Another Place

Iran Studies

VOLUME 17

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/is*

Another Place

Identity, Space, and Transcultural Signification in Goli Taraqqi's Fiction

By

Goulia Ghardashkhani

BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Cover illustration: Goli Taraqqi. Photograph by Omid Tari Fard.

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at http://catalog.loc.gov

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1569-7401
ISBN 978-90-04-35692-4 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-35694-8 (e-book)

Contents

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, my special thanks go to Profs. Christoph Werner and Roxane Haag-Higuchi, whose insightful supervision and invaluable input made the creation of this book possible. I would also like to thank all my colleagues in the department of Iranian Studies at the University of Marburg for the most amiable working atmosphere in the department and their constructive input during the colloquia and workshops. I am also grateful to Marburg University Research Academy for generously financing my doctoral project during its final stages. My gratitude goes also to two anonymous reviewers for their precious feedback on the manuscript of this book. I am greatly thankful to Omid Tari Fard for providing an amazing photograph of Goli Taraqqi for the front cover. I am truly grateful to my husband Felix Otter for his patience and emotional support throughout the time I was preparing the manuscript for publication. I should also express my gratitude to 'Ali Dehbashi for his instantaneous and profuse help whenever I faced a predicament.

A Note on Translations

Excerpts from Goli Taraqqi's stories in English are in most cases my own translations. Stylistically, they are literal translations; I have attempted to remain as faithful to the original text as possible. In the case of a few stories, namely "The Shemiran Bus," "My Little Friend," "A Mansion in the Sky," and "The Bizarre Comportment of Mr. Alpha in Exile," I have relied on Faridoun Farrokh's translations for reasons of convenience. In these cases, while the overall meaning of the Persian text has been preserved, there are often some minor differences between the original text and the English translation. Whenever the difference might affect the analysis, an explanation is given in the footnotes.

English translations of Persian titles are given as parenthetical information, following the transliterated titles only the first time they appear in the text. On other occasions, I have only referred to the titles in transliteration (based on the transliteration scheme of *Iranian Studies*). A list of the titles of the primary literature and their English translation has been appended to this work.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Globalization, diasporas, international dislocations and migrations have in recent years blurred, displaced and challenged cultural and national boundaries of identity. Dislocated cultures, as convoluted networks of languages, customs, rituals, beliefs, values, and arts, have formed into minor, but dynamic, discursive spaces that are in constant and reciprocal relation with the dominant culture of the hosting nation states. Literature of emigration, in this sense, as a form of art, mediated directly through language and narration, comes to serve as a typical site for cultural translation, where transformation and transference of meaning in between two or more cultures become possible.

The fictional work of Goli Taraqqi (*1939), the focus of analysis in this book, is an example of Iranian literature of emigration—mainly produced after the Islamic Revolution of 1978/79, as the result of writers and intellectuals' migration towards Western countries. In her post-emigration narratives, Taraqqi ventures to re-capture Iran both vis-à-vis and from the locale of France (to which she emigrated in 1979). Built upon retrospection and constant reassessment of past homeland memories, most of Taraqqi's narrative plots avail the author in presenting a re-configured image of homeland. In Taraqqi's representations of Iran, specific homeland-related discourses and the ways they influence a displaced individual's definition and perception of the self go through alteration.

The present work, accordingly, intends to demonstrate the ways in which Taraqqi's short fiction represents the fluidity of the meanings of self and other. Narratives of self and other in her stories are constructed, undermined, and ephemerally re-constructed in terms of the characters' distance from/contact to certain semantic realms. The concept of space, in its broad sense—referring to specific social structures, physical territories, virtual boundaries, familiar or unexplored cultural spaces, and the temporal space of past and present—determines the politics of identification in Taraqqi's short stories. In this respect, through close textual analysis and by drawing upon the ideas and concepts developed by Zygmunt Bauman, Stuart Hall, Paul John Eakin, Galen Strawson, and Homi K. Bhabha, this work ventures to explore the intricacies of the dynamics at work among identity, space, and narration in Goli Taraqqi's short stories.

Another Place, the title of this book, has been inspired by the very title of Goli Taraqqi's third collection of short stories. The volume was published in 2000 and unlike the author's much spoken autobiographical collections contains

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004356948_002

a rather heterogeneous selection of Taraqqi's narratives, different in themes, philosophical outlook, and style of narration but all about journeys to another place. I believe the constant obsession with space and displacement in Goli Taraqqi's stories is the key to understanding her narratives, a multifaceted literature that despite its simple, semi-colloquial, and unornamented language addresses delicate, complicated, and deep issues regarding the dependence of self and identification on space. The never completed act of (self) narration in Taraqqi's short stories and its ever-changing internal logic are strongly conditioned by the very space, wherein the stories are set, acted, and articulated.

The introduction to this book is a chapter on Goli Taraqqi's life, work, and critical reception in the context of Iranian contemporary literature. The chapter is finalized by an overarching and general theoretical section that comments on the relevance and interdependence of the major concepts that shape the analytical framework for the study of Taraqqi's short fiction in this work. Detailed theoretical discussions on specific topics appear in the main chapters based on the subject matter in question and the thematic relevance of the narratives examined within each chapter.

Born in Tehran on October 10, 1939 into a rather prosperous family, Goli is the third child of Lotfollah Taraqqi, the director and the chief editor of the popular journal *Taraqqi* (1929–1965).[1] The journalistic career of the father, alongside his occasional literary occupation,[2] has had a shaping role in the daughter's later literary ambitions. After finishing the first cycle of high school, at the age of fifteen, she leaves Iran for the United States, attends college there and later receives an undergraduate degree in Philosophy from Drake University, Iowa.[3] In 1963, she returns to Tehran and pursues her studies in the University of Tehran. In the meanwhile, she was engaged with composing theoretical and literary articles focusing on the topics of mythology, archetypes, and Jungian psychology which were published in different journals, such as *Ayandegan* and *Ketab-e*

1 *Taraqqi* was first published in 1928 (Farvardin 1308) in the form of a newspaper (issued three times a week). Its publication was interrupted after a while until 1941 (Shahrivar 1320). From 1941 onward, it continued to be published on a weekly basis until the year 1965. 'Abedini, "Taraqqi," p. 54. See also: Afrasiyabi, Samira. "Ruznameh-ye Taraqqi." *Ruznameh-ye Resalat* (7175) 01 Jan. 2011: p. 18.

2 Lotfollah Taraqqi has composed the novels *Jenn dar hammam-e Sangalaj* (1928), *Banu-ye hendi* (1930), and *'Eshqbaziha-ye Naser ad-din Shah* (recently published under the title *Jeyran va zendegi-ye khosusi-ye Naser ad-din Shah* (2009) by Nashr-e Donya-ye Ketab). Karimi, "Ziyafat-e khaterehha," p. 15. See also: 'Abedini, "Taraqqi," p. 54.

3 Mozaffari and Karimi Hakkak, *Strange Times*, p. 215.

alefba.[4] Between the years 1974 and 76, due to the request of Bahram Beyzayi (director and playwright), Taraqqi undertook a teaching position at the faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran and lectured for a while on the significance of mythology and symbols based on a Persian translation of Carl Gustav Jung's *Man and His Symbols*.[5]

Taraqqi's literary career starts with the publication of her first short story "Mi'ad" (The vow) composed in 1965 and published in the journal *Andisheh va honar*.[6] This story is later included in Taraqqi's first collection of short stories *Man ham Che Guevara hastam* (I too am Che Guevara) (1969). The volume, through eight independent narratives, recounts the stories of disoriented characters who, trapped in an inertial state of life, are obsessively in search of individuality in realistic as well as surrealistic conditions. In 1971, Taraqqi composes the script for the film *Bita* (1972), directed by Hazhir Dariyush, then Taraqqi's husband. Gugush (Fa'eqeh Atashin), the famous Iranian pop-singer, and 'Ezzatollah Entezami, the leading actor of the Iranian cinema and theatre of his time, starred in the film. The characters of the film resemble, in many aspects, those of the *Che Guevara* collection. In 1973, Taraqqi publishes her novel *Khvab-e zemestani* (Winter sleep). This short novel is later translated into French and English, respectively under the titles *Sommeil d'hiver* (1986) and *Winter Sleep* (1994).[7] Taraqqi's novella, on the level of content, deals with the "individual psyches of eight urban middle-class 'friends' and illustrates, in an unusual and symbolic manner, the disorientation and 'anomie' resulting from Iran's rapid modernization of the 1960s."[8]

The publication of *Khvab-e zemestani* (1973) is astonishingly followed by about two decades of literary silence. In 1977, Taraqqi divorces her husband Hazhir Dariyush;[9] and two years later, at the pinnacle of the Islamic Revolution (1978/79), leaves Iran for France, her main place of residence since.[10] In these two decades, that is between the years 1973 and 1992, Taraqqi's published literary production seems to be limited to only two single stories: "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man" (The great lady of my soul) and "Dandan-e tala'i-ye 'Aziz Aqa" (Aziz Aqa's gold tooth). The Persian original of the former appears in 1980 in

4 A collection of her essays is published in Taraqqi, Goli. *Bozorg Banu-ye hasti*. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2007.

5 Karimi, "Ziyafat-e khaterehha," pp. 15–18. See also: Zarlaki, *Khalseh*, p. 134.

6 Ibid. p. 18. See also: Moayyad, *Stories*, p. 363.

7 Moayyad, *Stories*, p. 363.

8 Talattof, "Taraqqi," p. 316.

9 Zarlaki, *Khalseh*, p. 134.

10 Karimi, "Ziyafat-e khaterehha," p. 9.

the weekly journal *Ketab-e Jom'eh*.[11] In 1986 the French translation of the same story is published in the Journal *Contre-Ciel* and wins the prize for the best short story of the year. The latter story, "Dandan-e tala'i-ye 'Aziz Aqa," is published in 1988 in *Omid*,[12] "an expatriate journal" issued in California.[13] Other than these two stories, Taraqqi, apparently, ceases to be literarily productive as regards her published work in these two decades. Nevertheless, short before the publication of the collection *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (Scattered memories) in 1992, one of the stories of the volume by the title "Khaneh'i dar aseman" (A Mansion in the Sky)[14] appears separately in the journal *Kelk* (in the fall of 1991).[15]

Goli Taraqqi's prolonged literary silence comes to be finally overcome by a revitalized literary passion. Apparently, it is only through being exposed to the agonies and ambiguities of a life far from her familiar homeland, that the author becomes nurtured by innovative materials for her yet-to-come narratives:

> I was silent for a long time. I was not able to write. Life in exile [(*ghorbat*)], getting to know a new world, a great cultural discovery, learning a difficult language, alongside an enormous world of fears, ambiguities, grieves, delights and amazements, all have had prevented me from writing. I should have devoured all these new incidents and digested them [before I could write again]. All was good and necessary. The question of exile—all kinds of exile—was raised against me.[16]

The silence is finally broken by the publication of the collection *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* in 1992 by Entesharat-e Bagh-e Ayeneh. Although Taraqqi lives in France for most part of the year, her stories continue to be written in Persian and published in Iran. Nevertheless, Taraqqi in her post-revolutionary/post-emigration phase comes to emerge as a different author. Both the main themes

---

11 "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man" is first published in the fifth issue of *Ketab-e Jom'eh* (1979) but is later included among the stories of the collection *Jayi digar* (2000).

12 "Dandan-e tala'i-ye 'Aziz Aqa" was first published in the third issue of the journal *Omid* but later appears under the title "Otobus-e Shemiran" among the stories of the volume *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992).

13 Moayyad, *Stories*, p. 363.

14 The title in translation is taken from Faridoun Farrokh's English translation of the story, which he included among several other stories by Taraqqi in a volume with the same title. The book was published in 2003 by the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

15 Taraqqi, Goli. "Khaneh'i dar aseman." *Kelk* 20 (1991): 76–88.

16 Fani and Dehbashi, "Naqd-e adabi," p. 45.

of her narratives and the general tone of their narration prove to be of a different nature after the protracted phase of her literary silence. The obsessive, intense, and monotonous narrative tone of the *Che Guevara* stories, for example, is replaced with the more relaxed, distanced, and lively narration of her autobiographical memories composed in France. The experience of life in exile (as the author believes) has, in general, influenced Taraqqi's narratives on both levels of content and structure. All of Taraqqi's post-emigration stories, with the exception of a few,[17] are directly concerned with the characters' experience of displacement from Iran to France. They are also structured in analepsis—i.e. in plots formulated in flashbacks—through the narrator's nostalgic retrospections about her memories of homeland. In other words, the construction of almost all of Taraqqi's post-emigration stories in one way or another is based upon her émigré status.

Taraqqi's literary activity after the publication of *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992) is continued by a collaboration with Dariyush Mehrjuyi (director and playwright) to compose the script of the film *Derakht-e golabi* (The pear tree) (1997) based on Taraqqi's short story with the same title.[18] In 1999, *Darya-pari kakol-zari* (The golden haired mermaid), a narrative piece of rhymed poetry composed in nursery rhythm, is published by Entesharat-e Farzanruz. The poem recounts the story of the experiences of an anti-cliché, "chubby, crazy and nosey" mermaid who, upon her journey to "another place," falls in love with a peasant's son. Taraqqi claims that the poem was, in the first place, intended to convey "romantic and mystic" messages; nevertheless, the mermaid was accused of immorality and, under that pretext, the book was banned from being published until 2007, when it was reprinted by the same publisher.[19] Until recently, Goli Taraqqi's major literary work after *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*, included two collections of short stories: *Jayi digar* (Another place) (2000) and *Do donya* (Two worlds) (2002), both published by Entesharat-e Nilufar. But in late 2014, two other literary works by Goli Taraqqi appear in Iran's book market: a collection of short stories, *Forsat-e dobareh* (The second chance), and a novel by the title *Ettefaq* (Incident). Since Taraqqi's most recent collection of

17 "Derakht-e golabi," "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man," and "Jayi digar," all included in the collection *Jayi digar* (2000).

18 In 2000, "Derakht-e golabi" is published in the collection *Jayi digar*.

19 Fani and Dehbashi, "Naqd-e adabi," p. 48. For the defense concerning the attacks on the book, see: Khorramshahi, "Javabiyeh," pp. 34–36.

short stories emerged during the final stages of the present project, it was not possible to include its narratives among the works analyzed within this work.[20]

The collection *Jayi digar* (2000) includes six stories, all of which deal with the theme of a journey—of either a literal or a mental type. Two of the stories are initiated in an airport, at the verge of the narrator's journey towards and from Iran.[21] The title of the story "Safar-e bozorg-e Amineh" (Amineh's great journey) explicitly foregrounds the significance of the *journey* taken by its protagonist. "Derakht-e golabi" and "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man" deal with mystic or symbolic journeys. "Jayi digar" (Another place) the title story of the collection, can be considered, regarding its theme and characterization, as a sequence to the story "Man ham Che Guevara hastam," published years ago, in 1969, in a volume with the same title. The protagonist of "Jayi digar," resembling in many aspects the main character of the story "Che Guevara," is now determined to embark on the journey to another place. In 2001, *Jayi digar* was nominated for the *Golshiri* literary prize as the year's best collection of short stories.

Do donya (2002) is considered as the second volume to *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*.[22] The narratives of the book concerning the matters of theme, form, style and tone are very similar to those published among *Khaterehha*. In the short introductory comment to *Do donya*, Taraqqi indicates that "the stories "Otobus-e Shemiran," (The Shemiran Bus) "Khaneh-ye madarbozorg" (Grandmother's house) and "Dust-e kuchak" (My Little Friend) [(originally published in *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*)] do, in fact, belong to this collection."[23] The collection includes seven autobiographical stories claimed to have been written during the author's residence in Ville d'Avray, a neurological clinic in the suburbs of Paris, in the year 1988.[24] Other than the opening story and the last one, which respectively deal with the memories of the writer's entrance to the hospital and her recovery, the rest of the stories are about her adolescent life back in Iran. The volume also includes a modified and completed version of the story of "Pedar" (Father) which had previously appeared in *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*.

---

20 An epilogue is appended to this work, which provides a brief introduction to Taraqqi's recent publications.

21 "Bazi-ye natamam" and "Anar Banu va pesarhayash."

22 The FIPA information chart of the book indicates that "the author regards this book as the second volume to *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992)". Taraqqi, *Do donya*, p. 6.

23 Taraqqi, *Do donya*, p. 7.

24 The opening line of "Avvalin ruz," the first story of the collection, resembles a diary entry including the date (August 1988) alongside the place of the text's composition. p. 12.

Goli Taraqqi: A Committed Writer?

Taraqqi's stories, in the still young tradition of Iranian prose fiction—inaugurated by the publication of M.A. Jamalzadeh's collection *Yeki bud, Yeki nabud* (Once upon time) (1921) as is wildely agreed upon by critics and literary scholars[25]—occupy positions in two different periods and/or categories of literary tendency. Due to the twenty-year-long temporal gap between her earlier and more recent literary productions, Taraqqi's fiction comes to display remarkable discontinuity as regards its thematic, formal and, to a lesser degree, stylistic characteristics. Whereas in her first phase of literary career, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, Taraqqi's work can be evaluated in terms of (and in comparison to) the main intellectual, political and social trends of the last three decades of the Pahlavi dynasty, culminating in the upheavals that lead to the revolution of 1979, the stories produced in her second literary phase are marked by the cultural and psychological consequences of the revolution alongside the impact of the author's emigration to France. Regarding the sociocultural context reflected in the works and considering the publication dates of the stories, therefore, Taraqqi's literature comes to be categorized under the prevailing fiction-writing trends of two different literary periods of Iranian contemporary prose fiction: first, the literature produced in the time span between 1953 and 1979,[26] and second, the post-revolutionary Iranian literature produced by emigrant writers outside the political borders of Iran. Taraqqi's early literary production, marked by the publications of her short story collection *Man ham Che Guevara hastam* in 1969 and her 1973 short novel *Khvab-e zemestani* (Winter sleep), is best discussed in relevance and comparison to its contemporary works produced between 1953 and 1979.

Mohammad Reza Shah's coup d'état and the overthrow of Mosaddeq's government in 1953 is followed by the Pahlavi regime's systematic undertakings throughout the country to suppress, limit, or even eliminate oppositional voices and activities. The relative freedom experienced by the press, writers and intelligentsia after Reza Shah's abdication in 1941 and during the post-World-War-II period comes to be violently restricted after the coup of *28 Mordad* (August 19, 1953).[27] In the time span between the years 1953 and the end of

25 Mir'abedini, *Hashtad sal*, p. 15. See also: Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, p. 50. and Mirsadeqi, "Short Story."

26 Respectively, the dates of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's coup against the nationalistic government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq (1880–1967) and the Islamic Revolution that marks the end of the Pahlavis' rule in Iran.

27 Mirsadeqi, "Short Story."

the Pahlavi regime in 1979, the socio-political sphere in Iran is characterized by tension.[28] The oppositional discourse of this historical era is both formed by and reflected in the fictional and polemical writings of intellectuals and the literary men of the time.[29] Non- or anti-establishment pieces of writing, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s permeated in, and defined, the country's intellectual sphere in spite of the regime's systematic monitoring and censorship of the works written.[30] Those writers who had come of age and experienced the freedom of expression during the 1940s (Al-e Ahmad being an example of the case) maintained an interest in promoting the idea of social protest in their works.[31] In the meanwhile, the younger generation of writers, whose first works were to materialize during the three decades before the revolution of 1979, became influenced and inspired by the writings of those who had already been acknowledged as established writers.[32] The issue of social protest or the expression of leftist leanings in literary works (either explicitly or through allegories and metaphorical references)[33] becomes a prevailing thematic engagement of the works written in the last decades of the Pahlavi regime in Iran.[34] This does not necessarily mean that the literature produced from the late 1950s up until the end of 1970s is exclusively involved with the idea of instigating a spirit of anti-Pahlavi revolution into the Iranian society. Nevertheless, the issue of being committed to the cause of the masses against the despotism of the Shah's regime is acknowledged as the "yardstick" for the evaluation of literary works in the intellectual atmosphere of the time.[35]

Through being regarded as the most prestigious literary genre and produced by those recognized as the intellectuals of a particular milieu, literature of commitment (*adabiyat-e mote'ahhed*), comes to define the characteristics of the literary period between the years 1953 and 1979 (especially during the 1960s and 1970s). The time span between the coup and the Islamic Revolution, in various scholarly works conducted on the literary history of Iranian contemporary literature, is highlighted for the prevalence and the high critical status

28 For the dynamics of the 1953 coup and the ensuing socio-political tensions during the 1960s and 1970s, see: Abrahamian, Ervand. *The History of Modern Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. pp. 118–149.

29 Karimi-Hakkak, "Introduction: Iran's Literature," pp. 193–194.

30 Ghanoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom*, pp. 79–80.

31 Mirsadeqi, "Short Story."

32 Ibid.

33 Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, pp. 69–70. See also: Ghanoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom*, pp. 162–163.

34 Ghanoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom*, p. 75.

35 Ibid., pp. 79–80.

of revolutionary (anti-Pahlavi) literature.[36] Jalal Al-e Ahmad, one of the most prominent writers of the period, in his *Sargozasht-e kanduha* (The story of the beehives) (1954) and *Nun va alqalam* (N and the pen) (1961), for instance, employs allegory in order to give voice to his social and political criticism of the Pahlavi regime.[37] In a later work by the title *Nefrin-e zamin* (The cursing of the land) (1967), Jalal ventures to attack Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's land reforms conducted in the rural areas of Iran.[38] Hushang Golshiri, another distinguished writer of the period, was associated with the members of the *Tudeh Party* and imprisoned for the same reason in 1962. Golshiri recounts narratives about his prison period in some of the stories published in *Namazkhaneh-ye kuchak-e man* (My little prayer room) (1975).[39] Interestingly enough, his best wrought novella *Shazdeh Ehtejab* (Prince Ehtejab) (1968), dealing with the reminiscences of a decadent Qajar prince, revealed through the internal monologue of its protagonist, is aptly received by the readers as an allegory on the Pahlavi dynasty, while such an interpretive approach has been overlooked by the censorship apparatus at the time of its publication.[40] Other prominent writers of the time, such as Jamal Mirsadeqi, Fereydun Tonekaboni, Mahmud E'temadzadeh (Behazin), Gholamhoseyn Sa'edi, Simin Daneshvar, and Samad Behrangi have all been referred to as *engagé* writers in different works on the history and growth of the Iranian prose fiction.[41] It is also interesting that in this particular period, the reputation of a writer as an *engagé* intellectual had a great impact on how his/her literary work was perceived and evaluated by the readership. Simin Daneshvar's reputation as a committed writer is attributed by a critic, at least partly, to her association with Jalal Al-e Ahmad, her husband, who was at the time well estimated as a writer with leftist leanings.[42] Samad Behrangi's canonization as an important literary figure of the time is, likewise, more indebted to his close affiliation with anti-regime intellectual circles than his literary talent per se. Michael Hillmann dismisses Behrangi's fiction as non-enduring literature and attributes his fame to his controversial death in the border river Aras in 1968 and the "social content" of his literature

36 See, for example, Ghanoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom*, pp. 73–102; Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, pp. 66–107; and Hillmann, "The Modernist Trend," pp. 7–29.

37 Ghanoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom*, p. 65–6.

38 Hillmann, "The Modernist Trend," pp. 14–15.

39 Mirsadeqi, "Short Story."

40 Ghanoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom*, p. 163.

41 See, for example, Ghanoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom*, pp. 73–102; Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, pp. 66–107; Hillmann, "The Modernist Trend," pp. 7–29.

42 Ghanoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom*, p. 121.

as the "value concept in literary criticism among nonestablishment readers."[43] Through his established and influential role among the intelligentsia of the time, Al-e Ahmad is able to create of Behrangi a "legendary figure" in a panegyric essay written on the occasion of the author's death. Al-e Ahmad immortalizes Behrangi in this essay by comparing him to "that little black fish[44] [that] has made his way through Aras to the sea so that he may reappear one day."[45]

The Iranian Association of Writers (*Kanun-e Nevisandegan-e Iran*) was founded in 1968 by prominent figures such as Gholamhoseyn Sa'edi to oppose government censorship and to promote free public expression.[46] In 1970, after Al-e Ahmad's death and due to fraction disagreements, the organization was weakened and its activities were quickly disbanded until 1977. Soon after the organization was dissolved, a member of its executive board, Fereydun Tonekaboni, was arrested and put into jail. The second period of the Association's activities, followed, shortly after its reorganization, by the ten-night gatherings in the Goethe Institute in Tehran, is highlighted by its intense engagement in oppositional objectives, if not by directly addressing the socio-political conditions of the time but through demanding the right to free expression on the cultural level.[47]

This intensely leftist, oppositional and reformist atmosphere, permeating the intellectual sphere in the few final decades of the Pahlavi regime, builds up the background in which Taraqqi's early literature appeared. Taraqqi's first collection of short stories, in this context, screams for recognition through its very title. The title of the collection, *Man ham Che Guevara hastam* (1969), by underlining the author's alleged leftist inclinations, expresses the demand of a young writer (namely, Goli Taraqqi) to be acknowledged among the writers of an already well-established intellectual and literary trend. However, as regards the content of the stories published in the volume, in comparison to that of the most prominent works that appeared around the same time, Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* stories display a certain degree of difference in their statement of and attitude towards what is regarded as social cause at the time of its publication.

The collection *Man ham Che Guevara hastam* appears alongside some recognized works that directly or implicitly support social (and political) change

43 "Revolution," p. 130.

44 Hillmann, "Revolution," p. 130. Hillmann's reference to Behrangi's well-known story *Mahi siyah-e kuchulu* (The little black fish) (1968).

45 Ghanoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom*, pp. 86–87.

46 Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, p. 81.

47 Ghanoonparvar, *Prophets of Doom*, p. 73. See also: Karimi-Hakkak, "Introduction: Iran's Literature," pp. 201–202; Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, pp. 91–2.

or, at least, announce the urge for it. Literary works written by major writers of the period that were published almost at the same time as Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* collection include examples such as: Golshiri's *Shazdeh Ehtejab* (Prince Ehtejab) (1969), Mirsadeqi's *Badha khabar az taghyir-e fasl midadand* (The winds prophesied a change of season) (1967), Behazin's *Beh su-ye mardom* (Towards people) (1969), Al-e Ahmad's *Nefrin-e zamin* (The cursing of the land) (1967), Behrangi's *Mahi siyah-e kuchulu* (The little black fish) (1968), Daneshvar's *Savushun* (Mourning for Siyavash) (1969) and Mehrjuyi's adaptation (1968) of Sa'edi's short story "Gav" (The cow) (1964). All of these works, in one way or another, whether written in an explicit social realistic mode (as in *Badha khabar az taghyir-e fasl midadand* and *Beh su-ye mardom*) or in a more sophisticated literary style (as in *Shazdeh Ehtejab* and "Gav"), depict the necessity of a fundamental change on the social level. In other words, the subject matter of such fiction, alongside its symbolism and metaphorical significance, addresses the question of society and the status quo. The root of the individual's enigma in such stories is attributed to suppressive, unjust and exploitive social (and political) conditions of the time; and the liberation of the individual is often suggested to be only possible through the act of revolution or a sort of social protest. Contrary to such prominent works and paradoxical to the message conveyed by its title, Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* collection does not only dispense with a revolutionary, Guevaraesque attitude towards social change but even despises the idea as mere idealism. Instead of instigating the imperative of a fundamental social revolution, the stories tend to reduce the necessity for change to the more realistic level of an individual's impetus. Paradoxically enough, in this respect, *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*, does not offer another example of that which can be characterized as a conventional *engagé* literary work but rather ventures to challenge the intellectual ideals of the literary circle it apparently seeks to be recognized by.

Likewise, Taraqqi's second work *Khvab-e zemestani* (Winter sleep) (1973) stays away from the ideological path of the proponents of committed literature. This work, too, like the *Che Guevara* collection, depicts its characters in an inertial state of life by delving into the psychological obsessions of the characters with their past and present. The stories are, at the same time, reflective of—or rather adjusted to—the theories of Jungian Psychology. Similar to the stories published in *Che Guevara*, the struggle for individuation is foregrounded in *Khvab-e zemestani*. The story addresses the problematic of individuation (from a Jungian perspective) in the context of a society going through modernization during the sixties.[48] Whereas the *Che Guevara* narratives are left open

48 A Jungian study of the work has been conducted in Mahak, *A critical Analysis*, p. 10.

ended with the possibility or, at least, a spark of hope for change and liberation, *Khvab-e zemestani*, with its characters already past their middle-age and the imminence of death in perspective, proves to be even less vital and provocative in an *engagé* sense. Interestingly, the novel did not receive any critical attention until years after its first publication.[49]

What is of emphasis regarding Taraqqi's former phase of literary production is not, however, her particular uniqueness in style and subject matter. Bahram Sadeqi, a writer among Taraqqi's contemporaries, for instance, has also experimented with more or less the same subject matters.[50] What is, nevertheless, of interest here is the marginality works such as Taraqqi's experienced in the face of the critical values that established the literary canon of the time. Whether formulated intentionally or created unconsciously, the title of Taraqqi's first collection underlines the friction between belonging to, and rejection from, that canon.

Two Decades of Silence

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, Goli Taraqqi's literary works do not appear in a continuum. While two of her fictional works were published, one following the other, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the next one in order does not appear sooner than 1992—that is, roughly two decades later. By taking into account that in the process of accessing historical information, absence of a specific phenomenon can be as much informative as its presence, it is interesting, in its own turn, to have a brief look on the literature of the period Taraqqi does not actively participate in shaping as a writer. Taraqqi's period of absence from the Iranian literary arena, from 1973 (the publication date of her novella *Khvab-e zemestani* (Winter sleep)) up until 1993, when her most recognized *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* appears in the Iranian book market some months after its publication,[51] covers several significant phenomena in the cultural and sociopolitical spheres in Iran: the reorganization of the Iranian Association of Writers (*Kanun-e Nevisandegan-e Iran*) in 1977, the ten nights of poetry reading held in the German-Iranian Cultural Institute (known as the Goethe Institute) in the fall of the same year, the Islamic Revolution of 1978/79, and the eight years of Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988) in the following decade. Often believed to have been precipitated by the political incentive intensified during the Goethe

49 Green, "The Modern," p. 15.

50 Mirsadeqi, "Short Story."

51 Mir'abedini, "Gozareshi az adabiyat," p. 159.

Institute ten-night gatherings, and serving as the point of inception for a new cultural, ideological and sociopolitical era, the Islamic Revolution marks a turning point in the literary history of Iran.[52] Having so far briefly dealt with the major themes in the works of the prominent authors of the last decade before the revolution, I see it proper, at this point, to focus more closely on the cultural and literary ambiance of the first decade after the Islamic Revolution. In contrast to the more unidirectional configuration of the literary works that appeared in the years before the revolution, the post-revolutionary literature of Iran is often characterized by diversity of subject matters. Topics such as Islamic ideology, feminism, and emigration come to frequent Iran's post-revolutionary literature.[53]

The Literature of the Islamic Revolution

The period shortly before and after the revolution is rather profuse in literary writings and revolutionary polemics taking advantage of a brief period of relatively relaxed atmosphere for free expression of thoughts. This period is abruptly followed by a series of cultural undertakings by the Islamic regime that, alongside other factors such as the outset of the war against Iraq in 1980, brought about the appearance of a new literary genre in the Iranian post-revolutionary cultural sphere. This new literary genre, often referred to as the literature of the Islamic Revolution (*adabiyat-e Enqelab-e Eslami*) is promoted and developed as the result of several restrictive and propagandist undertakings of the regime.[54] The so-called "Cultural Revolution," for example, was a large-scale movement, initiated in 1980, to practically purge the cultural and academic spheres from oppositional voices and Western influence.[55] The Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance founded in the year 1984, to mention another example of the regime's Islamizing propaganda policy, set up new principles in order to implement strict monitoring on any piece of writing before it is permitted publication.[56] The Council for Cultural Revolution of the Islamic Republic laid down the regulations and determined the criteria for the annual rewards bestowed upon those works that best represented the ideology of the new Islamic state.[57] The reduction in paper import, as one of the results of the supply bottleneck during the war, made paper rare and

52 Karimi-Hakkak, "Introduction: Iran's Literature," p. 201.

53 Mirsadeqi, "Short Story." See also: Yavari, "Post-Revolutionary."

54 Karimi-Hakkak, "Introduction: Iran's Literature," pp. 204–205.

55 Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, p. 112.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid., p. 113. See also: Karimi-Hakkak, "Introduction: Iran's Literature," p. 208.

obstructed the publication industry. Nevertheless, those works that supported the ideology of the regime, were likely to be sponsored by the Council, no matter what the quality of the work or the prominence of its author.[58] Recurrent themes in state-supported publications revolved around topics such as the Iran-Iraq war, glorification of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, veneration of Islamic Shiite values, depiction of the workings of God-bestowed miracles,[59] the significance of martyrdom, and soldiers' testimonials.[60] After the Islamic Revolution up until the year 1991, for example, the published narrative works engaged specifically with the topic of the Iran-Iraq war comprises 1600 short stories and 46 novels and novellas.[61] The general attitude of writers towards the issue of the war against Iraq, often referred to as the "Sacred Defense" in the terminology of the Islamic Republic,[62] ranges from highly idealistic and propagandist to more realistic (quasi-documentary) and slightly critical. Due to the reasons briefly mentioned above, those works reflecting the former tendency outweigh the latter in number.[63]

The Literature of the Islamic Revolution (*Adabiyat-e Enqelab-e Eslami*), in this respect, includes examples such as the works of modernist poets Tahereh Saffarzadeh and 'Ali Musavi Garmarudi whose composition of poetry with "religious coloring" date back to some years before the Revolution.[64] Asghar 'Abdollahi in 1981 published a novella by the title *Aftab dar siyahi-ye jang gom mishavad* (The sun gets lost in the darkness of the night), in which he recounts the story of a little boy and how his world is influenced by the Iran-Iraq war.[65] Ahmad Mahmud's novel *Zamin-e sukhteh* (The burned land) (1982) depicts the south of Iran in the first three months after the break of the war.[66] Esma'il Fasih's novel *Sorayya dar eghma'* (Sorayya in a coma) (1983), engaged for the most part with the lives of the first generation post-revolutionary Iranian intellectual exiles in Paris, is sprinkled, here and there, with passages capturing the horrors of the war in the narrator's nightmares. The novel's outset also reflects some urban scenes of the country in the early years after the Revolution. Fasih's well-wrought novel *Zemestan-e 62* (The winter of 1983) (1987) depicts the war-time

58 Stümpel, "Die Literatur," p. 81.

59 Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, p. 112.

60 Karimi-Hakkak, "Introduction: Iran's Literature," p. 207.

61 Stümpel, "Die Literatur," p. 85.

62 Nanquette, "An Iranian," pp. 943–946.

63 Stümpel, "Die Literatur," pp. 85–86.

64 Karimi-Hakkak, "Introduction: Iran's Literature," p. 205. See also: Talattof, *Political Writing*, p. 112.

65 Mir'abedini, *Sad sal*, p. 913.

66 Ibid., p. 910.

south in a documentary style through the adventures of its narrator, who gets closely involved with the lives of several war-stricken characters from different economical and ideological strata. In contrast to Fasih's objective and rather non-evaluative depiction of war-time Iran and his lack of interest in reproducing the Islamic Republic's ideals, Mohsen Makhmalbaf's attitude towards the Islamic regime's ideology in his works is one of affirmation and propagation. Mohsen Makhmalbaf, a prolific writer, director and cinematographer, during the early years of the Revolution was among the young voices that supported the ideals of the Islamic Republic in their works. *Howz-e Soltun* (1984), a novel recounting the story of a mosque's female janitor, is about the political activities of the clerics who during the 40s refused to be in the service of the Pahlavi regime. The title refers to the name of a salt-lake near Qom, in which the SAVAK drowns the anti-regime activists in the plot of the story.[67] In *Bagh-e bolur* (The crystal garden) (1986), Makhmalbaf reproduces the discourse and ideology of the Islamic regime and ventures to criticize the post-revolutionary social and economic conditions alongside the public's gradually increasing indifference towards the ideals of the Islamic Revolution and the Sacred Defense.[68] Mehdi Shoja'i in a short story "Zarih-e chashmha-ye to" (The shrine of your eyes) published in a collection with the same title in 1985 relates the story of an old father who upon hearing about his son's martyrdom advances up to the frontline trenches and finally manages to find his dead body. But as he sees the slain bodies of other martyred soldiers lying beside his son's, he decides not to take him away since he thinks it unfair to other combatants, whom he cannot equally carry back to the town.[69] Among other literary works categorized under the Literature of the Islamic Revolution (published in the first decade after the Revolution), are *Nakhlha-ye bisar* (The beheaded palms) (1984) by Qasem'ali Farasat, *Marsiyeh-ye Halabcheh* (The elegy of Halabcheh) (1989) by Nosratollah Mahmudzadeh, "Mard va Karbala" (The man and Karbala) (1990) by Mohammad Nurizad,[70] and *Shab-e malakh* (The locust's night) (1990) by Javad Mojabi.

Although Taraqqi does not have any major literary works published in the first decade after the Revolution, and although her mainly autobiographical literature is quite different in style and social approach from what is often known as the Literature of the Islamic Revolution, there appears one story and several scattered passages in her first post-revolutionary short story collection

67 Mir'abedini, *Sad sal*, p. 893.

68 Ibid., p. 894.

69 Ibid., p. 902.

70 Published in a collection with the same title in 1990.

that refer to the social conditions of the country in the first years after the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. From among the stories published in *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992), the story "Khedmatkar" (The maid) is the one which is exclusively set against a background reflecting the post-revolutionary social conditions in war-time Iran. The autodiegetic narrator's attitude towards the new circumstances is characterized by bewilderment and confusion. The sense of insecurity permeates the narrative. The characters feel to be incessantly threatened by the new regime's regulations concerning Islamic rules such as the mandatory veiling of women and the prohibition of alcoholic drinks. In the stories "Madame Gorgeh" (Madame Wolf) and "'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef dar ghorbat" (The Bizarre Comportment of Mr. Alpha in Exile),[71] the post-revolutionary condition of Iran is reflected in contradictory letters the protagonists (living in Paris) receive from friends and relatives in Iran. The story "Pedar" (published in its primary version in *Khaterehha*) has many references to post-revolutionary asset confiscation policies. In "Pedar," the death of the father following the loss of the family's splendid Shemiran house and garden sadly marks the termination of an era and the inauguration of another for the narrator. The treatment of the theme of a confiscated house in "Pedar" can be interestingly juxtaposed to Makhmalbaf's representation of the same theme in his *Bagh-e bolur* (The crystal garden) (1986) where a confiscated house and its garden serve as a shelter for a group of people harmed by (or sacrificing for) the war and the Revolution in different ways. While Taraqqi's "Pedar" dares to briefly touch upon the issue from the perspective of the ones who are harmed by losing a piece of landed property to the Islamic regime, *Bagh-e bolur* provides a humanistic justification for the action six years before Taraqqi's *Khaterehha*. Nevertheless, if we specifically focus on Taraqqi's literature in the first decade after the Islamic Revolution and if we try to explore the themes of the war and the Revolution in her work written in this particular period, we only come up with one single title: "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man," published originally in the journal *Ketab-e Jom'eh* in 1979. Interestingly enough, although the whole narrative plot of "Bozorg Banu" is set against the backdrop of revolutionary confusion, the story is about the protagonist's mystical refuge from all that chaos to a serene garden miraculously discovered in the middle of a desert. The garden in "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man" can symbolically represent Taraqqi's own stance in confrontation with the war and the Revolution. Instead of taking part and taking sides in the post-revolutionary social and political debates, Taraqqi apparently prefers to retreat and keep her silence. The

71 The translation of the latter title has been adopted from Farrokh's translation of Taraqqi's stories in *A Mansion*.

garden in "Bozorg Banu," in other words, can be taken as the cocoon into which the author secludes in order to await a new birth.

Goli Taraqqi: A Feminist Writer?

The Revolution of 1978/79 can be regarded as the historical event the consequences of which awakened a feminine consciousness in the sociopolitical and cultural spheres in Iran. The rise of literary feminism, as expressed in the Iranian post-revolutionary prose fiction, is commonly reckoned as a reaction to the legal and social restrictions exercised on women following the ideological reforms undertaken by the new Islamic regime.[72] Less than a month after the fall of the Shah, Ayatollah Khomeyni, on March 7, "proclaimed that working women should wear the Islamic form of modest dress."[73] The reactions to the issue resulted in women's demonstration on March 8 (the International Women's Day) protesting against the call for mandatory veiling of women. Despite all the protests, by the year 1983, Islamic veiling became legally mandatory for women in the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran.[74] The public image of the woman acted as a "flag" representing the new regime's ideology.[75] Soon after the Revolution, women also lost the rights to divorce and child custody in the case of divorce.[76] Other restrictions such as gender segregation were imposed in public places (e.g. schools, universities, beaches, and buses). The segregated spaces delineated and restricted the boundaries of women's public presence.[77]

The relation between all these state-imposed restrictions and the dramatic increase in the number of literary works written by women after the Islamic Revolution[78] is by itself a case that demands detailed exploration. Whether the rise of feministic literature in the post-revolutionary context of Iran is a direct reaction to the practice of Islamic ideology on the everyday life and the social rights of women or is it simply related to other sophisticated social factors such as the emergence of a belated wave of feminism (in its Western sense), for instance, can of course be debated. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the Iranian post-revolutionary prose fiction written by

72 See: chapter 5 on "Feminist Discourse in Post-revolutionary Women's Literature" in Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, pp. 135–172.

73 Milani, *Veils and Words*, p. 37.

74 Ibid., p. 38.

75 Milani, *Words, Not Swords*, p. 1.

76 Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, p. 135.

77 Milani, *Words, Not Swords*, pp. 1–3.

78 Milani, *Veils and Words*, p. 26.

women ventures to challenge the moral codes and the cultural definitions of femininity and virtuosity through displaying a tremendous engagement with women-related themes and topics. The woman's body, women's urge for self-expression, women's suppression, gender relations, and above all female consciousness come to be among the recurrent themes in the literature written by women after the Revolution. Women's post-revolutionary prose fiction, in this sense, displays also a shift in perspective when compared to the works produced by women during the last decades of the Pahlavi's rule. The 1960s and 1970s' outward-looking, social-realistic and male-oriented outlook is often replaced with a more inward-looking, private and metaphorical perception of the world in women's prose literature in the first decades after the Revolution. The shift is even perceptible in the work of such a prominent author as Simin Daneshvar, who is best known as the first Iranian woman novelist and wrote in both pre- and post-revolutionary periods.[79] In *Ghorub-e Jalal* (Jalal's sunset) (1982), the biographical account of the author's relationship with her husband Jalal Al-e Ahmad, for example, Daneshvar has already given up concealing behind her husband's ideological persona[80] and assumes a more personal and, at times, emphatically feministic attitude in describing and criticizing her late husband's temperament.[81]

Surveys on women's post-revolutionary literature of Iran often include the names of remarkable writers such as Ghazaleh 'Alizadeh, Shahrnush Parsipur, Moniru Ravanipur, and Zoya Pirzad. Ghazaleh 'Alizadeh, in her 1984 novella *Do manzareh* (Two views), portrays the false happiness of a middle-class couple. The husband, upon her wife's confession on their wedding night about a previous love relationship, attempts to resemble the perfection of the woman's ex-lover throughout his married life only to be disillusioned years after as he meets the man accidentally in person.[82] Shahrnush Parsipur, in her novel *Tuba va ma'na-ye shab* (Tuba and the meaning of the night) (1988), deals with women's disorientation throughout Iran's contemporary history, from the turn of the century up until the 1970s, in a magic-realistic style.[83] In *Zanan bedun-e mardan* (Women without men) (1989), Parsipur gives the account of the lives of five women through correlated short stories. The narratives focus on themes such as sexuality, virginity, space, independence, and productivity. In the stories published in a collection by the title *Kanizu* (1988),

79 Mir'abedini, *Sad sal*, p. 1109. See also: Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, pp. 158–163.

80 Ibid., p. 1113.

81 Talattof, *Politics of Writing*, p. 160.

82 Mir'abedini, *Sad sal*, pp. 1116–17.

83 Stümpel, "Die Literatur," p. 93.

Moniru Ravanipur depicts the inner lives, suppressed emotions and sufferings of women through private metaphorical implications and magic realism. The stories also reflect the folkloric beliefs and traditions of southern areas of Iran.[84] *Sangha-ye Sheytan* (Satan's stones) (1990), another collection of short stories by Ravanipur, includes narratives that contemplate women's common sufferings and agonies.[85] The title narrative relates the story of a young girl, a medical student, in Shiraz. Upon the protagonist's visit to her home village, under the pretext that city life is corrupting, her virginity is dramatically and savagely examined in the presence of other female inhabitants of the village. Other works produced by women during the mid-eighties up until the early nineties include *Heyvan* (Animal) (1985) (a short story collection) by Mahin Bahrami, *Seh hezar o yek shab* (Three thousand and one nights) (1989) (a novel) by Forugh Shahab, *Raqsi chonin* (Such a dance) (1991) (a novel) by Mahnaz Karimi, *Mesl-e hameh-ye 'asrha* (Like all the afternoons) (1991) (a short story collection) by Zoya Pirzad, and *Naranj o toranj* (The bitter orange and the bergamot) (1992) (also a short story collection) by Fereshteh Mowlavi.[86]

When it comes to Goli Taraqqi as a female writer, who is not quite active in the first decade following the Revolution (the period in which other women writers are experimenting with new themes and modes of expression), it becomes interesting by itself to see whether her literature, in general, reflects feministic modes and topics. As mentioned earlier, apart from a few single stories that appeared after the Revolution in different journals (*Ketab-e jom'eh, Kelk*, and *Omid*), Goli Taraqqi does not publish any fiction before 1992. In his four-volume survey on Iranian prose fiction, Mir'abedini briefly mentions Taraqqi's *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992) in the section devoted to the discussion of Iranian post-revolutionary literature by women and goes on by focusing on the two short stories the author published before her first post-revolutionary collection: "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man" (*Ketab-e Jom'eh*, 1979) and "Khaneh'i dar aseman" (*Kelk*, 1991).[87] Whether these two short stories alongside Taraqqi's later, or even earlier, fiction can be exactly put in the same category as the works mentioned above (such as Ravanipur's and Parsipur's, for instance) is by itself an interesting question. Is Goli Taraqqi, as a female writer, also a feminist? How central is the womanhood of her female characters to the development of her plots? How dominant is the presence of feminine consciousness

84 Mir'abedini, *Sad sal*, p. 1132.

85 Mir'abedini, *Sad sal*, p. 1138.

86 For a survey on women's literature in Iran after the Revolution, see under: "Dastannevisan-e zan" in Mir'abedini, *Sad sal*, pp. 1109–68. See also: Yavari, "Post-Revolutionary."

87 Mir'abedini, *Sad sal*, p. 1127.

in Taraqqi's narratives? Taraqqi's stance as a feminist writer has its own critics. Mahshid Amirshahi[88] and Farzaneh Milani,[89] for example, are among the ones who severely criticize Taraqqi for adopting a masculine language and for the fact that some of her stories are rendered through a masculine narrative voice.[90] Taraqqi, herself, however, does not give the matter of feminism much credence and does not hesitate to explicitly announce that she is *not* a feminist in her literature. In an interview with Kamran Fani and 'Ali Dehbashi, Taraqqi mentions that "I have been asked why my protagonists are often male. There is no why. Human beings are a combination of feminine and masculine principles (anima and animus) … That's why I do not believe in feminine or masculine literature."[91] The three stories Taraqqi publishes in the years after the Revolution and before the emergence of her 1992 *Khaterehha* are witness to the author's universal outlook in regard to gender issues. "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man" (1979) is the psycho-mystical account of the author's male, first-person narrator who, perplexed by war-time confusion and revolutionary chaos, experiences serenity and integrity in the confines of a paradise-like house which, in the symbolism of the story, is compared to the great lady (anima) of the narrator's psyche. The story "Dandan-e tala'i-ye 'Aziz Aqa" ('Aziz Aqa's gold tooth) (1988), later published in *Khaterehha* by the title "Otobus-e Shemiran," is an autobiographical narrative about the author's childhood passionate love for the ragged bus driver. The story's richness in psychological connotations concerning the matters of love and fascination distinguishes it from a commonplace narrative of romantic love which usually focuses on mere male/female duality. Taraqqi's "Khaneh'i dar aseman" (1991) is also far from a feministic story. Although "Khaneh'i dar aseman" represents a female protagonist in hardship, it deals with universal plights and predicaments such as displacement and old age rather than sexually specified perils such as dominant patriarchy and female immobility.

Nevertheless, taking all of Taraqqi's fictional works into account, regardless of their publication dates, one comes up with a few narratives that engage with issues such as married life—a theme that tends to appear recurrently in feministic literature such as Pirzad's, for instance. Among her *Che Guevara* (1969) stories and also in the collection *Jayi digar* (2000), Taraqqi does have some narratives that particularly focus on the relationship between the sexes in the structures of married life. The stories "Man ham Che Guevara hastam"

88 Amirshahi, "Zan," p. 108.

89 Milani, "Veiled Voices," p. 16.

90 Among the examples are the stories "Che Guevara," "Jayi digar," and "Safar."

91 Fani and Dehbashi, "Naqd-e adabi," p. 38.

and "Khoshbakhti" (Happiness) from the *Che Guevara* volume alongside the title story of the collection *Jayi digar* are, for example, of this type. However, here too, Taraqqi keeps the balance by representing both her male and female characters in restricted circumstances. While "Khoshbakhti," for instance, depicts a woman whose voice is repeatedly suppressed by the very presence of her husband, Mr. Heydari and Amir 'Ali (respectively the protagonists of "Che Guevara" and "Jayi digar") are the ones that feel to be at the verge of collapse due to the incessant demands of their wives in particular and married life in general. In the case of such narratives, nonetheless, Taraqqi seems to be rather inclined to criticize the very institute of marriage as an obstacle on the way to emancipation and individuality than specifically to take sides with women by adopting a feministic discourse.

Emigration Literature

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the publication of the collection *Khaterehha-ye Parakandeh* in 1992 marks the beginning of Taraqqi's second literary phase. Most of her short stories published since come to display a different trend in style, topic and mode of expression, in comparison to her earlier short fiction collected in the *Che Guevara* volume in the late 1960s. Noteworthy, for instance, is the fact that in Taraqqi's post-revolutionary phase, almost all the homodiegetic narrators of her stories, with the exception of only a few, tend to be also autodiegetic. The very presence of this type of narrator turns Taraqqi's stories from mere fiction to autobiographical, or semi-autobiographical, accounts of the author's experiences. This, of course, as it is the case with any kind of narrative activity, does not mean that Taraqqi's later fiction should be taken as the real representation of certain events that precede the act of composition. But the adjacency between the narrator and the author, in personality, language and experience, adds something to the reader's relation with the text. Taraqqi's post-revolutionary stories, in this sense, are more intimate and truer to life in comparison to her previous fiction that is rather reflective of a distanced, philosophical, and, at times, surrealistic style.

Since 1992, in this respect, *khatereh* (memoir) (as it is explicitly indicated in the title *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*) becomes in principle the realistic medium Taraqqi chooses to communicate her stories through. Nevertheless, the author's treatment of the genre differs from its more common generic prototypes in certain aspects. Taraqqi's *Khaterehha*, for example—unlike the frequent instances of semi-historical (semi-documentary) accounts of prominent historical or political figures, often presented to the market under the title

Khaterat—does not lay any claim to an objective representation of historical truth. Neither does it, in its narrative form and style, come any closer to the works subtitled by the term *Memoir* (often written and published abroad), which in most cases turn out to be a personal narration about a certain sociopolitical situation under the guise of an objective journalistic style.[92] What Taraqqi relates in her work, instead, is in fact a narrative account based on recollected past events, which she consciously modifies and rearranges (through characterization, plot construction, and the act of narration) so that they fit into the structures of a short story. In other words, Taraqqi mainly sticks to the rules of fiction writing while appropriating her memories of the past as her major material resource. Yet, her stories, in regard to their narrative style, retain the intimacy, believability, and realism of retold memories.

When it comes to the topic, or the thematic content, of Taraqqi's literature in her second-phase, the significance of the author's emigration from Iran to France (in 1979) cannot be ignored. As even the titles of her later publication indicate, Taraqqi's post-emigration narratives crystallize around the phenomenon of displacement and its consequential effects. All the three titles, *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992), *Jayi digar* (2000), and *Do donya* (2002), point in one way or another to the author's (or the characters') displaced conditions. While the word *parakandeh* (scattered), in the first place, refers simply to the fact that the narratives are based on random (or miscellaneous) memories, it simultaneously brings to mind the dispersed condition of emigrants all around the world. The term *Jayi digar* is by itself inherent of the concept of displacement. The words *ja* (place) and *digar* (other) in the Persian title highlight the significance of space and the intricacies of the confrontation with the other. The title *Do donya* is without much implication indicative of the oscillation between two different worlds, two different places, or, as it is often the case, between *here* and *there*—two words that are frequently reiterated in the text of the stories.

Taraqqi's post-revolutionary/post-emigration fiction falls, therefore, into a specific category of Iranian contemporary literature, which I would like to refer to as *emigration literature* appropriating Peyman Vahabzadeh's term "emigration poetry" which he used in his 1996 article to identify and elaborate on an emerging bilingualism in the poetry of Iranian exiles.[93] Bilingualism is not, however, the focus of my argument in employing the term, neither is the medium of poetry. The reason I prefer to employ Vahabzadeh's term is the way

92 Azadeh Molavi's *Lipstick Jihad* (2006) and Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003) are among the most well-known examples. Both works are subtitled as *Memoir*.

93 "Space, Identity," p. 44.

he distinguishes this category from what he refers to as "the poetry of immigrants" and "exile poetry."[94] He defines the former type simply as the poetry written by immigrants "regardless" of its "content" and the latter as a kind of poetry which is principally produced "in reaction to the political condition of the country."[95] Naturally enough, the former classification encloses the latter. I believe the same categorization is well applicable to the Iranian *prose* literature produced abroad. For example, while the former category includes works as diverse (in style, thematic content, and time of production) as Hedayat's, Modarresi's, Reza Qasemi's and 'Alavi's, the latter can comprise specific works written by Amirshahi and Fahimeh Farsayi.[96]

Accordingly, the category in which I would like to situate Taraqqi's second-phase stories, consists of a kind of literature in prose that is mainly produced outside the political borders of Iran as the result of the author's long- or short-term residence abroad after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. I would like to emphasize here the significance of the date of the Revolution, since it is commonly known as the historical event the consequences of which serve as the basis for both the Iranian's mass emigration and the gradual formation of the textual literary body that relates the encounter with the diasporic condition.[97] The category, accordingly, also necessitates an engagement with the topic of the emigrants' confrontation with the new and unfamiliar cultural space and all its derivatives, such as: nostalgia, language inefficiency, the trauma of displacement, and the consequential mental and emotional disorientation under the new circumstances. In the meanwhile, it should also be noted that *emigration literature* is in no sense completely free from references to the political circumstances that brought about the condition of exile. Such references, nevertheless, are rather swept away from the center, have already lost their propagandist intentions, and are only used to build up the narrative's background.[98] Moreover, the category of *emigration literature* should almost exclusively encompass works written by first-generation Iranian émigrés, as opposed to those produced by the second-generation of emigrants—whose literature comes to

94 Vahabzadeh, "Space, Identity," p. 43. For the genre's recognition, see: Rowshangar, "Adabiyat-e mohajerat."

95 Ibid.

96 Among the examples are Amirshahi's *Dar safar* and Farsayi's *Yek 'aks-e jam'i*. Fahimeh Farsayi's 1989 collection of short stories *Yek 'aks-e jam'i* includes narratives about the conditions of political refugees in Germany.

97 Karimi-Hakkak, "Introduction: Iran's Literature," p. 209. See also: Davaran, "Iranian Diaspora," pp. 9–13.

98 Yavari, "Post-revolutionary Fiction."

display traces of both a semi-Iranian identity, adopted from an *image* of Iran presented by an already formed Iranian diaspora,[99] and of the culture of the host country into which their authors are already well integrated. The works of this latter group, produced *in* and *about* diaspora, in its contemporary cultural sense,[100] are perhaps best represented under *the literature of diaspora*, since the term is indicative of a *collective* experience of displacement, marginalization, attempts at integration, and hybridity.

Iranian *emigration literature* in prose, in the sense defined above, is comprised of a rather dispersed body of literary text produced and published since shortly after the Revolution in different parts of the world both in Persian and, in some cases, in the languages of the writers' host countries. The sense of dispersal in regard to *emigration literature* is not, however, merely communicated by the fact that the works end up to emerge at different geographical spots around the world, but also—and even more perceptibly—by the ambiguity of the readership the works are likely to be received by. Those works published outside Iran, appearing often in rather low circulations at places as diverse and distanced as different continents, naturally do not enjoy a centrifugal book market.[101] Due to censorship and severe print policies, most of the works composed by émigré writers are not qualified to pass the Islamic Republic's print monitoring procedure. The online purchase of the books, moreover, is hardly an option for the readers in Iran, since international online financial affairs from and with Iran are not politically sanctioned. Consequently, a sizable population of the Persian-speaking readership, if not entirely eliminated, is cut down to individuals who, in one way or another—either illegally or on a limited personal scale—manage to have access to such works.

During the years after the Revolution up until today, however, there have been attempts by writers and literary critics to both introduce the emerging literary mode and to manage the problem of its readership. Some writers decided to write in the language of their host country, dispensing altogether with the Iranian and Persian-speaking book market.[102] Some writers, on the contrary, either by exerting a kind of self-imposed censorship or simply through choice of topic, consented to a sort of compromise in order not to lose the

99 The state California comes most readily to mind.

100 Mikula, *Key Concepts*, pp. 51–52.

101 For discussions about the problem of readership in exile, see: Rowshangar, "Adabiyat-e mohajerat." See also: Khaksar, "Goftogu ba Nasim."

102 Kader Abdolah, having so far published 18 novels in Dutch, is a prominent example of the case. For an extended discussion about the topic watch: BBC Persian, "Beh 'ebarat-e digar."

Iranian readership inside the borders of the country.[103] Some found translation a more practical option, whereby their works gained the opportunity to be presented to both Persian- and non-Persian-speaking readers.[104] Some literary scholars collected pieces of this kind of literature in different anthologies in order to introduce the genre and its authors to a wider range of readers.[105] Majid Rowshangar specifically engaged himself with *emigration literature* in Persian and published many pieces of the kind on a regular basis in his literary quarterly, *Barrasi-ye ketab*.[106] In order to make their works widely available for Persian-speakers all around the world, some authors, in recent years, published their works as free e-books[107] or made their stories accessible for public on personal weblogs.[108]

The first glimpses of the everyday lives of the Iranian post-revolutionary emigrants are to be caught in some works produced during the mid-eighties by authors whose main place of residence was in fact in Iran. In these works, the portrayal of the lives and conditions of Iranians abroad—as sometimes the main and sometimes the marginal subject matter—tends to consolidate through the eyes of a temporary visitor. Esma'il Fasih's well-received novel *Sorayya dar eghma'* (Sorayya in a coma) (1983) and the novel *Dal* (Falcon), (1986) by Mahmud Golabdarreh'i, are among the most relevant examples.[109] *Sorayya dar eghma'* is set in the years shortly after the revolution and at the outbreak of the war with neighboring Iraq. Upon hearing about his niece's critical health condition after an accident, the narrator leaves Iran for France in order to take care of the event. Several times during his stay, he visits an Iranian group of old acquaintances (writers and intellectuals among them). Through his dialogues, interactions, thoughts and comments about these characters, the narrator is successful in communicating a realistic and rather objective image of their disoriented lives and decadent artistic careers in exile. Composed in a less detached tone, Golabdarreh'i's *Dal* represents a dark image of the Iranian emigrants' lives in Sweden through long descriptive passages

103 Goli Taraqqi belongs to this group, for example.

104 Examples are Nasim Khaksar and Goli Taraqqi.

105 See, for example: Karim, *Let Me Tell You*; and Amirrezvani, *Tremors*.

106 First published in 1965. See: Rowshangar, "Adabiyat-e mohajerat."

107 Partow Nuri 'Ala's short story collection *Mesl-e man* (Like me) (2008) is an example of the case.

108 Examples are Hosein Nushazar and Marziyeh Sotudeh.

109 Mostafa Zamaniniya's *Rah-e deraz-e Estanbul* (The long way to Istanbul) (1985) is sometimes mentioned alongside these works. See, for example: Mir'abedini, *Sad sal*, p 939. But the focus of the book is on Iranian tourists abroad rather than on the matter of exile. See also: Mo'ayyad, "Naqd va barrasi," p. 328.

narrated in depressive and highly melodramatic language. The protagonist who has decided to join his wife and children in Sweden finds the Swedish law and the general living circumstances in exile inhumane and unbearably hostile.

From 1990 onwards, the instances of *emigration literature*, written by emigrant writers, with a specific focus on different dimensions of displacement and living in exile, become more frequent. Nevertheless, the presence of the host country and the degree of the characters' contact with the new cultural space differ from work to work. The extent of the portrayal of the new space and the immigrant characters' interactions and mobility within it is, therefore, sometimes regarded as a decisive factor indicating the author's reception or rejection of his/her exilic state.[110] In other words, such fiction is partly reflective of the author's attempts to familiarize the unfamiliar. The challenge, however, is not undertaken with similar perspectives or by equal vigor. While some authors' attitude toward the new circumstances, in Karimi-Hakkak's terms, is rather comparable to "the first man being driven out of paradise," some others approach the occasion as being "expelled from the prenatal state of bliss in the womb."[111] Whereas the former metaphor connotes suffering and an everlasting desire of return, the latter is inherent of the potentials of a new birth. In this respect, when analyzing different examples of *emigration literature*, at least two specific criteria should be taken into account: (1) the main spatial setting of the narrative (i.e. the contact zone), and (2) the narrator's (or the character's) attitude toward the experience of exile (often detectable in the tone of narration).

Iranian *emigration literature* since 1990 is comprised of many instances in which the characters' direct or indirect endeavors for adaptation become central to the narrative plot. Akbar Sarduzami's short story collection *Hadis-e ghorbat-e man* (The story of my exile) published in Sweden in 1992 includes stories—constructed in short fragmented sentences and dialogues—in which the first-person narrator's recurrent obsession with the past/Iran and the present/Sweden is highlighted as the main concern of the narratives.[112] Mahmud Falaki in the title story of his collection *Khiyaban-e tulani* (The long street) (1992), narrated in second-person, attempts to reconstruct the exiled self in different personae. The narration technique forces the reader to experience the events and emotions pertaining to the phenomena of exile and displacement alongside the narrator. In a rather serious, but disappointed, tone, the narrator

110 Yavari, "Post-revolutionary Fiction."

111 Karimi-Hakkak, "Introduction: Iran's Literature," pp. 209–210.

112 The collection includes also narratives that fall rather into the category of exile literature; "Man keh Ayyub nistam" (I am not Ayyub) is an example.

sketches a paradigm of the self's oscillation between extreme desire and abhorrence in regard to both the West and Iran (symbolized in female bodies). Sasan Qahreman's novel *Gosal* (Fault (in its geological sense)) (1995), another example of *emigration literature*, is rather focused on events and characters than form and narrative techniques. *Gosal*, in a serious and realistic language, relates the everyday ups and downs of the lives of Iranian refugees in different countries (Turkey, Czechoslovakia, and Germany). Reza Qasemi's well-wrought novel *Hamnava'i-ye shabaneh-ye orkestr-e chubha* (The nocturnal harmony of the wood orchestra) (1995), an excellent example of the genre, communicates the agonies, disorientations and the purgatorial in-betweenness pertaining to the narrator's exilic state (in France) through an ironic style and a highly technical narratological construction. The narrator is living the life he had written a novel about some years prior to the date of the events we are now reading about. In 1996/97, Nasim Khaksar publishes the novel *Badnamaha va shallaqha* (The windmills and the lashes) which in comparison to his earlier work *Mora'i kafar ast* (Mora'i is a pagan) (1989) is much less concerned with the characters' experiences as political activists than their lifestyles and relationships in the Netherlands. By incorporating exiled characters from nations other than Iran into his narrative plot, Khaksar, in this novel, is successful in representing the matter of exile as a global rather than a personal experience. Hoseyn Nushazar in his novelette *Na digar tak, na digar tab* (Tuckered out) (1998) relates the monotonous routines and the superficial relationships of Iranian immigrants in Germany. The characters of the novel (Iranians, Kurds, and Afghans) having left their homelands years ago are not capable of developing a sense of belonging toward any specific place in the world. Both in Germany and back in their homelands they feel themselves as displaced exiles.

