Transnational Migration and Identity Construction: A Comparative Case Study of Female Iranian Migrants Marjane Satrapi and Parsua Bashi's Graphic Memoirs

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to investigate the process of identity construction of middle-class female Iranian migrants in the contexts of both the home and the host societies. For this purpose, two graphic memoirs titled *Persepolis* and *Nylon Road*, written respectively by Marjane Satrapi and Parsua Bashi, two female Iranian Migrants to Europe, were chosen. Through a close reading of these texts which includes both visual and verbal analysis, this study attempts to demonstrate how the two authors and their protagonists (re)negotiate their identity in different contexts.

The analytical chapters are focused on the situation in the sending and in the receiving societies, analyzing the dominant strategies for constructing group identities both in each respective country through obligatory veiling and reformation of family law, and through racism and ethnicization. As a result it is suggested in the thesis that the two autobiographers face specific imposed identities in both contexts, which is also reflected in their work and the way they represent their main characters. In both cases the bi-directional situation of transnational migration makes female migrants' identities continuously shaped and (re)constructed in relation to both cultures. Thus a hybrid identity is formed which allows for more complex understanding of both home and host cultures. Such a migrant is not choosing between the two, but attempts to preserve access to the preferred values of both cultures, as well as a critical perspective on repressive social practices of both societies.

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In the name of my mother

And the memory of my father

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Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore how educated non-religious middle-class female Iranian migrants (re)negotiate their identity both in the home and the host societies, both within their social class and in broader community. In terms of their home country, I want to see if and how the self-perception of women is framed by the dominant gender order imposed on them by post-revolutionary Islamic regime, and how they negotiate their individual positions; and in terms of the host society, I intend to investigate if and how the situation of migration and the xenophobic environment impacts the process of their identity (re)negotiation.

For this purpose, I will focus on two graphic memoires titled *Persepolis* (2004) and *Nylon Road* (2006) respectively written by Marjane Satrapi and Parsua Bashi, who have migrated from Iran to Europe. Satrapi left Iran for Vienna, when she was a teenager in 1984, and Bashi migrated to Zurich in her late thirties in 2004. Satrapi's black and white graphic autobiography is written in a chronological order and it is a narrative of coming of age, starting from her childhood in the context of early post-revolutionary Iran. Unlike that, Bashi's colored graphic self-narrative starts from her arrival to Zurich when she is a grown up, and throughout the book she is visited by her other "selves" from different times, when she was of different ages; and these characters talk to her about her experiences in those times.

I found comparison of these two graphic autobiographies very telling in addressing my research question, since the two migrant autobiographers have depicted their "self" narrative in the situation of the home and the host societies "cross-discursively" (Chute, 2010, p. 5) using both images and words. There are points to deduce from the visual-verbal representations that in my belief could not be found in autobiographies which have used words only. Regarding the fact that my topic is related to the new gender order imposed by the new Islamic regime on female body, and how it is

controlled through veiling, graphic narrative would help to illustrate more palpably the embodied experience of the protagonists both in the public and the private spheres. The visual feature of the graphic autobiographies also helps in analyzing the process of "otherism" in the host society.

To answer the questions posed in the argument of this study, I plan to make a close reading of the selected autobiographies. In this analysis, I will draw upon the combination of textual and visual material in the narratives to support the argument. In addition, where relevant, for the purpose of comparative analysis, I intend to incorporate my own narrative in the analysis of the two autobiographies. As an additional example of female middle-class Iranian migrant from a later generation, my experience might shed some light on some aspects of the argument that I am building in this study.

My approach to identity, which is inspired by Nira Yuval-Davis (2010), is a combination of "dialogical" and "performative identity". I consider the process of identity construction as an ever continuing process in relation to space and time (Hall, 1992). Although I acknowledge that everyone is constantly negotiating their identity in everyday life, this process of identity construction is more dramatic in the migratory life. However, in this thesis my working hypothesis is that identity (re)negotiation for female Iranian migrants is characterized by specific dynamics created by two sets of imposed identities, gendered one at home and racialized one abroad. On the one hand, Iranian migrants have experienced the turmoil of a revolution, the establishment of a new system of governance forcing a gender identity upon them, and a war in the home society; on the other hand, similar to other migrants, they are also faced with another imposed identity going through the process of "xeno-otherism" (Kamali, 2011) in the host society.

The thesis is divided into three main chapters. In the first chapter, in reviewing the related literature, the terminology borrowed from different disciplines to address the topic of this thesis is introduced. In addition, this chapter also presents the method used for conducting this study.

The second chapter is focused on the home country beginning with a historical and political overview of the time when the narratives happen, moving to the autobiographers' familial and educational background and ending with their experience of growing up at the wake of a revolution and under the new Islamic regime and its gender order and laws. The third chapter addresses the situation of migratory life and is mostly focused on the host society, mentioning the identity (re)construction in a xenophobic European context and exploring the process of "otherism" and marginalization.

Overall, this thesis attempts to depict the hybrid identity shaped by the in-between position of migratory life (Bhabha, 2004) of educated non-religious female Iranian migrants based on the two graphic autobiographies.

Chapter 1:

Narrating Migration and Identity

The first four sections of this chapter are dedicated to a brief literature review on the subjects that this thesis will address. Since the topic of this thesis requires interdisciplinary approach, it has to borrow from a diverse body of literature from different disciplines to build a proper framework for its intended analysis. Therefore, the terminology that will be used throughout the analysis will be explained briefly under each sub-title.

To emphasize the need for a new conceptual vocabulary in order to produce new forms of knowledge Klein (2010) argues for a transgressive mode of knowledge production, meaning "pushing boundaries with critical thought in order to foster new theoretical paradigms" (p. 25). In this context, this thesis is also dealing with interdisciplinarity in the sense that it creates a "cooperative framework" by crossing the boundaries of, and borrowing from, distinctive bodies of literature from different disciplines: migration studies with a transnational view; literary criticism; the feminist perspective on autobiography and personal criticism; identity in cultural studies, sociology and literature (narratives); and lastly history, to know the historical context that these comic novels were produced in, paying special attention to the political context. In addition, of course, to study a comic book in a scholarly manner, analyzing visual self-representations through graphic is also necessary.

In the intersectional approach of this thesis gender is regarded as one of the several axes of inequality. Intersectionality, according to Davis (2008), "refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (p. 68). In analyzing *Persepolis* and *Nylon Road*, thus, this research will pay attention to the interplay of gender,

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nationality, religion, ethnicity and age in different times and contexts displayed in these two autobiographies. For example, the protagonists' experience in Iran, the home society, is mostly based on the interaction of their gender -female- and the religious fundamentalist state; while the intersectionality in the situation of migration is mostly associated with "ethnicity" and "race" in a xenophobic context. In all these experiences, age has a crucial role.

In the last section of this chapter, I will discuss the method applied to build the analysis.

Transnational Migration

It is more than half a century that migration studies have attracted special attention in Western countries. There has been an intense focus on migration and its specificity and this phenomenon has been increasingly regarded from a transnational perspective over the last two decades. According to Benmayor and Skotnes (2005), transnationalism defines migration as a "bi-directional phenomenon". They assert that migrants "actively maintain transnational circuits of kinship, economy, and culture" (p. viii), even though they are no longer living in their native country. In other words, instead of assuming migration as emigration from the home country, and immigration to the host country and expecting total assimilation of the immigrant in the culture of the host society as the only desirable result –which was the assumption in international migration studies until 1990s-, transnationalism highlights the importance of cultural encounters and of how both parties -home and host societies- mutually construct the situation of migration and migrants' identity. To study migration there are several key concepts which need to be addressed.

Racism is one of the important notions in migration studies. Racism ranges from the discrimination associated with skin color and eugenics to degradation based on ethnicity and culture (Lucassen, 2005). In contemporary Europe racism mostly differs from the kind of racism which is related to skin color and colonial hierarchical relations. The new version of racism is often more subtle,

focusing on "cultural differences" and "migrants lack of competence" (Denalty, Wodak, & Jones, 2011), which allegedly prevents them from integration. According to Denalty et al. (2011):

> The new racism exploits established xenophobic frames (fear of the other), ethnocentrism, masculinities and 'ordinary' prejudices in subtle ways and often, too, in ways that are unconscious and routinized. For this reasons the new racism has been termed 'xeno-racism', a mixure of racism and xenophobia. While being racist is substance, it is xenophobic in form: its outward defensive mode of expression disguises a stronger opposition to migrants and the continuation of racism in a new disguise and widened to exclude different groups of people. (p. 2)

According to these authors the liberal claim to be tolerant toward multiculturalism is a disguise for racism. What migrants are really looking for is recognition and acceptance, not mere tolerance. To these scholars the main concern is the discourses of exclusion which reproduces racism in everyday life. For Gabaccia "difference starts by examining the experiences of migratory women" (as cited in Bhavanani, 2001, p. 2), but she acknowledges that even the mere act of distinguishing a group of people from 'the rest' of society for the sake of a scholarly argument might reproduce the notion of 'race'. In this thesis, while providing evidence for the racist confrontations female migrant protagonists experience in the host society, I will try to be careful to clarify that there is no such thing as 'race' other than a social construction.

Another central notion in migration is that of the "home". According to Friedman-Kasaba (1996), in the context of migration, "home" no longer has a single specific meaning; rather, migrants try to associate meaning to home by going back and forth between the connotations of this concept, home, in the present time and the past (p. 31). Kim (2011) mentions that "displaced from their homeland, diasporic subjects attempt to re-create their own imaginative or mythical space of home and

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connectivity by developing transnational communications network… while negotiating cultural difference and identity between home and host countries" (p. 9).

In the last two decades, the concept of gender gained significance in migration studies through feminist researchers. Oishi (2005) asserts that "migration is no longer a solely male phenomenon" (p. 2) like it was traditionally assumed. Women's migration has increased significantly between 1960 and 2000, and by the year 2000, 48.6% of the world's migrants were women (p. 2).

Talking about women's migration, Friedman-Kasaba (1996) asserts that "rarely, and this is the root of the problem, have we thought of them as individual participants in a changing world-system, interpreting and improvising their lives against shifting economic, political, and social contexts" (p. 32). She emphasizes the importance of looking at the migration experience through an individual's perspective and pays attention to how she gives meaning to this situation. Friedman-Kasaba also highlights the distinctive migratory experiences of women who differ from one another based on their different status according to age, social class, nationality, and ethnicity (p. 3).

Kim (2011) places more importance on the complex ways in which women experience migration in their diasporic lives, depending on the social context. She asserts that these ways are not necessarily always progressive due to "global structures of domination and unspeakable inequality of racial relations" (p. 9).

In the situation of migration racism, home and gender are significant elements in the process of identity construction which I am going to explore in the following section.

Identity

Self-narratives, such as *Persepolis* and *Nylon Road*, are valuable resources for studying the process of (re)negotiating identity in different situations in everyday life. According to Benmayor and Skotnes (2005), life stories and personal testimonies are still the main sources for studying how migrants'

identities are constructed through transnationalism and globalization. In this section, I will try to show how this thesis approaches identity.

Hall (1992) mentions three different approaches in conceptualizing identity through distinguishing: the Enlightenment subject, the sociological subject, and the postmodern subject (p. 597). The Enlightenment subject follows the premise that each individual is born with an integrated identity which remains fixed throughout the person's life. As usually is the case in the Enlightenment thought, male subject is at the heart of identity conceptualization. However, the identity of the sociological subject is shaped through interaction with others[1]. In this view, although the subject is not assumed to be born autonomous, there is still a presumption of a kind of essence for the self, which will be modified and reformed through social interactions and internalized values, and learns the meanings and symbols. However, according to Hall (1992) "the very process of identification, through which we project ourselves into our cultural identities, has become more open-ended, variable and problematic" (p. 598) and this refers to the post-modern subject whose fragmented identity is temporal, and formed by a multiplicity of the cultural representations and systems of meaning that surround the subject. Therefore, if one assumes a coherent understanding of one's "self", it is only because one constructs a coherent "narrative of self" for oneself, even though some of one's possible identities might be contradictory. My approach to identity in this thesis, definitely, contradicts the Enlightenment interpretation of identity. However, inspired by Yuval-Davis (2010), I will apply a combination of the sociological and post-modern approaches to conceptualizing identity.

Yuval-Davis's (2010) "dialogical identity" (p. 271) is compatible with the second approach to identity introduced by Hall, that of the sociological subject. In this view, identity is shaped through the

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[1] According to Hall, this way of conceptualizing identity was introduced by Cooley and Mead.

norms and customs of the communities of belonging and performed according to the expectation of others around the subject. However, this interpretation fails to consider that not all the performances of the subject are conscious and purposeful. In the post-modern understanding of identity, subject's performances are not necessarily conscious. Yuval-Davis calls the latter conceptualization of identity the "performative identity"; to understand this, I explain Butler's notion of "performative act".

