and question "their own orthodox" views.[117] On the other hand Nafisi, the superior westernized intellectual authority,[118] does not recognize that the concepts of "pleasure is the great sin" and "sex is for procreation" are not Islamic.[119] She is the academic whose learned articles supposedly won her "respect and admiration,"[120] even though, unlike her students, she was not even acquainted with the works of Edward Said, which are widely read in Iranian academic circles. She is unlike the uneducated and backward Iranian masses that were supposedly "given food and money" to demonstrate against the United States. According to her, these monolithic and backward Iranians were "bussed in daily from the provinces and villages" and "didn't even know where America was, and sometimes thought they were actually" going there.[121] Ebadi, too, often looks down at ordinary Iranians in her book and actually claims that until the 1990s Iranians did not even "grasp" the real meaning of elections.[122]

Regarding the class debates, suicides, street battles, and other events that are claimed to have taken place, there is little to say except that professors at the University of Tehran and Allameh Tabataba'i University do not remember these events as she does. Some of the claims she makes conflict with television footage broadcast live on Iranian television, such as the story

about Nategh Nouri and the whip.[123] The same footage also refutes Hakakian's claim about Ayatollah Khomeini's coffin.[124]

Many of the dialogues and interviews in these memoirs are also questionable. Molavi claims to have interviewed "Sudabeh, a twenty-two-year-old medical student" at Amir Kabir University.[125] Oddly enough, Amir Kabir University is a technical university and has no medical students.

Like Nafisi and the others, Molavi shows a tremendous amount of ignorance about some of the simplest facts of Iranian society, religion, and culture, such as the story of Imam Hussein that is central to Iranian religion and culture. The Iranian "expert" Molavi states:

> Hossein embarked on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 680, stopping in Kufa, Iraq, to discuss battle plans with Kufan supporters. Before he could reach Mecca, however, word of Hossein's plans reached Yazid …[126]

It so happens that Imam Hussain was traveling from Makkah to Kufa, not from Kufa to Makkah. Elsewhere, he says, "When the villain Yazid struck the actor playing Imam Hossein."[127] However, as any book on Imam Hussain, such as that of Ayatollah Motahhari,[128] would point out, Yazid was never in Karbala.

One specific example from within Nafisi's text, perhaps, will help reveal the extent of the problem concerning her consistency, credibility, and authenticity. Nafisi claims that Nassrin was thirteen or fourteen years old when she unofficially attended Nafisi's classes at the University of Tehran.[129] However, a few pages later she states that only those who had a student I.D. card could enter the university campus, which is surrounded by fences. Indeed, entering the university without a student I.D. card "had become a challenge" and only "the most dedicated and rebellious jumped over the fences to escape the guards at the entrance."[130] Under such conditions, Nafisi fails to explain how this thirteen- or fourteen-year-old girl attended her classes.

Elsewhere, Nafisi explains how she secretly taught Nabakov to her eight disciples in Tehran "against all odds."[131] She forgets to mention, however, that at the time her rival, the hated professor X, among others, had students at the University of Tehran who did their theses on Nabakov.

A rather similar problem with credibility exists in Latifi's book. According to the book, her father was arrested on February 13 and executed on May 23.[132] She claims that a few weeks after March 19, both of her father's wrists were broken during an interrogation.[133] She then describes her meeting with her father in prison before the month of May.

> As the guard watched, I ran to my father's side and hugged him through the bars. He lifted me clear off the ground and held on tight. I could feel his heart beating – both of our hearts, beating as one – and my eyes filled with tears.[134]

What she forgets, though, is that her father's wrists are supposed to be broken. Bahrampour similarly claims that by the time her family left Iran, "citizens were being dragged from their homes in front of their families and taken before revolutionary committees."[135] However, the problem with this statement is that they left Iran almost a month before the fall of the regime and the establishment of the revolutionary committees.[136]