After the 1990s, writers such as Keyvan Fotuhi, Fereydun Tonekaboni, and Khosrow Davami produce fictional works that can be well placed within the category of *emigration literature*. Nevertheless, the presence of women writers producing fictional works referring to the condition of Iranian exiles all around the world becomes evidently more perceptible after 2000 than in the previous decade. A notable example is Shahla Shafiq's *Sug* (The mourning) (2000), a collection of connected short stories that recount the experiences and emotions of a couple that tries to come to terms with the death of their teenage daughter. The spatial settings of the stories—France and the U.S.—are depicted through the eyes of immigrant characters (mainly the woman). Comparable to the condition of Iranian emigrants, the daughter's donated organs are dispersed into the world and continue to function in foreign bodies. Shafiq's more recent collection of stories *Az anja va az inja* (From there and from here) (2010), is, likewise, comprised of narratives set in both Iran and

France. Goli Taraqqi whose *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992), as an instant of *emigration literature*, appeared in the early 1990s, publishes her two collections *Do donya* and *Jayi digar* respectively in the years 2000 and 2002. Mehrnush Mazare'i, in her collection of short stories *Khakestari* (Ash grey) (2002), focuses in principle on the question of women and their mentalities in marriage and relationships. Nevertheless, almost all the stories are set outside Iran (in the U.S. and Mexico, for example) and include many, but brief, references to issues relevant to the state of being an immigrant. Bilingualism is, moreover, a feature of some of the pieces. It seems, however, that the significance of a feministic outlook in the narratives has taken over the matter of exile relegating it into the background. Ruhangiz Sharifiyan, in her novel *Cheh kasi bavar mikonad, Rostam* (Who believes it, Rostam) (2003), narrated in first-person, recounts the regretful retrospections of an immigrant woman. Taking a journey on the train alongside her husband in Europe, the narrator contemplates her memories of Iran, her disoriented emotions in exile, and her desire for love. A different approach towards exile and emigration is represented by Azar Nafisi's bestselling controversial memoir *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003). Unlike the majority of the works written by first generation Iranian emigrants, the work represents a highly positive attitude towards emigration and the West and bluntly criticizes the cultural and educational policies practiced in the Islamic Republic.[113] Partow Nuri 'Ala in her short story collection *Mesl-e man* (Like me) (2008), published online as a free e-book, has included some stories built upon the experience of life in exile (here, the U.S.). The story "Khaneh-ye aftabi," for instance, is structured in the form of a letter written by an Iranian immigrant woman (a resident of the U.S.) to her husband who still lives in Iran. The text of the story, set in two different font types, communicates the juxtaposition between what the woman prefers to tell her husband in the letter and the reality of her life in the U.S. Among those emigrant writers who prefer to publish their works online is also Marziyeh Sotudeh.[114] Most of her stories deal with the exilic lives of immigrant characters from different nations. The story "Emruz cheh khvahi shavi" (What do you want to become today), to mention an example, is the account of an immigrant woman's residence in a mental clinic in Canada. The identity crisis of the first-person narrator is reflected by her obsessive wish to identify with inanimate objects. Some of the stories published in Nasrin

113 Hamid Dabashi has severely criticized Azar Nafisi for acting as a "native informer" in this work. For the critique, see: Dabashi, "Native Informers." For an extensive elaboration on the issue, see: Dabashi, *Brown Skin*. For an attempt at an alternative counter-representation of Iran, see: Keshavarz, *Jasmine and the Stars*.

114 Marziyeh Sotudeh's stories are published, for example, on *Kalamat* and *Asar*.

Ranjbar Irani's collection *Dastan-e yek ruz* (The story of a day) (2012) are also representative of the characteristics of *emigration literature*. The story "Sobhi khakestari va gerefteh" (A grey and gloomy morning), for instance, is the simultaneous account of the New Year festivities in Germany and the war-time bombardment of Karaj. The memory of the war is evoked by the firework's explosive sounds and people's cheering celebrating the New Year. The narrator now living in Germany is reminded of the death of a friend during the bombardment of her hometown in Iran.

By taking into account the contact zone in the works mentioned above (i.e. the spatiotemporal moments in which two different cultures interface in a specific work), it can be observed that the majority of literary pieces belonging to the category of Iranian *emigration literature* are in fact set in the very space of exile and depict, in one way or another, the characters' interactions and strivings for coming to terms with the exilic state. Non-Iranian characters, foreign words and phrases, names of certain places, definitions of the host country's customs, and laws and regulations are all indicative of the characters' (and by extension, the authors') attempts to internalize the unfamiliar. The process, nonetheless, is a difficult and, at times, a painful one. A gloomy and often serious tone of narration, therefore, is a frequent characteristic of most of the fictional works written by first generation Iranian immigrants.

In this context, however, Goli Taraqqi's second-phase literature is indicative of quite a different approach toward displacement and exile. Instead of struggling to interpret/internalize the new condition, she prefers to flashback to her memories of Iran in most of her narratives. The tactic, nonetheless, cannot be interpreted as a nostalgic refuge to the past per se. Through her flashbacks to her memories of the past, Taraqqi is successful in re-constructing certain discourses that held once true in a specific (here, Iranian) discursive space. Re-making the signification of certain concepts (such as *Farang*), Taraqqi automatically employs a much more lighthearted, ironic and, at times, humorous language in relating her stories.

Critical Reception

After the Revolution of 1978/79 and, particularly, after the publication of *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992), Goli Taraqqi's literature came to enjoy a wider range of critical reception. Even her much neglected pre-revolutionary works (the *Che Guevara* volume (1969) and *Khvab-e zemestani* (1973)) started to be evaluated in more frequent cases of literary criticism during the late eighties and in the subsequent years following the emergence of *Khaterehha*.

Taraqqi's literature has been the topic of a number of critical articles and literary reviews published in different journals both inside Iran and abroad. Both in the literary and the academic arena, interest has been shown in the critical reassessment of Taraqqi's fiction. Nevertheless, viewed in perspective, the critical work written on Taraqqi's literature suffers from specific drawbacks. Although Taraqqi's fiction is widely read[115] and many of her stories have been translated into different languages (English, French, German, and Italian, for example), critical study that offers a comprehensive and in-depth textual analysis of Taraqqi's narratives are indeed scarce. Analysis of Taraqqi's fiction, in general, is limited to short evaluative or comparative pieces on single stories, a few unpublished dissertations, and a monograph in Persian. Apart from this, Taraqqi's short fiction—demonstrating in its entirety a coherent style, mode of narration, and subject matter—has not been, to date, studied through a substantial and cohesive theoretical approach that can provide a gestalt understanding of her narratives. In the following, a brief review of Taraqqi's critical reception is provided.

'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi in their collaborative volume *Goli Taraqqi* (*naqd va barrasi-ye asar*) (2003) have collected a considerable number of interviews and critical articles (originally published in different literary journals and magazines from 1993 to 2003) about Taraqqi and her works. The first chapter of the book deals with the biographical information available about Taraqqi. In this chapter, Mehdi Karimi attempts to outline Taraqqi's biography through establishing a connection between her experiences in real life and the autobiographical references reflected in her fiction.[116] The second chapter includes a number of interviews with Taraqqi by different people. The critical articles about Taraqqi's fiction are collected in the third chapter of the volume; and chapter four, to a large extent, is comprised of the articles written by Taraqqi herself. Some of the articles that analyze and elaborate upon Taraqqi's fiction from diverse perspectives are briefly discussed below.

Jamal Mirsadeqi in his article entitled "Goli Taraqqi: zaban-e ehsas, zaban-e andisheh" (Goli Taraqqi: the language of emotion, the language of thought) distinguishes between Taraqqi's works written before and after the Revolution in terms of the author's narrative language. He argues that, having adopted a philosophical viewpoint and having been concerned with her characters' psychological states of mind, Taraqqi's language of narration in her early works can be characterized as a "language of thought," while, on the contrary, her

115 *Khaterehha-ye Parakandeh* (1992), for example, has to date enjoyed six reprints. The current reprint is circulated in 3300 copies.

116 Karimi, "Ziyafat-e khaterehha," pp. 15–162.

second-phase retrospective narratives are communicated in a "language of emotion."[117] The stories "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man," "Derakht-e golabi," "Jayi digar,"[118] and "Khaneh'i dar aseman,"[119] are treated as exceptions. According to Mirsadeqi, they reflect the narrative characteristic of Taraqqi's early works.[120] Unfortunately, however, Mirsadeqi's argument remains somewhat unsettled, since he never clarifies what he exactly means by the language of "thought" or that of "emotion," or simply why, for instance, a psychological description cannot, at the same time, be emotional. A comparison between Taraqqi's works written before and after the Revolution has also been proposed by Suzan Goveyri and Turaj Rahnama. Nevertheless, the brevity of the article does not allow space for the elaboration upon such a broad topic.[121]

'Ali Ashraf Darvishiyan and Reza Khandan, in a collaborative article, have adopted a formalistic approach to analyze the story "Otobus-e Shemiran." In this article, they try to highlight an organic relationship between the specific components of the story and its entirety in terms of romantic aesthetics.[122] Similarly, Majid Eslami, in his analysis of the collection *Do donya* (2002), approaches the stories from a formalistic point of view focusing on the element of *death* and the relationship between language and imagery in the narratives.[123] Mohsen Faraji examines the long short story "Jayi digar" and its problematic narrative situation. Although towards the end of the article the discussion becomes somewhat incoherent and fragmented, the main argument is quite well supported.[124] Reza Qasemi's article deals with "Khedmatkar,"[125] from a structuralist perspective, relying on theories developed by Vladimir Propp and Thomas Mann.[126]

"Tanzi keh zendegi ast" (The satire that is life itself) written by Rowya Sadr explores Taraqqi's style of writing and her ironic language in *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992). She also deals with the natural harmony between the real world and the world's image in the characters' minds.[127] The correspondence

117 Mirsadeqi, "Goli Taraqqi: zaban-e ehsas," p. 286.
118 *Jayi digar*.
119 *Khaterehha-ye Parakandeh*.
120 Mirsadeqi, "Goli Taraqqi: zaban-e ehsas," p. 293.
121 "Dastanha-ye," pp. 334–335.
122 Darvishiyan and Khandan, "Naqd va," pp. 371–381.
123 "Miyan-e binahayat," pp. 456–466.
124 "Vaqti keh ravi." pp. 434–439.
125 *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*.
126 "Agar kolahi." pp. 446–449.
127 Sadr, "Tanzi," pp. 501–507.

of the real and the imaginary is also the subject of analysis in Fahimeh Ja'fari's article about the collection *Jayi digar* (2000).[128]

Taraqqi's stories have also been studied in comparison to the works of other Iranian writers. Zari Na'imi compares *Darya-pari kakol-zari* (1999) with Behrangi's *Mahi siyah-e kuchulu* (1968) and Farrokhzad's "'Ali kuchikeh."[129] Hushang Golmakani in his article "Dar gozashteh cheh gozashteh" (What has happened in the past) states that due to the end of a particular historical era and the beginning of another, the literature of the latter has become retrospective in nature. Accordingly, he compares works written by Goli Taraqqi, Ja'far Shahri and Esma'il Fasih.[130] Farzad Purkhoshbakht, close to the end of a rather descriptive article about *Do donya* (2002), points to the similarity of this collection to Farrokhzad's later poetry. But unfortunately, he neither determines which poems he exactly has in mind nor does he clarify the ground for comparison.[131]

The matter of modernity is the subject of analysis in Leyli Golestan's article "Ensan-e parakandeh, sonnat va moderniteh" (The dispersed man, tradition and modernity). In this article, she points to the penetration of modernity and characterizes the *Farangi* elements of Taraqqi's narratives as the force of change in the setting of the stories. Golestan, however, does not go further to analyze the dynamics of this force.[132] The relationship between East and West is also the topic of discussion in an article by Shahriyar Zarshenas. He criticizes the "desire for modernity" and the "critique of the East" in Taraqqi's stories and regards "Bozorg banu-ye ruh-e man" as an example of "post-mysticism," a kind of materialistic mysticism devoid of religious belief.[133]

More recent research on Taraqqi's literature has been conducted by Shahla Zarlaki in her *Khalseh-ye khaterat* (The rupture of remembrance) (2009). By taking into account Taraqqi's autobiographical style, Zarlaki focuses on the significance of time, remembrance, masculinity, and femininity in Taraqqi's literature. Shideh Ahmadzadeh in an article published in *Muhajerat dar adabiyat va honar* (Emigration in literature and arts) (2012) compares Taraqqi's literature of exile with that of Firoozeh Dumas.[134] Laetitia Nanquette in the fourth chapter of her well-wrought monograph *Orientalism versus Occidentalism*

128 "Tataboq," pp. 407–412.
129 "Tajrobeh-ye," pp. 357–370.
130 Pp. 476–488.
131 "Hefaz-e sabz," pp. 467–475.
132 Pp. 336–342.
133 Zarshenas, "Jayi digar," pp. 80–81.
134 "Degarguni," pp. 11–25.

(2013) discusses, among the works by other Iranian emigrant writers, the matters of exile and inbetweenness in three of Taraqqi's short stories.[135]

Other than a few in-depth and coherent analyses, the study conducted on Goli Taraqqi's literature is comprised of a dispersed body of critical commentary published in fragmentary pieces in periodicals, anthology and encyclopedia entries, interviews, and weblogs during the recent decades. Most of the published materials discussing Taraqqi's fiction lack a substantial theoretical framework. They are mostly introductory, descriptive, or journalistic in nature. The urge for the present study has been, in the first place, instigated by this critical gap. Despite being well-received and well-published in comparison to other cases of Iranian emigration literature, Taraqqi's fiction has scarcely been the topic of scholarly examination in terms of its most crucial topics such as identity and displacement.

Goli Taraqqi's Fiction: Narratives of Space

Nostalgic gardens, memorable houses, ensnarling walls, clinical environment, transnational dispositions, flashbacks, homeland, and exile are all among the recurrent images and themes in Taraqqi's short stories. The matter of space, both in its physical and philosophical sense, comes to build up the thematic core of Taraqqi's fiction. The characters' relationships, interactions, obsessions, disorientations, inspirations, and emotions are all closely linked to the significance of space in Taraqqi's narratives. Whether studied as the concrete structures constructing the stories' spatial settings or explored in relation to the term's philosophical and linguistic significations (such as semantic/discursive realms), space is always foregrounded as an important factor to the conflict in Taraqqi's plots; it serves to be more than simply a place or the setting, where events take place; it is, in fact, the very *site* of the conflict, the very concept that shapes the narrative plot and gives meaning to the dynamics of its driving force, frictions, and twists.

Although Taraqqi's style, choice of topic and mode of narration demonstrate a rather considerable discontinuity, when her pre- and post-emigration narratives are compared to each other, one can still notice a thematic logic that connects the short stories of the two phases. While her earlier short fiction collected in the *Che Guevara* volume depicts a series of characters desperately struggling to escape the current spatial structures, most of Taraqqi's

135 The stories "Anar Banu," "Aqa-ye Alef," and "Madame Gorgeh" are examined in terms of content and form in Nanquette's monograph, pp. 118–140.

later stories are in fact set in an entirely new space. While the *Che Guevara* protagonists are obsessed with an urge for departure from the undesirable and strictly defining boundaries they are trapped in, Taraqqi's more recent protagonists are depicted in an attempt to define and situate the self within new local and cultural structures. Taraqqi's short stories are often created around the struggle between the *defining logic* of different spatial conditions and the desire for self-actualization on the part of the characters. Interestingly enough, the struggle is often presented through an autobiographical or semi-autobiographical style of narration that carries the focus from the fictional to metafictional both highlighting and re-conceptualizing the relationship between self and narrativity. The short stories of Goli Taraqqi, in other words, give the reader a very palpable and engaging account of the interaction among three fundamental concepts: space, identity, and narration; her stories are about the dependency of self's meaning on space and the role of narration in facilitating the feasibility of identification within space. Both as a motif and as the actual setting, space proves to be a dynamic factor in Taraqqi's plots. It is in constant interaction with other narratological elements of the stories; it determines the limitations and possibilities of particular actions and accounts for the characters' idiosyncrasies, their ideals, dilemmas, decisions, failures, and successes, and, thereby, lays down the rules for identification on the part of the characters involved. Yet, as the site of the conflict, space itself does not remain immune from the struggle. Both space and the cognitive logic it imposes on the characters in their process of identification change through the struggle for self-actualization.

The relationship between identity and space throughout Taraqqi's early short stories and her later autobiographical narratives consolidates within different cognitive frameworks. By a cognitive framework I mean the spatial, cultural, social, and discursive circumstances that settle and control the logic of meaning-making for the subject/character, the circumstances that make the construction and communication of a certain type of identity feasible or challenging. These cognitive frameworks in Taraqqi's stories are the result of the interaction between self and space. In the *Che Guevara* narratives, for example, the actualization of the self is dependent on the destruction of space, which is exclusively represented as a barrier to identification. In the stories set in exile, space becomes uncharted and indefinite resulting in dangling characters feeling lost and irrelevant to the space; the characters' principal endeavor in these stories is not to destroy but to re-construct (self) space. In Taraqqi's childhood memories, on the other hand, the act of meaning-making in its absolute sense loses its significance. Both space and identity in Taraqqi's retrospective narratives become relative and flexible resulting in a lighthearted

language and tone of narration characterized by irony, a language that defeats absolutism.

Identity, Space, and Transcultural Significations

Identity as a concept is more complex than it first appears. The term *personal identity* is developed by the Danish-born psychologist Erik Erikson to describe a certain individual's psychological development over his/her life time. On the one hand, therefore, identity is a notion that refers to an individual's "self-same-ness over time".[136] On the other hand, however, because it socially defines *who* an individual is—in terms of a specific trait (gender, ethnic background, and religion, for example)—identity can also be reduced to individuality. Moreover, since in a given cultural context a certain trait of an individual can be highlighted as his/her absolute identity, it can also be deduced that identities are "culturally inflected" and function within power relations.[137] The definitions of the term *identity* and the critical approach to the concept have basically taken two directions over the last century: (1) the psychological approach, which principally defines and studies identity as an individual's "essential self" (in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, for example),[138] and (2) the viewpoint developed in social and cultural sciences in which the emphasis is rather on the "communal and cultural aspects of identity formation" (discussed and developed in theories of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Stuart Hall, for example).[139] While the first approach's emphasis is on the integral unity of the self, the second viewpoint focuses on the plurality of identities within a certain individual. Moreover, whereas the former approach principally concentrates on the preservation of identity, the latter deals with the dynamics of identity formation and its communication in social contexts.

In discussions pertaining to the matter of identity formation, the term *identification*, though a complicated concept by itself, proves to be preferable to the

136 Mikula, *Key Concepts*, p. 92.

137 During, *Cultural Studies*, pp. 145–6.

138 For Freud's anatomy of the self, see: Freud, Sigmund. *The Ego and the Id* (*Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*). Ed. James Strachey. London and New York: W.W. Norton, 1962. For Jacques Lacan's theory on the process of a child's self-identification, see: "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function: As Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," *Ecrits: A Selection*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004. pp. 3–9.

139 Mikula, *Key Concepts*, pp. 92–93.

notion of identity per se,[140] since it permits the analyst to deal with more concrete and palpable situations than does the fluid and unstable notion of identity. The term *identification*, concisely defined, is used to refer to the process and dynamics of identity formation in a sociocultural context through (what Foucault refers to as) "discursive practices."[141] The question of identification, in other words, comes to the fore "in the attempt to rearticulate the relationship" between a subject and the sociocultural practices in a given discourse.[142] In the second half of the twentieth century, "with the advent of structuralism and poststructuralism," language and, by extension, representation come to build up the basis for the discussions and analysis of the dynamics of identity formation.[143] Stuart Hall, the Jamaican-born cultural theorist and sociologist, indicates that "the discursive approach sees identification as a construction [and therefore] a process never completed.... [Identification] operates across difference, it entails ... the binding and marking of symbolic boundaries."[144] In other words, identification can be understood as the never-ending attempt of the subject to signify the self in certain situations, in a particular discursive/cultural realm. The identification strategies developed and practiced in a certain discourse/culture might, therefore, fail to function in another.

In "The Work of Representation," Stuart Hall explores the theoretical development and the dynamics of the relationship between the subject and meaning in a cultural context. Drawing upon Saussure, he points out that language is a representational phenomenon that functions through signs and difference. That is, any particular signifier (word, item, color) is to (and does) *represent* the signified (meaning, message, concept) through its difference from other signifiers. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and generally agreed upon in any culture.[145] In this sense, meaning is *constructed* in a particular sociocultural context and is dependent on "conventions" rather than "nature;" accordingly, Hall argues that "if meaning is the result of ... our social, cultural, and linguistic conventions, then meaning can never be *finally* fixed."[146] Here, "discourse" (in its Foucauldian sense) takes over language as a "system of representation." Discourse is understood as "a group of statements

140 Hall, "Who needs," p. 16.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid.

143 Mikula, *Key Concepts*, p. 93.

144 Hall, "Who needs," pp. 16–17.

145 Hall, "The Work," pp. 30–31. On Ferdinand de Saussure and his place in linguistics, see: Culler, Jonathan. *Saussure*. Hassocks: Harvester, 1976.

146 Ibid., p. 23.

which provide the language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment." But the construction of meaning is not exclusively based on what can be linguistically communicated. Meaning is also conveyed through social practices such as ceremonies, rituals, behaviors, dress codes, and relations. Since "all social practices entail *meaning*, and meanings shape and influence what we do … all practices have a discursive aspect."[147] Therefore, if meaning, practice and the sociocultural context are so closely connected, then meaning is prone to change based on the conduct of the *subject* as well as his or her historical, geographical, and discursive standpoint. The act of representation, in this sense, is only possible through mastery over the shared sign-system of a specific discourse/culture—that is, mastery over the rules of encoding and decoding in a certain discourse. According to Hall's philosophy of encoding/decoding, "a message must be perceived as meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded" before it is comprehensibly represented.[148]

Since identification functions through discursive practices and any discourse is developed in a specific social and cultural territory/space, then, it is deductible that identification is also space-dependent. This, however, is not the only factor that relates identification to the notion of space. The relationship between the two concepts stems also from the very fact that identity is constructed and communicated through difference (as is the case with any other signifier in a sign system). If so, therefore, there should exist a virtual or, even, an actual borderline delineating the difference.[149] In other words, there should exist *boundaries* that outline the territories of the self. The term *self-space*, therefore, generally refers to the concrete or virtual territory that not only belongs to the self but, at the same time, differentiates it from others. The construction of self-space in a discursive realm, nonetheless, depends strongly on the subject's knowledge about, and range of interaction within, that particular discourse.

Through displacing phenomena, the subject is removed from the *usual* (or familiar) discursive realm and is positioned into an ambiguous one, wherein he or she is to rearticulate the self anew. This ambiguous semantic space, placed in between the known and the unknown has the discursive qualities of the *third space*, to use Homi K. Bhabha's term. More than a literal space, the term refers to a liminal "site" or an in-between discursive "situation" occupied by the outsider within the alleged (and in fact never determinable) borders of

147 Hall, "The Work," p. 44.

148 Hall, *Encoding*, p. 16.

149 Hall, "Who needs," p. 3.

a culture different from the subject's original.[150] The third space can in fact be interpreted as the frontal site of the encounter with the *other*, where linguistic and cultural signs "open onto the question of agency and provide an alternative, even antagonistic, form of authority."[151] It is within the third space that the representational aspect of culture formation is revealed and the absolute truth of any cultural discourse is undermined. It is only through this "third position of removal and distance," that the subject is able to "objectify and judge the different strata of culture."[152]

In the analysis of Taraqqi's stories in this work, the matter of identity is mainly explored through a sociocultural approach to the term. However, in the discussions about the genre of autobiography and the act of self-narration, the relation between narrativity and identity is explored with the assumption that self-narration is an attempt, on the part of the narrator, to preserve the integrity of the so-called "essential self."[153] In the author's second-phase stories, the significance of the process of identification is foregrounded whenever a character experiences transference from one discursive/cultural realm to the other. The characters' strivings to redefine the self under the new symbolic circumstances, in such cases, comprise the core of the analysis. Stuart Hall's theory of representation is mainly employed to discuss the paradoxical depiction (and reception) of the West in Taraqqi's retrospective narratives. By drawing upon the function and the dynamics of cultural representation, the analysis will demonstrate the ways in which Taraqqi's narratives offer an account of how the popular signification of the West (referred to by the term *Farang* in the Iranian context) is constructed, destabilized, and re-constructed in terms the subject's absence from/presence within the discursive spaces of homeland and exile.

The remainder of this book, accordingly, is divided into four chapters followed by a concluding section. Chapter two, "Entangled Identities: Space, Mobility, Individuation," is comprised of the analysis of Taraqqi's early narratives collected in *Man ham Che Guevara hastam* (1969) and that of the much later published "Jayi digar" (the title story of Taraqqi's 2000 volume), which in terms of thematic elements and characterization much resembles the *Che Guevara* stories. The narratives in question generally depict individuals as

150 Young, "The Void," p. 82.

151 Bhabha, "In the Cave," p. xi.

152 Byrne, *Homi K. Bhabha*, p. 32.

153 For an extensive study on the relationship between autobiography and the sense of selfhood, see: Eakin, Paul John. *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

they struggle to bring about a change in a personal realm. Stuck in certain circumstances (married life, chaotic households, and philosophical obsessions, for instance), they strive desperately to pull themselves out of the communal background they are carved in. The theoretical core of the analysis is based on a structuralist approach to identity, discussed by the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. According to Bauman, identity (in its modern sense) is only perceivable in a "'disembedded' or 'unencumbered' form"—that is basically when the subject is taken out of pre-defined structures.[154] Depicted both in realistic and surrealistic modes, the conflict against social control, space and stability in the stories mentioned above, is consolidated in the characters' constant obsession with the urge for mobility and the desire for self-elimination in an extended transitory phase. Through the analysis, it is intended to explore the dynamics between the desire for identity re-construction, on the part of the characters, and the frictions that obstruct or decelerate the process in the narratological structures of the stories. In principle, therefore, the analysis will center on two essential questions: (1) How is mobility, as a liberating act, interrupted in the linguistic construction of the text, that is, through verbs and specific sentence structures, for example? (2) How is the process of departure or self-elimination impeded through thematic elements, that is, through recurrent imagery, motifs, descriptions, and characterization, for instance?

Chapter three, "Displacement: The Problematics of Self-Space and the Trauma of Identification," deals with the analysis of three of Taraqqi's stories which exclusively focus on the trauma of displacement and the characters' encounter with the exilic state.[155] If in her pre-revolution/pre-emigration narratives Taraqqi depicts her characters on the verge of desertion, in the stories discussed in chapter three, she has already placed them within new spatio-semantic structures, namely that of *Farang* (an idiomatic reference to Europe and North America in Iran which during the reins of Qajars and the Pahlavis communicated a favorable attitude toward the West in the discourse of the upper and upper middle classes).[156] The analysis of these stories focuses, in principle, on the following aspects: (1) on the process in which the narrative of *Farang* (*there*), on the *threshold of emigration*, is constructed by the subject in terms of the already known (but rejected) narrative of *here* and *now*, (2) on the problematics of space construction and identification in relation to the subject's dysfunctional interactions within the new semantic realm. In

154 "From Pilgrim," p. 19.

155 "Khaneh'i dar aseman", "Madame Gorgeh", and "'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef dar ghorbat," from the collection *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992).

156 Ghanoonparvar, *In a Persian*, p. 11.

exploring the matters of space and identification, in this chapter, the analyses are primarily based on Stuart Hall's cultural semiotics

Chapter four, ""Avvalin ruz" (The first day) and "Akharin ruz" (The last day)," The Function of Self-Narration," is a chapter on autobiographical writing as Taraqqi's major genre in her second-phase fiction. The main focus in this chapter is directed towards the framework narratives of the collection *Do Donya* (2000) ("Avvalin ruz" and "Akharin ruz") which from a meta-fictional level comment on the necessity and function of self-narration as an attempt on the part of the subject to restore the self's integrity. In discussions about the function of narrativity, the theoretical approach draws much upon Paul John Eakin and Galen Strawson's (contrasting) views about the relationship between identity and narrativity.

In the fifth chapter, "Homeland Re-focalized: Shifted Significations and a Less Traumatized Style," the analytical emphasis is upon the act of cultural translation in the third space and its ironic effect in Taraqqi's autobiographical narratives. Since Taraqqi's particular hybrid position (as a first-generation immigrant) does not allow her to approach the culture of the host country as a native is often able to, most of her narratives—with the exception of a few, and even then in a very limited way—are basically concerned with either the agonies of inbetweenness (for example, displacement (discussed in Chapter three)) or a retrospective remembrance of homeland memories. The irony in Taraqqi's stories can, in fact, be understood as the result of the author's fading absolutism in the third space in regard to different discourses of truth of the left-behind homeland. Through the analyses in this chapter, therefore, it is attempted to focus on two principal questions: (1) How are the truths and absolute values of homeland, in the author's liminal condition, transformed into merely some narrative versions of possible realities? (2) In what ways and through which textual means has Taraqqi been able to represent the sociocultural discourses of the past in a multi-phonic self-contradictory style?

The results of the analyses are wrapped up in the concluding section. The outcomes of the discussions addressing the core questions of each analytical chapter are re-examined in relation to each other and within the framework of the study's objectives. The relevance, applicability, and efficiency of the theories and the critical approaches deployed in the study of Taraqqi's narratives are reviewed in terms of the accomplished results. In the course of my research, I came across questions and topics worthy of closer examination in solid scholarly studies. The field of Iranian literature produced abroad, already comprised of its own emerging subfields, is yet a young field of study, full of gaps and unexplored spots. The conclusion to this work, accordingly, includes also a few suggestions for further research in the field.

The present work is supplemented with a short epilogue on Goli Taraqqi's most recent publications. The novel *Ettefaq* and the short story collection *Forsat-e dobareh* became available in Iran's book market late in 2014; and that is why they could not be integrated into the present study, the major part of which had already been composed by that time. Although Taraqqi's recent works retain many traces of her second-phase literature (in narrative style and subject matter, for example), they differ from them in some specific aspects such as the representation of the phenomenon of emigration (in different historical periods) and the depiction of the contact zone with the cultural space of the host countries. Unfortunately, those works could not be part of the analytical corpus of this study. Nevertheless, I found it necessary to include a brief introduction to Taraqqi's most recent narratives in this work in order to emphasize the continual emergence of new themes and topics in Iran's emigration literature and to highlight the field's yet dynamic force.

CHAPTER 2

Entangled Identities: Space, Mobility, Individuation

The present chapter offers a close textual analysis of six of Goli Taraqqi's short stories. The narratives in focus include five stories from Taraqqi's earlier short fiction collected in the volume *Man ham Che Guevara hastam* (1969) and the story "Jayi digar" published later (in 2000) in a collection with the same title. The analysis, in principle, centers on the tension between the rigidity of spatial structures and the characters' incessant desire for identity re-construction. The possibility (or impossibility) of being mobile and the attempt at self-elimination from specific spaces or conditions construct the basis for discussion in this chapter. The relationship between mobility and identification is elaborated on by drawing upon Zygmunt Bauman's speculations on the matter of identity construction in its modern sense. In the following, accordingly, the discussion will open with a general introduction to the contents of Taraqqi's first collection of short stories and the relevance of Bauman's views on identity to the oncoming analysis. The analysis is developed in three subchapters based on the thematic relevance of the narratives in question. The discussion, in this respect, will be expanded by focusing on three different issues that constitute the site of conflict in the stories: (1) communal (or family) structures, (2) corporeal (or body) structures, and (3) the structures that deter the flow of narrative articulation.

The *Che Guevara* Stories and the Verge of Transition

As discussed briefly in the introduction, the very leftist title of Taraqqi's first collection of short stories, *Man ham Che Guevara hastam* (1969), is ironically juxtaposed to the non-*engagé* content of the narratives included in the volume. This paradox foregrounds the significance of the title in relation to both the content of the stories as well as the literary context in which the work has been produced.

In the title sentence, the emphasized phrase *man ham* implies the desire of an individual to be similar to an iconic leftist political figure. It is interesting to notice that the sentence structure of the title, due to the usage of the word *ham*, delineates a virtual threshold between the person who utters it and the entity he or she wants to be associated with. In other words, when one states "I *too* am someone/something," he or she both announces a break from the rest

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004356948_003

and a desire to belong to a certain group. Therefore, the sentence *man ham Che Guevara hastam* is uttered at the threshold of belonging and rejection—i.e. on the border of similarity and difference. The title of the book promises accordance with the then prevalent and intellectually acclaimed literary productions and well places Taraqqi's book in the context of the so-called "committed literature" of the time. On the other hand, quite indirectly and very shrewdly, it implies a difference. The difference is revealed as soon as one is exposed to the first short story of the volume. The content of the narratives betrays the title. No political engagement, in a serious idealistic sense, is displayed. Neither heroism nor any armed struggle is staged. The ironical discrepancy between the title and the content of the book stimulates the curiosity: What is the relationship between Taraqqi's book and committed literature? In what ways are the anti-heroic protagonists of the collection associated with Che Guevara and the leftist ideals of the time? What are the grounds of similarity between these narratives and the revolutionary literature of the sixties and the seventies?

No doubt siding with the political left leads to the construction of a political identity. Political leftism can be well placed within the structures of identity construction. The political left is signified and, thereby, defined through its opposition against—and hence its difference from—an authoritarian regime; it functions within the dynamics of power; it is goal-oriented and its locality of fulfillment lies in an ideal future. In this sense, becoming a leftist cannot be regarded as socio-political activism per se. It also fulfills a psychological function, the urge of an individual to be different and thereby *be*. The adopted identification strategy, in this case, has a dual function. First, through choice and the break from a majority, it leads to the formation of an individual identity. And then, as soon as one is able to surmount the boundary, or let us say, step over the threshold, a collective identity is constructed. The first-person, singular subject pronoun of the title, *man*, emphasizes the fact that the sentence (uttered by the self) is articulated at the verge of individuation. Concerning the *Che Guevara* volume Taraqqi declares:

> I should add that Che Guevara, as an individual, has no political significance for me. He is a person who consciously chooses his own destiny and moves forward until the final end. I do not make any social or political judgments. He is the symbol of a [decisive] destiny maker. That's it.[1]

Taraqqi's characters in *Man ham Che Guevara hastam* are, therefore, individuals who struggle to bring about a change in a personal realm—as opposed to

1 Karimi, "Ziyafat-e khaterehha," p. 39.

the imperatives of the term change on the socio-political level. Throughout the narrative plotlines of the volume, Taraqqi's characters, in this respect, are depicted in an endeavor against two interrelated conditions: against space and stability. That is, they desire self-elimination to wipe out an already stagnant identity through different strategies, represented in the symbolism of the stories, and, at the same time, they desire mobility to be revitalized, redefined in the ambivalent structures of spaces not yet known. Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* stories, in this sense, consolidate in extended transitory states at the verge of belonging to a specific social order and the desire for abandonment, the desire to terminate the stale monotony of social control, the desire for individuation.

Zygmunt Bauman: Disembedding the Self, a Postulated Project

The Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman is commonly acknowledged as one of the world's eminent social theorists writing on matters of modernity, consumerism, globalization, and the Holocaust. He is best known for developing the concept of "liquid modernity" (the software-based fluid modernity of our contemporary era) to illustrate, critique, and expand upon the process, effects and dynamics of globalization in the postmodern state of the world.[2] In his essential works, Bauman often keeps a critical eye (from humanistic and moral perspectives) on the homogenizing consequences of globalization policies[3] and the increasing "tendency towards 'adiaphorization'" in human relationships.[4]

Bauman's theoretical relevance to our discussion here, nevertheless, has little to do with his expansive speculations on the sociological process and effects of modernity and is limited to his ideas concerning individuation and

2 In a series of monographs written between the years 2000 and 2013, Bauman expands upon the implications and dynamics of liquid modernity and their impact on our contemporary social order: *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000; *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003; *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007; *Consuming Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007; *Culture in a Liquid Modern World*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011; and *Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

3 Bauman's ideas about the dehumanizing effects of postmodern societies and the politics of globalization have been particularly developed in Bauman, Zygmunt: *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998; and in a more recent work by him *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.

4 "Adiaphorization" is a term employed by Bauman to refer to the "exemption of a considerable part of human action from moral judgment and … moral significance." Bauman, "From Pilgrim," p. 32. See also: Bauman, *Moral Blindness*, p. 37.

identity construction in the modern era, as opposed to the implications of the concept of identity in our postmodern, digital times.

In a 1996 article,[5] Bauman, by focusing on the matter of identity, and through employing a particular set of metaphorical figures, ventures to differentiate between the problematics of identity construction, its aims, media, and strategies in the modern era, on the one hand, and within postmodern societies, on the other. Through juxtaposing the decisive, goal-oriented and devoted image of a "pilgrim" with the sporadic lifestyles of figures such as the "stroller," the "vagabond," the "player," and the "tourist," Bauman sketches a history of identity in this article.[6] While Zygmunt Bauman identifies the modern problem of identity as the individual's obsession with the construction and the preservation of the meaning of the self as a "solid and stable" entity, he emphatically points out that the problem of identity in the contemporary age of short-term jobs, rationalization policies, fading loyalties and "pure relationships"[7] is "how to avoid fixation and keep the options open."[8] Bauman's symbolic and visual comparison between the images of a civil society in its modern and postmodern states well clarifies his point. While the "catchword of modernity," in Bauman's views, is "creation," that of postmodernity is "recycling." The modern world, physically built in "steel and concrete," should ideally be substituted by the "biodegradable" materials and structures of postmodern cities; the modern time's "irreversible and non-erasable" photographs (as symbols for identity) are replaced with the "eminently erasable and re-usable" forms of recording media.[9] According to Bauman, identity, "a 'problem' from its birth," has triggered different forms of anxiety during different periods.[10] While "the identity-bound anxiety of modern times was the worry about durability; it is the concern with commitment avoidance today."[11] In other words, whereas modern identities had to be constructed solidly and preserved with consistency, in our globalized societies, the emphasis (regarding the issue of identity) is rather on flexibility and the possibility of instant change, when necessary.

Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* stories, set against the backdrop of Tehran's urban space during the 1960s, reflect a period in the socio-political history of Iran that

5 "From Pilgrim."
6 Ibid., pp. 26–32.
7 Ibid., p. 25
8 Ibid., p. 18.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p. 19.
11 Ibid. p. 18.

falls well into the country's 150–year experience with modernity.[12] Although Iran's so-called "encounter" with the modern—"modern ideas and institutions," as Mirsepassi suggests—"dates back to the mid-nineteenth century, the socio-economic relations in Iran remained predominantly pre-capitalist."[13] During the two-decade timespan encompassing the 1960s and 1970s, however, "Iranian society underwent a state-sponsored modernization program that affected the economic relations, social institutions, and cultural patterns of the country."[14] In the critical writings on Taraqqi's early fictional works and the interviews with the author, the question of this kind of cultural, institutional, and economic encounter with Western modernization, as one of the key elements in the narratological structure of Taraqqi's stories, often pops up.[15] If we consider that Taraqqi's early inert characters are set and forced to function within the structures of a society going through rapid transformation under the impact of modernizing projects, then Bauman's elaborations upon the significance and problematic of identity vis-à-vis modernity can be well employed to explain the recurrent leitmotif of unbreakable structures that impede the urge for identity re-construction in Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* narratives. In this respect, in the analysis of the stories in question, I will dispense with Bauman's main argument concerning the problem of identity in postmodernity and will rather shift the focus towards his ideas regarding the problematic of identity preservation and the dynamics of the process of identity formation in its modern sense.

The very term "identity" for Bauman is grammatically a "noun" that "behaves like a verb," since "it appears only in the future tense." Although identity as a term is often employed to refer to a specific "attribute of a material entity," it "has the ontological status of a project and a postulate." Identity, in other words, in Bauman's views, enters "modern mind and practice" as an "individual task," a task the necessity for which is triggered by the sense of "uncertainty:"[16]

> One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs; that is, one is not sure how to place oneself among the evident variety of behavioral styles and patterns, and how to make sure that people around would accept this placement as right and proper, so that both sides would

12 Vahdat, *God and Juggernaut*, p. xii.

13 *Intellectual Discourse*, p. 73.

14 Ibid. For Iran's modernization projects (White Revolution) during the latter Pahlavi era, see also: Abrahamian, *A History*, pp. 123–154.

15 See, for example: Golestan, "Ensan-e parakandeh" and Zarshenas, "Jayi digar."

16 "From Pilgrim," p. 19.

> know how to go on in each other's presence. 'Identity' is a name given to the escape sought from that uncertainty.[17]

The above quote highlights at least four significant points in regard to the concept of identity: (1) the dependence of the meaning of the self on the social patterns surrounding the self; (2) the relationship between identity and the concept of space; (3) the probable resistance of those particular spatial structures in case of an urge for mobility; and (4) the fact that identity's point of fulfillment is temporally located in the future. In this sense, Bauman emphasizes that "both meaning and identity can only exist as *projects*."[18] The project in question is one of *disembedding* the self from its current defining background.[19] And if considered a project and inspired by a desire of abandonment, then identity formation implies both "dissatisfaction with, and denigration of, the here and now" and a "distance" from (or a "delay" of) the longed for state of the meaning.[20] Accordingly, the modern subject involved in a project of identity (re)construction has to face a dual predicament: (1) how to pull out the self from the unyielding structures into which it is deeply carved; and (2) how to re-construct the new space for definition.

The narratological elements of Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* stories—that is, the plots, characterization, the settings of the narratives, and even the language of narration—do all reflect the characters' dissatisfaction with the current way they are defined in particular communal structures. All characters in question seek a way out of the rigid spaces that ascertain their meanings and, thereby, control their conduct and limit their freedom of self-expression. Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* narratives, in other words, are the stories of the friction between the will for new identities and the rigidity of the identity structures so far firmly preserved.

Surmounting the Communal Structures: Thesis, Antithesis, and the Final Escape

The depiction of family and married life as an obstacle on the way of individuation is a recurrent motif in Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* volume. In almost all of the eight stories of the collection, to a more or lesser degree, there *is* a reference to

17 Bauman, "From Pilgrim," p. 19.

18 Ibid., p. 22.

19 Ibid., p. 21.

20 Ibid., p. 22.

the characters' dissatisfaction with the constant demands of family life, social control, and the restrictions they impose on the characters' will for change, mobility, vitality, and the desire to re-define the self. From among these stories, the current section's analytical discussion will address two stories in particular: the title story of the volume and the story "Yek ruz" (One day). Other than these two stories, "Jayi digar"—one of Taraqqi's later narratives, published, in 2000, in a collection with the same title—will also be briefly discussed.

These three stories have specific features that make their inclusion in the same sub-chapter appropriate to the discussion. (1) They directly portray the framework of marriage or family life as the site of the conflict in process. In other words, it is exactly the structures of the institution of family (or marriage) that act as the predicament to the protagonists' will for change; and these are, at the same time, exactly the same structures that are directly sought to be surmounted by the protagonists. (2) If we consider that the *Che Guevara* volume has a single bold theme in its totality, there are two stories in the collection that juxtapose the thesis and the antithesis conveyed through this particular theme. If the story "Man ham Che Guevara hastam" emphasizes the urge for separation, in the story "Yek ruz," it is attempted, at least partially, to propose a negation of this attitude towards family life. (3) It is only after about thirty years following the publication of the volume *Man ham Che Guevara hastam* (1969) that Goli Taraqqi finally offers a resolution to the unresolved conflicts portrayed in her first collection of short stories; and this is not but through the story "Jayi digar." In the following, accordingly, the discussion will open with the analysis of the story "Man ham Che Guevara hastam" by focusing on the ways the protagonist's urge for mobility is impeded both linguistically and within the narratological framework of the story. This section will then continue with the analysis of the story "Yek ruz" and will be concluded by referring to the denouement of the story "Jayi digar."

Lost in the Maze: "Man ham Che Guevara hastam" and the Obstructed Mobility

The dynamics between the desire for mobility and the rigidity of space are very well captured in the setting of the title story of Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* collection. "Man ham Che Guevara hastam," through a heterodiegetic narrator, relates the story of its protagonist's dissatisfaction and frustration with the demands of married life on his thirty-ninth birthday. While driving hectically in the chaotic traffic jam on his way to his children's school, Mr. Heydari, is constantly obsessed with his wife's reproaches, demands, and complaints about different issues. The leitmotiv of the narrative is the cooking pot filled with the lunch for his children, which is refilled every day and taken to the children on a routine basis. The setting of the story, if focalized from a bird's-eye view,

depicts a maze-like location. The protagonist driving his car is caught in the obstructed passages of the maze, making no further progress towards his destination. There *is* movement in the plot, yet it is of an erratic type. There is no consistent, pre-determined transition from point A to point B:

> تمام راه‌ها بند بود. کمی جلو رفت، عقب زد، جابه‌جا شد و دید که فایده ای ندارد.
>
> All the ways were blocked up. He drove forwards a bit, then backwards, moved over, realized there was no use in it. (11)
>
> [آقای حیدری] دور زد و راهی را که رفته بود دوباره برگشت.
>
> [Mr. Heydari] turned his car and drove back onto the way he had already come from. (12)
>
> دست راست کوچهٔ باریکی بود که همه به آن هجوم آورده بودند. دست چپ یکطرفه بود.
>
> On the right, there was a narrow alley invaded by everyone. The left was a one-way street. (15–16)

There are many instances in the text of the story that depict Mr. Heydari's disoriented and constantly blocked movements in the narrative setting. But since the medium of literature is basically written language, it is interesting by itself to explore how mobility (here approached as an action potentially resulting in identity re-construction) is impeded in the text of the narrative. Concerning the nature of movement in the plot, it is important to pay attention to the relation between the concept of choice (desire) and character-initiatives as a narratological construct. In other words, it is of relevance to ask the questions: What primal forces initiate the action (in the form of movement) in the plot of the narrative? And what do they have to do with the choice (desire) attributed to the character?

Impeded in/by the Text

Events in narratives are generally communicated through the usage of a "verb or name of action."[21] However, actions are not necessarily initiated through

21 Rimmon-Kenan, p. 2.

the direct subjects of the verbs in question; there is often a process of "causality" at work.[22] Put in simpler words, the doer of an action is not necessarily the agency who commences the action. The relation between choice and the initiation of action can be well traced, for example, in the logic of the verb *khvastan* (to want). In this respect, three consecutive questions might be asked: Who wants? What does he or she want? Who actualizes the desire? In "Man ham Che Guevara hastam", the verb *khvastan*, in different conjugated forms, appears seven times in the text of the story. The subject of the verb in two of the cases is Mr. Heydari's wife, and in other five cases Mr. Heydari himself. Quite interestingly, nevertheless, the movement or action in the plot, even in its limited and circular form, is only then realized when it is inaugurated by the will of the wife and carried out through the agency of Mr. Heydari:

> [آقای حیدری] از توی جیبش یک تکه کاغذ درآورد و لیست چیزهایی را که زنش خواسته بود دوباره با دقت خواند.... [بعد] پایش را بی دلیل روی گاز فشار داد.
>
> [Mr. Heydari] took out a piece of paper from his pocket and read carefully through the list of the items *his wife wanted* to have.... [Then] he pressed his foot aimlessly on the acceleration pedal. (11, my emphasis)

The adverb "aimlessly," in the above excerpt, bears witness to the fact that the action is not realized through Mr. Heydari's own intention but rather through the desire of the wife who has demanded certain items to be bought. On the other hand and quite ironically, whenever the verb *khvastan* is attributed to the character of Mr. Heydari himself, it only results in the actions which remain on the fictional level (such as dreaming or regretful contemplations) without being actualized on the plotline. That is, there is no action directly accomplished through the choice (desire) of the protagonist:

> یاد آن روزها افتاد که با چه سماجتی پایش را به زمین می‌زد و می خواست همهٔ دنیا را قانع کند.
>
> He was reminded of those days when *he* would stamp his foot stubbornly on the ground and *wanted* to convince the whole world. (18, my emphasis)

22 Rimmon-Kenan, p. 17.

بهش [(به زنش)] می‌گم که من کار دیگه‌ای تو زندگی دارم، که من می‌خوام انتخاب خودمو بکنم و از این تسلیم ابلهانه خسته شده‌ام.

> I would tell her [(his wife)] that I have other things to do in life, that *I want* to have my own choice, that I am tired of this stupid capitulation. (24, my emphasis)

In both of the quotations above, the very desire of the protagonist is easily traceable. However, in none of the cases, does the desire result in the actualization of the will. While action, in the former excerpt, remains only limited to the useless, stubborn beats of the foot on the ground, in the latter, it simply takes the form of wishful thinking and is never materialized in the external world.

Mr. Heydari's role as the medium, rather than the initiator, of action can also be observed in passages where his activities are preceded by the defective verb "*bayestan*:"[23]

می‌بایست اول قابلمهٔ غذای بچه‌ها را به مدرسه ببرد، سر راه لباسها را از لباسشویی بگیرد، چیزهایی را که زنش یادداشت کرده بود بخرد، برود خانه، نهار بخورد و برگردد به اداره.

> First, he must take the kids' lunch to school, collect the laundry from the dry-cleaner's on his way, buy whatever his wife has listed down, go home, have lunch, and go back to his office. (12–13)

External action imperative blurs the role of the subject as the agency *who wills and does* and reduces it to the one who *obeys and does*. The discrepancy between the verbs "to will" and "to obey" leads us exactly to the clash between the desire for individuation and the necessity to preserve of the rigid identity structures so far maintained—a clash that constructs the principle conflict in "Man ham Che Guevara hastam."

The Impelling Force of Dissatisfaction

The clash, in this sense, is inaugurated at the very moment when the solid "placement"[24] of an individual in a certain social network is suspected by

23 Mace, *Persian Grammar*, p. 113.

24 Bauman, "From Pilgrim," p. 19.

the self. That which Bauman refers to as "uncertainty"[25] or "dissatisfaction"[26] builds up the primal impetus for the tendency either to leave or to alter that specific behavioral network. The conflict of the narrative, in this respect, is formed through the individual's desire for change vis-à-vis the resistance of the current structures. The protagonist's so far preserved identity, closely connected to, and defined by, his *function* in a communal network (family, marriage, or fatherhood), is strongly dependent on his ability to comply than his decision to decline. Mr. Heydari, who, from the outset of the story, is characterized by dissatisfaction, anger, agitation, disappointment, bewilderment and doubtfulness, is depicted on his thirty-ninth birthday at a stage in his life, where he is no more satisfied with compliance:

> با خودش فکر کرد که هفت سال تمام این راه را هر روز رفته، برگشته و اعتراضی نکرده است. هفت سال تمام سرش را زیر انداخته و گفته: «بله، حتما، چشم...».
>
> He thought to himself that it is, by now, seven years that he has driven this way back and forth without any objections. For seven years, he has ... only bowed his head mumbling "yes, sure, all right ...". (16)

Mr. Heydari's internal objection to the roles (identities) imposed upon him is best captured in the title sentence of the story, which by resonating the protagonist's voice, is uttered in first-person singular. In other words, the protagonist's ideal image of incompliance seems to be symbolized in the character of Che Guevara, the very figure that is openly reproached by Mr. Heydari's wife, who in her own logic of "placement" detests and is threatened by Che Guevara's self-centeredness:

> این چه گوارا چه زشته! شکل میمونه، چه چاقه! چه ریش مضحکی داره! این جور آدما به درد نمی‌خورن. خودخواه و پردردِسرن. این جور آدما قدر نعمت رو نمی‌دونن.
>
> How ugly this Che Guevara is! He looks like a monkey! How fat is he! What a ridiculous beard! Such people are useless. They are egoistic and troublesome. Such people don't appreciate the blessings of life. (15)

25 Bauman, "From Pilgrim," p. 18.

26 Ibid., p. 22.

The word "egoistic" (*khodkhvah*, in the Persian text) can be used as a derogatory equivalent to refer to a person with individualistic aspirations. Mr. Heydari's notion of such terms as "decision," "choice," "perseverance," "goal" (18), "way," and "mobility" (20) is indicative of his willingness and desire for self-made choices. Regretting his past ideals, he is "reminded of those days, when he used to draw a circle around himself and call it the center of the world" (20).

In order for an independent subjectivity to be constructed, there seems to be only two strategies available for the individual in question. Either he has to destroy the structures and rebuild them in the way he wishes (like a revolutionary and, hence, Che Guevara), or he has to escape the framework of the structures altogether in order to establish his own somewhere else. Although the application of both of these strategies prove to be impossible for the protagonist of the story, it is interesting to notice how his endeavors to do so have been depicted in the narrative.

The Smashed Cooking Pot

On the symbolic level, the stiffness of the structures of Mr. Heydari's so far preserved identity (as a husband and a father) is well captured in the form and function of the cooking pot, in which he carries the lunch for his children to school. As the leitmotiv of the narrative, the cooking pot is the element which is recurrently mentioned in the text; it is the object around which the exposition of the plot is formulated; it is the object against which the antagonism of the protagonist is directed. In this sense, all Mr. Heydari's actions and obsessions concerning the enigmatic situation he is trapped in (his married life and duties) parallel his attitudes and reactions to the existence of the cooking pot. On the semantic level, too, the connotations of the cooking pot calls to mind concepts such as home, nourishment, kitchen, and mother, all of which can be well placed within the discourse of family life:

> صدای لق لق در قابلمه توی گوشش پیچیده بود و دستش بوی آش و چربی می‌داد. حس کرد که این قابلمه مثل طوق بلا به گردنش بسته شده و جلو راهش را گرفته است. با خودش گفت: «دیگه تموم شد، واقعا تموم شد—الان خودمو از دستش راحت می کنم.» در ماشین را باز کرد. قابلمه را برداشت و توی هوا چرخاند. دسته‌اش را محکم توی مشتش فشرد و ... محکم به زمین کوبید.

> The clattering sound of the pot lid echoed in his ears; his hands smelt of pottage and fat. He felt the cooking pot had been tied up to his neck like

> an ominous token, blocking up his way forward. "It's over, it's really over," he thought by himself, "I'll get rid of it right away." He opened the door of the car. Lifted the cooking pot, twisting it in the air, he pressed the handle in his fist and … smashed the cooking pot onto the ground. (26)

The above excerpt depicts the battle between the protagonist and what the cooking pot symbolically stands for. The cooking pot is compared to "an ominous token" ("*towq-e bala*") which prevents him from moving forward. In response to the blockage of movement and in order to render the structures of communal life (here, embodied in the framework of the cooking pot), the protagonist decides to smash the pot against the ground, so that, through shattering it, he would be able to alter its structures. It is of relevance to compare this crucial moment to an earlier point in the story, where Mr. Heydari is obsessed with preserving the shape of the pot rather than altering it: ""The bolt of the handle has dropped" he thought "I must (*bayad*) fix it just tonight, as soon as I'm back"" (12). Here again, the usage of the word "*bayad*" bears witness to the fact that the preservation of the outlines of the cooking pot is demanded, or let us say imposed, by an external authority rather than the will of the individual himself; here again, Mr. Heydari falls into the logic of "obeying" rather than "willing."

Although Mr. Heydari is depicted as a character obsessed with rebellious thoughts, his rebellion, in the plot, is not demonstrated further than smashing the cooking pot against the ground. After being helped by someone on the street with clearing up the mess, he puts the cooking pot back into his car and appears to be consoled by remembering his wife saying "thank God that there is always someone in this town to help one out of trouble" (28). The denouement of the story seems to have given the plot a clear-cut closure. However, the significance of Mr. Heydari is not simply in what he does at the final resolution of the narrative but rather in the fact that, through his erratic movements in the setting of the story, he manages to highlight the outlines of the shackles that prevent him from moving out. Although the story seems to have concluded with a consolation uttered by the wife, the ironical tone of the narrator in reference to Mr. Heydari's wife and her function in his life adds a tone of cynicism to the closure of the story.

"Yek ruz:" An Attempt at Re-Unification

The narrator of "Yek ruz," a woman (separated or divorced) in her early forties, relates the story of the one-day long reunion with her son and daughter after about seven years of separation. The story begins on the day before the arrival of the children and depicts the protagonist in a pleasing anticipation of an

everlasting happiness in the company of her children. The children arrive; but the reunion proves to be far from the narrator's expectations. As the plot of the story unfolds, the tone of narration takes on different modes. The narrator begins her story with sheer optimism, becomes cynical and doubtful from time to time, briefly confesses disillusionment, and continues in denial.

The story, on the level of contents, attempts to give voice to a counter-discourse to the ideology proposed by the other stories of the collection. While in the stories "Man ham Che Guevara hastam," "Khoshbakhti," "Safar" (The journey) and "Tavallod" (The birth) for example, the narratives' so-called message comes to be perceived as a conviction in favor of individuality and the necessity of mobility,[27] the story "Yek ruz" is rendered from the viewpoint of a character who, on the contrary, expresses a desire for staying where she is and re-constituting a new togetherness. Nevertheless, the events of the story proceed in a way that the actualization of the protagonist's ideal image of family life proves impossible. The defeat of the protagonist in re-establishing familial ties underscores the indispensability of individualism for happiness and satisfaction in life.

A Counterargument to Mr. Heydari's Ideal

The plot conflict of "Yek ruz" is based on a discursive tension between the protagonist and an acquaintance called, again, Mr. Heydari. Although Mr. Heydari as a character is almost absent from the plot—especially regarding his participation in events and actions—his influential presence in the story is strongly felt. Mr. Heydari, in fact, represents the very antagonistic force against which the whole plot of "Yek ruz" is formulated. Nevertheless, he stands for a victorious antagonist, an antagonist who not only represents but, by the end of the narrative, also reinforces the ideology of truth conveyed in the collection *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*.

The story "Yek ruz" is not the only story of the volume which includes a character called Mr. Heydari. This character also appears, as seen above, in "Man ham Che Guevara hastam," alongside other stories such as "Safar" and

27 The stories "Khoshbakhti" and "Safar" are going to be discussed later within this chapter. "Tavallod" relates about the chaotic state of a family at the time of a baby's birth. The family's house, in its current state of confusion, brings to mind the image of a madhouse with its insane inhabitants. By the end of the narrative, with the baby's birth, the mother's death, and the brother's departure—apparently for good—a certain degree of equilibrium and sanity is restored in the narrative setting. The plot conflict and its resolution depend strongly on the brother's urge to leave. The baby's birth alongside the brother's final departure symbolizes the possibility of new beginnings.

"Khoshbakhti"—in the former two, even, as the protagonist of the stories. Whether or not the character of Mr. Heydari represents the same individual, in the plots of the narratives mentioned, is not specifically of our interest here. What is, nevertheless, of significance is that Mr. Heydari stands for a particular type in Taraqqi's stories. This character type is intended to represent the modern, educated, middle-class individual experiencing a mid-life crisis in confrontation with the conflict between the so-far valid social values and the necessity for individuation. This character type is employed as a clerk in an institution or works as a teacher; he reads newspapers and journals, and is interested in poetry and world politics. With regard to his routines, he is depicted to be exhausted with his must-do responsibilities, communal demands, and social control. He pursues a fantasy of change. His ideals are revolutionary, at least, on an individual level. What he emphasizes is the significance of an individual, the significance of the *I*. The very possibility of happiness for this character is embedded in the idea of self-satisfaction.

As already pointed out, the conflict of the story is reflected in the obsessions of the protagonist with Mr. Heydari's comments on the possibility of happiness in life. The opening paragraph of the narrative gives the reader the impression that the story to follow would be a story about Mr. Heydari narrated from the viewpoint of a heterodiegetic (third-person) narrator:

> آقای حیدری مواظب دست‌هایش است. آقای حیدری به کفش‌های براقش نگاه می‌کند و می‌گوید من مسئول خودم هستم، من به این خون که در رگهایم می‌دود افتخار می‌کنم، من حساب روزها را دارم، من زنده‌ام.
>
> Mr. Heydari takes care of his hands. Mr. Heydari looks at his shiny shoes and says I am responsible for myself; I am proud of the blood that runs in my veins; I am conscious about the passage of time; I am alive. (87)

This premise, however, proves to be wrong as early as the second paragraph, which reveals that the story is actually related by a homodiegetic narrator who, through some flashbacks, reproduces the pieces of the discussion she has previously had with a person (perhaps a colleague) called Mr. Heydari. The subject of discussion is related to the protagonist's long anticipated reunion with her children and whether or not the state of happiness could be attained through re-establishing a family life. In this respect, the conflict of the plot is formulated in/through the narrator's internal monologue (in some parts, internal dialogue) as she attempts to convince Mr. Heydari and, thereby, herself of the fact that she *will* be happy in the company of her children: "from tomorrow

on I will be a happy person" (87). Her certainty about the approaching happiness is, nevertheless, immediately disturbed as she remembers Mr. Heydari's questions enquiring: "What difference does their [(the children's)] existence make? What is changed by it?" (87). The protagonist's response to these questions produces the counter discourse to Mr. Heydari's arguments and, thereby, his ideological standpoint:

> فردا نوبت من است. فردا دست بچه‌هایم را می‌گیرم و به خودم می‌گویم که به این دلیل باید زنده ماند، برای خاطر اینها، من مسئول اینها هستم، اینها همه چیز را توجیه می‌کنند.
>
> Tomorrow is my turn. Tomorrow I will hold the hands of my children and tell myself that this is the reason I have to stay alive for, for their sakes. I am responsible for them. They justify everything. (88)

The comparison between the narrator's answer to the questions posed by Mr. Heydari and the opening lines of the story, quoted earlier (see above), puts two different viewpoints in symmetrical opposition. While Mr. Heydari announces his very self as the only entity responsible for *himself*, the protagonist defines her existence in terms of her maternal responsibilities. Mr. Heydari's vitality and life drive stem from an autonomous self-sufficiency—metaphorically, from the very "blood that runs in [his] veins,"—whereas the protagonist depends on an external "reason" to "stay alive for," an external reason which is ironically related to her by blood. While Mr. Heydari is a character who lives every day to the full by being "conscious about the passage of time," the protagonist remains in anticipation of the day to come, of the "tomorrow." The juxtaposition of the two viewpoints gives way to the expression of a philosophical contention depicted both within this particular narrative and also in relation to the other stories of the collection. In "Yek ruz" certain images, in this respect, evolve into symbols that represent the controversy between the two attitudes.

