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Reading Transnationalism as a Repertoire of Polyrhythmic Identities in Diasporic Iranian Women

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ABSTRACT:

"Sometimes we feel we straddle between two cultures; at other times that we fall between two stools." This statement by Salman Rushdie verily portrays the hyphenated Iranian identities that seem to constantly vacillate between the disjunctive and conjunctive continuities. By addressing the ambiguous status of Firoozeh Dumas in *Funny in Farsi* (2003), and Azadeh Moaveni in *Lipstick Jihad* (2005) and *Honeymoon in Tehran* (2013), my argument centers on how the notion of identity is inseparably linked to the authors' transnational existence and historical exigencies, which takes place in the form of a constant dialogue between the non-linear and disconnected spacio-temporality. I argue that these memoirs represent "contingent individualism", a term Monica Chiu uses to define the contest between an individual's yearnings for national belonging and a bitter critique of the country of origin. While Iran was tossing back and

forth between two differing ways of temporal experience and historical development—Iranian Revolution, and thereafter, Islamic Fundamentalism on one side, and progressivism and a corresponding leap into the modernity on the other, both Dumas and Moaveni were struggling to synchronize their internal beats with an ever-changing environment. Thus, a product of the polyrhythmic structure of the socio-political change, their development remains eternally contradictory. What could be found between these interstitial space—of diaspora and metropole, exclusion and inclusion, and between the metaphors of space and belonging—is a conspicuous site of resistance.

KEYWORDS:

Iranian diaspora, memoirs, female writers, transnational identity, home, belongingness

Edward Said in his *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983) states:

> My position is that texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted. (4)

The mentioned statement by Said purports how modern literary theories should not focus on exclusion of reality from the text with its emphasis on mere "textuality", but instead, literature should be conceived as worldly, thereby, connecting texts with "the

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existential actualities of human life" (5). This approach of Said inevitable results in connecting literature with "the circumstances, the events, the physical senses" (4) along with the socio-cultural environment wherein the author/writer in positioned. While explaining the workings of the cultural system which is hierarchical in nature, he resorts to the terms "filiation" and "affiliation". According to Said, while filiation is the hierarchical way of group formation on the basis of biological descent, affiliation indicates a social way groups are formed whereby their allegiances are not passed on by biological origins or inheritance but because of ideological relationships. This entails how the cultural systems in a modern society are, therefore, no longer established on biological lineage but through "horizontal affiliation" (18).

Thus, Said's argument on the formation of social identities, on the basis of affiliative relationships, along with its focus on new hierarchies and affirmations of cultural differences form the basis of my argument. In this paper, drawing upon the social and cultural transformations of the exilic Iranian-Americans, my argument centers on how distance and displacement from one's native land, and a sense of dilemma at having a dual socio-cultural existence often seem to provide itself as an additive factor to the already troubled selves of the diasporic individuals. From the standpoint of exilic studies, this sort of split cultural identity could be damaging to an individual's sense of his/her sustained identity. However, it is thorough the process of becoming a subject speaking for its own, and by being witness to its present as well as its historical exigencies, and thereby, through the means of crafting their life-narratives,

these diasporic writers fix their damaged psyches and their disillusioned selves. Thus, the objective of this research paper is to analyze how Firoozeh Dumas in *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America*[1] (2003), and Azadeh Moaveni in *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran*[2] (2005) and *Honeymoon in Tehran: Two Years of Love and Danger in Iran*[3] (2013), is constantly defined by non-linearity and discontinuities and a sense of "unhomliness" which has, in turn altered, to state it in Boehmer's words, the "impulse of narrative of reconstructed identity". This has, thereby, become a motif in their self-expressions, as an approach to "transform their experience of cultural schizophrenia into a restorative dream of home [. . .] or a consolatory lyric combining diverse melodies" (113) while constructing their exclusive spaces of transcultural belonging.

While we analyze the post-Revolutionary Iran in its fourth decade, and the subsequent alternations that have come about with the historic situation brought to the nation, it becomes essential to identify those Iranians who migrated to the West, essentially giving rise to what we today call as "Iranian Diaspora". It is also significant to consider how this term "diaspora" entails the critical questions regarding the status

[1] The title *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America* shall henceforth be referred as *Funny in Farsi* or *F in F* unless stated otherwise.

[2] The title *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran* shall henceforth be stated as *Lipstick Jihad* or *LJ* unless stated otherwise.

