

Satrapı's *Persepolis*: A Post-Colonial Work or not?

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ÖZET Azar Nasifi'nin *Reading Lolita in Tehran* adlı eserinin başarısı sayesinde son zamanlarda diaspora anı yazılarının sayısı artmaya başlamış ve sonucunda Neo-Oryantalizm, Oryantalizmin güçlü ayaklarından biri haline gelmiştir. Diaspora edebiyatı yazarları, Hamid Dabashi'nin belirttiği gibi "yerli kaynaklardır": Kendi ülkeleri hakkında "bilgi" üretirken aslında Batı'nın gözünden Doğu'yu inceleyerek kendi halkına zarar veren kaynaklardır. Ürettikleri, herhangi bir değerlendirmeye tabi tutulmadığından diaspora anı yazarları, Doğu'nun gerçek yüzünü açığa çıkaran objektif, doğru ve tarafsız yazarlar olarak kabul görürler. Bu görüşe paralel olarak, İranlı bazı diaspora yazarları İran halkını ilkel, gülünç, erotik, şiddet yanlısı Oryantal stereotipler olarak betimlemektedir. Bu çalışmamızda, İranlı Diaspora yazarlarından Marjane Satrapı'nın *Persepolis* adlı eserini inceleyeceğiz. Satrapı, İranlıları, tam da Oryantalist söylemin Doğuluları tarih boyunca aktardığı gibi betimlemeye çalışan bir 'yerli kaynaktır'. Bu çalışmada, Sardar, Said ve diğerlerinin kuramlarından hareketle Oryantalist söylemde yer alan varsayımlar ortaya konmuş ve bu varsayımlar ışığında eser incelemesi yürütülmüştür.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER anı yazımı, Oryantalizm, yerli kaynak, diaspora, stereotip

ABSTRACT During the recent past years, chiefly due to the triumph of Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, diasporic memoirs have popped up, and consequently the phenomenon of neo-Orientalism has been converted into one of the most well-fortified pillars of Orientalism. The authors of such diaspora writers are, in Hamid Dabashi's terminology, 'native informers' who try to produce "knowledge" about their own homeland, and actually ruin the face of their countrymen by scrutinizing Orientals through Western looking-glasses. Without any evaluations of what they proffer, the diaspora memoirists are regarded as truthful, prudent and impartial ones who unveil the *real* East. Following this lane, some of the Iranian Diaspora authors move heaven and earth mostly to portray Iranians, as Oriental stereotypes, primitive, ludicrous, erotic, violent and etc.

This paper is going to fulfill a close reading of one of the Oriental works of Iranian Diaspora writer, Marjane Satrapı: *Persepolis*. Satrapı is our concerned 'native informer' who seeks to portray Iranians precisely as what the Orientalist discourse has been promulgating down the history lane. Here, first of all, very briefly, using Sardar and Said and others, the presuppositions existent in the Orientalist discourse are put forth, and then they are traced in the work to give substance to the Orientalist identity of it. Direct sentences from the book are brought force to prove beyond doubt how this work tries to fortify Orientalist discourse regarding Iran and Iranians.

KEYWORDS memoirs, Orientalism, native informer, close reading, diaspora, stereotypes

THE ORIENT UNVEILED: REAL OR FABRICATED

Though resting somewhere far from the madding crowd, the Orient is a territory full of sound and fury. It is "the location of the Garden of Eden"¹ and offers "exotic, sin-

1. Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999), p.9.

ful, sexual delights all wrapped in an ancient, mystical and mysterious tradition.”² It is the land of fabulous fictions and is associated with ‘the escapism of sexual fantasy’. To see more to it, one should remember that an Oriental is “a passive, childlike entity that can be loved and abused, shaped and contained, managed and consumed.”³ Those human beings roaming the Earth to the east of the West are ‘inevitable liars’, ‘lethargic and suspicious’ and “in everything oppose the clarity, directness and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race.”⁴ The Oriental “generally acts, speaks and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European.”⁵ To know more of their identity, a Westerner should bear in mind that “accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind”⁶ and that their brainpowers, like their “picturesque streets” are “eminently wanting in symmetry.”⁷ They are ‘gullible’, ‘devoid of energy’ and “irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, different.”⁸ The Orientals are “half devil half child”⁹ and whence absolutely untrustworthy; they are “customary, passive, non-participating, endowed with a ‘historical’ subjectivity, above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself.”¹⁰ Their societies are ‘despotic by nature’¹¹ and lack of legal institutions is quite conspicuous there. There is no real science and scientist on this part of the globe. The Orient is realized through “its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability.”¹² The Orient of Orientalists is never without ‘its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness’.¹³

Ruminating on what passed here, thanks to dear Orientalists, one can get to a disheartening fact: the Easterners lack enough traits to be proved human. It seems that all of the negative traits which one can find under the wide blue yonder are to be probed within the margins of the eastern hemisphere. Being exotic, sinful, passive, childlike, lethargic, suspicious, inaccurate, asymmetrical, irrational, depraved, fallen, gullible, devoid of energy, half devil half child and non-active, puts too much a burden on one’s shoulder to claim that an Oriental also can be a human being too. It is quite strange that

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2. Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism*, p.6.
 3. Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism*, p.6.
 4. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1994), p.39.
 5. Lord Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (New York: MacMillan, 1908), p.164.
 6. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.38.
 7. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.38.
 8. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.40.
 9. Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism*, p.6.
 10. Anouar Abdel-Malek, “Orientalism in Crisis” *Diogenes*, 44 (Winter, 1963), pp.104-12.
 11. Sardar Ziauddin, *Orientalism*, p.7.
 12. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.206.
 13. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.205.