Butler (1988) distinguishes between Goffman's notion of "role performance", and her concept of "performative act". For Goffman, the self performs adopted roles according to social expectations; while Butler (1988) suggests that "this self is not irretrievably outside, constituted in social discourse, but that ascription of interiority is itself a publically regulated and sanctioned form of essence fabrication" (p. 528). For Butler, the performative act is not an expression of an internal authentic self, or a conscious performance of what is imposed on the self; rather the subject is formed through the power relations of existing discourse, which itself is historically shaped through reiteration of a set of practices. As for Yuval-Davis (2010) "performative identity" not only can be constituted within the dominant social discourse, but also in contestation to it (p. 270).

Yuval-Davis (2010) argues that the dialogical approach -a term which she borrows from Bakhtin- and the performative approach to identity are not mutually exclusive, and that considering both of them at the same time leads to a more thorough understanding of the ongoing process of identity construction. She states that:

> The sociality of identity narratives is produced either within existing social normative discourses and/or dialogically, combining individual and collective resources. These narratives are contingent and are continuously being (re)constructed, reinterpreting the past while moving forwards temporally. They can be more or less multiple and complex, contested and contradictory. Identities assume boundaries, but these can be more or less naturalized, more or less individuated, more or less politicized. (Yuval-Davis, 2010, p. 279)

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Yuval-Davis suggests that identities are to be understood as particular forms of narratives concerning the self and its boundaries, narratives "in which people tell themselves and others who they are, who they are not and who/how they would like to/should be" (p. 279).

Therefore, my approach to identity in studying Satrapi and Bashi's self-narratives is inspired by Nira Yuval-Davis's combined approach of performative and dialogical identity. I assume that Identity is not naturally born with the subject, neither does the subject have full agency over its formation. Identity is temporal and spatial and it depends on the situation and surroundings. Although the person's self-perception is influenced by all the identity boxes (gender, class, religion, nationality and race) that one has been categorized in, it is also fluid and (re)negotiated depending on the context. The self-agency in giving special meaning to the self cannot be separated from the context, meaning community and the time one is living in. Nevertheless, no two persons with the same belongings perform "themselves" in exactly the same manner, nor does a person have the same self-performance throughout her life span. Notwithstanding, however mutable and fluid, identity always has a mark of uniqueness based on one's self, since no two beings are in the exact similar path in their life. Identity is constructed both by the discourses in performative manner, and through dialogues based on one's personal and collective resources, since it is dialogical as well.

In analyzing the two comic autobiographies by female Iranian migrants to Europe, I will focus on how they address different identity positions in different times and contexts, and how they challenge and renegotiate assumed identity categories in these contexts. As argued before, different positionality of authors and their characters is constructed through interaction between different categories of identity in various contexts. Based on the context, some of these categories influence their (both the autobiographers' and the protagonists') positionality more or less than the others.

Women's Autobiography and Life Narratives

One of the specific features of women's autobiography, mentioned by Smith and Watson (1998), is giving voice to previously unheard subjects, meaning women. Autobiography gives the chance to women to speak in their own words. It is an opportunity for "self-discovery" and that is why Smith and Watson call it "women's personal literature of the self" (p. 11). In their view, women's personal narrative is an alternative narrative to the male dominated well known autobiographical texts which are mostly representing "heroic identity". It is also important to emphasize that, unlike the individuated subjectivity depicted in men's autobiographies, women's autobiographies highlight the construction of the subjectivity in relation to others. In women's autobiographies the subject is more fluid and is formed in the interface between self and others (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 5-11). This aspect of women's autobiographical work will become important in my analysis since both authors analyzed here put a lot of significance to their interpersonal relations, both at home and in the situation of migration.

There are several central themes that should be considered while dealing with autobiographies. My purpose in mentioning these themes here is to illustrate that I am aware of the limitations and also of the specificities of autobiographical writings.

One of the key issues in autobiography studies is "memory and remembering". There are two main points about the process of remembering in writing autobiography; one is "the limits of remembering" and the other "the politics of remembering" (Smith and Watson, 1998, p. 39). There is a personal limit to remembering since each of us can recall some incidents in the past and not all. According to Smith and Watson (1998), this is because not only each one of us has a different capability in recollecting past events, our personal interpretations of these events differ from one another. More importantly, for these authors, the "act of personal remembering is fundamentally social and collective" (p. 26). So the contexts in which we remember things are important, since each

context has a different political implication. What we remember and forget and why we do so vary through time (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 24). In other words, it depends on when we are doing the act of remembering and in which context, because we do not always remember the same events in the same manner; nothing remains the same, everything is changing and remembering is always an interpretation.

According to Michielsens (2000), "remembering is inherently a selective process" which is limited by "social reality, current ideology, personal capacity of remembering, language and cognitive mapping" (p. 183). She asserts that this selective process is further dependent on concepts which change through time and that "it is a permanent challenge to create continuity in one's life, while social and cultural changes are happening all the time" (p. 184). In an example relevant to my study, Michielsens mentions that in a post-revolutionary period "a radical rupture" happens in the way people give meaning to the events of their lives (p. 195).

Similar to Michielsens for whom memory is related to mutability of concepts through time, Radstone (2000) illustrates how memory is embedded in language. She emphasizes that subjects are constituted by and in language; in this regard, autobiographical texts have a constructive role in the production of subjectivity. The subject is "textually constituted" and this textual production has a history. Radstone, similarly, highlights partiality, flux and temporality of memory. Memory, thus, cannot be considered simply as a representation of the past. She recognizes autobiography as "spatial and temporal bounds" of a specific life due to the unclear borders of the past and present (Radstone, 2000, p. 207).

Smith and Watson (2010) underline the materiality of memory, since it is always embodied, and usually invoked by a matter connected to our five senses. Therefore, for them, life narratives are links between memory, subjectivity, and the corporeality of the body; life narratives are themselves

constitutive of memories which are built through subjects' historical interpretations and in relation to their "ever-moving pasts".

The next issue in studying autobiographies is the concept of "experience". Smith and Watson (2010) state that "mediated through memory and language, experience is already an interpretation of the past and of our place in the culturally and historically specific present" (p. 31). For Scott (1991) subjects are "constituted" by experience, rather than "having" experience. She asserts that experience has wrongly been taken for granted as a pure and neutral way of understanding and producing true knowledge, especially in writing and explaining history. She argues that experience is always constructed discursively and politically, with no single universal meaning; therefore, it needs interpretation. In her view experience should not be counted as self-evident just by assuming that vision is the neutral means of gaining knowledge and that writing (history) is merely a description of the truth found through seeing and experience. In this sense, autobiography is always an interpretation, which needs to be understood in the context of its production. Therefore, in studying the memoirs that are the subject of this research, I will also consider the context in which they were produced.

The next point that should be addressed in relation to autobiography is "authenticity". This is where readers begin to have a role, since the question is whether or not the reader believes the narrated experience as "truth". As Smith and Watson (2010) suggest about the relation between the author and the reader, the reader decides who has the right to write about an experience. For the reader, an authentic author is the person who has immediate access to the narrated experience; for instance, a migrant could be the authentic author of a narrative on migration experience. In addition, it depends on the reader to determine which kinds of experiences are noteworthy enough to be narrated (p. 237). Therefore, the intended reader impacts the narration not only at the moment of production, but also after publication. Readers are active participants both in interpreting and in legitimizing the

authenticity of the autobiography. In this sense, Satrapi and Bashi are both counted as authentic authors of their memoirs.

A further issue to consider is the autobiographical "I". Smith and Watson (2010) draw our attention to the gap between the narrating "I", and the narrated "I". According to what I discussed above, since the time and context of narration are different from the time and the context of the narrated experience, important questions arise in relation to the narrative subject and about the "historical notion of personhood and the meaning of lives at the time of writing" (p. 238). Specifically, in the comic texts of the autobiographies I analyze in this thesis, the question would be "what is the relation between the voice-over narrations above the frame to dialogue bobbles within it?" (p. 239).

"Identity", which I have already expanded in the previous section, is another important concept when dealing with autobiographies. According to Smith and Watson (2010), narrators, in their autobiographies, try to identify "themselves for the reader" (p. 38). As argued before, identity is temporal and spatial, which means "what may be a meaningful identity at one day or in one context, may not be culturally and personally meaningful at another moment or in another context" (p. 38). During one day, an individual might navigate between different categories of identity (gender, class, religion, nationality, ethnicity, race), which implies that identity is multiple. Using the term multiple identity I intend to address the intersectionality of categories of identity, and not simply adding one category to another. As mentioned earlier, the nature of identity is conflictual, and the specific aim of this thesis is to look for conflicts and contradictions of identity construction in Satrapi and Bashi's memoirs, since the material of "autobiographical storytelling is drawn from multiple, disparate, and discontinuous experiences and the multiple identities constructed from and constituting those experiences" (Smith and Watson, 2010, p. 40).

In autobiographies, subjects are always spatially positioned; that is why "space" is another crucial notion in autobiographical studies. Autobiographical subjects are situated not only geographically,

but also in terms of nation, gender, race, ethnicity, etc. Smith and Watson (2010) quote Keith and Pile according to whom "spatialities represent both the spaces between multiple identities and the contradictions within identities" (p. 46).They also mention that Kulbaga's notion of the "spatial rhetorics of memory" has been redefined by some scholars of migration "to present autobiographical subjects as migratory and transnationally situated, rather than defined by a stable national identity" (Smith & Watson, 2010, p. 47). These new hybrid identities (migratory and transnational) are globally constructed and executed through geopolitical space.

"Agency" is also another issue to consider in studying autobiography. In this thesis, I approach this issue from the Foucaultian view in which subjects' agency is bounded to discourses. As already explained, autobiographical subjects are embedded in language and historical context and they are "multiply vulnerable: to their own opaqueness, to their relationality to others, and to the norms through which they tell of themselves" (Smith and Watson, 2010, p. 58). Therefore, what I intend to do in studying *Persepolis* and *Nylon Road* is to contextualize the narrators' agency when telling or withholding cultural stories in their autobiographical texts.

Bakhtin's concepts "dialogism" and "heteroglossia", in which words do not carry a specific meaning, but multiple meanings in relation to the interactional context, are very useful for this kind of critical understanding. The dialogical subject is always mediated by language. In this view, the agency of the autobiographical subject is neither determined, nor entirely boundless. Instead "the voice of the narrator is a dialogical voice through which heterogeneous discourses of identity cross the tongue" (Smith and Watson, 2010, p. 31).

In addition, for a critical understanding of the subject of autobiography, paying attention to the "class status" of the autobiographer is important, which I will discuss further in the second section of the second chapter.

To sum up this section, according to the authors discussed here the process of remembering, memory, autobiographical subjects and agency, and the spatiality and temporality of self narratives make telling stories about the "self" always a complex process which entails attempts "to impose order on the lives of the subjects" (Evans, 1999, p. 24). Studying autobiography, thus, necessitates contextualization and in-depth reading to recognize contradictions in the attempt to represent a coherent self.

Women's Graphic Autobiography and Migration

In blending visual and verbal texts, comics provide potential grounds for women to express themselves in their autobiographies. However, this genre of writing has not always been this popular with autobiographers. In her book *Graphic Women* (2010), Chute argues that it is only a few years since graphic self-narratives have gained importance as a "new literary form". Even so, it was mostly referred to as "man's world" before the two popular autobiographical comics written by women, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2004) and Alison Bachdel's *Fun Home* (2006) became widely known and appreciated. Chute (2010) refers to graphic autobiographies as an "innovative genre of life writing" and her main argument is that "the story could not be communicated any other way" (p. 2). Comics offer female life-story writers the possibility to depict their past as they want to convey it, and use the combination of words and images for representing themselves and their lives' events. Chute draws attention on the risk of visual representation for women autobiographers, since they become the female object to-be-looked-at. However, she asserts that these women are, simultaneously, the designers of those visual-verbal scenes which convey their interpretation of their lives in a hybrid way. Therefore, this visual-verbal form has special potential for giving voice to women to express their embodied experiences in everyday life. Chute (2010) calls this "words and images cross-discursivity" a "doubled narration" (p. 5).

In this visual-verbal form of narration, the voice of both the narrator, at the present time, and the protagonist, in the past at a younger age are inter-twined; the former comes up on the top or bottom of each frame separated from the drawing by a line, while the latter is written in bobbles inside the drawings besides the image of the character. As chute (2010) explains each frame contains a specific time which she calls "boxes of time", and the frames are separated by gutters or empty spaces, which represent "absence", the gaps that will be filled by the readers' imagination and interpretation. The reader will decide how much time to spend on each frame and on which part of the drawing to focus longer. Therefore, comics are in dialogue with the reader and engage them as participant in the narrative. Even though all kinds of story-telling engage the reader, yet the visual part of the comic invites the reader to a more challenging engagement, to construct meanings through relating words and images, and also, the different frames, and the filling of the gaps. This is why Chute emphasizes that the most persuasive point about comics is that they represent time (past, present, future) and space (gutters, gaps) on the page. She says that the time is the masculine attribute and space, as absence, is the feminine one; the combination engenders the hybridity and cross-discursivity of comics. More importantly, comics can play "with and against visual stereotypes" (Chute, 2010, p. 12), and this is one of the interests of this thesis.