[3] The title *Honeymoon in Tehran: Two Years of Love and Danger in Iran* shall henceforth be stated as *Honeymoon in Tehran* or *HT* unless stated otherwise.

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of whether or not it is interchangeable with exiles. Stéphane Dufoix's analyses diaspora as:

> Relieved of its heavy burden of misery, persecution, and punishment, the word nicely fits the changes in the relationship to distance, in view of the quasi disappearance of time in its relationship to space [. . .] Whether "diaspora" is a common word, a scientifically constructed concept, or a rallying cry that gives meaning to a collective reality, it is highly contemporary. Denying this would be pointless. It is more important to try to understand what this updating of an ancient term involves. (106)

Dufoix's etymological concerns regarding the term "diaspora" brings forth the limitations as well as illusions of the deployment of the concept. Given this, one could recognize how the immigrant Iranians, now the second and third-generation Iranians in West reflects diverse perspectives and varied socio-cultural customs in the global context.

Unlike their male counterparts, these female diasporic Iranians could be termed as being doubly estranged, considering how they are not merely invisible and unseen in the Iran of the Islamic Regime, in the post 1979 Revolution, but also, they are associated with a notion of belongingness to the West which aggravates their sense of being Iranian in the context of the post- Revolutionary homeland. Consequently, self-referential writings serve as an outlet for the chaotic emotions and experiences that transpired as a result of being raised in the host land, away from the sense of what is typically defined as "home" and "homeland" in stark contrast to the ones that never

had to leave Iran. The mentioned diasporic life-narratives of Dumas and Moaveni, by revolving around the metaphors of space and belongingness, however, represent "contingent individualism" (Monica Chiu 99). Chiu uses this term to delineate a visual and narrative contest between an individual's yearnings for national belonging and a bitter critique of the country of origin. The authors, Dumas and Moaveni, here seem to emulate this fraught relationship by the means of a narrative choice that entails both—resistance as well as dependence upon their sense of nationality for reaffirmation of their identity.

Moreover, these diasporic Iranian women also sought the genre of memoir-writing as a means of expression that was no more regarded as a male-dominated sphere. By re-writing, and in turn, re-defining the social and the political scenario of Iran from a perspective centering on women, these authors attempted not merely at re-construction of the history but also at embarking on their privileges of this new literary mode for self-expression. Thomas Larson, in this regard, states how "[d]espite the occasional female author, autobiography [was] a male genre" (12). It is this choice of the genre that results in crystallization of the female writers' resistance of the domineering regime of Islamic Fundamentalism. Contingent on this argument is the symbolic assertion of their suppressed selves, and thereby, their gallant declaration of breaking down the constricting walls meant to strictly guard the private lives from the public sphere—an act strictly forbidden by the Islamic theocracy that discourages any form of women's self-expression to the outside world. Furthermore, writing in the West and publishing it in the Western countries without any kind of self-censorship is definitely a

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hard stroke against the Fundamentalists of the Islamic regime that equates everything Western with cultural impurity and social decadence. Dumas and Moaveni, in this vein, "have embraced this genre to signal a kind of agency that heretofore was off-limit to them and perhaps to reflect the new realities of negotiating identity in a non-Iranian context" (Karim xix). Moreover, both Dumas' and Moaveni's act of writing could be seen as a symbolic act of representation of the disempowered native Iranian who were disallowed self-revelation of any form and thereby, not approved to publish their memoir since the Iranian state exercises extreme censorship. The virtue of being hyphenated, then, allows them the liberty as well as the space of a critical insider that enable these writers to scrutinize the Iranian political context without being threatened with any severe restriction. In contrast, when asked in an interview regarding availability of her memoir in Persian language, Dumas replies that censor's office has rejected the Persian translation of her memoir, and has, in fact, returned back her copy asking the author to remove an entire chapter entitled "The Ham Amendment" from the book. Dumas further states, "I consider that chapter the soul of the book, so having to remove it was painful. That's life under an Islamic theocracy" (2008, 203). Striking on a similar chord, Moaveni, reflection on the harsh censorship in terms of the state-sanctioned gender rules and laws states that:

> After the 1979 revolution, the authorities barred women from playing polo in public, but eased the ban in 2005 . . . Female players were still barred from competing against men, and women had to wear manteaus and

> headscarves on the field. I had ridden horses in Iran in 2003, overheating while wearing a veil under a helmet. But I imagined that in their excitement at finally being able to compete publicly, the women's team did not dwell on such discomforts. (*HT* 219)