scholars remarking on the Orient have put the concept of 'change' into the trash of their minds. Marshall and Williams introduce the Orient as "a continent of bizarre religions, fanatically adhered to and it was a continent whose people changed very little" and then continue that "the *one stereotype explained the other* as it was their religions that required Orientals for ever the same."¹⁴ To Orientalists, time, unfortunately, did not convey a sense of alteration and hence it became attainable for them to stereotype the Orientals. Illustration of the Islamic or Oriental character caused the production of some markers such as *the Oriental personality* and *the Islamic spirit* and also to the notions of the supposedly mental retardation and instinctive inertia as common features embedded in all Muslims.¹⁵ The picture of the Oriental, specifically Muslims, through the watching glasses of the Westerners, from the primary days of encounter up to the moment, has changed very little. Friedrich Nietzsche in his *Human, All Too Human* argues that the 'world of appearance', quite apart from the 'thing-in-itself', emanates from the fecund imagination of human beings. He censures philosophers for their tendency to "confront life and experience (what they call the world of experience) as they would a painting that has been revealed once and for all, depicting with unchanging constancy the same event."¹⁶ Nietzsche argues that life 'has gradually *evolved* and is still *evolving*, and therefore should not be considered a fixed quantity'.¹⁷ Human generation has been altering and transforming during the dark tunnels of history from the day of Adam and definitely will go on evolving. How is it within the realms of possibility for Orientalists to generalize on the Orient, an entity which embraces a massive domain brimful of individuals from divergent social circumstances, heritages, and milieus? For Nietzsche, the world of appearance is a direct result of 'illogical thoughts' and projection of 'mistaken conceptions onto the things'. Granting a speck of attention to what Nietzsche maintains leads the Orientalists towards a danger zone. It is quite incontrovertible that they have shrugged this fact off that people are changing each second and it is certainly taboo to generalize on such a vast notion as 'Orient'. The findings of the Orientalists, among many other issues, stimulated Nietzsche to state that "now the world of experience and the thing-in-itself seem so ordinarily different and separate that it rejects any conclusion about the latter from the former".¹⁸

14. P. G. Marshall and G. Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind* (London: Dent, 1982), p.158. (emphasis added.)

15. Elzain Elgamri, *Islam in the British Broadsheets: The Impact of Orientalism on Representations of Islam in the British Press* (Lebanon: Ithaca Press, 2008), p.30.

16. Fredriche Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p.23.

17. Fredriche Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, p.23.

18. Fredriche Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, p.23.

Taking a trip down a history lane, we are in no way but to accept that the Orientalist discourse has exploited numerous ways to stereotype Orientalists, and for sure Iranians as a subcategory. During the past two decades a mass of Iranian life narratives have rushed into the European and North American book markets. Considering the anti-Iranian sentiments, the aftermath of 9/11 and Islamophobia, such memoirs have gained a large readership within the region. Such modern *Bibliothèques*, chiefly recorded by Iranian diaspora writers, do their utmost to portray the savagery, brutality and mental derangement of Iranians and are, consequently, good commodities for the consumption of the Westerners who hanker after the veiled face of the *real* Iran and all the injustices practiced there.

Iranian Memoirs emerged in the late 1980s, and surged into the market since 2001 coinciding with the inception of the 'war on terror'. Regarding Iranian memoirs to the moment, they can be divided into two broad categories: one consists of the life narratives which concern Iran before 9/11 and the other after the atrocious event. And hence: pre- and post-9/11 memoirs. Pre-9/11 memoirs reflect on Iran immediately before and after Islamic revolution of 1979. Such works can be considered as examples of 'scar literature' or 'literature of the wounded'. Scar literature zooms in on trauma and oppression during the Cultural Revolution of China, but more broadly, as Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith have extended the concept, it refers to any work which casts a retrospective stare at the yore days and all the agonizing experiences the author undergoes. One of the early such memoirs is Betty Mahmoody's best-selling *Not without My Daughter*. Mahmoody relates her appalling ordeal in a supposedly two-week trip to Tehran which turns out to last 18 months. Once the putative fortnight is over, Seyyed Bozorg Mahmoody, Betty's Iranian husband, declines to return to America and even does not let the other two to leave the country. Consequently, Betty gets ensnared in a country she is not fond of, and, seemingly, everyone hates her there. During this course of forced stay in Iran, she is tortured and downgraded in numerous ways, and even threatened to be killed by her husband if she schemes to make her getaway. Finally, she manages to break free through the backing of some people by crossing the borders of Turkey.

Post-9/11 memoirs are those which portray Iran after 9/11 abominations. Some of recent such life narratives contemplate mainly on Iran after the tenth presidential election which was held on 12 June 2009. Roxana Saberi's *Between Two Worlds: My Life and Captivity in Iran* can be brought as an example of such memoirs. Saberi outlines from the outset when she is forced from her Tehran apartment by some agents of the government to the prison up to the time when after months of hardship she is

released. She skillfully manages to attribute buffoonery to Iranian government and its authorities.

Chalmers Johnson, in his book *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of Republic*, exhibits how the phoenix of American republic dies and a raptorial empire rises from its ashes.¹⁹ This metamorphosis having had happened, memoirs have also transformed into a genre in the service of such an empire. American imperialism and its right-wing liberal discourse of humanism which hankers after *emancipating* Muslim women from Muslim men have provoked a new interest in Iranian life narratives for the Westerners. Mino Moallem, professor of gender and women's studies at UC Berkeley, states that "the West is now claiming once again the liberation of the rest of the world as its responsibility,"²⁰ and as a result, we can spot piles of such memoirs written by subaltern classes validated and authorized through 'the legitimate and civilizational tropes of the West'. Following what was touched upon, the subaltern non-white third-world woman authors cannot give voice to themselves unless the West bestows them with a 'space' to sound off. As it comes quite clear-cut, the 'imperialism of anti-imperialism' would smother any subaltern voice which tries to shatter, or even debilitate, the bases of its empire. On the other hand, any work which castigates and censures Islamic and third-world countries would receive western license, and numerous epitexts on it would be pushed on in the markets.

As Leili Golafshani argues, Westerners are fascinated to the non-white Iranian memoirs "not only because they want to gain knowledge of women's lives in that particular region of the world but to also because they are unsure of how to respond to the increasingly cold war between America and Iran."²¹ Those who submit themselves to these memoirs, as Gillian Whitlock states, stress two things: "First, their need for knowledge about Islam, the desire to reach beyond stereotypes by gaining access to the other, and to be able to think critically through independent reading. Second, the tendency of life narrative to produce a humanist and ethical response that stresses shared humanity over and above differences of culture and religion is repeated."²² Hence, knowledge production is just a

19. Hamid Dabashi, "Native Informers and the Making of the American Empire" *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*, (1-7 June 2006), retrieved from: <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/797/special.htm>> on 2nd January, 2012.