Needy Hands vs. Self-Content Hands

Hands in the story "Yek ruz" are depicted as the part of body through which either the characters' dependence on or their independence from others is expressed. Mr. Heydari, in this sense, is described as a person who "takes care of his hands" and feels "alive" (87), while on the contrary, the protagonist, in order to "stay alive," is waiting for the moment when she is able to "hold the hands of [her] children" (88). Throughout the text of the narrative, several times, the protagonist makes mention of the hands and fingers of different characters,

including hers, her children's and Mr. Heydari's. While the hands of other characters stand for their self-contentment and independence, the narrator's hands are in search of other hands (her children's) in order to come into existence:

> نه، آقای حیدری نمی‌فهمد، آقای حیدری نمی‌داند. من برای زنده بودن دلیل می‌خواهم. به دست‌هایم نگاه می‌کنم: یک روز دیگر آنها را حس نخواهم کرد. من برای شستن دست‌هایم دلیل می‌خواهم.... فردا همه چیز را از سر شروع می‌کنم.
>
> No, Mr. Heydari does not understand; he does not know. I need a reason to be alive for. I look at my hands: for one more day, I would not feel them. I need a reason to wash my hands for.... Tomorrow, I will start everything all over again. (89)

Without the presence of her children, the hands of the protagonist remain impalpable. What makes the existence of the narrator tangible for her is the assumption that she is needed by her children. It is interesting to note that in other textual instances, the narrator implicitly refers to the image of her own hands through expressing an urge for taking her children's. The image of the protagonist's craving hands becomes particularly highlighted when it is compared to the image of other characters' contented hands. While the narrator attempts to "hold [her son's] hands and tries hard to kiss his face," for instance, the son only "sits down and puts his hands motionlessly on the knees" (91). The hands of different characters, in this sense, become a recurrent obsession for the protagonist. There are, for example, several references to the hands and fingers of Mr. Heydari, a person who has consciously announced himself as self-dependent. He "trims his fingernails and rests one hand onto the other" (88). He "takes care of his hands" and is also depicted while "washing his hands" (87), an action for which the narrator needs a specific "reason" (89). The fact that the reader hardly receives any information about Mr. Heydari's appearance, except the way he treats his hands, reinforces the symbolic significance of hands in the story. They grow into the narrator's focal point and symbolically stand for the only possibility through which she is able to be re-connected to others, and thereby, feel happy and vital. As soon as the protagonist sees her daughter, she "hastily holds her hand" (91). She also misses the days when her daughter used to "put her hands around her neck" (93). The separation between the protagonist and her children, following the same logic, equals to her symbolic death. The narrator's vital existence seems to be affected after being disappointed by the unsatisfying family reunion. As

she feels disheartened by her children's cold affection, she stretches her "hand for the edge of the bed and breathe[s] with difficulty" (91). In other words, for the Protagonist of "Yek ruz," the sense of vitality as well as the desire and, even, the possibility to live seems to be only imaginable in the company of other family members.

The Adjacent Death and the Distant Vitality

The protagonist's desire for family re-unification in the story "Yek ruz" is also represented through the juxtaposition of images pertaining to death and life (the latter understood as family life in the circumstances of the story). The recurrent death imagery, as the narrative's objective correlative, comes to describe the protagonist's feelings and suppositions regarding her present state of life. As early as the opening lines of the story, the narrator refers to "something invisible, persistent and irritating" which has filled the whole space of the room. Immediately afterwards, she mentions death: "How about others? Do they think about death as often as I do?" (87). The narrator's thoughts of death are in accordance with how she describes the setting of the narrative. Stagnancy and the presence of imminent death are implied by the "rotten flowers" in the vase (87), the odor of "old paint" and "damp walls" (90), the "darkness [of] the corridor and the corners of the rooms," "blackness," and "the coagulation of old and worn-out items" (94). Liveliness and vitality, on the other hand, are associated with other images, images that are actually situated outside the space the protagonist occupies. Since such images do not belong to the narrator's space of existence, they are mostly represented through auditory and olfactory information rather than visual images:

> می‌روم توی بالکن، از بالا صدای حرف می‌آید، صدای پا، صدای به هم خوردن درها، صدای نفس‌های تند، صدای خنده، صدای کارد و چنگال، صدای رادیو و جیغ و داد بچه‌ها.
>
> I step on the balcony. From [the floor] above, I can hear sounds of conversation, footsteps, the slam of the doors, the sound of panting, the sound of laughter, the sound of cutlery, the sound of radio, and the sound of children's shouts and screams. (88)

> از طبقهٔ بالا صدای چرخ خیاطی می‌آید، صدای در یخچال و بوی پیازداغ.
>
> From the floor above comes the sound of the sewing machine, the sound of the fridge door and the smell of sizzling onions. (88)

This is the way the narrator defines life and happiness. The above excerpts reflect the protagonist's fantasies about the life she would like to lead alongside her children. The prevalence of culinary imagery, in the above passages, brings to mind the image of the lunch pot that had to be taken every day to the children's school by Mr. Heydari in the title story of the volume. The Mr. Heydari of "Man ham Che Guevara hastam" is obsessed with the children's lunch pot and finally smashes it onto the ground in order to disturb, and thereby, escape the structures of family life. Similarly, the comments of Mr. Heydari in "Yek ruz" are reiterated in the middle of the above descriptions in order to undermine the narrator's fantasies of re-constructing a family (her only solution for unhappiness, death and stagnancy): "What do you need them [(the children)] for? To hell with them! Everyone lives for his/her own sake" (88).

The Impossible Backward Movement: Verification of Mr. Heydari's Attitude

The impossibility of the narrator's fantasy is not only underlined by the oppositions of Mr. Heydari but also through the fact that the actualization of her fantasies necessitates a backward movement on the temporal axis. In other words, the narrator wishes to reconstruct a shattered situation that is already a matter of the past. Although at the beginning of the story, the protagonist appears to be obsessed with the arrival of a moment that stands in the future, namely, "tomorrow" (87), her anticipation gives way to nostalgic emotions as soon as she is confronted with the long-awaited moment. Her hope for setting up the family anew, in this sense, lasts no longer than half a day. Metaphorically, "tomorrow," for the protagonist, stands for an unshaped situation, a new condition, something that can be built and beautified in fantasy. However, as soon as the moment of reunion arrives, all her hopes and fantasies begin to refer to a condition that could have once been present in the past and has logically nothing to do with either the future to come or the present situation. By the arrival of the children, the narrator recounts: "I should only open this door. I should only go down these steps—just a moment—how easy it is to become happy. How easy it is to find all the lost things again" (90). The protagonist, here, is on the verge of confrontation with what she considers to be the turning point of her life. The arrival of her children is supposed to render her situation from misery to happiness, from inertia to vitality. The excerpt, nevertheless, indicates that the instant of happiness is, in fact, ephemeral. It is anticipated to occur in the immediate future, is experienced for "just a moment," and is afterwards to be searched for in the past among "all the lost things."

The aforementioned passage is the first of a series of references to the narrator's life in the past. Past events, memories and items all function as the material by means of which the protagonist attempts to re-construct the days to come.

Future, for the protagonist, in this sense, is deeply rooted in her nostalgia for the past. As soon as the narrator feels that she has been given the cold shoulder by her children, she plunges into the good old days in order to nurture the hope for happiness—in order to avoid disillusionment. She retreats to places and neighborhoods of days gone by ("the house in Farvardin Street" (92 and 96), "the Shahrdari Café" (93 and 97), "the Bizhan Alley," and "the Shokufeh elementary school" (94)). Not only is the protagonist's desired temporal space located in the past but she also tries to connect her children to and, thereby, locate them back into her retrospective temporal setting. Through items such as "childhood photos" (94), old school "report cards," and "first composition[s]" (95), the narrator strives hard, but in vain, to restore her children back into an ideal past:

«عزیزم می‌خوای عکس‌های بچگیتو ببینی؟» می روم و از زیر تخت دو تا آلبوم خاک گرفته بیرون می‌کشم. موهایم به فنرهای تخت می‌پیچد و پیراهنم تنم را فشار می‌دهد. خاک‌ها را از روی صورتم پاک می‌کنم و می‌خندم. دخترم می‌گوید: «نه، از عکسهای اونوقتا بدم می‌آید.»

> "Wanna see your childhood pics, dear?" From under the bed, I pull out two dusty albums. My hair gets stuck in the springs of the bed and my dress presses [tightly] against my body. I brush away the dust off my face and smile. My daughter says: "no, I hate the photos of those times." (94)

While the protagonist persistently tries to pull back the children into the past, they are inclined to continue on their ways forward: "My son is thinking about travelling to America; he is thinking about the future" (96). As the children incessantly resist the protagonist's demands for a backward movement on the temporal axis, her fantasies are disrupted by moments of disillusionment. The narrator's enthusiastic—and so far implicitly doubtful—monologue is, in this respect, interrupted by explicit confessional remarks about the impossibility of her dreams and demands: "They [(the children)] remember nothing. It is as if they had been born just like this, their lives lacking a past" (97). This is the moment when the narrator descends to associate the children with life, health, and happiness and, once again, her own condition with death and decay:

زنده‌اند. سالمند. خوشحالند. نه، اینها آن نامریی غایب را توی اتاق من حس نکرده‌اند. اینها از آن باید مطلق، از آن باید نفرت‌انگیز نخواستنی خبر ندارند.

> They are alive. They are healthy. They are happy. No, they have not felt that strange invisible [entity] in my room. They don't know anything about the absolute must, about the disgusting undesirable must. (97)

Nevertheless, at this particular point, the protagonist's acknowledgment of an approaching death, as a symbol for a state of stagnancy and depression, does not cause her to oppose Mr. Heydari as it did at the beginning of the story. While earlier in the narrative, the protagonist's recognition of decay and lack of happiness made her express an enthusiasm for unification and family life, as the only remedy for her current condition, the above passage, on the contrary, serves as a prelude for the protagonist's transition from denial to disillusionment. This process of transition is finally concluded by the narrator's confession that "yes, Mr. Heydari is right. To hell with them [(the children)]! *I* am the one who matters" (my emphasis) (99).

The brief transitional phase from denial to disillusionment is mainly characterized by events and descriptive passages that indicate confusion in the narrator's perception and clarity of vision. Before explicitly confessing that "Mr. Heydari is right," the narrator goes through a phase in which her perception of the external world becomes disturbed:

> سینما شروع شده و چراغها خاموش است. دخترم توی تاریکی می‌خندد و راه خودش را پیدا می‌کند.... چشمم جایی را نمی‌بیند. دست‌هایم را دراز می‌کنم. سعی می‌کنم دست‌هایشان را بگیرم. دور خودم می‌چرخم. گیج شده‌ام و نمی‌دانم کجا باید رفت. آدمها با صورتهای عبوس نگاهم می‌کنند. چیزهایی نا مفهوم می‌گویند.

> The movie has started and the lights are off. My daughter laughs and finds her way through the darkness.... My eyes don't see anything. I reach my hands out to hold theirs. I turn around myself. I am confused and don't know where to go. People look at me angrily and utter incomprehensible things. (98)

Themes of disturbed mobility, ambiguity and disorientation reappear. The protagonist fails to find her way in the darkness. She is surrounded by ambiguous images and sounds, feels confused and is not able to comprehend her surroundings. The modifiers and descriptive phrases referring to the protagonist's perception mirror the ones used in reference to most of the protagonists of the *Che Guevara* collection, as it will be seen later. Here is the moment when

the narrative depicts the protagonist as a disoriented character similar to the protagonists of the other stories of the volume. While in other stories of the collection such a moment comes to formulate the initiation of the narratives, here, in the story "Yek ruz," the narrative approaches its denouement via the depiction of the protagonist as a disoriented character. In other words, the story "Yek ruz" is terminated where the other stories begin. The narrative is terminated at the moment when the protagonist is convinced that *she* is "the one who matters" (99).

"Jayi digar:" Conflict Resolved

"Jayi digar," comprising around a hundred pages of Taraqqi's 2000 short story collection with the same title, is the author's longest short story so far written. The narrative, though set in the year 1998 (that is, about thirty years after the Islamic Revolution) is full of formal and thematic similarities to Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* stories. It is as if the author had finally made the decision to combine the main themes and motives of the *Che Guevara* volume and create a single story with a clear cut resolution to the conflicts that have been set up, but never concluded, in the collection of her (rather experimental) short stories published around three decades before.

Through detailed and extensive description, "Jayi digar" recounts the story of Amir 'Ali's sudden realization of the fact that, throughout his marriage, he has acted as others (especially, her wife and her family) expected him to. The story is narrated by a friend, who has access to some letters written by the protagonist, has known him for a long time (from his childhood), and is close enough to his wife to be informed about what exactly went on between the two. The narrative, in short, is the story of how the protagonist becomes conscious of a rebellious self inside him (suppressed for years). The story, in other words, is the account of the tensions that finally lead to the protagonist's abandonment of his home, job, wife and family.

Amir 'Ali: A Prototype of Mr. Heydari

The story "Jayi digar" has many characteristics in common with the narratives collected in Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* volume. The character of Amir 'Ali and even his relationship with his wife, for example, can be regarded as a duplication of Mahmud Heydari and his condition in "Che Guevara." Both stories recount their protagonists' frustration with their marital routine and the demands imposed upon them. The wives of both protagonists, likewise, represent the force that works to retain the structures of family life (this is also, as discussed above, the case with the character of the woman in "Yek ruz") Similarly, in both of the stories, the protagonists' struggle for and the obsession with the functionality

of individual will arise on their birthdays which, interestingly enough, are both on the same date (namely, 17 *Mehr*).[28] The plot conflict, in other words, in both narratives, is one of compliance and rebellion respectively standing for self-denial and individualism. Reproducing the character of Mr. Heydari, for example, Amir 'Ali is described as "an obedient husband" and a "compromising" fellow (171). The protagonist is later characterized as a person who knows exactly what he *must* do; and the very word ""must" (*bayad*) is inscribed into his mind in red letters" (173). Without his wife "his existence cannot be manifested" (173); and it is the wife who knows it well how to "put a harness on" and "checkrein" him (177).

A Room of One's Own

"Jayi digar," in other words, is built upon the same conflict represented in the story "Che Guevara"—namely, the obstructed desire of the protagonist for abandonment. In "Jayi digar," however, there are many instances that explicitly highlight the relationship between the protagonist's urge for departure and his desire for constructing a new individuality. This issue, for example, is particularly detectable at the moment when Amir 'Ali breaks the news to his wife that he wishes to move to another bedroom, since he believes "it is of benefit for the two of them" ("*beh salah-e har do ast*") (209). His wife's reaction to this sentence underlines the plot conflict:

> «به صلاح هر دو؟ کدام هر دو؟ مگر من و تویی جدا از هم در کار است؟» ... هر یک در اتاقی جداگانه؟ ... بیست سال بود که مثل دوقلوهای سیامی کنار هم خوابیده بودند، چسبیده به هم، و جدا کردنشان آسان نبود.... چنین چیزی امکان نداشت مگر آنکه یکی از آن دو بمیرد.
>
> "Of benefit for the two of us? Which two? Do you and I exist on our own?" ... Each in a separate bedroom? ... For twenty years, they had lain beside each other like Siamese twins, stuck to each other. It was not easy to separate them.... It was impossible, unless one of them died. (209)

The very term *jayi digar* (another place) is, therefore, first actualized in the private space of a bedroom locked from inside and, thereby, separated from the rest of the apartment (211 and 225). It is in this space that Amir 'Ali's "unknown

28 Compare: "Che Guevara," *Che Guevara*, p. 11 and "Jayi digar," *Jayi digar*, p. 171. Interestingly, 17 *Mehr* is also Goli Taraqqi's own birthday.

malady" (171), namely his recurrent nausea, stops bothering him (225); and it is in this bedroom that he consciously contemplates a remedy to come to terms with the out of control, "satanic," and antagonistic spirit growing inside him (225). The remedy, interestingly enough, is associated with the protagonist's childhood fantasies about taking "journeys" and *not* being in possession "of a specific place or location" (226). From this part of the story onwards, the narrative focuses on the actualization of Amir 'Ali's will for departure which is, in principle, developed and represented through two particular motifs: the desert and the kite.

The Unshaped, Empty Deserts

The protagonist's departure in "Jayi digar" is completed through two journeys, one with a return and the other one, apparently, without. On his return from the preliminary journey that lasted for about two months (251), Amir 'Ali finds his wife gone (most probably with the narrator) and his mother on the death bed in the hospital. After the mother passes away, Amir 'Ali, free from any emotional bond or responsibility, sets off on the journey he has dreamed about for a long time. Both in the protagonist's actual journeys and in his fantasies about one, the idea of a desert, as an empty, unshaped space, having a potential for being re-configured into a new entity, is foregrounded in the narrative's imagery. The image of the desert, bringing to mind Bauman's metaphor of the pilgrim,[29] is repeatedly mentioned in "Jayi digar." Early in the story, the narrator, for instance, refers to Amir 'Ali's childhood dreams of imaginative journeys within "empty deserts" (173). The desert, furthermore, is referred to as a place, "a better place," which provides "the possibility for a different *form* of life" (my emphasis) (173). Likewise, Amir 'Ali's spirit is described to be in possession of a "wild side" which in case of being "unleashed" would impulsively rush towards "deserts and mountains," towards "unknown towns and primitive tribes" (177). The protagonist, in the same way, longs for "vast spaces and open horizons and the possibility of another life … in another place" (179).

The idea of another place, reiterating the title of the story, in this respect, is linked to the untraced surface of a desert. Throughout Amir 'Ali's journey, the motif of the desert, as a place of desire, has a bold presence. Spatial phrases such as "in the middle of a dry and desolate desert" (250), "at the margins of vast deserts," "towards unknown and unfamiliar deserts" (261), and "in the midst of a desert" (262) appear recurrently to describe the protagonist's passion for inhabiting (or passing through) this particular space. The space in question, the desert, comes to be repeatedly (more intensively, though, towards the end of

29 Bauman, "From Pilgrim," p. 20.

the narrative) associated with the will for individuation and the possibility of identity reconstruction:

> وسعت بیابان، آهسته آهسته، وارد بدنش شد.... هیچ نگاهی به او خیره نبود و کسی قضاوتش نمی‌کرد. می‌توانست تغییر شکل و ماهیت دهد. می‌توانست بمیرد و انتخاب مرگ به اختیار خودش بود.
>
> The vastness of the desert gradually entered into his body.... No one was looking at him; and no one judged him. He could transform into another shape, into another essential nature. He was able to die; and [in this case] death would have been his own free choice. (250)

During his journeys through deserts, Amir 'Ali becomes more and more conscious about his transformation into a new self. On the verge of the second journey, for example, having the "vast deserts" in perspective, he thinks that "a big chapter of his life has come to an end," and feels that "he, no longer, belonged to anyone or anything" (258). Looking at his reflection in the mirror, right before getting into his car, he recognizes himself as "someone different," a "strange other," and a "new person" (260). The protagonist, at this moment, gradually merges with his reflection in the mirror and "nothing, but a memory, is left from the previous Amir 'Ali" (261). By the end of the narrative, Amir 'Ali, still on his way moving towards the "unfamiliar deserts," feels "happy," since "no one knows him" and he is no longer "imprisoned in a specific structure" (261); he is now finally able to "start everything from square one, from his own inception" (263).

The Free Flight of the Kite

The concept of freedom in the symbolism of the story is also closely connected to the image of the kite—standing for lightness, independence and detachment. The image of the kite, in "Jayi digar," as a significant motif of the story, is highlighted in a childhood memory retold by the narrator (226–7). Kite running is introduced as Amir 'Ali's favorite pass-time activity in his childhood and, at the same time, is linked with his passion for taking journeys. When running his kite, Amir 'Ali used to become detached from everything else around him. He used to stare at the kite, follow it with his eyes and "travel with it through the vast width of the sky" (227). One day, the string was accidentally released from Amir 'Ali's hands; and the kite soared higher and higher until it disappeared and went on surfing within "another place and [another] time," as the narrator comments (227). Contrary to the narrator's expectations, however, the accident

did not dispirit Amir 'Ali. He remained cheerful and was certain that "the kite would return one day" (227). The return of the kite, however, does not take place on a literal level within the story. Nevertheless, on the symbolic level, the kite becomes incarnated in Amir 'Ali's very body as he sets off on his journey toward another place. Driving on the road, for instance, he feels that the "vastness of the desert, … gradually entering into his body, takes him along like a lighthearted kite" (250). Close to the end of the story, too, as the reader is given the account of the protagonist's sheer sense of happiness and freedom, it is mentioned that Amir 'Ali suddenly feels that "he does not exist; he has faded away and … his kite flies alongside him, smoothly swinging its colorful tail" (262).

The image of the kite in "Jayi digar" is evolved into a symbol for freedom and independence due to the fact that it has liberated itself from being controlled by a person holding the string, namely, the kite runner. The image of the kite, being controlled by a piece of string tied to it, reiterates the jokey imagery depicted earlier in the story to describe the wife's authority upon Amir 'Ali; the wife has been referred to as a person who is able to "put a harness on" and "checkrein" her husband (177). Nevertheless, by the denouement of the story, the protagonist is finally able to "unleash" (177) himself as the kite "playfully" detaches itself from the kite runner (227).

Conflict Resolved

As pointed out earlier, it is not until the publication of "Jayi digar," that the conflict inaugurated in Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* stories is resolved. It is only in this particular story that the reader is witness to a realistic actualization of the act of departure. Interestingly, after the protagonist's departure the reader perceives the story scenes through the focalizing eyes of the protagonist. We travel out alongside the protagonist. The general tense of narration also shifts from past to present. Now we can observe Amir 'Ali as he drives, feels, thinks and experiences (261–3). The imperative sentence "let us watch him" ("*negahash konim*") (262), on the pre-final page of the book, reinforces the reader's focalizing angle as he or she starts to follow the protagonist by hovering over him and not letting him out of sight.

Corporeal Self-Alteration as a Means to Escape Communal Structures

The desire for self-elimination, as discussed above, constructs the main challenge for Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* protagonists, vis-à-vis the restrictions imposed upon their urge for individuality. While in the narratives examined so far the

plot conflict consolidates within and over the structures of domestic life, the stories "Safar," "Derakht" (The tree) and "Ziyafat" (Celebration) depict characters who struggle to escape their current defining framework through altering their own bodies. In other words, in "Safar," "Derakht," and "Ziyafat," the site of conflict shifts from the external boundaries, restricting the characters' actions and obstructing their way out, to their corporeal shape and existence. Instead of trying to alter the defining social structures of everyday routines, the protagonists of these stories attempt to modify their very bodily existences.

The narrative in focus, in this section, will be the story "Safar." Nevertheless, before beginning the detailed examination of the story in question, here I would like to provide short summaries of the stories "Derakht" and "Ziyafat" in order to clarify what exactly is meant by the protagonists' urge for modifying their corporeal existences.

The story "Derakht" is structured upon the struggle of two conflicting forces contesting over the protagonist's existence. On the one side stands the protagonist who, having been overcome by a sense of absurdity, is appalled by the sight of any social interaction, resigns from leading an average human life, retreats in idleness, and consciously descends towards bestiality. On the other side is the wife of the protagonist who, standing for both social demands and social vitality, is in desperate struggle to win the husband back and restore him into a reasonable, social human being. The site of conflict is the body of the protagonist itself. The protagonist's body as a physical entity is the spot on which, and for which, the clash of the plot is constituted. Paradoxically, the rebellion of the protagonist against society is illustrated not in his action but rather in his inaction. He has devoted himself to a parasitic lifestyle. He has given up his job (104), lives on financial aid provided by his wife and a friend (106), remains in bed all the time, and disregards his personal hygiene to the extent that his body is covered by lice and his skin is encrusted by scab (103–4). In other words, the protagonist has apparently decided to stop functioning as a social human being in order to be excluded from the structures of the society he is forced to be a part of. His only wish is to be metamorphosed into other beings such as a "poisonous tarantula," an "irritating louse" or a "protozoan animal" (103–4). By the end of the story, the protagonist is obsessed with the idea of turning into a tree (the *derakht* of the title). *Derakht*, in the mind of the protagonist, comes to be determined as the desirable state of being. The protagonist who approaches life and all its details with abhorrence refers to trees with affection and admiration. A tree becomes the symbol of being solid, great, robust, everlasting and independent of any social interaction and, in one word, self-sufficient (110–12).

Another example representing the body of the protagonist as the site of conflict is the story "Ziyafat," which through the internal monologue of its homodiegetic narrator represents an instance of the clash between the desire for individuation and the entanglement within a social network. The male protagonist of the story is depicted in the midst of his wedding night. While other people (including his father, the bride, and a friend) regard the date as the inauguration of happiness, the groom himself seems to be cynical and hesitant about it. By the end of the story, the protagonist apparently chooses death over being confined in the structures of married life. He commits suicide and, thereby, resolves the conflict by eliminating his very existence.

Amputation: A Way to Be Cut Off from the Communal Body

The story "Safar" renders the account of its protagonist's observations and reflections in a hospital before and after the amputation of his leg. The story is related through a homodiegetic narrator (the protagonist himself) who at the same time remains the static focalizer throughout the narrative. The narrative is set in the hospital and is populated by a dozen of insignificant flat characters (such as doctors, nurses and the protagonist's relatives). The amputation of the protagonist's leg shapes the central conflict of the narrative for most of the characters. Nevertheless, the conflict of the plot, concealed from others, is exclusively developed and resolved in the mind of the protagonist and although closely connected with the act of amputation, is in no sense identical with it. The plot conflict for the protagonist, and thereby for the reader, comes to be reflected in the protagonist's obsessions with fundamental questions addressing the issues of self and identity on social and philosophical levels.

Two Modes of Self-Reference

Concerning the issue of identity and the protagonist's philosophical obsessions, the portrayal of the relationship between the protagonist's inner reflections and his actions (or reactions) in the outside world is of great significance. The major part of the story "Safar" is narrated in an extended internal monologue which is principally engaged with two distinct types of narration modes regarding the narrator's portrayal of his self. During the process of narration, the protagonist either refers to the outside world, by informing the reader about what is happening around him, or he is mentally occupied with certain philosophical questions about the essence of existence. Although the protagonist's self in both cases comes to represent a central issue in the text, there are specific differences in the way it is portrayed and treated in each passage type.

While in the passages of the former type the narrator takes on an objective attitude toward himself, the latter is specifically engaged with the question of the existence of the self. In other words, the narrative's mode of self-reference can either be characterized as either descriptive or reflective throughout the text. In order to discuss the issue further it is helpful to refer to an exemplary passage of each sort.

Passage I:

> آستین‌هایم را بالا می‌زنند. یقه‌ام را باز می‌کنند. سرم را به طرف راست می‌گردانند. از گوشهٔ چشم شانه‌های زنی را می‌بینم که روی میز کنار تختم خم شده است و چیزی را با دقت می‌نویسد. روی دیوار نزدیک در دو قاب چوبی است. پیراهنم را در می‌آورند. یک نفر پلک پایینم را می‌کشد و با دقت به تخم چشمم نگاه می‌کند.

> They roll up my sleeves, open up my collar and turn my head to the right side. From the corner of the eye, I see the shoulders of a woman who has bent over my bed and writes something carefully. On the wall next to the door, there are two wooden frames. They take off my shirt. Someone pulls down my lower eyelid and looks carefully into my eyeball. (47)

Passage II:

> فکر می‌کنم بود و نبود یک پا برای من چه فرقی می‌کند؟ بود و نبود دست‌هایم، بود و نبود این شهر، این دنیا، برای من چه اهمیتی دارد؟ من استاد دانشگاه هستم، استاد فلسفه. شاگردهایم می‌پرسند: «آقا، نیستی هست یا نیستی نیست؟ هستی اول نیست بوده یا همیشه هست بوده؟»

> I wonder what difference it makes to have or not to have a leg. What is the significance of the existence or nonexistence of my arms for me, the existence or nonexistence of this town, of this world? I am a university professor, a professor of philosophy. My students ask: "Sir, does nonexistence exist or does nonexistence not exist? Was existence primarily a nonexistence or was it always an existence?" (50)

From the excerpts quoted above, the first one belongs to the category of descriptive passages and the second to that of reflective passages regarding the

protagonist's approach to his self. The textual characteristics of each type are quite important in furthering the analysis of the narrative concerning the question of identity. If self, as a semantic or, more concisely, a discursive construct, is signified in a text, then it is also the text that constrains the self into a specific subject position.[30] In other words, the self is defined in the text and by the text it articulates or/and is articulated in. The analytical comparison of the passages above, accordingly, can clarify certain issues about the entity who is considered to have formulated them (here the protagonist/narrator). In this respect, it is relevant to explain, in closer detail, why the former passage can be generally assumed as descriptive and the latter as reflective. This question can be initially approached by analyzing the usage of the verbs that are associated with the self of the utterer—i.e. with the pronoun "I" as the structural subject of the sentences and the possessive pronoun "my"—in each passage.

Descriptive Self-Reference

In the former excerpt (*passage I*), considering the function of the narrator's self as the grammatical subject of the text, there is only one action, namely the act of seeing or observing that, both explicitly and implicitly, is attributed to the first-person pronoun of the narrator. In its explicit form, the action is directly mentioned in the sentence "I see the shoulders of a woman." That means, the pronoun "I" comes to be the grammatical subject of only one verb in the passage, and that is the verb "see." Even if the verb has not explicitly appeared in the text, the completion of the act of observation could still be deduced from the passage itself. In other words, the utterance (narration) of this passage necessitates the simultaneous act of observation on the part of the narrator. This quality can be noticed in the major part of the narrative's text. In such passages, in general, the narrator's subjective functionality is reduced to the act of observation or in a few instances to other types of perception, such as perceiving sounds and voices, and in very rare cases, perceiving through his sense of touch. In this sense, the role of the narrator in this passage type is limited to that of an impartial perceiver/reporter and not a doer or a reactor. In other words, the text acquires the quality of being anti-expressive. The lack of self-expression in the text renders the existential significance of the entity who utters (and is uttered in) the text problematic.

Following the argument stated above, it is also interesting to explore how the self of the narrator is reflected in the noun phrases that contain the possessive

30 Hall, "The Work," pp. 54–56.

pronoun "my"—namely, phrases such as "my sleeves," "my collar," "my head," "my shirt," "my eyelid" and "my eyeball." It is significant to note that all these phrases in the grammatical structure of the text come to represent the direct object of the verbs used. Although the protagonist is narrating about himself, his self cannot be depicted as the subject of any active sentence. Even if the sentences are rephrased in a way so that the noun phrase containing the possessive pronoun "my" becomes the subject of the sentence (e.g. my head is turned to the right side), he would only come to function as the subject of a passive sentence. In other words, there is no way for the self of the narrator to be reformulated (on the level of meaning) from a passive object to an active subject. The structures of the text, in this sense, have forced the self of the protagonist into the position of an impotent entity whose existence is associated with a rotting "stinky" corpse (48). The protagonist, in this respect, is depicted as a passive, expressionless entity on the verge of nonexistence.

Reflective Self-Reference

Having referred to the question of existence, it is now relevant to turn into the second passage quoted above (*Passage II*) in order to discuss the matters of self and identity in the story "Safar" a little further. Passage number two has already been characterized as a piece of reflective text regarding the way in which the protagonist approaches (him)self as the central topic of the passage. Concerning the relationship of the pronoun "I" and the actualization of a particular action in the text, it can be noticed that the "I" of the protagonist in this passage type is connected with the verb "wonder." In other words, the narrator in such passages is particularly engaged in the act of contemplative questioning. The fact that the entire passage is formulated in a sequence of interrogative sentences emphasizes the reflective quality of the passage. Even the possessive pronoun "my," as the reflection of the narrator's self in the noun phrase "my students," comes to construct the grammatical subject of the verb "ask."

In this respect, it is also significant to pay attention to the content of the questions posed. The first sentence of the paragraph reiterates Shakespeare's most quoted verse "to be, or no to be" through the phrase "to have or not to have a leg" (in the Persian version, "*bud o nabud-e yek pa*"), and thereby, formulates the problematic of the text in a nutshell. The protagonist of the story experiences and contemplates an existential dilemma which is also explicitly referred to in all other questions posed in the passage. The perplexed narrator is in search of an answer to the question that addresses the significance of existence, in general, and his, in particular.

Amputation: The Conflict Itself or the Symbolic Resolution?

At this point, it is necessary to consider the conflict of the plot once again and explore its significance in relation to the sequence of the events in the narrative. As briefly pointed out, there are two different attitudes towards the central event of the plot in "Safar." Almost all the characters of the story approach the amputation of the protagonist's leg with sorrow and comment on the approaching event with pity. It has also been mentioned that the conflict of the plot, in the mind of the protagonist, has significantly to do with the act of amputation but is far from identical with it. The only common ground between these two attitudes, therefore, is the *crisis* of the plot which is constructed around the medical operation. Nevertheless, while from the vantage point of all the characters, the amputation of the protagonist's leg is approached as the turning point that leads to a tragic end, for the protagonist, it functions as a transitional phase that symbolically may result in the resolution of the conflict. The protagonist of "Safar", like those of other stories of the volume *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*, is preoccupied with the possibility of resolving his obsessions by means of escaping a particular situation:

> خسته‌ام—از نگاه کردن، از شنیدن، از لمس کردن. یک نفر می‌آید و درجه را از زیر زبانم درمی‌آورد. خسته‌ام—از خوردن، از خوابیدن، از روزها و شب‌ها. آیا راه فراری نیست؟ آیا واقعا راه فراری نیست؟
>
> I am exhausted—with observing, with hearing, with touching. Someone comes and takes out the thermometer from under my tongue. I am exhausted—with eating, with sleeping, with nights and days. Is there not a way to flee? Is there really no way to flee? (51)

The protagonist is exhausted by being the others' object of control, by the routines of everyday life, and by the monotonous passage of time. In order to render the circumstances to his advantage, he nurtures a possibility (or dream) of escaping the situation. Nevertheless, quite paradoxically, he experiences relief and success only after the amputation of the same limb with which one would ever be able to run away. On the final line of the story, he indicates "No one knows how happy I am" (57). This paradox can only be explained on the symbolic ground. In order to decipher the symbolism of the narrative regarding the conflict of the plot and its resolution, it is relevant to see how the protagonist expresses his feelings on the verge of the operation:

به خود می‌گویم: چه بهتر. این همان چیزی است که می‌خواستم. دیگر هیچ کس کوچکترین توقعی از من نخواهد داشت. حالا می‌خواهد نیستی هست باشد می‌خواهد نیست باشد. شاگردهایم می‌توانند بمیرند. دیگر هیچ کس از من سؤالی نخواهد کرد.

> I tell myself: so much the better. This is exactly what I wanted. No one, ever again, is going to have the slightest expectation from me. No matter if nonexistence comes to an existence or remains nonexistent. My students can die. No one, ever again, is going to ask me any questions. (54)

As stated above, the nature of the conflict for the protagonist is in no sense the removal of his leg but rather has to do with the social demands from which he would be automatically exempt through the amputating operation. The amputation of the protagonist's leg, in short, is associated with exemption from social commitments and responsibilities. Regarding the fact that generally a "related approach to integrity [or social identity] is to think of it primarily in terms of a person's holding steadfastly true to their commitments, rather than ordering and endorsing desires,"[31] it can be concluded that the protagonist has to dis-integrate, at least on the symbolic level, in order to escape a social role, so that he would be able to re-construct an individual identity based on personal desires.

The desire for disintegration, on the realistic level, is therefore rooted in the protagonist's urge for being cut off from a communal body. On a symbolic level, this can be observed in the way the protagonist recurrently refers to his parts of body. The text of the story is permeated with the narrator's references (more than 80 cases, in the text of the narrative) to his parts of body, naming 28 different parts consisting of his "head," "eye," "eyelid," "eyeball," "mouth," "throat" (47), "heart," "hand," "leg," "face," "lips," "nose" (48), "toes," "big toe," "skin" (49), "stomach," "tongue," "arm," "ear" (50), "brain," "teeth" (51), "shoulder," "back" (52), "elbow" (54), "chest," "neck" (55), "forehead," and "waist" (56). Moreover, it is worth noting that the inescapability of symbolic disintegration and decay before the protagonist's new birth as an individual is also explicitly referred to in different passages of the narrative. In the hospital room, for instance, the narrator depicts an image of his body's imminent decay by a close description of the flies that move on his face, lips, nose and eyes (48). Right before the

31 "Integrity," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

operation, too, he indicates "I feel that I am getting disconnected from everything and each part of my body is being pulled to a side" (54). The amputating operation, in other words, stands for the process that facilitates the act of dis-integration for the protagonist.

The Downward Journey

The process of the operation can be considered as a liminal stage which is symbolically associated with a temporary death phase for the protagonist. The title of the narrative itself, "Safar," is exactly attributed to this particular phase. The journey starts with the protagonist's transference to the operation room. The journey is a downward one; it is a journey to the underworld, to the world of the dead:

> از یک راهروی باریک می‌گذریم و از پله‌ها سرازیر می‌شویم. دیوارها ساکت و خاکستری است. دوازده تا پله می‌شمارم.... همه جا پر از تاریکی است. می پیچیم. باز سرازیری پله‌ها. هیچ کس حرف نمی‌زند.... صداهای آشنا دورتر و دورتر شده‌اند. پایین‌تر می‌رویم.
>
> We pass from a narrow corridor and rush the stairs down. The walls are silent and grey. I count twelve steps.... [E]verywhere is full of darkness. We turn. Once again the downward slope of the stairs. No one talks.... The familiar voices get farther and farther. We move further down. (52–3)

The encounter with death is, however, experienced at the verge of anesthesia which is compared to the sense of "suffocation" in water and is referred to as "the last moment" (55). The downward movement continues:

> همه چیز دورتر می‌شود و من همراه خرچنگ‌ها پایین‌تر می‌روم.... سعی می‌کنم شناکنان خودم را به روی آب برسانم. نمی‌توانم.
>
> Everything is getting farther and I, in the company of crabs, sink further down.... I try to swim and reach the surface of water. I can't. (55)

> تمام حیوانات دریایی برای من جشن گرفته‌اند و مرا به عمق گودترین چاه‌های دریایی می‌برند.... حس می‌کنم که به عمق ظلمت رسیده‌ام، به انتهای شب، به عدم مطلق.

> The sea creatures have thrown a party for me and are taking me to the depths of the deepest sea wells.... I feel I have touched the depth of darkness, the end of night, the absolute nonexistence. (55)

The protagonist dies temporarily and is reborn after the operation. Here is exactly the point where, for the first and only time throughout the story, the protagonist explicitly mentions the word "journey:" "I am alive and the crabs have disappeared. They open up the door. We set off for our journey upwards" (56).

After the process of amputation—or the symbolic dis-integration—the protagonist comes back to the world of the living as a newly born individual. All the images of stagnancy and passivity are replaced with those of movement and vitality in the imagination of the protagonist:

> خودم را با یک پا مجسم می‌کنم. چطور می‌شود نشست؟ ایستاد؟ راه رفت؟ باید برایم شلوار یک پاچه دوخت. باید از این به بعد فقط یک لنگه کفش خرید. می‌خندم.... خودم را می‌بینم که روی یک پا لی‌لی‌کنان از این اتاق به آن اتاق می‌روم. می‌افتم.... تلوتلو می‌خورم. می‌دانم که باید مثل بچه‌ای که تازه به دنیا آمده است ایستادن و راه رفتن را دوباره یاد بگیرم.

> I imagine myself with one leg. How I would sit? Stand up? Walk? I should have my trousers tailored with one leg. From now on, I have to buy only one shoe. I smile.... I see myself skip on one leg form one room to another. I would fall down.... I would stagger. I know that I have to learn anew how to stand up, how to walk like a newly born baby. I have to start everything over again. (56)

The leg of the protagonist is amputated. The process of the operation, as the turning point of the story, influences the mood and the language of the narrator/protagonist. The transition can be detected in the articulation of the narrator's self in the final paragraphs of the narrative. The protagonist's position changes from the passive, motionless object to that of an active, mobile subject, despite the amputation of his leg. The death imagery is replaced with birth symbolism. The presence of a woman in the hospital, dressed in white and smelling of milk and pregnancy (56–7), highlights the association of the protagonist's current state to the idea of a new birth. The tendency of the protagonist to construct a new identity is emphasized in the sentence "I feel as if I have been newly born and my very existence has not yet discovered its essential nature.... I wish I would be allowed to start walking as soon as possible"

(57). Quite similar to the other stories of the collection, the possibility of identity reconstruction in the story "Safar" is linked to the notion of mobility.

Narration: A Way Outwards

"Khoshbakhti" and "Mi'ad," the stories to be discussed in the closing part of the present chapter, although similar in many ways to the narratives analyzed so far, differ from them in two conspicuous ways: (1) unlike the other stories of the volume, the urge for abandonment, in these two stories, is expressed by *female* characters; and (2) in both stories, the act of *narration* is emphatically foregrounded as the means that facilitates mobility.

"Khoshbakhti:" The Silenced Narration

"Khoshbakhti" depicts a one-day long episode of the everyday life of its middle-class female protagonist. The story, for the most part, is narrated in an extended internal monologue (switching sometimes to an internal dialogue). It deals, in principle, with the reflections of the protagonist on the notion of happiness in her seven-year old marital life. The conflict of the plot is based on the woman's desire to inaugurate a dialogue with the husband and the very impossibility of narrative articulation. The tone of narration, throughout the story, remains melancholically contemplative and is, mostly, characterized with self-denial. Towards the denouement of the story, however, the denying tone of the narrator gives way to confessional realism; and the reader gradually experiences a shift in the extent of conformity between what is written on the page and what is read between the lines.

The major theme of "Khoshbakhti" is built upon the protagonist's urge for self-expression through the act of narration—an urge which is recurrently impeded by what is interpreted as the husband's intellectual superiority. Exerting power *through* language and *upon* language, the so-called superiority of the husband demonstrates discursive qualities. While it gives eligibility and credence to a certain discourse, it denies the other the right to articulation. Silenced narrative voice in "Khoshbakhti" is reinforced on both formal and thematic levels. Although the story is rendered through the mouth of a first-person narrator who is engaged with the act of narration, by revealing her thoughts and experiences to the reader, silence rules all over the narrative. The fact that the story, for the most part, is formulated in an internal monologue, paradoxically, highlights the impossibility of *voiced* narrative articulation in the structures of the story. Yet, other than the story's formal characteristics, there are several narrative and linguistic techniques that alongside the thematic plot-relations play a role in subduing the protagonist's urge for narration.

A Battle of Voices

The story opens with an abrupt decisive sentence told, or rather thought, by the female protagonist: "I am a happy person" (31). The accuracy of the sentence is, however, immediately undermined by the images reflecting her frustration in life rather than her happiness. As soon as the character refers to her present physical position, her emotional state, and her lifestyle, it becomes evident that she is talking not about her happiness but rather about the absence of happiness. For example, as the narrator declares that "I have slept so much that I feel dizzy. All afternoon long I've lain down here; senseless and motionless.... But what shall I do if I get up? No one and nothing is waiting for me" (31), she is only successful in communicating the sense of boredom rather than that of happiness. Obviously, the narrator is not happy; yet, her happiness is emphatically accredited as a fact through the statements of the husband whose unquestionable quoted words sets the rule for how the woman is permitted to feel. In the eyes of the husband, happiness is nothing extraordinary; it is exactly what the woman is feeling (or should feel). "You're really a happy person. What else do you want" (31), for instance, is reiterated in the woman's mind as a statement not only remembered but also as a strong order on the part of the husband. As the second-person subject pronouns of the husband's quoted sentences are integrated into the woman's first-person narrative voice, the "I" of the narrator announces herself happy: "Every day, every minute, every second, I am happy" (31). This technique produces interesting effects throughout the story. It brings about an irony which is not intended by the narrator herself. This unintended irony, in its own turn, reinforces the narrator's denying tone resulting in a self-subversive, double-voiced monologue in which two conflicting voices are dispatched from the mind of a single character. In this sense, the text of the story becomes a battlefield of voices.

Happiness and Narrative Communication

The narrator whose ultimate medium for happiness is to communicate a story to her husband finds herself reluctant or subdued to do so. Quite early in the story, for instance, she desperately wishes "if only something interesting would have happened, so that I could tell Mahmud about it; I have nothing to tell—I mean interesting things" (31). The narrator's wish for narrating a story to her husband is so desirable that she is even willing—on a certain level of consciousness—to give her life for it: "I have to do something with this happiness. If only I could die and tell Mahmud about it" (31). Nevertheless, throughout "Khoshbakhti," the act of narration in the presence of Mahmud as an addressee never takes place. The resulting discursive tension and its suppressive effects

on the voice of the narrator are reflected in, and also reinforced by, certain textual conditions. That is, not only does the text of the story represent and communicate the conflict, but the conflict itself is intensified and reiterated through the usage of certain sentence structures and conversational patterns. These textual conditions and the ways they influence the plot-conflict can be discussed under two categories: (1) conditional articulation, and (2) discursive devaluation.

Conditional Articulation

By conditional articulation I mean those textual moments when the narrating voice of the protagonist is put into silence due to the fact that what she wants to express does not meet certain criteria. In other words, the thoughts, feelings, ideas and, in short, all the stories of the protagonist can only be *conditionally* expressed. Whenever the protagonist is filled with the urge to talk to the husband, she suppresses the urge to re-consider whether her words are "important" (31) or "interesting" (31, 32, and 34) enough to be expressed. In other words, being important or/and interesting are the prerequisites for the articulation of the protagonist's stories. In the story "Khoshbakhti," whenever the narrator contemplates the importance of an event, she unconsciously tries to appropriate the mindset of the husband and, thereby, lays the ground for conditional articulation. That is, what she wants to express can only be articulated under the condition that it is interesting or important for the husband. In this sense, her discourse is practically defeated by that of the husband.

Sometimes in the text of the story, the discursive friction between the couple is explicitly depicted in a dialogue in which the husband directly and abruptly prevents the woman from talking:

> می‌گویم: «اگه بدونی تو کوچه چه خبره.» می‌گوید: «ساکت، دارم چیز می‌خونم.» ولی من دلم می‌خواهد حرف بزنم. از صبح تا حالا منتظر بوده‌ام، ... می‌گویم: «من یه حرف حسابی پیدا کرده‌ام، می‌خوام بزنم. خیلی جالبه.» سکوت.
>
> I say: "you can't imagine what's up across the alley." He says: "quiet, I'm reading." But I want to talk, I've been waiting since morning ... I say: "I've come upon something important to talk about. I want to say it. It's very interesting." Silence. (34)

However, in some other cases, she does not even dare to initiate narration, since she has practically internalized Mahmud's defeating arguments and

frequently recalls them as hindering warnings whenever she feels like talking to him:

> دلم می‌خواهد بروم و با محمود حرف بزنم. البته باید دلیلی داشته باشم، یک دلیل محکم. ولی من فقط می‌خواهم با محمود حرف بزنم، حرفهای معمولی، از همین چیزها که بلد هستم. محمود می گوید: «نباید وقت منو با حرفهای بی‌معنی تلف کرد.»
>
> I want to go and talk to Mahmud. But I should have a reason, a strong reason. But I just want to talk to him, about usual things, about the things I know about. Mahmud says "you should not waste my time with your nonsense." (32)

In such cases, even a half-articulated dialogue, where the woman could at least have a small chance to utter her thoughts and feelings, is denied to her. The dialogue occurs inside the mind of the protagonist and silence continues.

What makes the process of narrative articulation in the presence of the husband even more complicated is that the woman would apparently never be able to fulfill these conditions. The husband, through his discourse—allegedly considered as the more eligible one—labels the woman as a person who is essentially not able to fulfill these conditions: "Mahmud says: "I and you are important; I mean, I am important and you only are"" (35). If this is the case, and if the woman is already and essentially described as unimportant, all her attempts in looking for interesting and important stories would only put her into a vicious cycle. In other words, the woman's urge for utterance is trapped in the structural logic of the text and is, thereby, recurrently subdued.

Discursive Devaluation

As so far discussed, the plot conflict in the story "Khoshbakhti" revolves around the issue of verbal articulation. The story depicts a battle lead by the struggle of two different types of discourse, each fighting for eligibility. While the female protagonist is rather prone to narrate stories about everyday issues and relationships ("common conversation" ("*harfha-ye ma'muli*") (32), the husband supposedly gives priority to what is generally known as intellectual material (e.g. politics, the Vietnam War (33), poetry, and literary criticism (32)). In the course of the narrative, the discursive confrontation between the two attitudes materializes in some verbal statements which expressed through abuse and insult are meant to devalue and, thereby, discredit the discourse of the other.

In this sense, discursive devaluation, as a strategy of confrontation, results in the construction of a hegemonic system. In such a system the discourse of the lower is defeated by what is held as the higher discourse. In "Khoshbakhti," the narrator's internal monologue is permeated with the usage of swear-words (e.g. "rotten stinking potatoes" (32) and "stupid chatterbox" (33)) which she self-denyingly appropriates in order to invalidate the discourse of the common. In this way, each time she initiates the act of narration, she interrupts the flow of the so-called common stories through abusing the very common-ness of the subject matter in question:

> از خیابان صدای جیغ می‌آید، صدای شیون دسته جمعی. می‌دوم کنار پنجره. می‌ایستم. نه، من نباید اهمیت بدهم، نباید نگاه کنم. اینها مردم عادی هستند، مردم احمق با مسائل پیش پا افتاده.
>
> I can hear the sounds of screams and mass lamentations. I go and stand by the side of the window. No, I should not care. I should not watch. These are common people, stupid people with unimportant problems. (32)
>
> همین حرفهای احمقانه‌ای که تمام زنها بلدند. با آن شوهر بی‌شعور معمولی [(اشاره به شوهر همسایه)] باید از همین حرفها هم زد.
>
> About all the stupid things that all women can talk about. One should speak to such a foolish common husband [referring to the neighbor's husband] about such crap. (33)

The hegemonic aspect of the relation between the status of the common and the stance of the husband is highlighted when the narrator refers to the husband as the savior who has "rescued [her] from the grip of the common people" announcing herself "happier than everyone", a person who belongs to a "higher world, to a superior man" (35). The narrator, who is essentially dependent on the husband to be lifted up to a higher stature, is, therefore, recurrently engaged in denouncing the discourse of the common. In this way, whenever she is provoked to narrate a story, she represses the urge by abusing the very nature of her common subject matter. The discourse of the common is, accordingly, placed at an inferior position, and so is the narrative interrupted.

Of course, the story "Khoshbakhti," viewed from a feministic perspective, can be approached as a story whose protagonist's voice is frequently silenced through the masculine discourse of its "superior" male character. I do not

necessarily criticize such an approach. Nevertheless, I believe it is also possible to pose the question whether the voice of the husband is ever heard more emphatically than that of the woman. I mean, whether the husband, who is characterized as a person interested in intellectual issues, is ever depicted while expressing his political views, for instance. Since the whole plot-sequence is rendered through the perspective of the female protagonist functioning as the narrator-focalizer, it is—in most of the cases—not the voice of the husband that the reader directly experiences but rather the narrator's *quoted* version of what he might have said under particular circumstances. It should also be noted that what the narrator reports, at the same time, is formulated in a voiceless internal monologue/dialogue. Accordingly, all the quoted sentences attributed to the husband are equally bereaved of voice as are the thoughts of the narrator. Nevertheless, there are a few scattered lines throughout the story in which the voices of both characters can be heard. These are the moments when the narrator's monologue is intermitted for the sake of voiced utterance. In such instances a mini-dialogue is ephemerally formed; but this neither develops into a conversation nor does it cause *any* of the characters to initiate a *voiced* monologue (36–8). Furthermore, close to the end of the story, the narrator, in a more realistic tone confesses that "I have also deprived him from life … maybe if I were not here, he wouldn't have stayed; he wouldn't have decayed in here" (43). This aspect of the story can even be better grasped when the story is studied in comparison to the story of "Man ham Che Guevara hastam" whose male protagonist, also named Mahmud, is frustrated by the same circumstances in his marital life.

Self-Elimination for the Sake of Self-Expression

The impossibility of voiced narrative articulation in the plot of the story is also strongly connected with the physical space the narrator occupies. The spatial setting of the story delineates a box-like space which is silent and almost closed to the outside world. The characters move from one room to the other without expressing any words or emotions. Throughout the story, if there is ever a spark of hope for the narrator to relate her stories, it is at the moments when she is able to perceive/imagine her object of narration beyond the structures of the house. If her potential object of narration is located in the outside world, then the protagonist has to step out to be able to perceive it, in the first place, and then produce narratives about it. In this sense, the possibility of narrative articulation is dependent on the narrator's self-elimination from the space she presently occupies. Close to the end of the story when the narrator finally adopts a more realistic (less denying) tone, she confesses that "these walls, this bed and this room have been hiding something from me,

have taken it away; the most important thing [(*asl-e kari*)] has always been on the other side of the wall" (41). Here for the first time in the story, the narrator makes use of her personal criteria to judge the importance of the topic she wishes to talk about—a topic which is located "on the other side of the wall." Throughout the story, the unconscious desire of the narrator for self-elimination (with the intention of voiced narration) is depicted and highlighted by means of two recurrent motifs: liminal spaces and the concept of death.

Liminal Spaces

By the term liminal space, here, I intend to refer to those spots in the setting of the narrative, where the narrator's contact with the outside world becomes possible—places such as "windowsills" (32, 39, and 40), through/behind the "curtains" (33, 39, and 43), the "wall" (37, 41, and 43), and the "doorsill" (42). Not only do these specific places mark the borderlines between the inside and the outside, but they also delineate thresholds *towards* outside—spaces that provide the protagonist with the opportunity, or fill her with the temptation, of leaving. Quite interestingly, it is exactly at such spots that the self-restraining and self-denying attitude of the narrator is interrupted and, even if for a short while, a story flows on:

> محمود در اتاق کارش است. از کجا می‌فهمد؟ پرده را کنار می‌زنم. زیر پنجرهٔ ما پر از آدم است. زن همسایه توی سرش می‌زند و موهایش را می‌کشد. یقه‌اش را پاره می‌کند و دمر روی آسفالت کوچه می‌افتد. کاهگل جلوی دماغش می‌گیرند و کمکش می‌کنند بلند شود.

> Mahmud is in his study. How is he going to find out? I draw the curtain aside. Under our window, there is a crowd of people. The wife of the neighbor is hitting herself on the head and pulling her hair. She tears off her collar and stumbles on the street asphalt. They hold some thatch under her nose and help her stand up. (32–3)

Such stories are never permitted to be re-produced in the presence of the husband. Even the mental process of formulating such narratives has to take place in the absence of the man. Nevertheless, it is exactly at such liminal spots that the woman becomes fervently engaged in composing narratives. Not only does she try to report back the observable (e.g. in the case of scenery description), but she also adds the element of imagination to the process of narrative production through posing questions—questions the answers to which can practically result in the composition of creative narrative:

من عادت داشتم هر روز وقتی محمود خانه نبود از لای پرده به آن زن نگاه کنم. می‌دیدم که چطور همه‌اش با شوهرش حرف می‌زند و چطور عصرها جلو خانه‌شان لب پله می‌نشینند و با در و همسایه صحبت می‌کند. دلم می‌خواست بدانم از چی حرف می‌زند. از کی؟ چطور؟

Whenever Mahmud was not home, I used to watch that woman through the curtain. I could see how she constantly talked to her husband and how she sat on the edge of the steps in front of the house every evening and talked to the neighbors. I wanted to know what she was talking about. Whom about? How? (33)

پشت دیوار اتاقمان صدای پا و حرف می‌آید. در فکر اینم که مردم دیگر چه کار می‌کنند؟ کجا هستند؟ چه کارها بلدند؟ این مردم که صدای راه رفتنشان صبح تا شب به گوشم می‌رسد کجا می‌روند؟ دلم می‌خواهد بروم بیرون.

I can hear the sounds of footsteps and people speaking from behind our bedroom wall. I wonder what these people are doing. Where are they? What can they do? Where are they going—these people whose footsteps reach my ear from morning to night. I want to go out. (37)

The perception of that which is located outside provides the woman with the ingredients for the stories she would like to relate. These potential stories, however, are in no sense purely fictional but they rather reflect the protagonist's personal wishes and pities. The former of the above two excerpts, for instance, reflects how the protagonist pities the lack of mutual conversation in her marital life, and the latter, illustrates her desire for mobility. In other words, these stories are particularly produced through a process of self-projection. The protagonist uses the observed and renders it to a medium of self-expression.

Death

The concept of death in the text of "Khoshbakhti" has two functions: on the one hand, as it was the case with some of the other stories analyzed earlier in this chapter, it operates as a motif that symbolically and recurrently communicates the protagonist's tendency to be eliminated from the space she already occupies. On the other hand, however, it is a thematic element that facilitates

the possibility of *interesting* narrative articulation for the protagonist. In the beginning lines of the story the narrator states "if only I could die and tell Mahmud about it" and, only some lines further, she remembers "when my father died, somewhere deep in my heart, I felt happy. I had finally found something to talk about" (31). In the course of the story, too, she is obsessed with the death of the neighbor kid and tries to find an opportunity to talk about it to the husband (34, 36, and 38). Here, it is interesting to notice that in the case of the first excerpt mentioned above, the act of narration after death entails a rebirth. This issue by itself renders the concept of death from a terminal stage to a liminal passage. In this sense, death becomes a channel which symbolically enables the protagonist to eliminate herself from the world of silence and be reborn into the world of voices—into the world where "people are alive and talk to each other" (42).

تُک پا تُک پا به طرف در می‌روم. انگار که روی پل صراط هستم و بین مرگ و زندگی فقط یک لحظه فاصله است. به پشت سرم نگاه نمی کنم. به هیچ چیز. دلم می‌خواهد وقتی پایم را به کوچه گذاشتم از همه چیز حتی از گوشت و پوست خودم هم خالی باشم.

> I tiptoe towards the door. It is as if I am standing on the Serat Bridge and there is only a moment between death and life. I don't look backward. I look at nothing. I wish when I step into the alley, I am emptied from everything, even from my own skin and flesh. (42)

The liminal characteristic of death is very well captured in the above excerpt, where the religious visualization of death merges with the image of the tempting threshold of the doorsill. So far as it is depicted in the plot of the narrative, the protagonist of "Khoshbakhti" never succeeds in stepping over the threshold and leaving everything behind. Nevertheless, by the closure of the story, her attitude towards her marital life is shifted to a different level of consciousness. The story closes with the sentence "I love you" (44)—a sentence with which the woman had previously addressed her husband (38). However, what the statement communicates entails another layer of meaning; it is no more a naïve self-denial; it is rather uttered with the cynicism brought about by the experience of a revelatory disillusionment.

"Mi'ad:" A Postponed Promise

If in the story "Khoshbakhti" the protagonist's obsession with the possibility of narrating stories is implicitly represented by her tendency to talk about

common topics and people, the story "Mi'ad" is an explicit narrative about its narrator's desire to become a writer. The title of the story refers to the female protagonist's recurrently postponed self-promise to begin the act of writing. Bored and frustrated by life routines, such as her job (141–2), her colleagues (143–4), her friends (133–4), and her family (139–40), she only associates life and happiness with the ability to compose stories.

The Will to Narrate and the Urge to Leave

The narrator's urge for writing a book is the main theme in the story "Mi'ad." The short sentence, "I am thinking about my book" (133), abruptly introduces and highlights the main topic of the narrative right at the beginning of the story. "Mi'ad," as another sample of Taraqqi's early narrative style, is full of repetitions. Its female protagonist's urge for becoming a writer is directly referred to in more than 25 cases throughout the story (the whole of which is composed in 18 pages) through phrases such as "my story,"[32] and "my book,"[33] or by referring to her intention of becoming an "author" ("*nevisandeh*") and the very act of composing.[34] Interesting, however, is that the protagonist's desire to produce a fictional piece of writing in "Mi'ad" is in fact connected with other actions and desires throughout the narrative. The protagonist's obsession with story writing, for example, is explicitly related to the act of departure. Once again, we are confronted with a story in Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* collection in which the protagonist nurtures a dream of abandonment. Nevertheless, similar to the story "Khoshbakhti," abandonment in this story too can only be facilitated by the act of narration itself. The sequence of the three opening sentences of the story emphasizes the relation between the two actions. As the narrator states: "I am thinking about my book. I will start it this week. I wish I could leave" (133), the link between the two actions is established. The relation between writing and leaving, however, is not limited to this preliminary excerpt. Throughout the narrative, the protagonist repeatedly mentions the two, side by side. Frustrated by a conversation with a friend, for example, the narrator indicates: "It would only be enough to put the cup back on the table, stand up, and leave. Why don't they understand that I am a writer …?" (134). Annoyed by the company of her mother and stepfather, to mention another instance, the protagonist contemplates: "I am a writer and have great plans; I tell myself that I should count to ten, stand up, and leave" (139–40). The excerpts make a connection

32 Taraqqi, "Mi'ad," pp. 133, 137, 141, 142, 143, and 144.

33 Ibid., pp. 133, 135, 136, 137, 139, and 145.

34 Ibid., pp. 134, 135, 137, 139, 141, 143, 145, 148, and 150.

between the protagonist's wish to become a writer and her urge for departure. Simultaneously, however, the passages highlight the protagonist's procrastination in performing the two actions. Both the act of composing and that of a permanent departure are only represented as emergencies upon which the protagonist does not ever act decidedly in the framework of the story.

Narration: The Means to Express Selfhood, the Means of Happiness

The act of narrative composition in the story "Mi'ad" is also depicted as an identification strategy to emphasize the significance of the self. Several times in the story, the narrator mentions that through writing she would be able to prove to others that she is different from them. Referring to her mother in her thoughts, for example, she indicates that "this woman does not know how different I am from her common stupid children; [she does not know] that I am a writer" (139). Somewhere else, thinking about the completion of her book, the protagonist wonders "when would I be able to prove who I am and how much I differ from common people" (143). Elsewhere, with a more emphatic tone, the narrator explicitly underlines the connection between her prospected book and her real self:

> دلم می‌خواهد همین الان این کتاب را نوشته بودم. دلم می‌خواهد همین الان می‌توانستم رویم را بکنم به مردم و بگویم این منم، من واقعی، منی که شماها تا به حال نشناخته بودید، منی که این همه مدت منتظر فرصت بود و حالا سرش را از تخم درآورده است.
>
> I wish I had written my book by now. I wish I would have been able to face people now and tell them that this is me, the real me, the me you had never known, the me that had been waiting all this while to find the opportunity to hatch the egg. (135–6)

The prospected book, in the above quote, is referred to as identical to the narrator's real self. It is represented as the exact entity through which the narrator would ideally be able to construct and communicate her new self. Taking into account the relationship between the protagonist's obsession with the act of writing and her desire to leave (discussed above), the prospected book can, in fact, be interpreted as the project through which the protagonist wishes to surpass the borderline that separates the world of communal coercion and that of the individual self-expressiveness.

The first two passages, quoted above,[35] are also indicative of another significant point. The emphasis on the stupidity of the "common" and the necessity to be different from the "common" are reminders of the tension in the story "Khoshbakhti," where the narrator's oscillation between her will to narrate about common issues and the externally imposed significance of talking about important topics constructs the core conflict. The same tension is also depicted in the story "Mi'ad." The protagonist, for example, contemplates a wish to write about "a philosophical question," talk about "important issues" ("*harfha-ye hesabi va mohemm*") and immediately regrets the fact that all the important "secrets," "messages," and "philosophies" have already been written about. There is only one passage, however, in the middle of the story, where the narrator comes up with the idea that she does not necessarily have to write a story about the so-called "important issues."[36] Facing a "window" and looking outward, she states:

> فکر داستانم هستم. نمی‌دانم این داستان دربارهٔ چی هست. چرا. می‌دانم. یک داستان ساده است، دربارهٔ یک آدم، یک آدم معمولی یا شاید یک آدم مهم. چه فرقی می کند؟
>
> I am thinking about my story. I don't know what it is about. Yes. I know. It is a simple story, about a person, a common person, or maybe an important one. What is the difference? (142)

While the narrator is standing in front of the window, the tension between the common and the important decreases in the story "Mi'ad." Furthermore, it is only in this particular scene that the narrator is inspired by the topic of her prospected narrative. The image of the contemplating narrator looking out the window, at the same time, brings to mind the female protagonist of the story "Khoshbakhti," who unconsciously begins to narrate stories whenever positioned in front of the window. It is also worth of note that even the idea of "happiness" ("*khoshbakhti*"), the tile and the subject matter of the latter story, is particularly linked with the act of narration in the story "Mi'ad." Interestingly

35 (1) "This woman does not know how different I am from her common stupid children," p. 139, and (2) "When would I be able to prove who I am and how much I differ from common people?" p. 143.