Chute discusses that autobiographical comics are a mode of narrative which explores "the self"; in other words, they are "self-reflexive" and a kind of "personal expression". Therefore, according to Chute, comic books as a way of representing embodiment are a useful means for "feminist concerns". Graphic narratives can play a crucial role in depicting the situatedness and positionality of the autobiographers and their protagonists specifically in the "time of global misrepresentation, misinformation and systematic mendacity" (Chute, 2010, p. 27).

Boatright (2010) approaches graphic books from a different angle and considers them a useful medium for representing migrants' experiences. He asserts that in the contemporary world where

culture is becoming more and more visual, the meanings that could be conveyed through "employing both illustrations and words" can draw special attention to certain dimensions and ignore certain others (Boatright, 2010, p. 469). He introduces graphic books as a "viable genre" and emphasizes how it privileges certain immigrant experiences, because there is not "one" immigrant experience.

Similar to Chute, Boatright (2010) underlines the fact that readers are active participants in interpreting what the author tries to express through visualizing experiences of migration. He indicates that the reader decides to "take up, refuse or contest" (p. 470) the author's message. For him, treating migrants with racist and classist (xenophobic) acts and ideas can be more easily pictured in comic style than in narratives which use only words, because drawings can illustrate differences in appearance and depict situations which cannot be put into words. For instance, since he is talking in the context of the US, he mentions how skin color or the shape of the eyes of East Asians are played with in comic books depicting how these features prevent them from assimilation into a society which privileges white skin. In relation to the drawing style, Boatright states that it is easier to identify with cartoon-like character drawings (such as in Satrapi's work) than in more realistic kinds of drawings, (which could be found in Bashi's comic book). That is probably one reason why Satrapi's work is more popular than Bashi's.

The reason why I have selected graphic autobiographies for this thesis is their potential in conveying more than words and sentences. The visual and verbal combination or the "cross-discursivity" of comic books helps clarify the autobiographers' and their characters' identity construction in the situation of migration more explicitly than narratives merely based on words can do.

Feminist Personal Criticism and Close Reading

Close reading, as a method of literary criticism, according to Lukic and Sanchez Spinosa (2011) has been brought to the foreground by feminism. In this thesis, close reading is applied to both visual as well as textual components of the two graphic autobiographies, in order to answer the overarching

research question. In this close reading, I approach the process of identity construction from an intersectional perspective, trying to highlight the dynamics of different categories of identity in different situations. Therefore, this study is not merely gender focused. Besides maintaining an intersectional perspective, this thesis will also benefit from an interdisciplinary approach which enables it to use concepts from different bodies of literature as explained throughout this chapter.

Personal criticism (or autobiographical theorizing) is a feminist approach of analysis, which, Miller (1991) believes, "entails an explicitly autobiographical performance within the act of criticism" (p. 1) and is a powerful tool for cultural criticism. She states that first in the 1970s it was Ronald Barthes who went beyond structuralism and suggested a more subjective, more embodied literary critique; so he was the one who confronted the objective literary criticism theories in favor of personal criticism. However, Miller asserts that feminist personal criticism is a combination of Barthes's French post-structuralism and Adrienne Rich's American feminism in which a woman's autobiography, meaning one's personal life story, is used to criticize the culturally dominant power relations, through bridging between life and theory, body and mind. In other words, as Smith and Watson (1998) put, "the personal criticism facilitates the reading of personal experience and theory through each other" (p. 33).

In personal criticism the researcher weaves her own self-narrative into the critical argument. For the comparative analysis of data in this thesis, as a person who has experienced a migrant life, I am including my own personal narrative in some parts of the analysis. Therefore, there are three narratives from three different generations of women (Satrapi, Bashi and I), each of whom has left Iran to Europe at least once in their life.

I believe that incorporating my personal narrative in the analysis can provide some insight into the result, because it not only shows the depth of engagement with the topic, but also illustrates the main points by giving viability to the content through subjective clarifications instead of objective

abstractions. Moreover, "private life" is not "merely personal" and in feminist criticism whatever is "Personal is political"; in this sense, personal criticism opens ways to creating what Miller (1991) calls "critical writing of the dominant models of access to knowledge" (p. 5).

In this practice, I will also reflect on my own positionality, since according to Miller (1991) "personal criticism is often located in a specific body (or voice) marked by gender, color, and national origin" (p. 4). I am a female Iranian migrant to Europe; I lived abroad two years as a child (from 1991 to 1992), and am now again living in Europe studying at the post graduate level. I share gender, nationality and social class and level of education with the authors of the comic autobiographies under study here, except that I am from a later generation than they are. I was born after the Revolution and grew up in a bit of a different environment in the sending country, Iran.

Caws argues that personal criticism includes a "willing, knowledgeable, outspoken involvement on the part of the critic with the subject matter" and she adds that this criticism encourages "the potential reader to participate in the interweaving and construction of the ongoing conversation this criticism can be, even as it remains a text" (as cited in Miller, 1991, p. 24). In this sense, through entering my own narrative into the analysis I intend to elaborate the conversation both with the material of this thesis and its potential reader.

Chapter 2:

Coming of Age as a Woman in Post-Revolutionary Iran

In this chapter, I am focusing on the specific situation of growing up as a woman in the context of post-revolutionary Iran as my example of the home country. Scott (1991) argues that the identities of the individuals, whose experiences are under study, are not "self-evident". Instead, we need to investigate how these subjects are constituted discursively through history and politics, and how their experience of their surroundings is shaped by these discourses (Scott, 1991, p. 777). Hence, in the first section I try to map the autobiographers' positions in the political and historical context of pre and post revolutionary Iran. I will also describe the collective identity imposed on women by the Islamic regime after the Revolution, through educational system, and law practices. To accomplish this task I will draw attention to relevant examples and descriptions both from the memoirs under study, and other related scholarly literature which help contextualize the memoirs.

In addition, I do not intend to homogenize Iranian women as a single category, or claim that all of them experience the same sort of life. As Mohanty (1991) has elucidated, it is erroneous to assume women as a pre-existing homogenous category with common interests, regardless of their differentiating positionality that has constituted them distinctively (p. 64). Therefore, to consider the social class difference, in the second section, I explicate the background of the female authors of the two autobiographies under study in this thesis. In that part, I discuss the relevance of class and family upbringing for the position the two authors take when it comes to representation of Iranian context and the way it has shaped their lives and identities. I also explore the relevance of their educational background.

In the third section, I deal with the central issue of the experience of compulsory veiling in the two narratives with a special emphasis on the processes of observation and controlling as it is performed by the state both in public and private spaces.

The last section of this chapter is dedicated to family law in post-revolutionary Iran, and how it puts restrictions on women. Both Marjane Satrapi and Parsua Bashi have experienced divorcing under these laws, which became important parts of their respective narratives. Their cases will be explored in detail in this section.

Historical and Political Context

Other than through her familial and educational background, the subject is constituted historically through the norms and customs of the society she lives in. As Scott (1991) emphasizes, and as mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, subjects are "constituted" by experience, rather than "having" experience as autonomous individuals. Scott (1991), referring to Spivak, states that what should be done is to "make visible the assignment of subject-positions, not in the sense of capturing the reality of the objects seen, but of trying to understand the operations of the complex and changing discursive processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted, or embraced" (p. 792). An analysis based on such premises requires specific focus on how identity is produced through the politics that shape one's experience (Scott, 1991). Therefore, in this section, gendered identities imposed by the Islamic state, which form subjects through contestation or internalization will be explained. For this purpose, I will refer both to historical evidence included in Satrapi's memoir, and on historical literature on the concerned era.

According to Afary (2009):

> In 1978 Foucault hoped that the Iranian Revolution would become a countermodern revolution that would unleash the radical form of political spirituality for Iran and the broader Muslim world. But it would be a mistake to call the Islamist social order

countermodern. Both the Pahlavi regime and the Islamist regime employed various techniques of modernity, particularly ones that operated directly on the body. (p. 267)

Under both regimes, before and after the 1979 Revolution, women's bodies and sexuality were the central issue in constructing the national identity. As Rada Ivekovic (2005) explains "any new regimes –the establishment of a state, the definition of a nation- starts with a gender order, an order of bodies divided per sex… defining that order implies violence" (p. 66). The violence that she refers to can be both the practice of compulsory un-veiling in the Pahlavi Regime, and the obligatory veiling in the post-revolutionary Iran. In both cases, the new born political system was mapped on the body of women by imposing a new gender regime based on female sexuality, one as a symbol of modernization, the other as a sign of Islamization.

Mir-hosseini (1996) believes that the return of "Hijab" (veiling), after the Revolution, and this time as a state law, is rooted in the ban and sanction of Hijab during Reza Shah's modernization of Iran in the 1930s. Although after Reza Shah was replaced by his son (1941), wearing Hijab was no longer formally punished, it was a serious barrier to accessing better positions or entering certain places (such as classy restaurants or the beach) up until the Revolution. Since mostly women from the lower classes and traditional families wore Hijab, they were under pressure and discrimination. Therefore, Mir-Hosseini (1996) argues that Hijab became an emblem of resisting the Shah's tyranny and immorality, and many middle-class women, along with Islamist students, wore Hijab as a symbol of alliance in between them, in the break of the Revolution. At the same time, she states that no one - especially the middle class women- could foresee that "in 1983, appearing in public unveiled [would]

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become an offence, punishable by the 'Islamic' penalty of up to seventy-four lashes" (Mir-Hosseini, 1996, p. 156) –a law which is still at work[2].

As previously mentioned, after the 1979 Revolution in Iran, when the Islamic Republic came to power, a new Islamic gender regime was introduced in order to govern the bodies in the new political system. Marjane Satrapi assigns the very beginning of her comic book, *Persepolis,* to informing the reader about this new order after the Revolution, which was to be obeyed by both religious and non-religious women. She says that in 1980, when she was a 10-year-old elementary student, veiling became mandatory in schools. Then she compares schools, before and after the Revolution. Before the Revolution, boys and girls were attending the same schools and classes; while after the Revolution, they were separated in different schools based on their gender. In addition to the compulsory veiling and gendered separation, bilingual schools were recognized as symbols of "capitalism" and "decadence" by "the Guardians of Islamic Revolution", and all of them were closed down. These changes in the educational system were called "the cultural revolution" (1980-1983) which was an attempt on the part of the new regime to reinforce an "Islamic culture" and prevent "Western liberal culture penetration".

Therefore, Marjane, who used to go to "a French non-religious school", suddenly, found herself in a female only school, wearing Islamic dress (Hijab), and being taught religious material. Following, she mentions the demonstrations held by women, in which some were protesting against veiling, and some were supporting the obligatory veiling. However, finally, mandatory veiling was imposed on all women in Iran. To understand why women had different opinions on the issue of veiling, it is necessary to consider the historical context in which "compulsory veiling" was two-sided. For

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[2] Although Hijab successfully became mandatory under this condition, the post-revolutionary generation started to resist it by 'not veiling themselves properly', which is called 'Bad-Hijabi'.

middle-class highly educated women who were the minority and already had access to power resources and independence, this law was oppressive, but at the same time, for women from the traditional families the situation was entirely different.

According to Mir-hosseini (1996), compulsory Hijab empowered many women by facilitating entrance to the public domain for majority of Iranian women who were previously prevented from participating in the male dominated public sphere by their religious families. Therefore, it provided opportunities for education and economic independence for women other than the educated, working upper and middle-class minorities –such as Satrapi and Bashi.

In a more complex approach, Osanloo (2009) states that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, from the very beginning, after the Revolution, was a mixture of "theocratic, republican and even direct democracy components" (p. 4). The mixture was made in order to go against the individualistic Western ideas. In her view, the main question is how in the specific Islamist context of post-revolutionary Iran women are both shaping and have been shaped by discourse that borrows from both liberal and Islamist thought.

In this sense, the lower-class traditional women have participated in shaping the Islamic discourse by confirming the obligatory veiling and enabling themselves to enter society in this new order. And the middle-class non-religious women are also forced to re-form their identity publically conforming to the law, but at the same time being in contestation to the imposed gender order.

Satrapi points to some concrete aspects of life under the new gender order. She mentions in her memoir that "the regime had understood that one person leaving her house" had to ask herself if "my trousers [are] long enough', '[is] my veil in place', 'can my makeup be seen', 'are they going to whip me'" (p. 148). Such a citizen is under the strong influence of imposed gendered rules which tend to make her politically passive, keeping her busy with her body and in fear of being arrested.