20. Lord Golafshani, *Politics and Culture*, retrieved from: <<http://www.politicsandculture.org/2009/10/02/leili-golafshani-'iranian-exilic-memoir'-a-review-of-shirin-ebadi-iran-awakening-azar-nafisi-reading-'lolita'-in-tehran-azadeh-moaveni-lipstick-jihad/>> on 3rd January, 2012.

21. Lord Golafshani, *Politics and Culture*.

22. Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), p.62.

part of the life narratives; the other part being about the process of taking sides. The heinous and ghastly worlds which such memoirists illustrate strengthen Westerners in their decisions against Iran as an Islamic country.

One of such memoirs which is our concern now is Satrapi's *Persepolis*. Here, our aim is to look deep into the work to see the Orientalist discourse moving in the artillery of the book and, we will see how Satrapi tries to fortify the supposed discourse.

SATRAPI AND ORIENTALIST DISCOURSE

'Manichean Heresy' is a concept which flourished in the third century AD and postulated a 'dualistic theology'. This doctrine maintains that Satan is co-eternal with God and that the two provinces of matter and spirit are like poles of a magnet. When we enter into the borders of postcolonial world, Manicheanism indicates the binary structure of imperial discourse. This term was popularized by Abdul JanMohammad. JanMohammad gives a rundown of the process through which the colonial monsters polarize the entities of the colonizer and colonized into Manichaeian spheres of good and evil. Civilized colonial cultures are the embodiment of whatever is good and pure while the colonized world is uncontrollable, chaotic, unattainable and ultimately evil.

Some Iranian diaspora writers of memoirs bring Manicheanism into play to construct an intense binary opposition between Iran and West. So as to realize this, native informers get inclined towards essentialism – that is, for example, they ascribe a feature to all Iranians which is mostly a negative one and stands against the clashing positive characteristic of Westerners en masse. This mission, also seemingly burdensome, is utterly plain sailing for memoirists. The reason lies within the boundaries of Orientalism which has already supplied the Western collective unconscious with their favorite archetypes: The Oriental "generally acts, speaks and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European."²³

Marjane Satrapi assumes that Iranians are by nature passive which stands against the dynamicity of the Westerners. In *Persepolis*, chapter entitled 'The Key', Marji quite astonished from the increasing number of Iranian war martyrs pays a visit to her mother and demands her stance on war casualties. Marji's mother quotes from her father that "when a big wave comes, lower your head and let it pass!"²⁴ This leads Marji to conclude

23. Lord Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, p.164.

24. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.94.

that: “that’s very Persian, the philosophy of resignation.”²⁵ There is a very delicate touch of irony palpable here. The very act of ‘resignation’ and submission stands totally conflicting with what Satrapi herself portrays of Iranians who, so as to safeguard their country from the hands of transgressors, made their way to the front. Marjane Satrapi herself has observed and experienced Islamic Revolution and the days such as Black Friday in which thousands of people laid down their lives for their Iranian and Islamic ideals. It is too vague to fathom out how a human being who has eye-witnessed such events is to pronounce this nation passive. But, on the whole, Satrapi is quite at liberty with such things since she has got the long and deep-rooted discourse of Orientalism at her disposal to back her. Getting back to the first paragraph, we can see that previously Orientalists have introduced an Oriental as a “*passive*, childlike entity that can be loved and abused, shaped and contained, managed and consumed.”²⁶ Owing to this Orientalist discourse, Satrapi does not stumble across a problem while attributing passivity to a whole nation! The Orientalists betrayal to the Orient stands fully clear-cut in a scene while Marji is struggling in a war of words with a nun. The Reverend Mother tells her that: “It is true what they say about Iranians. They have no education.”²⁷ By education, she does not allude to the knowledge one secures in schools and universities. She is, in reality, attacking Iranian culture. The nun is claiming that Iranians are not civilized and cultured people and are not conscious of a humane behavior. Unquestionably, Satrapi is trying to evoke the Oriental uncivilized and uncultured archetypes of the Middle Ages which are obvious in Mandeville’s *Travels*: demonic races, cannibals, troglodytes and dog-headed people.

This Orientalist discourse does its utmost to come up like Janus who is endowed with two faces: one face is always heavenly and pleasant; the other brings the Hades and underworld to light. In reality, one is lightness and the other darkness. Such a dichotomy is to be seen in the Orientalist discourse of Iranian exilic writers. Once considering the rumors about the long-range missiles that can reach Tehran, Marji says that “we Iranians are Olympic champions when it comes to gossip.”²⁸ The reason might be summarized in the words of Marji’s grandmother in *Embroideries*: “to speak behind others’ backs is the ventilator of the heart.”²⁹ Once again, she comes up with a crude essentialization. Satrapi

25. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.94.

26. Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism*, p.6. (emphasis added.)

27. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), p.23.

28. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.135.

29. Marjane Satrapi, *Embroideries* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2005), p.20.

in many places tries to trivialize religion (Islam) and consequently, forgets that Iranians are mostly Muslims and backbiting in Islam is considered as a deadly sin. Quran considers backbiting as the equivalent of eating the flesh of one's dead brother (Refer to Chapter Hojorat, ayah 12). Even if we forgo the cares and concerns of religion on the issue, it is too reckless, baseless and irrational to consider a whole nation of seventy million people as gossiping creatures.

She also considers Iran as a country where the strains of religion restrict people. On the other hand, Europe is her land of free and the realm of happiness, a place where she can water the bush of her flairs and, as an upshot, she won't go waste. In *Persepolis 2*, Marji states that she has travelled to Austria "with the idea of leaving a religious Iran for an open and secular Europe"³⁰ Satrapi is quite prudent and headful in terms of word selection. Here, she is opening two Manichaean pictures into the reader's mental eye: religion / open and secular, and religious Iran / open and secular Europe. The logical premises of this sentence are as follows: Firstly, being religious equals not being open or actually being restricted. Secondly, Iran is religious and hence not an open country. And thirdly, considering freedom, Iran comes directly against Europe.