36 The story's theme of a recurrently postponed project of writing a story (about common topics) is quite similar to that of Zoya Pirzad's short story "Qesseh-ye khargush va gowjeh-farangi" (The story of the rabbit and the tomato). See: Pirzad, *Seh ketab*, pp. 3–5.

enough, the protagonist's thoughts about the composition of her book and the possibility of "happiness" in life are, likewise, formed as she is facing out through a window:

> از گوشهٔ پنجره به درخت‌ها نگاه می‌کنم، به آسمان، به خانه‌های روبه رویی، به پنجره‌ها .... کاش اتفاقی می‌افتاد. کاش الان ... کتابم را نوشته بودم. من می‌دانم که چیزی به اسم خوشبختی چیزی به اسم زندگی وجود دارد. چرا نباید به آن برسم؟
>
> From the corner of the window, I look at the trees, the sky, the houses in front of me, the windows.... If only something would happen. If only ... I had already written my book. I know there is something by the name of happiness, by the name of life. Why shouldn't I attain it? (145)

Unlike the story "Khoshbakhti," where the concept of happiness is treated and represented ironically—i.e. through depicting the protagonist's false conception of happiness—happiness in "Mi'ad," is consciously associated with the act of narration. In other words, while in "Khoshbakhti," the relation between happiness and the ability to narrate stories is only discernible through the implications of the narrative, "Mi'ad" is the story of it protagonist's explicit decision to find happiness through narration.

The Autofictional Dimension

The story "Mi'ad" through its thematic relevance and due to its particular position within Taraqqi's literary works is supplemented by an autofictional dimension. Not only is "Mi'ad" a story about its narrator's wish to become a writer, but it is also Taraqqi's first piece of published short fiction.[37] In other words, "Mi'ad" can be considered as its author's, (Goli Taraqqi's) public announcement about the initiation of her literary career. Apart from this, as the last story published in the collection *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*, "Mi'ad" functions as a prelude to Taraqqi's other short story collections published years later. Not only the narrator of the story "Mi'ad," as the title implies, promises to become a writer, but she also predicts the wish to be fulfilled in "another place" (139). The story's narrator explicitly mentions countries such as "France," "Italy", and America, as the places where she can have "more opportunities" to "live," to "decide," and to "write her books" (148–50). The narrator even makes mention

37 Karimi, "Ziyafat-e khaterehha," p. 18.

of her intention to travel to "*Farang*" as "a place faraway from here and its difficulties" (149). Interestingly, it is only after the publication of her stories written in "another place" that Goli Taraqqi begins to be recognized as a professional Iranian writer.

The matter of identity construction, in Goli Taraqqi's early short stories, comes to be closely connected with concepts of space and placement. The conflict in the narratives published in the author's *Che Guevara* volume in 1969, in one way or another, is depicted through the character's incessant struggles to escape the solid social structures of modern life that have so far confined them within the defining frameworks of everyday routines. In contrast to the socialistic premise communicated by the title of the collection, the narratives recount the stories of the urge for change, on an individual level. In order to be foregrounded as individuals, the main characters of the volume endeavor to work their way out of the communal network that determines their actions, responsibilities, duties, and, in short, who they are. The implications of the character's struggle within the narratological framework of the stories are explainable through Zygmunt Bauman's speculations about the relation between identity construction and space in modern societies. According to Bauman, individuation, as a disembedding process, entails constant friction between the desire for self-liberation and the encumbering social structures. Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* stories are narrative representations of this friction. In the stories, the site of conflict between the two forces at work is represented through social structures, corporeal structures, and the impediments for narrative articulation. In none of the stories, however, does the conflict between the urge for individuation and the resisting boundaries resolve. It is only years later that Taraqqi ventures to offer a resolution for this conflict in the title story of her collection *Jayi digar* (2000), where the protagonist finally succeeds to surmount the defining restrictions within which he had been trapped.

CHAPTER 3

Displacement: The Problematics of Self-Space and the Trauma of Identification

When compared to one another, Goli Taraqqi's first- and second-phase short stories display remarkable discrepancies in terms of style and subject matter. Yet, specific issues concerning the thematic content of Taraqqi's narratives help to establish a link between the author's early short fiction published in 1969 and her later narratives of the 1990s and early 2000s.

With the exception of a few, all Taraqqi's second-phase short stories are either set or initiated within the framework of a new locality.[1] In most of Taraqqi's post-emigration stories, we are given the account of emigrant characters. Given the fact that Taraqqi's early short stories, as discussed in the previous chapter, are constructed around the characters' never fulfilled urge for desertion, it is possible to assume the new spatial position of the author's post-emigration characters as the deterred actualization of that urge. In simpler words, while Taraqqi's characters in her first collection are obsessed with the urge to leave, in the author's later stories, they have already left. The continuity between Taraqqi's early narratives and her more recent works is, at the same time, highlighted by the attempt at identification on the parts of the characters in the author's both pre- and post-emigration literature. While the urge for desertion in the former is provoked by the characters' desire for a new identity, in the latter, we are confronted with characters who struggle for identification within the unknown space they have recently entered. In other words, while Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* characters are obsessed with the possibility to shatter (or erase) worn-out identities, in the author's post-emigration stories, the main characters attempt to *re*-construct identities.

Examining Taraqqi's after (and about) emigration stories, we usually come across narratives that initiate within new discursive spaces (outside Iran/out of homeland). The narration of these stories is triggered by a specific incident or an emotional state of mind in the author's new space of residence abroad

1 Exceptions are "Derakht-e golabi," "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man," "Khedmatkar," and "Jayi digar." The other stories that do not directly point to a setting outside homeland (like "Khaneh-ye madarbozorg"), as it will be soon discussed, are, in fact, regarded as retrospected stories that can be integrated into the framework narratives of *Do donya* (2002), set in a mental clinic in the suburbs of Paris.

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004356948_004

(France, Paris); but soon afterwards, the story shifts to deal with the narrator's memories of homeland, related in extended flashbacks. Only five stories among all Taraqqi's exile-related narratives (published by 2002) are exclusively about the experience of displacement: "Khaneh'i dar aseman," "'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef dar ghorbat," and "Madame Gorgeh" (from the collection *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992)), and the framework stories of the collection *Do donya* (2002), "Avvalin ruz" and "Akharin ruz." From among these stories the latter two will be later discussed in detail in a chapter on the function of narrativity. In this chapter, the focus will be on the three stories from *Khaterehha* and the matter of self-space in exile. The protagonists of these stories are portrayed in a struggle to bring the new (the unknown) into the familiar semantic order. During the process of making the unknown known the characters are in an incessant attempt to establish the borders of the self. Regarding the matters of displacement and self-space, the theoretical approach draws much upon Stuart Hall's speculations about representational practices in culture.

Displacement and Its Impact on Representational Practices

The term *displacement*, in the analysis of Taraqqi's short stories, can be highlighted both as a thematic event within the plot of narratives (actualized through the characters' spatial/geographical movement from one specific space/geographical spot to another) and as a theoretical term that facilitates the analytical elaborations on the stories. In this respect, it is necessary to clarify the term's usage and implications before proceeding with the examination of the stories in focus.

As briefly pointed out in chapter one, the act of displacement pertains not only to a spatial dislocation but also to a discursive one. The term, in simple usage, refers to a shift in an individual's spatial position. If an individual is moved from the geographical point A to the geographical point B, he or she is regarded to have been displaced in the general usage of the term. However, when the term *displacement* is used in the realm of cultural studies, it often refers to a *trauma* experienced by the subject in question. The term strongly connotes negative concepts such as violence, separation, escape, distance, exile, discrimination, marginalization, loss, miscommunication, nostalgia, and homelessness. In this respect, in order to answer the question about the meaning of displacement, it is of particular significance to examine the nature and the dynamics of that which is referred to as the *trauma* of displacement.

No doubt, the consolidation of the trauma of displacement and the subject's experience of it depend on different variables such as issues of class,

ethnic background, gender, and religion alongside many other factors like the displaced individual's current and previous economic statuses, reasons of displacement, present locality, future prospects, and the degree of that individual's integration into the new sociocultural order. Nevertheless, what underlies all these factors is hypothesized to be deeply rooted in the displaced subject's disturbed cognitive order or, as Stuart Hall suggests, his or her "conceptual system." The "conceptual system" or the "conceptual map" of an individual refers to the fundamental system of representation expanded and developed throughout his or her life time.[2] By "organizing, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts" and by "establishing complex relations between them," an individual is able to perceive, interpret, and make sense of his surroundings.[3] In this sense, the formation of any individual's "conceptual system" depends much on the way that person has learnt to construct and attribute meaning to the reality outside. Any individual's conceptual map, therefore, maintains within the internalized context and the system of belief to which he or she is accustomed. In other words, any individual's conception of reality strongly relies on the semantic context into which he or she is positioned. Any incident that brings about a change in that context (spatio-cultural displacement, for example) affects the accustomed cognitive relationship between the phenomenon outside and its mental interpretation. In this way, the subject's process of conception is disturbed and becomes dysfunctional. Therefore, it can be suggested that the trauma of displacement is basically rooted in the subject's inability to perceive the meaning of the reality outside (in a functional way (not in an essential way))[4] and to place himself or herself within it. In this respect, in order to examine the underlying dynamics of the trauma caused by displacement, it is, in principle, necessary to examine, first, the relationship between space and the process in which meaning is produced and communicated, and, second, the relationship between space and identification. To this end, it is accordingly significant to briefly survey the theoretical developments

2 Hall, "The Work," p. 18.

3 Ibid., p. 17.

4 Essential reality is unmediated. "Reality … is something which is partially created by media through which it is represented. Its interpretation depends on the "relationship between reality and representation," between "fact and fiction." Allen, *Intertextuality*, p. 177. Reality comes to be interpreted through its function in a specific semantic formation; "[a]ll that is needed for the text to function is the presupposition of the intertext. Certainly, presupposition itself cannot exist unless the reader is familiar with the structures organizing the representation of reality." Riffaterre, "Interpretation," 239.

on the nature of language, communication, and the representational aspect of culture.

Representation: Communication in Culture

In "The Work of Representation," a comprehensive introductory chapter to *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997), Stuart Hall—the British Jamaican cultural theorist and sociologist—elaborates upon what is generally meant by the term *representation* in cultural studies. He defines representation, shortly, as "an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture."[5] In his elaborations about the workings of cultural representation, Hall expands upon two approaches toward language: the "*semiotic* approach," influenced by the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, and the "*discursive* approach" derived from the works of the French philosopher Michel Foucault.[6] Through referring to the Saussurean and the Foucauldian linguistic theories as "constructionist," Hall rejects both the centrality of the subject and the existence of a fixed and precisely communicable reality outside the minds of those who participate in the act of communication. Therefore, as Hall emphasizes, the "meaning is *not* in the object or person or thing, nor is it *in* the world. It is we who fix the meaning so firmly that, after a while, it comes to seem natural and inevitable."[7]

Nevertheless, it is important to note that language as a system is much more inclusive than the spoken or the written forms of expression and perception.[8] So many other things which are not considered *linguistic* in the usual sense of the term function through the same mechanism. In this sense, it is possible to speak of "the 'language' of facial expressions or of gesture, for example, or the 'language' of fashion, of clothes, or of traffic lights," since they all communicate specific meanings through the particular codes that are shared by a number of people in a particular culture, social context, or a specific historical moment.[9] In other words, communication can only take place within culture/discourse.

Discourse, in its Foucauldian sense, can be defined as the dynamic network of meaning and practice, intrinsically weaved around (or constructed in reference to) a central truth (such as religion, justice, or a scientific discipline, for example). Discourse, in this respect, not only contains and facilitates all the possible ways in which a specific topic can be talked about, understood,

5 Hall, "The Work," p. 15.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., p. 21.

8 Ibid., p. 18.

9 Ibid., pp. 18–19.

supported, or argued against, through language, but it also lays the ground for social acts such as encouragement, celebration, prohibition, and punishment, through (and in response to) practice.[10] In this sense, discourse cannot be regarded as "purely a 'linguistic' concept;" discourse is a product of language *and* practice."[11] All social practices, no matter how grave or insignificant they are (compare murder and a simple smile, for example), have meanings and trigger reactions on the part of the other members of the society who are exposed to those practices. In this sense, neither meaning nor the subject participating in an act of representation can exist outside discourse. In other words, the very act of identification, as a representational practice, is discourse-dependent.

Identification and Space

If identification is approached as a discursive representational practice, its function and dynamics become intently linked to the matter of space. The significance of space in relation to the practice of identification is at least twofold: (1) The act of identification is only possible within and in relation to a particular discursive formation. Any geographical modification in the local state of an individual that exposes him or her to a different "regime of truth" will have an impact on the process in which that certain individual might operate as a subject within the new discursive circumstances.[12] Any particular "regime of truth," as the "mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements,"[13] ("statements," here, used in a broad sense including all social conventions, cultural customs, dress codes, body language, etc.) not only defines the subject in a certain way that might be different from his or her definition in relation to another system of truth, but also determines his or her social conduct and identification practices. Actions and statements can communicate different messages, and, hence, result in the formation of different (and unintended) identities in different systems of truth. Geographical displacement, in other words, can also be a discursive displacement which might render the identifying subject, at least for a while, lost, irrelevant, dangling, and disoriented. (2) If the act of identification is regarded as a representational practice, it functions through the "binding and marking of symbolic boundaries [...]. It requires what is left outside, its constitutive outside, to consolidate the process."[14] This means, if the ultimate goal of the

10 McHoul, *A Foucault Primer*, p. 31.

11 Hall, "The Work," p. 44.

12 Foucault, "Truth," p. 73.

13 Ibid.

14 Hall, "Who needs," p. 17.

act of identification is to position oneself, even if ephemerally, as a meaningful entity in a particular discursive realm, and if we consider that this meaningfulness is communicated through difference (that is through signification), then there must exist a virtual (or an actual) borderline that delineates this difference. The act of identification, in other words, is the act through which the self is consolidated within what can be referred to as self-space.

The Problem of Self-Space in Taraqqi's Stories

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, in three of her second-phase short stories, Goli Taraqqi deals with the portrayal of the problematics of self-space construction in her characters' new and unfamiliar local positions after emigration. Mahin Banu, the protagonist of the story "Khaneh'i dar aseman", Mr. Alef, and the autodiegetic narrator of "Madame Gorgeh" are all intensely preoccupied with the matter of self-space and the fact that they lack one.[15] Belonging to different generations and having been induced by different motivations to emigrate, all these characters struggle to build up a space of their own within their new locality. The following analysis, accordingly, will be focused on the problematics and dynamics of constructing the space which would both place the displaced self and define it within the new discursive realm. Due to the significance of the story "Khaneh'i dar aseman" and its vividly highlighted theoretical relevance to the matters of space and identification, a larger part of this section will be devoted to the analysis of this story. The discussion about the story "Khaneh'i dar aseman" will center on the matter of displacement and how it disturbs the characters' identification strategies. In the case of Aqaye Alef's situation, the analysis will be focused on the protagonist's anxiety brought about by the paradox between his desire to rigidly preserve his private space and his willingness to be absorbed by (or integrated into) his new locality. The analysis of the story "Madame Gorgeh" will highlight the way in which the structures of a home, as a typical representation of self-space, is delineated in the setting of the story.

"Khaneh'i dar aseman:" The Dangling Position of the Displaced

"Khaneh'i dar aseman," as mentioned earlier, is a particular specimen of those of Taraqqi's stories whose plots and settings are consolidated through the characters' confrontation with the exilic state after emigration. The protagonist, Mahin Banu, an old woman in her seventies, is forced to leave wartime Iran in

15 All these stories are published in *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992).

order to join her children and their families in Europe and the UK. The story is focused on matters of nostalgia, space and identity. Having been deprived of her home in Iran and failing to establish one abroad, Mahin Banu experiences the sense of belonging nowhere else but on a flight for which she has a personal ticket issued with *her* name on it. Physically as well as emotionally enfeebled by recurrent displacements and old age, she finally dies in Canada, at her brother's place. The final pages of the story reflect her near death experiences and mental images in which the pleasure of flight is merged with the desire for the sense of security in her childhood.

The story is among the very few of Taraqqi's exile-related stories that do not claim to be autobiographical. The narrator is a heterodiegetic one who, in the beginning paragraphs of the story, focuses on the character of Mas'ud, Mahin Banu's son, his horrors of living in Iran (in the midst of the Iran-Iraq war), and his motivations for leaving Iran for Europe. He sells the house (that used to belong to his mother) and all the furniture in an auction and prepares to leave. The narrator pauses on the character of Mahin Banu as soon as the eyes of the son are cast onto the old mother. On the verge of departure the focalizing eyes of Mas'ud and, with extension, those of the reader are fixed on the image of the mother; and thereby, she is foregrounded as the point of contemplation in the story:

> ویزا گرفت. بلیط خرید. بار و بندیلش را بست و، درست، دم رفتنش بود که مثل آدم‌های تبدار، چشمش به مادر پیرش افتاد و زیر پایش خالی شد. از خودش پرسید که تکلیف او چه خواهد شد و دل و روده‌اش، از درد و استیصال، ... به پیچ و تاب افتاد.
>
> Visas were obtained, tickets bought, suitcases packed. And then, just before departure, he caught sight of his old mother and proceeded to fall apart. "What will happen to her?" he asked himself. He felt an excruciating pain in the pit of his stomach as his entrails twisted and turned at the thought.[16]
>
> *KHATEREHHA* 159

The fact that the image of Mahin Banu is perceived (by the reader) and focused on at the crucial moment of departure through the eyes of the son (feeling guilty for leaving the old mother behind) makes her remain the object of

16 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 100.

worry, a character who provokes the senses of pity and bad conscience on the part of the reader. Throughout the story, the reader is practically not able to free himself or herself from the moment when the image of the left-behind protagonist was captured in the psyche of the son.

The departure of the son, in this way, raises the issue of displacement as the main problematic of the story "Khaneh'i dar aseman." In order to approach the phenomenon of displacement, as the core theme of the story, and its ensuing dynamism in the narrative plot, I will elaborate on three forms of displacement depicted in the story: first, the displacement of the son as an emigrant from Iran to France, second, the displacement of the old mother who is left homeless *within* her homeland, and third, the displacement of the mother *from* homeland (Iran) to other countries (France, the UK, Canada). In each section, I will attempt to map out the relation between the act of displacement and the ways in which it influences the character's perception of his or her surrounding and the self.

Mas'ud D.'s Initiation of the Journey: Narrative Reconstruction of the Other on the Threshold of Departure

تابستان بدی بود؛ داغ، بی‌آب، بی برق. جنگ بود و ترس بود و تاریکی. مسعود «د»، مثل آدمی افتاده در عمق خوابی آشفته، گیج و منگ و کلافه، دست زن و بچه‌هایش را گرفت و شتابان راهی فرنگ شد، بی آنکه بداند چه آینده‌ای در انتظارش است.

> It was a rough summer. Intense heat. No water no electricity. It was war, fear and darkness. Massoud D, as if in the depths of a bad dream, confused, dazed and disoriented, dragged his wife and children all the way to Europe without thinking, without knowing what lay ahead of him.[17] (158)

The beginning lines of "Khaneh'i dar aseman" put forward two of the main concerns of the story regarding displacement: departure and destination. The narrative is initiated by creating a situation on the threshold, at the same time (and place) when (and where) the character has made the choice to traverse the border, from *here* to *there*. This movement alongside its consequences can only be detected (as already pointed out) among Taraqqi's post-revolutionary and post-emigration productions, which on the thematic level, differ excessively from her earlier narrative works. Nevertheless, the opening lines of "Khaneh'i

17 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 100.

dar aseman" carry sophisticated traces of the author's early stories written and published about two decades before the publication of *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992). It is worth mentioning, for example, that Mas'ud D., (who right up to the third paragraph seems to be the protagonist of the story), through his leaving aspirations, calls to mind the leitmotiv of the stories of the volume *Man ham Che Guevara hastam* (1969). If about twenty years ago, Taraqqi had been recurrently engaged with characters obsessed with the thoughts of departure and leaving everything behind, she has now created a character who has finally made the decision and put the idea into action. It is also quite interesting to note that the modifiers used to describe the character of Mas'ud D. at the point of departure ("confused, dazed, and disoriented") are reminders of the way in which several of the disoriented characters of the *Che Guevara* volume are described. Nevertheless not only is the act of departure completed in this story, but it is also initiated towards a presumably concrete destination: towards *Farang*.[18]

The word *Farang* in Taraqqi's stories has an intricate signification.[19] It does not simply and exclusively stand for a geographical destination—as it has been implied by the word "Europe" in Farrokh's translation of the story.[20] It, of course, refers also to Europe; but at the same time, it is deployed ironically to undermine the hegemony of Europe.[21] Moreover, it also functions as an empty tablet (or an empty vessel), as the site of the other, for the projection of the unknown (or that of the absent). The term *Farang*, in the excerpt above, is a good example of Taraqqi's ironically ambiguous usage of the term. The definition of the term is not fixed (or determined) in the context it is mentioned. It is, on the one hand, the point of orientation, for the disoriented character; but on the other hand, it is a hazardous destination as the journey is somehow warned against by the narrator's comment: Mas'ud "dragged his wife and children all the way to Europe [(*Farang*)] without thinking, without knowing what lay ahead of him." The latter part of the sentence could have been translated into "little did he know what lay ahead of him," which more clearly communicates the dramatic irony implied in the text. As the narratological technique through which the narrator shares with the reader some knowledge about the character's destiny he or she is ignorant about, dramatic irony both states a premise

18 As also pointed out in the story "Mi'ad."

19 The word is a Persianized variant of France but is generally deployed to refer to European and North American countries. The term's connotations and cultural implications will be extensively discussed in Chapter Five.

20 The term is an ambiguous one. In this story alone it signifies, France, England, and Canada.

21 See Chapter Five.

(in the form of a hope or intention) and instantly undermines it by implicitly prophesying an unfavorable outcome.[22] In the case of Mas'ud D. and Farang as his prospected refuge, the same paradox is implied. Farang is both depicted as the desirable destination, and as the place where terrible incidents might be awaiting the character in question. Thus, Farang, in this way, remains the site of ambiguity. It is *there*, it is somewhere *else*; and its borders of meaning (and even geography) are not clearly defined or delineated in the text.

The subject on the verge of immigration is involved in a double-sided semantic activity. On the one side, he is involved in detaching the self from the present semantic system, and on the other, he is engaged in a process of attributing meaning to the destination. On the threshold of departure, in other words, the subject is in a constant attempt to erase the narratives of *here* and construct the narratives of *there*.

> نمی‌خواست عاقل و محتاط و دوراندیش باشد. نمی‌خواست با کسی مشورت کند؛ به خصوص، با آنهایی که از او با تجربه تر بودند، آنهایی که از هر گونه جابه‌جایی و تغییر می‌ترسیدند، یا به خاک و سنت و ریشه اعتقاد داشتند و ماندنشان بر اساس تصمیمی اخلاقی بود.

> Deliberately, he shunned common sense, caution, and circumspection. He showed no inclination to consult others more experienced than he, or more likely to stand their ground either because of fear of change and displacement or of some kind of a moral precept based on the love of one's homeland and belief in its cultural heritage.[23] (158)

In order to be able to step on the way, in order to initiate the journey, Mas'ud D. has to distance himself from whatever narrative that is based on the discursive truth of *here* and *now*. He has to *shun* wisdom, common sense, reality, morality and the values of the current symbolic system, so that the act of departure can be performed. In this sense, the act of departure is more than just a physical movement from a certain spatial point towards another. It is an act that influences the subject's cognition: the ways he or she understands and relates to the events, values, narratives and the criteria of right and wrong on the semantic level.

If immigration is regarded as crossing the border between two semantic (discursive) realms, then on the threshold of immigration, not only does the

22 Abrams and Harpham, *A Glossary*, p. 295.

23 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 100.

subject start to disconnect the self from the already known but he or she also commences to attribute narratives to the unknown.

> مسعود «د» از جنگ بیزار بود و از مرگ واهمه داشت. دلهره‌های شبانه توان و قرارش را گرفته بود و اضطراب دردناک سحرگاهی آزارش می‌داد. باید می‌رفت؛ باید می گریخت و در جایی امن ساکن می‌شد، جایی دور از امکان مرگ و جنون انقلاب.
>
> Massoud hated the war and feared annihilation. He was sick and tired of incessant anxiety attacks. He had a senseless urge to get away and settle somewhere safe and secure, far away from all the commotion, bombs, explosions, and the possibility of dying or going insane.[24] (158)

It is of interest to note how the signification of Farang, as the character's destination, is constructed in the above excerpt. The term Farang is not directly mentioned in the passage above; but it is referred to through the adverb "somewhere." The word "somewhere" referring to a place—whose name is either not stated or not known—is inherently a conveyor of *missed* information. If the character refers to his destination with the adverb "somewhere," then both the addressee (reader/listener)—due to the absence of that which is *not stated*—and the addressor (the character)—due to that which is *not known*—would naturally be expecting (or missing) concrete information about the place in question. The subject, in another sense, has to construct a narrative meaning for the ambiguous place of destination in order to make it real, in order to make it exist.

The character's prospective destination, in the above passage, is attributed with safety through the phrase "safe and secure." Safety, as the alleged characteristic of this place, is dependent on the inexistence of danger and threat. Farang is described as a place that is "*far away* from all the commotion, bombs, explosions, and the possibility of dying or going insane" (my emphasis). The destination, in other words, is a place attributed with the *absence* of that which is present in homeland. The character uses the narrative of homeland as his raw material and appropriates it to construct the narrative of the unknown destination.

Mas'ud D., in this respect, is represented at the threshold of displacement. At a liminal stage, where the intention of transition influences his semantic perception. At this particular point, the narratives of the left-behind—or let us say, the to-be-left-behind—discursive space are modified and appropriated

24 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 100.

for the definition of the unknown. During the process of Mas'ud D.'s displacement, the disrupted continuity of here and now is replaced by constructed narratives of there (the destination) and then (the future).

Lost Space, Lost Temporality: Nostalgia, a Narrative Attempt at Self-Preservation

After opening up the narrative with the story of Mas'ud D. on the verge of displacement, the narrator employs an interesting technique to, first, focus on the character of Mahin Banu as the left behind mother and, then, turn her into the main focalizer of the story. Mahin Banu's character is foregrounded through the eyes of the son, in an emotionally laden scene, where the "sight of his old mother" makes Mas'ud D. proceed "to fall apart" and hesitate, for a moment, about his plans of departure (159).[25] The beginning sentence of the following paragraph is both focused on the character of Mahin Banu and simultaneously renders her into the focalizer: "His mother, Mahin Banu, had watched, silently and without protest, all the time that the sale of the household was going on" (159).[26] In this way, the beginning paragraphs of the story—which up until the third gave the reader the account of Mas'ud D.'s motivations and worries right before his departure—turn into the mother's object of focalization. In other words, it seems that it has so far been the mother who has been watching the departure of the son, or at least, perceived the scenes *alongside* the departing son. Two different focalizations, at this particular point, momentarily converge and make the phenomenon be perceived from two perspectives. Through this narrative technique the dual impact of displacement is highlighted, revealing the fact that at the threshold of displacement, both the deserting and the deserted are influenced. Not only is Mas'ud D. affected through the act of departure, but so is his old mother as the left behind.

In the time span between Mas'ud D.'s final preparation for emigration and the actualization of the mother's departure towards France, the enigmatic situation of Mahin Banu, as the left behind, concerns three temporal perspectives: her chaotic present situation, her past reminiscences, and her future uncertainties. The relation between Mahin Banu's conception of these three temporalities and her actions (or inactions) is of peculiar interest, if it is approached with regard to the process in which she attempts to make sense of space and the self. In other words, Mahin Banu's sense of identity and her actions can be studied in relation to her perception of time and space.

---

25 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 100.

26 Ibid.

At the turn of focalization from Mas'ud D. to his mother, the reader finds his or her way to the present conditions of Mahin Banu's life and character. From the beginning Mahin Banu is characterized by inaction, passivity and anti-expressiveness. She watches without intervention. She tolerates without objection. She utters no audible words: She "had watched, silently and without protest," while the house and its furniture were being auctioned off (159).[27] Instead of any objection "she had kept her silence, sitting quietly and unobtrusively in a corner" (159).[28] As a self-expressive action, she only cries. But even the act of crying, itself, takes place when she is "alone, in the dark privacy of her bed, behind the closed door of the bathroom and at the end of the garden behind the tall cedars" (160).[29] Even her feelings, thoughts and justifications are not directly attributed to the character but rather communicated—in many passages throughout the story—through the narrator's free indirect discourse (better recognized in the original text than the translated version): "In her maternal sensitivity," Mahin Banu "realized" why her son had to sell off everything and leave the country behind; and "that was the reason why she had kept quiet and out of his way" (160).[30] Mahin Banu's inability to express her disapproval, namely her prolonged silence, is in close relation with her already lost right over space. Self-expression, identity, and space are three interwoven concepts when it comes to the subject's identification possibilities. In the case of Mahin Banu, the expressing self has to be hidden (by the time of crying, for instance) or practically stop existing by silently keeping "out of [the son's] way."

Not only does the depiction of Mahin Banu's character, vis-à-vis her current difficulties, emphasize the relation between displacement and her troubled sense of identity, but it also reflects her disturbed perception of the flow of time. Mahin Banu in her present state is described as a dislocated character (deprived from her home) who is convinced to live with others (with her sister and her husband) as a temporary guest, or rather, a temporary burden as she later comes to feel. The phrase *temporary burden*, here, is a key combination. The condition refers, in fact, to a temporal/spatial lot of (self-) imposed invisibility, into which the character is forced in order to be detained from existence, and hence, the feeling of being a burden on others' lives: "she did not own this "place". In fact, she did not own any place in the world any more. She was in a void suspended in mid-air" (160).[31] Not only does the term "suspended," expose

27 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 100.

28 Ibid., p. 101.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., p. 101.

the problem of space through the image of something being hung and kept away from solid ground, but it also highlights the temporal aspect of the phenomenon by bringing to mind the concepts of cessation and delay. Throughout this phase, the character has to remain unobtrusive, invisible and inexpressive for (allegedly) a certain amount of time. The character and her sense of the self are, in other words, suspended, interrupted, or frozen. Mahin Banu's inability to express the self, in this respect, is closely linked to the concept of space as well as time. Contemplating on the passage of time and her age (which she considers to be rather imposed upon her than real), she feels both lost in time and "superfluous," in others' spatial territory:

> چیزی اضافی شده بود، خارج از نظام کیهانی منظومه‌ها، مثل ستاره‌ای فرو افتاده، تبعید شده به انزوای آشفتهٔ آسمان. دلش می‌خواست نبود و نمی‌شد. مرگ با او فاصله داشت. پاهایش زمین را می‌خواست. بدنش ذره‌های نور و گرما را می‌بلعید و فکرهایش، با هزار نخ نامرئی، به کنج و کنار شیرین زندگی گره خورده بود.

> She felt … like an extinguished star out of the celestial orbit, exiled to the chaotic desolation of uncharted space. She wished she did not exist. But death was distant from her, and she groped with her toes to feel the solidity of the earth. Her body avidly absorbed the particles of light and warmth, and her thoughts, with myriad invisible chords, tied her to the sweet nooks and crannies of her past life.[32] (161)

Suspension of time and action, in the case of Mahin Banu, is far from the subject's death wish or the will for permanent self-elimination. It is like a pause; it is a gap in between the past and the future. It is the embodiment of a present not worth living. It is a present omitted. It is, in other words, an existence lived in oscillation in between the pleasant past and the yet-to-come unknown future. "The sweet nooks and the crannies of her past life," in this sense, stand for all the spaces of the bygone times which are *now* denied to her.

The representation of the past during Mas'ud D.'s hasting for departure and Mahin Banu's residence with her sister is, to a large extent, carried out through the depiction of the old objects of the past or, as mentioned in the story, "the relic of bygone days:" "the Tabrizi rug" (159),[33] the "Russian floor lamps," the

32 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 102.

33 Ibid., p. 100.

"sequined wrappers," "the betrothal mirror," "the wall clock, the china plates and the gilded picture frames" (159).[34] During the process of Mahin Banu's dislocation, these objects function as connection knots between the dislocated (dispersed) present condition and the once unintermittent continuity of the past. Whenever Mahin Banu comes into contact (through her hands or eyes) to these objects, she indulges herself in the reminiscences of the past:

> ترمه‌ها و فرشها و اشیاء قدیمی، یادگار پدر و شوهر و روزهای خوب جوانیش را دوست داشت؛ با آنها پیر شده بود و میانشان الفتی دیرینه بود. خاطره‌هایش مثل هزاران تصویر پراکنده در فضا، در اتاقهای خانه می‌چرخیدند و رد پا و جای انگشتان کودکیش روی سنگ‌فرش حیاط و آجرهای دیوار باقی مانده بود.

> She was attached to the old tapestry and odds and ends left over from the happy days of her youth, bequeathed to her by her father and her husband, both now deceased. Over the years, she had developed a bond with them. The memories of her entire life floated throughout the old house, and every brick and stone bore the imprint of her childhood experiences.[35] (160)

Mahin Banu's retreat to beautiful or, more accurately, *beautified* memories and recollections of the past leads us to the significance of the notion of nostalgia and its function in relation to the subject's identification process. Nostalgia (or homesickness) generally refers to a condition when pleasant memories of past are recollected with senses of regret, unattainability and loss on the part of the subject.[36] The condition is not brought about by a chronological cause-and-effect relationship. This means that an event in the past does not cause, nor does it motivate, the sense of nostalgia in the present. On the contrary, that which occasions the subject to feel nostalgic resides either in the present, or

34 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 101.

35 Ibid.

36 The word Nostalgia is formed by the "Greek *nostos*, to return home, *algai* [sic], a painful condition; thus a painful yearning to return home. Coined by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in the late seventeenth century, the term was meant to designate a common … condition of Swiss mercenaries." Davis, "Nostalgia," 414.

is pertained to the future.[37] Nostalgia, in this sense, is generally considered to be a retrospective "reaction triggered by fear of actual or impending change."[38]

In the case of Mahin Banu, the "change" is actualized in her son's departure and Mahin Banu's homelessness. The relation between the son's displacement and Mahin Banu's nostalgia is very well captured in the scene where the mother, watching the furniture of the house being sold off, associates the sale with the emigration of a mother's children to other countries:

> شاهد رفتن ساعت دیواری و... بشقابهای چینی و قابهای طلایی [شده بود]؛ مثل سفر غم انگیز بچه‌های مادری پیر به شهرهای اجنبی. فهمیده بود که روزگاری سخت در انتظارش است و پذیرفته بود.

> She had watched the wall clock, the china plates, and the gilded picture frames disappear one after another. As she let them go, she had felt the despondency of a mother watching her children one by one abandoning her in favor of faraway places. She knew that hard times were ahead.[39] (159)

The auction of the old furniture of the house, "the remnant of old familiar things" (160),[40] is compared to the most unfamiliar incident of Mahin Banu's life: the departure of her children. The incident has displaced the normality and the usual order of Mahin Banu's conception of past, present, and future. The unforeseen present incident, in other words, has disrupted the old woman's expectations regarding the flow and completion of her life narrative and prevented it from being sustained into a prospected future. Mahin Banu's nostalgic reflections, in this respect, are the result of her apprehensions about the "hard times ... ahead," occasioned by the displacement of her children in the present.

Displacement affects the subject's narrative continuity and results in creation of new narratives that influence and (re)shape his or her sense of identity. While in the case of Mas'ud D., the intention of departure invalidates the

37 Davis, "Nostalgia," p. 416. While Davis argues that nostalgia is occasioned by a traumatic condition in the present, Nawas and Platt regard nostalgia as a "future-orientated" matter. For the latter viewpoint, see: Nawas, M. Mile, and Jerome Platt. "A Future Oriented Theory of Nostalgia." *Journal of Individual Psychology* 21 (May 1965): 51–7.

38 Ibid.

39 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 101.

40 Ibid., p. 100.

truth of the present narratives and evokes the construction of alternative ones that pertain to, and explain, the subject's future destination, in the case of Mahin Banu, the phenomenon of displacement results in her nostalgic retreat. The departure of her son, alongside her being deprived of her home, distorts the continuity of Mahin Banu's here and now and obscures her vision of the days to come. Nostalgia, in this sense, is a narrative process in which the subject creates sweet stories of the past in order to replace that which is bitterly displaced. The experience, however, feels rather bitter than soothing, since the subject is in fact aware of, as well as threatened by, the realistic onward flow of the events and the impossibility of a backward movement. The character of Mahin Banu, in this respect, is depicted to be on an infirm ground, in vacillation between present existence and impossible or/and inaccessible temporalities. The old "Tabrizi rug…[and] its floral and golden patterns…[feel] warm, but like a body in the final moments of life" (159),[41] prove to be ephemeral, disappointing Mahin Banu's wish for an uninterrupted continuity. On the one hand "she felt very much alive and unwilling to die…[looking] forward to the coming of spring and summer, to a future with her relatives and offspring," while on the other, she felt lost in time and space not knowing who she really was and what she was to do (in the Persian text: "*nemidanest ru-ye kodamin lahzeh az zaman oftadeh ast; Kist? Kojast? Va taklifash chist*?) (160). She both wished "she did not exist" and felt, at the same time, that "death was distant from her" (161).[42] The oscillation between the desire to die and the eagerness for life and vitality, alongside the character's obsession with past and future, represents Mahin Banu's traumatized sense of identity. Nostalgia, in short, as a narrative process, functions as an accessible way of relating the past to the present and future. It is "like long-term memory, like reminiscence, like daydreaming … deeply implicated in our sense of who we are, what we are about and … wither we go."[43]

Mahin Banu's uncertainty about the future has also an impact on the ways she perceives and constructs narratives about France. Before embarking on the journey to join her son and his family, Mahin Banu refers to France twice: once, as her son's destination, at the time of the house auction, and once more, before the arrival of "the much-awaited day" (163),[44] as the distant target for which her life in homeland has been procrastinated. In neither of the instances does Mahin Banu refer to the destination with the actual name of the country,

41 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 100.

42 Ibid., p. 102.

43 Davis, "Nostalgia," p. 419.

44 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 104.

as a geopolitical region. The Persian terms used in the original text are expressive of interesting connotative meanings in this regard:

> شاهد رفتن [اسباب و وسیله‌ها شده بود]؛ مثل سفر غم‌انگیز بچه‌های مادری پیر به شهرهای اجنبی.
>
> As she let them [(old items and furniture)] go, she had felt the despondency of a mother watching her children one by one abandoning her in favor of faraway places.[45] (159)

> از شرم به خودش می‌پیچید و روز شماری می کرد تا هر چه زودتر راهی فرنگ شود و پیش بچه‌هایش سر و سامان گیرد.
>
> The situation deteriorated to the point that made Mahin Banu count the days until she could leave and join her children in Europe.[46] (163)

The terms *shahrha-ye ajnabi* and *Farang* both referring to France, in the context of the story, communicate opposing narratives of the West in terms of their discursive signification. While the term Farang, as mentioned earlier, is associated with a "safe and secure" place (158),[47] the phrase *shahrha-ye ajnabi* refers to the unfavorable hostile relationship between the East and the West in the Iranian context. Although also used long before the date of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the term *ajnabi*—meaning, foreign, alien, or outsider—has come to indicatively underline the irreconcilability of Iran and Western powers in the Iranian post-revolutionary discourse.[48] Phrases such as *dast-e ajnabi* (referring to the conspiratorial undertakings of the West against Iran), *jasus-e ajnabi* (used in reference to the Western espionage within Iran), to name two prevalent instances, came to be proliferated in the discourse of the Islamic anti-West ruling authorities of the country. In the passages quoted above, accordingly, the two oppos-

45 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 101.

46 Ibid., p. 103.

47 Ibid., p. 100.

48 Ayatollah Khomeyni, for example, has used the term in his arrival talk in Behesht-e Zahra on February 2, 1979, to refer to the necessity of national and Islamic autonomy vis-à-vis America. For the complete text of the talk, see: Khabargozari-ye Fars, "Matn-e kamel." The term "*ajnabi*" has also been recently the subject matter of a heated argument in the field of football politics in the popular sport TV program *Navad*. For an article about the debate, see: ISNA. ""Ajnabi" chist."

ing concept, *shahrha-ye ajnabi* and Farang, are appropriated to signify the same destination. Both ways of referring to France are formulated at the threshold of departure and on the verge of displacement. In the former case, the formulation of the term is based upon the bitter departure of the son which, in its own turn, displaces much in the routine of the left behind mother; and in the latter, it is pertained to the approaching departure of the mother herself. Here, once again, it is interesting to note how the phenomenon of displacement affects the subject's process of attributing meanings, and hence narratives, to certain—allegedly static—notions. The narrative of *shahrha-ye ajnabi*, in the above excerpt, is associated with dispersion, distance, despondency, abandonment, displacement, and loss. It is also connotative of a tragic terminal stage, since the route of the journey is planned to be never travelled back. The narrative of Farang, on the other hand is constructive and related to happiness, reunion and order ("*sar va saman gereftan*"). It also connotes new initiations, hope, future, and vitality. Nevertheless, the signification of the unknown destination is not limited to these opposing (or antagonistic) denotations. The positive connotation of the term Farang, in the context of the story, is not free from an additional *ironic* level of meaning. The term Farang still bears signs and traces of impending disillusionment through calling to mind the narrator's earlier predictive comment on the consequences of the journey.

Mahin Banu in Farang: The Problem of Space, the Shrinkage of Body

Mahin Banu's residence in Europe comprises her disappointing and unpleasant accommodations, first, with her son in Paris and, later on, with her daughter in London. Although Mahin Banu's departure date from Iran is described as "the much-awaited day" ("*ruz-e mow'ud*") (163),[49] the descriptive passage pertaining to her feelings of happiness and satisfaction does not last more than a couple of lines in the text of the story. The joy over reunion is briefly described as a "dream," and the fact that Mahin Banu "kissed" and "hugged" her grandchildren repeatedly and moved around the "tiny apartment" as she was talking vehemently, asking "repetitive and confused questions" (164–5).[50] As soon as she was "eventually persuaded to retire [to bed]" (165),[51] on the evening of arrival, the problem of space emerges. The account of Mahin Banu's residence with Mas'ud D. and his family in Paris is specifically engaged with the notion of space and the depiction of Mahin Banu being treated as an excessive existence in the limited framework of Mas'ud D.'s small apartment. The narra-

49 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 104.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

tive of Paris/France, in the story "Khaneh'i dar aseman," does not depict the characters' contact with the urban space of Paris; but it is rather exclusively devoted to the structure of Mas'ud D.'s apartment and Mahin Banu's problematic placement in the boundary of the flat:

> در گنجه‌ها از فشار لباسها بسته نمی‌شد و زیر تخت‌ها انباشته از اسباب بود. جا برای تکان خوردن نبود.
>
> All the closets in the apartment were bursting with clothes. Various household articles were stuffed under every bed, sofa, and chair. There was no room to move.[52] (164)

> [در آپارتمان] دو اتاق خواب بود و یک آشپزخانهٔ باریک دراز و حمامی کوچک و مستراحی گوشهٔ آن. تو اتاق زن و شوهر که نمی‌شد [خوابید]؛ ... توی اتاق بچه‌ها جا نبود؛ دو تا تخت به هم چسبیده و مشتی کتاب و کفش و راکت تنیس و توپ فوتبال افتاده بود روی زمین.
>
> The apartment had two bedrooms, one kitchen and a tiny bathroom with a commode in a corner. She couldn't very well sleep in the couple's bedroom.... The children's room was too congested: two beds side-by-side and the floor cluttered with books, socks, shoes, tennis rackets and a soccer ball.[53] (165)

In the crammed space of Mas'ud D.'s apartment in Paris, Mahin Banu's quest is to find a small unoccupied corner into which she could be fitted. She is contended with the smallest lot of space that could be allotted for her personal use without arousing in her the feelings of usurpation, shame and superfluousness. For "the first couple of nights," she was placed in the "children's bedroom;" but "on the third day ... was moved out ... and assigned a corner of the living room floor where she could sleep on a foam mattress" (164).[54] During daytime, she "would roll up the mattress and stow it away under a sofa. She kept her suitcase in the kitchen and dragged her handbag around wherever she went" (164).[55] Whenever the "family entertained," Mahin Banu "had to remove her bed-

52 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 105.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., p. 104.

55 Ibid., pp. 104–105.

ding from the living room and look for another spot around the house" (165).[56] She had even "spent a couple of nights in the bathtub" (165).[57] Mahin Banu's experience of lack of personal space in the structures of Mas'ud D.'s tiny apartment in Paris shapes her conception of Farang as a geographical territory in general. Mahin Banu, who had previously considered her transference to the so-called Farang as the only solution to her displacement in homeland, has now come to associate the concept of Farang with the problem of lack of space:

> ولی مهین بانو، از همان دقیقهٔ اول با خودش گفت که زندگی در فرنگ این شکلی است؛ جای غرو لند ندارد و خدا را شکر که پیش بچه‌هایش است و زندگیش سر و سامان گرفته است.
>
> But, Maheen Banu had convinced herself that it was the way Europeans live their lives and there was nothing she could do about it. Thank goodness she was with her family and her life was settled into a routine.[58] (165)

It is also interesting to note that the possibility of "*sar va saman gereftan*" in the company of her family is still a part of the signification of a life lead in Farang, or perhaps her only consolation in order to come to terms with the new difficulties. Nevertheless, in the process of her attempts to adapt to the new conditions, her feeling of being a *temporary burden* is little by little replaced by the threat of becoming a *permanent burden* on others' lives.

The uneasiness of becoming an excessive appendage, menacing to be a permanent phenomenon rather than a temporary phase, does *not*, in the new conditions, make Mahin Banu temporarily detain herself—as she did in Iran—from living in the present. If Mahin Banu is finally "convinced" that this is "the way Europeans live their lives," then she has to start to construct a new continuity—a new narrative of the self—to define her existence in the space she regards as Farang. At this particular stage, Mahin Banu's thoughts, actions and feelings work their ways into her physical existence affecting her very body. In the process of avoiding the possibility of becoming a parasitic existence, Mahin Banu is tormented by both mental uneasiness and physical pain. In the children's bedroom, "in the middle of night," Mahin Banu wakes up "with the sensation of a heavy weight pressing on her chest" (164).[59] She is "needled by a curious mixture of humiliation and guilt circulating through

56 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 105.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., p. 104.

her body like a physical pain" (164).[60] The bed in the children's bedroom feels like "a bed of nails" and makes Mahin Banu wish "she had slept in the corridor or squatted against a wall in a corner" (164).[61] When, out of politeness, Mas'ud D. persuades her to sleep with his wife on their bed, Mahin Banu is not able "to sleep a wink" and feels "ill at ease lying next to her daughter-in-law" (165).[62] "The sheets," too, feel "prickly" and her body glows "with the heat of embarrassment" (166).[63]

Regarding the problem of self-space in Mahin Banu's new surroundings, there is an interesting relation between the feelings of guilt, embarrassment, uneasiness, and humiliation on the part of the protagonist and her corporeal/physical sufferings which is worth to be expanded upon at this point. Let us consider lack of personal space as the fundamental problem in the story. Put briefly, the narrative plot of "Khaneh'i dar aseman" can be summarized as the strivings of a character for possessing a space of her own. The problem of personal space, all along the development of plot, disturbs the dynamism of construction (and/or maintenance) of the self due to the character's deprivation from the spatial boundary in which (and through which) it can be expressed and defined. The subject (here Mahin Banu) is, therefore, in search of that particular self-space in which she would be able to initiate the process of self-construction. Not succeeding in doing so, she is filled with the sense of excessiveness. In other words, she begins to define herself *in terms of* her problematic spatial position in the family, namely, as an appendage or a parasite. The humiliation of becoming a parasitic existence results in a series of physical sufferings on the part of the character (such as the feelings of being pressed, needled, and heated) through which Mahin Banu's very body is deformed, in the course of the plot, into a corporeal shape that would occupy as little a space as possible. In other words the character of Mahin Banu goes through a process of objectification. She is reduced to a "diminutive, delicate and brittle" item that could be "easily fit in a closet or under a bed" (165).[64] Feeling embarrassed while lying down beside her daughter-in-law on the bed, to mention another example, Mahin Banu tries to make herself as small as possible through contracting her body into a smaller compass:

60 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 105.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.

از عروسش خجالت می‌کشید. دراز کشیده بود لب تخت، ... خودش را آنقدر جمع و قلنبه کرده بود که به توپی کوچک می‌ماند؛ هلش می‌دادی قل می‌خورد می‌رفت ته اتاق.

Her body glowed with the heat of embarrassment. She crawled to the edge of the bed and bundled herself in a fetal position so tightly she was almost like a little ball that would fall off the bed with the slightest push and roll to the corner of the room.[65] (165–6)

The process of Mahin Banu's objectification starts to develop during her residence with her son's family in Paris. All along her struggle to adapt herself into the new lifestyle, she attempts to fit herself into the congested space the so-called Farang has to offer. By the time she arrives at her daughter's place in London, she is already comparable to little animals or light concrete objects. "Standing next to" David (her English son-in-law), for instance, "Mahin Banu was even more aware of her smallness.... Weighing forty kilos or less, she felt light as a bird, with porous bones and spindly legs" (168).[66] At the entrance of the staircase, "David swept her body off the ground, at which she gave a scream and stiffened herself like a rod." Being carried up the stairs by her son-in-law "tucked under his arm," Mahin Banu was "not unlike a wooden doll" (168).[67] The "sensation" of being objectified, in the following passage, is attributed, this time, to the character of Mahin Banu herself. The sense of transformation into an object, in the excerpt bellow, is, for the first time, conceived as the character's identity from Mahin Banu's own perspective:

تا به حال چنین اتفاقی برایش نیفتاده بود؛ واکنشی طبیعی یا عکس‌العملی حاضر برای قبول یا رد این اتفاق نداشت. حس می‌کرد خودش نیست. تبدیل به یک شیئی شده، یک جارو یا صندلی، که از بازار خریده‌اند و «جارو بودن» تجربه‌ای تازه بود با دنیای خاص خود.

This was an entirely new sensation. She had absolutely no frame of reference from which to react to this situation. She felt she was not herself, that she had become an object, a broom, or a chair, which the couple had

65 Taraghi, "A Mansion," pp. 105–106.

66 Ibid., p. 107.

67 Ibid., p. 108.

> bought at a store. Being a broom was a new state of mind, a new dimension of her existence.[68] (168–9)

Up until this point in the story, it is only through descriptive passages and the comments of the narrator that the character of Mahin Banu is identified (or rather portrayed) as nonhuman beings of small composition. In other words, Mahin Banu's symbolic inclination to become a small object (rather than a heavy burden) is perceived and described by a narrator-focalizer—that is, through the perspective of an external observer rather than by the character herself. At the moment of entrance into her daughter's "even smaller" apartment in London (168),[69] however, Mahin Banu has already acquired and accepted her new identity as an inanimate object. In the course of her residence at her daughter's place, Mahin Banu's urge for objectification seems to be affecting even her daily diet: despite her already "meticulous" appetite (compared to that of a "domestic chicken" ("*morgh-e khanegi*"), in the Persian text), she tries to "eat even less in order to reduce the burden on the family budget" (169).[70] In spite of Mahin Banu's all endeavors, nevertheless, the problem of space goes on in Maggie's (Mahin Banu's daughter's) apartment in London. Here too, Mahin Banu had to "sleep on the living room couch and stay out of the way in the bedroom when there was company" (169).[71] During the summer vacation, as Maggie and David decide to spend some time in the "highlands of Scotland" and sublet their apartment in London (in order to "augment the family income"), they venture to send Mahin Banu back to Paris (171).[72] The idea being instantly rejected by Mas'ud D. due to his family's camping plans for summer, Mahin Banu is consequently "agreed to be housed in the back of [a friend's] … shop] in London (171–2).[73] At this very point, Mahin Banu is fully aware of the fact that her position in the family is reduced from a mere object to a "cumbersome, undesirable object" that is thrown to "some storage place in the back of the shop" (171–2).[74]

---

68 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 108.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., pp. 109–110.
73 Ibid., p. 110.
74 Ibid.

Suspension in Mid-Air: The Retreat from the Symbolic

During her stay with Maggie and her English husband (David), another problem is unfolded in Mahin Banu's enigmatic situation. Other than the matter of space and the subsequent urge for objectification, the problem of language now emerges in Mahin Banu's routine disturbing the character's communicative bounds with the setting around her:

> مهین بانو یاد گرفته بود که با خودش حرف بزند. زبان دامادش را نمی‌فهمید و مگی ناچار بود که با شوهرش به انگلیسی حرف بزند؛ یا اصلا حرف نزند. شام را در سکوت می‌خوردند.
>
> It was here that Maheen Banou had got into the habit of talking to herself. She could not communicate with her son-in-law, and Maggie had to talk to her husband in English. Often she chose not to tell anything at all. The dinner was always a quiet affair.[75] (170)

Mahin Banu's perception of her surroundings in London undergoes a drastic change. She loses, little by little, her dependence on language as a semantic medium for communication and instead ventures to take refuge to her own thoughts. Gradually, she is detached from her present environment altogether and indulges in her past recollections:

> [بعد از شام] هر سه نفر به تماشای تلویزیون می‌نشستند؛ برنامه‌های علمی یا فرهنگی، بحث و گفتگو. مهین بانو زل می‌زد؛ خیره می‌ماند؛ اما نه چیزی می‌دید و نه چیزی می‌فهمید. غرق در خاطره‌های خودش می‌شد؛ در مکان و زمانی دیگر.
>
> [After dinner,] they turned on the television. They watched only cultural programs and talk shows. Maheen Banou stared at the screen uncomprehendingly and was soon adrift in the world of her own thoughts and recollections of other times and places.[76] (170)

The significance of television, as a medium, in the passage above, is quite interesting. Mahin Banu's position in front of the television facilitates a real, though virtual, contact between her and the cultural space of Farang which has not

75 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 109.

76 Ibid.

so far been depicted or referred to in the narrative. At the moment and location of encounter with the television's screen, Mahin Banu is instantly situated in a liminal condition, at the threshold between the self and the other. The television, in this sense, functions as a window that opens from the restricted structures of the apartment into the world of the other, bringing about the opportunity of contact and comprehension. Nevertheless, any semantic negotiation between the two (the self and the other) is avoided by the protagonist in a sort of reflex. She stares without any perception at the TV screen and instantly retreats back to the familiar "world of her own thoughts and recollections of other times and places."

As a matter of fact, the unfamiliar, new space does never actually exist for the displaced subject, unless it enters, and is shaped within, his or her semantic cognition. Vis-à-vis the unknown, the subject can take attempts at comprehension in order to bring the new space conceptually into existence. Actions such as comparison between the new and the old (between the self and the other), vacillation between here and there (or now and then), alongside the construction and compilation of narratives of the new are part of the dynamism at work in the process of conceptualization. Mahin Banu's lack of knowledge of the new language (as a semantic medium), the experience of being objectified and excommunicated, her blurred vision of the future, alongside her nonambitious approach to life in her mid-seventies, all can be considered as demotivating reasons lying behind her detachment from the present time and space. Nevertheless, no matter what the underlying reasons for her gradual detachment and oblivion are, Mahin Banu's retreat to the "recollections of other times and places", at this particular stage of the story, cannot be simply regarded as a nostalgic reaction. It is rather, as it is explored below, a prelude for a cognitive transition from the "Symbolic," pertaining to meanings, plurality of signification and linearity of time, back to the "Imaginary" pre-linguistic stage of cognition.[77]

77 The terms "Symbolic" and "Imaginary" refer to Jacques Lacan's theories of psychoanalysis. Lacan makes a distinction between "*the Imaginary* and *the Symbolic*. The 'Imaginary' concerns the child's early fragmented and yet heavily symbolized sense of map of the body. Infants, at this early stage, do not make clear distinctions between themselves and those around them, principally the mother. The 'Symbolic' concerns the state, after the full acquisition of language, which Lacan calls the 'Symbolic order'. With the acquisition of language, the subject enters into the social positions and rules and relations which underpin society." Allen, "Intertextuality," p. 48. For an extensive discussion on the topic, see: *Ecrits: A Selection*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004.

Upon Karim Khan's outrage about "his sister's humiliating condition," It is decided to send Mahin Banu to Canada to stay with her brother who lived in relative comfort and affluence in a house on the farm (173).[78] On arrival at her brother's place, Mahin Banu is already severely sick. Being too weak and feeble to recover, she dies in a rather short time following her arrival. The final pages of the story are specifically engaged with her euphoric experience of flight and her near-death dreams and imaginations.

Ever since her dislocation in homeland, Mahin Banu is never able to identify any specific piece of space as her own other than the limits of her passenger seat on an airplane. On the flight from Paris to London, feeling "free like a bird just let out of the cage," Mahin Banu associates the plane with a "house" that is "warm and secure." She is finally able to own a "seat all to herself" that "nobody could lay claim to" (167).[79] The flight from London to Canada is also depicted in an identical manner:

> خوشحال بود که باز وسط زمین و آسمان است و این طولانی‌ترین راه بود و چه کیفی! نشست کنار پنجره و چشمش به روشنایی شفاف بیرون خیره ماند. جایش گرم و نرم بود و همین را می‌خواست، کنجی مصون از تجاوز دیگران.
>
> The prospect of the flight, which was to be her longest, pleased her. On the plane, she was seated next to the window. She would stare at the bright translucence outside the plane for long periods. Her seat was warm and comfortable. That was all she wanted, a place all her own, immune from the encroachment by others.[80] (173)

The experience of flight, characterized by warmth, comfort, immunity from intruders and the sense of possessing a designated self-space, is not only an opportunity for the character to compensate for the lost sense of belonging, but it is also a visual incarnation of Mahin Banu's sense of displacement. Earlier in the story, grieving upon having no place in the world, for instance, Mahin Banu feels to be "in a void, suspended in mid-air" (160).[81] The protagonist's position on the flight, moreover, calls to mind an earlier comparison between the dislocated protagonist and "an extinguished star … exiled to the

78 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 111.
79 Ibid., p. 106.
80 Ibid., p. 112.
81 Ibid., p. 101.

chaotic desolation of uncharted space" (161).[82] In other words, although the plane represents a "house" for the character (as a delineated space), the floating position of the airplane is associated, on the contrary, with the sense of placelessness—that is, with the *lack* of the space that, on solid ground, is denied to the protagonist. Mahin Banu's satisfaction on the airplane seat, therefore, can lead to two interrelated, but apparently contrasting, interpretations. On the one hand, we can say Mahin Banu feels at home on a flight, because she owns a "seat" designated "all to herself." Whereas, on the other hand, it can be argued that the experience of flight lifts up the character to a level where there is no need for defining boundaries. In other words, if the position of the plane is associated with the character's out-of-place-ness, suspension "in mid-air," or exile to the "uncharted space," it can be argued that the flying plane drags the protagonist out of the domain of delineation, realm of signification, or in Lacanian terminology, the *Symbolic order*. While textual references pertaining to the former interpretation are explicitly stated in the story (e.g. in the passages quoted above), the latter, being more implicit, needs to be explored through closer analysis.

Drawing upon post-structuralist linguistics, Jacques Lacan argues that at the time of language acquisition, the infant gradually (but never completely) leaves the Imaginary order and enters the Symbolic. The Imaginary, for Lacan, is "the realm of internalized perceptual representations, or pre-linguistic images," that starts to operate as soon as the infant is able to "identify with its own image in the mirror." The "split between the child's [so far] fragmented internal self and its deceptively coherent image," Lacan argues, "lies at the very heart of human subjectivity and identity;" the Symbolic, on the other hand, "represents the sphere of language and social regulation, which gives meaning to our experience of the world." The Symbolic is identified by Lacan as "the sphere of the Other."[83] Based on this brief piece of theory, the premise now is that in the story "Khaneh'i dar aseman," the protagonist having failed to comprehend and socially function in the new semantic space is drifted back (not completely *to*, but) *towards* the Imaginary in denial of the incomprehensible other. In her day-dreams on the flight, and afterwards, in her near death hallucinations about the flight, it can be observed that Mahin Banu rejects language, linearity of time and other semantic systems.

By the closure of the previous section, it is indicated that Mahin Banu's refuge to "recollections of other times and places" (170),[84] in front of the television

82 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 102.

83 Mikula, *Key Concepts*, p. 97.

84 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 109.

screen at her daughter's place in London, is not a mere nostalgic retreat, but rather a prelude to the process of her withdrawal from the Symbolic. The fact that Mahin Banu does not comprehend her surroundings, gradually, reduces the protagonist's semantic interaction with the world outside to the extent that she is detached from the present time and space and is drifted to other temporal and spatial realms. On the flight from London to Canada, having already been symbolically elevated from the terrestrial domain of language and signification, Mahin Banu is drowned in some euphoric images of the past—different, in quality and effect, from nostalgia—which render her previous resentments and grievances, over the past, insignificant. It is not until Mahin Banu's detachment from the earth, as a metaphor standing for the realm of signification, that "all her earthly recollections, even those of her large Tabrizi-tapestry, embroidered shawls and the Pahlavi Avenue house" are "obliterated" (175).[85] On the plane, Mahin Banu is dragged to her past reminiscences (specifically to her childhood memories, at around the age of twelve (174));[86] but, as a matter of fact, the recollections do not contribute to a sense of loss on the part of the protagonist, as it is often the case with nostalgic experiences.

Mahin Banu's joyful recollections of her childhood memories, during her flight from London to Canada, demonstrate specific qualities. They are generally represented in gapped poetic language, are essentially dreamlike, and have a quality of being mystical or metaphysical, causing a sort of ecstatic joy on the part of the protagonist. The recollected images, nonetheless, operate, at the same time, in a logical framework. Although, at first glance, they might seem to be haphazard and chaotic, they do, in fact, represent a coherent entirety. In Mahin Banu's mental images during the flight, all the imagery, metaphorical elements, recollected facts as well as fancies work their way to be blended in a unity. Mahin Banu's dreams map out an image of the world in which lines and borders of differentiation fuse smoothly and inseparably into a uniform wholeness. The fusion is operated on, at least, four levels: the visual, the auditory, the temporal, and the semantic.

On the visual level, the erasure of Symbolic boundaries is performed by obliteration of colors and shapes. The whole color spectrum of the protagonist's image of the universe in her dreams is reduced, almost exclusively, to two shades of color, namely, the blue of the sky and the whiteness of snow which, in the course of the narrative, infinitely expand to encompass the whole frame of Mahin Banu's perception. The words "blue" and "sky," in the passages referring to the protagonist's flight experience, are repeated ten times (174–8) and

85 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 113.

86 Ibid., p. 114.

each time are closely contemplated and elaborated upon, by the narrator, to sketch a uniform conception of the world:

> آسمان آبی یکدست بود؛ بدون لکه‌ای ابر، بدون تلنگری ناهنجار یا موجی ناموزون، رفته تا آخرین مرز تخیل، تا ابتدای چیزها، آن سوی اشکال متداول و مقیاسهای جاری.
>
> The blue of the sky was even and uninterrupted. No patches of clouds or air turbulence disturbed the vastness that stretched from the primeval moment to the last frontier of imagination, an expanse undefined by any shape or form, unmeasured by any scale.[87] (174)

The image in focus is "even" and "uninterrupted," uncontaminated by any "patches" or "turbulence." It is characterized as "undefined," neither representing nor communicating any particular "shape or form." Unlike the limited and apportioned space of small apartments, it is interminable and immeasurable, vast enough to represent the whole universe, a universe that is not divided into distinct territories. The same functionality can be observed in regard to the color of white. The words "white" and "snow" are mentioned up to twenty times in the passages about Mahin Banu's imaginations on the flight (173–7).[88] The repetition is frequent enough to dye the entire setting of the story in pure whiteness, erasing the traces of all shapes, forms and other defining borders and delineations. The "sleeping city, frozen under the cover of snow" is compared to "an uninhabited house with all the furnishings covered under the clean white sheets" (174).[89] The sheet-like whiteness of the snow covers both the "house" and its "furnishings" in the imagination of the protagonist, and thereby, entirely nullifies both the question of homelessness and Mahin Banu's bitter nostalgic dependence on old items and furniture.

The protagonist's gradual inclination towards dispensing with language and other signifying practices can also be observed on an auditory level. The snow symbolism, in Mahin Banu's dreams, not only functions to merge all shapes, forms, and images into a visual unity, but it also works its way to mute Mahin Banu's dreamlike perception of the universe into sheer silence:

87 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 112.