Thus, writing ostensibly proved therapeutic, which could be traced in terms of Miriam Fuchs' understanding for the need of writing the narrative of one's "self-representation", as reflected in *The Text is Myself* (2004). She states this "self-representation" as a safe re-experience of the traumatic events: "[T]hese women were embroiled in or else deeply affected by events beyond their ability to readily cope. Each had reached a life juncture at which self-representation became imperative" (5). In other words, the genre of self-narratives leads to both, an outward as well as an outward journey, which facilitated them to re-visit their past memories through the means of writing about them, while allowing them a kind of introspective self-analysis. In this vein, Isadora Duncan in her autobiography *My Life* (1927), describing this "inward journey", states "div[ing] down within ourselves and bring[ing] up thought as the diver brings up pearls—precious pearls from the closed oysters of silence in the depths of our subconscious" (qtd. in Baer 5).

Similarly, narration about their lives expedites these Iranian-Americans to uncover their selves suppressed by the newly informed lives—an outcome of their diasporic bearings culminated as a result of their separation from Iran. In this regard, Larson in *The Memoir and the Memoirist* (2007) states how losing of the "core selves", or

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what could be described as "the undiscovered self" in the words of Carl Jung, results in disequilibrium since it is "the internal quality which our civilization and traditions collectively suppress, and is always alive and forming within us" (116). Thus, life-writing while it enables negotiation with contesting selves—between the spiritual and the physical journeys—it also empowers them with reconciliation and attainment of a balanced being. Fuchs, in this regard, explains how "regaining authority, finding a voice and restoring emotional equilibrium" is an assured aid when it comes to life-writings (23).

Thus, while the act of memoir-writing is a process of delineating their disintegrated selves into a coherent identity, yet it could be inevitably noticed how these narratives end up vacillating between concerted and disconcerted tendencies, thereby, bringing a momentous tension in their mundane flow of reality. Dumas in *Funny in Farsi* refers to her continual challenging efforts at recreating Nowruz in America while stating Christmas as a boring holiday (105), and simultaneously, praising the "exotic American landscape" (8). Moaveni in *Lipstick Jihad* notes how "there was Azadeh at school, who managed to look and sound like the other kids, baring occasional lunchbox oddity; and there was Azadeh at home, who lived in a separate world, with its own special language and rituals" (19). Thus, both these authors attempt to reconcile their fragmentary self-consciousness by constantly delineating to their "Iranian-ness" through nostalgic Iranian memories and through the apparent freedom that America has given at their disposal, and thorough their constant

strives between the equal halves of their Iranian and American selves. In *Lipstick Jihad*, Moaveni describes *Agha Joon*, her grandfather who, in a continual battle to maintain his Iranian sensibilities, refused to learn English and instead, continued reading Persian poetry almost all throughout the three decades of his life in America (*LJ* 15). Similarly Moaveni's grandmother would endlessly cook Persian food in the American household in a manner that the author states as typical of immigrants, with the motive to "exert[…] some control over her transplanted life through purity of the palate" (*LJ* 17).

In a manner identical to all the exiles, the Iranian-American identity, as reflected by Dumas and Moaveni, are encountered to have experience the utter confusion and dilemma of a dual-existence, or rather, a split identity that Marjane Satrapi in *Persepolis* (2004) terms as "schizophrenic" selves (151). Moaveni in her memoir emphasizes on how *Maman*, her mother, would furiously attempt to integrate both worlds, the American and the Iran, for her (*LJ* 19). Moaveni states how "[s]he didn't want to sacrifice anything: neither her Iranian values, nor her American independence. She refused to abdicate one side for the other, not even for a time, and it made our life together harrowing and unruly" (19).

However, being from a Middle-Eastern country, owing to its history of the 1979 Islamic Revolution[4], and the subsequent imposition of the gender discriminatory laws

[4] The Iranian Revolution, more commonly called the Islamic Revolution of 1979 was one of the huge mass movements centering on the overthrow of the autocratic Pahlavi dynasty, and its subsequent reinstatement of the theocratic Grand Ayatollan Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic Revolution. However, with the establishment of the Islamic regime, there were overt attempts at enforcing gendered laws on the Iranian state, with compulsory enforcement of *hijab* or veil for women. For more details on the political climate surrounding the

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and state imposed *hijab*[5] on women, and more recently, the American Hostage Crisis in Iran in 1981[6], and later, the American declaration of Iran as a part of their "War on Terror" or the "Global War on Terrorism"[7] on September 2004, further deepened the identity crisis and reinforced the already existent polarities, thereby, obligating them to constantly define and re-define themselves vis-à-vis the host culture.

"Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel we straddle between two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools," states Rushdie in

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Islamic Revolution in Iran, see Dariush Zahedi, *The Iranian Revolution Now and Then: Indicators of Regime Instability* (2000) and Brenden January, *Pivotal Movements in History: the Iranian Revolution* (2008).

[5] *Hijab* is usually referred to the head-coverings traditionally donned by Muslim women, a dress code considered to be the modest kind of Islamic code of dressing with a cultural prominence and a legal compulsion in many countries, with Iran (more specifically since the 1979 Iranian Revolution) being one of them. Since the 1979 Revolution, the Islamic Regime has made it mandatory for women to don *hijab*, and in turn, converting religious symbols into visual figures of cultural emblem or a kind of cultural purifier whose onus has been made to rest on the government's portrayal of what they assume to be an ideal Muslim women. For further details see Hamideh Sedghi, *Women and Politics in Iran: Veiling, Unveiling and Reveiling* (2007).

[6] The Iranian Hostage Crisis was an episodic event that marred the political and diplomatic relations between Iran and United States. In 4th November, 1979, fifty-two diplomats and citizens from America were held as hostages for more than a year. This event led to an ultimate deadlock between the two countries, consequently leading the then American president Jimmy Carter to severe all the ties with Iran. This event is regarded as one of the longest witness of hostage crisis in the history ever recorded. For further information of the 1979 Hostage Crisis in Iran, see David Farber, *Taken Hostage: The Iranian Hostage Crisis and America's First Encounter with Radical Islam* (2005).

[7] The "War on Terror" or what is often referred to as the "Global War on Terrorism" refers to a kind of metaphorical war initiated as a part of the international military campaign post-9/11 Attack in the United States. The then American President, George Washington Bush, in the year 2001, was the first to use the term "War on Terror", and both Western media along with Bush administrator have been appropriating the term ever since in order to advance their global military, and political and legal struggle against the regimes and governments accused of supporting terrorist organizations, with Iran as one of them. "Since 1979, Iran has been responsible for countless terrorist plots, directly through regime agents or indirectly through proxies like Hamas and Hezbollah" states the Clarion project (prepared by Clarion Project National Security Analyst, Ryan Mauro). For further details, see Clarion Project, Iranian Support for Terrorism < https://clarionproject.org/>.The term "War on Terror" was initially used with a specific focus on the Islamic counties supporting terrorist organizations, however Barack Obama in 2013 has discontinued any such perusal of "War on Terror".

Imaginary Homelands (1991, 15). Rushdie's statement verily defines the negotiations of the past and present conceptualized through metaphorical space that these diasporic subjects seem to engage with. The memoirs of Dumas and Moaveni reveal the intricacies in their conceptions of what they perceive to be "home", which act as a foil to their transcultural experiences as modern exilic individuals. Thus, the mentioned narratives, while on one hand, reveal their capricious identity transformation; on the other hand, it proffer a recognition of how the Iranian diasporic individuals comprehend such changes, thereby, defying notions of identity and cultures as marked by fixed or continual spaces of change. Space could be described as both: as a concrete point of location–of nation, region, neighbourhood and so on, as well as an abstract notion of one's sense of belongingness and identity. The author/subjects here express a sense of both connectedness as well as a racist and violent interment that often ostracized them. Mary Douglas in her essay "The Idea of Home" expatiates on "tyranny of home" by referring to Barbara Pym's *Less Than Angels* wherein home is often defines in dualities—both in terms of "affectionate images of home as a pattern of regular doings" as well as "images [that] are frankly hostile". Douglas further states how "[t]he very regularity of home's processes is both inexorable and absurd. How does it go on being what it is? And what it is?" (287).

> Home is neither a space, but it is not necessary a fixed space. It does not need bricks and mortar, it can be a wagon, a caravan, a boat, a tent. It need not be a large space, but space there must be, for home starts by bringing

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> some space under control. Having shelter is not having a home, nor is having a house, nor is home the same as household. For a home neither the space nor its appurtenances have to be fixed, but there has to be something regular about the appearance and reappearance of its furnitures. (289)

Dumas' memoir chronicles her diasporic existence in the Southern California, the trials and tribulations, and the cultural shock she had to encounter with having no firsthand information of the country beyond the glowing memories of her father's Fulbright days in Texas, and the later economic depravations they had to suffer because of the American Hostage Crisis in Iran. In fact, Dumas' humorous explanation of her family structure and her home could be traced back to Douglas' idea where she states that "[t]he mixture of nostalgia and resistance explains why the topic [idea of home] is often treated as humorous" (287). On the other hand, Moaveni's *Lipstick Jihad* and *Honeymoon in Tehran* centers on her tangled identity amidst her standoff between the two cultures—as an Iranian in America and later as an American on Iran. These memoirs are, therefore, an explanation of a lived history, of a exilic national belonging and their conscious endeavors at attempting to bridge the political and ideological gaps between the Western stereotypes regarding Iran and the lived reality, that require constant reconfigurations of space.