On her return back to Tehran Marji says that "after four years living in Vienna, here I am back in Tehran. From the moment I arrived in Mehrabad airport, and caught sight of the first customs agent, I immediately felt the *repressive air* of my country."³¹ Pulling focus on what is uttered here gets us once more to our previous debates. She claims that the moment she hits upon Mehrabad airport, she feels 'the repressive air' of her country. The uttered sentence furnishes evidence that her previous lodging (Europe) was not repressive that now she can smell a new atmosphere to experience, actually a repressive air! Maybe Europe was not repressive in Marjane Satrapi's definition of freedom, but at least she herself shows how the European society she lived in aimed at corrupting her. Markus, to come up with just one example here, a shakedown artist, and the one whom she became a friend with, had deliberately involved Marji in trafficking fixes. It might have lead Marji to the depth of a mire an escape from which might have been a sheer wish.

Even Marji's father is aware of such 'repressive air' which would ruin her daughter. Once, while talking with Reza, his future son-in-law, and the one whom he does not trust in as a match made in heaven for his daughter, Marji's father says that "my wife and I have raised our daughter with complete freedom. If she spends her whole life in Iran, she

30. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.1.

31. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.92. (emphasis added.)

will wither."³² Like other instances which we pored over, this one, also, unveils the essential difference between Iran and the West. For Marji's father Iran is not a free land, and since Marji has been brought up 'in complete freedom', she will wither if she lingers in Iran for good. In another case, when Marji's marriage is on the way, her mother tells her that "I want you to leave Iran, for you to be free and emancipated"³³ Again Iran is portrayed as a close land which those (women) who hanker after emancipation have got no other choice but to leave the existent repressive air of the country.

Marjane Satrapi strives to show some external elements which hatch such a despotic air in Iran. One of which is the Iranian Big Brothers. Once, while holding conference with two of her friends, Marji begins to enunciate on the Iranian counterparts of the skin-heads. She says: "... they are everywhere? You think that there aren't any where I come from? They are ten times more fearsome than yours. In Iran, they kill the people who don't think like the leader!"³⁴ Marjane does not fail to portray Sepahi soldiers such as the Big Brothers of 1984, or even worse. Sepahi forces are the ones whom seemingly Marji hates and tries not to have eye-contact with. Satrapi finds almost all of the Iranian authorities, not only Sepahi forces, intolerable. That's why when she gets into Mehrabad airport and catches sight of the first Iranian customs agent, she feels the repressive air of her country.

This repressive air finds its way even in the family and familial relations. Considering European and Iranian men; and here another category in the dichotomous discourse of Orientalism would heave in sight. Iranian men are utterly different from the European counterparts. Oriental men and their discourse of suppressing women is not something new for the Westerners whom, thanks to the dear Orientalists, have a vast realm of Orientalist archetypes in their minds. Satrapi, as well, would not fail to remember to rattle on this despotism and tyranny running in Iranian families. Once while in a car with a friend, Gila, Marjane thinks of Behzad, a graphic artist of a journal who was a hero to her for twenty days. She mentions that Behzad "didn't even let his wife say one word;"³⁵ and then swiftly comes up with an exclamation of sorrow: "Ah, Iranian men!"³⁶ Satrapi is again floundering in the sea of essentialization. She believes that Iranian men are totally suppressive creatures who do not even let their wives to talk, to 'say one

32. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.159.

33. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.163.

34. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.73.

35. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.183.

36. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.139.

word'. It is so interesting that Satrapi ends up at this idea on 'Iranian men' just by taking Behzad into account. This sort of reduction to essentials seems cruder than one can think of from a mature literate woman! It is worthy to mention that her driving friend says that "don't say that! It is not Iranian men, but men, period. Two years ago I was going out with a Spanish diplomat. On the surface he behaved better, but deep down, he was the same thing."³⁷ Even though her friend is trying to break her loose from the hollow and futile shackles of essentialization, for Marji the case is fixed and way closed. She plays her own tune without paying attention to what passes around her.

Marjane Satrapi attempts to manifest that the country is boring for most of the Iranians, not only for women whose liberty has been confiscated but also for regulated children. Marji's parents while touring Turkey conclude that: "It is so hard for kids in Iran. The poor things."³⁸ But it would not terminate at this point and Satrapi moves on to spell out that not only the peripheral environment of society foils tiny children's exuberance, but also the internal factors of familial forces. She indirectly suggests that mothers in Iran are intolerant and strict which obviously stands against the permissive mothers of the West. Once, when Marji wants to get out of the house in order to buy some stuff for and by herself, while being a little kid of thirteen, she points out that: "for an Iranian mother my mom was really permissive. I only knew two or three other girls who could go out alone at thirteen."³⁹ It is too strange that Satrapi fails to see thousands of other little Iranian children who go to school even before the age of thirteen alone.

In a letter to his friend Paul Deussen in January 3, 1888, Nietzsche tells Deussen that he hankers after a 'trans-European eye' (*greisenhaftenkurzsichtigkeit*) which would save most of the people from 'European short-sightedness'. What we see in the character of Marjane Satrapi is a graphic artist endowed with a European eye rather than a trans-European one. Considering her with such viewpoint, it is not queer to hear from her a stereotyped version of Iran, an Oriental territory.

In the closing portion of *Persepolis*, Marji's parents had already set their sights on sending Marji abroad. It is not a sturdy mission to be undertaken since even previously, before Islamic Revolution, they had sent her on a tour to France alone. Marji gets downright cheerful since to make her way alone to West is 'real independence'. The heavy-with-meaning point is that Marji's parents while talking over with her to clarify and, at the same time, legitimize their resolution say that: "we feel its better for you to be far

37. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.139.

38. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.127.

39. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.131.

away and happy than close by and miserabl.”⁴⁰ This aphorism, once more, opens the door of Orientalist dichotomy to our debates. The West is the realm of ‘far away’ and ‘happy,’ but Iran, the ‘close by’ land, is and makes the subjects ‘miserable’. Iran is rendered and depicted as an inferno from which an escape is a must. Marjane Satrapi’s mind is totally obsessed with the West and whatever is Western. When her parents tell her that they have their hearts set on Turkey, she gets too crestfallen and woebegone and says: “Bah...Turkey is for the birds. Only uncool people go to Turkey. If you are taking a trip, why not go to Europe or the United States!”⁴¹ It is fair and pleasant to mention that Turkey has been one of the headquarters of the Orientalist focus. That might be a reason why the occidental-minded Marji gets repulsed at the word of Turkey.