88 Ibid., pp. 112, 113, and 116.

89 Ibid., p. 112.

[مهین بانو] نیمه شب بیدار می‌شد؛ می‌دانست که بارش برف ادامه دارد و گوش می‌داد. تمام شهر خوابیده بود؛ ... هیچ صدایی به گوش نمی‌رسید جز سکوت جادویی فضا، لبریز از هیچ، از سکوت خاموش خدا.

> Waking up in the middle of the night, Maheen Banou would know that the snow was still falling and she would listen to the silence of the sleeping city ... Nothing was audible except a magical stillness that permeated the space and overwhelmed the senses with the peaceful presence of a divine, ethereal being.[90] (174)

Silence is described as an audible—in fact, the only audible—"sound of the sleeping city" during the night-long snowfall. Later textual references to stillness and silence in Mahin Banu's dreams highlight and clarify the fact that the gradual proliferation of silence in the protagonist's dreams is not merely caused by the "sleeping city" during the night, but rather by the occasion of snowfall as an objective correlative standing for the protagonist's slow, but steady, withdrawal from the realm of signifying sounds. As Mahin Banu "looked at the snowy day outside," for instance, "she strained to hear the sound of cascading snow, the same inviting sound of silence she was used to hearing when it snowed heavily" (177).[91] The adjective "inviting," in this passage, underlines the protagonist's inclination for a deviated movement—for, probably, a retreat. At the very moment of death, as the instant of the protagonist's permanent departure from the Symbolic, Mahin Banu is described to have "listened intently" while "she could only hear the muffled sound of the falling snow and the welcome silence of death" (179).[92]

The concept of time (as a linear phenomenon), and the perception of events in relation to the passage of time, are constructed in the Symbolic order. In other words, the notion of time, as a continuous, forward flowing flux is transformed to a semantic means for making signification, narration and the exchange of meaning in terms of temporality possible. In Mahin Banu's altered state of perception during her flight fantasies, however, the linear chronology of time is entirely disturbed. Indulged in her dreams, Mahin Banu loses "track of time and who or where she" is (174):[93]

90 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 112.

91 Ibid., p. 115.

92 Ibid., p. 116.

93 Ibid., p. 113.

همه جا بود، در زمانهای مختلف. در آن واحد هزار تصویر از خودش می دید؛ پراکنده در فضا، یا ردیف پشت هم، مهین بانوهای گوناگون، پیر و بچه و جوان، در این زندگی و در اعصار دیگر. زنی به توان بی‌نهایت، بسته به هم زنجیروار در بازگشتی ابدی.

> She was everywhere and in all ages of time; simultaneously, she saw a thousand likenesses of herself in different stages of her life, in infancy, youth, and old age—plastered all over the earth and sky. She saw herself and incarnations of herself in other lives. She saw a woman multiplied infinitely, replicated in an endless series that wrapped round and round eternity.[94] (174–5)

At this very moment, Mahin Banu's narrative of the self grows to be independent from the linear concept of time. Mahin Banu, who, up to a certain point in the story, struggles to save the coherence of the self, through oscillation between narratives of past and present, has now conceptualized an alternative perception of time, and thereby, of her identity. The notion of time, in Mahin Banu's dreams at this particular point, stops functioning as a unidirectional axis on which the subject's self-perception is inevitably attached to static temporal spots. Instead, the flight dreams offer the protagonist the possibility of the simultaneous existence of different "incarnations" of the self "in all ages of time." While in the former temporal model, the coherence of the self is only achieved through semantic means, such as narratives of past, present, and future, the latter model of time represents the self as an actual (compared to narrative) collective plurality. The non-linear (non-Symbolic) notion of time has also an impact on the subject's perception of space. Turned into a collective plurality (that is, a unified self, comprising numerous possible selves), the identity of the character is no more dependent on restricted boundaries of specific spatial positions, nor is it defined in terms of the lack of space for that matter. In this sense, not only does Mahin Banu in her flight fantasies perceive herself "in different stages of her life, in infancy, youth, and old age," but she also feels to be "everywhere … plastered all over the earth and sky."

In her imaginations on, and about, flight, Mahin Banu gradually reaches the point where she starts to reject certain semantic systems altogether. The process is initiated as the protagonist, influenced by the downward view from within the flying airplane, imagines herself (as a child) to be, simultaneously,

94 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 113.

on top of Mount Damavand and her father's shoulders. She refers to this position as "the highest spot in the world from which the buildings looked humble and people ant-like and insignificant" (178).[95] It is from this perspective that Mahin Banu ventures to observe and reject the limits of specific semantic systems, such as education, patriarchy, history, religion, moral creeds, and mathematics, gradually imposed on an individual in the process of the acquisition of (or adapting to) the Symbolic. Immune from "the reach of everyone," she is detached from the admonishments of her mother; from "her husband, who set the limits of her liberty;" from "those who set moral standards and historical precedents;" and from all "those who measured her intellect and surveyed the periphery of her thought with the short ruler of geometry and the dismal measures of mathematics" (178).[96] Unlike the formulation of knowledge in the Symbolic order, Mahin Banu's dominant position on top of the universe stands for an alternative mode of perception that cannot be defined and formed in terms of language or in semantic systems for that matter. The Persian text includes an additional phrase in the same passage (omitted in the English translation), that is worth to be mentioned at this point. On the top of Mount Damavand, Mahin Banu is described to be beyond the reach of "those who crammed her mind with the demolishing weight of words" ("*sarash ra ba vazn-e khordkonandeh-ye kalamehha mianbashtand*") (178). The protagonist, in this respect, is posited in a stance that is particularly detached from the realm and authority of "words," and signification in its conventional sense.

The significance of "words," in Mahin Banu's imagination is replaced by "pre-linguistic images" pertaining to the protagonist's "internalized perceptual representations", namely, the Imaginary phase of perception.[97] In other words, through the character's dream-like representation of the world, different images coalesce into one another in order to construct multilayered illustrations that stand for complex conceptions. It is, for instance, interesting to note how the image of Mount Damavand, as the ultimate spot of security, is merged with the image of the protagonist's father and many other images:

> کوه دماوند، بلند و استوار و مجلل، از دور نگاهش می کرد. به شکوهمندی پدرش بود وقتی سر نماز می‌ایستاد و باد زیر عبایش می‌زد و به نظر می‌رسید که سرش به آسمان می‌رسد و پاهایش در زمین ریشه دارد.

95 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 115.

96 Ibid., pp. 115–116.

97 Mikula, *Key concepts*, p. 96.

> From a distance, Mount Damavand glared down. It was tall and majestic, like her father when he stood in prayer, with the wind twirling his mantel about him. It appeared as if his head scraped the sky and his feet had driven roots into the earth.[98] (177)

The cone-like shape of Mount Damavand, in the above excerpt, is compared to the upright position of the father in prayer dressed in a mantle (*'aba*, in the Persian text). Stretched in between earth and sky, the image is all-encompassing incorporating all time and space into an eternal ubiquitous entity. It is well rooted into the earth, representing history, strength and the sense of belonging. Being the highest mount-peak of Iran, Mount Damavand, itself, can be taken as a symbol for homeland or, as represented in the image of the father, for the fatherland. The protagonist's position on the top of it, in this sense, underlines the paronomasia (pun) inherent in the name of the character. By interchanging the first and the second letters of the word Mahin Banu in its Persian form, the name of the protagonist is modified into another Persian girls-name, *Mihan Banu*, the homeland's lady.

Aqa-ye Alef and the Door Dilemma

The story "'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef dar ghorbat," often referred to as a part of an incomplete novel, is one of Taraqqi's conspicuous narratives about the trauma of displacement and the experience of living in exile.[99] The story has been written during the early months of the author's residence in Paris after her emigration and, although not an explicit account of Taraqqi's life, contains many autobiographical elements and seems to have been composed as a "reflection" upon the author's "earliest experience as an émigré."[100] The narrative is structured by the protagonist's constant oscillation between his present situation in *ghorbat* or in "exile"—as indicated in the title of Farrokh's English translation of the story, "The Bizarre Comportment of Mr. Alpha in Exile"—and his previous life in Iran. The protagonist named Aqa-ye Alef, a fifty-two-year-old single man and a previous teacher of history, is forced by the circumstances after the Revolution to leave Iran for France. Other than the protagonist's nostalgic contemplations about his life in Iran that reveal to the reader some episodes about the character's childhood, love life, and

98 Taraghi, "A Mansion," p. 115.

99 In the table of contents of the collection *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992) (6th reprint) the title of the story "'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef dar ghorbat" is followed by the information: "*bakhshi az yek roman*." See also Fani and Dehbashi. "Naqd-e adabi," p. 43.

100 Farrokh, "Introduction," p. 6.

the conditions that occasioned his emigration, the story is for the most part constructed around the character's sense of displacement and his obsessions with space. The narrative plot of the story is built upon the paradox between the protagonist's desire to avoid his new surroundings, by constantly indulging in his past memories of homeland, and the real self-imposing present circumstances. In the following analysis, accordingly, I will deal with the *door* motif in the story as a recurrent theme. The door of the protagonist's room in "Aqa-ye Alef" comes to be highlighted as a symbolic element in the story setting around which the character's attempts at the construction of self-space within his new locality, within exile, consolidate.

The Room and Mr. Alef's Door Anxiety

Despite the signification of the phrase *one's own room*, the limits of Mr. Alef's small apartment in Paris does not signify the private space belonging to the protagonist within the setting of the story. Mr. Alef's room is rather depicted as the site on which the tension between the outside and the inside is consolidated. Mr. Alef's room, in other words, is not depicted as the safe territory of the self, but rather as the battle field for constructing one. The door of the room, in this respect, plays a symbolic role within the narrative setting. In most of the occasions in which the protagonist is struck by anxiety, the door of the apartment can be regarded, in one way or another, as the source that triggered that anxiety. Placed on the outlines of a room's edges, a door can facilitate or hinder contact with the outside world. Not only does the door separate the private from the public, but it also balances the tension between the two. The significance of the apartment door, as a sort of warning for the battle between the familiar and the alien, is highlighted within an extended passage that depicts Mr. Alef's confrontation with an old woman, who sells postcards with religious motifs. The passage in question is eight-page long; it starts with the woman's knock on the door and extends up to the point where the protagonist is left in his room burning with fury for being deceived by the old woman. Within this passage, the word *dar*, the Persian equivalent for the word door, is repeated up to eighteen times (198–205). The image of the door, in this part of the story, is developed into the focal point of the text; the door is turned into the element in terms of which the protagonist's relationship with his new spatial position is constructed. Throughout this passage, Mr. Alef develops three different attitudes towards his exilic state in Paris: (1) hesitation, (2) receptiveness, and (3) aversion.

A short synopsis of the passage in question is as follows: There is knock on the door. Mr. Alef is in bed. First, he denies that he heard the knocking sound and then hesitates a good while to open the door wondering about who the

person behind the door might be and whether he has to change his clothes and tidy his room before opening the door (hesitation) (198–201). He finally opens the door, hesitates a little longer but soon decides that the woman is quite friendly and invites her inside. The woman hands in to Mr. Alef postcards with Christian motifs. As long as the woman stays in Mr. Alef's room, he tries to be very hospitable and nice towards her (receptiveness) (201–3). The woman demands fifty francs for one of the postcards she has given Mr. Alef. Mr. Alef is shocked but is finally obliged to pay the money, not out of will but out of timidity. The woman leaves; and the door is shut. The protagonist feels to be betrayed and decides not to let anyone enter his room from then on (aversion) (203–5).

The first part of the passage foregrounds the door of Mr. Alef's apartment as the point towards which the protagonist's anxiety is directed. The knocking on the door is the action that disturbs, in the first place, Mr. Alef's sleep and urges him to leave his bed, the only place within which he actually feels safe and secure. Mr. Alef's hesitation between the door and the bed is mentioned more than once in this particular part of the story:

در می‌زدند. آقای «الف» شنید و به روی خودش نیاورد.... و به خواب نیمه هشیاری که از سرش می‌گریخت، مذبوحانه چسبید.

There was knock on the door. Mr. Alpha, still helplessly adhering to the early morning drowsiness, dismissed it as a figment of his imagination.[101] (198)

صدای ضربه‌ها دوباره بلند شد و آقای «الف» دنبالهٔ فکرهایش را رها کرد و به سمت در اتاق راه افتاد. دوباره از خودش پرسید که کی می‌تواند باشد.... جرأت نمی‌کرد فکر کند. دلش می‌خواست برگردد و دوباره بخوابد.

There was the knock again, this time somewhat louder than before. Mr. Alpha abandoned his ruminations and started towards the door, but hesitated again, racked with the uncertainty as to who it might be.... Mr. Alpha could not speculate any more. By now he wished to crawl back into his bed.[102] (199)

101 Taraghi, "Mr. Alpha," p. 130.

102 Ibid., pp. 130–131.

The hesitation is the result of "uncertainty." On the one hand, Mr. Alef feels threatened by the "knock on the door." Some lines further, it is indicated, for instance, that he feels to be "immobilized by a nameless fear" and stands "motionless in the middle of the room with his eyes glued on the door" (199).[103] The knock signals the probable existence of something unfavorable, something even hostile, awaiting behind the door, something that can possibly disturb his life order. As the protagonist wonders about the identity of the person outside and reaches for the "doorknob," he is once more "seized with hesitation" (200).[104] The world outside pushes itself against the limits of Mr. Alef's room and incessantly tries to penetrate its very structures: "Through the crack of the ill-fitting door, he could feel the biting cold blowing in" (200).[105] He immediately identifies the penetrating cold as a characteristic of his exilic state in "Europe" (Farang, in the Persian text); he is pessimistic about the knocking sound and expects disappointment by contemplating that there is nothing "familiar" outside awaiting him "but the winds of Europe blowing in the hallway" (200).[106] Despite all his fear and indecision, Mr. Alef, who finally decides to open the door and let the knocking woman inside, takes a step, even if a small hesitant one, to reconcile the self with the other.

Throughout his short encounter with the French woman, apparently someone "from a holy order on a mission to propagate Christianity," Mr. Alef, though still feeling intimidated, tries to be more receptive and open towards communication (201–3).[107] The scene following Mr. Alef's opening of the door represents an episode of the protagonist's struggle to actualize a reciprocal exchange of culture and identity in exile. Although the encounter proves to be far from satisfactory and is terminated with the protagonist left to feel disillusioned and betrayed (for having had to pay fifty francs for a postcard against his will), it is in fact the only example of a *dialogue with the other* within the narrative—even if a much fragmented and a totally dysfunctional one. The passage is permeated with cultural signs, through which the protagonist tries to make sense and show approval of the French culture and, at the same time, to convey his own identity and cultural heritage to the French woman. The text, in this sense, is full of signifying elements that are indicative of the protagonist's attempt at translating cultures. The dialogue starts with the woman showing some postcards to Mr. Alef as he opens the door:

---

103 Taraghi, "Mr. Alpha," p. 131.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid., p. 132.

خانم پیر دوباره حرفش را تکرار کرد و از توی پاکتی زرد و کهنه تعدادی کارت پستال درآورد و به آقای «الف» نشان داد؛ عکسهای قشنگی بودند، از حضرت مسیح و مریم مقدس و کلیسای نتردام. آقای «الف» کتاب گوژپشت نتردام را خوانده بود و به ویکتور هوگو ارادت خاصی داشت. عکسها را گرفت و با تحسین به تصویر کلیسای نتردام اشاره کرد و به نظرش رسید که خانم پیر منظور او را فهمیده است و از این رابطه ذهنی و ارتباط ناگهانی خوشحال شد.

> The woman repeated her sentence and produced a few postcards from a dingy, soiled envelope. There were color pictures of Christ, Mary, and Notre Dame. Mr. Alpha had read *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and held Victor Hugo in special regard. He took the picture and pointed at Notre Dame with a gesture that he hoped conveyed his admiration. He detected a flicker in the woman's eyes and felt some satisfaction in having established a rapport with her.[108] (201)

Although the message the woman tries to convey is completely misinterpreted by the protagonist, the images printed on the postcards lead to the formation of an imaginary exchange of meaning in Mr. Alef's mind. Trying to find some association between his own interests, his background knowledge about the French culture, and the religious motifs of the postcards, for example, Mr. Alef is reminded of Victor Hugo and abruptly assumes that the woman has comprehended the association of the picture with what Mr. Alef had in mind by pointing to the image of Notre Dame. The signifying game continues with Mr. Alef pointing to "his pajamas meaning to apologize for his inappropriate dress," to which the woman responds with indifference (201).[109] Then, in order to show respect towards Christianity despite his being a Muslim, he points "to a picture of the crucifix" and, giving "his face an expression of respect and compassion," utters that "I am an Iranian, a Muslim" (202).[110] As Mr. Alef asks the woman to join him inside, he attaches the picture of Christ to the wall. The French woman and the image of Christ have now intruded the limits of Mr. Alef's apartment as two foreign elements. In the meanwhile, the protagonist keeps up with his attempts at representing the Iranian culture

108 Taraghi, "Mr. Alpha," p. 132.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

of hospitability. He asks the woman, for example, if she would like to drink "Iranian tea, Scheherazade tea," and offers her Iranian confectionary, gesturing that the taste is very good (203).[111] The woman, however, remains irresponsive to his efforts for communication. She refuses to drink the tea and seems to have "no intention of eating the candy," the *gaz* (203).[112]

Despite all miscommunications and the protagonist's consequential disillusionment, the encounter of Mr. Alef and the woman bears some traces of a dialogue. There are, for instance, some Iranian elements within the room about which the reader only gets to know through the eyes of the woman. Both "the map of Iran on the wall" and "the small Persian rug on the floor" are only focalized through the eyes of the woman. In other words, these elements, which both demarcate the geometrical dimensions (the wall and floor of the room) of Mr. Alef's private space in Paris and indicate the protagonist's cultural and geographical origin, are communicated to the reader not sooner than they are reflected in the eyes of the French woman—that is, not sooner than they are, in a way, *recognized* by the woman. Moreover, the act of intrusion as well as the coexistence of native and foreign elements, such as Iran's map and Christ's image on the walls of Mr. Alef's room, points to the inevitability of the communication between the self and the other in exilic conditions, in spite of recurrent frictions between the two.

The encounter between Mr. Alef and the French woman, though a promising one on the symbolic level, is a bitter and humiliating incident for the character. Mr. Alef is outraged, on account of being overcharged for only a postcard by the French woman:

> آقای «الف» در را بست و بلاتکلیف وسط اتاق ایستاد.... دلهره‌ای ناگهانی توی تنش می‌چرخید.... سوسکی از جعبه گز بالا می‌رفت. تمام خانه‌اش پر از سوسک بود. هر چه دوا می‌زد فایده نداشت.... با کتابی که دم دستش بود محکم روی سوسک کوبید. سرش را چرخاند. چشمش به عکس مسیح افتاد و بیشتر لجش گرفت.
>
> He closed the door and stood in the middle of the room indecisively ... [A] dull anxiety circulated in his body.... He caught sight of a beetle that was climbing on the candy box, one of many pests that had infested the whole tenement and were not deterred by his faint attempts at

111 Taraghi, "Mr. Alpha," p. 133.

112 Ibid.

> spraying.... As he aimed a book at the intruding beetles, he caught a glimpse of the picture of Jesus Christ and was filled with a surge of anger.[113] (204–5)

Mr. Alef is infuriated for being deceived. His private territory is intruded; and he is robbed of both his honor and property. His body is overwhelmed with anxiety. The sense of intrusion is symbolized through the beetles which have already infested the whole apartment. The image of a beetle on the candy box underlines the symbolic significance of both the candy, the *gaz*, as the now-infested confectionary through which Mr. Alef tried to represent his culture, and the beetle, as the inescapable force of the outside. As the protagonist wants to strike the beetle with the book, his eyes are cast upon the picture of the Christ, which emphatically announces its presence within Mr. Alef's small apartment.

But the image of Christ is not always associated with the protagonist's aversion towards his foreign surroundings or the sense of having been intruded for that matter. It is rather Mr. Alef's attitude towards his exilic state that determines his interpretation of the picture attached to the wall of his room and its symbolic significance. When it was getting closer to mid-day, for instance, Mr. Alef looks out from the window and suddenly gets into a euphoric mood by becoming conscious about the arrival of spring. It seems that the prospect of spring days restores his optimism:

> همه چیز درست خواهد شد. کمی صبر می‌خواهد، کمی توکل، و به عکس مسیح نگاه کرد و به نظرش رسید که حضرت مسیح هم به او نگاه می‌کند.... آمدن آن خانم پیر را به فال نیک گرفت.

> "Everything will turn out fine," he muttered to himself. "All that's needed is patience and faith." He involuntarily glanced at the picture of Jesus Christ. The picture appeared to stare back at him benignly.... He even decided to take the visit of the old woman as a sign of good omen.[114] (206–7)

As the world outside, perceived through his window, becomes associated with the presence of spring and the prospect of a better future, the picture of Christ and even the bitter experience of the encounter with the French woman all turn to represent something positive, something inherent of new opportuni-

113 Taraghi, "Mr. Alpha," p. 134.

114 Ibid., pp. 135–136.

ties. Interestingly, the protagonist's optimistic ruminations are abruptly linked to the image of the door, as he is reminded of the following proverb: "If the Lord in his infinite wisdom chooses to close a door … in his boundless mercy he will open a window elsewhere."[115] The word "window" in the second part of the line has in fact been chosen by the translator to avoid the repetition of the word *dar* (door) in the Persian text ("*Khoda chon ze hekmat bebandad dari, ze rahmat goshayasd dar-e digari*") (207). Mr. Alef's indetermination about whether he should keep his door open or closed is also mentioned as the narrator briefly refers to his first days of arrival in Paris when he used to leave the door of his room open:

> روزهای اول که آمده بود… در اتاقش را نیمه باز می‌گذاشت تا هر چه زودتر با همسایه‌هایش دوست و رفیق شود. همسایهٔ مجاور و همسایهٔ طبقهٔ پایین، هر دو، ازش [به سرایدار] شکایت کرده بودند … و آقای «الف» از آن پس در و پنجرهٔ اتاقش را می‌بست.
>
> Leaving his door ajar,…[he intended] to facilitate the approach by a prospective friend among the neighbors. The practice, however, had only resulted in acrimonious complaints to the concierge…. Thereafter, Mr. Alpha kept his door and windows closed.[116] (207–8)

A conspicuous, and quite a symbolic, reference to the door has also been made in one of the letters to the protagonist from Iran, written by his beloved Mrs. Nabovvat:

> «عزیزم در اتاقت را چفت نکن. چه دیدی، شاید حضرت خضر آن طرفها باشد. این روزها همه عازم فرنگ هستند…. حالا هم در اتاقت را باز بگذار، کسی چه می‌داند؛ شاید رؤیت خضر نصیب تو شود.»
>
> "Darling … Don't lock the door. Who knows, perhaps the prophet is in your neighborhood. These days everybody is heading for Europe. Why not Khezr? … Leave your doors open. You may yet have a visit from Khezr."[117] (213)

115 Taraghi, "Mr. Alpha," p. 136.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid., p. 141.

Khezr, a mytho-mystical figure, is often associated with the essence of life, vitality, and longevity in Muslim traditions.[118] So, if at the prime of spring people keep their doors open, they might be lucky to catch a glimpse of his holy face and be blessed. Mrs. Nabovvat has suggested that if the protagonist leaves his "doors open," he might have the opportunity of visiting Khezr, who stands for good omen, new life, and, for that matter, new beginnings. Mrs. Nabovvat's lines, nevertheless, are even more suggestive than this. In only a couple of short sentences, she has drawn a picture of Iranian's emigration and their entrance into the cultural space of Europe (*Farang*). Even Khezr might have taken refuge in France from all the harsh conditions back in Iran. Yet, this is only a tragic interpretation of the passage. A more optimistic one would emphasize the fact that with the displacement of the protagonist and his fellow countrymen, a part of their cultural heritage is also dissipated into other places in the world. As the picture of Christ has somehow managed to find its way into Mr. Alef's private territory, so might Khezr be walking down the streets of Paris. As Mr. Alef finally leaves his apartment, "his heart … laden with a vague anticipation of good news," he is once more "reminded of the sentence in Mrs. Nabovvat's letter: "Keep your door open, dear. Perhaps seeing Khezr will fall to your lot!"" (299–300).[119] Nevertheless, the story does not terminate with this optimistic mood. At the end of the narrative, when Mr. Alef returns to his room, he closes "the door noiselessly behind him" and heaves "a deep sigh of relief" (231).[120] The story ends with the closure of the door; but having been witness to Mr. Alef's one-day routine, the reader can anticipate another opening.

"Madame Gorgeh:" Reconstruction of Self-Space in Exile[121]

Among Taraqqi's exile-related narratives, "Madame Gorgeh" (also published in *Khaterehha*) is the closest to the story of Mr. Alef in terms of subject matter. "Madame Gorgeh" relates the story of an Iranian woman who lives in a small apartment in Paris with her two children. The plot of the narrative focuses on the conflict between the homodiegetic narrator of the story, easily identifiable with the author, and her nagging neighbor, Madame Gorgeh, who recurrently

118 Some regard "Khezr as a prophet and some as a "*vali*." … In Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, Khezr is described to have drunk from the Fountain of Life and been endowed with everlasting life." "Khezr," *Dehkhoda*.

119 Taraghi, "Mr. Alpha," p. 153.

120 Ibid., p. 154.

121 The Analysis of "Madame Gorgeh" has been published previously in *Familiar and Foreign: Identity in Iranian Film and Literature* (2015) edited by Manijeh Mannani and Veronica Thompson, pp. 189–209.

blames the narrator and her children for making excessive noise.[122] The story's climax is built upon the narrator's extremely harsh argument with the neighbor, after discovering that all her claims about the irritating noises have been unsubstantiated. Both "Mr. Alef" and "Madame Gorgeh" deal with lives and experiences of Iranian characters that have recently immigrated to France and live in small apartments in Paris. The plot conflict in both stories consolidates around the matter of private space and the difficulties of constructing one in exile. In this sense, the apartments of the characters are foregrounded as the focal point in the narrative setting of the stories. Apart from this, in both cases, the Iranian characters' relationships with Parisians (neighbors and concierges, for example) are characterized with intimidation and fear on the part of the Iranians. Although the two narratives are similar in many aspects, their thematic approach towards the concept of self-space in exile slightly differs from one another. In Mr. Alef's case, as discussed above, the apartment is depicted as the site for the representation of the protagonist's dual attitude towards his exilic condition. Both Mr. Alef's desire for embracing the new and his antipathy towards it are communicated through the structures of his small apartment. In the case of "Madame Gorgeh," however, the protagonist's apartment, by the end of the story, is represented as the space within which self-expression becomes possible. The story "Madame Gorgeh," in other words, has to do less with the relationship between the self and the other but more with the delineations of the boundaries of the self in exile. The following, in this respect, is the analysis on how the structures of self-space are set up by the protagonist within her unfamiliar surroundings.

One of the major problematics of the story "Madame Gorgeh" is the reconstruction of space in the setting of the narrative. The narrator is incessantly obsessed with the question of space and repeatedly complains about the lack of self-space in Paris. The concepts of space, borderlines, rooms, home, and the like are frequently mentioned in the story. The opening lines, for instance, indicate that "life in diaspora, in Paris, is full of hidden anxieties and the guilty feeling that one is the outsider who has come from the other side of the borderlines and has usurped the space of the insiders" (140). Throughout the story, the narrator refers to her apartment with phrases such as "small and limited," "a mouse nest" (142), "a hand-span space" and "a place in which one cannot

122 The term Madame Gorgeh, through which the neighbor is referred to by the narrator and her children, provides the story with a fable-like dimension. This aspect of the story and its relation to the exilic condition of the narrator has been discussed in Nanquette, *Orientalism*, pp. 136–137.

stir" (143). Not only is the narrator's space small and limited but the act of possessing it is also denied to her; for, after all, she is an outsider—an outsider who can of course be the usurper but definitely not the owner.

The actions of the narrator and her children are also restricted and repressed within the space of the apartment. In order not to disturb Madame Gorgeh, they have to "be cautious," "stay silent" and "walk quietly" (147). They even receive a letter from the neighbor "emphasizing that they should stay at home less and rather try to spend their time outside" (147). Later in the story, the narrator draws a comparison between her present situation and her previous life in Tehran where she was "not horrified by the neighbors and was able to scream, caper about, laugh, cry, and dance" in her private territory (150).

This latter example correlates the concept of space with an individual's capability of self-expression. If we interpret the absence of self-expression as the nonexistence of the self, then it is possible to link the concepts of space, identity, and language (or any other shared sign system through which self-expression becomes possible). The interrelation between these three concepts is better clarified in the following excerpt, where the narrator ironically compares "silence" to "death:"

> به خانم همسایه قول می‌دهم که این سر و صداهای غیر انسانی دیگر تکرار نخواهد شد... و بی آنکه پایم به زمین برسد، چون پشه‌ای سبک، تا انتهای راهرو پرواز خواهم کرد و تا سه روز و سه شب زیر تشک، و یا در صورت لزوم زیر تخت، در سکوت مرگ، به سر خواهم برد و تمام کوششم در تبعیت از قوانین این مُلک و رعایت اصول مردم این شهر خواهد بود.
>
> I'd promise her [the neighbor] that all these inhuman voices would never be repeated again ... and that I'd fly away, without my feet touching the floor, like a light mosquito, to the end of the corridor; and I'd spend three days and three nights under the mattress, or under the bed if necessary, in the silence of death. I would try my best to stick to the rules of this land and adhere to the principles of its people. (141–2)

Here, two actions—the muting of "inhuman voices" and the shrinkage of the self to the size of a "mosquito"—result in the erasure of the self. The same relations can also be detected in the narrator's death wish, the entombment imagery and the association between death and silence. In other words, what results in the nonexistence of the self has both semantic and spatial significance. In this sense, identification can also be defined as the ability to construct self-space through mastery over a particular sign system. Accordingly,

the trauma of displacement is not merely caused by transference from one particular space to another, but rather by transference from one semantic realm to the other. This issue is verified in the last sentence of the above excerpt, where the narrator talks about adherence to the "rules" and "principles" of the "land" that she has recently entered.

The location of the narrator in the story "Madame Gorgeh" is a liminal one. However, not only is she geographically displaced, but she also occupies a space which has shifted semantically from her original. This issue, by itself, foregrounds the significance of language in the formation of an in-between position. By significance of language, I do not exclusively refer to the fact that the subject in question (here, the narrator) has not yet acquired the foreign language with which she has to deal in the new locality, but rather the semantic ambiguity caused by displacement—an ambiguity which gives way to the subject's interpreting attempts.

The displaced subject is exposed to a new discursive system that has to be learnt and internalized before identity formation is ever possible. Several times in the story, the narrator points to her inability to make sense of the ambiguous situation in which she is trapped. She refers to the neighbor, for instance, as "the ominous ghost who has a perpetual, invisible presence" in her "chaotic" life (141). Some lines further, she indicates that having just arrived, they "don't know the whys and hows of living in Farang,... have been thrown up to the other side of the world and turn around each other like sleepwalkers" (141). In order to render the new space intelligible, the narrator frequently articulates generalized descriptions about the manners and life style of Parisians and, thereby, attempts to construct narratives about her surroundings:

> در این شهر مردم در ایوان خانه نمی‌نشینند و هِرهِر و کِرکِر نمی‌کنند و وقت گرانبهایشان را به چرندگویی و الکی خوش بودن نمی‌گذرانند.... فرانسوی‌ها در خانه‌شان را به آسانی باز نمی‌کنند.... سلام و احوالپرسی رایج نیست.
>
> People, in this town, do not sit out on the balcony of their houses; they do not chatter and giggle over nonsense; they don't spend their invaluable time for happy-go-lucky blather.... The French do not easily open up the doors of their houses ... greetings, here, are not regular. (143–4)

Along the same lines, it is also relevant to pay attention to the concept of rights. What determines an individual's right to a certain behavior in a social context? In addition to the scripted version of rights, generally known as the

law, there is an unwritten convention that ascertains the rights of an individual in any community. This conventional legal system is embedded in the behavioral sign system of that community. That is, in order for a person to know about his rights and act upon them, it is indispensable for that individual to have enough knowledge about the discourse in which he or she is communicating. In "Madame Gorgeh," the ambiguity of the narrator's situation is due to the fact that she is not yet able to recognize what her rights are. She is constantly obsessed with a vague sense of guilt. Contemplating her situation, she refers to herself as "the Iranian, accused of an unknown guilt", a person who does not "have the right to object" (143); later, commenting on her intimidated relationship with the neighbor, she muses, "little by little we have forgotten that we, too, are human beings and everyone is free in his own house … we are not used to defending our own rights, since we do not know them in this very land" (147).

Significantly, the rising action of the plot is also initiated at the instant when the narrator becomes assured of her *right* to act. It is midnight and the children are in bed when the neighbor knocks at the door complaining about the noise they make. With increasing excitement, the narrator relates:

> می‌ایستم. گوش می‌دهم؛ سکوت محض است.... دانستن زبان فرانسه و شناخت فرهنگ شرق و غرب نمی‌خواهد. منطق سادهٔ آدمهاست. هیچ صدایی در خانهٔ ما نیست و خانم طبقهٔ زیرین اشتباه می‌کند. این دفعه دیگر زیر بار زور نمی‌روم چون حق با من است، و این «داشتن حق» امتیاز بزرگی است که به من نیرو و جسارت می‌دهد.
>
> I stand still. I listen. There is sheer silence … There is no need for the French language; there is no need for any knowledge about the cultures of East and West. It is the simple logic of all humankind. There is no sound inside, and the neighbor from the lower floor is wrong. This time, I won't be bullied, since I am right; and being right is a great privilege that gives me power and courage. (151–2)

Upon recognizing her right, the narrator explodes, abuses the neighbor and harshly chases her away. The neighbor never comes back, and in this way, the first self-space is constructed in the setting of the narrative. With the absence of Madame Gorgeh, "life regains its natural form;" the narrator and her children can "talk cheerfully with no fear;" they can "sit on the balcony and laugh with no apprehension;" they go out when they want and "staying out is not an obligation" (154).

The framework of a home, as one of the most symbolic terms referring to the concept of self-space, is finally delineated in the setting of the story. Although, from the narratological point of view, the conflict of the plot is somehow resolved, the text of the story bears witness to the continuing obsession with an original homeland: "Years pass and we still dream about going back" (155). The present tense of the verb "pass" indicates that probably there will be no end to the obsession with the idea of an ever-postulated return and the troubled sense of belonging. The phrase "*salha migozarad*" induces a sense of perpetuity as if the oscillation of the self in between two spaces, once inaugurated, might never be completely resolved.

The stories examined in this chapter deal with the problem of identity in unfamiliar cultural spaces. The matter of identification, in the analyses, is approached as a representational practice functioning in the semantic realms of specific cultures through acts of signification. The trauma of displacement, accordingly, is studied in relation to the characters' dysfunctional practice of self-representation within foreign cultures. The characters' ability (or inability) to construct self-space is, therefore, examined in terms of their capability of communicating the self's meaning and, thereby, drawing the boundaries of differentiation in the story settings.

In "Khaneh'i dar aseman," the new unfamiliar space paralyzes the protagonist's self-representing functionality to the extent that she is rendered to be identified as excessive inanimate objects that cannot be placed anywhere within the foreign semantic realm of exile. The character's liminal position is symbolized in her airplane seat, suspended in between the Earth and the sky. On the plane, the protagonist ventures to retreat from the Symbolic order (the realm of language) altogether. The prevalent merging imagery of the text, erasing the defining lines of the world outside, highlights the character's tendency to recede to the pre-linguistic Imaginary, where identity is a matter of unity and does not depend on semantic significations. The story of "Mr. Alef," in similar ways, deals with the character's troubled sense of selfhood and the transforming forces of exile upon his identity. The door of his apartment, in this respect, stands for his dual attitude towards exile, the will for integration and the fear of the unknown. Symbolically, the door makes the contact in between the self and the other possible and the blending of the two indispensable. "Madame Gorgeh," is another example of Taraqqi's stories that addresses the matter of displacement in terms of the problematics of the construction of self-space in exile. The narrator, obsessed with the sense of guilt and incapable of comprehending her rights in her new locality, is continuously hesitant about her actions within the structures of her private apartment in Paris. Nevertheless, on one occasion, upon becoming certain about her being right, she becomes able to delineate the boundaries of self-space in exile, her home in Paris.

CHAPTER 4

"Avvalin ruz" and "Akharin ruz:" The Function of Self-Narration

"Avvalin ruz" and "Akharin ruz" are respectively the titles of the first and the last stories published in Goli Taraqqi's collection of short stories *Do donya* (2002). The collection is described by the author, in a short introductory passage, as a sequence to the volume *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992). In the same passage, Taraqqi indicates that the stories "Otobus-e Shemiran," "Khaneh-ye madarbozorg" and "Dust-e kuchak" originally included among the stories of *Khaterehha*, do in fact belong to this volume. The collection also includes a revised and completed version of the story "Pedar" the primary variant of which had been published in *Khaterehha*. At the end of the short introductory paragraph, Taraqqi also expresses the wish to have all the ten stories (the seven included in *Do donya* together with the above mentioned three stories from *Khaterehha*) gathered and republished in the same volume in the future, since according to the author they all are the constituent parts of the same novel.[1] Whether the potential work (in its entirety) could be considered—from a generic point of view—as a novel can be debated. Nevertheless, sure is the fact that these stories have much in common when it comes to issues of form, genre, and style. Being based on the author's memories of Iran, all these short stories have autobiographical elements and are, therefore, retrospective in their point of reference; they are all narrated through a homodiegetic narrator that can be easily identified with the author; and they are all inspired in response to the author's exposition to her new, out-of-homeland surroundings. The topics of the stories, however, are different from one another; each story discloses an independent incident. Nevertheless, certain characters happen to reappear in, and develop through, several of the narratives.

If it is possible to imagine all these ten stories in an identical volume, then the link among the stories is established by the accounts of the narratives "Avvalin ruz" and "Akharin ruz" as the framing stories of the volume. The framework story, in this sense, recounts the entrance and the recovery of the author into and from the mental health clinic, Ville d'Avray, in the suburbs of Paris in the year 1988 (*Do donya* 11). The former story represents the autodiegetic

1 Taraqqi, *Do donya*, p. 7.

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004356948_005

narrator, on the first days of her residence in the clinic. The story is built upon narrative pieces that alternate between the present stance and feelings of the author in the clinic and the random accounts of her memories of the past, the remembrance of which is, in large part, triggered by some elements, such as a sound, a smell, a touch, or a scene, in the clinical environment of Ville d'Avray. Motivated by the encouragements of a doctor, the narrator begins to keep a written account of her past recollections that are gradually worked out into coherent and comprehensible stories (that is, the narratives included in the volume). In the latter story, "Akharin ruz," with which the collection comes to an end, the narrator explicitly acknowledges the fact that she owes her recovery to the act of writing. Instead of an alternation between past and present, in "Akharin ruz," the protagonist focuses on the events and emotions pertaining to the present moment, while, at the same time, she keeps the future in perspective.

The stories "Avvalin ruz" and "Akharin ruz" provide the narratives included in the collection *Do donya* (alongside the ones mentioned in the introduction) with a metafictional level. Through these two stories, the reader learns about both the process in which the narratives are produced and the occasion that necessitated their composition. Taking into account that the stories are basically autobiographical, it can be maintained that the framework narrative of the short fiction published in *Do donya* is, in fact, about the function of autonarration—that is, about the relation between narrativity and self-representation—in autobiographical fiction. In this respect, the analysis of the stories "Avvalin ruz" and "Akharin ruz" will focus on three major issues: (1) on the narrator's alienated self in the space of Ville d'Avray mental health clinic, (2) on the theories addressing the function of self-narration in relation to the author's perception of selfhood, and (3) on the function of self-narration as depicted in the stories "Avvalin ruz" and "Akharin ruz."

Narrative Oscillation: The Self in an Alien Environment

Although Taraqqi has composed a dozen of autobiographical stories, "Avvalin ruz" is among the few ones, the opening lines of which resemble a diary entry with a date: "August 1988. Ville d'Avray mental health clinic. Suburbs of Paris" (*Do donya* 11). The next sentence beginning with the pronoun "I" (in the Persian text), abruptly foregrounds the question of the author's self as the main topic in focus: "What am I doing here" (11)? The lines following the question provide the reader with the visual description of the story setting—the Ville d'Avray mental health clinic:

آدمهای مچاله، با صورتهای مقوایی و چشمهای مسدود، روی نیمکتهای چوبی کنار هم نشسته‌اند. آدمهای ویران با دستهای پیر. از این پرستارهای سفیدپوش موطلایی وحشت دارم، از این باغ خاموش بیگانه، از این درختهای سوگوار با سایه‌های غمگین خاکستری، از این شمشادهای صاف منظم، یک اندازه، یک شکل، ایستاده کنار هم، مثل سربازهای آماده به خدمت.

> Crumbled people with cardboard faces and closed eyes are sitting, side by side, on wooden benches. Dilapidated people with wrinkled hands. I am horrified by the blond nurses dressed in white, by the silent alien garden, by the mourning trees with gray gloomy shadows, by the regular shapes of boxwood bushes, equal in size and shape, standing in a row, resembling soldiers in military service. (11)

The poetic language[2] of the text together with the artificial, theatrical mise-en-scène of the setting establishes a certain distance between the focalizer and the physical world around her. The protagonist, placed among inanimate, doll-like strangers, is surrounded by an alien ambiance. Her surrounding is uncanny, grotesque, lifeless, and artificial. The straight row of boxwood bushes, "resembling soldiers in the military service," imbue the reader with the fear of impending hostility and the imminence of war. This theatrical atmosphere, put forward as early as the opening paragraph, prepares the reader for certain symbolic depictions and metaphorical constructs in the narrative. In the course of the story, Ville d'Avray mental health clinic gradually grows to stand for a condition beyond the mere structures of a madhouse.

After delineating the theatrical environment of the hospital, the narrator visualizes the house and the garden in which she spent her childhood, "the Shemiran garden" (12). In this way, a symbolic dimension is added to the significance of Ville d'Avray mental clinic. The clinical environment and the protagonist's state in it represent the condition of being detached from home. This symbolic aspect of the story is particularly highlighted in the narrator's dream about her father. One night in a dream, she happens to see the father in an old town in Egypt:

---

2 The passage resembles much the style, choice of words, and imagery of Forugh Farrokhzad's poetry.

چشمان نافذش به نقطه ای دور در افق خیره بود. شاید به سرنوشت فرزندانش نگاه می کرد، به خرابه های باغ شمیران، به ایل و تبار پراکنده اش در گوشه و کنار جهان و به من، محبوس میان این آدمهای غریب.

> He was staring with his piercing eyes at a faraway spot on the horizon. Maybe he was looking at the destiny of his children, at the ruins of the Shemiran garden, at his dispersed tribal descendants, all around the world, and at me, imprisoned among these alien people. (12)

At this very moment, the protagonist's confinement, in the mental hospital, is linked to her exilic condition. The Shemiran garden (as the author's childhood place of residence) is now deserted and in ruin. The father's countrymen are all scattered, all over the world; and his daughter is restrained among strangers, somewhere in the suburbs of Paris.

Before moving on, I would like to make it clear that by taking the madhouse as a symbolic representation for the author's exilic condition, I do not mean to deny the autobiographical factuality of the author's residence in the mental health clinic of Ville d'Avray; nor do I venture to claim that the author's trauma of dislocation is the underlying cause for her hospitalization in the clinic. Nevertheless, I would like to argue that Taraqqi, as the author of the story, has ventured to appropriate the experience of staying in Ville d'Avray for dealing with issues of displacement and the trauma of identification in exile in her narratives.

Following the argument stated above, it is worth mentioning that those sections of "Avvalin ruz" that exclusively engage with the depiction of the protagonist's condition in the present (that is, all the parts that refer to the incidents happening in the space of the mental clinic) are, in many cases, focused on the narrator's disturbed sense of the self. In order for the argument to be clarified, it is helpful to render some narratological abstractions of the story setting into more concrete images. The setting (i.e. time and space) depicted in the narrative plot of "Avvalin ruz" is divided, in fact, into two distinguished spatiotemporal partitions: (1) the environment of the clinic, as the symbolic representation of the narrator's exilic state, and (2) the space of homeland. The former space encompasses the events and the characters of the present, and the latter is the territory of the past. In short, the story represents a character in the present that remembers the events of the past from time to time. Nevertheless, it is also interesting to note that all the passages related to the protagonist's recollections of the past are actually narrated in present tense. In

other words, while indulged in the act of remembering, the narrator is actually re-visiting and re-experiencing all the moments of the past. Therefore, it is also possible to propose an alternative interpretation about the analeptic passages of the text: It can, accordingly, be argued that the spaces of past and present do, in fact, co-exist (at least, in the mind of the protagonist) and that she actually traverses the distinctive borderline between the two spatiotemporal territories whenever she is triggered or urged to do so. Each territory possesses, moreover, its own narrative characteristics. In other words, the type of the text employed to relate the incidents of each territory differs sharply from the other. While the passages referring to the present condition of the narrator are interrupted, ambiguous, and full of abstractions, the narrator's references to the past are more concretely described and coherent.

Dispensing with the close textual analysis of the homeland passages at this stage, I would rather like to focus on the text that pertains to the protagonist's condition in her here and now—that is, the passages about the clinical environment. Here, I would like to discuss the ways, in which the existence of the self in the present, as a specific textual space, becomes impossible or, at least, problematic. In other words, I would like to elaborate on how the process of self-construction proves to be obstructed in certain textual structures.

The passages pertaining to the temporality and space of the mental clinic of Ville d'Avray are generally characterized by negation. That is, the passages are, in large part, built up by certain type of word choice, images, and structural constructs, through which notions of rejection and denial are recurrently communicated. The protagonist, for example, wants to "get away, before it's too late" (12). She rejects the idea of belonging among the inhabitants of Ville d'Avray by contemplating that "no, I am not similar to these people" (13). She withdraws from having any contact to others, and when the occasion is forced upon her, she pulls herself "aside" and starts to "walk backwards" (14). As in a nightmare, she struggles to run away only to find herself standing still and immobile (14). She rejects the company of others by hiding her face behind the bed sheets and explicitly states that "sleep, escape, and oblivion are the only things she desires" (16). In short, the protagonist is at constant strife to avoid or deny the present circumstances. As already pointed out, the fact that the author's childhood memories are represented as the alternative world (or space) of refuge for the protagonist emphasizes that the narrator's condition in the madhouse is in fact a symbolic representation of her cross-national displacement. In other words, we are dealing, here, with a character who ventures to reject the unknown and ambiguous space of the other for the sake of the familiar.

The clinical passages also indicate that the protagonist is going through a process of self-alienation. It seems that the self of the protagonist (manifested in her will and freedom of choice) and her very body (as the physical and visual

incarnation of the self) are gradually being detached from one another. The narrator observes, for instance, that her "feet are glued to the ground" and her "body does not belong" to her (12). After some pages, she indicates that "my body is hollow and empty. If they release me, I will collapse" (16). In the beginning paragraph of the story, the narrator gives the reader a grotesque image of the clinic in which the space of Ville d'Avray is described as furnished by artificial items and puppet-like creatures. In the course of her stay in the clinic, the protagonist, herself, is rendered into one of those puppets. Little by little, she loses control over her body and turns into both the object and the agency of others' will. The protagonist is either described as the object upon which others act; or she acts through the will, the force or the urge of others. The treatment of the protagonist as an object, in the former case, changes her into a passive entity. On her arrival day, for instance, the narrator states that the nurses "take my clothes off and dress me in a long, wide gown" (14). On other days they venture to "pull …[her] out of the bed, first by asking nicely and finally by force" (16). When an old woman, a patient of the clinic, approaches to touch the protagonist's hair, "she stands still and gives up …[the old woman] strokes the hair, combs it and starts to braid it" (16). It is interesting to note that, in some of the passages quoted above, the protagonist is not even treated as the direct object of the main verb (as she is, for instance, in the sentence "they pull me out of the bed") but has rather become the *site* on which others' actions actualize. While her clothes are being taken off and in the case of the old woman stroking and combing her hair, for example, she is not the grammatical object of the sentences in question, but is, in fact, an entity whose *parts* are replaced or modified by others. The protagonist, in this way, resembles a puppet, an object of others' desires:

> هر صبح که چشمهایم را باز می‌کنم، صدایی کنار گوشم روزهای هفته را می‌شمرد. صدا با من حرف می‌زند و، مثل امواج رادیویی کهنه، دور و نزدیک یا کوتاه و بلند می‌شود. صدا به من می‌گوید باید بلند شوم، دوش بگیرم، لباسهایم را عوض کنم و صبحانه‌ام را پشت میز بخورم.
>
> Every day, as I open up my eyes, a voice starts to name the weekdays by my side. The voice speaks to me, and like the wave-frequencies of an old radio, gets closer or farther. The voice tells me to get up, to take a shower, to get dressed and to have my breakfast at the table. (15)

The will of the protagonist (as a manifestation of her self) is replaced, in this respect, by the "voice." Therefore, she proves not to be the one who makes

the decision and acts upon it, but is rather the one who is forced to fulfill the commands of an external "voice." So, if the protagonist gets up, takes a shower, gets dressed and has breakfast, she is actually led to do so by others as a self-alienated character or rather like a wind-up doll. In short, the protagonist, in the passage above, is reduced to the *agency* (or the medium) for some other entity's command.

The protagonist, at this very stage, has not yet been able to enter the realm of mutual communication with the doctor on a humanistic level. The "voice" standing for a synecdochic representation of the doctor can, in fact, be compared to the strings of a puppeteer who controls the puppet from a meta-level. The prefix meta-, here, is a crucial one, since, later on in the course of the story, it is the doctor that encourages the patient (the protagonist) to compose her autobiographical stories. In other words, the process of the protagonist's rehabilitation in the clinic (or in exile, to go back to the symbolic signification of the story setting) can be taken as a process of self-(re)creation (discussed further, later on).

There is also a semantic level to the protagonist's alienation in the space of Ville d'Avray mental clinic which is worth mentioning here. The way the character, on her first day in the clinic, perceives her environment is witness to the semantic vagueness and ambiguity of the space she has stepped into:

> فکرهایم پراکنده‌اند. کلمه‌ها از ذهنم می‌گریزند. همه چیز در سرم تکثیر می‌شود: اشکال، اعداد، صداها، چروکهای ملافه و تیک تاک ساعتها. صورتها از برابر چشمهایم عبور می‌کنند، روی هم می‌افتند، تغییر شکل می‌دهند و ناپدید می‌شوند. میان گذشته و حال می‌چرخم بی آنکه بتوانم روی لحظه‌ای مشخص متوقف شوم.
>
> My thoughts are scattered and words flee my mind. Everything becomes multiplied in my head: shapes, numbers, sounds, the wrinkles of bed sheets, and the ticking of clocks. Faces pass across my eyes, overlap, deform and disappear. I wonder in between past and present, incapable of coming to a halt on a certain moment. (12)

Shapes, figures, sounds, and other signs do not grow into static, comprehensible notions. There is a sort of fluidity, ephemerality, and obscurity in the way the protagonist perceives and makes sense of her surroundings. Her dangling situation in between past and present brings us, once more, to the layout of the story setting, mentioned earlier. Not only does the protagonist go back and

forth in between two temporalities, through recurrent flashbacks, but she also traverses the borderline in between the ambiguous space of the alien other and the familiar space of homeland. In reaction to the vagueness and agitations of the present space, she withdraws to the territory of the already known by the slightest factor that reminds her of the familiar. On her arrival date, a doctor asks her name, nationality, and place of birth. The protagonist's answer to these questions takes her back to her childhood memories of Tehran:

— محل تولد؟
— تهران
همهمهٔ شیرین شهری آشنا توی سرم می‌چرخد و باغ شمیران، مثل خوابی سبز، پشت پلکهایم می‌نشیند.
تهران با آن حرف بازیگوش «ر»، که زیر زبان می‌غلتد، و آن «آ»ی کشیدهٔ بلند، مثل دهانهٔ وسوسه‌انگیز بازاری رنگین، مرا در خود فرومی‌کشد.
کسی از دور صدایم می‌زند، کسی از آن سوی کوه‌ها و دریاها.

—Place of birth?
—Tehran.
The sweet hubbub of a familiar city turns around in my mind and the image of the Shemiran garden, like a green dream, is reflected on the back of my eyelids.
Tehran, with that playful sound of "R," that rolls under the tongue, and that long, extended "A," opens up like the mouth, of an enticing colorful Bazaar, and absorbs me into itself. Someone is calling me, someone from the other side of seas and mountains. (12–13)

The character is drifted back to her place of birth as soon as she pronounces the word "Tehran." Nevertheless, it is not exclusively the name of the city, as a term pertaining to a specific geographical territory, that makes the protagonist remember and visualize the past; but there is also a phonological factor at work, at the moment when the analeptic retrospection of the author is initiated in the text. It is, in fact, the difference in the phonetic articulation of, first, the consonant "R" in the two languages of French and Persian, and then, the vowel "A" that brings about the shift from the alien France (Ville d'Avray) to "Tehran," the "familiar city." The possibility for transition is facilitated, in the first place, through the playful pronunciation of the sound "R" followed by the extended "A." Then, the shape of the mouth, resembling a cavity, a gate or an

entrance at the time of articulating the sound "A," is associated with the spot at which the transition is actualized. The protagonist's spatiotemporal transition to homeland, in this sense, is facilitated through linguistic factors. Specific phonological aspects of each language (and the ways they differ from one another) are rendered to resemble spatial images (Tehran, city, Bazaar, the entrance) through which the protagonist is able to traverse the borderline, separating the setting of the story into the space of exile and that of homeland, and thereby, be transferred to "the other side of seas and mountains."

As pointed out earlier, in the passages pertaining to the other side of the borderline, the protagonist is situated in the text in a different manner. Homeland passages are more concrete and less ambiguous. They are full of colors, tastes, sounds, and other descriptive details that are observed and perceived by the narrator-focalizer. The text of homeland memories, from the stylistic point of view, is more coherent and less interrupted than the text describing the space and events of the clinic. While the character in Ville d'Avray passages is depicted as lost in time and space, the narrator in homeland stories is rather specific about when and where the narrative events take place. Generally speaking, the protagonist, both as a perceiver (or focalizer) and as a character in action comes to be portrayed as more functional and active in homeland passages compared to her present condition in the hospital.

I do not intend to go into further details about the passages describing the past, since they are in fact the fragmented versions and the primary sketches of Taraqqi's autobiographical stories that, in their complete forms, are integrated into the collections of *Do donya* and *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*. Specific details of the stories "Pedar," "Golha-ye Shiraz" (Shiraz flowers) "Dust-e kuchak," "Fereshtehha" (The angels), and "Khaneh-ye madarbozorg" are mentioned in "Avvalin ruz." These stories and the rest of Taraqqi's autobiographical stories are going to be discussed in the next chapter. What I would like to underline here, nevertheless, is the fact that in the space of Ville d'Avray mental health clinic, we are dealing with a character whose self is manifested in two different temporal and spatial settings; and in each of them, it demonstrates more or less differing characteristics. The protagonist, in other words, is depicted as possessing a kind of split-character. While she feels easy, competent, and lively on the one side of the border, she is portrayed as passive, lost, and disinterested on the other. However, the protagonist succeeds to overcome the problem, by the end of the framework narrative, through the act of writing. Encouraged by her doctor, she starts to put down the memories of the past; the more she writes the better she feels herself to be. In this respect, it is worth exploring why and in what way the process of writing about the past influences and enhances the protagonist's perception of the self in the unfamiliar space of exile.

The Relation between Self and Narrativity: An Issue of Debate

Going back to the significance of the framework story in *Do donya*, I find it relevant to focus on the genre of autobiography and its function in regard to its author's process of identity formation. The basic question concerning this issue would then be: how is autobiography, as a piece of writing composed to narrate about the self, related to the concept of identity? In order to answer the question, I would like to draw on two contrasting viewpoints on the relation between self and narrativity suggested by (1) Paul John Eakin, and (2) Galen Strawson. Based upon these theories, I will, then, propose my own stance concerning the function of self-narration and try to explore it in the stories "Avvalin ruz" and "Akharin ruz." The crucial points in debate are, first, whether identity, as the representation of the self, is a narrative phenomenon at all; and second, if a narrative approach to identity is necessarily a good thing in itself.

Paul John Eakin, in his 2008 book titled *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative*, attempts to clarify and complement the standard view of the relation between narrativity and self-construction. Drawing upon the neurologist Oliver Sacks, he emphasizes that "our life stories are not merely *about* us but in an inescapable and profound way *are* us."[3] In order to discuss the issue further, he approaches the notion of selfhood through a model proposed by the psychologist Ulric Neisser. Among the five types of selfhood, discussed in Neisser's model, Eakin underlines and expands upon what Neisser identifies as the "extended self", that is "the self of memory and anticipation, [that is] the self existing outside the present moment."[4] For Eakin, the extended self is "the self existing continuously across time" and it is "this temporal dimension of extended selfhood that lends itself to expression in narrative form." In this sense, the extended self becomes "the primary subject of autobiographical discourse."[5] Eakin considers the practice of narration and the registration of self in narratives as an unconscious process that is always at work in anyone's mind in its natural healthy state. He believes that when the narrative practice of identity formation is disturbed (through a trauma, or loss of memory, for instance) then one "can be jolted into awareness of the central role it plays in organizing our social world."[6] Through exploring different cases and examples, Eakin proposes that "individuals who have lost the ability to

3 Eakin, *Living*, pp. *x* and 1.

4 Ibid., p. *xiii*.

5 Ibid., p. 3.

6 Ibid., p. 4.

construct narrative … have lost their selves."[7] In this respect, not only is the subject's conception of the self, for Eakin, a narrative phenomenon, but it is also through narrativity that any individual is able to maintain a normal (undisturbed) conception of the self.

A part of the arguments in *Living Autobiographically* is specifically devoted to Eakin's defense of the narrative view on identity against Galen Strawson's controversial essay "Against Narrativity." Galen Strawson, a British analytic philosopher, in his essay published in the new series of *Ratio* in 2004, expressly dismisses the "idea of narrative identity."[8] In this essay, Strawson argues against narrativity both as the "empirical thesis about the nature of ordinary human experience" and as the "normative, ethical claim [that emphasizes] we ought to live our lives narratively."[9] In other words, Strawson neither believes that the experience of the self is a narrative phenomenon in itself, nor does he think that it can necessarily do an individual any good in the process of self-construction. The rejection of self as a narrative product by Strawson proceeds based on the argument that although individuals "have a past" and "have a respectable amount of knowledge about it," they do not have any access to the *self* as it was apprehended and experienced in the past.[10] For Strawson, the firsthand experience of selfhood, in this sense, is bound to the moment inhabited in the present. Regarding whether the construction of self in a narrative form is a good thing in itself, Strawson distinguishes between two common tendencies in self-experience in relation to the passage of time: the "Diachronic" and the "Episodic" perceptions of self. While the Diachronics, as Strawson refers to them, tend to apprehend the self "as something that was there in the (further) past and will be there in the (further) future," the Episodics, by contrast, have no tendency to comprehend the self in a continuum;[11] they are rather inclined to lead a life in what Strawson comes to call "a more happy-go-lucky culture."[12] In this sense, Narrativity, for Strawson, is an individual's chosen or adopted "outlook on life" and not the mere characteristic of the experience of selfhood.[13]

---

7 Eakin, "Living," p. 23. Quoted from Kay, Young, and Jeffery L. Saver. "The Neurology of Narrative." Paper presented at the Modern Association convention. New Your, 29 Dec. 1995.

8 Ibid., p. 8.

9 Strawson, "Against," p. 428.

10 Ibid., p. 433.

11 Ibid., p. 430.

12 Ibid., p. 431.

13 Ibid., p. 430.

I agree with Eakin in the fact that after "jolting events," to deploy Eakin's term,[14]—that is, after shaking, destabilizing incidents—the person in question needs to reconstruct the events into an understandable logical narrative form in order to be able to explain for and digest the shocking effect of the incident. In the story told, the narrator (here the person who was affected by the event) can be potentially (or ideally) situated in a self-constructed, but acceptable, arrangement of events in a way that the incident in question and the person's place in it would be justified and, thereby, the whole situation overcome. So, in this way, the act of narration has a specific function in the process of self-construction. Nevertheless, I can also fully agree with Strawson in his opinion that the Episodic, non-obsessive, "outlook on life" makes one live happier.[15] In other words, it is also true that narration can bring about recurrent obsessions with the past and the future. Now, the question is what is the relation between self and narrativity? And in what circumstances does self-narration do someone good?

Strawson claims that for Episodics "the past can be present or alive in the present without being present or alive *as* the past."[16] That is, the Episodics can remember the past without re-experiencing the identity state (i.e. the self) of that particular moment in the past. However, Strawson does not expand on how an Episodic's self-experience is structured as that person remembers the past in a narrative form. In another sense, if the Episodics and Diachronics both remember and construct narratives about the past (and I believe they both do, since memories are always structured in a narrative form), why is the present self of the former group not disturbed (influenced, or affected) by the act of narration and why that of the latter group is? What is the criterion that determines that the former group belongs to a "happy-go-lucky culture" and the latter to a "revenge culture"?[17] How is the experiencing self related to the self in the past in each case?

Most of us (if not all), often (if not always), tend to remember in a narrative form. The effect of remembrance on the self, however, regarding the extent one might be able to access a previous self-state, can differ. Sometimes we remember, in Strawson's words, "without being present or alive *as* the past."[18] Sometimes we remember as we re-experience the past. While in the former narrative type the self of the past is treated (or seen) as only a character of the

14 Eakin, *Living*, p. 3.

15 Strawson, "Against," p. 430.

16 Ibid., p. 432.

17 Ibid., p. 431. Strawson has borrowed the latter term from Laura Blumenfeld.

18 Ibid., p. 430.

story told, in the latter narrative type, the remembered incident is actually relived by the person who remembers it. In other words, while the Episodic outlook enables one to view the past from a meta-level, that is from the level of the narrator, the Diachronic outlook facilitates firsthand experience on the level of character (think about remembering embarrassing moments, for instance). In the Diachronic form of self-narration, in this sense, the self is split. This means that the self inhabits (at least) two different states of identity: one in the actual present and one in the obsessive point in the past. The obsessed self moves back and forth in between the two (or more) self-states.

Self-narration, in this sense, is not simply a piece of text that registers who the person in question is, but it is in fact an attempt to leave the obsessive level of character in a past experience and be wholly restored into the present, on the level of narrator. Autobiographical writing, as a typical genre of self-narration, has the same functionality. Through the act of writing, the author of an autobiographical piece does not specifically disclose or register the self, but rather tries to make a closed episode of the already experienced event of the past. I prefer, therefore, to use the terms *episode* and *episodic* in lower case in order to both appropriate Strawson's terminology and to outline the difference with his anti-narrative stance in regard to the concept of identity. Here, I do not specifically intend to discuss whether identity is essentially a narrative or non-narrative construct. What I want to clarify, however, is that if an individual has already adopted a narrative outlook on self-construction, then the process of narration can be beneficial to the construction of an incorporated self (as opposed to a split self) provided that the individual in question is *finally able to approach and remember the events of the past on the level of narrator*. The process in which Taraqqi's urge for writing her memories of homeland are initiated, developed, and concluded is a good example that shows how the split self of the author (re)inhabits the present moment as a whole through self-writing.

Autobiographical Function: Leaving the Madhouse

In the process of rehabilitation, the main problem with which the protagonist of "Avvalin ruz" has to deal is explicitly and precisely stated in the passage below:

> خانم دکتر اصرار دارد که ... بفهمم کی و کجا هستم. باید از گذشته فاصله بگیرم و به زمان حال برگردم. باید «منِ» کنونی‌ام را بشناسم و این موجود واقعی را در فردا و آینده مجسم کنم. نمی‌توانم. از آینده وحشت

دارم و «امروز» زمان خالی و معلقی‌ست که به هیچ مکانی متصل نیست. تنها گذشته واقعیت دارد و، مثل دامن گلدار مادر، من را در پناه خودش می‌گیرد.