Significantly, in *Reading Lolita in Tehran* there is a reference to another so-called memoir, Betty Mahmoody's *Not Without my Daughter*.[137] In this work Mahmoody, who briefly lived in Iran, speaks about the irresolvable differences between eastern and western culture. Iranians are filthy, mad, scheming, corrupt, violent, hostile, lazy, eager to kill, unorganized, unpredictable, animal-like, and "strange."[138] According to her, some Iranians try to copy western culture, but fail because of their lack of sophistication.[139] She claims that "Time seemed to mean nothing to the average Iranian" and that "Once a year everyone in Iran takes a bath."[140]

Nevertheless, what is important is that when Nafisi refers to Mahmoody's extraordinarily racist work, it is not to criticize it. In fact, it is implied that Nafisi's disciple Nassrin confronts similar conditions in Iran to those that Mahmoody allegedly confronted. *Not Without my Daughter*, it seems, is just another authentic representation of life in the country.

In order to understand the motivation behind writing a book such as Nafisi's, one just needs to ponder the author's statement to the effect that many have become famous by writing against the Islamic government.[141] Bahrampour even explains that when her mother wrote a fictional account about a woman whose innocent husband is executed in revolutionary Iran, a publisher was interested and asked if she would "go on TV and say its true."[142] Later her mother accepted the offer, but the publisher had lost interest.[143] Apparently in the market for such "memoirs," the tellers of these modern "oriental tales" or "memories" feel sure that anything sells – and the more sensational the stuff, the better it sells and the more "popular" it gets. However, one does not wonder at Nafisi or the other writers; rather, one wonders at many of those progressives in the West who would be outraged if such language were ever used to describe other peoples or races.

Despite the negative images of contemporary Iran that exist in the background, *Funny in Farsi* is not really a memoir about Iran, and among the rest

of the texts that have been discussed here, only *Saffron Sky* and (to a significantly lesser extent) *To See and See Again* offer a somewhat ambivalent and less negative picture of the country. Despite stereotyping Iranians and the existence of numerous inaccuracies in the work, such as the hiring of "chest-beaters" in *Saffron Sky*,[144] Asayesh shows little hostility and tries to develop a more balanced picture of the country. She openly acknowledges that before traveling to Iran the image she had developed in her mind was "built of ignorance and fear and facile suppositions."[145]

Indeed, in the works of Asayesh, Dumas, Bahrampour, and Moaveni,[146] we are reminded of how the extremely negative representations of Iran constructed in the American media, as well as in the Iranian "exile" media (largely funded by the American government), result both in the formation of highly negative ideas about Iran among many Iranians in the diaspora as well as a strong sense of shame. This is perhaps one reason why these writers feel the need to constantly remind the western reader of their love for, and admiration of, the United States. It also makes it even more difficult for some of these writers to present an unbiased account of Iran.

Conclusion

In this paper we dealt with "memoirs" and tried to probe into their "truth claims." A possible criticism of our approach is that our focus on examining these claims is misplaced, as a memoir is not, after all, a biography or book of facts. First of all, in the contested field of literary discourse things are not quite that simple. Moreover, the point is that these claims are regularly taken as "truths" about Iran.

Speaking of memoirs and remembering, if we remember – for any consideration of Orientalism is, to use Behdad's phrase, an "anamnesiac practice," "an exercise in remembering"[147] – that some of the central texts in Orientalist canon are concerned with Iran (Said cites Aeschylus' *The Persians* as a founding text here, for instance), we can better understand why and how it has become the target of a powerful neo-Orientalism ("axis of evil"). These writings are certainly Orientalist or neo-Orientalist. Most of them are Orientalism pursued to absurd extremes without the slightest effort taken not to be absurd. This does not mean that a completely objective form of representation exists or that Iran is a utopia; however, the extent of their misrepresentation of Iran is extraordinary. The only thing more extraordinary is the extent to which many critics and scholars in the "West" view *Reading Lolita in Tehran* and the other alleged memoirs as honest representations of Iran, thus reducing the lives of millions of people to caricatures

and prejudices. At a time when we were being told that elements within the former Bush administration were seeking a moral justification for war, pointing this out becomes all the more important for those of us potentially at the receiving end of the next "shock and awe" campaign.