The Autobiographers' Social Class and Its implications

As explained in the introduction of this chapter, the governmental Islamization of the society after the Revolution had different impacts on women based on the social background they were coming from. Both Satrapi and Bashi are from middle-class families with leftist ideas; as can be inferred from the content of their memoirs. They were raised by non-religious, educated parents who did not restrict them to the home because of their gender. For instance, when talking about her family, Bashi asserts that "My parents were very *liberal*, compared to the *traditional* mentality of the Iranian majority who never allowed their children to have relations with the opposite sex before marriage" (p. 42) (Italics are mine). Satrapi comes from a similar family background. Thus, these authors' experiences as women in post-revolutionary Islamic Iran are associated with oppression. In this section, I elaborate their familial and educational background based on the materials from their autobiographies. I will explain what their parents' worldview looked like, and in what kind of environment they were raised, which led to their oppression under Islamic regime.

Marjane was only nine years old when the Islamic regime was established so she was not really participating in the Revolution; she only witnessed her parents' and their friends and families' participation. Both Marjane's parents had participated in the demonstrations during the Revolution in the hope of overthrowing the Shah's tyrannical regime and achieving a proletarian state.

In the era of revolution, Bashi was a 13-year-old teenager and a Marxist activist a year prior to and after the Revolution. They had reading groups, for which she studied many complex Marxist books, the content of most of which she could not comprehend at that age. She continued her oppositional political activism underground, even to the point when the leftist activists were arrested, and mostly executed by the newly established regime. She lost friends in these executions, while Marjane, as a witness, only experienced her beloved uncle, whom she adored as a revolutionary hero, being executed as a traitor to the country, and an alleged spy for Soviet Union. Because of Marxist political

activism, her uncle was imprisoned in both regimes, before and after revolution. From very childhood, Marjane was exposed to leftist ideas, and Iran's history through the books her parents gave her, and her family's daily talks specifically through their political analysis of the situation they were living in at different points.

Bashi only slightly hints at the fact that her father had Marxist ideas, but she does not mention her mother's political view. She only emphasizes that her mother was not religious or traditional, and did not wear a veil. There is no evidence in the book proving that Bashi's parents also took part in the revolution.

What is clear from the life-stories of these two women is that neither of them had religious people among their family members, relatives, or other acquaintances. They were both forced to obey Islamic codes after the establishment of the Islamic Republic's governing system. Their parents cultivated an oppositional stand in their homes. In addition, not only were their parents highly educated, but also they themselves had both studied Graphic Arts at university. It also should be mentioned, even though they were surrounded by Marxist ideas, and were thinking of the proletariat, neither of them is from working-class families, rather they are from the middle-class, or even, in Satrapi's case, the upper class.

Marjane's grandfather, from her mother's side, was a Qajar[3] prince, who was educated in Europe, and was once the prime minister of Reza Shah before becoming a Communist activist (p. 23). Afterwards, he spent most of his life in prison. Thus, Marjane's family background was related to the previous royal family (Qajar), whose descendants are still among the upper class of society, and their first generation were mostly educated in France, which Marjane does not address in her memoir. But she mentions that she used to go to French-Persian bilingual school which is the legacy of the Qajar

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[3]the dynasty before Pahlavi (Reza Shah and his son)

family. In addition, throughout the story it is pointed out that Marjane's family have servants at home, and at other relatives' places. She even mentions that her parents, even though claiming to have communist ideas, did not treat them equally as family members. In one scene she shows that the maid is having lunch in the kitchen while they are sitting at the table in the living room. Or in another instance, they accept a child from a poor rural family to take care of but they never treat her as their daughter. They even ruin her love relationship with a neighbor boy by telling him that she is not their child and is coming from a different social class and he might not want to have anything to do with her.

Bashi mentions explicitly that she is from a middle-class family and depicts this visually in two frames (see figure 1).

Figure 1 Middle-class; traditional family, (Bashi, p. 88)

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In these two frames she illustrates her own middle-class lifestyle by contrasting an image of her family with one of a traditional family which constituted the majority of the population during the Iran-Iraq War. Similar to Marjane who was sent abroad after the revolution, Bashi's brothers had also left Iran, during the Iran-Iraq war, to pursue their education; otherwise they had to go to war. In addition, the older brother was a professional musician (European classical instrument), and since music was announced against religion and banned, there was no future for his professional life in Iran. Her brothers left the country illegally and with the help of smugglers. Her parents also insisted to send her, but she refused to leave, and decided to enter university in Iran. All these elements, being musician, and being able to afford sending all children to Europe for continuing education, illustrate that she was really from a middle-class family, who had access to opportunities the majority did not.

In sum, Satrapi and Bashi were both from a social class whose life-style dramatically changed by the Islamic laws after the revolution, and veiling was oppressive practice for them. On the other hand, majority of women from traditional families benefited from the gender separation, and obligatory veiling, thus getting the opportunity to enter the public sphere. I, myself, am also from middle-class highly educated family. I am the third child out of four who left Iran to study in Europe. However, I do have religious relatives, who are also middle-class and educated.

Speaking about class issues in this context, there is another point to be made. Although both Mir-Hosseini (1996) and Afshar (1999) have classified the middle-class among the non-religious, it is impossible to draw a clear cut line here. Many middle-class families have religious and nonreligious members which complicates the debates on public application of Islamic rules in the society. But this debate is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Experiencing Veiling in the Public and the Private Spheres

In this section, based on evidence from the two comic books and my personal narrative, I depict the living situation of middle-class, educated, and non-religious Iranian women, under the obligatory veiling and Islamic moral laws on women's sexuality in post-revolutionary Iran. In addition, I emphasize the paradoxical ways of living in public and private spaces, and how state surveillance on sexuality is not exclusively applied to the public domain, but also invades indoor lives.

Satrapi's Persepolis begins with introducing imposed veiling on Iranian women. The narrative starts in the context of early post-revolutionary Iran. The first chapter is called "The Veil". Marjane's representation of the imposed veiling at school in the beginning of her book is depicted ironically. Specifically, the visual play with the very two first frames (see figure 2):

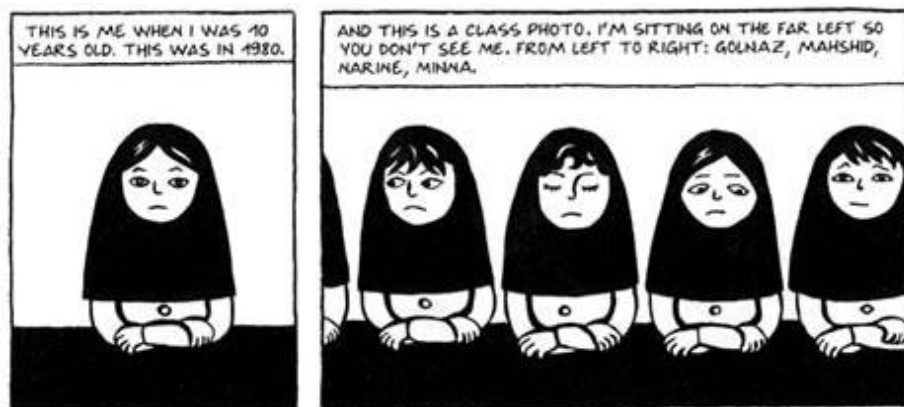**Figure 2: Personal "photo"; class "photo", (Satrapi, p. 3)**

The first frame contains an individual medium shot "photo" of the main character in her childhood with veil. In the next medium shot frame, immediately beside it, four little girls are wearing the same costume and sitting in a row, all looking sad, and the only difference between them is the style of the uncovered part of their hair.

The bitter irony of this visual representation lies in the intelligent game Satrapi plays with the images of the little veiled girls. Like reading any other story book, here, too, the reader looks for the main character; only here the main character is to be found in images and not in words. Satrapi breaks this expectation and removes the protagonist's image from the second frame. This, of course, is not realized immediately by the reader as all the veiled girls in this frame resemble each other. The words help the reader understand her absence. The satire implies that the collective identity imposed on women through mandatory veiling leaves no space for individuality meaning that there is no way to distinguish them from one another. In the following frames, Marjane starts explaining how after the 1979 Revolution veiling became obligatory for women and how she and her friends, as little school girls, did not really like it.

Such a beginning has a number of connotations; the very name of the chapter, and the image of sad veiled little girls in the opening frames emphasize mandatory veiling as a painful turning point in the autobiographer's life, but also one of the indications that covering women's bodies became one of the key concerns of the new Islamic regime. These representations highlight the specific intersection of national and gender identity forced upon women. Afshar (1999) argues that in the governmental Islamisization of Post-revoltionary Iran, "veiled women" are the emblem of Islamification. The Islamic Republic of Iran chose covering women's bodies and controlling their sexuality as the symbol of the Islamic culture which they wanted to reinforce as an opposition to Western liberal culture. However, it should not be forgotten, as Mir Hosseini (1996) points out, this mandatory veiling was empowering for women from the traditional lower class of society.

Another telling frame which perfectly portrays the protagonist's conflictual identity regarding the experience of veiling is figure 3.
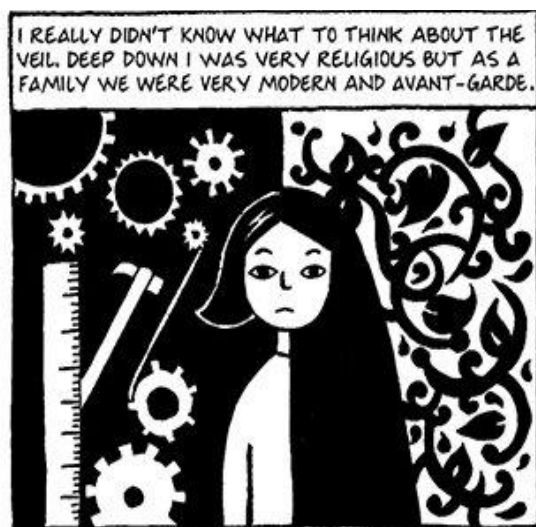
Figure 3: Hybrid identity, (Satrapi, p. 6)

This frame, cutting the main character, and the frame itself in two halves has implications other than the narration above the frame "I really didn't know what to think about the veil; deep down I was very religious but as a family we were very modern and avant-garde" (p. 6). The image goes beyond the explained words; the visual-verbal combination and the fact that the reader interprets this combination and not merely the words, is one of the specific features of graphic autobiographies, as mentioned in the first chapter (Chute, 2010; Boatright, 2010).

This comic frame visualizes the hybrid identity Marjane is struggling with as a little girl in post-revolutionary Iran and under the law of mandatory veiling. In the verbal part, she refers to the traditional and Islamic context of the society that has an impact on her, and the position of her family which contradicts those ideas, and she feels like being torn apart between these two viewpoints. Thus she puts in opposition religion with modernity; on the one side depicting the model for identification in accordance with the ideas of the Islamic post-revolutionary society, and on the other, presenting the model base upon the ideas of her parents and her family environment. While the right side of the frame, which represents society, is full of twisted mysterious curvy lines, crossing one another and filled with leaves which could imply an association with nature, as well it

evokes the iconography of traditional Islamic art. On the left side, the modern depiction is very precise and every part is totally separated from others, and the space is filled with manmade mechanical devices. Whereas no logical pattern could be found for the right side, the left side is full of individual tools symbolizing industriousness, calculability, working and production. Since her parents have Marxist ideas, the tools can be related to the significance of work. The ruler could stand for the predictability and preciseness of modernity and the baffling right side drawings for traditions. Marjane does not show any preferences for any of the two sides, and does not privilege any one over the other, since the frame is cut exactly in the middle.

As depicted further in the story, in her day dreaming, Marjane talks with both God and Karl Marx (see figure 4).

Figure 4: God and Marx, (Satrapi, p. 13)

She even wants to be the last prophet (being the only woman among all male prophets before her), but paradoxically she develops Marxist ideas as her religious doctrine. Even though, as already stated, Satrapi constitutes a binary opposition through this graphic image, yet, inadvertently, she presents a much more complicated and nuanced combination as well. The fact that she wants to become a prophet who develops Marxist ideas illustrates the hybrid identity she is living with as a subject who is, as Scott states, "constituted discursively, but there are conflicts among discursive systems,

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contradictions within any one of them, multiple meanings possible for the concepts they deploy" (p. 793).

Before analyzing the next image, related to the difference between the public and the private non-religious middle-class lifestyle, and in order to understand veiling better, it is important to know the concepts of "Mahram" and "Na-Mahram". Under the Islamic regime, women have to cover themselves in the presence of "Na-Mahram" (not Mahram). Mahram is a person in whose presence women do not need to wear any veil and to whom they are allowed to communicate freely. The only "Mahram" men to a woman are: Father and grandfather, brother, uncle, husband, and father in-law. Any other men are assumed as potential cases of having forbidden sexual relationships and not covering in their presence or having friendly conversations with them are punishable by law –with forty lashes.

Religious families, traditionally, follow the Islamic rule on Mahram and Na-Mahram in their private life. But the attitude of non-religious families indoors is totally different from how they appeared in public. Figure 5 shows how compulsory veiling splits the living styles in public and private spaces for non-religious middle-class women in Iran. As the narrator herself writes in the description on this image "our behavior in public and our behavior in private were polar opposites" (p.151).