People might be proud of their origin, but to Marji, it is tout au contraire. She believes that to be an Iranian is a ‘burden’. Once during a party at school, Marc, a graduated student, approaches her and asks her of her name. Marji answers that: “Marjane. I’ve been here a year.”⁴² Then Marc asks her of her origin. And she answers that she is French and then, quite downhearted, leaves Marc. In the meanwhile, she thinks that: “Iran was the epitome of evil and to be Iranian was a heavy burden to bear.”⁴³ She totally puts her grandmother’s words of wisdom into oblivion: “always keep your dignity and be true to yourself.”⁴⁴ But for her “it was easier to lie than to assume that big burden” of coming from a country which was “the epitome of evil.”⁴⁵ Satrapi tries to construct a very authoritative discourse by unveiling herself as an author who does not advocate the Islamic Republic of Iran and like, imperialism of anti-imperialism, which is claiming the liberation of the rest of the world and specifically Muslim women, she is concerned with the emancipation of women in Iran (and totally Muslim countries).

Subsequent to giving a rundown of the distressing situation of women in Iran, Satrapi says in a bold and bigger font, “I want to leave this country!”⁴⁶ It imparts the traumatic status of women in Iran that does not leave women a choice but to take themselves off from Iran. Men are crushing all women down while “all laws are on their side.”⁴⁷ That’s why Marji’s mother assures her that “you are a free woman. The Iran of

40. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.148.

41. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.129.

42. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.41.

43. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.41.

44. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.41.

45. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.41.

46. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.183.

47. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.183.

today is not for you. I forbid you to come back!”⁴⁸ The ‘Iran of today’ is so upsetting that presses Marjane’s mother to consign the mother-daughter emotion to oblivion and to forbid her to return to Iran again.

The issue of suppression can become transparent in the course of Satrapi’s work too. For example, once while Gila is giving her a ride, Marjane thinks of Behzad, a graphic artist like herself, whom she respected for 20 days before. She comes to understand his real self and hidden id. Marjane and Gila visit Behzad when they hear that he has been arrested for a drawing which depicted a bearded man. There they visit Behzad, Mandana and their child, Nima. What occupies Marjane’s mind on the way back is that whenever Mandana wanted to utter a word, Behzad interrupted her. As an instance, Marjane poses a question to Mandana there: “so, what do you do?”⁴⁹ And the instant she says “well, I...;” Behzad interrupts her and answers that: “She studied pharmacology, but we had Nima very quickly after getting married. So now she is a housewife.”⁵⁰ Once Marjane asks Mandana of Nima’s age, the moment she says ‘he’s...’, again Behzad punctuates her and says that “eight and a half. In July, he’ll be nine!!!”⁵¹ This act of interruption moves on and on in that session. It lodges in Marjane’s mind to discompose and perturb her to a great deal. Marjane states that “to think that he was my hero for twenty days! His whole spiel about freedom of expression, while he didn’t even let his wife say a word! *Ah, Iranian men!*”⁵² Satrapi is attributing this structure of censoring the wives to all *Iranian men!* She takes merely Behzad into consideration and comes up with an immensely astonishing value judgment on all Iranian men. She is suggesting that in Iran men do not let their wives talk and, in point of fact, bereave them of freedom of expression. After some other words, Marjane decides to leave the country. Definitely, her destination would be Europe. It suggests that this freedom of expression that she is talking of is freebie in Europe while quite expensive in Iran. It has a real price in Iran, she indicates. It seems that Marjane has forgotten her parents. If her father only allows her mother to talk, which is so, she should not propose such a stereotypical essentialization.

Gerard Genet, in his *Narrative Discourse*, presents five central categories of narrative analysis. They are ‘order’, ‘duration’, ‘frequency’, ‘mood’ and ‘voice’. The category of ‘mood’ can move a further step forward by being subdivided into ‘distance’ and ‘perspective’. What we want to fix on here is the subclass of ‘distance’. By distance we mean “the relation

48. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.187.

49. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.182.

50. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.182.

51. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.182.

52. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.183. (emphasis added.)

of the narration to its own material."⁵³ Distance is actually a question of recounting the story ('diagesis') or representing it ('mimesis'). In other words, diagesis, in E. M. Forster's terminology, is 'telling' and mimesis 'showing'. Within the course of the story, the author can convey the meaning he or she is looking for to the reader whether through addressing it directly or by coming up with a set of conditions and ideas which implies what he or she wants to address directly. In other words:

In showing (also called the 'dramatic method'), the author simply presents the characters talking and acting, and leaves it entirely up to the reader to infer the motives and dispositions that lie behind what they say and do... In telling, the author intervenes authoritatively in order to describe, and often to evaluate, the motives and dispositional qualities of the characters.⁵⁴

Such a 'showing' technique is the matter with Marjane Satrapi's style of writing. She does not need to say directly and openly that, for example, "we Iranians are Olympic champions when it comes to gossip;"⁵⁵ instead, she can come up, in T. S. Eliot's terminology, with an 'objective correlative' and provide a ring of ladies who sit somewhere and start telling about themselves and others in order to ventilate their hearts. She embellishes her characters with some traits and leaves it to the reader to infer what she aims at. Marjane Satrapi simply puts forward some stories in order to indoctrinate what she harbors in mind.

In numerous cases, *Persepolis* portrays how Iranian people take it on themselves to be dishonest in their affairs. Once we encounter Marji's father back at home. He says that he has been to Rey Hospital and there he has spotted people coming out while 'carrying the body of a young man killed by the army.' Just after this martyr, they notice another cadaver getting out of the hospital. Straight away they shout: "Here is another martyr."⁵⁶ The supposed martyr is an old man and all of those who fell short of following the first martyr came over to this one. While they are carrying the old man and shouting revolutionary slogans, an old lady appears and roars: "Please! Stop it! Stop it!"⁵⁷ When they ask her of her identity, she replies that she is his widow. Then she continues that: "my husband died of cancer."⁵⁸ The rest of the story suggests that they take the dead old man as a martyr and continue demonstrating against Shah and his regime.

53. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989), p.105.

54. M. H., Abrams, & G. G., Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), p.43.

55. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.135.

56. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.31.

57. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.31.

58. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.31.

Marji tells of her teacher who once used to say that Shah was chosen by God, but now orders them to “tear out all the photos of the Shah from” their books⁵⁹ Or, once we spot Marji and her parents while visiting their neighbors. The lady neighbor says: “Hello! All those demonstrations were really tiring but we finally succeeded.”⁶⁰ Then her husband continues: “look! A bullet almost hit my wife’s cheek. Liberty is priceless.”⁶¹ Nonetheless, Marji’s mother reveals the other way around: “what nerve! She always had that nasty spot. If we weren’t neighbors, he would have said she’s a martyr raised from the dead.”⁶²

Persepolis accents on the false information Iranian government broadcasts. For example, once Marji goes to his father and Anoosh and says that: “on TV they say that 99.99% of the population voted for the Islamic republic.”⁶³ When she utters this, her father retorts irately that: “Do you hear that, Anoosh? Do you realize how ignorant our people are? The elections were faked and they believe the results: 99.99%!! As for me, I don’t know any single person who voted for Islamic republic. Where did that figure come from?”⁶⁴ It is a pleasant trick Satrapi is coming up with. She can, in reality, kill two birds with one stone. First of all, she is portraying the government as the one which broadcasts false information: a dishonest one. Secondly, she is questioning the authority of the Islamic Republic.

Once while Marji and her parents are watching the TV, they hear from the 8:00 news that: “140 Iranian F-145 carried out bombing raids on Baghdad tonight.” Marji takes it as a sign heralding the powerful army of Iranians forces, but his father, who is in Marji’s terms ‘defeatist’, does not put his faith on it and commences on foraging for his radio in order to check on BBC, British Broadcasting Company. Once more we are with the old banal Orientalist dichotomy: Iranian news agency versus BBC. Without any doubts and irrefutably, BBC would get the upper hand in this competition. Marji’s father says that: “you can’t always believe what they say. 8 o’clock. The BBC is broadcasting too. Where’s the radio?”⁶⁵ He does not give credence to Iranian news agency and is found wanting to corroborate the authenticity of the heard news from BBC. He takes the radio from Marji and tunes the radio to BBC. The radio news agency airs that “140

59. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.44.

60. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.44.

61. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.44.

62. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.44.

63. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.62.

64. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.62.

65. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.83.

Iranian bombers attacked Baghdad today”⁶⁶ At this point in time, they get really on cloud nine. But it is not the end. BBC also proclaims that “president Banisadr has ordered the release of the military pilot jailed after the failed coup. They agreed to attack Iraq if the government broadcast the national anthem.”⁶⁷ The rest of the news was not so cool for them: “Iranian losses were very heavy... half of the planes in mission have not returned.”⁶⁸

Marjane Satrapi does not lag behind in this competition of revealing erotic Iranians too. But, unlike others who follow the ‘telling’ technique of writing the memoir, she, just as before, adheres to her ‘showing’ style. *Persepolis 2* takes us to a rendezvous between Marjane and her childhood friend, Farnaz. There, Marjane talks of suing for a divorce to her. But Farnaz replies in negative and so as to corroborate herself, she comes up with an exemplum. She relates the story of her own sister which has left her husband. Farnaz pronounces that “from the minute she had the title of divorced woman, the butcher, the pastry chef, the baker, the fruit and vegetable seller, the itinerant cigarette seller, even beggars in the street, all made it clear they’d like to sleep with her.”⁶⁹ This story, quite conspicuously, speaks for itself. It manifests lustful Iranians who desire a divorcee very lasciviously. It engraves the foregone Orientalist tales considering female slavery.

In *Persepolis*, we hear Marji’s father who, while listening to the news, says: “incredible! They think all men are perverts!!” Taji, Marji’s mother, replies: “Of course! Because they really are perverts!!”⁷⁰ Marji’s mother is going a stage further on so as to parade that the ones who curb the sexual freedom are themselves sexually ‘pervert’! Such is the case with Azar Nafisi as well who believes that all religious men are sexually ‘pervert’.

Mohja Kahf’s enlightening work on Western rendition of the Muslim women manifests that Western representation of them has not been static down the temporal tunnels of history. He finds Muslim women portrayed as ‘termagant’ in the Medieval and Renaissance texts; however, notices them being depicted as ‘odalisque’ in Enlightenment and Romantic texts. And hence, “although the Muslim woman emerges as a powerful figure in early Western narratives, she metamorphoses into a symbol of oppressed, enslaved womanhood in the age of Enlightenment.”⁷¹ While Western women are crushed down

67. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.84.

68. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.85.

69. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.178.

70. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.74.

71. Nima Naghibi, *Rethinking Global Sisterhood: Western Feminism and Iran* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p.35.

during the 17th and 18th centuries in the context of masculine enlightenment, they strive to define themselves as ‘progressive’ in the 19th century by honoring them as the ‘progenitors of their race’. They placed themselves in the discourse of ‘individual liberty’ by posing themselves as ‘white’ ones and Eastern women as non-white ones. One of the great examples of such a discourse constructing a binary opposition between Western and Eastern women in 19th century English literature is rendered in *Jane Eyre*. Ultimately, in the 20th century, this discourse of dichotomous womanhood penetrates well into the collective unconscious of Western women’s narratives. What manifested this polar contradiction between the two parties was (and even currently is) ‘veil’. Naghibi states that:

“Western women mobilized to their advantage the popular significations of the veil as evidence of women’s subjugation and claimed the unveiling, hence liberation, of Muslim women as their prerogative. In Western discourses, the practice of veiling was represented as tantamount to imprisoning women; it was enforced by the male patriarchy and symbolized a dogmatic faith that enlightened Europeans had discarded in favor of a democratic and secular system of government.”⁷²

Satrapi’s world is not free from the cares and concerns of such Western woman. She, just like Western sisters, raises her sword of opprobrium against the veil so as to don an attire of ‘whiteness’. In *Persepolis*, she illustrates a playground in which little children rather than wearing the veils are playing with them. One girl claims that it is too hot to wear it; another is applying the veil as a harness for her horse while calling ‘giddyap’. We notice another girl who is metamorphosed into a monster by casting the veil over her head. This scene is too informative to Satrapi’s aim. She is actually changing the identity of veil by scrutinizing it through the viewpoint of little children. Considering the veil from these little children’s view, “it is after all a piece of cloth, and its fetishization by adults can seem strange.”⁷³ The scene implies that this so-called ‘veil’ is nothing but a ‘piece of cloth’ and it is too crude to fetishize it as an essential constituent of a woman.