At the end of her book, Moaveni, who has returned to the United States, makes an important complaint about how Iranians and Muslims are being treated after 9/11:

> People, our own friends, confessed the strangest, most insulting things, without any intention of offending ("I was sitting next to this guy on the subway, saw him reading the Koran, and wondered whether I should call the police, since the terror alert was on yellow"). You had to wonder what they were thinking, and why it was suddenly okay to think and act like this. What other religion could you so openly slander?[148]

The irony is that we would have liked to ask her the same question.

Endnotes

1. Lois P. Rudnick, Judith E. Smith, and Rachel Lee Rubin, eds. *American Identities: An Introductory Textbook* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006), 123.
2. Ali Behdad, "American Literary History," http://alh.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/ajm040v1.pdf.
3. Hamid Dabashi, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/797/special.htm.
4. Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (New York: Random House, 2004), 102.
5. Shirin Ebadi (with Azadeh Moaveni), *Iran Awakening* (Random House: New York, 2006), 4 and 8.
6. Afschineh Latifi, *Even After All This Time* (New York: ReganBooks, 2005), 38 and 14.
7. Christopher de Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs* (London: Harper, 2005), 38.
8. Ebadi, *Iran Awakening*, 9.
9. Azadeh Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2005), vii and 9.
10. Afshin Molavi, *The Soul of Iran* (New York: Norton, 2005), xxiii.
11. Marjana Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (New York: Pantheon, 2003), 4.
12. Tara Bahrampour, *To See and See Again* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 7.
13. Gelareh Asayesh, *Saffron Sky* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 1 and 61.
14. Latifi, *Even After All This Time*, 32 and 47.
15. De Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden*, 38.

16. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 265 and 281.
17. Ibid., 285.
18. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, 142 and Molavi, *Soul of Iran*, 16.
19. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 281.
20. Ibid., 84.
21. Ibid., 214.
22. Ibid., 109.
23. De Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden*, 42.
24. Ibid., 28 and 267.
25. Ibid., 120.
26. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, 88.
27. Asayesh, *Saffron Sky*, 31.
28. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, 136.
29. Ibid., 89.
30. De Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden*, 78.
31. Ibid., 187.
32. Ibid., 198.
33. Bahrampour, *To See and See Again*, 344-45.
34. De Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden*, 219, 222, 253, 228, 101, 228, 237, and 247.
35. Molavi, *Soul of Iran*, 38, 41, and 78.
36. Ebadi, *Iran Awakening*, 78.
37. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, 44.
38. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 270.
39. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, ix, 4, and 51.
40. Ibid., 21.
41. Ibid.
42. Ebadi, *Iran Awakening*, 12, 20, 28, 105, 107, and many others.
43. Molavi, *Soul of Iran*, 41.
44. Asayesh, *Saffron Sky*, 177 and 176.
45. De Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden*, 22.
46. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, 226.
47. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 45.
48. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, 131.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., 107.
51. Roya Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004), 163.
52. Bahrampour, *To See and See Again*, 101.
53. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 9 and 179.
54. Molavi, *Soul of Iran*, 120.
55. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 185 and 220.
56. Ibid., 221.
57. Firuzeh Dumas, *Funny in Farsi* (New York: Random House, 2006), 75.