Persis Karim in her anthology on multifaceted writings—poetic and prose as well as fictional and non-fictional works by women whose lives have been delineated

by Iran's recent politically turbulent history and their subsequent diasporic existence, immigration and exile—explains the experiences of the Iranians now settled in Europe and America, in the aftermath of 1979 Revolution or during just about the time the Revolution was turning awful (xii). She notes how these diasporic writings in her anthology also include narratives by "young Iranians who were born and raised in the United Stated or born and raised in Iran, but studies in the United States" (xiii). These young writers, states Karim, often seem disoriented when asked about their land of origin. However, the most ambiguous and yet crucial answer is the way they define themselves: "neither Iranian nor American" (xxiii). They, in fact, perceive themselves as coming "from Iran, but not Iranians" or "born and raised in the United States" but not necessarily being American in their sensibilities (xxiii). This is indicative of a seeming possibility of how these diasporic young Iranians, and at times, these second generation Iranians, do not really consider themselves as belonging to Iran, considering their affinities lie with the Pahlavi Shah of pre-Revolutionary Iran that does not prevails anymore, and they cannot rest their affinity to the Islamic Republic which resulted in banishment of Shah, imposition of strict gender codes and, thereby resulted in their traumatic exiles and displacements from their host country. Simultaneously, while they suffer from inexplicable trauma of separation of Iran, yet they are not able to consider themselves as American or European either considering the stigmatization of terrorism—an idea attached to Iran and being from Iran. Thus, their trauma of exile is reinforced by their subsequent belongingness to nowhere. At times, this also triggered in these Iranians an utmost sense of falsified association with the host country and

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simultaneous indifference to the country of origin. For instance, Moaveni in *Lipstick Jihad* notes, "[t]o be Iranian in the United States during the 1980s meant living perpetually in the shadow of hostage crisis. Many Iranians dealt with this by becoming the perfect immigration: successful, assimilated, with flawless, relaxed American English and cheerfully pro-American political sentiments" (8). Stating these acts as "self-conscious public theatre", Moaveni further sates how "[o]ften when Iranians encountered each other in public, they pretended not to recognize each other as fellow Iranians, speaking English to one another in identical accents" (*LJ* 11).

This brings to the fore how any approach in analyzing these diasporic narratives as a teleological process and as a gradual journey towards the collective as well as individual destiny, is obligated to be ineffective, since these writings are defined by the contradictory dynamics, of the constant flashbacks, and the corporeal presents of the author. Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of spatiotemporal form which he describes through the notion of "chronotopes" here is quite significant in explaining the classical *Bildungsroman* that these diasporic authors defy. Bakhtin explains how "man's individual emergence" in the narratives of development "is inseparably linked to historical emergence", and that, this emergence of the individual takes place in the pattern of a dialogue between linear as well as cyclical temporalities (23). In his examination of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprentice Years* (1796) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wherein he introduced the notion of *Bildungsroman* tradition, Bakhtin observes how Goethe's writing was based on the "background of the world's buttresses begins to

pulsate . . . and this pulsation determines the more superficial movement and alteration of human destinies and human outlooks" (30).

For Bakhtin, Goethe's ingenuity prevails on his understanding of, and his competence to intercede between the cyclical time of his experience and the agrarian background of the pre-modern society into which he was born, and the necessarily progressive and modern "historical time" that dominated the last thirty years of the eighteenth century. The Bakhtinian notion of approaching *Buildungsroman* here is significant since it enables the understanding of the tension between the progression and the discontinuities in the narratives of Dumas and Moaveni while creating this spacio-temporal form as a technique, and not a digression, in portrayal of their identity. Like Dumas and Moaveni, even Iran was squirming back and forth between the two differing ways of temporal experience and historical development—Iranian Revolution and thereafter, Islamic Fundamentalism on one side, and progressivism and a corresponding leap into the modernity on the other. The problem of Iranian Revolution, the ravages of the Iran-Iraq war, the subsequent and economic breakdown and later American Hostage Crisis in Iran, not just has an immense impact on the natives but equally the Iranians in the diaspora. Dumas centering on the distressed plight of the Iranian American states:

> Overnight, Iranians living in America became, to say the least, very unpopular. For some reasons, many Americans began to think that all Iranians, despite outward appearances to the contrary, could at any given

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> moment get angry and take prisoners. People always asked us what we thought of the hostage situation. "It's awful," we always said. This reply was generally met with surprise. We were asked our opinions on the hostages so often that I started reminding people that they weren't in our garage. (39)

"Whether as a haven of exotic sensuality or strong hold of fanatic religiosity, Iran has, since ancient times, inflamed the popular (western) imagination" observes Lila Azam Zangenah. She notes how the Iranians before the Iranian Revolution of 1979 were seen as exotic and alluring Orientals, and as "the most cheerful people in the world", the circumstances in the post-Revolutionary scenario, more specifically after the hostage crisis, has altered the perception of East drastically violent manner (xi). As Dumas further mentions, the situation had aggravated so much so that her mother had to start falsely asserting herself to be from Russia or Turkey, than being Iranian (*F in F* 40). Although migration from the turbulent homeland seemed like a viable option, and as a means of countering the hegemonic state practices of Iran, and thereby, replenishing oneself, yet those authors who came to America—"a nation where freedom reigns" (*F in F* 75)—at times found themselves bereft of any agency.

The experiences of these women as being hyphenated identities in the multicultural contexts, however, also directs towards the painful irreconcilable halves of their lives wherein their sense of belongingness caters to two of the strikingly opposing cultures. Moreover, writing about this schizophrenic personal life while being

an insider to both the culture, puts forth the critical situation wherein the requirement to chose one of the two becomes problematic. For instance, Moaveni's husband, referring to his sister's identity in a continual strife between European and Iranian life styles, states:

> When she travels, all she thinks about is filling her suitcase with the right kind of shampoo cereal, child medicine She send her son to the German school because the Iranian ones are terrible . . . When she runs out of the German muesli, he refuses to eat Iranian cereal. . . If you're going to live in Iran, you need to live as everyone else does. The same cereal, the same schools, the same vaccines. You can't live like an alien in your own society. (*HT* 268)

Nonetheless, as evident from Dumas and Moaveni's narratives, the act of writing down, indeed, aids is integrating the fragmented lives into coherent whole while appreciating the plurality provided to them by both—their home as well as host countries.

Thus, these diasporic memoirs not only strengthen the reworking of the conventional genre of life-writings, but also appropriate a form traditionally relegated to the Universalist- Western subjectivity, more often to male. Thus, in this vein, Dumas and Moaveni's memoirs not just expresses the growth and development of the non-Western, Muslim, female Iranian subject, but also, alters and modifies the terrain of life-narrative as a mode encompassing the socio-cultural sphere through which the individual self develops. Furthermore, the paper delves into the literary and socio-

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cultural transformations embarked by these diasporic women within the historical framework of the pre and the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution. These life-writings are therefore symbolic commencement of the entrance of women into the public sphere, from *andruni* to *biruni*[8]—an arena formerly relegated to their male counterparts in the Iranian tradition. Moreover, these kinds of life-writings could be termed as a re-writing of the Revolution, which in turn, is reflective of how history is now re-recorded while accentuating this newly-founded autonomous identity wherein women are now both socially and politically active and aware of their roles as citizens of the metropole. Not only does Dumas and Moaveni use the genre to trace their own consciousness, but also constantly juxtaposes it against the compelling political and historical events in their home as well as their host countries. The constant yearning for the Iranian homeland as well as American ideals of freedom is what results in a congenial dialectical image of the authors. The historical circumstances generating the tension between the emergent and the cyclical temporalities becomes the interstitial space, which gets transformed into the site of resistance for these authors.

[8] The distinction between *andruni* and *biruni* in itself is indicative of a complete estrangement of the interiors and the exteriors of the house wherein *andruni* or the interior space is exclusively reserved for the females while putting strict restrictions for women to go outside. On the other hand, *biruni* comprises much of the exterior place and is essentially meant for the reception of guest, mostly men. For further details on the architectural construct of *andruni* and *biruni*, see Nazgol Behdadfar et al, "Reading a Home: An Application of Rapoport's Viewpoint in Iranian Architectural Studies," 2014.

This juxtaposition symbolically assumed how women were to be constricted within the domain of the domestic while men were supposed to deal with the outside world.

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