As obvious in these images Satrapi and her friends are covered from head to toe in public (here at the university) but unveiled in the private sphere. It must be noted that neither of these scenes are depicting only female spaces. Their friends from the opposite sex (who are considered Na-Mahram) are also present in both spaces. It is worth remarking that, in my opinion, a simple written autobiography can never be as expressive and telling as a comic book in representing the embodied experience of these women in the public and the private.

Figure 5: Public and Private, (Satrapi, p. 150-152)

At the time when Bashi's and Satrapi's narratives took place, surveillance over veiling and communication with Na-Mahram was applied severely in both public and private spheres but in different manners[4]. In the public sphere, the way to practice this law was that if people from different sexes were walking together, even though the women were veiled, their relationship would be checked by the morality police in order to make sure they were "Mahram" to one another.

Bashi mentions in her memoir that she experienced being lashed only because she was arrested with her male university classmate[5] in the street. They were not even in a relationship, but were sent by their professor (who was not careful enough in asking a boy and a girl to go together), to do some shopping for the art class (see figure 6).

Figure 6: The Morality police (Pasdar), (Bashi, p. 43)

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[4] It is more than fifteen years (since Khatami's presidency) that surveillance over communication with Na-Mahram, particularly in public space, is not as strict.
[5] most universities were/ are not separated by sex

When taken to the police station, even though according to law she could ask her parents to come and pay a fine instead of the lashes and release her, since she starts arguing with the cleric authority in charge there (see figure 7), she immediately receives seventy lashes (forty for communicating with a Na-Mahram and thirty for being rude to the judge).

Nevertheless, people could not freely practice what they would like even in the private. As Afary (2009) has mentioned, the obligation to veiling and surveillance over "bodily functions" after the revolution was not limited to restrictions in public areas; it opened its way to the private space as well (p. 267). The moral police had and still have the right to break into people homes, whenever they suspect that a mixed party is going on indoors and women are un-veiled (see figure 8).
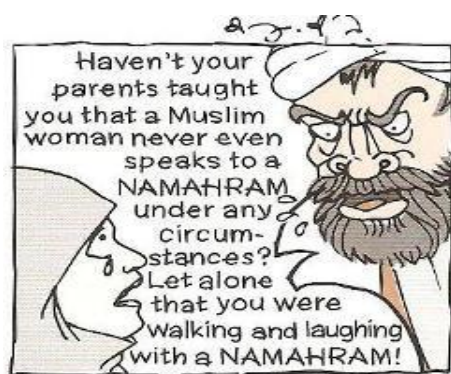
Figure 7: Na-Mahram, (Bashi, p. 44)   Figure 8: The mixed party, (Satrapi, p. 152)

They arrest everybody, and take them to prison, calling the families to check the relations between boys and girls. If they are simply Na-Mahram, they are again sentenced to lashes or to pay a fine instead. It is worthy to notice, nowadays, this system of punishment is enormously money making for the government. In the first decade after the Revolution, however, this law was practiced very

often. Some prejudiced judges even ordered for the lashes to be applied without calling the family to exchange this corporeal punishment for a fine –as was experienced by Parsua Bashi.

Under these Islamic codes enforced by the post-revolutionary regime, women from the non-religious middle-class were pushed to get married at a young age, as is the case with traditional religious families who followed the tradition of arranged marriages for their young daughters. No matter how open the relationships with Na-Mahram were for these women, yet living under the pressure of surveillance and the stress of being punished severely was not easy.

Living under this pressure, a few years after her return to Iran and entering university, Marjane was also more or less forced to marry, because it was not possible to hang around outdoors with her boyfriend. The moral police (the guardians of revolution at that time) checked every couple appearing in public places, to see if they were married or not and to have them punished in case they were not. Therefore, they only had opportunity to spend time together indoors which was boring and annoying.

Bashi married at age 23 for a similar reason. When she started a relationship with her colleague at work, her parents asked her to meet him at home in order not to get arrested and be whipped again. In this way, the guy managed to convince her very soon to marry him.
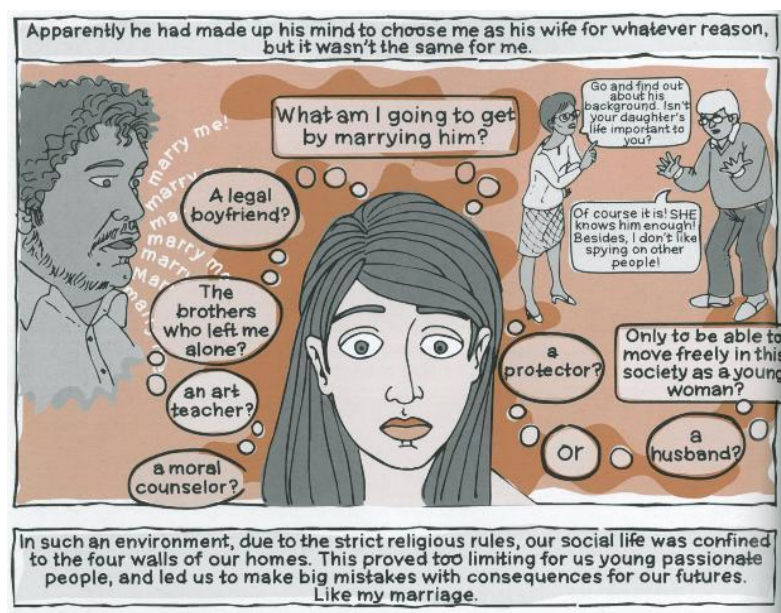
Figure 9: Reasons for Marriage, (Bashi, p. 46)

As one can see in figure 9, Bashi is having a hard time when thinking about marriage. Even though she has not yet "made up" her mind to marry this person, thinking about having an easier life and being able to "move freely" makes her decide to get married.

Interestingly the situation of being married under such conditions for both of the writers resembles being imprisoned as they both illustrate themselves behind bars (see figures 10 and 11).

Figure 10: Marjane, behind the bars, (Satrapi, p. 163)

Figure 11: Bashi, behind the bars, (Bashi, p. 70)

In accepting to get married, Satrapi finally obeys the only possible sexual lifestyle forced upon women by the state. Bashi conforms to marriage as well and shows herself encaged because she is literally confined to her house by her husband who is given the right by the state to do so –this will be explicitly discussed in the following section. Through marriage and veiling, as Afary (2009) also mentions women's bodies and sexuality are successfully controlled by the Islamic regime and the veiled female body, as Afshar (1999) states, becomes the symbol of Islamisization of the post-revolutionary society.

Family Law

Under the Family Law in post-revolutionary Iran, the right to divorce is exclusively men's[6] unless the woman officially asks for it when signing the marriage contract. This law, however, is either unknown to many women, or women usually refrain from asking it because it is conventionally considered rude and even bad omen to ask for this at the beginning of a married life.

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[6] **Article 1133 of the Civil Code** states: A man can divorce his wife whenever he so chooses and does not have to give her advance notice (WFAFI, 2005).

Under such conditions Satrapi and Bashi both experienced divorce, yet in different ways. In Bashi's case, her married life was problematic due to the rights men have over women under Islamic code, while Marjane's divorce was easy and happened with mutual understanding. Unlike Parsua, Marjane never faced violence or abuse by her husband, and her divorce was simply the result of a lack of love in their mutually respectful relationship. Beside the fact that Marjane's husband was a decent person and did not wish to take advantage from the rights he had, her divorce process was also smooth because Marjane's father asked his future son-in-law for the official right to divorce for his daughter before she got married.

Bashi gave birth to a girl a year after marriage and got a divorce six years after she got married. From the very beginning she had conflicts with her husband, who almost confined her to their house. According to the law, married women need their husband's written consent to get employed; otherwise, the husband can sue the employer. Bashi's husband did not let her go to work anymore[7], claiming that work place was not safe for her, and that he was protecting her by bringing her work home. She was not allowed to leave home to visit anyone, either.[8] First, she was banned from visiting her friends because her husband thought they were "immoral". After a while, communication with relatives was stopped. And finally she was not even allowed to visit her mother anymore because her husband believed that her mother was a witch. She struggled with this situation for a few years, before deciding to get a divorce.

In the family law in post-revolutionary Iran, the woman can ask for her dowry in case the man requests divorce. However, if the woman demands divorce she cannot receive anything. Bashi

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[7] **Article 1117 of the Civil Code** states that the husband may ban his wife from any technical profession that conflicts with family life or her character. (WFAFI, 2005)

[8] **Article 105 of the Civil Code** "In the relationship between a man and a woman, the man is responsible as head of the family." The Council of Guardians, has decreed, "A woman cannot leave her home without her husband's permission, even to attend her father's funeral". (WFAFI, 2005)

nonetheless decided to ask for a divorce because she knew according to the law she still could have custody of her daughter at least up to when she was seven years old. However, since Bashi asked for the divorce, the judge of the family court gave even the custody over the child to the father based on his own judgment according to which he disqualified Bashi as a good Muslim mother: "if you were a good mother you would live with your husband and keep quiet. True Muslim women live their lives with husbands even if they get beaten every day" (see figure 12).
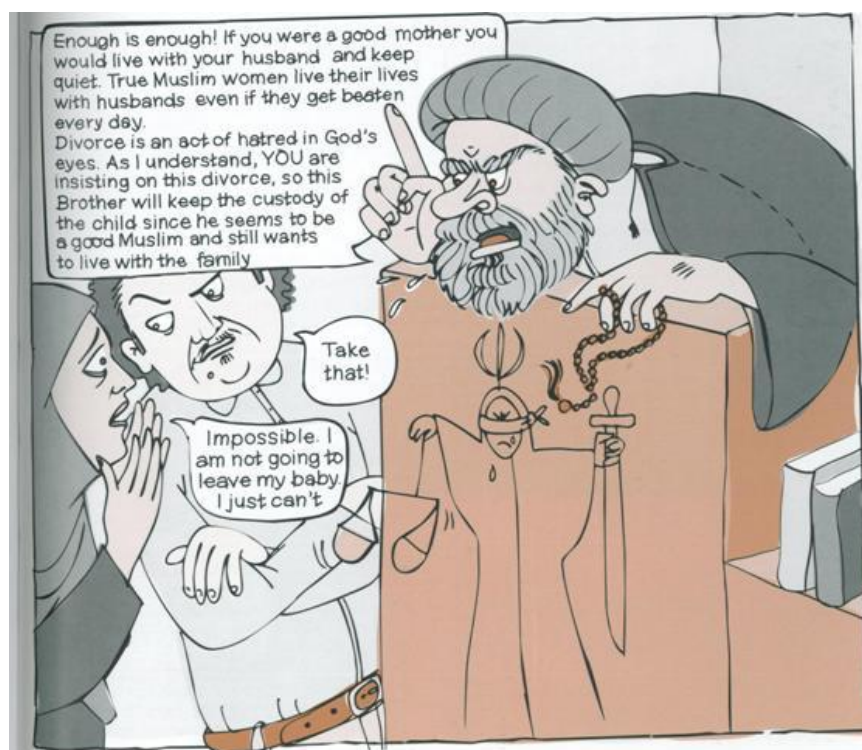
Figure 12: The good mother, (Bashi, p. 69)

The authority in the family court is the judge who can go beyond the law if he so decides. Although Bashi was allowed by the court to visit her daughter 24 hours every other week, the husband never let her see the child again. What catches eyes in the visual representation of these scenes is the resemblance of the exaggerated caricatures of the cleric (judge) of the family court and the one who sentenced her to lashes (see figures 7 and 12). Both clerics are also positioned above her image

forcing their authority over her. These depictions, in my opinion, point at the role of the ruling religious authorities and their control over women's bodies, sexuality and life.

Although these laws have been subject to change from the year that Bashi got a divorce, in general divorcing is still very hard when the woman initiates it. According to Mir-Hosseini (1996) the 1992 reforms in the family law are mostly focused on restricting men's access to divorce, and making them pay the wife a remarkable amount of money in case she does not agree with the divorce or the husband does not have any good reason for divorcing. However, she concludes that the 1992 reforms are more practically useful for economically dependent women (housewives), not for middle-class working women who are seeking divorce and children custody.

As depicted in figure 13, a divorced young woman would experience several problems in the context of post-revolutionary Iran.

In this image Bashi illustrates her experience as a divorced young woman. She is assumed "available" by men because she is no longer a virgin and is not in the possession of any man; she is thus considered a potential sexual target. It is also very difficult for her to rent an apartment because no land lord would like for his house to become a place for free sex. Such a woman is not welcomed at her married friends' and relatives, as she is considered a potential threat to their marriage. When following her court cases to gain custody of her child, she is asked for sexual services in exchange from male authorities involved; not mentioning that as a mother who has left her child, she is always exposed to bitter comments.