> The doctor insists that … I try to figure out who and where I am. I should distance myself from the past and return to the present. I should get to know my current "I" and learn to imagine it as a real existence in tomorrow and in the future. I can't. I am horrified by the future and "today" is an empty and suspended slot of time, detached from any space. Reality is the past that harbors me like the floral skirt of my mother. (19)

The passage underlines the relation between the experience of selfhood and the notions of temporality and space. The crucial matter for the protagonist, in the first place, is to "figure out who and where" she is. Therefore, the space in which the protagonist is placed is directly related to her sense of who she considers herself to be. According to the doctor, also, the protagonist should finally be able to detach herself from the past in order to be restored into the present moment. The text above, moreover, links the concept of time to the notion of space. The protagonist, who has lost the sense of who and where she is, describes the present as "an empty, suspended slot of time that is not attached to any space."

In order to recover—in order to comprehend her "current "I""—the protagonist has to restore the self in the present time and space. If she is able to be situated in her *here and now* instead of oscillating in between two temporalities (past and present), two spaces (homeland and exile) and, thereby, two identity states (childhood and adulthood), she would be able to overcome her traumatized sense of selfhood. Therefore, whatever the method of the protagonist vis-à-vis the problem is, in the end, she ought to interrupt her dual existence in order to be wholly incorporated into a normal state of selfhood in the present. Otherwise, the present surroundings would remain ambiguous and the character's interaction with it problematic. The protagonist, at this particular point, is aware of the fact that the ambiguity in her surroundings is not an inherent characteristic of the environment, but is actually caused by the way she perceives and interprets the world. After referring to the doctor's comments and recommendations on the process of her rehab, the protagonist explicitly expresses that "I know that the world outside is different from the way I see it" (20).

The story is continued by disclosing an important memory of the author's childhood. The narrative piece in question refers to an ecstatic joy experienced

by the protagonist as she had stealthily entered her father's study when she was a little girl. Imitating the father's posture at his desk, she uses the "magical ink" to inscribe zealously on white pieces of paper (22). The experience, on the part of the author, is directly associated with her passion for writing. She considers the ink-stained pieces of paper as her "first" and her "only complete story" (23). The next paragraph switches abruptly to the present: "The doctor is aware of my passion for writing. She brings me a pack of white paper and a couple of sharpened pencils …[and] tells me to write down … my memories" (23). The process of writing is initiated. From this point onwards, the story "Avvalin ruz" is complemented by a metafictional level. The author shares with the reader the process in which she uses words and concepts to construct her narrative:

> سلامت روانی من در گرو نوشتن فکرها، حس‌ها و خاطره‌هایم است. باید از واژه‌ها، حرف‌ها، نقطه‌ها، ریسمانی محکم ببافم و از این چاه تاریک، چاه خواب و خاموشی، بیرون بیایم.... با نخهای رنگین کلمه‌ها قالی پرنده‌ای می‌بافم و به دورترین روزهای گذشته سفر می‌کنم. به نخستین خاطره‌ها.
>
> My mental recovery exclusively depends on writing down my thoughts, emotions, and memories. I have to weave words, letters, and dots into a strong rope in order to find my way out of this dark well, the well of silence and oblivion … I weave the colorful strings of words into a flying rug and take a journey to the farthest days of the past, to the very first memories. (24–5)

The excerpt above is one of the outstanding passages in the story "Avvalin ruz" that directly addresses the relation between self-narration and the perspective of narration. The narrator appropriates words, thoughts, emotions, and letters to construct (or weave) the means of her recovery through a story. Not only does she emphasize that her mental well-being is dependent on the act of writing about her very self, but she also provides the reader with the visual perspective she adopts as she is engaged in relating the stories. At this particular point, the narrator does no more trespass a spatiotemporal borderline in order to re-experience the past; but she is rather elevated to another level (through the images of the rope and the flying rug) in order to observe the past from *above* and review it from a meta-level. This does not necessarily mean that the author does not experience while remembering, but the emphasis is rather on the fact that by the closure of the act of narration the author is distanced from a particular identity state of a past selfhood. Before the initiation of the act of

writing, the protagonist's experience of the past is performed on the level of the story, that is, on the *level of character*. It is not until the appearance of the metafictional passages that the protagonist begins to approach the past from the *level of narrator*. That is why, despite the fact that from the beginning of the story the narrator is regarded as an autodiegetic one, in the analysis of the narrative, one should be quite careful—especially regarding the former half of the story—not to use the terms *protagonist* and *narrator* interchangeably. It is in fact after the metafictional comments on the narrative that the character of the protagonist gets closer to that of the narrator.

The recovery of the protagonist, in this sense, is not simply achieved due to the act of narration, but rather due to the *level* of narration she acquires after the closure of the process of narrating the story. In other words, as pointed out earlier, self-narration is in fact an attempt on the part of the author (or speaker, in the oral form) to leave the obsessive level of a previous identity state in order to be reinstated in the present as a whole. If such a narrative process proves to be successful, out of the narrator's past experiences, a closed narrative (but non-obsessive) *episode* is created. The story "Akharin ruz," assumedly composed after the author's recovery from Ville d'Avray mental clinic, is, accordingly, proliferated with textual instances that underline two crucial points: (1) the narrator has been finally able to close an episode of the past; (2) the narrator is recovered from possessing a split-character and is reinstated to the time and space of the present.

"Akharin ruz" opens up with a metafictional passage commenting on the final moments in which the author completes the composition of her homeland memories:

> قصهٔ «پدر» را افتان و خیزان، با سختی و درد، با قهر و آشتی، بالاخره تمام می‌کنم. آخرین حرفها را می‌نویسم، آخرین نقطه را می‌گذارم و دری را رو به گذشته می‌بندم.
>
> Reeling and tottering, with pain and difficulty, with all its sullen and peaceful moments, I finally manage to put an end to the story "Father." I write down the final letters, put down the final full-stop, and close a door to the past. (204)

Through the image of a closed "door to the past," the episodic characteristic of the author's sense of selfhood in the present is reinforced. Although, throughout the process of remembering, the author has been closely engaged in the experiences of the bygone days (no matter if they are claimed to be real or constructed), the recovery of the author's traumatized sense of identity, in

particular, is associated with the moment when she is finally able to "close a door to the past." The idea of making a closed episode of past experiences by means of the act of narration is reinforced in "Akharin ruz" through being recurrently mentioned in several passages. Having come to inhabit the "current moments of today" the author, for example, emphasizes that "the past is turned into a history left behind, into the old yesterdays" (206). Two paragraphs later, the relation between the closure of the act of self-narration and the author's restoration into the present is underlined once more as the author relates: "I put my stories into the closet and lock the door. I throw the key into the vase on the table and turn around to face the days to come … I want to think about today" (206).

It is also quite relevant, here, to emphasize once more that the function of autobiographical narration for the author (or the speaker) is to recover from a dual existence. Having been through with the act of writing her childhood memories, the narrator in "Akharin ruz" expressly confesses that "a part of me, a part of my childhood spirit, from the very moment of birth, had been left behind in that house. I was incomplete and imperfect" (204). Through relating the stories of her childhood, in this sense, the author becomes capable of fusing the left-behind part of the self with her current selfhood in the present.

It is discussed in the above that it is only through the act of narration, and even then, only through entering into the level of narrator, that the self comes to be experienced in its entirety in the present moment. Nevertheless, the episodic outlook on selfhood, as an experience in itself, is ephemeral in nature. There are many incidents throughout our everyday lives that are capable of breaking the integrity of the self in its happy-go-lucky state by opening up the way to the obsessive experiences of the past. The narrator of "Akharin ruz" also seems to be aware of this fact. In the moments of her intense happiness about her recovery, she is, at the same time, conscious about the temporary quality of the experience:

> این سرخوشی دلپذیر اتفاقی موقتی‌ست. مگر می‌شود یک عمر راست راست راه رفت و معلق نشد؟ … فعلا سبکبار و هشیارم و به این «فعلا»، این زمان نامعین محدود، دو دستی چسبیده‌ام. فهمیده‌ام که می‌توان مُرد و از نو متولد شد.

> This pleasant exhilaration is transient. Of course, it is not possible to live a carefree life continuously without ever feeling [lost or] suspended again…. For the time being, I feel sober and carefree, and will stick to this

> moment tightly, to this limited, indistinct portion of time. I have understood that it is possible to die and be born again. (207)

At this moment, the narrator is consciously able to perceive her selfhood in an episodic way. The experience of the self, for the narrator, is now detached from recurrent, intense preoccupations with the past. She is now dwelling in the evanescent moment of the present, while she is simultaneously *aware* of its transience. What is even more interesting is that the narrator has even realized that the same process would be at work in the future: "Tens of images of myself invigorate in front of my eyes: faces of someone in the future, someone in the front ahead of me, on the axis of time. The probable me. The me afterward" (210). The narrator refers to each incarnation of her self in the future as "someone" else, in a "probable" identity state. She is both able to conceive that the sense of identity is essentially prone to recurrent transformations in the future and that her future identity states are, in fact, formed into different episodes in her life. The adjective "probable" in the excerpt above touches upon the narrative quality of identity. Although the firsthand experience of selfhood is a matter of the present, and although the self is modified to inhabit different episodes, there is a sort of narrative continuity at work—a sort of narrativity that brings about some *possibilities* of experience and crosses out some other. Imagining herself in between the images of her "children" and her old mother, as the person who is the "heir to the time and language" of her "tribe," the narrator announces that her "present stance is the very spot in between the bygone days and the moments to come" (214). Not only through this announcement does the narrator underline that the experience of selfhood is specific to the moment in the present, but she also, through the images of her mother and children, and through reference to the future and the past points to an encompassing narrative form regarding self-experience.

"Avvalin ruz" and "Akharin ruz," the framework narratives of Taraqqi's autobiographical stories, provide the author's nostalgic memories of the past with a metafictional dimension. They respectively relate the narrator's first and last day of residence in a mental clinic and deal with her trauma of identification in exile. Advised by her doctor to compose her memories, the narrator becomes finally able to find a remedy for her split personality, for her recurrent oscillations between past and present. The two stories address the relationship between self-narration and identity. The act of self-narration makes it possible for the narrator to construct a closed narrative episode of the past. By narrating the past, the narrator is finally able to leave the obsessive level of character and be restored on the level of narrator with regard to her memories of the past.

CHAPTER 5

Homeland Re-Focalized: Shifted Significations and a Less Traumatized Style[1]

As pointed out in the latter part of the previous chapter, the framework stories of Taraqqi's 2002 collection *Do donya* (2002) add a metafictional level to her autobiographical stories, both to the ones included in the collection and to the ones mentioned in the volume's short introductory statement by the author.[2] If these framework narratives can be expanded to encompass all Taraqqi's autobiographical stories comprising four more narratives in which the character of the narrator can be well identified with the author herself,[3] then we will have a body of narratives produced in between the narrator's perplexed sense of selfhood (expressed in "Avvalin ruz") and her recovered, more flexible sense of the self depicted in the collection's final story ("Akharin ruz"). In this sense, Taraqqi's autobiographical stories are situated in between two different modes of self-perception: (1) the one which is affixed to an allegedly static conception of the self, frozen in a remote but familiar spatiotemporal past, and (2) the one which, in an episodic sense (as discussed in chapter four), is based on the simultaneous and ephemeral existence of different and even oppositional *selves*. The latter mode of self-perception seems to be the outcome of the autodiegetic narrator's recurrent commuting between past and present, a narrative fluctuation that gradually disturbs her absolutism regarding the signification of self and other. In this respect, the space whence the act of narration is initiated in Taraqqi's autobiographical stories, is of a liminal quality. The space of narration in these stories is located in between homeland and exile, in between familiar and foreign cultures.

From among all Taraqqi's short stories her so called memories (or *khaterehha*, as expressed in Persian) are rendered in a less traumatized and somewhat

1 This chapter is an extension of an article published previously in *Familiar and Foreign: Identity in Iranian Film and Literature* (2015) edited by Manijeh Mannani and Veronica Thompson, pp. 189–209.

2 The titles mentioned in the introductory passage are "Otobus-e Shemiran," "Khaneh-ye madarbozorg," and "Dust-e kuchak." Taraqqi, *Do donya*, p. 7.

3 The stories "Anar Banu va Pesarhayash," "Bazi-ye natamam," and "Safar-e bozorg-e Amineh" published in *Jayi digar* (2000), and the story "Madame Gorgeh" from the collection *Khaterehha* (1992).

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004356948_006

ironic style. Compared to her earlier narratives (take the *Che Guevara* stories, for example), Taraqqi's autobiographical stories are narrated in a more lighthearted and cheerful tone, even if the central topic of the stories addresses a serious and somber topic. The main premise of the current chapter, in this respect, is that Taraqqi's autobiographical narratives, all having been produced after the author's emigration to France, are of a more playful style because the process of their narration has been initiated and formed within the third space of cultural liminality. As an immigrant writer occupying a marginal space on the border of two cultures rather than at the center of one, Taraqqi is engaged in a discursive process that reveals the arbitrary, non-referential aspect of any cultural truth. On the theoretical level, therefore, the analysis in this chapter relies much on Homi K. Bhabha's deconstructionist approach towards colonial discourse. The analysis, in this respect, will focus on the discursive conceptualization of the West and the Western culture in Taraqqi's *Khaterehha* (memories). Through re-presenting the cultural signification of *Farang*, a concept referring to the representation of the West in an Iranian context, Taraqqi succeeds in re-defining the semantic relationship between Iran and the West in her stories.

Accordingly, in this chapter, unlike the previous three, the narratives in question will not be studied one by one in separate subchapters. Instead, the main focus will be on the ways in which certain homeland-related discourses have been built, re-visited, and undermined in Taraqqi's autobiographical stories as a whole. The focus, in other words, will not be on the plot development of single stories but rather on the way in which the West and the Western culture (*Farang* and *Farangi*) are represented in the text. Discourse analysis, in this sense, is deployed as the main analytical approach towards the text.

Homi K. Bhabha's Approach to the Study of Colonial Knowledge

Homi K. Bhabha is considered as one of the groundbreaking theoreticians in the field of post-colonial studies. His coinage of new concepts, such as *ambivalence* and his new conceptualization of already deployed notions, such as *hybridity*, have enriched and expanded the theoretical ground for a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of power relations and the intricacies inherent in the formation and the representation of cultural identities within the contemporary multi-cultural and post-colonial state of the world. Bhabha's method in approaching his subject matter—that is, the whole body of knowledge produced through colonial discourse—is basically rooted in two different fields of humanities: semiotics (in its general usage as the study of

meaning-making through linguistic and non-linguistic signs and symbols) and psychoanalysis. In principle, Bhabha relies on a post-structuralist approach towards the construction and communication of meaning in discourse. Inspired by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), he is much influenced, among other thinkers, by Michel Foucault (1926–1984). Bhabha's discussions about the flux of signification are also influenced by Jacques Derrida's (1930–2004) deconstructionist notions of language, dealing with the instability of meaning, its ever deferred transference, and its continual difference and deviation from what it initially seemed to be conveyed by that meaning.[4] Having incorporated much from the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, Bhabha's writing focuses on the study of the conflict between the colonizer and the colonized through detecting the ambivalent and the unconscious nature of the oppressed's resistance against the colonizer.[5] Both the semiotic and the psychoanalytical approaches are expanded by Bhabha, in an interwoven way, to offer a multidimensional perspective of (1) the dynamics at work within the colonial discourse, and (2) the active (even if not always an intended) agency of the colonized in undermining the truth sought to be conveyed by that very discourse (i.e. the discourse of colonialism).[6]

Most part of Bhabha's terminology, in this respect, can be perceived on two different but correlated levels: on the textual (or discursive) level and on the mental (or psychological) level. Whereas, on the textual level, Bhabha's work deals with the self-contradictory and (for that reason) self-destabilizing nature of the colonial text (the term text, here, should be understood in its broad sense, comprising science, art, literature, history, culture, practice, and so on), the psychoanalytical level of his work approaches colonialism as a condition brought about by the colonizer's psychological state of mind, generally characterized by anxiety and fear. Bhabha in the latter sense, therefore, ventures to analyze "the West as a patient, in search of a cure for its malaise."[7] As a result, Bhabha deploys and expands upon terms such as the *stereotype*, the *mimicry*, the *uncanny*, *anxiety*, and *ambivalence* which tend to operate within his discussions as notions with a double-sided critical edge. Through these concepts, Bhabha studies colonialism as a discursive construct and, at the same time, observes it as the expression of an anxious mind, the colonizer's mind.

---

4 Huddart, *Homi*, pp. 4–5.

5 Ibid., pp. 42–45. For Freud's influence on Bhabha's conceptualization of the *Uncanny*, see: pp. 81–84.

6 Ibid., p. 62.

7 Ibid., p. 78.

In the following, both in the elaborations on Bhabha's theoretical contributions to the field of post-colonial studies and, later, in the application of his theories to Taraqqi's literature, the discussions will be focused on Bhabha's discourse-related critique of the polarized colonial understanding of the East and the West rather than on the underlying psychological assumptions that have resulted in the formation of that colonial knowledge. Although throughout the discussions, the awareness about the psychoanalytical aspect of Bhabha's theory will be retained, the analysis in particular will address Taraqqi's literature as a *textual* construct whose meaning is embedded in the semantic realm, in which it is constructed and expressed. This viewpoint is also in accordance with the approach deployed throughout most of the analyses in this work until now.

The theoretical discussion in this section will, accordingly, continue by focusing on two related concepts developed by Bhabha: (1) *hybridity*, and (2) the third space as the site of *hybridization*. Later in discussions about the signification of *Farang* in Taraqqi's autobiographical stories, Bhabha's concept of *mimicry* will also be of extensive use.

Bhabha: Cultural Hybridity

Central to the question of cultural hybridity is the definition of *culture*. In a broad sense, culture is comparable to a dynamic, always changing, never stable, network of "attitudes, mentalities and values and their expression, embodiment or symbolization in artefacts, practices and representations."[8] The term *hybrid*, in cultural hybridity, in one sense, underlines "the mixed-ness, or even 'impurity' of cultures—so long as we don't imagine that any culture is really *pure*."[9] The term *hybridity*, therefore, in its general usage, is deployed to indicate that any culture (if we can ever talk about one single culture) is a mixture of different cultures. In other words, cultures are always in a process of interaction and modification. The phenomenon of cultural interaction and the characterization of culture as an impure construct have been referred to and theorized through different terms by different thinkers. Many of these terms are "metaphorical."[10] Peter Burke, in his illuminating work on the definition and the critical history of the concept *cultural hybridity*, refers to an array of such metaphors, metaphors employed from the terminology of different scientific and cultural branches to refer to and describe the impure nature of any culture. Some of these metaphors, drawn, for example, from "economics, zoology,

8 Burke, *Cultural*, p. 5.

9 Huddart, *Homi*, p. 6.

10 Burke, *Cultural*, p. 34.

metallurgy, food and linguistics" have been used respectively through terms of "borrowing, hybridity, the melting pot, the stew and, finally, translation."[11] Burke, then, indicates that he finds the linguistic metaphors such as "translation" as more clarifying than the other metaphors used in this context.[12] Before discussing the propriety of the term "translation" in reference to the linguistic aspect of cultural interaction or "cultural exchange,"[13] it is of relevance to mention two other thinkers that, prior to Bhabha, have employed the term *hybridity* in their critical theories to underline a certain type of mixed-ness: Mikhail Bakhtin and Edward Said.

Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian philosopher, semiotician, and literary critic has used the term hybridity "in its philological sense" to refer to the "way in which language, even within a single sentence, can be double-voiced."[14] In other words, in Bakhtin's theory, hybridity is used as the concept that "describes the condition of language's fundamental ability to be simultaneously the same but different." In this sense, Bakhtin defines hybridization as a literary technique—extensively employed by Dostoyevsky—the immediate effect of which turns to be ironic. Bakhtin's notion of hybridization describes "the ability of one voice to ironize and unmask the other, within the same utterance."[15] Therefore, hybridity, in its Bakhtinian sense, refers to the mixed-ness of meaning in a single statement where the simultaneity of different meanings results in irony.

In post-colonial studies, the term hybrid is also mentioned in the work of Edward Said in the sense that "all cultures are involved in one another" and that no culture "is single and pure." In his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said refers to cultures as "hybrid" and "heterogeneous."[16] In the introduction to the same work, he announces his "principal aim" as "not to separate, but to connect;" acknowledging that "cultural forms are hybrid, mixed, impure," he states that "the time has come in cultural analysis to reconnect" the theory of cultures "with their actuality."[17] Although Said, immediately, mentions that

---

11 Burke, *Cultural*, p. 34. Burke, here, has referred to Baron, Robert. "Amalgams and Mosaics, Syncretism and Reinterpretations: Reading Herskovits and Contemporary Creolists for Metaphors of Creolization." *Journal of American Folklore*. Spec. Issue of *Creolization* 116 (2003): 88–115.

12 Ibid., p. 35. Another linguistic metaphor Burke refers to is "creolization."

13 Ibid., p. 42.

14 Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 20.

15 Ibid. See also: Bakhtin, Mikhail M., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. pp. 80–82 and 358–9.

16 Burke, *Cultural*, p. 51. See also: Said, *Culture and*, p. xxix.

17 Said, *Culture and*, p. 15.

"[a]s the twentieth century moves to a close, there has been a gathering awareness … of the lines *between* cultures,"[18] his main attention remains on the questions of cultural inclusion and exclusion in the encounters of cultures.[19] Said's viewpoint is similar to that of Bhabha's, (discussed below) in relying on frontal effects but differs from his in its primary assumption that there should initially exist some homogeneous cultures that through exposure, influence, and interaction *become* impure.

In "The Commitment to Theory," published alongside his most important essays in *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha emphasizes that "[c]ultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in their relation of Self to Other."[20] For Bhabha, any assumption that approaches the matter of identity, in general, and cultural identity, in particular, as the relationship between two distinct and different entities such as "one's self and other," or "subject and object," can turn to be "very damaging in its consequences."[21] David Huddart clarifies Bhabha's point by indicating that:

> If you know only too well where your identity ends and the rest of the world begins, it can be easy to define that world as other, different, inferior, and threatening to your identity and interests. If cultures are taken to have stable, discrete identities, then the divisions between cultures can always become *antagonistic*.[22]

Bhabha's deployment of the term hybridity serves to undermine any definition of cultural identity that may result in the so called "*antagonistic*" encounter of cultures. Therefore, on one level, hybridity, in Bhabha's theory, too, refers to the implications of the term discussed above, to "the fact that cultures are not discrete phenomena; instead, they are always in contact with one another, and this contact leads to cultural mixed-ness."[23] However, the significance of Bhabha's usage of the term hybridity is in his insistence "less on hybridity than on *hybridization*."[24] For Bhabha, cultures are not only hybrid in their present state because of having interacted with other cultures but, in fact, cultures strongly depend on marginal encounters for whatever form they have

18 Said, *Culture and*, p. 15.
19 Ibid.
20 Bhabha, "The Commitment," pp. 35–36.
21 Huddart, *Homi*, p. 6.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., p. 7.
24 Ibid.

so far taken. Bhabha "insists on hybridity's ongoing process." His emphasis is on the fact that "there are no cultures that come together leading to hybrid forms; instead, cultures are consequence of attempts to still the flux of cultural hybridities."[25] What is, therefore, referred to as culture (in its differentiating sense, such as national culture, ethnic culture, and so on) is only an artificial, fictional, political, or strategic construct. Bhabha's theory of hybridity, in this respect, shifts critical attention from the definite central metropolitan culture to its indefinite margins as the site in which the phenomenon of hybridization is continually at work with its full dynamic force.

Bhabha: Third Space and Cultural Translation

As it has been so far discussed, the point of departure for Bhabha's view on culture is not placed at the center of culture but rather on its margins. In order to study the dynamics of the process that results in the mingling of cultures, or hybridization, Bhabha's focus is directed to those places where the interaction between cultures is most visible, that is, the spaces *in-between* identities, or *in-between* cultures. It is, indeed, somewhat difficult to think about words such as edges, margins, borderlines, or even the proposition *between* without thinking about concrete and well delineated entities (here, concrete and well delineated identities or cultures, the very idea of which is already undermined by Bhabha). In this respect, it is important to note that when Bhabha refers to such spatial terms, he is *not* assuming a distinctly polarized image of different cultural identities designated as self and other; but instead when talking about borderlines, margins, in-between spaces, and so on, he is, in principle, referring to those "radically *open*"[26] spaces within which there is a greater *intensity* of cultural diversity and, thereby, cultural blending. Bhabha characterizes such spaces by the term *liminal*. For him, "*liminal*" spaces are paradoxically "*central* to the creation of new cultural meaning;" they are, in fact, regarded as the "proper *location* of culture."[27] As a literal form of spatiality, liminal spaces are to be found, for example, within multicultural societies, where the so-called native and migrant identities meet, or have a greater chance of meeting.

What is stated above, however, is a bird-eye-view of Bhabha's theory concerning liminality or, as he refers to it, the "Third Space."[28] The above explanation gives a long-shot image depicting the practical application of Bhabha's theory to understanding and examination of the sociocultural conditions of

25 Huddart, *Homi*, p. 7.

26 Soja, "Thirdspace," p. 50. My emphasis.

27 Huddart, *Homi*, p. 7. My emphasis.

28 See: Bhabha, "The Commitment," pp. 36–39.

multi-cultural societies, where the notion of identity is discussed in terms of *cultural* difference. But, in fact, in theorizing the concept of third space, Bhabha starts from a close-shot focusing on the encounter between individuals—between the individual self and the individual other (provided that such a polarized view of self and other is, at least, temporarily imaginable). The crucial starting point for Bhabha is the instant of the articulation of a statement within which the pronoun "I" (intended to refer to the speaking self) is uttered.[29] The usage of the pronoun "I" has several implications. It is the pronouncement of the identity of the speaking self; but, simultaneously, it implies that the communication is taking place between the self and an *other*. By using the pronoun "I," the uttering self intends, in the first place, to refer to himself or herself (i.e. to signify the self); but, while uttering the sentence, he or she underlines the existence of an addressee, an already othered entity, or simply the listening "You."[30] On the linguistic level, Bhabha then distinguishes between the different significations of the pronoun "I" as: (1) "the subject of a proposition (*énoncé*)," and (2) "the subject of enunciation."[31] By the term "subject of a proposition," Bhabha basically refers to the meaning of the pronoun "I" signifying the individual who has uttered the statement (i.e. the speaking person); whereas "the subject of enunciation" refers to the semantic function of the pronoun "I" in the statement, after it is already uttered and thrown out—that is, in the statement now distanced from the addressor, the statement in the void. If any statement containing the pronoun "I" is taken out from its context, both the "I" as the addressor and the implied "You" as the addressee of that statement lose their points of reference and become ambiguous.[32] In other words, there is always a temporal gap, or "a disruptive temporality of enunciation,"[33] as Bhabha puts it, between the instant a statement (containing the pronoun "I") is uttered meaningfully by the addressor and the moment it is perceived meaningfully by the addressee. The "I" and the "You," symbolizing self and other, momentarily and with deferment, might make sense; but their meanings are instantly lost in the ambiguous space of the void. Any meanings

29 Bhabha, "The Commitment," p. 36. Bhabha's conceptualization on the linguistic aspect of the Third space has its origin in poststructuralist theories such as Jacques Derrida's and Emile Benveniste's. See also: Young, "The Void."

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Young, "The Void," p. 82. As Young states, referring to Emile Benveniste and Otto Jespersen, this is true about all pronouns. "Pronouns," according to Young, are "words that have no meaning without a context."

33 Bhabha, "The Commitment," p. 37.

defining or attributed to the self (the "I") and the other (the "You") are, in this sense, unstable and unfixed.

Think about this in a broad sense. Any statement, cultural narrative, ritualistic activity, ideology, historical account, and, in short, any representational practice, intended to define the self vis-à-vis an other becomes devoid of stable meaning in the gap between self and other. In this respect, when Bhabha talks about the third space, he highlights two factors in particular that define the phenomenon of liminality regarding the relationship between identities: (1) the temporal gap between utterance and its signification, and (2) the de-contextualized state of any enunciation (or statement). While the first point stresses deferred signification, the latter necessitates re-contextualization. Third space, in this sense, can be defined as the temporal and semantic gap in between identities, at the moment of the encounter between self and its other, at the very moment when any narrative of truth attributed to either of them is destabilized. Third space is mainly a semantic realm within which meanings are shifted and displaced from their original and illusively stable points of reference; it is the site within which different, and even oppositional meanings are simultaneously possible. The concept of third space, as Soja underlines, is an attempt to encourage "spatial thinkers to set aside the demands to make an either/or choice and contemplate instead the possibility of a both/and also logic."[34] According to Bhabha, "before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate" the "hybridity" of cultures we should "understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in … [a] contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation."[35] This "contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation" is, in fact, what Bhabha conceptualizes as the third space. So, Bhabha's third space, in principle, "is the site of enunciation:"[36]

> Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, [is that] which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.[37]

The verb *translate* in the above passage is a key term for understanding the semantic characteristics of the third space. Earlier, it was indicated that *cultural*

34 Soja, "Third Space," p. 50.

35 Bhabha, "The Commitment," p. 37.

36 Young, "The Void," p. 82.

37 Bhabha, "The Commitment," p. 37.

hybridity as a social process has been conceptualized through a variety of metaphorical terms that actually refer to the same phenomenon.[38] Peter Burke, discussing the term cultural hybridity, emphasizes his preference for the deployment of linguistic metaphors, such as "translation," over other terms.[39] Since, within third space (in the way Bhabha defines it), all representational narratives and practices need to be re-contextualized in order to signify a meaning, and since Bhabha theorizes third space as the space of enunciation, the term *translation* (directly addressing the act of signification) seems to be a proper term to be highlighted in this context. Meaning, in the third space, has to be re-constructed. The process is one of "translation and negotiation."[40] The term cultural translation, in this respect, is attributed to the ongoing process of meaning-making in between cultures, in between identities, where the original meanings have already lost their points of reference. Cultural translation, in other words, is the process through which both culture and consciousness become hybrid through absorbing and constructing different (and even contrasting) conceptions of truth and re-arranging them horizontally (as opposed to vertically); it refers to a condition under which power relations and solid structures of subject/object, true/false, and either/or are all destabilized.

Goli Taraqqi and Her Authorial Stance within the Third Space

As discussed earlier, Goli Taraqqi's so called autobiographical narratives—though different in their plots and subject matters—share some outstanding features when it comes to the question of style. Other than only a few stories related in a rigid and somewhat depressive tone,[41] all of Taraqqi's post-emigration stories are rendered through a relatively lighthearted language. By the term lighthearted, I basically mean to refer to a rather reduced degree of personal involvement, a sort of nonjudgmental attitude, and even an objective reassessment of events during the act of narration. Of course, the way Taraqqi characterizes the narrator or, more specifically, the narrator-focalizer of most of her autobiographical stories has, indeed, a great impact on her style. The author's recurrent deployment of her young self in rendering the stories, for example, makes all the events to be focalized and represented through observing and experiencing eyes rather than through detecting and judging eyes.

38 Burke, *Cultural*, p. 34.

39 Ibid., p. 35.

40 Ibid., p. 38.

41 "Khaneh'i dar aseman" and "Avvalin ruz" are among the examples.

Nevertheless, Taraqqi's lighthearted style can also be regarded as the outcome of her special authorial stance. As an Iranian immigrant, living in Paris and dealing with the perplexities caused by displacement, Taraqqi is situated in a liminal position. Her stories both produced within a marginal stance in between two cultures and reflecting upon the obsessive duality caused by displacement can be taken as fine textual pieces reflective of the act of cultural translation. In Taraqqi's stories, the absolute definitions of the familiar self and the foreign other are radically modified. Seriously power-laden and hierarchical distinctions are all toppled down and leveled side by side on equal ground.

Before starting with the analytical section, it is proper to mention the titles of all the stories that will be examined and referred to in this chapter once again for clarification: the stories in focus are "Otobus-e Shemiran," "Dust-e kuchak," "Khaneh-ye madarbozorg," "Madame Gorgeh," and "'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef dar ghorbat," from the collection *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992); "Bazi-ye natamam" (The unfinished game) and "Anar Banu va pesarhayash" (Anar Banu and her sons) from the collection *Jayi digar* (2000); and the stories "Khanomha" (The ladies), "An su-ye divar" (On the other side of the wall), "Golha-ye Shiraz," "Fereshtehha," and "Pedar," from *Do donya* (2002). "Madame Gorgeh" and "'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef dar ghorbat" have been already discussed in detail in chapter three; but they include some elements that are worth to be examined also in the present chapter.

Farang: An Equivalent of the West?

One of the key concepts in Taraqqi's later publications is the notion of *Farang* and its signification. Etymologically, the term Farang is the Persianized equivalent of the word France. The adjective Farangi is, thus, generally used to indicate an association with Farang (France, and hence Europe).[42] The terms Farang and Farangi, in the past, have been used to refer to "the people and lands of Christendom" but since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries they refer to "the West and Westerners in general, more specifically to the lands and peoples of Europe and North America."[43]

Almost all the stories published in Taraqqi's second-phase collections (1992–2002) deal, in one way or another, with the notion of Farang.[44] Although Taraqqi does not necessarily foreground Farang as the central theme of these

42 "Farang," *Dehkhoda*.

43 Ghanoonparvar, *In a Persian*, pp. 2–3.

44 Although the stories "Derakht-e golabi", "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man," and "Jayi digar" deal with the concept of space (as also specified in the title of the collection), they do not specifically deal with the question of the exilic situation as the result of emigration.

stories, the word itself, its connotations and the ironic references to the notion permeate her narratives. Generally speaking, the concept of Farang in Taraqqi's work comes up in two types of stories: first, in those which are primarily set in exile (after emigration) but continue with the reconstruction of a temporally and spatially remote homeland, mainly depicted in the author's autobiographical flashbacks (the examples being "Otobus-e Shemiran," "Dust-e kuchak," "Golha-ye Shiraz,") and, second, in the stories which are specifically set in France and narrate the experience of displacement (e.g. "Madame Gorgeh" and "'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef dar ghorbat"). While in the stories belonging to the former group, the concept of Farang, alongside its attributes, is represented positively, those of the latter reflect a counter-Farangi discourse.

Taraqqi's upper-middle class characters, when located in Iran, are depicted as individuals infatuated with Farang and the sociocultural connotations it communicates. Their passion for Farang is generally represented in the ways they try to *imitate* the Farangi ideal, their emulative attitude being reified in their everyday manners, cultural activities, values, and ambitions. In this respect, if Farang (in the first place, a spatial term) is socioculturally perceived as an ideal, then it can be logically inferred that the individual's transition from the location he or she already inhabits (home/Iran) to the desirable and spatially remote space of Farang (France) would result in his or her general satisfaction. However, Taraqqi's account of her characters in France proves to discredit this hypothesis. These characters are depicted as disillusioned, dissatisfied, and disoriented. In this respect, the following question is raised: what function does Farang fulfill in the sociocultural space of home/Iran that it fails to perform in France, which is allegedly the embodiment of the notion of Farang? In order to answer this question, it is important to clarify some ambiguities regarding the concept of Farang.

Farang Signified

There are certain intricacies that undermine the stability of the notion of Farang leading us to the fact that how Farang is linguistically (and hence culturally) conveyed and communicated is a discursive phenomenon and its signification is *constructed* through different contextual interactions. In this respect, one major question to be explored is the meaning of Farang.

The meaning of the word Farang is not fixed and slips based on the discourse in which it is articulated—first, based on how, where and when it is talked about and held as true, and second, based on the social practices it stimulates. In Taraqqi's stories, the most important factor influencing the meaning of Farang is the subject's transition from one sociocultural space to another (here from Iran to France)—a movement that shatters the word's

previous connotations and makes it ambiguous. In this sense, the intricacies and ambiguities concerning the signification of the term Farang in Taraqqi's stories are closely related to the concept of space. This is not simply because Farang primarily denotes Europe as a geographical locale but rather because Farang's denotative and connotative meanings shift and alter based on the location of the perceiving subject (character). Regarding the perceiving subject, here, it should be emphasized that due to Taraqqi's autobiographical style and her somewhat class-conscious approach to the events she incorporates into her narratives, the reader, in most of the cases, perceives the narratives from the vantage point of the Iranian upper middle class. In this respect, in exploring the multi-layered signification of the term Farang in Taraqqi's stories, the discussion (not always but for the most part) is limited to the perspectives of those characters who, at a certain point of time and place, are infatuated with Farang and its attractions rather than the ones who are intimidated by it.[45] Accordingly, by the location of the perceiving subject, I mean the spatial relation between the geographical standpoint of the subject both to Europe (which is primarily what Farang refers to) and to what Farang in a more sociocultural sense denotes. In this sense, there are at least three layers regarding the concept of Farang in Taraqqi's stories: The first layer of meaning is related to what Farang signifies for the subject living in Iran for whom it is perceived as a geographical point of orientation and a desirable object of emulation. The second layer is related to the moment of confrontation, the moment when the geographical distance between the subject and destination is overcome, and as a result, the subject is confronted with disillusionment and new interpretations of the concept. The third layer is related to how the signification of Farang is altered when the old and the new definitions of the term are re-considered. In this case, the admiring and emulative attitudes of the subject in Iran are re-viewed by the subject who has already been exposed to a newer signification of the term after emigration. The perceiving subject, accordingly, experiences a slippage in the signification of the concept Farang. For him or her, Farang is no longer an admirable object of imitation nor is it only associated with the biting experience of disillusionment. The meaning of Farang becomes vacillating; and the truth of the term is disturbed. Although the first and the second attitudes towards the concept of Farang function as Taraqqi's raw materials for her narratives, her retrospective authorial stance leads to an ironic style which

45 No doubt, the signification of the term Farang and the way it influences an individual's sociocultural practices is also a matter of class. But, here, I prefer to limit myself to the matter of space and dispense with the issue of class for more clarity and congruity.

undermines both. In other words, she tells us the stories from an in-between position, from the third space.

I will return to the significance of irony in the third space, the way it is constructed in Taraqqi's text, and the way it functions to nullify seemingly concrete and stable truths, later on. But, before doing so, I would like to open the discussion by focusing on the concept of Farang and what it is *supposed to* signify in the context of those of Taraqqi's narratives that are set in pre-revolutionary Iran.

Farang in Taraqqi's Childhood and Adolescent Memories: Associations

In the above, it is indicated that Farang, as a concept in Taraqqi's stories, has different layers of signification. It is an ambiguous notion the meaning and connotations of which are not fixed. Meanings of Farang are constructed, undermined, and only ephemerally re-constructed in the text of Taraqqi's stories. In order to elaborate on this fluid process of meaning-making, I would like, here, to focus on Farang's first layer of meaning. This layer, as pointed out, is related to what Farang signifies for the Europhilic character acting in a specific sociocultural context set in pre-revolutionary Iran. In other words, here, I would like to limit myself to the *associations* of the notion of Farang for those characters who, in one way or another, seem to be impressed by its attractions. In this respect, I will refer to textual instances taken from different stories to discuss two questions in particular: (1) What does Farang stand for in the context of the stories in question? And (2) How does any association with Farang result in the construction of differentiating (or defining) borderlines?

Concerning the socio-historical setting of Taraqqi's childhood and adolescent memories,[46] it is relevant to mention that European (and also North-American) cultural practices—such as dress codes, foods and beverages, arts and entertainment, and moral conventions—build up a new value system during the reign of the Pahlavis (1925–1979). These *Farangi* (associated with Farang) cultural practices, exercise hegemony over the already familiar for at least three reasons: first, because they are promoted by the state authorities; second, because they are new, unfamiliar, and exotic; and third, because of the economic superiority of the social classes that consume them. The construction of this value system elicits, in consequence, certain reactions from the

46 All of Taraqqi's childhood and adolescent memories are set in pre-revolutionary Iran, during the reign of the Pahlavis (1925–1979). These stories include "Otobus-e Shemiran," "Dust-e kuchak," "Pedar," "Khaneh-ye madarbozorg," "Bazi-ye natamam," "Khanomha," "An su-ye divar," "Golha-ye Shiraz," and "Fereshtehha."

individuals exposed to it. This reaction or attitude fluctuates between the extremes of "Europhilia" and "Europhobia."[47] In another sense, this value system functions as a point of orientation based on which subject positions or identities are constructed in a specific discursive realm. For those individuals—or social classes, on a larger scale—that are attracted to this European (or North-American) cultural commodity (often conceived as modern), certain practices, attitudes, and behaviors are associated with value-laden meanings. The introduction of such cultural practices into a society, in other words, also means that they are introduced into the social sign system of that particular region. That is, they are practiced to be perceived, and when perceived, interpreted; in short, they are practiced to *represent* something. In this sense, in order to expand our discussion about the significations of Farang in Taraqqi's literature, it is proper to see what Farang is associated with in those of her second-phase stories that are set in pre-revolutionary Iran.

Farang's Associations

The idea of Farang, in Taraqqi's childhood memories, although continuously present, is never treated as the main subject matter of the narratives. The exact word Farang and its other derivatives, such as *Farangi* (the adjective) and *Farangiha* (the plural noun referring to people from Farang), for instance, do not appear more than a couple of times in a single narrative. In the story "Golha-ye Shiraz," for example, they only appear in four cases. However, what gives the reader the impression that Taraqqi's stories are permeated with the concept and images of Farang is the kind of *discourse* constituted around the term. Farang, in Taraqqi's childhood memories, is an ever present aura encompassing all the events, characters, and relationships; it is always there, somewhere in the setting of the stories, somewhere in air. Its presence is communicated through characters' mindsets, pleasures, concerns, phobias, orientations, values, goals, and general dispositions. When it comes to its conceptual connotations, Farang, if analyzed within the discourse represented by these narratives, is generally associated, among other possible concepts, with knowledge, political awareness, rationality, progress, advanced medical science, fashion, high culture, mobility, future, modernity, beauty, goodness, and joy. In the following, in order to clarify this issue, I will focus on some exemplary excerpts within which the association of Farang with some of the concepts just mentioned is highlighted.

Whenever mentioned as a geographical locale in Taraqqi's childhood and adolescent memories, Farang (Europe or America) is perceived as the point

47 Tavakoli-Targhi, "Women of the West," p. 19.

of orientation towards which children should finally set off. Young minds are recurrently reminded that it is necessary for them to continue their prospective education in the future *abroad*, an ambiguous space located outside the borders of their homeland, an imaginary mental locale which is already defined as *the* destination in the future for the adolescents. In the story "Pedar," for instance, the narrator mentions that "sooner or later" we will be sent to "some far corner of the world to study and work" (176). The father says that "these dumbasses must go abroad," learn to "stand on their own feet and become somebody" (176). Farang, as the intended destination positioned abroad, is allegedly capable of transforming the *stupid* children ("*korrehkharha*," in the Persian text) into wise, independent grownups. More or less, the same statement is repeated in the story "Dust-e kuchak," where the narrator comparing Tuba Khanom's superstitions to her father's rationality is reminded of the latter saying: "You must go to America and be educated … you must make money and be somebody" (46).[48] Parviz, the neighborhood gallant of the story "Golha-ye Shiraz," is another example of this issue. Parviz, whose parents are described by the phrase "like Farangiha" (resembling people from Farang) (113), will soon leave Iran for the U.S. to complete his education there (122). The repetitious representation of the West, referred to by the terms Farang or *kharej* (abroad), or simply through the names of the related countries or continents, as the locale for education, makes the conceptual signification of the West to be evolved into the very source of knowledge and science. Farang, in this sense, is signified as the geographical spot within which young Iranian people would be modified from ignorant into knowledgeable, from nobodies into somebodies.

The connotation of Farang as the source of knowledge and science is also communicated by the fact that in case of any kind of illness and health-threatening malady, the characters are inclined to receive the treatment in Farang (or in *kharej* (abroad)). In the case of the narrator's illness, in the story "Otobus-e Shemiran," for example, "the father is becoming more and more convinced in the genius of European doctors [(*doktorha-ye Farangi*, in the Persian text)]. They cure any disease with one prescription," he says (17).[49] Khanom Naz, the sulky, pretentious character of "Khanomha," to mention another example, boastingly lies to the narrator about her husband's absence by saying that "he has gone abroad for therapy" (58). In the story "Pedar," the Iranian doctors disappointedly indicate that "the only possibility for the father's recovery (if there is ever any) is to take him abroad" (190). In "Golha-ye Shiraz," Gol Maryam's father, if not an authentic Farangi himself, is described

48 Taraghi, "My Little," p. 38.

49 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 19.

as a doctor who has been living abroad, in France, for the most part of his life; he has always been rational and had a scientific point of view *like* Farangiha" (106). In this latter case, Gol Maryam's father, despite having stopped practicing medicine, is given an additional credit as a doctor, since he has been living and educated in the West. On one level of meaning, in this sense, in Taraqqi's childhood and adolescent memories, the colonial binary of Western Doctor vs. Eastern Patient is emphatically reinforced. Nevertheless, as it will be later discussed, there is much more to the representation of the relationship between the West and the East in Taraqqi's stories. No colonial binaries, in Taraqqi's narratives, are to be left unchallenged.

Concerning the individuals' appearance and how they look, beauty, good smell, and being chic and fashionable are the factors that are recurrently attributed to Farang, or Europeans, in Taraqqi's memories. The beauty of Svetlana, the Russian antagonist of "Dust-e kuchak," for instance, has been pointed out in at least five passages in the text of the story.[50] Svetlana's long blond hair and her blue eyes have threateningly haunted the narrator to the extent that she constantly feels to be an inferior to her; "she is not like us," the narrator states, "she is well shaped and fair-skinned. I feel her superiority" (33).[51] Somewhere else, Svetlana is described as someone who "smells good" and "knows things we can't even dream of" (31–2).[52] In this latter example, good smell has, by itself, become a sign that, in an irrelevant way, is abruptly linked to Svetlana's omniscience—the excerpt underlines once more the cultural signification of Farang as the source of knowledge. In another instance, Svetlana's long blond hair and her European style of beauty are associated with her boundless power, with her omnipotence: "Her golden hair bobs on her shoulder," describes the narrator, "she is so doll-like it scares me. To me, she is an omnipotent sorceress, and if she notices me she'll skin me alive" (45–6).[53]

Among other characters whose looks and dressing style represent an association with Farang is the narrator's mother. She reappears in most of Taraqqi's childhood memories and has a constant presence as a character representing a favorable attitude towards Farang. In the story "Otobus-e Shemiran," for example, the mother is described in the following words:

50 Taraqqi, "Dust," pp. 30, 31, 33, 43, and 46.

51 Taraghi, "My Little," p. 29.

52 Ibid., p. 28.

53 Ibid., p. 37.

بوی مادر با تمام بوها فرق دارد. بویی است که از عطر و پودر فرنگ می‌آید، از آرتیست‌های سینما و مجله‌های مُد.... مادر بوی روزهای آینده را می‌دهد، بوی فردا و تمام چیزهای خوبی که در انتظار من است.

> My mother smells different from anything else. Hers is the smell of [Farang's] perfume and powder, of film stars, Fashion magazines .... Mother smells of future days, of tomorrow, and all the good things that are in store for me.[54] (10)

Here again, good smell is associated with Farang. The smell of the mother is explicitly compared to the imported Farangi cosmetics and the media through which Farang is visually represented within the cultural context of Iran: cinema and fashion magazines. But apart from this, the olfactory element is extended to be connected to the idea of a good future. Farang is associated with the time yet to come, with an imaginary prospective future, full of *good* things.

Farang functions as a differentiating factor in the social and cultural spheres depicted in the setting of Taraqqi's memories. In other words, Farang and that which is represented by it delineate the boundaries of difference—the difference between the ones who can offer (economically, culturally, and ideologically) to enjoy the so called privileges of the West and move, supposedly, towards modernity, progress, and an enlightened future, on the one hand, and the ones who simply remain behind in a less privileged position, on the other. Our discussion will continue, in the following, by examining those passages within which Farang, while being associated with the superior West, is considered to be a criterion based on which identity borders are delineated within Taraqqi's stories.

Farang: A Differentiating Element

As just examined, Farang's positive connotations in the sociocultural context of Taraqqi's childhood memories is symbolically associated with notions that reproduce the hierarchical binary of the West vs. the East, the priority of position, of course, given the former. The mere fact that Farang and, with extension, the Farangi practices do communicate specific meanings in a cultural context suffices to draw the conclusion that Farang and its connotations tend to be utilized by groups and individuals in acts of representation—a discourse-dependent semantic activity through which, as discussed in the

54 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 14. The word *Farang* has been eliminated in Farrokh's translation.

previous chapter, identities are constructed and communicated. Accordingly, it is important, to demonstrate how the concept of Farang (laden with particular values and significations, in the context of Taraqqi's narratives) is depicted as a notion based on which defining borderlines, both virtual and actual (physical), are delineated in the setting of Taraqqi's autobiographical stories, borderlines that differentiate Farangi individuals from the rest, borderlines that sketch the outline of specific Farangi spaces within the narrative settings. In the present section, the attention will be on those textual instances through which the defining boundaries between the Farangi and its other are emphatically outlined.

Virtual borderlines, separating Farangi identities from the common, familiar or simply, non-Farangi characters in Taraqqi's memories, are perceived in those passages where the *difference* between certain characters is foregrounded. In such cases, usually, the character in question is described to be special or totally different from others in some aspects. This character, to whom often Farangi characteristics are ascribed (explicitly or by implication), is, in fact, singled out and separated from others through *spatial* idioms or metaphors. In this sense, the term *virtual borderline* is used to refer to those *metaphorical* (or symbolic) elements in the text deployed to delineate the difference between Farangi and non-Farangi identities. The adjective *virtual* is used to underline the notion's contrast from physical space delineations where actual urban spaces are highlighted. In the story "Dust-e kuchak," for example, this issue can be observed in the scene where Svetlana, the school's Russian newcomer, is introduced to the narrator's class:

> در کلاس باز می‌شود. خانم مدیر است. پا می‌شویم، می‌ایستیم، همهٔ سرها به طرف خانم مدیر می‌چرخد. صدا از کسی در نمی‌آید. در چهارچوب درِ کلاس دختری باریک و بلند ایستاده است؛ شبیه به هیچ یک از شاگردان مدرسه نیست. شبیه به من یا دوست کوچک هم نیست. موهای بلندِ طلایی دارد و چشمهای بزرگ آبی.

> The door opens and there stands the head mistress. We all jump to our feet and stand at attention. We look at her in awe and complete silence. With her is a tall, slender girl, framed by the doorway. She doesn't look like any one of us. She is not even like me or my friend. Her hair is long and blond, and she has big blue eyes.[55] (30)

55 Taraghi, "My Little," p. 27.

The already discussed Farangi appearance of Svetlana, in the passage above, is the factor that makes her be differentiated in this particular scene; as indicated in the text, she looks different from all the other students at school. In this specific scene, Svetlana's overall figure is framed within the structure of the door, which, on the visual level, acts as the encircling line that both separates Svetlana from the rest of the students and, at the same time, brings her into particular focus.

Another instance of separation through virtual identity borderlines can be detected in "Golha-ye Shiraz." From her first encounter with Gol Maryam (the central character of the story), the narrator points to the invisible borderlines between Gol Maryam and the rest of the members of their dancing group. Gol Maryam, whose manners, life style, and general appearance are recurrently compared to people from Farang, drives back home in a car which has dark gray glass. The narrator wonders "why the inside of the car cannot be seen from outside" (106). Gol Maryam is described by the narrator as someone exceptional, "someone who belongs to another tribe;" she is also referred to as "*tafteh-ye joda bafteh*," in the Persian text (99). In all the three cases mentioned, Gol Maryam is positioned on the other side of the differentiating borderlines. The car she drives in is visually impenetrable; and she is explicitly compared to an outsider, the indigenous of another tribe, the native of another community. The expression "*tafteh-ye joda bafteh*," in this context, has the most conspicuous metaphorical implication. It refers to a piece of thread that is not woven into the whole texture, and, thereby, remains separate from the intertwined threads. Gol Maryam, in this sense, is compared to an entity which is not perceived as a part of its context. Interestingly enough, the same expression is used in the story "Khanomha," to describe Khanom Naz's desperate infatuation with Farang by referring to her self-adoring pretentious manners. Khanom Naz "is in love with herself," comments the narrator, "she is proud of the light color of her hair and complexion. She thinks she is a Farangi and considers herself as *tafteh-ye joda bafteh*" (36). In the case of Khanom Naz, Farang and resembling Farangiha in terms of appearance are explicitly underlined as the factors that bring about the condition of being different from the rest, the condition of being represented as that piece of thread that remains aloof from the rest of the texture. Nevertheless, in the course of the story, Khanom Naz's Faranginess is depicted as a fake one in comparison to the allegedly more authentic way the narrator's family resembles the culture of Farang.

Following what has been just indicated above, the consciousness about the function of Farang as a differentiating factor is well highlighted at the opening of the story "Khanomha." As soon as Khanom Naz and her sister, distant relatives of the narrator's family, enter the Shemiran house, the mother tries

to build up the separating borderline in between her family members and the new outsiders. The arrival of the sisters, compared to the "invasion of an alien tribe" threatens the security and habitual order of the narrator's house:

> مادر، نگران از حضور [آنها]، ... با سرعت دیواری نامرئی میان ما و آنها می‌کشد—ما که آشنا با غرب و علم و تجدد هستیم و آنها که عقب مانده و خرافاتی‌اند و از حاشیهٔ کویر می‌آیند.
>
> Mother, worried by [their] presence, ... quickly sets up an invisible wall between us and them—us who are familiar with the West, science, and modernity, and them who are backward and superstitious and come from the margins of the desert. (31)

Familiarity with the West, representing "science" and "modernity," is the criterion that determines the difference between the inhabitants of the Shemiran house and the new outsiders. The two sisters, as indicated in the passage above, are essentially characterized as the West's others, that is, as "superstitious" (unscientific) and "backward" (unmodern). Moreover, through being juxtaposed to the marginal geographical origin of the guests, the narrator's house comes forth to occupy a central position. In this respect, not only does the association with the West guarantee the essential differences between individuals, but it is also depicted as the determining factor for deciding who belongs to the center and who should be relegated towards the margins. The "invisible wall" constructed by the mother in between the members of the house and the newcomers is, in fact, a symbolic representation of the frontal line that defines self *against* other or, as stated in the text, "us" *against* "them." Previously, in this chapter, it was indicated that if identity is defined in terms of a dualistic relationship of the self to other, the division between them "can always become *antagonistic*."[56] The antagonism between self and other, in the passage above can be seen both in the hegemonic relationship of center to margin and in the symbolic comparison of the confrontation between the two through the term "invasion."

In the context of Taraqqi's childhood memories, Farang's function as a cultural concept appropriated by characters in representational practices and in the process of identity construction is not limited to the formation of what we have so far referred to as virtual identity borderlines—the "invisible wall," just discussed above, being an example of the case. Looking at the spatial settings

56 Huddart, *Homi*, p. 6.

of Taraqqi's retrospective narratives, it is possible to detect actual spatial boundaries within the urban space of Tehran—physical spaces made of bricks and cement—that are perceived and identified as Farangi spaces by the narrator and other characters, since they *represent* Farang.

From among Taraqqi's autobiographical memories, in four stories, namely, "Khanomha," "Golha-ye Shiraz," "Fereshtehha," and "Khaneh-ye madarbozorg," the main plot incidents are consolidated against the background of the urban space of Tehran in the fifties. These four stories contain passages that describe certain streets, neighborhoods, districts, and buildings (such as cinemas, theaters, restaurants, and shopping centers) in Tehran from the viewpoint of an adolescent who is eagerly excited by the mere site of these spaces and also by the cultural products offered within their spatial territory. Both these territories and what is practiced within them are represented as the wonders of modernization, the source of which is identified as the West or, in recurrent cases, as Farang. Such spaces and cultural practices provoke a sort of positive excitement on the part of the beholder (here, mainly, the narrator-focalizer) due to their unfamiliar and exotic nature as well as the narrator's adolescent urge for new experiences and discoveries.

Tehran, in Taraqqi's narratives set in pre-revolutionary Iran, especially in the ones mentioned above, is delineated as a city on the verge of change. This change is of a spatial nature; not only is it rooted in remote places and geographies (such as Europe or America), but it also constructs new boundaries within the larger space it enters. Tehran, as an urban space, in this respect, is charted into specific territories that reflect the impact of this change and its cultural and geographical source. Among the recurrent examples of the case are the avenues Lalehzar and Istanbul, located in Tehran's modernized downtown, which have a highlighted presence in Taraqqi's stories.

On Tehran's map today, Lalehzar Avenue extends from Emam Khomeyni Square (previously, Tupkhaneh Square) in the south and cuts Enqelab Street in the north. On its left and right, it parallels, respectively, Ferdowsi and Sa'di Avenues. The history of its construction goes back to the late 19th century in the Qajar period (1785–1925). Apparently, upon his return from his first trip to Farang (France) in 1873, Naseraddin Shah, having been impressed by the neat and beautiful Parisian streets decides to have an Iranian version of Champs-Élysées in Tehran. The large Lalehzar garden was sold; the trees where cut; and the lands where divided among the intimate circle around the Shah.[57] The street, named after the garden, gradually turned into one of the most modern and attractive features of Tehran, where the latest European fashion was

57 Shahri, *Tehran-e qadim*, p. 276.

displayed in its luxurious shops. It was crowded by stylish people, "the chicest men and the most à la mode youth."[58]

In her stories, Taraqqi repeatedly describes Lalehzar Avenue as a Farangi space with all its positive attributes. There are barely any references in the text that do not underline the association between the two. In "Golha-ye Shiraz," set in the summer of 1953 amid the confusion during the overthrow of Mosaddeq's government, for instance, wandering down the streets of Tehran, the narrator, enticed by the sparkling shop-windows, cinemas, bistros, bookstores, colorful ads and posters, and fashionable dandies, comments on the Istanbul and Lalehzar Avenues in the following words:

> خیابانهای اسلامبول و لاله‌زار دو جادهٔ بهشتی‌ست که از میان خواب و خیال‌های ما عبور می‌کند و پر از وعده‌های کیف‌آور و اتفاقهای مسحور کننده است: مغازه‌های پوشاک، ... سینماها، عکس‌های هنرپیشه‌های فرنگی، ...
>
> The streets Istanbul and Lalehzar are the two heavenly roads, full of enjoyable promises and charming events, which pass through our dreams and imaginations: clothing shops, ... cinemas, posters of Farangi actors ... (96)

The streets Istanbul and Lalehzar are compared to roads leading to heaven (*behesht*, in the Persian text). Lalehzar Street, an imitative reconstruction of Farang within Tehran's urban space, is associated with the allurements of paradise. Directly linked to "enjoyable promises," "dreams," and "imaginations," the street accommodates the narrator's whimsical future dreams within her present surroundings. Suggesting the way the future would look like in days yet to come, the entire district is the visible and physical incarnation of the idea of future. Lalehzar Avenue, moreover, functions as the display window of Western modern culture. Decorated by posters and images of the so-called "Farangi actors," screening Farangi movies within its newly built cinemas, and as the converging point for Farangi style and fashion, the street is comparable to an enticing showcase representing the West in front of the exited eyes of the adolescent narrator-focalizer.

The modernized heart of Tehran with its Farangi associations repeatedly appears in Taraqqi's narratives. In "Otobus-e Shemiran," to add yet another example of the sort, describing her fashionable mother smelling of Farang's

58 Shahri, *Tehran-e qadim*, p. 278.

"perfume and powder," the narrator mentions that the mother's odor reminds her of "Lalehzar Avenue, and the Municipality Dance Hall" (10).[59] Also in the story "Khaneh-ye madarbozorg," giving the account of the family's shopping expedition for a cousin's wedding ceremony, the young narrator states that "I am in love with the Istanbul Avenue; when I inhale the smell of Farang's perfumes and powders, I feel warm, loose and drowsy inside" (61). In "Fereshtehha," the story about an acquaintance's French wife and daughter, the garden of Café Naderi (also located on Istanbul Avenue) is described to be filled with "pleasant odors" and "dazzling colors." "As it got darker," states the narrator, "the orchestra of Café Naderi started to play Western music and those who knew Farangi dances walked towards the center of the floor" (136). In the same story, Ferdowsi department store, (Iran's first department store, founded in 1957 and modeled after American prototypes),[60] is described as a wonder: "The German Café-restaurant on the store's second floor," relates the narrator, "smells of the magical foods of the Western world." The restaurant is described as "a special place" (*jayi khass*) for which "men wore cravats and women dressed up" (133–4).

Reflection of the West in Tehran's urban space in the fifties is not limited to the central parts of the city in Taraqqi's narratives. Tajrish, located in northern Tehran, is another instance of the case. Giving the account of Tajrish district, the narrator captures the discrepancy the penetration of Farangi practices has caused within Tehran's sociocultural realm. This issue is particularly well expressed in the descriptions about Tajrish in the story "Golha-ye Shiraz:" "up on the bridge," declares the narrator "Tajrish is divided into two parts" (118). Sa'dabad Street resembling a glorious party furnished with fashionable men and women is decidedly juxtaposed with the "the other side" of Tajrish—the Bazaar entrance and the district of Darband—which being "dim and less crowded" belongs to taxi and bus drivers, women wearing chadors, street fights, shouting machos, and drunken vagabonds. The borderline between the two sides of the square is emphasized by the narrator's statement that she and her friends "are not allowed to cross over to the other side" (119). They always meet in front of "Villa Ice-cream Store", where they can have the brand new Farangi fruit ice-cream; "the ice-cream that smells of another world, a world on the other side of the borderlines" (119). The two parts of Tajrish construct a spatial binary that highlights the superiority of Farang as the source of joy, the place of beauty, and the ideal object (space) of desire. The names of the streets

59 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 14.

60 Dorbeygi, "Forushgahha," p. 22.

are also quite telling: Sa'dabad (place of prosperity) and Darband (a narrow and impassable passage in the mountains).[61]

Taraqqi's adolescent recollections, set in the urban space of Tehran, are permeated with references to that which can be referred to as *imported cultural spaces*. The introductory paragraph of "Golha-ye Shiraz," for example, is full of geographical nouns and modifiers that outline different social and cultural spaces within the setting of the narrative. Among the examples is the international dancing course of the Armenian Madame Yelena. The dancers of Madame Yelena's course, the Shiraz Flowers of the title, are supposed to perform in cultural spaces such as *Talar-e Farhang* (the Hall of Culture) and Cinema Metropole (95). Not only do these cultural spaces function as vessels of performance for the newly imported cultural products (such as international dances, films, and plays), but they also vividly signify newly-constructed exotic spaces through their very names. Other than Cinema Metropole, for instance, there are two other cinemas mentioned in the story which have American names: "Cinema Mike" (103) and "Cinema Rex" (109). Even "Cinema Bahar" is immediately described as the cinema screening American films (101). All these cultural spaces, constructed within Tehran's urban space, play a significant role in the ways people practice identification. Who is interested and can afford to learn and perform such cultural activities? Who is interested and can afford to be among the audience? Who is let in and who is left out? What does one learn and adopt by being exposed to these practices? What does one abhor and shun? These are just a few of the questions based on which subjects consciously or subconsciously engage in the act of identification when exposed to imported Farangi cultural practices.

The Encounter with Farang

If Taraqqi's literary work is studied in its totality, it is clearly recognized that Farang's signification in her stories is not limited to its positive and promising connotations. Those of Taraqqi's narratives set abroad and/or addressing the matter of displacement do provide a different signification of the term, a rather gloomy one, often associated with disorientation, nostalgia, lack of self-space, loneliness, coldness, and unaffectionateness, as if the whole idea of Farang has only been an empty promise. The encounter with Farang in Taraqqi's Farang-based stories communicates disappointment and disillusionment. I will not linger on the negative representation of Farang in Taraqqi's stories at this point, since the issue has already been extensively discussed in chapters three and four. However, in order to clarify the point of discussion and help the flow

61 *Rah-e tang va sa'bol'obur dar kuh*. See: "Darband," *Dehkhoda*.

of argument, I will mention some exemplary passages, selected from some of the narratives, in which Farang and the West are directly associated with negative concepts and depressive emotions.