Iranian diaspora exilic memoirs endorse and buttress each other. They are a vast moor of intertextuality swapping materials among each other. Like the Orientalists of the centuries ago who employed massive materials piled up in the city library in order to pen their travelogues, memoirists of the present age take liberties with the other handy memoirs. It strikes us as if no documentation is called for what they are claiming to be sheer facts. They also do their utmost to convince the Western readers of the existence of some non-existent materials in Iranian culture.

72. Nima Naghibi, *Rethinking Global Sisterhood*, p.35.

73. Gillian Whitlock, *Soft Weapons*, p.190.

One of the principal topics which the hands of neo-Orientalism trifle with is the idea of the 'Golden Key', a key which would get its owner to the paradise. This non-existent element finds its way in the memoirs of many writers such as Molavi, Hakakian, Nafisi and Ebadi.⁷⁴ This is actually the intertextuality of the memoirs which take a non-existent element from one memoir and then expand it. Satrapi is also to flirt with this illusion. Once we observe Mrs. Nasrin in Satrapi's house. She is utterly woebegone as if the rain of sorrow is dribbling from her face. When Marji and Taji call for the cause, she unveils a 'plastic key painted gold'. Then she carries on and says: "they gave this to my son at school. They told the boys that if they went to war and were lucky enough to die, this key would get them into heaven."⁷⁵ She then bursts into tears, since she is under the impression that "they want to trade this key for my old son."⁷⁶ But Satrapi would not bring it to a halt. She needs to represent Iranians more and more irrational in the eyes of the world. Mrs. Nasrin proceeds: "they told him that in paradise there will be plenty of food, women and houses made of gold and diamonds."⁷⁷ Women made of gold and diamonds can be one of her most crude assertions. Taji decides to indoctrinate the boy the way she has in mind; nonetheless, he does not take an interest in what she says, and instead declares that he will marry Marji in the future.

Then Satrapi tries to trivialize the imposed and holy war. So as to actualize this, she brings Shahab, another cousin to Marji, to the scene. Shahab is back from the front. He, also crestfallen, opens the gates of his gloomy heart:

"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 after life 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."⁷⁸

Then, Marji herself continues that "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."⁷⁹ First of all, the sheer claiming of such a thing comes quite queer. If there were anything of the sort, the BBC, the news agency that they admire a lot, would have aired tens of hours of program considering the *irrationality* of Iranians

74. Seyyed Mohammad Marandi and Hossein Pirnajmuddin, "Constructing an Axis of Evil: Iranian Memoirs in the 'Land of the Free'" *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 26 (2009), pp.23-47.

75. Matjane Satrapi, *Persepolis I*, p.99.

76. Matjane Satrapi, *Persepolis I*, p.99.

77. Matjane Satrapi, *Persepolis I*, p.100.

78. Matjane Satrapi, *Persepolis I*, p.101.

through mentioning such golden keys. In addition, seemingly Satrapi is not wise enough to distinguish between a plaque and a golden key. All the Iranians, the moment they cast a look at the sketch Satrapi has drawn, and which you would see next page, would laugh at its eccentricity. They all are conscious of the real identity of the supposed Golden Keys. They are in reality the plaques which are worn by the soldiers so that if they are killed, one might recognize their identity. When the adult Marjane observes the mothers of the martyrs on TV who are happy exclaims: “I can’t figure out if it’s faith or complete stupidity.”⁸⁰ Satrapi is seemingly keeping the incident under the surveillance from her own standpoint, a simulacrum of the Western point of view. The spiritual elements do not find a way in her thoughts. What she reflects on as ‘stupidity’ might be sheer rationality; nonetheless, she is not equipped with the trans-European eye to figure that out. All the mothers about whom she is prattling get unhappy without any doubts the moment they hear of their sons’ demise. However, they are also happy since their sons breathed their last in the way of defending their country and religion from the hands of the invaders.

Satrapi’s performances of whiteness becomes ‘white’ where she does her utmost to construct an Iranian identity clashing with Iran which is being defined as primarily ‘Middle Eastern’ or ‘Muslim’. Marjane, in the ring of her friends, considers all of them as traditionalist, since they consider her a ‘whore’⁸¹ By distancing herself from traditional Muslims, Satrapi plays a part in diffusing the pervasive racialization of Muslims. Little Marji also tries to show lady guardians as irrational when she says: “it was obvious that she had no idea what punk was.”⁸² One of the other weird and queer assertions of Marji pops up when she asserts that “the religious leaders are very stupid.”⁸³ It is not clear by what criterion Satrapi is coming up with such a value judgment. She also talks of ‘nuptial chamber’ and claims that according to Shiite tradition when a man is cut down in prime, a nuptial chamber is raised for her and “that way, the dead man can symbolically attain carnal knowledge.”⁸⁴ It seems that she is too free in her claims and does not need to come up with any sort of documentation. Her implied readers would accept her as a ‘native informer’, and consequently she would not be pressed for any authentic writings. First of all, the tradition she is babbling about is by no means one of the orders of Shiite sect. However, as was aforementioned, she does not need to put forward any documents for

79. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.102.

80. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.99.

81. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.116.

82. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.133.

83. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.63.

84. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.94.

what she utters as facts. Secondly, the tradition does not suppose that with getting the 'nuptial chamber' raised, the deceased would, symbolically or in reality, 'attain carnal knowledge'. This tradition just mourns a dear one cut down in his or her primes and signifies that this 'nuptial chamber' could be for his or her merriment, not loss of life.