Figure 13: Just divorced, (Bashi, p. 71)

Bashi has taken advantage of the characteristic of comic books of combining words and images to convey her message in a clever way. She depicts her vulnerable and unstable situation as a divorced woman in the society by illustrating herself walking on a thin rope, always in danger of losing control and falling down. This shows how trying to move against the wave of tradition and laws can put a young woman in a defenseless and shaky position. The fact that being a young divorced woman is so difficult pushes most women to staying in their married life in spite of the difficulties. It takes lots of strength to act differently.

Conclusion

One of the major themes of the two autobiographies, which this chapter tried to explore, is the experience of coming of age for women in the wake of the revolution in Iran. The political changes in this transitory era made this experience a significant one specifically for women as the new regime mapped its new order on the female body through two major instruments: compulsory veiling and family law. By controlling female body and sexuality through these axes, the state successfully imposed a collective identity on women which consequently formed the emblematic face of the new Islamic regime (Afshar, 1999). Both Bashi and Satrapi, as middle-class non religious women, have spent their adolescence and youth in this time of transition and have thus, depicted these changes in their personal experience. As was discussed in this chapter, their lifestyle in public and private vividly differed under the new order, which shaped their hybrid identity both in contestation and confirmation of the collective imposed identity on women.

However, to consider the experiences of middle-class women as represented by Satrapi and Bashi as the only or the predominant reaction to the state promoted gender practices of the Islamic revolution is too simplistic. What these two authors represent in their autobiographical narratives is related to certain aspects of their lives and framed by their social class, age, education and attitude towards religion. For many women from lower class or more religious families, compulsory veiling and reformed laws on marriage were not considered to be a confining issue, and they even had an emancipatory role.

Overall, to conclude, I would like to draw on what is at the heart of Afshar (1996) and Mir-Hosseini's (1996) discussions of women's situation after the 1979 Revolution. According to them, women's issues have been politicized after the Revolution, since the law under the new Islamic regime is concerned with all aspects of women's lives, from the most private issues, such as their role as mothers and wives in the family, to how they should appear in the public sphere, to what extent

and in what professions. However, the new circumstances have positioned women in a paradoxical situation: the Islamic Republic governance system, on one hand empowers women by providing access to education, employment, welfare, and political participation for every social class, and paves the way for them to enter the public arena, on the other hand, it encourages women to take up domestic roles as mothers and wives and tries to confine them to the home through its restrictive family law on women.

Chapter 3:

Orientalizing Middle-Eastern Migrants

In this chapter, I intend to analyze the formation of identity in the situation of migration through the autobiographies of Marjane Satrapi and Parsua Bashi. In some cases, for further clarifications, I will benefit from my own narrative as a female Iranian who has also experienced migration. I will also use Said's (1979) notion of Orientalism in order to analyze how stereotypes of Oriental people are constructed. Even though this notion can be criticized and I will refer to this later, it is, nevertheless, a suitable analytical frame for understanding the process of "othering" which Bashi and Satrapi experience in their migration.

Satrapi left Iran for Vienna when she was a 14-year-old teenager in 1984, and Bashi migrated to Zurich in her late thirties in 2004. In studying the content of these two graphic autobiographies, I will analyze how the protagonists are situated in different times and contexts, and how they challenge and renegotiate their identity in different situations. As argued in the first chapter, their different positionality is constructed through intersectional work of different categories of identity such as gender, age, nationality, religion; I will also be looking into the difference in significance of these categories depending on the given context. In the following analysis I will illustrate how "othering" happens both in the context of the host society and in the community at home country based on the main characters' positionality.

Xenophobia, Racism, and Stereotypes

Kamali (2011) states that "a short overview of relevant research on discrimination in Europe shows how widespread racism and discrimination against 'the others', namely non-Western groups living in Europe, has been" (p. 302). He argues that the modern civilization in Europe is in need of othering

to build its modern identity. According to Kamali, constructing "us" happens through imagining communities of belonging on different levels, from family to building a nation with political borders in the modern Europe. This belonging becomes meaningful upon conceptualizing "them," who do not belong to these intertwined communities; "us" is what "they" are NOT. In his words "the existence and the threat of 'them', 'our' enemies, has been an inseparable and constitutive part of the social construction of 'us' " (Kamali, 2011, p. 302). Therefore, defining a nation, in the modern sense, depends on the creation of 'others'. Kamali clarifies that "otherism" has different dimensions – sexism, racism, and homophobia. However, what he is addressing in relation to migration is the concept of "xeno-otherism". Xenophobia means the fear of strangers who are assumed not to belong to a specific (modern European) nation-state. In this context, 'otherism' refers to "racist and exclusionary practices against migrants" (p. 305), who are believed to belong to an 'other' group "with a sense of racial or ethnic identity" (p. 306). In this section, I will bring evidence of xeno-otherism from the two autobiographical comics under the study here, while in addition to racial and ethnic discriminations and exclusions I emphasize the gender aspect of such experiences by the two female protagonists.

Satrapi recalls that when for the first time she goes with her first Austrian boyfriend to his home, his mother comes to his room and yells at her to get out of their home and her son's life, and screams that she knows Marjane only wants to get Austrian passport through abusing her son. Afterwards, since her son still continues his relationship with Marjane, the mother cuts off his allowance. Satrapi mentions here that she had already heard such words in the streets of Vienna from a few people, words such as "dirty foreigner get out" (p. 66), but hearing it from her boyfriend's mother and getting kicked out of the house (see figures 1 and 2) was for the first time so humiliating and could not be easily ignored.

Figure 14 "Leave us alone!"1, (Satrapi, p. 66)
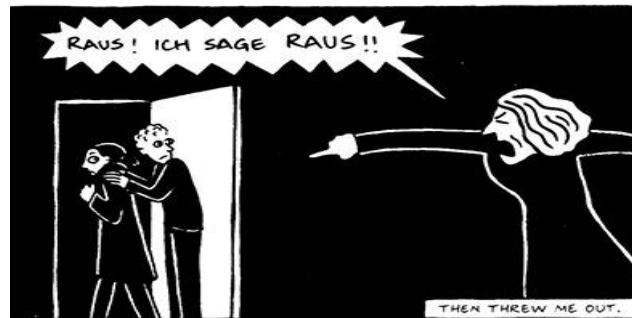
Figure 15 "Get out!"2, (Satrapi, p. 66)

In figure 14 which is a good example of illustrating xenophobia, one can see a close-up of the angry profile of the mother all in white and a deep focus which depicts Marjane as a small figure totally dressed in black blending in the black background. Marjane's face is shocked and the gesture of her hands up in the air shows she has surrendered to the situation. Through the white color associated with the mother, and exaggerating her anger by assigning one third of the frame to her yelling huge profile, this image, in my opinion, reinforces the opposition and the apparent hierarchy of races and depicts a xenophobic scene.

In the next scene, one can observe the intersection that defines Marjane's position in the migration situation, her race (as a Middle Eastern) and her gender (as a female).

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Figure 16 "This isn't a Bordello.", (Satrapi, p. 67)

Racialized stereotypes are also operational when Marjane and her boyfriend decide to meet at Marjane's place her landlady comes to her room and orders the boy to "get out!" shouting that her house is not a "whore house" ("Nutten Haus") (see figure 3). She accuses Marjane of being a secret prostitute for a long time thus revealing long lasting suspiciousness based on her stereotypical beliefs about Middle Eastern women. This is confirmed in the next frame in Marjane's own words; when the landlady refuses to believe that the boy is Marjane's boyfriend, she replies "what? To you, true Austrians don't go out with girls like me? Is that it?" (p. 67). Her boyfriend is a totally blond guy immediately recognized as a native, one of "us" who supposedly does not build a long-lasting relationship with black haired "others" such as Marjane, but only uses them for exotic sexual services. In other words, she must be a prostitute for such a man to come to visit her; otherwise, she should be involved with boys from her own degraded race.

To understand how and why Marjane is stereotyped in these scenes, one can refer to Said's (1979) notion of Orientalist knowledge production which, according to him, takes place through representations of the Orient produced by the Western gaze. In this mode of knowledge production, Orient is the object of study, exoticized and eroticized in representations. This is similar to how the boy's mother and the landlady, under the influence of such discourses, see Marjane as representing a

sexually exotic other. Moreover, in this process of othering through which, in Said's words, hierarchical power relations are reproduced by the oppositional binary of West/East, Us/Them, Marjane is seen as an "other" and thus as an inferior to the superior Westerners.

Another turning point in Marjane's teenage migrant life earlier to this event, also illustrates well, the stereotypical image on Iranians in the European context. At the time when she is living with the nuns, Marjane is at one point reproached for her "improper" manner of eating, because she was eating from a pot in the TV room, which was a common practice of European residents at the same place. So the problem was not her eating at the wrong place, (even though in her home back in Iran she was never allowed to have food in front of TV); the nun was actually troubled by her eating from the pot instead of having the food on a proper plate. This is a pretext for the nun to statement the following: "it is true what they say about Iranians; they have no education" (p. 23). Marjane reacts angrily and replies "It is true what they say about you, too; you were all prostitutes before becoming nuns". The irony of the situation which frames Marjane's response is the fact that she was expected to be much more disciplined in her parents' home in Iran. Thus, in reply to discrimination which is both national and racial, she replies herself with an offense which is sexualized and gendered, but also based on a set of preconceived ideas. She refuses to apologize for this offense unless the nun, too, apologizes to her for what she said about Iranians and consequently, she gets expelled from the dormitory.

Intolerance towards migrants based on stereotypical preconceived ideas is also present in Bashi's narrative. Picking up on the problem of racism and xenophobia in the situation of migration, in one full page frame in the book (see figure 17), Bashi pictures protests against the presence of migrants in their country. The figures of protesters are either shouting slogans or showing placards with various points against migrants.

On the other hand, as we can see in the image, at the bottom right side of the very same frame, there are people (Westerners) asking for "peace" and "no war" while besides them there are two missiles on each of which is respectively written "to Iraq" and "to Afghanistan". This part of the image refers to the peaceful protests against wars with the Middle-Eastern countries. These wars were and still are taking place on the pretext of humanitarian acts (for example in the name of emancipating Muslim women (Abu-Lughod, 2002)), but are actually aiming at the energy sources, and benefiting Western politics. However, these protests were in vain because the missiles are shown as flying towards destinations where we know wars have already broken out.

This specific depiction does NOT try to homogenize Westerners as a group of racists who care only about their own benefits; instead, alongside the xenophobic images a positive attitude is also shown. Just as Said has suggested that "East" should not be homogenized, it is important that "West" not be seen as a homogeneous category either. Many have criticized Said's analysis arguing that he is not only reinforcing the binary opposition of Orient/Occident that he is trying to break, but is even, ironically, homogenizing the West inasmuch as he would want to criticize it when applied to the East (Ning, 1997). Therefore, I believe that it is worth noticing that Bashi does not depict black and white pictures of the given situations, but attempts to show both their positive and their negative aspects. When the character of Bashi in the book argues with her past "selves" from the times she used to live in Iran, neither West as the host society, nor Iran as the home country is portrayed as extremely good or unbearably bad. Instead she keeps balancing the conversations by striving to present the pros and cons in each case.
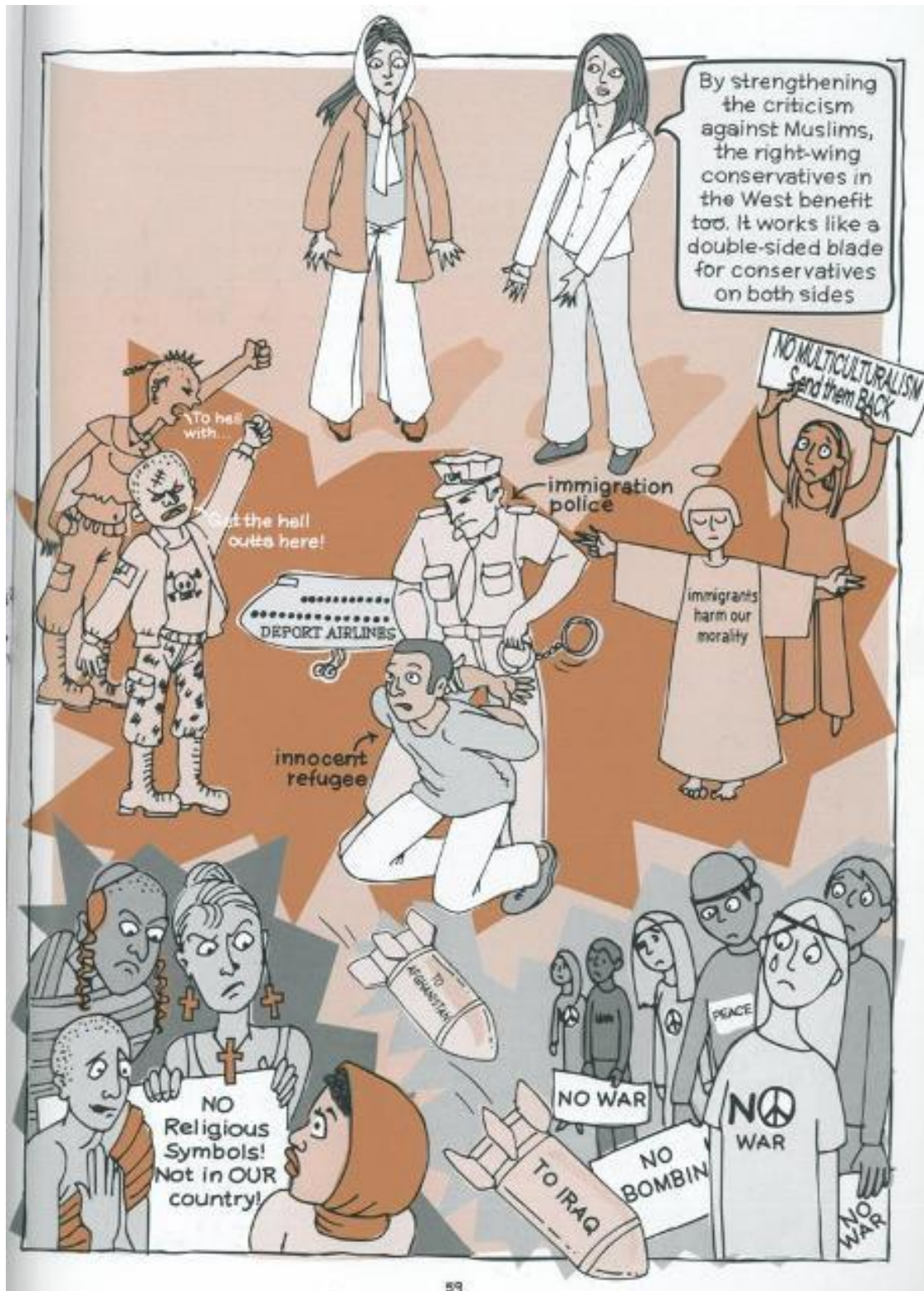
Figure 17: Protest against migrants, (Bashi, p. 59)