In the story "Madame Gorgeh," for example, the term Farang loses its positive connotations. Instead of enticing odors and magical tastes of Farang, the reader is confronted with phrases such as: "Farang's inodorous peaches … and cucumbers" (143). The amiable and enticing fragrance of Farang's cosmetics, referred to repeatedly in Taraqqi's Iran-based memories, is interpreted by Anar Banu, the old protagonist of the story "Anar Banu va pesarhayash," as an alienating odor. Her emigrated son, having washed his body with "Farangi soaps, smells like strangers" (59). "Westerners," (*gharbiha*), who have been previously regarded as civilized and progressive are re-defined as "greedy, superficial exploiters" ("Madame Gorgeh" 140). The second generation Iranians "brought up in Farang"—Farang, the place which has so far been regarded as the source of knowledge—are referred to as "illiterate" ("*bisavad*"), since they are not able to read and write in Persian ("Anar Banu" 47). Coldness and humid weather recur as a sort of objective correlative standing for the unaffectionate and depressive conditions of exile throughout the narratives set in Farang. Hearing a knock on his door, Mr. Alef ponders that there is nothing on the other side of the door but "the winds of Europe [Farang] blowing in the hallway" ("Aqa-ye Alef" 200).[62] Elsewhere, Mr. Alef blames all his worries and apprehensions on "loneliness and the consistently overcast skies of Europe [Farang]" (209).[63] In Anar Banu's story, Sweden is described as a place where one's "tears freeze in the eye and like glass particles blind it" (58). Examples of this type are quite frequent in Taraqqi's exile-related stories. These are just some random passages (among many others) in which Farang, as a spatial concept, standing for the so-called West, is referred to with negative attributes. I attempted to make mention of passages in which a direct reference to the term Farang and the West is visible. But Taraqqi's stories about the experience of exile are, in fact, permeated with long descriptive passages through which the character's new locality and its very impact on his/her emotional state of mind are well expanded upon. In such excerpts, sometimes, the character's new place of residence is simply referred to by the common adverb of place "*inja*" (here) which either explicitly or with implications is contrasted to the notion of homeland.[64]

62 Taraghi, "Mr. Alpha," p. 131.

63 Ibid., p. 137.

64 See, for example, Taraqqi, "Aqa-ye Alef," p. 185.

Farang Undermined

Earlier in this chapter, it was indicated that the concept of Farang in Taraqqi's stories has several layers of signification. So far, we have touched upon the two basic ways in which it is signified under different sociocultural circumstances, in the context of Taraqqi's narratives: (1) Farang, represented as an amiable and desirable point of orientation, and (2) Farang, associated with displacement, depression, and disorientation (mostly examined in chapters three and four). Whereas in the former case, Farang functions as a decisively influential and stimulating factor in characters' identification process, in the latter, in total contrast, it is depicted as a place within which identification becomes impossible or, at least, problematic. Seen in this particular way, Farang seems to signify two rigid and absolute truths in Taraqqi's stories which, at the same time, negate one another. This issue, by itself, is proof to the fact that Farang's denotation, like any other semantic construct, is only discourse dependent and, therefore, arbitrary. What is, however, problematic about this conclusion is that it underlines the latter interpretation of the term as the more well-founded one, since it is allegedly discovered after first-hand encounter and immediate experience; therefore, the second signification of the term, as a matter of fact, turns out to be the correction of the first and, at best, can only replace it. The negative interpretation of the term Farang, in this sense, becomes the concluding one. This is, indeed, a common case in instances of Iranian emigration literature. Examples of depressive accounts about the exilic states of emigrated characters and the harsh circumstances of exile and displacement, as mentioned in the introduction to this work, are rather frequent in works of first-generation Iranian emigrant writers. However, there is much more to the way the concept of Farang (and, by extension, the West) in Taraqqi's stories is represented. Taraqqi's childhood and adolescent memories have been composed through a process of re-contemplation. They have been written after the author's (or the autodiegetic narrator's) emigration. They have been constructed in a process of *re*-visiting the past. The past, in Taraqqi's autobiographical stories, is re-written, not only because the genre necessitates retrospection, but rather because the author appropriates her *in-between* position to produce her narratives.

Irony and the Third Space

Taraqqi as an emigrant writer, experiencing a displaced semantic existence in between two cultures—already distanced from the one within which she was defined, and located only at the margins of the new and unfamiliar one—has to translate her past into her present and vice versa to define the self and the other anew. Here, I would like to draw some links between irony, as a linguistic

and literary trope, and Homi K. Bhabha's notion of cultural translation and the third space, discussed earlier in this chapter. Through distance and objectification, the representational aspect of culture is revealed. This means that what is generally signified as the stable *truth* in a cultural discourse can easily lose its point of reference through cultural translation in the third space. In this way, the authority of truth is undermined and the effect becomes ironic. The fact that the ironic effect, as one of the consequences of occupying a third subject position, is brought about by the simultaneity of different meanings (the truth and the non-truth), here, highlights Bakhtin's influence on Bhabha's conceptualization of the third space, mentioned earlier. The third space, in this sense, is the site of irony.

Taraqqi's third subject position enables her to go back and forth between two cultural discourses. In this sense, she is constantly engaged in an act of translation in order to produce meaning. During the process of cultural translation, the representational function and the arbitrary nature of cultural practices are revealed. In her autobiographical stories, Taraqqi provides the reader with the stereotypical images and sociocultural practices that both convey and construct the Farangi discourse. What makes the stories amusing and ironic is the fact that through her in-between authorial stance and through employing other narratological strategies, she "presents a nuanced way of looking at the Other."[65] Taraqqi well engages in the process of cultural translation; in her so called *khaterehha* (memories), she, time and again, sets up the truth, convinces the reader about its reality, but suddenly or simultaneously topples it down and lightheartedly shares the reader's grin over the scene. In the following, accordingly, the discussion will continue with the detailed examination of the ways the relationship between West and East (Farang and Iran) is reformulated in Taraqqi's memories of homeland.

Farang: An Ambiguous Locale

Earlier in this chapter elaborating on the meaning of the term Farang in its rather contemporary usage, it was indicated that Farang, in a general sense, refers to "the lands and peoples of Europe and North America."[66] The term, even if clearly defined in this way, encompasses a large part of the world with diverse people, languages, races, cultures, historical narratives, and of course different geographical coordinates on the globe. In other words, although the term in question seems to have a certain definition referring to a particular space, its geographical signification is only illusively stable. In the text of

65 Nanquette, *Orientalism*, p. 140.

66 Ghanoonparvar, *In a Persian*, pp. 2–3.

Taraqqi's narratives, for example, Farang refers to places as diverse as Paris, Sweden, America, Russia, London, Belgium, Canada, and Armenia. But apart from the multi-referential usage of the term, the ambiguity of Farang as a spatial concept is highlighted through the vagueness of the way its geographical location is mapped within certain passages in Taraqqi's narratives.

The story "Anar Banu va pesarhayash" includes several passages in which the geographical position of Sweden is defined in the unrealistic and metaphorical language of a fable,[67] a characteristic that transforms Sweden from a real place encompassed by and strictly defined within its geopolitical borders to an unreal and fictional land existing nowhere outside the world of fantasy. Relating the story of her sons' departure and the objective of her journey, Anar Banu tells the narrator about her bewilderments trying to know where Sweden was located: "Where is Sweden? I asked around. In our village nobody knew where Sweden was.... People said you should travel across seven seas" (57). Anar Banu should set off on a quest-like journey in order to reunify with her sons, now living in a vague place located somewhere "across the seven seas." The "seven seas," or "*haft darya*", is a "figurative term referring to all the seas and oceans of the world."[68] The usage of the phrase in Iranian classical literature is rather metaphorical standing for long distances and obstructed and laborious progress towards a certain goal, or being lost and disoriented.[69] Elsewhere, Anar Banu declares "at first, we thought Sweden is somewhere in Iran, one of the villages of the North perhaps. Then, we found out it is on the other side of the world" (58). The geographical coordinates of the intended destination, located "on the other side of the world," continues, in this sense, to remain indefinite. Anar Banu's sons, on the contrary, encourage their mother to go to Sweden by indicating that the country is not much far away, at all; according to them, Sweden is just "behind the gate" ("*posht-e darvazeh*"), an archaic way of expressing that something is just around the corner (67). Sweden, as a spatial notion, in this respect, is represented as the nowhere-land of a fictional world; it can be as distant as it can be nearby. Reaching there might be even "easier than going to Mashhad"

67 For discussion about the generic features of "Anar Banu va pesarhayash" as a fable, see: Nanquette, *Orientalism*, pp. 134–137.

68 "The ancient Hindus, Chinese, Persians, Romans and more referred to the *Seven Seas* as completely different bodies of water." See: *World Atlas*, "What and Where."

69 Notice the significance of the phrase in the following line of Rumi's *Divan-e Shams*, for example: "*Haft aseman ra bardaram vaz haft darya bogzaram/Chon delbaraneh bengari dar jan-e sargardan-e man*."

(according to her sons), or as challenging as climbing over the "seven mountains," as the chief of the village claims it to be (67). Even the narrator of the story, represented as a modern and a much travelled woman, does not seem to know much about Sweden. As she casts a look at Anar Banu's ticket, she ponders, "Gothenburg. I am bad in geography; Gothenburg is apparently a city in Sweden. Where in Sweden? I don't know" (65).

An Ironic representation of Farang as an ambiguous place is emphasized through the character of Khanom Naz in the story "Khanomha." Khanom Naz, a far relative of the narrator and one of the two sisters spending a summer with the narrator's family in the Shemiran house, is generally characterized as a pretentious and sulky person faking religious piety and morality. She is, in effect, a showy liar. In order to receive social approval, especially in the presence of the narrator's family (characterized as "familiar with the West and modernity," at the opening of the story) (31), Khanom Naz forces her excessively obedient husband to boast about his made-up political connections and his imaginary recurrent travels to Farang (37–8). Everyone in the family, including the young narrator, knows that the husband is making everything up to please the wife: "Mr. Hesam does not have a good memory," describes the narrator in a playful language, "and the dates of his travels to Farang shift between five to ten years" (38). There is only one time in the story that Khanom Naz and her husband actually travel to Farang, to Belgium. Khanom Naz is obsessed with Belgium; but "if she is asked where Belgium is, she will certainly give a vague answer" comments the narrator (56). On their arrival in Belgium, Khanom Naz tumbles down an escalator and breaks her leg. She spends two days in the hospital and two more days in a hotel room; "nevertheless, she is satisfied with her journey to Belgium" and has a lot to relate about the place (56). Ironically, the only place she has actually been able to see in Belgium is nowhere but her hotel room:

> از اتاق هتلش هم تعریف می‌کند—تنها جایی‌ست که دیده—از کاغذ دیواری گلدار و روتختی سفید و پرده‌های مخملی سبزرنگ، ... و [از] خدمتکار موبور و چشم آبی هتل—کمی شبیه خودش—که موهایش را مثل خربوزه بالای سرش جمع می‌کرده، پیش‌بند سفید می‌بسته و می‌دانسته تهران کجاست.

> She also talks about her hotel room—the only place she has seen—about the floral wallpaper, the white bed sheets, and the green velvet curtains,... about the blond and blue-eyed maid—looking like herself—who

> collected her hair like a melon upon her head, wore a white apron, and knew where Tehran was. (57)

The meaning of Belgium (and by extension, that of Farang) remains ambiguous. Khanom Naz does not get to know about the place more than what her limited hotel room has to offer. The blue-eyed blonde represents the Farangi cliché. In order to underline her own association with Farang, Khanom Naz puts an emphasis on the way she resembles the maid in appearance.

The irony about Khanom Naz's limited knowledge about the geographical location of Belgium is foregrounded in the closure of the passage above, where it is indicated that the maid "knew where Tehran was." The irony of the sentence, at first glance, is directed to the fact that unlike Khanom Naz who does not know much about Belgium, the Belgian servant apparently knows about where Tehran is. Yet the statement is subtler than this. Although the passage is related through the narrator's mouth, it is an instance of free indirect speech. In other words, in the above passage, the narrator's voice is mingled with an echo of Khanom Naz's diction; that is, the reader can sense the character's (here, Khanom Naz's) voice, personality, and attitudes through the sentences uttered by the narrator. Accordingly, the statement in question is actually a part of all the other things Khanom Naz has supposedly experienced about Belgium and is greatly amazed by. By stating that the servant "knew where Tehran was," Khanom Naz does not praise the servant's knowledge in particular, but rather re-defines herself through the eye of a Farangi person. This is a matter of recognition; Khanom Naz has been *recognized* by a Farangi native and, therefore, she is.

Another ironic reference to Farang that highlights the concept's geographical equivocality and reveals its discursive and arbitrary nature can be observed in the case of the narrator's father. The narrator's father, throughout Taraqqi's childhood and adolescent memories, is characterized as a person in favor of the Western culture, modernity, and progress. He believes that his children must study and work hard in Europe or America and in this way turn into independent and respectable individuals (176). The father, unlike many other characters, is depicted as a true and acceptable version of a Farangi person in Taraqqi's stories. He is almost never the object of irony; and his originality and reliability are recurrently praised and foregrounded by the narrator. In the story "Pedar," for instance, the father is quoted in a serious and respectful tone: "I am [made of] steel; and steel never rusts" ("*man fuladam va fulad hargez zang nemizanad*"); the statement is abruptly followed by the narrator's verification: "and he does not lie" (176). Nevertheless, the personality of the father gradually loses its reliability as he becomes ill and his health condition deteriorates.

The narrator is disillusioned. Feeling "insulted" and "cheated" by the father's illness, she contemplates with despair and anger: "steel that was not supposed to rust is corroded from inside" (194). The father's incurable illness exposes his imperfection. Like anyone else, he is liable to err and misjudge. His fallibility is revealed in the hospital scene where having had an operation on his eyes (damaged by the illness), the blindfolded father tries to lead a conversation with the narrator:

> با دستش حرف می‌زند و نگاه می‌کند و دستش مدام به جایی دور اشاره می‌کند، جایی که با چشمهای نابینا می‌بیند. می‌گوید: «می‌فرستمت آمریکا. دلم می‌خواهد درس اقتصاد بخوانی یا دکتر بشوی.»
>
> He speaks with his hands and looks [ahead]. His hand continually points to a distant place, the place that he sees with his blind eyes. He says: "I will send you to America. I wish you study economy, or become a doctor." (195)

The geographical precision of Farang is, once more, undermined, this time, however, not through ignorant, ridiculous, or pretentious characters but rather through the stable and reliable character of the father. The repetition of space-related words—"distant," "place" (used twice), and "America,"—highlights the significance of the concept Farang as a locus, a locus which is pointed to as an intended but vague destination. Farang's positive connotations (as a point of orientation and the source of knowledge and education) are still emphasized in the text but, this time, quite ironically, by a person who pretends (or at best imagines) to see "a distant place" with "his blind eyes."

"Otobus-e Shemiran:" 'Aziz Aqa's Magic Lamp

Taraqqi's memories, as pointed out earlier, are not only recollections, but also re-interpretations of the past. The past, in Taraqqi's stories, refers to broader issues than merely a set of events, characters, and images remembered and related in a personal way by an autodiegetic narrator. There is more than nostalgic contemplation to Taraqqi's accounts of her recollected past. The main motifs of Taraqqi's memories, as indicated before, are concentrated on the relationship between the homeland-based self and the Western other re-viewed by the displaced self, located now (and ambiguously defined) in between the cultural realms of self and other. Far from homeland and only on the threshold of the so-called West, the narrator of Taraqqi's memories is engaged in a process of re-interpretation: past events and characters are re-visited; and

discursive associations are defined anew. The story "Otobus-e Shemiran" is an outstanding example of this case. The story is about the infatuation of the narrator's young self (a little school girl from an upper-middle-class family living in Tehran, most probably, in the late forties) with 'Aziz Aqa, the coarse city bus driver. The little protagonist has developed a secret emotional bond with this driver and refuses to get on any other buses, on the way back home, but the one driven by 'Aziz Aqa. Through the viewpoint of this little protagonist, the relationship between self and other is re-interpreted in this particular story.

Past Re-Visited

"Otobus-e Shemiran" opens on a serene winter day in Paris. The narrator and her daughter miss their bus and have to wait for the next. Eight years have passed from their arrival in this city. The snowfall and the misty air having created a dreamlike and peaceful atmosphere lift the author from present-time Paris back to her childhood memories of homeland in Tehran:

> به زمستانهای تهران فکر می‌کنم، به کوه‌های سفید و بلند البرز در زیر آسمانی فیروزه‌ای و به درختان عریان باغمان که به خواب رفته‌اند و غرق در رویای بازگشت پرندگان مهاجرند.
>
> I am put in mind of Tehran in winter, dominated by the tall, snow-clad Alborz peak underneath the turquoise-blue skies, the bare, sleeping trees in the far end of our garden, dreaming of the return of migrating birds.[70] (2–3)

Negotiation between the two discursive realms of homeland and exile (in Paris) is depicted right at the beginning of the story. A specific scene in Paris reminds the narrator of the past. The process of the displaced individual's swinging back and forth in between two cultural existences—a conspicuous feature of exilic conditions—is well at work. The narrator is shifted from Paris to her pre-emigration spatiotemporal state. The phenomenon of emigration is highlighted, in the depiction of a winter day in Tehran (already evoked by the Parisian winter), through the poetical image of the garden's "bare, sleeping trees" dreaming about "the return of migrating birds"—"the migrating birds," here, being a metaphorical reference to emigrated Iranians. The emigrated narrator, in this sense, is drifted back in thought to *re-visit* the past. After about two pages, the long shot, displaying the sky, the mountains, and the garden,

70 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 9.

narrows down and focuses on the figure of the ten-year-old narrator: "I see myself when I was ten," relates the narrator as she focalizes herself as a child back in time (5).[71] The narrator is now clearly involved in the act of re-viewing the past. As it will be shortly illustrated, during this process of re-visiting, in "Otobus-e Shemiran," the meaning of Farang as a sociocultural concept, connoting the superiority of the West in the context of the narrator's pre-emigration life, is undermined and re-constructed. In the following, accordingly, it will be argued that through the little protagonist's emotional bond with the character of 'Aziz Aqa and her naively fresh (that is, socially less contaminated) outlook, positive associations of Farang are well disturbed.

The Image of the Other: Identity Borderlines

'Aziz Aqa, the driver of the Shemiran bus, is a central character in the story. He is the little protagonist's constant object of attention and admiration. Although 'Aziz Aqa is portrayed as a crude and vulgar character, who looks like a beast ("*div*"), urinates on street-side trees, and drinks vodka from a bottle while driving the bus, the protagonist sees him differently and, unlike others, is not appalled or scared by him (11). She does not deny his obscenity or lack of refinement, though. No euphemism is employed in the description of 'Aziz Aqa's appearance:

> دوست من شکل دیو است و بچه‌های کوچک از او می‌ترسند. روی دست‌ها و بالای سینه‌اش خالکوبی است. از نزدیک گوش تا آن طرف گردنش خطی کلفت و بنفش کشیده شده است. انگار کسی می‌خواسته گردنش را ببرّد. مادر هیچ وقت سوار اتوبوس نمی‌شود. راننده و ماشین خودش را دارد اما می‌داند که دیوهایی مثل عزیز آقا در دنیا هستند و دلش شور مرا می‌زند. دوست ندارد با اتوبوس به مدرسه بروم اما این دستور پدر است.

> My friend has the look of a giant, scary enough to frighten small children. His hands and upper chest are covered with tattoos. There is a thick, bluish scar from one ear to the other side of his neck, as if somebody had tried to cut his head off. My mother never rides the bus. She has her own car and driver because she knows there are monsters like Aziz Agha

71 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 11.

> roaming the world. She is unhappy about my riding the bus to school. But this is my father's direct order.[72] (9–10)

Despite his eccentric looks, 'Aziz Aqa is described as a "friend" of the protagonist. But the mother, on the contrary, regards the existence of his type in the world as a threat. The mother avoids bus drivers in general, considers them as "monsters," and is concerned about her daughter's safety because of her daily bus rides to school. An unsurmountable, differentiating line is decisively drawn between the characters 'Aziz Aqa and the protagonist's mother. Fear, distrust, and the necessity of avoidance describe the relationship between the two, especially on the part of the mother whose outlook concerning the matter at hand is directly revealed to the reader by the narrator. The abhorring and generalizing attitude of the mother, regarding 'Aziz Aqa as a type, can, of course, be attributed to class relations or simply to a mother's concern for her child. However, as the story unfolds, the relationship among 'Aziz Aqa, the young protagonist, and her family takes on new meanings.

The ten-year-old narrator-focalizer of "Otobus-e Shemiran," as indicated before, is Taraqqi's key narratological strategy to counterbalance the discursive meaning of Farang in the story. Events are perceived and interpreted by the young protagonist (the adult narrator's young self) while they are simultaneously re-seen and re-elucidated by the framework story's narrator (the remembering narrator living now in Paris). In other words, the language of narration, in "Otobus-e Shemiran," is double-voiced, echoing, on the one hand, the little protagonist's naïve but fresh outlook and, on the other, the experience and wisdom of the adult narrator. While some critics attribute this narratological characteristic to the author's inability to sustain a pure narrative voice,[73] I consider it as a well-deployed technique that makes the act of re-interpretation possible in the story.

In "Otobus-e Shemiran," olfactory imagery, a recurrent feature of Taraqqi's narrative style, permeates descriptive statements and passages. Descriptions about odors, in written text, can vivify settings and characters, in a way that even visual representations cannot do. Through olfactory imagery, not only characters and settings become invigorated, but also certain moods and related subsidiary meanings complement the signification of the object being described. Earlier in this chapter, in the discussion about Farang's positive associations, several instances of this case were mentioned in detail. An odor

72 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 14.

73 For analysis on the type of the narrator in "Otobus-e Shemiran," see: Darvishiyan and Khandan, "Naqd va," 371–381.

emanating from a certain individual, in Taraqqi's stories, is also a defining factor. Not only people are described through the way they smell, but they are also *differentiated* from each other. In "Otobus-e Shemiran," this is exactly the way the protagonist's mother (even the whole Shemiran household) is contrasted to the character of 'Aziz Aqa, the bus driver. Through olfactory imagery, in this story, the characters' identity borderlines are delineated and, simultaneously, destructed. The excerpt below depicts a scene in 'Aziz Aqa's bus as the young protagonist is sitting next to a broken window that lets in the biting winter blow. The ride has taken longer than usual due to the heavy snow:

> عزیز آقا کتش را درمی‌آورد و روی پاهای من می‌اندازد. کتش بوی گند می‌دهد.... دستم را با غرور به یقهٔ چرب کت او می‌کشم. انگشتانم بوی عجیبی می‌گیرند، بویی که در خانهٔ ما نیست، در خانهٔ دایی جان‌ها و عمه‌ها هم نیست. بوی سگ و گربه و گاو و گوسفند هم نیست. بویی است که از سوراخ دنیایی ناشناخته می‌آید. بوی تمام کارهای بدی است که نباید کرد.
>
> Aziz Agha takes his jacket off and spreads it over my legs. Its smell assails my nostrils ... With a sense of pride I rub my fingers on the greasy collar of the jacket, and they take on an unfamiliar smell, a smell that is not in our house, nor in my aunts' and uncles' houses. It is not the smell of cats, dogs, and cattle, either. It is a smell that exudes from the corners of an unknown world, of naughty things that should be avoided.[74] (10)

Smells are represented as the defining feature of different worlds: the familiar world of the Shemiran house and the "unknown world" 'Aziz Aqa stands for. Several times in the story, the narrator makes mention of the way 'Aziz Aqa smells. The "strange smell of his breath ... and [that of his] greasy old jacket," appear more than once in the narrator's contemplations about the bus driver (11).[75] Somewhere else, likewise, to refer to another example, the narrator describes the smell of 'Aziz Aqa's "breath" to be "sharper than the smell of the iodine tincture" her mother uses for her "cuts and bruises" (9).[76] The way 'Aziz Aqa smells is depicted to be far from amiable. The significance concerning

74 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 14.

75 Ibid., p. 15.

76 Ibid., p. 14.

the matter of smell in "Otobus-e Shemiran," as just mentioned, is not only in narrative description but also in the way characters and notions are contrasted and emphatically differentiated from each other. Smells, in other words, address the matter of identity. This issue is specifically highlighted in a sequence of paragraphs (the first one already quoted above) in which 'Aziz Aqa's smell is juxtaposed with the smells of the protagonist's world. The excerpt above is followed by the descriptions about the smell of the protagonist's mother:

> بوی مادر با تمام بوها فرق دارد. بویی است که از عطر و پودر فرنگ می‌آید، از آرتیست‌های سینما و مجله‌های مد و خیاابان لاله‌زار و سالن رقص کافهٔ شهرداری. مادر بوی روزهای آینده را می‌دهد، بوی فردا و تمام چیزهای خوبی که در انتظار من است.

> My mother smells different from anything else. Hers is the smell of [Farang's] perfume and powder, of film stars, Fashion magazines, Lalehzar Avenue, and the Municipality Dance Hall. Mother smells of future days, of tomorrow, and all the good things that are in store for me.[77] (10)

The comparison between the two passages above reveals interesting issues about the duality between the world of the Shemiran house and that of 'Aziz Aqa. The smells associated with the bus driver are described negatively through phrases such as "*bu-ye gand*" (Persian for stench or stink),[78] or through the image of the greasy collar of the jacket. On the contrary, however, the smell of the mother is connected with "all the good things" inherent in the concept of "Farang," communicated (in the latter passage) through amiable and pleasant smells (Farang's associations with concepts such as modernity, beauty, future, and prosperity have been previously elaborated upon).[79] In other words, on one level of meaning, the juxtaposition between 'Aziz Aqa and the protagonist's mother re-produces the polar conception of bad/good—bad standing for the common and less privileged bus driver, and good standing for the

77 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 14.

78 The sentence "*kotash bu-ye gand midahad*" in the Persian text has been translated by Farrokh as "Its smell assails my nostrils" which communicates the sharpness of the smell but euphemizes the Persian phrase's denigrating connotations. Compare: Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 10.

79 The word *Farang* has been omitted in Farrokh's text. Compare: Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 14.

Westernized privileged upper-class family of the narrator. The bad/good opposition is better perceived in the Persian text where the phrase "*tamam-e karha-ye bad*" (all the bad things) in the former excerpt, is contrasted with "*tamam-e chizha-ye khub*" (all the good things) in the latter.[80]

The Realm of the Other: Traversing the Borderline

The good/bad binary opposition does not remain static and clear-cut in "Otobus-e Shemiran." While the protagonist's Farangi mother continues to occupy her strictly defined self-space vis-à-vis the other, the little protagonist easily surmounts the boundary:

> با این کت روی پایم آدم دیگری می‌شوم، آدمی که مجبور نیست تمیز و با ادب و درس‌خوان و شاگرد اول باشد، به موهایش فکل‌های پُفی بزند و به همه سلام و تعظیم کند و در تمام مهمانی‌ها برای غریبه‌ها شعری را که در مدرسه یاد گرفته و، درست هم بلد نیست، از بر بخواند و اولین درس پیانواش را، ... برای قوم خویش‌های پرحرف بی‌حوصله بنوازد و در مسابقهٔ زیباترین کودک شرکت کند و ببازد.

> But with this jacket on my knees, I am reincarnated. I am someone else, someone who does not have to be clean, polite, studious, and at the top of the class. Someone who does not have to wear a ribbon in her hair, curtsey to strangers on social occasions, and sing her half-learned school songs for them. Someone who does not have to play on the piano her first music lesson ... for bored and disinterested relatives, and take part and consistently lose in Beautiful-Child contests.[81] (10)

'Aziz Aqa's strange-smelling jacket has the power to transform. It affects the self-conception of the protagonist and changes her into "someone else." All the valued prerequisites for the so-called modernized girl are destabilized through 'Aziz Aqa's greasy jacket and its sharp and unpleasant smell. Covered by the jacket, the young protagonist feels to be relieved from the others' overwhelming expectations from her, as a daughter of a modernized and Farangi family.

---

80 The former phrase is translated as "naughty things" by Farrokh. Compare: Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 10.

81 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," pp. 14–15.

"Beauty contests"[82] such as the "Beautiful-Child" contest mentioned in the passage above, are a constituent part of the imported Western "beauty culture" that emphasizes women should look neat and beautiful (by use of Western "health and beauty" products, for example) and be "educated" and "socially active."[83] The image of the modernized woman used to be commercialized through fashion and women's magazines as a part of "the Pahlavi state's Women's Awakening Project" (1936–41); the project, on a representational level, intended to "redefine the particulars of gender roles" in Iran.[84] In the story "An su-ye divar," to refer to a similar case, Mr. Tank, an acquaintance of the narrator's father, addressing the young girls of the family, goes through a list of certain qualifications necessary to be acquired by a modernized girl:

> هر یک از شما نمونهٔ کامل دختر شایسته است و دختر شایسته متجدد و تحصیل‌کرده است، کتاب و روزنامه می‌خواند، پیانو می‌زند و روزی، به احتمال قوی، وکیل مجلس خواهد شد. آنها که یاغی و خودسرند ... در دنیای خوشبخت آدم‌های موفق جایی برایشان نخواهد بود.
>
> Each of you is a complete example of a Qualified Girl. A Qualified Girl is modernized and educated. She reads books and newspapers, plays the piano, and one day, most probably, will become a member of the parliament. The ones who are rebellious and self-willed ... will be excluded from the happy world of the successful people. (84)

"*Dokhtar-e Shayesteh*" is the Persian term referring to the title given to winners of women's beauty contests, the same type of contests the little protagonist of "Otobus-e Shemiran" is forced to take part in and "consistently lose." The ideal emancipative image of "*Dokhtar-e Shayesteh*," constructed based on Western standards and criteria in a modern age, is well undermined in "Otobus-e Shemiran." "Reincarnated" by 'Aziz Aqa's stinky jacket, the protagonist does not need to be clean, amiable, and accomplished to please anyone; with 'Aziz Aqa's jacket on her legs, the protagonist becomes "like him." The jacket functions as an element that shatters the social persona forced upon the young protagonist revealing her relaxed and carefree selfhood. In 'Aziz Aqa's jacket, the protagonist becomes, in one sense, masculinized and empowered and feels

82 Camron, "Importing "Beauty Culture,"" p. 84.

83 Ibid., p. 80.

84 Ibid.

capable of "walking the back allies of the town" alone and "unescorted" (11).[85] She also feels bold enough to imagine herself "giggling coquettishly and flirtatiously" like "the daughters of Fatemeh, the laundress." In other words, if not emancipated in a modern sense, the protagonist becomes *liberated* through the smell of 'Aziz Aqa's jacket. Commenting about the gentle and kind character of the bus driver (despite his coarse and bestial appearance), the narrator indicates that "I am entranced by the magical, transparent vapor that arises from the strange smell of his breath … and greasy jacket;" she continues, immediately, that engulfed by this vapor, "I feel a state of beatitude" ("*ehsas-e khoshbakhti mikonam*") (11).[86] The protagonist's explicit statement about her euphoric sense of happiness ("*khoshbakhti*") destabilizes Mr. Tank's prediction that un-modernized women, probably the ones resembling the "the daughters of Fatemeh, the laundress," will be eventually denied happiness.

'Aziz Aqa's Gold Tooth: Reversal of Hierarchies

In Taraqqi's memories, the hierarchical relationship between West and East, as examined previously, is also built by the recurrent representation of Farang as the source of scientific and medical progress. Farang, despite referring to an ambiguous locality, is represented as an allegedly known and definite geographical point the characters of Taraqqi's memories turn towards in case of any illness and malady. In the story "Otobus-e Shemiran," the West/East hegemony, reiterated by the binary opposition of Western Doctor/Eastern Patient, becomes unsettled through the symbolic significance of 'Aziz Aqa's gold tooth.

'Aziz Aqa's gold tooth is the most important symbolic element in "Otobus-e Shemiran." The story before appearing in the volume *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992), was published, in 1988, with the title "Dandan-e tala'i-ye 'Aziz Aqa" ('Aziz Aqa's Gold Tooth) in the journal *Omid* in California.[87] The significance of the bus driver's gold tooth in the narrative had been underlined by being reflected in the title of the story in its original publication. Throughout the narrative plot of "Otobus-e Shemiran," the driver's gold tooth, as a semantic sign, is perceived and interpreted from two different viewpoints. 'Aziz Aqa's gold tooth is identified: (1) as an exciting and fanciful mystery from the viewpoint of school children, and (2) as a sign of vulgarity from the viewpoint of the narrator's mother. Whereas in the former case, the gold tooth is associated with fantastic Oriental

85 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 15.

86 Ibid.

87 "Dandan-e tala'i-ye 'Aziz Aqa" was first published in the third issue of the journal *Omid* an expatriate journal issued in California. See: Moayyad, *Stories*, p. 363.

folk tale imagery and the driver's kind smile, in the latter, it is connected with the mother's fears, avoidance, and antagonism.

The mystery about 'Aziz Aqa, for the young protagonist, is based on a rumor going around at school. The students who know 'Aziz Aqa for a longer time claim that all his "teeth are gold" (13).[88] Having not witnessed the matter with her own eyes, the protagonist fantasizes about it and waits for that very moment when her giant friend would open his mouth and let the mystery be discovered. After that long ride next to the broken window in 'Aziz Aqa's bus on that snowy winter evening, the protagonist becomes terribly sick. Lying down in fever at home, she falls asleep and has a dream about the bus driver:

> خواب می‌بینم روی کول عزیز آقا سوارم و او، مثل قالی پرنده، بالای ابرها پرواز می کند و مرا به تماشای شهرهای دور و ناشناخته می‌برد. چقدر دلم می‌خواهد دهانش را باز کند و من دندانهای طلایی او را ببینم اما حیف که لبهایش مثل درِ صندوقچه‌ای پر از جواهر بسته است.
>
> In my dream Aziz Agha is carrying me on his shoulders as he flies through the air and over the clouds like a flying carpet, taking me to distant, unknown cities. I wish he would open his mouth and let me see his gold teeth. But as always, he smiles with his mouth closed and his lips are sealed like a lid of a treasure chest.[89] (15)

In the protagonist's dream, 'Aziz Aqa's body is turned into a marvelous means of transportation that like a "flying carpet" carries the protagonist all around the world. The fantastic Oriental image of the "flying carpet" is merged with the urban image of the Shemiran bus. 'Aziz Aqa's gold tooth is compared to a golden piece lying in a mysterious "treasure chest" accessible by nothing but 'Aziz Aqa's broad smile with an open mouth.

In contrast to the fanciful picture communicating joy, freedom, security, and affection in the passage above, the mother's interpretation of 'Aziz Aqa and his gold tooth creates a dark and frightening image:

> به نظر مادر تنها آدم‌های بد ولات دنداهای طلا دارند و همهٔ آنها هم دزد و آدمکش هستند و هزار بلا سر دخترهای کوچک می‌آورند. من که

88 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 16.

89 Ibid., p. 17.

باور نمی‌کنم و دلم می‌سوزد وقتی می‌بینم مادر گاهی وقت‌ها بدجنس و دروغگو می‌شود ... و غصه می‌خورم از اینکه مادر خیلی چیزها را نمی‌داند؛ مثلا، پایتخت بیشتر کشورها را نمی‌شناسد و قوانین سادهٔ حساب را بلد نیست.

> In her [(the mother's)] view people with gold teeth are thugs and murderers who will hurt little girls if they get a chance. I can't seem to agree with her. It bothers me to see my mother sometimes say things that are openly spiteful and malicious ... I am saddened by my mother's ignorance: she does not know the capitals of many countries and is stumped by simple mathematical computations.[90] (13–14)

As previously pointed out, the narrator's mother defines the bus driver as an other, as someone that should be avoided and kept away from, as someone who should be left outside self-boundaries (e.g. the boundaries of the Shemiran house). 'Aziz Aqa's gold tooth, in this respect, is a sign that stands for his undoubtedly bestial and dangerous nature from the mother's viewpoint. Nevertheless, through the narrative voice of the story that reflects childhood innocence, on the one hand, and the adult narrator's more experienced and authoritative outlook, on the other, the mother's judgment is fundamentally unsettled. The double-voiced statements of the young protagonist nonchalantly raise the reader's suspicion about the truth of the way the mother interprets 'Aziz Aqa's gold tooth; the mother's judgment is unreliable, since she is ignorant even about commonplace issues such as "the capitals of many countries" and "simple mathematical computations."

Here, it is important to emphasize once more, that at least a part of the mother's judgmental remarks about 'Aziz Aqa is the result of her tendency to assess and define people based on their familiarity or unfamiliarity with Farang (or the so-called West).[91] This issue has also been discussed above in the identity duality brought about between 'Aziz Aqa and the world of the Shemiran house through the story's much emphasized olfactory imagery. In the following, the discussion, accordingly, will be focused on the way the hegemonic relationship between these two territories (Farangi/Non-Farangi) is disturbed.

---

90 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 16.

91 For example, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the narrator's mother "quickly sets up an invisible wall" between her family and the two sisters of the story "Khanomha" upon the very pretext that the family is "familiar with the West, science, and modernity" and the two sisters are "backward." See: Taraqqi, "Khanomha," p. 31.

This issue is very well conveyed through the process of the little protagonist's sickness and recovery.

The protagonist's sickness worsens over some time. The Iranian doctors' prescriptions do not improve the girl's health conditions. The mother loses her trust in the family's doctor altogether and throws off all the medicines prescribed by him (17).[92] The father's authoritative order is spoken out loud; his little daughter "should be taken to Europe [(Farang, in the Persian text)] for treatment" (16).[93] He believes "in the genius of European [Farangi, in the Persian text] doctors," who can "cure any disease with one prescription" (17).[94] The father's decision is put into action; and the "mother enthusiastically packs multiple suitcases for the projected trip to Europe" (18).[95] The mother's enthusiasm for the trip, in the latter statement, ironically exposes her Europhilic attitude towards the prospective journey. The destination of the journey suddenly seems to take priority over the cause of the journey (which is supposed to be the treatment of her daughter's sickness). By adopting an ironic tone, the narrator playfully destabilizes the meaning of Farang as the medical utopia. This issue can even be better grasped when both the father's confidence in and the mother's eagerness about Farang are juxtaposed with Hasan Aqa's Europhobia.[96] Hasan Aqa, the family's obedient servant and the skilled cook, finds himself in panic as soon as he hears about the family's departure for Farang:

> حسن آقا کارت پستالی کهنه، از زنی چاق با موهای طلایی در لباسی از مخمل و تور، دارد. می‌گوید این زن ملکهٔ پاریس است و زنی بدجنس است که به قرآن و حضرت محمد اعتقاد ندارد. حسن آقا نگران من و مادر است و از مادربزرگ می‌خواهد برای نجات ما از چنگ این ملکهٔ کافر روز و شب نماز بخواند.
>
> Hassan Agha shows me an old postcard picture of a plump woman with golden hair and in a velvet dress. This is the Queen of Paris, according to him. She is a vicious woman and does not believe in Holy Koran or the

92 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 19.

93 Ibid., p. 18.

94 Ibid., p. 19.

95 Ibid.

96 For Europhilic and Europhobic attitudes towards the West see chapters 3 and 4 in Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, pp. 35–76.

> Prophet. He is visibly worried about me and urges my grandmother to say even more prayers for my recovery.[97] (18)

Represented by the picture of a blond woman on a postcard, Farang, from Hasan Aqa's perspective, equals wickedness and religious infidelity. His relationship to Farang, accordingly, is defined by distressing emotions aroused by fear and pessimism. Farang, in this sense, stands for something that Hasan Aqa consciously avoids being defined as: a "vicious" unbeliever that, certainly, would not do the protagonist's sickness any good. The juxtaposition between the two opposing perceptions of Farang (standing for health and joy, on the one hand, and wickedness, on the other) produces a comic effect. The irony relies much on the distanced objectivity of the child who sees and reports back without taking sides or particularly believing in either of the attitudes represented. The tone of narration, nevertheless, reflects the adult narrator's mocking cynicism. Representation of the opposing significations of Farang breaks down the absolutism conveyed by either of them. Both the parents and Hasan Aqa prove to be ridiculously wrong about how they relate Farang to the protagonist's sickness and possible recovery.

The process of the protagonist's recovery, in fact, starts a few days before the family's departure for Paris. Worried by his little friend's long absence, 'Aziz Aqa appears at the door of the Shemiran house to pay the protagonist a kind visit and enquire about her health. The mother, nevertheless, is infuriated by the event:

> «رانندهٔ اتوبوس؟» ... قیل و قال مادر به گوش می‌رسد. می‌خواهد بفهمد که چگونه راننده‌ای بی سر و پا جرأت کرده برای احوالپرسی دخترش بیاید. حسن آقا را می‌فرستد تا به او بگوید اگر یک بار دیگر این طرف‌ها پیدایش شود دستور خواهد داد قلم پایش را بشکنند.

> "The bus driver?" My mother's voice booms in the hall.... I can hear my mother's indignant pronouncements about the gall of a common bus driver presuming to pay her daughter a visit and her command to Hassan Agha to tell him that if he is seen in the vicinity once again his shins will be broken.[98] (19–20)

97 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 19.

98 Ibid., pp. 20–21.

The bus driver should be kept well out of the vicinity of the Shemiran house. Not only does the mother's fury intensify the polarizing lines between the territories of self and other, but it also indicates how vulnerable and at the same time threatening these limits are if they are to be strictly retained. The nice and well-mannered mother of the protagonist turns, in a moment's time, into an insulting person threatening the bus driver with physical violence.

However, by hearing the news about 'Aziz Aqa's presence at the door, the little girl jumps out of her bed and runs to a room which has a "window" looking out "onto the street." She pushes "the curtain aside," looks out, opens "the window," and calls "his name" (20).[99] As the window opens, a pore appears on the citadel's wall: "I call him again, louder, as I wave at him vigorously," recounts the narrator vehemently, "he turns, looks up,... sees me ... [and] begins to smile" (20).[100] Communication, even if in quite a primary form, is created between the Shemiran house and the driver of the Shemiran bus, who, though allowed to drive up to the margins of the house, is never let in.

The final encounter between 'Aziz Aqa and the protagonist right before the family's departure for France is of crucial significance to this chapter's main point of discussion. The relation between 'Aziz Aqa and the Shemiran household gains a symbolic significance that goes beyond a mere mother-daughter relationship or class issues. By the end of the story 'Aziz Aqa is turned into a symbolic element that disturbs the medical preeminence of Farang. In the following passage, the narrator elaborates on the greeting between 'Aziz Aqa and the little protagonist standing at the window of the Shemiran house:

> می‌خندد و با این خنده است که اتفاقی عجیب می‌افتد. لب‌هایش باز می‌شود. دهانش شبیه به غاری تاریک است، و در انتهای آن، یک دندان طلا، مثل چراغ علاءالدین، برق برق می‌زند. می‌دانم که از این چراغ جادویی هر چه بخواهم بهم خواهد داد. چشم‌هایم را می‌بندم و آرزو می‌کنم دوباره سالم شوم، سرفه‌ام بند بیاید و ترس دست از سرم بردارد.

> He begins to smile, and a strange vision overtakes me as for the first time I see him smiling with parted lips. His open mouth appears like a dark cavern. Somewhere deep inside there is a gold tooth that shines like a magic lamp. Intuitively, I know that all my wishes will be granted by this lamp.

99 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 21.

100 Ibid.

> I close my eyes and hastily wish that I may be hale and hearty again, that the wracking cough may go away, that fear may leave me forever.[101] (20–1)

The passage above relates narrative events that eventually lead to the recovery of the little protagonist and plot resolution. Close to the end of "Otobus-e Shemiran," civilized Farang and its vulgar other (represented by 'Aziz Aqa, as perceived and depicted through the mother's perspective) are once more juxtaposed. The comparison between the two, however, is not as implicit as before. 'Aziz Aqa and Farang, so far symbolizing two sets of essentially different and aversive cultural notions within the narrative plot, are now vying for definition in terms of the protagonist's recovery. What is put at stake, through this juxtaposition, nevertheless, is Farang's supremacy within the hegemony of Farangi/Non-Farangi opposition. If the fatal ailment, allegedly inflicted upon the protagonist by 'Aziz Aqa,[102] is ultimately cured by Farangi doctors in Farang, the superiority of the notion is emphatically verified; if not, however, something about its perfection is obviously unsettled. The unsettling element emerges from within 'Aziz Aqa's mouth gaped by an affectionate broad smile piercing through the insurmountable hostile enclosure of the Shemiran house. The bus driver's gold tooth, previously associated with his vulgarity and potential danger, "shines like a magic lamp" that is capable of instantly granting the protagonist her health:

> به پاریس که می‌رسیم ... سه روز بعد دکتری فرانسوی مرا می‌بیند و نسخه‌ای مفصل برایم می‌نویسد. حالم از مدتها پیش بهتر شده است و کمتر سرفه می‌کنم. هیچ کس از راز من و جادوی چراغ طلایی خبر ندارد و مادر بهبودی سریع مرا به حساب نبوغ دکتر فرانسوی می‌گذارد؛ اما خودم می‌دانم کی و چی مرا شفا داده است.
>
> [We] arrived in Paris ... Three days later I was seen by a French physician, who prescribed a long list of drugs. But the process of recovery had started many days before and by then the cough had already gone. No one had any inkling as to my secret magic lamp. My mother, naturally, attributed

101 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 21.

102 It was in 'Aziz Aqa's bus that the little girl caught the cold; and it was because of her deep affection for 'Aziz Aqa that she resisted giving up her seat by the broken window on the cold winter evening.

> my improved health to the miracle of European medicine. But I knew what had healed me.[103] (21)

The protagonist owes her recovery to the "magic lamp," symbolized in the image of the bus driver's gold tooth, rather than to the treatment of Farangi doctors. The mother's comment on the genius of Farangi physicians is represented as an erroneous discernment which only adds to the irony of the passage, especially when the mother's tendency to pass unreliable and subjective judgments on others is compared to the young but more reliable protagonist, backed up by the adult narrator's wise and impartial personality. Most importantly, the image of the "magic lamp," referred to in the Persian text through the term *cheragh-e 'Ala'eddin*, highlights 'Aziz Aqa's significance as a character symbolizing the East as opposed to the concept of Farang representing the West. In other words, the prior position of Farang in the West/East polarity is destabilized through Eastern folkloric elements and symbols that seem to be capable of defeating hostility through an affectionate smile, science through magic, and ailments through love.

Mimicry: Mastering the Culture of the Other

The alleged supremacy of Farang in Taraqqi's memories is also undermined through the ironic effect of the characters' emulative attitude toward an imagined Farangi excellence. Some of Taraqqi's characters, as a part of their identification practices, try to reproduce the Farangi ideal through imitating whatever Farang as a broad cultural notion represents. The outcome of such imitations in most cases turns to be far from satisfactory resulting in a comic/ironic impact. Homi K. Bhabha, through his concept of *mimicry*, elaborates upon the underlying implications of such imitative reproductions in colonial discourse and brings forth its unsettling effects upon a hegemonic and polarized understanding of colonial relationships.

Bhabha conceptualizes mimicry as "an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners, and ideas" of the colonizer's "supposedly dominant or even superior culture."[104] With much emphasis, he differentiates theoretically between mimicry and assimilation, the latter being often associated with the subordinating impacts of the act of imitation in colonial discourse. Based on the premise that no assimilation is ever a perfect and complete act, he demonstrates how the colonized subject's desire for assimilation reveals the

---

103 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," p. 21.

104 Huddart, *Homi*, p. 57.

instability of and the anxiety within the colonizer's imagined ideal of eminence.[105] Imitating the colonizer's culture is not merely a *failed* desire on the part of the emulative subject; this failure subordinates the alleged supremacy of the colonial discourse. The colonized should ideally be "reformed" to represent the Western culture's eminence; but, at the same time, it should retain some "*difference*," so that it can be recognized as the colonizer's inferior other.[106] The slippage in reproducing the ideal model transforms the colonized subject into an "'incomplete' and 'virtual'" entity.[107] The colonial subject, in this sense, is signified as "almost the same [as the colonizer], *but not quite*."[108] Ironically enough, therefore, the "success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure;" in other words, "mimicry is at once resemblance and menace."[109] As a matter of fact, reproduction of incomplete "mimic" subjects, in the long run, makes the "great tradition of European humanism … capable only of ironizing itself."[110] In another sense, the colonizer's culture generates and propagates its own ideal image in caricatures.

In the following, accordingly, the discussion will continue by focusing on some examples in Taraqqi's childhood memories in which certain aspects of Farangi culture such as language, arts, and manners are tried to be adopted by some characters. Through ridiculous, comic, or simply unsuccessful attempts to reproduce the alleged eminence of Farangi culture, its assumed authority is undermined. In recurrent cases, the characters' emulative attempts often result in deformed and sarcastic articulation of what Farang is supposed to stand for. Below, in order to demonstrate the dynamics of the process at work, the destabilizing function of some acts of mimicry in Taraqqi's stories will be examined in detail. Particular attention, in this respect, will be paid to the significance of three cultural issues embedded in some narrative plots: playing the piano, learning the English language, and practicing European manners and fashion.

The Piano

The piano in Taraqqi's stories is more than just a musical instrument. It functions as a semantic element associated with the prestige of Farangi culture and

105 Huddard, *Homi*, p. 57.
106 Bhabha, "Of Mimicry," p. 86.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., p. 86.
110 Ibid., p. 87.

what it generally represents. A "modernized" girl should be able to play "the piano," according to Mr. Tank, a Europeanized acquaintance of the narrator's father (84). Moreover, taking piano lessons is imposed on the young protagonist of Taraqqi's childhood memories by her mother who is characterized as a person, inclined to praise and enjoy Farang's attractions. The piano is also a defining element capable of setting up intervening barriers between the Farangi and the Non-Farangi. The metaphor of the invisible "wall," deployed once at the opening of the story "Khanomha", reappears later in the narrative to describe the function of the piano within the Shemiran house:

> رسیدن پیانوی دُم دار که شبیه به هیولایی عظیم و جادویی‌ست، دیواری میان من و خانم‌ها می‌کشد و مادر مهمانی بزرگی به افتخار این اتفاق فوق‌العاده مهم می‌دهد. پیانوی دُم دار را توی اتاق نهارخوری، جنب سالن پذیرایی، می‌گذارند و رویش را با ملافه‌ای گلدار می‌پوشانند.
>
> The arrival of the grand piano, which looks like a giant and magical monster, sets up a wall between me and the ladies. Mother throws a great party in honor of this extraordinarily important event. The grand piano is put in the dining room, right next to the reception hall, and is covered by a floral sheet. (49)

The piano obviously communicates something more than art and music. It widens the gap between the ones who own it and the ones who due to their so-called unfamiliarity "with the West … and modernity" (31) are in no sense related to it. The piano has also a central and pompous presence in the house. It is foregrounded as an awesome and huge object located "next to the reception hall"—at a place where it could be well seen and appreciated by prospective visitors. It is a show-off token serving to represent not only the family's inclination towards modernization and Western culture but also the fact that the family has conquered this culture by possessing the piano.

The praise for the piano is related in an ironic tone. Exaggerated importance is ascribed to the piano's arrival. A great party is held by the Farangi mother to celebrate the occasion, so that everyone would see and adore the newly bought object's grandeur. The narrator's voice filtered through the viewpoint of the child-focalizer adds to the irony. The young protagonist refers to the grand piano by the phrase "*piyano-ye domdar*" in the Persian text, meaning "the piano with a tail," as if she referred to a giant and unfamiliar object representing an animal-like creature. The phrase, uttered twice with a child's sarcasm, belittles

the strange object's grandiosity and disturbs the seriousness of its presence in the Shemiran house.

The irony of the occasion continues with the equally comic reactions of other characters who, unlike the protagonist's Farangi mother, do not relate to the prestige the piano has brought into the Shemiran house:

> حسن آقا از این مهمان غریبه، که بزرگتر از ماشین پدر است، می‌ترسد و با احترام به آن سلام می‌کند. خانم ناز ورود آن را به فال بد می‌گیرد و به گوش همه می‌رساند که با وجود این دستگاه شیطانی، نماز روی زمین و زیر سقف خانهٔ ما حرام است و به زودی از پیش ما خواهد رفت.
>
> Hasan Aqa is terrified by this strange object, which is even bulkier than father's car, and treats it with respect. Khanom Naz regards its arrival as a bad omen and declares to everyone that with the presence of this satanical instrument prayer is religiously unacceptable on the floor and under the ceiling of our house; and, therefore, she will be soon leaving us. (49–50)

The piano enters the Shemiran house as a wondrous object. The individuals exposed to this novelty are forced to define themselves based on their emotional and ideological orientation regarding its remarkable presence in the house. Hasan Aqa, the servant of the house, is awestruck by the sight of the huge object to the extent that he personifies the piano as a "strange guest." This attitude seems to be rooted in his relationship with the father of the family, the master of the Shemiran house. He promptly compares the piano to the father's car, another grand object possessed by the wealthy master. Since the piano is related to the master, it should be gracefully respected. The piano, in other words, becomes a synecdoche for the master himself. The irony of the passage relies much on this metonymical construct. The piano, in this respect, well fixes Hasan Aqa in his subject position as the servant in a Master/Servant relationship. Khanom Naz's attitude towards the new object is constructed in another discursive formation. Music's clash with Muslim piety is the basis for the character's self-definition upon the encounter with the piano. The Musical instrument, according to Khanom Naz, represents Satan and should be undoubtedly shunned from the Shemiran house, if prayers are to be accepted by God; otherwise, Khanom Naz will leave the house herself. The piano, in one way or another, serves as a dividing element. The irony of the situation, however, lies in the fact that Khanom Naz is characterized as a liar in Taraqqi's story; and

even her religious piety is totally deceptive. During the month of Ramadan, for example, she pretends to fast but continues eating in secret (48–9). I will return shortly to the clash between playing the piano and religious piety to discuss it in relation to the matters of mimicry and irony.

Having pointed out that the piano, in Taraqqi's memories, represents a feature of Farang's culture and functions as a discursive construct provoking acts of identification, it is now relevant to focus on how the urge for playing the piano is related to the act of mimicry and its ironizing effects.

Despite the daughter's personal aversion to the act, the mother forces the little protagonist to take piano lessons and perform in front of others. Upon the mother's demand, the young protagonist has to "play on the piano her first music lesson, which is not anything more than Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, for bored and disinterested relatives" (10).[111] Although the piano instructor informs the mother, repeatedly, about the fact that her daughter is the "most untalented student of hers," the mother insists on her own denial and invites relatives and all the "important acquaintances of the family" to the daughter's unsatisfactory concert ("An su" 83). Several times, in Taraqqi's memories, the young protagonist's revulsion about playing the piano is directly mentioned. Contemplating the force imposed upon her, in the story "Khanomha," the protagonist helplessly ponders "I hate to play the piano. I feel I am imprisoned and no one understands me" (51). In "An su-ye divar," she compares her piano classes to "torture sessions" (83). Somewhere else in the same story, the narrator states:

> پنجشنبه‌ها بعدازظهر درس پیانو دارم (با زور و اکراه) و مادر این بار اسمم را در کلاس خانمی ارمنی نوشته است. این کلاس—کلاس بد بختی—خانه‌ای متروک در انتهای کوچه‌ای بن‌بست است. راه پله‌ها بوی مستراح ... می‌دهند.... خانم معلم پیرزنی زشت است.... تا به حال دو بار، از شدت عصبانیت به پشت دستم کوبیده و اشکم را درآورده است.
>
> On Thursday afternoons, I have piano lessons (which I have to take despite my repugnance); this time, I am enrolled in a class taught by an Armenian teacher. The sessions—sessions of misery—are held in a deserted house at the end of a dead-end alley. The corridors smell of toilets ... and the teacher is an ugly old woman.... She has hit me, twice, on the back of my hand, out of intense anger, and made me cry. (66)

111 Taraghi, "The Shemiran," pp. 14–25.

Torture and prison imagery, associated with the protagonist's experience of her piano sessions, stand in sharp contrast to the emancipatory promises of modernization for women, mentioned in an acquaintance's declaration about the should-be-acquired qualifications of an ideal modernized girl. Instead of happiness, success, and emancipation, foreseen by Mr. Tank for a girl who is "modernized, educated … and plays the piano" (84), misery, failure, and the sense of imprisonment characterize the protagonist's experience of her piano lessons. On the symbolic level, other associations of Farang such as mobility, beauty, and good smell are also all undermined in the passage above. The Armenian teacher (Armenians are often categorized among the Farangi in Taraqqi's memories) looks ugly; and her piano sessions are held in a house the corridors of which smell of toilets. The house itself is located at the dead end of an alley which makes mobility problematic. A similar case is the European piano instructor of the story "Khanomha." The Polish piano teacher, always in a melancholic mood, is described as an alcoholic, "often half-drunk," who smells of "perspiration and spoiled wine" (50).

Not only are the music lessons and their so-called instructors depicted as non-functional from the viewpoint of the protagonist, but so is the piano itself. Everything about the piano's grandeur is apparently deceptive: "despite its bulky and awesome appearance," states the narrator, the piano is a "rattletrap; it does not make proper sound and most of its keys are broken down" (50). The narrator describes the keys and the sounds they make in the comic language of the little protagonist who is irritated by the piano's total malfunction:

> بعضی از آنها فرونمی‌روند. چندتای دیگر وقتی فرومی‌روند، در نمی‌آیند و باید چندین بار رویشان کوبید.... کلید سُل صدا ندارد و کلید لا قرچ می‌کند. کلید فا وِزی شبیه سوت زنبور دارد.
>
> Some of them cannot be pressed. A few others when pressed do not come up and have to be struck a couple of times.... The Sol key has no sound; and the La creaks. The Fa has a buzzing sound like that of a bee. (50–1)

The piano as an aspect of Farangi culture proves to be nothing but a lie. This is, of course, only observed by the little protagonist, who is closely engaged in the process of playing the instrument. Having been once deceived by Khanom Naz about her religious piety, she compares the two occasions: "playing the piano is a lie like Khanom Naz's fasting" (50). Under the influence of Khanum Naz's religious inculcations about the significance of God and afterlife (46–7), the little protagonist had been distanced from her family's Farangi lifestyle.

She had stopped enjoying the Lalehzar Avenue shopping expeditions accompanying her mother, for example (46); and all their fashionable acquaintances had turned to lose their attraction in her eyes (46). In one sense, for the protagonist, religion and Faranginess became oppositional notions; and up to a certain point in the narrative plot, she felt to be lost in the either/or logic of different and opposing truths conveyed by each. But eventually, deluded by Khanom Naz's hypocritical piety and after being engaged in a pretentious and dysfunctional process of learning how to play the Farangi musical instrument, the protagonist manages to discover her own order of truth: "I fluctuate in between playing the piano and thoughts of worship and guilt; and do not have belief in any of them" (51). The indefinite position of the young protagonist in between two oppositional discourses is reflective of the liminality of the authorial stance from where the story is narrated.

The entire attempt to reproduce an aspect of the Farangi other's culture through decorative emulation brings about a case of mimicry. The piano and the art of playing it are depicted in caricature-like and even sarcastic occasions that, consequently, result in ironizing the authority of the matter at hand through its own deformed shape (think about, for example, the broken huge piano that looks like a monster with a tail and makes a buzzing sound like a bee). This, of course, does not mean, in any sense, that the irony is directed to the music culture. The object of irony in the case just examined is the Farangi culture itself—that is, a (colonial) cultural formation within which Farang (with all its ambiguities) is observed with specific semantic values and counter values. At the end of the story "An su-ye divar," the protagonist decides not to perform in the concert to which all the "important acquaintances of the family" are invited (83); feeling deceived by the grownups' pretentions and hypocrisies, she ponders: "the piano concert, ha! A lie bigger than any other lie" (91). She imagines the Armenian piano teacher during the concert feeling "happy about the absence of her untalented student" (92).

The English Language

Mimicry's destabilizing effects on the eminence of Farangi culture, in Taraqqi's memories, can also be examined in regard to language acquisition. The importance of learning English, often imposed by parents (in this case, mostly by the protagonist's father) is ironized through the children's lighthearted and non-serious regard for it. No matter how serious and demanding the father's authoritative commands about the necessity of learning English, the children manage to evade the obligation for more fun activities. Below, I will briefly point out the implications of this issue through some textual instances.

The story "Pedar," in its first half, is focused on the matter of language learning. The father of the family who believes earnestly in "science and modernity" and thinks that his children should certainly go "abroad" ("*kharej*") to be able to "stand on their own feet, and become someone," hires an Indian man, Mr. Ghazni, to stay with the family and teach English to the children (176). The narrator, however, right after introducing Mr. Ghazni to the reader, states that "we learn everything from him but English (176)." In the course of his stay at the Shemiran house, Mr. Ghazni becomes the entertaining playmate of the children, an amusing storyteller, and Hasan Aqa's apprentice in house chores (179). It is only in the presence of the father that Mr. Ghazni and children pretend to take English lessons seriously. The father lays down strict rules from the beginning. Introducing Mr. Ghazni to the family he says:

«این معلم انگلیسی شماست. هر کس با او فارسی حرف بزند جریمه می‌شود.» و بعد رو به مستر غزنی می‌پرسد:

"What is your name?"

و مستر غزنی، دستپاچه، جواب می‌دهد:

"My name is Ghazni, sir."

برادرم بلند می‌خندد.

"This is your English teacher. Anyone who speaks Persian with him will have to pay a fine." Then he turns to Mr. Ghazni and asks him [in English]:
"What is your name?"
Mr. Ghazni answers clumsily:
"My name is Ghazni, sir."
My brother laughs out loud. (178)

The father's introductory English mini-conversation with Mr. Ghazni and the prospect of a penalty are apparently intended to both inspire the children to speak English and convince them of the seriousness of the matter. Yet the situation is perceived by the brother as a comic scene. His sudden bursting into laughter at the moment of his father's serious introduction ceremony undermines the importance of the situation.

Upon the father's command about learning English, foreign language enters the territory of the Shemiran house. The text of the story becomes sprinkled

with short sentences and phrases in English. Short and often elliptical fragments of English, spoken by different characters, do often produce an ironic effect. The father himself whose method of language learning consists of memorizing "dictionary entries page by page" (184), asking Mr. Ghazni to have lunch with the family says: "Come, Sit, Eat" (177). The language spoken by the father, though semantically and grammatically correct, sounds unnatural and telegraphic for the situation.

The mother uses Mr. Ghazni not to learn a language, but for a totally different purpose. Mr. Ghazni, for the mother, serves to represent the so-called "new phenomenon" of "having a foreign servant" ("Safar-e bozorg" 75). She takes "pride" and satisfaction in showing him off in the presence of relatives and acquaintances by giving him orders in English limited to short sentences such as "Come!" or "Go!" ("Pedar" 179). The only time the children speak a word of English, in this story, is when they intend to play a prank on Mr. Ghazni by pushing him into the swimming pool (181).

English is taken seriously only by the grownups of the family who ascribe values to the language that do not have much to do with its functions as a means of communication. The father conceives this language in association with "science and modernity," and with the children's bright future in Western countries (176). The mother deploys both the language and the so-called teacher as decorative bits and pieces to represent the Farangi culture. The children, on the other hand, deconstruct these values through their natural and playful resistance to the father's rigid commands. In the Shemiran house, the process of teaching and learning English never actually starts. Teaching English is also resisted on the part of the language teacher who coming from a colonial background has many stories about "his braveries *against* the British Army" (179, my emphasis) In the Shemiran house, despite the father's desire, the English teacher is turned into a fun playmate of the children who almost never speaks in English.

An excerpt from the story "Dust-e kuchak" will help, at this point, to clarify the difference between learning a foreign language per se, and the practice of reproducing it through mimicry. The narrator, in the passage below, relates about the games she used to play with her closest friend ("*dust-e kuchak*") in her childhood:

> گلبرگ‌های شمعدانی را روی لبهایمان می‌چسبانیم و مثل آدم بزرگ‌ها با هم می‌رقصیم. گاهی وقتها به ته ماندهٔ سیگاری که پیدا کرده‌ایم پُک می‌زنیم و چیزهایی به انگلیسی بَلغور می کنیم.