58. Bahrampour, *To See and See Again*, 235.
59. Roksana Bahramitash, "The War on Terror, Feminist Orientalism and Orientalist Feminism: Case Studies of Two North American Bestsellers," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 14, no. 2 (summer 2005): 223-37.
60. Molavi, *Soul of Iran*, 142.
61. Bahrampour, *To See and See Again*, 218 and 300.
62. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, 74.
63. Ibid., 93.
64. Ibid., 95.
65. De Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden*, 1 and 2.
66. Ibid., 3, 7, 7 and 11 and many more, 11 and 13 and many more.
67. Ibid., 14.
68. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 48, 30 and 59, 210, and 168 and 211.
69. Ibid., 244.
70. Ibid., 83.
71. Ibid., 304.
72. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, 71.
73. Ibid., 152.
74. Ibid., 71; 111, 156, 216, 223, and 234; 100.
75. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 12, 24, 44, 46, 47, 85, 107, 170, and 171.
76. Ibid., 212.
77. Ibid., 191.
78. Ebadi, *Iran Awakening*, 91 and Bahrampour, *To See and See Again*, 163 and 207.
79. Satrapi, *Persepolis*, 145.
80. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculation on Widow Sacrifice," *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), 296.
81. *Saheefeye Noor*, vol. 16 (Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Bahman 1381 [Iranian calendar]).
82. Asayesh, *Saffron Sky*, 39 and 145.
83. Ibid., 145.
84. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 181 and 182.
85. De Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden*, 39.
86. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, 53.
87. Ibid., 54.
88. Ibid., 61 and 147, 87 and 98, and 71.
89. Ibid., 49 and 100.
90. Ibid., 96 and 103.
91. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 71 and 93, 96, 137, 158, and many more.
92. Ibid., 266.
93. Hakakian, *Journey*, 199.
94. De Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden*, 132.

95. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 193.
96. Ibid., 274.
97. Ibid., 98.
98. Ibid., 209.
99. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, 7-8.
100. De Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden*, 63.
101. Satrapi, *Persepolis*, 116.
102. Ebadi, *Iran Awakening*, 66.
103. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 208 and 209.
104. Ebadi, *Iran Awakening*, 62 and 61.
105. Molavi, *Soul of Iran*, 88 and 265; Hakakian, *Journey*, 202; Ebadi, *Iran Awakening*; and Satrapi, *Persepolis*.
106. Ebadi, *Iran Awakening*, 61.
107. Satrapi, *Persepolis*, 99.
108. Ibid., 101-02.
109. De Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden*, 128, 132, and 132-33.
110. Ibid., 113.
111. Ibid., 133.
112. Ibid., 134.
113. Ibid., 139.
114. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 23.
115. Ibid., 119.
116. Ebadi, *Iran Awakening*, 74, 78, and 93.
117. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 277.
118. Ibid., 176.
119. Ibid., 298.
120. Ibid., 173.
121. Ibid., 105.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid., 45.
124. Hakakian, *Journey*, 233.
125. Molavi, *Soul of Iran*, 99.
126. Ibid., 65.
127. Ibid., 67.
128. Morteza Motahhari, *Hemasaye Hossaini*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Sadra Publications, 1377 [Iranian calander]).
129. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 122.
130. Ibid., 138-39.
131. Ibid., 6.
132. Latifi, *Even After All This Time*, 2 and 17.
133. Ibid., 5-7.
134. Ibid., 10.
135. Bahrampour, *To See and See Again*, 163.

136. Ibid., 115.
137. Betty Mahmoody, *Not Without my Daughter* (Great Britain: Corgi, 1989), 324.
138. Ibid., 15, 23, 27, 28, 31, 32, 36, 37, 85, 231, 335, 365; 391; 220; 17; 21; 342; 429; 203; 35; 342; 26; and 45.
139. Ibid., 116.
140. Ibid., 81 and 207.
141. Nafisi, *Reading Lolita*, 181.
142. Bahrampour, *To See and See Again*, 143.
143. Ibid., 149.
144. Asayesh, *Saffron Sky*, 23 and 88; and 135.
145. Ibid., 18.
146. Ibid., 167; Firuzeh Dumas, *Funny in Farsi*, 41; Bahrampour, *To See and See Again*, 137 and 192; and Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, vii.
147. Behdad, "American Literary History," 8.
148. Moaveni, *Lipstick Jihad*, 235.