Home and Belonging

Migration studies pay special attention to the meaning of "home". As discussed in the first chapter, speaking from a transnational perspective, there are questions about what "home" means to a migrant. Is "home" in the country of origin, which we are used to calling homeland? Is "home" a place? A space? A person? A thing? A concept?

According to Al-Ali and Koser (2002), 'home' is neither just a physical place to live in, nor simply linked to "family, community or homeland/nation" (p. 6); rather than referring only to physical places or "symbolic spaces", home implies both. In addition to these, home is a place where one locates his/her personal and social meanings; it is accompanied by a strong sense of belonging and is related to the "sense of self, of one's identity, which corresponds to various conceptualizations of home" (p. 7). They further emphasize that even though the previously accepted notions of home which implied concrete definitions are already shaken, yet those involved in "transnational practices might express an uneasiness, a sense of fragmentation, tension and even pain; everyday contestations of negotiating the gravity of one's home is particularly distressing for those who are vulnerable, for example the poor, women, illegal immigrants and refugees" (Al-Ali and Koser, 2002, p. 7). Al-Ali and Koser additionally assert that the meaning of the 'non-home', which used to be the "unfamiliar" and "outside" has also changed in transnationalism; the "here" and "there" are less and less clear and difficult to maintain; therefore, "the dynamic and relationship between transnational migrants and their 'homes' [multiplicity of home]"(p. 8) is important in studying the situation of migration. Such tensions could be found in the two comics investigated in this thesis.

Satrapi and Bashi both foreground the notion of home in their memoirs and each gives it several specific meanings. Bashi assigns a few pages of her memoir to discussing the meaning of home and investigating whether she is feeling "homesick". It is important to figure out where home is to know whether you are homesick or not. She states that, after her migration, she was usually asked by her

native (Austrian) friends if she felt homesick or if she was satisfied with her new life, and she emphasizes this is a question that immigrants are frequently asked in the host society. In response to these questions she enters a conversation with her 18-year-old self who lived in Iran in 1984 after the Revolution and during the Iran-Iraq War and had a strong opinion about the huge wave of emigration from Iran at that point –a wave which, the narrator mentions later, is still going on. During this conversation, she remembers that her brothers, most of her family and friends left Iran at that point, and although her parents were insisting that she had to leave too, she decided to stay in her 'homeland', and take the entrance exam of university[9] there, since she believed that if everybody leaves, there will be nobody to do any good for the country. At the same time, through this conversation or an inner dialogue, she realizes that she felt very lonely at that point in her life even though she was still living in her homeland because most of the people she felt close to were gone. Therefore there are other elements besides physically existing in the homeland which make a person call a place "home".

In these pages, Bashi's definition of "home" is based on two elements: the caring presence of the "loved ones" and the "mother tongue". Just as the absence of her loved ones makes her feel lonely in her home country, the first thing that makes her feel alienated in the host society is the "language barrier"; therefore, language is one of her major concerns. This is all the more so because she is trying to learn a foreign language as an adult, at the age of 38, and that is why it becomes a central issue when she talks about what is home to her: "language; I think one is at home in one's mother tongue; a foreign language, even if learned properly, does not pass along the emotional depth of one's message".

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[9] In Iran there is only one exam to enter all universities. The exam is held not by the universities but by an organization called the National Organization for Evaluation and Testing (NOET).

Figure 18: Language, mother tongue (Bashi, p. 34)

Therefore, what Bashi really misses is to have the opportunity to talk in Farsi with someone, rather than being physically present in Iran. As seen in figure 18 she illustrated herself as naked and thus vulnerable in a place where she can neither talk her own language, nor the language of the host country.

Satrapi's narrative also has a frame which implies a shared culture imbedded in the mother tongue as a sort of home. But for Satrapi the language is more directly linked with the whole culture that was left behind. Thus when her mother comes to Vienna to visit her, and she finds the opportunity to talk in her own language, she mentions that "It relaxed me to talk to her; it had been so long since I'd been able to talk to someone without having to explain my culture" (p. 52) (see figure 19).

Figure 19: Language and culture, (Satrapi, p. 52)

At the same time, both authors go beyond the question of language in discussing the meaning of "home" in the situation of migration. A page after discussing the mother tongue, Bahsi asserts that "home is where your loved ones are" (p. 35), concluding that if everyone she knows is out of Iran, she is closer to them now that she, too, is living abroad. As a result, she says "for years I was homesick in my hometown; after such a depressing experience, I could not feel it anymore as an immigrant" (p. 35). She felt lonely and alienated in her so called "home country" even years before deciding to migrate, so for her there is no such thing as "home" in her "home land".

Satrapi, similarly, sees home in "having loved ones close by" although her experience does not prove this to be true in all contexts. In her case, since she was alone in Vienna and most of her family and friends were back in Iran in the horrible situation of the Iran-Iraq war her perspective was different than Bashi's: "certainly, they had to endure the war, but they had each other close by; they had never known the confusion of being a Third-Worlder, they had always had a home" (p. 113). She assigns "home" to the state of "not being alone" but being surrounded by caring people. According to her, no matter in what situation you are living, if you are emotionally supported by people around you,

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you feel at home. In the situation of migration that she experienced during her teenage years, she was treated as an "other", and specifically a Third-Worlder who was degraded and accused of being less educated and cultured, and as seeking to take advantage from European natives. As explained in the previous section she faced racism and xeno-otherism from people around her.

Satrapi's search for "home" can be found in between the lines of her search for emotional support. For example, when she accidentally sees her boyfriend having sex with another girl, she is totally devastated because, at that point in her teenage migrant life, she has no close person other than him. She leaves her flat wandering around, and living in the streets for about two months because her feeling of loneliness after losing such an emotionally supportive relationship to betrayal is unbearable for her. At this point she loses her only "home", which she thought she had found in her boyfriend, that is, in the supportive "loved one". She even mentions that after a few years she no longer felt angry with her boyfriend because she realized that she had been expecting a lot from a 19-year-old boy: to be her whole family and life; her mother, her father, and also a kind of twin sister to her and, in a word, her "home". Finally, Satrapi's miserable life style in the streets of Vienna ends by her spitting blood in a street in the middle of the day and fainting. After finding herself in a hospital she gains her strength again and decides to go back "home", to her loving parents, friends, and family, to Iran, on the condition that her parents do not ask her what she has been through during the last two months.

However, in the context of her home country her experience does not prove that merely being close to the loved ones can convey "home". When she goes back, once again she feels lonely and is not capable of communicating with her family and specifically with her now grown-up friends whom she has not met since they were only fourteen years old.

Alienated from her community in her homeland, among family and friends, she describes her 19-year-old friends as follows: "they all looked like the heroines of American TV series, ready to get

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married at the drop of a hat, if the opportunity presented itself" (p. 105). In figure 20 the reader can see that they all have heavy makeup and brushed hair in a very stylish and feminine manner, unlike Marjane who is looking plain and simple.

AFTER MY FAMILY, IT WAS MY FRIENDS' TURN. I HAD FEWER APPREHENSIONS ABOUT THEM: WE WERE THE SAME AGE, WHICH SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO CONNECT.

HI! HOW ARE YOU? UHHH...

I WAS WRONG. THEY ALL LOOKED LIKE THE HEROINES OF AMERICAN TV SERIES, READY TO GET MARRIED AT THE DROP OF A HAT, IF THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF.

Figure 20: Friends in Iran, (Satrapi, P. 105)

The first comment Marjane receives from her friends is that "you look like a nun, no one would ever guess that you'd lived in Europe" (p. 105); they assume that women in Europe look like them since they have freedom in choosing what to wear and how to look[10]. She wonders how they used to be her close friends: "I had a hard time remembering what had brought us together before" (p. 105) and consequently she says "I felt terribly alone" (p. 105).

Another instance where she feels separated from her friends and when she understands the clashes between the recent culture of the sending community, and that of the host society, neither of which she feels to belong to, is when her friends ask her if she has experienced sex and how it was. When she replies that it depends on who you have sex with, they are shocked to know that she has been with more than one person and one of her friends shouts at her: "so what's the difference between

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[10] Marjane, as the narrator, explains her friends' appearance as a kind of resistance toward the oppression against women in Iran –as mentioned in the second chapter of this thesis. However, this is something she realizes much later.

you and a whore?" (p. 116). Even though she is now physically in her home country, yet again she misses a home where she could belong, because she cannot identify with the dominant culture of her community in her homeland. Marjane then complains that "underneath their outward appearance of being modern women, my friends were real traditionalists"[11] (p. 116). In her homeland female sexuality is limited while in the context of host society she has experienced a different sexual life style as a girl. This difference creates a gap between her and her friends and thus hinders communication. We can see that Marjane still feels lonely after returning to Iran and does not feel at home because she cannot find a community with shared ideas that she could join, identify with and belong to. She has not grown up in the same environment with her friends to have obtained common ideas about life with them. She explains her feelings at that time by saying "I was a Westerner in Iran, an Iranian in the west. I had no identity. I didn't even know anymore why I was living" (p. 118). Marjane finds herself separated and alienated from the home society, while, at the same time, she has experienced an unbearable solitude and discrimination in the host society and the situation of migration. The process of "othering" has happened to her in both places. She no longer recognizes where her roots are, where she belongs; she cannot find a source for identifying herself. At this point, she draws the far-reaching conclusion that without having any "identity" or being able to define a belonging there is no point in living.

 However, I argue that the grown up narrator does not feel the same. She is living in a liminial space or a "Third Space" (Bhabha, 2004); a combination of both cultures, which simultaneously is neither of them. According to Bhabha (2004) "the intervention of the Third Space" (p. 37) makes the process of meaning making ambivalent by shaking the integrated understanding of culture. This liminial space, or "cultures hybridity", implies neither an assimilation in the host culture, nor a return

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[11] Although this oppositional binary making of modern/traditionalist is troubling, I develop this point later because my focus here is on the meaning of home for a migrant.

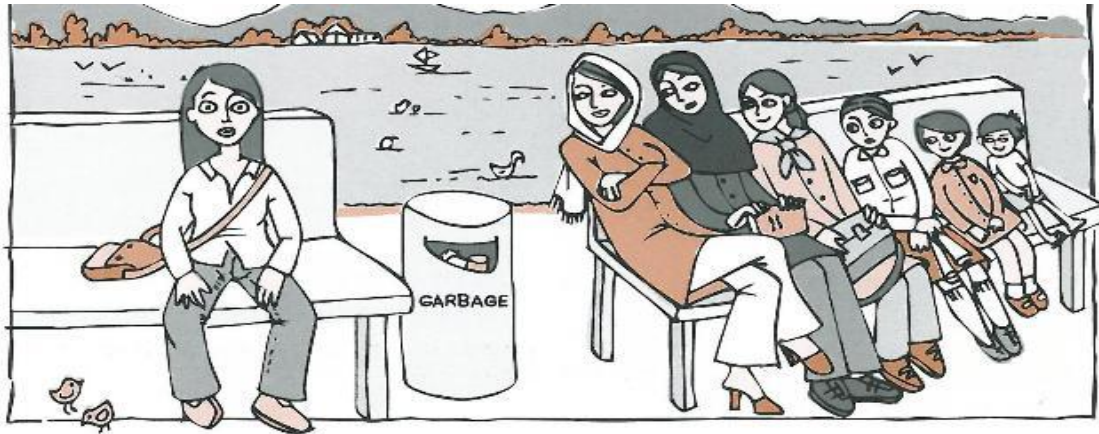to the home culture. Living in this liminial space enables Satrapi to criticize both cultures (Naficy, 2001).