One of the most imbecilic maneuvers Satrapi carries out to secure her sought-after objectives is the trivialization of culturally valued issues. They all seemingly root from a deep-rooted antipathy towards the cultural constituents of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The little Marji, as an instance, does not fail in 'making fun' at martyrs.⁸⁵ It can not be deciphered why she is undertaking such a task. What is wrong with the martyrs that leads her to 'making fun' at them is not to be puzzled out. These martyrs have offered their priceless lives in order to let us live a life without mental disturbance emanating from intruders. In the anniversary of the victory of Revolution, she also pokes fun at the Islamic Republic and its ideals by decorating the classroom with toilet papers.⁸⁶ She also attributes whatever dictatorial to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Once when her mother reproaches her for ditching the school classes, she says: "dictator! You are the guardian of the Revolution of this house!"⁸⁷ Taji plays dictatorial, in Marji's viewpoint, and as a result, she considers her as a 'guardian of the Revolution' since she takes her mother as a 'dictator'. Hence, every 'dictator' is affiliated, in a way or another, with this regime! Previously we saw that how even he plays down the voluntary organization of Basij by manifesting one Basiji serviceman who takes bribes.

Marjane is recently back from Europe, and hence she goes sightseeing Tehran. When her father returns to home, after some initiatory tittle-tattling, he poses a question: "did you walk around a little? What did you think of Tehran?"⁸⁸ Marjane only gives voice to one word: 'sordid.' The reason is somehow irritating: "I was shocked. At least one street in three is named after a martyr."⁸⁹ Marjane's mind gets too occupied with the streets being named after martyrs or the 'sixty-five-foot-high murals representing martyrs'. She also compares the image of martyrs on the walls with sketches reading 'best sausages for 20 shillings' in Austria.⁹⁰ The backdrop and milieu is too 'unsettling' and 'unbearable' for her; Marjane feels as though she is walking in a cemetery; and as a result, she hurries home so as to evade the scene.

85. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.97.

86. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.97.

87. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.113.

88. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.98.

89. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.98.

90. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.96.

Satrapi, furthermore, tries to trivialize the local religion and regard it as a restricting factor. When Marjane and Reza are done with their sketch of the mythological park, Marjane takes it to the municipalities in order to proffer it to the mayor. In the first two times, she is denied an appointment with the mayor because of her coverings. However, on the third try, she gets the permission to visit the mayor. But she turns to be dismayed and disillusioned when the mayor tells her that: "I am going to be frank with you. The government couldn't care less about mythology. What they want are religious symbols. Your project is certainly interesting, but it is unachievable."⁹¹ In this case, 'religion' foils her sketch of a period of non-stop toil and troubles. Taji also loathes the local religion enormously. Once when Marji wants to come up with a wild pretext so as to justify her ditching school, she asserts that she has had a 'religion' class.⁹² Satrapi even tries to trivialize *namaz*, the act of saying prayers. We observe little Marji in the ring of friends, when one of them, quite proudly, says that he prays five times a day. Marjane retorts: "me? Ten or eleven times...sometimes twelve."⁹³ In this way, she is portraying *namaz* as a religious symbol which has split up from its initial meaning and value and is used just for bragging about and hypocrisy.

CONCLUDING REMARKS ON AN ORIENTALIZED ORIENTAL: PERSEPOLIS, ORIENTAL OR NOT

Satrapi does not notice anything of value in the 'repressive' sphere of an Islamic Iran. She takes each and every aspect of indigenous Iranian culture to be 'backward', qualified for being unloaded onto the trash of history. Seemingly a *collective amnesia* and a *selective memory* have pooled resources in her process of memoir writing. She avails herself of such a collective amnesia and strives to brush off the precious values and cultural products of an Islamic Revolution from the face of history. Satrapi's greedy longing for assimilating into Western culture spells out a defaming and vilifying attitude towards local Iranian history and culture. However, we must not neglect the fact that memoirs just present subjective discursive mappings of the world. Gore Vidal, in his own memoir *Palimpsest*, asserts that memoirs are written from the way one remembers one's own life, and not what is in reality out there recorded. Satrapi applies her own life narrative to scrutinize and engender new forms of Islamic identity, to strive for 'social justice' and a

91. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 2*, p.177.

92. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.113.

93. Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis 1*, p.75.

democratic layout of the society. So as to fulfill such a task, the Western public discourse might come indispensable to her. Peter Novick, considering such a discourse, asserts that: “public discourse doesn’t just shape private discourse, it is its catalyst; it sends out the message ‘This is something you should be talking about’.”⁹⁴ American imperialism acts out as a ‘catalyst’. It simply presents the memoirists with a message, a quite dictatorial one: you must articulate what ‘we’ crave for. So as to accomplish this, the collective amnesia and selective memory join forces to let Satrapi submit to the passions of imperialism. An orderly deprivation of a collective memory paves the way for her to paint an imposed and holy war, for example, as a black scene of carnage which was undertaken for nothing. It strikes us as if, in Francis Fukuyama’s terms, we are hitting ‘the end of history’. It seems as if no one has ever recorded the heroism that Iranians manifested during the imposed war; or, as if no one has chronicled the ultimate sacrifices the young soldiers, about whom Satrapi speaks copiously, made in the arena of an unequal war. Satrapi is under the impression that no one has ever heard or recorded anything about Hossein Fahmide, Behnam Mohammadi Rad and many other young soldiers who made the backdrop of war charged with the accounts of heroism and sacrifice. Her strategic location, in Said’s terminology, lays in the bizarre accounts she relates considering an Islamic Iran.

The Iran she is portraying is far from real Iran as a vast nation of more than seventy million people. Considering all the things passed about Satrapi’s works in the preceding sections, it is perfectly bizarre for Satrapi to claim her *Perspolis* is not anti-Iranian. To sum up all others, Satrapi is in reality an Orientalized Oriental who is defined by Soguk as:

“one who physically resides in the ‘East’, and sometimes in the West, yet spiritually feeds on the West. S/he announces her/himself to be ‘post-Oriental’, or ‘postcolonial’, yet is a practicing member of ‘orientalising’ praxis in its daily operations in the interpenetrating realms of art, aesthetics, folklore, media, education, and so on. S/he is the non-Western subject who makes her/himself largely in the image of the West, its experiences, designs, and its expectations . . . for her/him the West is always more intelligible and fulfilling, and thus more attractive than East.”⁹⁵

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⁹⁴ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), p.197.

⁹⁵ Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism*, pp.85-86.

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