Figure 21: Past selves, (Bashi, p. 21)

And the same thing is true about Bashi in her inner dialogues with her past "selves" (see figure 21); in these dialogues she is continuously reflecting on positive and negative aspects of the situation she is faced with in both societies.

Friendship with the Marginalized

In this section, I exclusively focus on Satrapi's first year experience of migration, and compare it to my own childhood migratory experience in Finland. Since Bashi does not experience going to school because of her different age of migration, or does not explain how she makes friends at her arrival, under this sub-title I draw primarily on Satrapi's memoir. I am going to compare my own friend group with Satrapi's since I believe our positionality as Middle Eastern migrants at school shaped our special friendships with "internal others". By this term I mean those students who were assumed different in the context of the host country, who did not belong to the mainstream in one way or another.

As I have already mentioned, the second volume of Marjane Satrapi's comic autobiography starts with her arrival in Austria in 1984, five years after the Revolution and in the middle of the Iran-Iraq

war, when she was a 14-year-old teenager. The only foreign language she has learnt in Iran was French and she is there to go to a French school; but her roommate and every other resident of the boarding house where she lives speak only German, which she does not understand. Therefore, her first impediment in communicating with others in the new environment is the language. She cannot even spend time with them watching television because all programs they watch are in German.

It soon turns out that no one from the mainstream of the host society is really interested in her friendship, not even at the French speaking school where her classmates take advantage of her poor French and make fun of her. After the revolution the French school she used to go to in Iran was closed down by the Islamic regime that came to power; Marjane did not use her French for three years before leaving Iran. Therefore, not knowing French well, she becomes an object of ridicule for her classmates rather than attracting them to a friendly relationship.

As for me, similar to Marjane, I faced the language barrier. I arrived in Finland when I was ten since my father was invited to teach at Helsinki University. Only three months before leaving Iran, I attended an English class for only one semester and immediately afterwards I found myself in Helsinki. A few days later the head of the department in which my father was teaching registered me in the only Finnish school that had some classes for international students as well. Since I did not know Finnish, they decided that I should study in the second grade of elementary school to catch up with my Finnish, while I was a fifth grader in Iran[12]. The first day in class was very stressful. The teacher asked me to come to the front of the class, and introduced me as a newcomer from Iran. Everyone was looking at me very curiously which was understandable because I was new there. However, I was not feeling comfortable, specifically because very few students knew any English and

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12 I used to study the material related to the fifth grade with my sister at home.

the teacher talked in Finnish most of the time and explained just a few things in English which I still had difficulty understanding fully.

When the teacher finally took me to my seat and went back to the board and started to write something, some students approached me in silence and some started to touch my hair. I stood still and could not understand what was going on; I was even a bit scared. Now I know that it was their first time to see such dark and curly hair[13]. When the teacher turned to the class, everyone ran back to their places. She came to me and started caressing my hair (see figure 22) and said I had beautiful hair and that was why everyone liked to touch it.

Figure 22: My "black" hair (my narrative)

Back in Iran, I am counted as a person with (dark) brown hair. My hair is not, in any way, considered black because there are many people with much darker hair color; but in a place where everybody

13 At the time rarely did any one migrate to Finland so the environment was mostly Finnish and people were not used to seeing different looks.

was totally blond or at least had very light hair colors, my hair seemed as black as it could be. Other than the language barrier, I found my exotic look embarrassing and it became a serious impediment in maintaining any equal relationship with native students. Even though Marjane does not mention such an experience, yet she was probably also excluded from the mainstream on the grounds of her look as well.

Figure 23: Marjane's friend group, (Satrapi, p. 13)

When Marjane goes to school no one welcomes her warmly. She is not accepted as a normal fourteen-year-old student among her classmates of her age in the host society, specifically because of the "language barrier" and her nationality (or the region of the world she is coming from) which limits her choice of friends. The only people who are interested in her life experience back in Iran are

themselves members of a marginalized group who simply think that experiencing a revolution and a war and personally seeing dead bodies is very "cool". She describes the members of her friend group -whose image can be seen in figure 23- as: "an eccentric" who is an eighteen-year-old French girl – much older than the average age of her classmates-; "a punk" who is a twenty-year-old boy from whom, to her surprise, she receives her first kiss on the lips as a way of welcoming her, and "two orphan boys" from Switzerland, and herself as a "third-worlder" and the youngest member.

Marjane's eccentric older friends (see figure 24) are in the habit of smoking joints. Her friends are older than her; they belong to a different age group thus their hobbies are different from those of school children. But in order to assimilate with them and keep her circle of friendship, Marjane has to take up their habits even though she feels she is going against her parents' wishes. Marjane's family had strong opinion against drugs, and she is afraid she might end up addicted to joints. In this situation she tries to make a compromise attempting to take an 'in-between' position, acting somewhere between her friends' demands and her parents' values.

Figure 24: Smoking Joints, (Satrapi, p. 39)

She pretends to smoke and fakes getting high by thrusting her fingers in her eyes and making them look red while no one is paying attention (see figure 24). However, she always feels guilty for doing so and explains the situation in the following way " the harder I tried to assimilate the more I had the

feeling that I was distancing myself from my culture, betraying my parents and my origins, that I was playing a game by somebody else's rule" (p. 39).

In my case, since I did not know any Finnish and other than the migrant students nobody else knew any English in my class, my friend group was limited to other migrant classmates. Similar to me but for different reasons besides being migrants, these classmates were all marginalized from the mainstream. One was a nine-year-old Estonian girl, named Olga, who did not know any Finnish. Although she had already been living there for two years, she had not been sent to Finnish schools, and was studying at home with the help of her father, in her own language. My other friend was an eight-year-old Finnish-Arab girl, named Rihanna. The Finnish-Arab girl had light colored eyes and lighter totally straight hair which did not make her stand out in appearance as I did, but still because of her half Arab origin, although she spoke Finnish fluently, mostly children made fun of her. The third person in my friend group was another nine-year-old girl who was a child of divorced Swedish and Canadian parents living in Finland. Her name was Sona. Other than knowing Finnish, she was the only person speaking English fluently in the whole class; even our teacher's English was very poor; that I could tell. Sona was a very naughty disobedient girl and since her parents did not really take care of her, she was left on her own for the whole days living as she wished which scared other children and made them keep a distance from her.

Consequently one can observe that the friends groups in both Marjane's narrative and mine were formed from among those who were marginalized from the mainstream as "internal others", due to the fact that they were migrants and/or living an eccentric, out of the ordinary life style. In my case Olga, Sona and Rihanna were all coming from migrant or mixed migrant families and were not accepted in the mainstream not only because they (as in the case of Olga) could not speak the local language, but also because they were different from the ordinary kids due to their diverse cultural backgrounds, or out of the ordinary life style (as in the case of Sona), or the assumption that they

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belonged to a different race (as with Rihanna). One thing which seems to have brought us together is the fact that for all of these reasons none of us were accepted in the mainstream of Finnish children at school. We made our own space of communication which neither confirmed the host mainstream nor the cultural background that our families belonged to. Even the language we used to communicate with was a combination of words and body gestures that belonged neither to the host nor to the home societies specifically, but it was rather an ambiguous mixture, a "hybrid" of a language.

Marjane had almost the same experience. Her friend group included people who were marginalized as well because they were mostly migrants and lived a peculiar life style as a gang. However, in her case age also played a role; since her friends were all older than other classmates, thus mixing with other students was mutually repulsive.

All in all, regardless of the nuances and shades of difference between mine and Marjane's narrative in this case it seems to be true that for a migrant who is still not accepted in the host society friend groups are less likely to include local people. Migrants attempt, unawaringly, to find other marginalized people with whom they share the same "space" in the context of the host society.

Conclusion

My attempt in this chapter was to show how Satrapi's and Bashi's identities are formed in the situation of migration mainly through the three issues of xeno-otherism and imposed identities, the issue of home and belonging, and the formation of friend groups.

As argued, the process of xeno-otherism, through racism and ethnicization, marginalizes foreigners as "others" of the society, and forms the "them" as different from "us". As I tried to show this process ends in defining a predetermined, stereotypical identity. The protagonists of these autobiographies face this imposed identity and try to confront these assumptions.

In all the cases presented here going through the process of "otherism" and being pushed towards the margins influenced the migrants' choice of friends. In the section related to friendships, I included my own narrative, and I tried to show how mine and Satrapi's marginalized groups of friends were shaped through "otherism".

The identity is being constructed and renegotiated through the presence and absence of home as well. But the idea of home is not a stable one; it changes the meaning in the given context and in the situation of migration is no longer limited to a geographic space. For Satrapi and Bashi the idea of home is connected to mother tongue, and the culture embedded in it, but also to the presence of those they love.

In section related to home, to show how protagonists are situated in an in-between position, I explained the process of "otherism" as one of the many factors by which the protagonists can be placed in a liminial space. As migrants, they experience xeno-otherism in the host society, but also, a feeling of alienation from the home society. Thus these women are positioned in a liminial space in between the home and host societies' cultures; this space is a hybrid one, it allows for both cultures to be brought together in the migrant's perspective. Therefore, I argue that the protagonists are renegotiating the boundaries differently, not as separation but as points of connection; this creates "cultures hybridity". The resulted hybrid identity is continuously in process of being formed and renegotiated in the bi-directional situation of transnational migration.

Therefore, what I have been striving to do in this chapter, was to show that while Said' (1979) ideas reinforces the dichotomous understanding of Orient/Occident and the superiority it implies, Bhabha's (2004) notion of the liminial or "Third" space provides a complex understanding which blurs the boundaries between these two, and as result between 'us' and 'them', and paves the way for a hybrid understanding of cultural identity.

Conclusion

My purpose in this study was to depict the on going process of identity construction in the specific situation of migratory life of middle-class female migrants from post-revolutionary Iran. The genre of graphic memoir was specifically selected for this purpose regarding the complexity it offers this topic through its multilayered representation in combinations of words and images. Through a close reading of the visual and verbal texts of Marjane Satrapi and Parsua Bashi's graphic autobiographies, in my analysis, I tried to illustrate how their protagonists (re)negotiate their identity in the context of the home and the host societies.

In studying the experience of coming of age in the wake of the 1979 Revolution and the establishment of a new regime in Iran, I think I managed to show the conflictual nature of these middle-class autobiographers' lifestyle in public and private, and how they continuously defined them-selves, partially in contestation, and partly in confirmation to the imposed gender identity by the Islamic state through the compulsory veiling and family law.

In the context of the host society, I tried to show that beside the hybrid identity that these middle-class women have developed under the post-revolutionary new gender order, they confront yet another identity, that of the foreigner "other", imposed upon them. Their identity is shaped through facing discrimination based primarily on ethnic and racial grounds, which intersects with gender as well. Thus in the situation of migration they are marginalized in the xenophobic European context.

Therefore, the problem of imposed identities and the way individual women face them as a particular challenge in their lives became one of the central issues in the two graphic autobiographies analyzed here. Despite differences in the personal situation of the two autobiographers, in their narrative and visual styles as well as the positions they take in certain situations, there are some crucial similarities between the two graphic memoirs which allowed me to come to the conclusions regarding the

situation of migration they are both dealing with. Namely, in both cases we are facing bi-directional situation of transnational migration, (Benmayor and Skotnes 2005), which means that they remain in close relation with both home and the host societies. Satrapi and Bashi are placed in a liminial space where both cultures have converged, and which enables them to position themselves critically toward both cultures and negotiate their situatedness both as authors and as protagonists of their own narratives.

In other words, I have tried to illustrate that "performativity", "relationality", and "positionality" are the three constructive features of these female autobiographers' works, and that specifically the form of graphic memoir represents these three more comprehensively (Smith & Watson, 2013). Performing their identities, Starapi and Bashi are always negotiating them in dialogue with others and in relation to dominant social discourses.

In addition, in order to make further nuances and clarifications, at several points I have interwoven my personal narrative into the analysis of the two graphic autobiographies. I think my personal experiences of a woman born and grown up in post-revolutionary Iran, who has also experienced a migratory life, might have brought some insight to the analysis.

These graphic autobiographies can be studied with focuses other than the process of identity construction, approaching them particularly through theories such as those on autobiographies, narrative studies and memory or working on them through professional visual analysis. These, however, were beyond the scope of this thesis which is focused mainly on the process of identity construction in the situation of migratory lives of Iranian middle-class women.

Using graphic memoirs, and benefiting from their combination of literature and art as a ground for studying the social issue of identity construction in the transnational lives of migrants, I hope to have contributed some new insight to social studies.

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