> We cover our lips with petals of red geraniums and dance together, pretending to be grownups. Sometimes, we light up a discarded cigarette butt and puff on it in turns. Muttering the few words we have learned in English.[112] (26)

The game is based on acting like "grownups" in a social event. It is most probably an imitation either of a party held in a Farangi style, with dressed-up smoking women in heavy make-up and dancing couples, or based on a similar scene depicted in an American movie, for example. Conversing in English is a decisive factor; it underlines the cultural origin of the model being copied (as Farang or the West). However, as everything else in the scene, the spoken language is far from real. The verb "*balghur kardan*" in Persian refers to speaking a language with mistakes, in a broken or incomprehensible way.[113] The characters, in other words, mimicking the language in a game of imitation, only *mutter* the few words they have learned in English. The irony of the scene has interesting implications. The children copy acts that have already been acted (either in parties, which supposedly *represent* the culture of Farang, or in films, which naturally rely on the act of representation to be produced). In this respect, by revealing the emulative objectives of a certain lifestyle, the children's incongruous imitation game parodies its model and subverts its authority.

European Manners and Fashion

Identification, as extensively discussed in chapter three, is a signifying practice that functions through representation. The subject is defined (temporarily and relatively) by certain characteristics that are semantically constructed and communicated in a social context. Imitation, as a social practice, accordingly, can be regarded as an identification strategy to signify the discursive connotations of an ideal model. This strategy is perhaps most effective when practiced to re-generate its model based on its *external appearance*, most effective because, first, it does not take much time and effort to copy a model on a superficial level and, second, what is represented in appearance is the most visible and can often be perceived and interpreted through a cursory glance. Despite its optimal availability and impact, this strategy is liable to undesirable outcome. Even slight imperfections and incongruities can invert the result by turning the imitated image into a caricature of its original model. Imitation of

112 Taraqqi, "My Little," p. 25.

113 "Balghur kardan," *Dehkhoda*.

fashion and manners are the two cases that can easily bring about the conditions for such a fallacy and its ensuing ironic effects.

Taraqqi's memories contain several instances of the case mentioned above. Faranginess becomes the object of overt irony in recurrent cases through the imitative actions of those characters, who behold it as the standard of excellence and try to duplicate it. An example of the case is Atash Afruz, the young daughter of an acquaintance of the narrator's family in "Fereshtehha." Atash Afruz is allured by Farang. Her fascination is depicted in different circumstances in the narrative. The passage below relates how she tries to imitate Greta Garbo acting in a movie:

> کشته مردهٔ سینما رفتن بود.... اگر از فیلمی خوشش می‌آمد، ده بار به دیدنش می‌رفت. از سینما که درمی‌آمد، کسی دیگر بود. صدا و حرف‌ها و کارهایش شبیه به هنرپیشه فیلم می‌شد. خیال می‌کرد گرتا گاربو است و مثل او تودماغی حرف می‌زد یا اشک می‌ریخت. می‌ایستاد جلوی آینه، با خودش حرف می‌زد و صحنه‌های عاشقانهٔ فیلم را تکرار می‌کرد.
>
> She loved to go to the cinema.... If she liked a film, she would go to watch it several times. When she left the cinema, she would be someone else. Her voice, words, and actions would resemble the actress. She would imagine herself as Greta Garbo and would shed tears or speak like her with a nasal voice. She would then stand in front of a mirror and speak to herself, reproducing the film's romantic scenes. Her loved-one is an imaginary creature. (132–3)

The character's attempt to reproduce the Farangi image is explicitly mentioned in the passage above. Her gaze is obsessively fixed on the image of the Farangi actress on the screen. As she leaves the cinema, she is already haunted by the actress's image. Similar to the example about the children's imitation game, mentioned earlier, Atash Afruz is engaged in a process of imitating an action that has already been acted and is, therefore, far from real. Nevertheless, the difference between the two is in Atash Afruz's *obsession* with whether or not the simulation is an exact one. In other words, the children imitate and enact to be entertained, while Atash Afruz imitates, performs, and then inspects her performance in the mirror to evaluate its resemblance to the model. The character's anxiety is reflected in her attempt to gaze back on her Farangi self in the mirror. Looking at her reflection in the mirror, however, is not only a checking action (exposing Atash Afruz's anxiety) but also a restoration of the character's

desiring gaze on the Farangi subject. In other words, the image in the mirror accentuates the artificial nature of the imitated act as well as the irreproducibility of its very model. The final sentence of the above passage underlines the unreal nature of Atash Afruz's romantic contemplations indicating that her desires remain on an imaginary level.

Romance for Atash Afruz is a matter closely linked to Farang. She looks forward to meeting "her future husband" in the "German Café-restaurant," a "special place" smelling of the "magical foods of the Western world" that has been recently opened in Ferdowsi department store, a place her father regards as the "emblem of the country's development and progress" (134). Eventually, Atash Afruz falls in love with a man, Mr. R., who despite being much older and already married, is considered as an ideal candidate owing to the ways he resembles Faranginess:

> ایشان مردی به سن و سال پدر بودند، با شکمی گنده و کتی کوتاه، با سری نیمه طاس و چشمهایی کوچک و دهانی بزرگ. این آقا با این ظاهر قزمیت، کی بود که ادای فرنگی‌ها را درمی‌آورد و دست خانم‌ها را می‌بوسید؟ ... معلوم شد که ... در پاریس زندگی می‌کند، و دختری به نام سوفی و زنی به اسم مادام ماری دارد. اسم پاریس که به میان آمد، ... چشمهای آتش‌افروز گرد شد. ظاهر قراضهٔ آقای «ر»، در یک آن، عوض شد. شکمش تو رفت. کت کوتاهش قد کشید. کفش‌های خاکی‌اش واکس خورد و هاله‌ای طلایی دور سرش نشست.
>
> He was a man around the age of my father. He had a big belly and wore a short suit jacket. He was half bald with small eyes and a big mouth. I wondered who this man was with this rickety appearance mimicking Farangi people by kissing women's hands.... It was found out that ... he lived in Paris and had a daughter by the name of Sophie and a wife called Madame Marie. Upon the mention of the word Paris,... Atash Afruz's eyes popped out. In a moment's time, Mr. R.'s shaky appearance changed altogether: his belly became flat, his jacket became longer, his dirty shoes were waxed, and a golden halo formed around his head. (135)

The encounter with Mr. R. is focalized from two different perspectives: first, through the eyes of the narrator's young self and, then, from the viewpoint of Atash Afruz. The former viewpoint (related from the beginning of the passage up to "In a moment's time") provides, in part, a detailed description about

Mr. R. based on his external appearance. Although he looks like a typical middle-aged Iranian man, the narrator is appalled by his very sight. Nevertheless, the narrator's sense of abhorrence does not seem to be induced by Mr. R.'s appearance per se, but rather by the incongruity of the sight in focus. The narrator, wondering about the man's identity, juxtaposes his appearance with his pretentious manners. As explicitly mentioned in the text, Mr. R.'s exaggerated gesture of "kissing women's hands" only gives away the fakeness of his manners. The practiced curtesy is culturally irrelevant in the context of the story setting. Even the narrator's mother is "perplexed" by this so-called Farangi gesture and "quickly withdraws her hand" (135). So far, Mr. R.'s imitative Faranginess has not even been persuasive enough to impress Atash Afruz. She simply finds the situation "boring" and "turns her face away" (135). It is only Mr. R.'s alleged *factual* association with Farang, through his wife's French nationality, that ironically turns him into a romantic target for Atash Afruz: if Mr. R. is to divorce the French wife to marry Atash Afruz, however, what will retain his Farangi identity? The latter part of the excerpt above, focalized through Atash Afruz's "popped out" eyes, turns the entire situation into a full-scale comic scene. The word "Paris," by itself, has the magical power to transform Mr. R. from a detestable boring person into an entirely amiable man. The text's ironic language and ludicrous imagery alongside Mr. R.'s fake mimicking actions expose the insubstantiality of the Farangi culture's preeminence.

Another instance of mimicry in the story "Fereshtehha" can be observed as Atash Afruz and the narrator's families await an evening visit by Mr. R. and his French wife in the Shemiran house. Women's preparation for this *special* event is of particular interest. They try to welcome the much respected guests coming from "the heart of Farang," in the most befitting way possible; the prospect of the "fanciful French lady's" presence in the Shemiran house has exhilarated every one (136). Tables are set with lace table cloths, porcelain dishes, and crystal glasses; and all the natural flowers, "the white and violet dahlias," are replaced with "artificial flowers—from abroad—that exactly look like real flowers" (137):

> زن‌ها یک خروار توالت کردند و خانم چنار[(مادر آتش‌افروز)] موهایش را به تقلید از هِدی لامار بالای سرش جمع کرد و گلی به کنار موهایش زد. آتش‌افروز، دستپاچه و هیجان‌زده، کلاه حصیری پدرش را کِش رفت، تمام سوراخ‌هایش را پر از گل شمعدانی کرد و سرش گذاشت. پدر گفت: «چرا شماها خودتان را شبیه میمون‌های باغ وحش کرده‌اید؟»

> Women wore a lot of makeup. Ms. Chenar [(Atash Afruz's mother)], imitating Hedy Lamarr, collected her hair in ringlets above her head and attached a flower to it. Atash Afruz, in an excited and clumsy way, sneaked her father's straw hat and filled the entire holes with red geraniums and put it on top her head. Father said: "why have you made yourselves look like the monkeys in the zoo." (137)

The passage speaks for itself. The text's ironic language and farcical imagery well undermines the situation's seriousness. Imitation of that which is supposed to represent Farang's style and fashion is the basis for the family's arrangements for the evening. In order to be presentable to the much revered guests—described earlier as "distinguished creatures" resembling "film stars" (136)—women wear heavy makeup and the same hairstyles as Farangi actresses. The outcome, however, is an array of ridiculous caricature-like faces.

The artificiality of the characters' imitative efforts parallels the replacement of natural flowers with the artificial Farangi ones ("*mal-e kharej*") that, as ironically put, "exactly look like real flowers." Apparently, what constructs the Farangi culture relies much on the act of imitation. The example of the flowers clarifies the point. Between the two choices of "real flowers" and the Farangi "artificial flowers" resembling the real ones, the right choice would be the latter for the occasion. In Farangi culture, in other words, the subject should not be *the same* as the real version but should rather closely *resemble* it. This is an example of what Bhabha refers to as "almost the same, *but not quite*."[114] Ironically enough, it is this *resemblance* that determines whether or not an individual can be acknowledged as Farangi. The arrival of the much awaited guest, the French wife of Mr. R., verifies this hypothesis. Her very sight disappoints the excited hosts: "we expected someone *looking like* film stars," relates the narrator, but instead "our eyes were cast upon a short and thin woman, around the age of her husband, who had thin blond hair and wore thick glasses" (138, my emphasis). The French woman's appearance disappointingly does not meet the characters' expectations of that *resemblance*. The French woman, ironically, does not look Farangi enough for the taste of the beholders.

The significance of artificial resemblance in the framing of Farangi culture can also be seen in the story "Khaneh-ye madarbozorg." On a trip down Istanbul Avenue, the eleven-year-old protagonist is caught by the sight of a "mannequin in the display window" of one of the poshest clothing stores in Tehran. The mannequin is wearing an "evening dress" and a "straw hat;" she has

114 Bhabha, "Of Mimicry," p. 86.

"golden hair" and "glittering red lips." Men, middle aged and young, are "standing in front of the shop window watching it." The sight makes the protagonist's "heart jump in excitement." What she sees in the window reflects her idea of "future" and "growing up" (62). The mannequin *representing* a Farangi woman in the "display window" functions as the model based on which the image and the idea of a Farangi woman are shaped in the mind of the protagonist. It has an impressive presence. Displayed in the framework of the shop window and under the admiring gaze of the passersby, the mannequin is turned into a highlighted object of desire. Later in the same story, the same scene is associated with the young protagonist's increasing cynicism. Remembering the scene, the narrator states: "The Farangi mannequin, with its low-cut neckline, is standing in the display window. From a distance, it indicates to me; it looks like film stars; it looks like mother" (64). What is indicated by the "Farangi mannequin" is not explicitly mentioned in the text. Apparently, the message has to do with resemblance. The adjective "*shabih*" (meaning similar) is repeated twice, after the indicating action, to complete the entire sentence. The young protagonist, at this particular moment, is experiencing an epiphany, "a sudden radiance and revelation that occurs during the perception of a commonplace object,"[115] the "commonplace object," here, being the mannequin in the display window. The indicating action has several functions. It reveals the representational significance of the mannequin as a constructed signifying element in a cultural formation, exposing its imperfection and the relativity of its meaning. The gaze of the protagonist, moving respectively upon the images of the Farangi mannequin, the acting Farangi film stars, and finally, on the Farangi mother, underscores the mother's engagement in emulative action. The fact that the source of imitation, in the chain of the images reviewed in the protagonist's mind, is an inanimate object disrupts the authenticity of the Farangi culture's narrative.

"Mimicry," for Bhabha, is "a comic approach to colonial discourse."[116] It is "a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model, the power which supposedly makes it imitable."[117] Nevertheless, whether mimicry can be employed as a conscious strategy by subjects to unsettle the authority of the cultural model they try to reproduce is somewhat controversial. For Bhabha, the fact that mimicry is a form of "resistance at all is more important than the degree to which it is an actively pursued strategy."[118] This is exactly the way mimicry functions to un-

115 Abrams and Harpham, *A Glossary*, p. 111.

116 Huddart, *Homi*, p. 57.

117 Ibid., p. 62. Quoted from: Bhabha, "Of Mimicry," pp. 87–88.

118 Ibid.

dermine Farang and its alleged cultural supremacy in Taraqqi's narratives. The unsettling effect on the absolute eminence of the Farangi culture, in the cases examined above, is not brought about, in any sense, by active resistance on the part of the characters. In the context of Taraqqi's memories, characters, on the contrary, are depicted as open and amenable towards Farang and the cultural practices representing it. Farangi culture, in Taraqqi's memories, is unsettled on a discursive level. The outcome of the characters' imitative practices turns their very cultural ideal model of imitation against itself.

Liminal Spaces: Amalgams of Truths

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to bring into focus two particular ways in which the concept of liminality is represented in terms of actual or virtual *spaces* within Taraqqi's narratives. So far, the discussion about the structure of irony in Taraqqi's stories has been based on the *writer's* (or the autofictional narrator's) in-between authorial (or narrative) stance in the third space. It has been demonstrated in detail that the hierarchical and the static semantic relationship between the self and the Western other (or the Farangi other) is re-viewed and unsettled in Taraqqi's autobiographical stories. Nevertheless, at this point, I would like to redirect the focus to capture close shots reflective of liminal spaces *within* the settings of Taraqqi's narratives. Airport scenes and letter contents are the two examples that explicitly depict the third space as amalgams of different truths in Taraqqi's stories.

As discussed previously, as a part of the theoretical approach adopted in this chapter's analyses, the third space is defined in terms of the discursive relationship between different cultures and identities. In principle, the third space is conceptualized as the temporal and the semantic gap in between identities, where statements and narratives, intended to fix the definitions of self and other, lose their points of reference.[119] Within the third space, accordingly, notions, beliefs, historical and cultural narratives, identities, and ideologies, resist to be contemplated in an "either/or" logic.[120] The third space, in other words, is the fluid contextual void in between different illusions of definition and fixity.

Third space, however, seems to contradict the notion of spatiality, given the general logic of space as a concrete and palpable territorial concept. The term seems to signify a rather loose and abstract notion of space, far from the tangibility of everyday life and experience. No matter how philosophically abstract the concept—as a spatial notion—might appear to be, its dynamics are to be noticed in certain urban spaces, characterized by cultural diversity and contradictory representations of different discursive realities. Airports, in Taraqqi's

119 See: Bhabha, "The Commitment," pp. 36–39.

120 Soja, "Thirdspace," p. 50.

narratives represent such a state of liminality—a space of decontextualized narratives. The opening lines of the first two stories of the collection *Jayi digar* not only depict international airports as concrete representations of the third space (and the process of hybridity at work within it), but also supplement the title of the collection with another layer of signification; *jayi digar*, meaning another place (or somewhere else), can, in one sense, refer to the state of inbetweenness.

Both the stories "Bazi-ye natamam" and "Anar Banu va pesarhayash" open with introductory statements captioned right at the outset of the narratives. The captions, respectively, give information about the spatial settings of the stories.

فرودگاه اورلی. پرواز شمارهٔ ٦٦٧ - ایران ایر.

Orly Airport. Flight number 766—Iran Air. (9)

فرودگاه مهرآباد - پرواز شمارهٔ ٦٢٧—ایر فرانس.

Mehrabad Airport—Flight number 726—Air France. (45)

The stories are set in airports in Iran and in France. Both captions also hint at the directions of the prospective flights. The process of narration, in both stories, accordingly, begins on the verge of the narrator's border traversals. The oppositional directions of the flights, from France to Iran and vice versa, are a symbolic representation of the narrators' recurrent fluctuations in between different cultural realms, in between the culture of the self and that of the other. In one sense, therefore, the initial settings of the narratives in question reflect the very liminal position from where the stories are being narrated. The introductory lines of "Anar Banu va pesarhayash" bring the narrator's experience of inbetweenness into particular focus.

دو بعد از نیمه شب یعنی تمام شب بی‌خوابی. یعنی کلافگی ... همراه با دلتنگی و اضطرابی مجهول و این که می‌روم و می‌مانم و دیگر برنمی‌گردم (از آن فکرهای الکی)، یا بر عکس، همین جا، در همین تهران عزیز—با همهٔ خوبی‌ها و بدی‌هایش—می‌مانم و از جایم تکان نمی‌خورم (از آن تصمیم‌های الکی‌تر). و خلاصه اینکه گور پدر این سرگردانی و این رفت و برگشت‌های ابدی (ابدی به اندازهٔ عمر من) و این پرواز نصفه شب و ... عبور از گمرک—پل صراط.

> It is two o'clock after midnight; and this means an entire night of sleeplessness, frustration,... homesickness, and an unknown anxiety. Empty thoughts run through my mind: I will go away, stay, and never come back again; or, contrariwise, I'll stay right here, in dear Tehran—despite all its pros and cons—I'll stay and never move again (all dubious thoughts). To hell with all these wanderings and perpetual oscillations (perpetual, as long as my entire life); [to hell] with this midnight flight and ... passing through the customs—the Serat Bridge! (45)

The text is expressive of the narrator's anguished state of mind right on the verge of her return journey from Iran to France. Anxiety and indecision characterize the narrator's general feelings. She is occupying a position in between homeland and exile. She is both drawn and repelled by each existential realm. Stability is unattainable. Neither homeland nor exile is capable of providing the narrator with solid ground. She is recurrently dragged into the state of liminality and is destined to remain there perpetually, as long as her "entire life," fluctuating between two states of being. The comparison of the narrator's liminal existence to the Serat Bridge foregrounds her dangling and undecided state of continual traversals.

Taraqqi's depiction of airport scenes is well reflective of the characteristics of the third space. International airports, in Taraqqi's narratives, represent hybrid spaces, where meanings and identities are displaced and the absolute logic of right and wrong stops functioning.

> پرواز پاریس- تهران پر است. خواهش‌ها، التماس‌ها، هارت و پورت‌ها، مَنم مَنم کردن‌ها فایده ندارد. جا برای هیچکس نیست. هیچکس. نه برای مستکبرین، نه برای مستضعفین، ... نه برای فرنگی‌ها. حتا فرانسوی‌ها.

> The Paris-Tehran flight is completely packed. Entreaties, pleas, and exaggerated pretentions of self-esteem are all of no use. There is no place for anyone. For no one. Neither for the oppressors, nor for the oppressed; ... neither for the Farangi people, and nor even for the French. (9)

On one level of meaning, the opening lines of "Bazi-ye natamam" give the account of an excessive number of passengers imploring tickets (or seats) to board a packed flight from France to Iran. Yet, on the symbolic level, the passage is a depiction of displaced individuals in search of placement. A chaos of displacement and undecided conditions is reflected in the image. Values and hierarchal notions of self-definition, constructed and recognized in different discursive formations, are toppled down and rendered nonsensical in

terms of value and priority. The "oppressors" (*mostakberin*), the "oppressed" (*mostaz'afin*), the "Farangi," and the "French" are all decontextualized and bereft of discursivity. Each of these identity labels, if articulated and represented in the right discourse, would have pertained to a specific structure of truth, would have found a specific subject position. The condition depicted in the passage above captures liminality in between the cultural realms of Iran and France. Different discourses and oppositional narratives co-exist in the confusion depicted in the image. The terms *mostakberin* and *mostaz'afin* instantly re-produce Iran's post-revolutionary anti-West political idealism and its socialistic aspirations and, thereby, reiterate the revolutionary and, of course, frontal narrative of the Exploited East vs. the Exploitive West.[121] The term "Farangi" calls to mind the West-oriented ideal model of modernity, mostly perceived and emulated by the secular Iranian upper and upper-middle classes. The emphasized differentiation between the "Farangi" and the "French" (through the word "even" (*hatta*)) subtly refers to the marginal self-perception the Iranian immigrants in France, who despite preserving a Farangi identity within Iran are relegated to the periphery vis-à-vis the French. All these contrasting narratives of the semantic relation between the two apparently well-defined cultural territories are represented simultaneously within the international space of the airport as an urban consolidation of liminality. Co-existence of paradoxical narratives and representations of homeland and exile within the third space renders their points of reference dubious and, at best, only relatively accountable.

International airports in Taraqqi's narratives, as just examined, represent the concept of liminality in a *concrete* territorial sense. But apart from this, third space, in Taraqqi's stories, is also depicted as a *virtual* space. Letters, due to their narrative quality and the fact that they constantly travel in between homeland and exile, construct a liminal space in written words within Taraqqi's narratives. In one sense, letters, in Taraqqi's short stories, function as textual liminality; they are a mish-mash of contrasting narratives that relate stories about the post-revolutionary conditions of homeland as well as the current paradoxical perceptions of Farang. The following paragraph, in this respect, provides a series of excerpts taken from the letters, received from Iran, by Taraqqi's emigrated protagonists. The examples are from the stories "Madame Gorgeh" and "'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef."

In the story "Madame Gorgeh," the narrator, in a rather extensive passage, refers to the content of the letters she has received from relatives and friends in Iran. The "first letter" is from "Leyli, who lives in Tehran." She is "happy and satisfied" with her life and has "no fear of the war and the bombs." She has

121 Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, p. 17.

come to terms with the "Islamic hijab," and "is, every evening, busy attending or hosting parties" (148). The "second letter" is from "Dariyush A;" he has gone broke; and "his son is on the run." The letter is "sad and bitter," comments the narrator, and gives "a bleak image of the future" (148–9). The "third letter" is from "Mr. Kaf," whose "brother has been executed." He is positively assured that "Russians and Americans have conspired; and Iran's secession is indispensable" (149). In "'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef dar ghorbat," to refer to another story, Mrs. Nabovvat, the beloved old friend and colleague of Mr. Alef, expressing admiration for Farang, in a letter to the protagonist, has written: "how lucky you are! … I wish we could be there, too, in that Garden of Eden, that crowning glory of all the cities of the world" (183).[122] In the same story, in a letter from Mr. Alef's mother, Farang, on the contrary, is referred to as the "land of infidels," where one's "health," "faith," "virtue," and "money" is in some sort of danger (183–4).[123] Mr. Alef's uncle has written about the "worsening economy" in the post-revolutionary conditions of the country and has expressed ardent willingness to "emigrate," if "some employment" could be arranged for him, since, after all, he is a "firm believer in the poet's wise dictum, to wit, "Dying a death of misery is too high a price to pay for allegiance to one's ancestral land";" he has "signed his letter officiously, both in Persian and Latin scripts" (184).[124]

Given the examples mentioned in the above paragraph, therefore, life in homeland is characterized with happiness and satisfaction, despite the ongoing war and the recurrent bombardments. Frivolous "parties" continue to be held under the Islamic state's strict surveillance. The mandatory "Islamic hijab," paradoxically, does not seem to bother the ones whose lifestyle is defined in essential contrast to the post-revolutionary state's sociopolitical ideals. But homeland, at the same time, is described as "sad," "bitter," and "bleak." Young activists are either "executed" or "on the run." The economic conditions of the country are deteriorating. Destitution and insecurity characterize homeland. Nevertheless, this narrative's absolutism is also immediately undermined through an ironic twist that foregrounds Mr. Kaf's exaggerated pessimism and his tendency to buy into conspiracy theories regarding the West's manipulative politics. The West itself, as a cultural-geographical totality, is rearticulated in contradictory narratives, too; Farang is simultaneously identified as the "Garden of Eden" and the "land of infidels." The letter written by Mr. Alef's uncle has also interesting implications. The traditional *bazari* uncle belonging to an older generation justifies emigration to Farang based on a line from

122 Taraghi, "Mr. Alpha," p. 118.

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.

Sa'di. Emigration is rationalized, according to the uncle, since Persian poetry, as one of the most acknowledged features of the Iranian culture, has granted permission for leaving one's "ancestral land" under self-abasing circumstances. The word *khvari*[125] in the poet's line (translated as "misery" in "Mr. Alpha") refers to an individual's lack of self-esteem and the state of being degraded.[126] Ironically, the letter is being read by Mr. Alef whose self-perception has been traumatized in Farang (often referred to as *ghorbat* (or exile) in the text of the story). The uncle's bi-lingual signature ("both in Persian and Latin scripts"), at the closure of the letter, renders his poetical justification ironic and exposes his simplistic attitude towards emigration.

Different narratives of homeland and Farang, gathered and pasted alongside each other, represent a *collage* of the semantic relationship between the two cultural spaces—collage, since although all these narrative bits and pieces are part of a larger totality, they remain irrelevant, random, and, at times, paradoxical in their correlations. In a larger picture, this condition characterizes the text of Taraqqi's memories. Not only are they constructed during the author's experience of liminality, but they are also narratives of negotiation constructed during a process of cultural translation.

Taraqqi's so-called *khaterehha* (memories) or autobiographical short stories are constructed within a retrospective narrative process. They are the result of the autofictional narrator's recurrent fluctuations in between past and present. Yet, past and present, in Taraqqi's memories, are constituted not only as two different temporal standpoints but also as *interwoven* discursive realms. I put an emphasis on the word *interwoven*, since incidents, characters, concepts, social norms, histories, interpretations, and all cognitive processes that demand narrative conceptualization are semantic constructs and, therefore, necessarily context dependent. Narratives of the past re-produced in the present will end up communicating a new meaning, while they still reflect traces of the old. Nevertheless, it is not only the passage of time that supplements Taraqqi's memories with a new layer of meaning but also the phenomenon of displacement. Taraqqi produces her autobiographical memories from within an authorial/narrative stance distanced from the realm of the familiar and located at the margins of the foreign. Discursive dislocation, in Taraqqi's memories, therefore, is not only a matter of the passage of time but, more importantly, a matter of cultural traversal. Both Taraqqi and the autofictional narrator of her memories abide somewhere in between the cultural spaces of the familiar homeland and the disorienting exile. Homi K. Bhabha conceptualizes the

125 *Natavan mord beh khvari keh man inja zadam.*

126 "Khvari," *Dehkhoda.*

position of the subject in between two cultural/discursive realms as the third space. Third space refers to a liminal semantic realm in between self and other, within which illusively stable narratives of identity are rendered relative and ephemeral. Third space, for Bhabha, is the very realm of hybridization where meanings, disconnected from their previous points of reference, become dangling and undecided.

Taraqqi's memories are contemplated in the third space, in between homeland and the exilic state within the so-called Farang (the Persianized version of France, extended to encompass the Western world). The relationship between Iran (representing the self) and the Western other is re-defined through a process of cultural translation. Farang's signification, in Taraqqi's memories, is represented in two discursive realms: pre-emigration Iran and post-emigration exile. In the pre-emigration Iranian context, Farang represents the marvels of the West such as beauty, joy, science, modernity, emancipation, and progress. The attractions of Farang in this context result in the construction of hegemonic identity boundaries traceable in both different characters' social relationships and the construction of certain urban spaces in the settings of the stories. Nevertheless, all the allurements of Farang fade away as soon as the concept becomes identical with the agonizing experience of exile, a condition that paralyses the characters' process of identification. Taraqqi's authorial position is located in between these two semantic realms. Her narrative oscillations in between the old and the new significations of Farang result in an ironic narrative style that undermines both.

In Taraqqi's stories, Farang's seemingly static associations—both its alleged superiority vis-à-vis the indigenous culture and its apparently everlasting unaffectionate and disorienting conditions after emigration—are destabilized through different strategies. One of the ways in which Farang's stability is undermined is through recurrent references to the term as an ambiguous locale. Farang's geographical location is not determined in a clear-cut way in the narratives. Events and characters, to mention another destabilizing strategy, are sometimes depicted through the eyes of a child (the narrator's young self), who, having been less affected by social conventions and cultural signs, is intuitively capable of interpreting her surroundings differently and in a more personal way. Farangi culture is also disturbed through the depiction of exaggerated clichés and caricatures, brought about as the result of the characters' emulative attempts to duplicate that culture as an ideal. The dynamics of hybridity and co-existence are reflected in Taraqqi's text and this is exactly the characteristic that results in Taraqqi's ironic style and lighthearted narrative tone. Recurrent negotiations between past and present, homeland and exile, sweet nostalgia and bitter displacement, renders Taraqqi's text into an amalgam of truths, a textual example of liminality.

Conclusion

"Taraqqi's stories are stories of space," commented Prof. Ghanoonparvar on a presentation, held in the panel "The Place of Space in Modern Iranian Literature" during the 2012 Iranian Studies conference in Istanbul.[1] He could not be more right. The matter of space, addressed from different perspectives, is the backbone of Goli Taraqqi's narratives. Spatial structures do not merely designate the settings of Taraqqi's stories; in an intricate way, they are a constituent part of the narrative plots, a determining factor in the narrative style, and definitely essential to the plot conflicts of Taraqqi's short fiction. Both in her first- and second-phase short stories, Taraqqi's characters are depicted to be in strife with the dominant forces of space and spatiality. Spatial frameworks, in Taraqqi's literature, determine the rules for characterization (on the part of the author) and identification (on the part of the characters). Characters, in Taraqqi's work, consolidate through their struggle with space. Space itself does not remain a static factor throughout Taraqqi's literature; it evolves from static structures into dynamic and more flexible zones of relativity.

In Taraqqi's narratives, space and identity and the interaction between the two are depicted within three cognitive frameworks: identity within rigid and strictly defining structures, identity within uncharted and indefinite realms, and identity in fluctuation within the third space. Each of these frameworks imposes its own logic on the conceptualization of the relation between space and identity. In the framework of a strictly defining social order, identity, though perhaps easily preserved, becomes destructive and uprooting in case of any desire for an alternative; it causes false dilemmas and operates in a reductive black-and-white logic. Identity, in unfamiliar semantic realms, is a yearning for the lost, a yearning for a network of meaning capable of placing the displaced—a yearning for the re-construction of an obliterated self-space. In the third space, however, the matter of identity evolves into an ephemeral phenomenon. It becomes flexible and relative disobeying the logic of absolutism and static signification. Liminal identities are dynamic and rely on plurality and coexistence of paradoxes.

In Taraqqi's early short stories, published in the collection *Man ham Che Guevara hastam* (1969), the dependency of space and identification is depicted through the characters' incessant struggle for self-elimination. All of Taraqqi's

1 Afrasiyabi, Dana. "Madman in the Attic: Illness, Space and Gender in Goli Taraqqi's Scattered Memories." International Society for Iranian Studies, Istanbul 2012. 2. Aug. 2012. Conference Presentation.

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004356948_007

Che Guevara protagonists feel an urge to destruct the defining frameworks of their existence, the frameworks that determine their actions, responsibilities, thoughts, and morals in a society going through modernization. They are caught in the duality of functioning within the communal order of society (based on man's *role* in family life, institutional occupations, and social relationships) and the desire for individuation. Zygmunt Bauman defines individuation in terms of the self's dissatisfaction within the communal patterns surrounding it and puts an emphasis on identity as a process through which the self is dislodged from its background. Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* protagonists are involved in such a dislodging process. Through different symbolic strategies, they try to destroy the borderlines that define who they are.

Bored and frustrated by the monotony and demands of family life, several of Taraqqi's early characters seek to leave and tear the bonds that prevent them from independence. Disorientation felt by the protagonist of the collection's title story is symbolized in the maze-like and obstructed setting of the narrative that serves as the background for the character's obsessions about leaving his family behind. In the story "Yek ruz," the female protagonist's ideals of family reunion and happiness are undermined by her colleague's emphasis on independence and the priority of individual self over others. The birth of a baby and the death of the delivering mother, in the surrealistic and agitated atmosphere of the story "Tavallod," link the brother's departure with the possibility of serenity and new beginnings. Some of Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* characters seek the way out of routines and social control through altering their bodies. Their corporeal existence, in other words, stands for the structures that have to be surmounted. The protagonist of "Safar" is happy about the amputation of his leg, since he believes that the operation would, in effect, exempt him from all his social responsibilities. In "Derakht," the character's urge for change and individuation is depicted through his desire for metamorphosis into a nonhuman being. In "Ziyafat," in order to resist the defining structures of the social institution of marriage, the narrator of the story commits suicide on his wedding night. Self-expression, in "Khoshbakhti" and "Mi'ad," is connected with the possibility of narrative articulation. The female protagonists of both stories feel the urge for departure in order to be able to narrate their stories. "Mi'ad," being the author's first piece of published work, seems to have an autofictional dimension foregrounding the initiation of its author's writing career.

In none of Taraqqi's *Che Guevara* narratives is the conflict resolved. The characters are depicted in struggle but never succeed to overcome and traverse the boundaries obstructing their ways towards individuation. It is only after about thirty years that Taraqqi offers a resolution to the *Che Guevara* conflict in her 2002 collection *Jayi digar*. Amir 'Ali, the protagonist of the title story,

resembling in lots of ways Taraqqi's early protagonists, decides to leave everything behind and acts upon his decision. Yet the relation between Taraqqi's first- and second-phase literature, often characterized by essential difference and discontinuity, is not merely established by the story "Jayi digar."

Taraqqi's post-emigration literary work, including three consecutive collections *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh* (1992), *Do donya* (2000), and *Jayi digar* (2002), is often considered to stand for the author's literary rebirth after two decades of silence following the publication of *Khvab-e zemestani* (1973). Despite major differences in subject matter, narrative tone, and even the generic characteristics between Taraqqi's first- and second-phase fiction, there is a thematic logic that links the two. While Taraqqi's early protagonists strive to leave their current circumstances, most of Taraqqi's post-emigration stories are entirely set or initiated within the new and the yet unknown space of exile. The characters' exilic states in Taraqqi's second-phase literature, in one sense, can be considered as the deterred actualization of the *Che Guevara* characters' urge for departure. While Taraqqi's early protagonists are obsessed with the possibility to shatter or escape the structures of worn-out identities, the autodiegetic narrator and the displaced protagonists of Taraqqi's post-emigration stories struggle to re-construct identities, to re-construct self-spaces. According to Stuart Hall, identification functions through difference and representational practices. Like the construction and communication of meaning in specific semantic realms, it is closely linked with the concept of space because of its dependence both on discourse and the boundaries of differentiation. Construction of self-space, in this sense, is the main problematic regarding the displaced self's social functionality within an unfamiliar culture. Taraqqi's stories of displacement foreground the characters' challenge to construct self-space under their exilic conditions.

"Khaneh'i dar aseman" is a distinguished example among Taraqqi's short stories depicting the trauma of displacement and its protagonist's plight as regards the construction of self-space. Tossed around by her children like an excessive object from country to country, the old protagonist identifies nowhere else as self-space other than her airplane seat, symbolizing her suspended condition in exile. Incapable of identification in her exilic state, she shuns and retreats from the realm of language and meaning in her near death illusions. "Mr. Alef" experiences the trauma of identification in similar ways. He is well aware of the transforming effects of exile upon his sense of selfhood. His desire for self-elimination is symbolized through the recurrent bed imagery. His bed symbolizes a virtual portal that facilitates his transition from exilic disorientation to the security of homeland. The protagonist's dual attitude towards his displaced condition—pertaining to his will for integration, on the one hand,

and his fear of the unknown, on the other—is represented through the door of his room which symbolically makes the encounter between self and other as well as the mingling of the two indispensable. In "Madame Gorgeh," the narrator's hesitance and her obsession with an ambiguous sense of guilt, in exile, prevents her from recognizing her rights and permissions in her own private space. Upon a commonsensical judgment about her being right confronting the neighbor's unsubstantiated complaints, the narrator succeeds in delineating the borderlines of a self-space in exile.

"Avvalin ruz" and "Akharin ruz," the framework narratives of *Do donya* (2002), add a meta-fictional level to Taraqqi's autobiographical stories. They foreground the function of self-narration in the autodiegetic narrator's recovery from her identity trauma in exile. On her first arrival days in a mental health clinic in France, unable to connect to her here and now, the narrator is in constant vacillation in between past and present. It is only through narrating the stories of the past that she is finally able to recover from her obsessions and create a closed episode of her past recollections. Through self-narration, the narrator gradually leaves the obsessive level of character as regards her reminiscences and is restored onto the distanced level of narrator. By the end of the latter story, the narrator develops a more flexible (an episodic) concept of the self; she is able to view herself in different stages of life without being affixed to any static conception of the self.

Taraqqi's autobiographical stories, in other words, are situated in between two modes of self-perception: the perception based on an absolute and static conception of the self and the perception based on the simultaneous, ephemeral, but nondisruptive existence of different selves. Taraqqi's narratives of fluctuation facilitate the transference from the former identity state to the latter. Through the act of narration, not only the concept of the self, but also the relationship between the self and other is transformed. The liminal state of the author destabilizes the allegedly static narratives of self and other.

Taraqqi's authorial stance, in this sense, located in between self and other, is an instance of that which Homi K. Bhabha conceptualizes by the term *third space* and identifies as the site of *hybridization* and cultural translation, a semantic realm within which meanings are decontextualized and displaced from their original and illusively stable points of reference. Her autobiographical stories, narrated from the third space, destabilize the meaning and cultural associations of *Farang* (a term pertaining to the concept of the West in an Iranian context.) In Taraqqi's in-between narratives, the relationship between the Iranian self and the Farangi other is redefined. Both the positive associations of Farang, perceived from a pre-emigration state, and the negative associations of the term, perceived from an exilic state, are ironized, challenged, and altered.

Farang, a spatial term, often foregrounded as a geographical point of orientation, remains an ambiguous locality in Taraqqi's text. Although characters of her memories deploy the term in reference to an apparently specific geographical locale, a close analysis of the text reveals the fact that Farang pertains, indeed, to nonspecific coordinates on the globe, to a variety of countries and cultures. In several cases, the term's point of reference is highlighted as imaginative, fantasized, or equivocal territories.

Farang's preeminence in medical science (as emphasized by several characters of Taraqqi's memories) is challenged in the story "Otobus-e Shemiran," where the young protagonist owes her recovery from a fatal illness to the affectionate broad smile of the non-Farangi bus driver and the sight of his gold tooth. Despite her parents' reliance on the genius of the so-called Farangi doctors, the young protagonist attributes her recovery to the driver's gold tooth, compared to an oriental magic lamp capable of making her wishes come true.

The characters' emulative attitude towards the Farangi culture (art, fashion, and language) is undermined through the ironical effects produced by imperfect imitations. The act of *mimicry*, Bhabha's term for the colonized subject's attempt to duplicate the alleged supremacy of the West, results in the production of images that, in effect, caricaturize the Western culture's ideal. The characters' emulations of Farang and the Farangi culture, in Taraqqi's autobiographical stories, turn against the Farangi discourse itself and underscore its alleged supremacy.

Situated in between homeland and exile and facilitating the relation between the two, both airports and letters are represented as liminal sites in Taraqqi's autobiographical stories. In the airport scenes and within the content of letters, different and even opposing narratives of homeland and exile are given voice and held as true, producing a collage of the semantic relationship between self and other. The text of Taraqqi's post-emigration memories is characterized with this condition. In her retrospective stories, homeland and Farang as well as the relationship between the two are defined through an amalgam of paradoxical narratives. Taraqqi's memories are not only articulated from an in-between narrative space but they also transmit narratives of liminality through cultural translation.

Iranian literature addressing the matter of displacement is a young literary tradition, still in its prime. Sub-genres of exile literature, emigration literature, diasporic literature, and literature of return, are still dangling labels attributed to an emerging body of fictional work, negotiating the phenomenon and the experience of displacement. There are many unanswered questions in regard to issues of textual characteristics, development, and the generic implications of the works, produced by first- and second- generation Iranian emigrants that

need detailed exploration. Comparative studies, of course, can be conducted between Iranian-American literature and other samples of hyphenated literature produced worldwide. The autobiographical sketches of Firoozeh Dumas published in *Funny in Farsi* (2003), on both thematic and stylistic levels, for example, can be well compared to many passages in Meera Syal's 1997 British-Indian bildungsroman *Anita and Me*. In the course of my research, however, I came across a few specific topics of particular interest that, to my knowledge, have not yet been addressed as topics of a scholarly examination as regards the matter of displacement.

When it comes to topics of literature and displacement, the attention is often shifted from inside the borders of Iran to its outside. The term displacement is often, if not always, associated with geographical dislocations: emigration, forced or self-imposed exiles, and life in diasporas. The phenomenon, however, can be approached from a different angle. Semantic realms can also be dislocated without the process being space-dependent. Abrupt social and political changes can result in semantic chaos. The result is often comparable with conditions brought about by cross-national displacement. Fiction depicting the characters' uncertainties and the identity traumas against the backdrop of the 1978/79 Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), such as Fasih's *Zemestan-e 62* (1987) and Taraqqi's newly published novel *Ettefaq* (2014), are among the examples. Emigration from Iran can also be examined in works that address the issue as a contemporary wave in today's Iran, depicting a younger generation that aspire to leave the country for reasons different from the already settled Iranian emigrants' across the globe. Belqeys Soleymani's *Ruz-e khargush* (The day of rabbit) (2011) and Taraqqi's "Entekhab" (The choice) published in *Forsat-e dobareh* (2014), for example, refer to the implications of the issue.

Epilogue

When I started this project, my aim was to produce a close textual analysis of Taraqqi's short stories, to contextualize her literary position in the Iranian contemporary literature, and to offer an encompassing outlook on the stages Goli Taraqqi's short fiction has gone through in about three decades. As I was well advanced composing this work, however, two other works by Taraqqi appeared in Iran's book market: *Ettefaq*, a novel, and *Forsat-e dobareh*, a collection of short stories, both published in 2014. Unfortunately, by that time it was too late to include the narratives of *Forsat-e dobareh* in the discussions of this study. This epilogue, accordingly, is appended to this book in order to offer a brief and general introduction to Taraqqi's most recent publications.

Forsat-e dobareh includes nine narratives. The collection is supplemented by a short introductory note by Goli Taraqqi about her tendency to identify with her characters from time to time.[1] She compares one of her character's troubles with receiving the official permission for the publication of his poetry with her own case in regard to the publication of *Forsat-e dobareh*. Commenting on the content and the thematic significance of her recent narratives, in the same note, Taraqqi mentions that this volume's stories are about the state of being a perpetual "*rahrow*" (a traveler) in life, not knowing whence we have come and where we are heading. This theme is represented on the cover of the book, as the author indicates, through the image of the figure of a walking man, sculptured by Alberto Giacometti.

The stories of the collection cannot be considered as entirely new in narrative style and subject matter. The opening story of the volume "Banu Khanom" (Ms. Banu), for example, can well be categorized among Taraqqi's *Khaterehha* or *Do donya* narratives. It is related by a homodiegetic narrator (easily identifiable with the author as a teenager). The incidents take place in Anushiravan Dadgar highschool, referred to in "Dust-e kuchak" as the narrator's new school.[2] The downtown wanderings of the adolescent characters of the story bring to mind the urban setting of "Golha-ye Shiraz." The story, narrated in Taraqqi's familiar language, is about a strict and bad-tempered school principal who expels one of the students for having disregarded the school's disciplines. After a year, the expelled girl comes back accompanying Princess Shahnaz (probably her schoolmate in Switzerland) on a visit to school. The school principal is

1 Taraqqi, *Forsat*, p. 2.

2 Taraqqi, "Dust," p. 47.

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004356948_008

mortified by the event. The story includes passages that juxtapose the school principal's authority at school with her pitiable lonely life outside school.

The story "Entekhab," is one of the most impressive narratives of the collection. It addresses the matter of emigration in today's Iran. Amir Hoseyn, the protagonist of the story (born 1995), has lost his parents in a car accident years ago, as he was a baby, and has lived since with his cherishing grandmother. The protagonist's relationship with his friends foregrounds the lifestyle and the general mindset of the Iranian youth nowadays. At about the age of eighteen, Amir Hoseyn insists that the grandmother sell her house and they move to a posher neighborhood. She consents to the idea, despite her unwillingness, but thinks the occasion as a good opportunity to provide her grandchild with real estate for his future. Later, encouraged by his girlfriend living in France, Amir Hoseyn sells the apartment, in which he still lives with his grandmother, without telling her. A friend of his is supposed to take her to a retirement house after Amir Hoseyn's departure. But the grandmother, having overheard Amir Hoseyn talking to a friend, leaves the apartment for an unknown place. Finding her bed empty in the morning, the protagonist takes some of her valiums, falls asleep, and misses his flight. The story is let open-ended while the new owners of the house arrive at the door. The grandmother's character and the plight of the story can be compared to those of "Khaneh'i dar aseman."

"Dozd-e mohtaram" (The respectable burglar) is set shortly after the Revolution, depicting the social conditions in Iran in the first post-revolutionary years. The house in which the narrator lives with her mother and grandmother, is confiscated by the new state; and so they are forced to stay with her uncle. On an evening the mother's purse is robbed by a man who has broken into the house. Years later, the narrator, now living in Canada, pays her uncle a visit. The uncle has had a brain attack and, now invalid, is taken care of by a man who is found out to be the same burglar. He explains to the narrator that after the Revolution, he was jobless and needed money for his wife's urgent caesarean. Now the couple takes care of the uncle and treats him as a family member. The story setting, permeated by senses of uncertainty and insecurity, resembles the atmosphere depicted in "Khedmatkar."

"An yeki" (The other one) is about the life of a pre-revolutionary colonel's daughter. After the father's death, the girl is encouraged to get married despite her hesitation to be able to pay back the father's debts. Feeling no affection towards her husband, she refuses intimacy. Her husband, though a nice person in general, on one occasion forces himself upon her. The girl leaves him and moves to her aunt's place soon to find out that she is pregnant with twins. Right after deliverance, she chooses one of the children and abandons *the other one* to be brought up by the aunt. Some years later, the child chosen by the

mother, is taken away to the U.S. by his father. He dies later in a car accident. The background setting, in the second half of the story, reflects Tehran's wartime bombardments. The themes of destiny and separated twins are also foregrounded in Taraqqi's recent novel *Ettefaq* (2014).

"Puran khikki va arezuha-ye bozorgash" (The obese Puran and her big dreams) seems to be another example of the author's adolescent memories. It bears traces of Taraqqi's language, style, and recurrent motifs in *Khaterehha* and *Do donya*. Parviz, the gallant teenager of "Golha-ye Shiraz," reappears in this story, this time as a leftist Robin Hood who encourages the narrator and Puran to snatch their visitor's shoes and clothing for the poor. But the parents soon find out and the operations have to stop. Puran, having turned into an ardent leftist in heart, feels deceived by Parviz's leadership when she happens to see him on the street wearing a pair of familiar shoes. The story, on one level, can be approached as a parody of pre-revolutionary leftist idealism in Iran.

"Gozashteh" (The past) relates the story of a girl who has come to Iran from abroad for a visit. She is wandering in a museum that used to be her family's house before the Revolution. As it starts to rain, she leaves in haste and accidentally drops her diary notebook. The museum's security guard, a former attendant of the house, finds the notebook and, later in the evening, starts to read it. The diary is about the girl's recollections of her past life about a loving aunt who shortly after the Revolution commits suicide in prison. Before her death, she informs the girl's mother that she has left her favorite Tara statue with Heydar, the man who is now reading the diary. The man, anticipating the girl's return, takes the statue and the notebook back to the museum on the next day. But the girl never comes back.

"Shaparak va Aqa-ye 'Adl-e Tabatabayi" (Shaparak and Mr. 'Adl-e Tabatabayi) is set in contemporary Iran and relates the story of an aggressive man, Mr. 'Adl-e Tabatabayi, in his sixties, who is not on speaking terms with his only daughter now on the verge of giving birth to a baby. Shaparak the mentally retarded girl living in the house across the protagonist's, watches him all the time from the window and regularly brings him flowers. Her actions irritate Mr. 'Adl-e Tabatabayi for causing misinterpretation in the neighborhood. But on one occasion advised by his old maid to think about Shaparak as his own daughter, the protagonist goes through an epiphany. He finds serenity in the girl's visage and thinks about her daughter, Huri, and his soon to be born grandchild with much affection.

"Zendegi-ye sadeh" (Simple life) foregrounds the problems with publishing and the superficiality of the intellectual trends in contemporary Iran. 'Alireza, the protagonist, has been pressured by his mother throughout his lifetime to become an artist, a musician, a writer, or a renowned intellectual. Having failed in all of these fields, he becomes a poet. His latest volume of poetry, however,

does not get permission for publication. One evening, he attends an event, an engagement party of a friend. The conversations in the gathering reproduce the superficial intellectual discourses of today's Iran. The absurdity of the guests' empty talks appalls the protagonist. By the end of the story, 'Alireza decides to throw away all his papers and live together with the Afghan maid of a recently deceased banned writer and her little sweet girl, who is not allowed to go to school due to her nationality.

"Forsat-e dobareh" relates about the troubles faced by the autodiegetic narrator of the collection's title story finding a babysitter for her son. The story, set about a year after the Revolution, has many features in common with "Khedmatkar" in terms of ambiance, subject matter, and characterization. The Revolution has disturbed the habitual life order. The narrator is unable to trust anybody. She hires several people but finding them incompetent, harmful, or unreliable, decides to take a leave and raise her child by herself. At the end of the story the last babysitter, Delbar, comes back after about six months to ask for a second chance; but by then, the narrator and her family have already decided to leave Iran.

Taraqqi's novel, *Ettefaq* (2014), is the lifetime story of two twin siblings Nader and Shadi, from their births until they become sixty. Their relationship is of a mythological quality. Although incidents of life part their paths from each other, they are always in each other's thoughts and dreams and have a sort of telepathic connection with one another. Nader leaves Iran as a teenager and lives in the U.S. for a long time, while his sister stays in Iran. The novel's setting alternates between Iran and the United States. Shadi's struggles in Iran's post-revolutionary wartime atmosphere are complemented by her brother's life abroad. In her depictions of Nader's exilic condition, Taraqqi deviates much from her previous exile-related narratives. Nader is able to interact with the *other* in exile. He makes friends, gets married, and experiences a lot of ups and downs in the American sociocultural space. By the narrative plot, the twins are reunited in Iran. The last scene of the novel captures them together in the swimming in the sea while they feel themselves not older than ten.

Taraqqi's recent fiction is distinguished from her second-phase literature in that there is almost no sign of that sweet-and-bitter nostalgic language that characterizes her previous stories of displacement. The style of narration is, however, more or less the same, featured by simple vocabulary and structure, concise descriptions, and a well-balanced usage of colloquial language. Regarding the short stories, on the thematic level, there is a shift of attention from past- to present-time Iran. Most of her new stories are either completely set or temporally extended to the recent years. Concerning the matter of displacement and disorientation, there is much more emphasis on Iran's post-revolutionary and wartime chaos in comparison to her previous work.

English Translations of the Titles of Taraqqi's Short Stories

"'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef dar ghorbat"	"The Bizarre Comportment of Mr. Alpha in Exile" (based on Farrokh's translation)
"Akharin ruz"	The last day
"An su-ye divar"	On the other side of the wall
"Anar Banu va pesarhayash"	Anar Banu and her sons
"Avvalin ruz"	The last day
"Bazi-ye natamam"	The unfinished game
"Derakht"	The tree
Do donya	Two worlds
"Dust-e kuchak"	My Little Friend (based on Farrokh's translation)
"Fereshtehha"	The angels
"Golha-ye Shiraz"	Shiraz flowers
Jayi digar	Another place
"Jayi digar"	Another place
"Khaneh'i dar aseman"	"A Mansion in the Sky" (based on Farrokh's translation)
"Khaneh-ye madarbozorg"	Grandmother's house
"Khanomha"	The ladies
Khaterehha-ye parakandeh	Scattered memories
"Khoshbakhti"	Happiness
"Madame Gorgeh"	Madame Wolf
Man ham Che Guevara hastam	I too am Che Guevara
"Man ham Che Guevara hastam"	I too am Che Guevara
"Mi'ad"	The vow
"Otobus-e Shemiran"	The Shemiran Bus (based on Farrokh's translation)
"Pedar"	Father
"Safar"	The journey
"Safar-e bozorg-e Amineh"	Amineh's great journey
"Tavallod"	The birth
"Yek ruz"	One day
"Ziyafat"	Celebration

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004356948_009

Bibliography

Works by Taraqqi

Taraghi, Goli. "A Mansion in the Sky." *A Mansion in the Sky*. Trans. Faridoun Farrokh. Texas: Center for Middle Eastern Studies University of Texas at Austin, 2003. 100–16.

Taraghi, Goli. "My Little Friend." *A Mansion in the Sky*. Trans. Faridoun Farrokh. Texas: Center for Middle Eastern Studies University of Texas at Austin, 2003. 23–38.

Taraghi, Goli. "The Bizarre Comportment of Mr. Alpha in Exile." *A Mansion in the Sky*. Trans. Faridoun Farrokh. Texas: Center for Middle Eastern Studies University of Texas at Austin, 2003. 117–54.

Taraghi, Goli. "The Shemiran Bus." *A Mansion in the Sky*. Trans. Faridoun Farrokh. Texas: Center for Middle Eastern Studies University of Texas at Austin, 2003. 9–22.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Derakht." *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*. 1969. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 103–15.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Khoshbakhti." *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*. 1969. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 31–44.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Man ham Che Guevara hastam." *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*. 1969. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 11–28.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Mi'ad." *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*. 1969. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 133–50.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Safar." *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*. 1969. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 47–57.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Tavallod." *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*. 1969. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 61–83.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Yek ruz." *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*. 1969. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 87–100.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Ziyafat." *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*. 1969. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 119–30.

Taraqqi, Goli. "'Adatha-ye gharib-e Aqa-ye Alef dar ghorbat." *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*. 1992. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 182–231.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Dust-e kuchak." *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*. 1992. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 23–47.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Khaneh'i dar aseman." *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*. 1992. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 185–79.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Khaneh-ye madarbozorg." *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*. 1992. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 48–75.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Madame Gorgeh." *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*. 1992. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 140–56.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Otobus-e Shemiran." *Khaterehha-ye parakandeh*. 1992. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 2–22.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Khanomha." *Do donya*. 2002. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 31–61.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Akharin ruz." *Do donya*. 2002. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 205–15.

Taraqqi, Goli. "An su-ye divar." *Do donya*. 2002. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 66–92.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Anar Banu va pesarhayash." *Jayi digar*. 2000. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 45–72.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Avvalin ruz." *Do donya*. 2002. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 11–27.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Bazi-ye natamam." *Jayi digar*. 2000. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 9–41.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Fereshtehha." *Do donya*. 2002. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 129–70.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Golha-ye Shiraz." *Do donya*. 2002. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 96–126.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Jayi digar." *Jayi digar*. 2000. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 171–263.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Safar-e bozorg-e Amineh." *Jayi digar*. 2000. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 75–121.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Pedar." *Do donya*. 2002. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008. 173–202.

Secondary Literature

'Abedini, Hasan. "Taraqqi, Lotfollah." *Farhang-e dastannevisan-e Iran*. Tehran: Tehran Dabiran, 1990.

Abrahamian, Ervand. *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Abrahamian, Ervand. *A History of Modern Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 10th edition. Boston, Mass.: Cengage Learning, 2011.

Ahmadzadeh, Shideh. "Degarguni-ye nostalzhiya dar adabiyat-e mohajerat-e Iran." *Mohajerat dar adabiyat va honar: majmu'eh maqalat*. Ed. Ahmadzadeh, Shideh. Tehran: Entesharat-e Sokhan, 2012. 11–25.

Allen, Graham. *Intertextuality*. 2nd edition. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2011.

Amirrezvani, Anita, and Persis Karim. *Tremors: New Fiction by Iranian American Writers*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2013.

Amirshahi, Mahshid. *Dar Safar*. Los Angeles: Sherkat-e Ketab.1995.

Amirshahi, Mahshid. "Zan az did-e dastannevisan-e mo'aser." *Hezar bisheh. Majmu'eh'i az maqalat, sokhanraniha, naqdha, va mosahebehha-ye Mahshid Amirshahi*. Ed. Ramin Kamran. Stockholm: Baran, 2000. 99–120.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M., The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

"Balghur kardan." *Loghatnameh-ye Dehkhoda*. 2nd edition. 1998.

Bauman, Zygmunt. "From Pilgrim to Tourist—or a Short History of Identity." *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Ed. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay. London: sage Publications, 1996. 18–36.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

BBC Persian, "Beh 'ebarat-e digar: Goftogu ba Qader 'Abdollah." *BBC Persian*. Online video clip. *YouTube*. 29 Jan. 2013. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujJfPR8G0I0, accessed 25.03.2015.

Bhabha, Homi. K. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *The Location of Culture*. 1994. Rpt. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. 85–92.

Bhabha, Homi. "The Commitment to Theory." *The Location of Culture*. 1994. Rpt. London and New York: Routledge, 1997. 19–39.

Bhabha, Homi. "In the Cave of Making: Thoughts on Third Space." *Communicating in the Third Space*. Ed. Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner. New York: Routledge, 2009. ix–xiv.

Burke, Peter. *Cultural Hybridity*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2009.

Byrne, Eleanor. *Homi K. Bhabha*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Camron, Michael Amin. "Importing "Beauty Culture" into Iran in the 1920s and 1930s: Mass Marketing Individualism in an Age of Anti-Imperialistic Sacrifice." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24.1 (2004): 79–95.

Dabashi, Hamid. "Native Informers and the Making of the American Empire." *Al-Ahram Weekly Online* 797 (1–7 June 2006). http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/797/special.htm, accessed 25.03.2015.

Dabashi, Hamid. *Brown Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press, 2011.

"Darband." *Loghatnameh-ye Dehkhoda*. 2nd edition. 1998.

Darvishiyan, 'Ali Ashraf, and Reza Khandan. "Naqd va barrasi-ye "Otobus-e Shemiran"." *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 371–81.

Davaran, Ardavan. "Iranian Diaspora Literature since 1980: Contexts and Currents." *Literary Review*. Spec. Issue of *Iranian Diaspora Literature since 1980* 40.1 (1996): 5–13.

Davis, Fred. "Nostalgia, Identity and the Current Nostalgia Wave." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 11.2 (1977): 414–24.

Dehbashi, 'Ali, and Mahdi Karimi. *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003.

Dorbeygi, Babak. "Forushgahha-ye zanjireh'i-ye Refah: zarurat-e ejtema'i ya abzar-e eqtedar-e siyasi." *Goftogu* 13 (1996): 19–28.

During, Simon. *Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Eakin, Paul John. *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative*. London: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Eslami, Majid. "Miyan-e binahayat-e gozashteh va binahayat-e farda." *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 456–66.

Falaki, Mahmud. *Khiyaban-e tulani*. Stockholm: Baran, 1992.

Fani, Kamran, and 'Ali Dehbashi." Naqd-e adabi: goftogu ba Goli Taraqqi," *Bokhara* 19 (2001): 30–54.

Faraji, Mohsen. "Vaqti keh ravi ghayeb ast cheh kasi qesseh miguyad?" *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 434–9.

"Farang." *Loghatnameh-ye Dehkhoda*. 2nd edition. 1998.

Farrokh, Faridoun. "Introduction." *A Mansion in the Sky*. Goli Taraghi. Trans. Faridoun Farrokh. Texas: Center for Middle Eastern Studies University of Texas at Austin, 2003. 1–8.

Farsayi, Fahimeh. *Yek 'aks-e jam'i*. Cologne: Yasmin, 1989.

Fasih, Esma'il. *Sorayya dar eghma'*. 1984. Rpt. Tehran: Nashr-e Now, 1990.

Fasih, Esma'il. *Zemestan-e 62*. 1987. Rpt. Tehran: Nashr-e Peykan, 2003.

Foucault, Michel. "Truth and Power." *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rainbow. New York: Pantheon, 1984. 51–75.

Ghanoonparvar, Mohammad Reza. *Prophets of Doom: Literature as a Socio-Political Phenomenon in Modern Iran*. Boston: University Press of America, 1984.

Ghanoonparvar, Mohammad Reza. *In a Persian Mirror: Images of the West and Westerners in Iranian Fiction*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

Golabdarreh'i, Mahmud. *Dal*. 1986. Rpt. Tehran: printed by Katibeh, 1987.

Golestan, Leyli. "Ensan-e parakandeh, sonnat va moderniteh." *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 336–42.

Golmakani, Hushang. "Dar gozashteh cheh gozashteh." *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 476–88.

Goveyri, Suzan, and Turaj Rahnama. "Dastanha-ye Goli Taraqqi." *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 334–5.

Green, John. *The Modern Persian Short Story 1921–1981: A Bio-Bibliographic Survey*. Diss. The University of Michigan. Ann Arbor: 1987.

Hall, Stuart. *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*. Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1973.

Hall, Stuart. "Who needs 'identity'?" *Identity: a reader*. Ed. Paul Du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman. London: Sage Publications, 2000. 15–30.

Hall, Stuart. "The Work of Representation," *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. 1997. Rpt. Ed. Stuart Hall. London: Sage Publishers, 2003. 13–74.

Hillmann, Michael Craig. "Revolution, Islam, and Contemporary Persian Literature." *Iran: Essays on a Revolution in Making*. Ed. Ahmad Jabbari and Robert Olson. Lexington: Mazda Publishers, 1981. 121–142.

Hillmann, Michael Craig. "The Modernist Trend in Persian Literature and Its Social Impact." *Iranian Studies* 15.1–4 (1982): 7–29.

Huddart, David. *Homi K. Bhabha*. 2006. Rpt. Abingdon: Routledge, 2007.

"Integrity." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 9 Apr. 2011. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/integrity/, accessed 28.03.2015.

ISNA. ""Ajnabi" chist va "ajnabiparast" kist?" *Iranian Students' News Agency*. 29 Jan. 2013. http://isna.ir/fa/news/91111005973/, accessed 31.03.2015.

Ja'fari, Fahimeh. "Tataboq-e jahan-e dastani va jahan-e vaqe'i." *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 407–12.

Karim, Persis. *Let Me Tell You Where I've Been: New Writing by Women of the Iranian Diaspora*. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2006.

Karimi, Mehdi. "Ziyafat-e khaterehha," *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 15–162.

Karimi-Hakkak, Ahmad. "Introduction: Iran's Literature 1977–97." *Iranian Studies* 30.3–4 (1997): 193–213.

Keshavarz, Fatemeh. *Jasmine and the Stars: Reading More Than Lolita in Tehran*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Khabargozari-ye Fars. "Matn-e kamel-e sokhanrani-ye tarikhi-ye Emam Khomeyni dar Behesht-e Zahra." *Khabargozari-ye Fars*. 30 Jan. 2013. http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13911110000529, accessed 31.03.2015.

Khaksar, Nasim. *Mora'i kafar ast*. Paris: Khavaran, 1989.

Khaksar, Nasim. *Badnamaha va shallaqha*. Paris: Cheshmandaz, 1996/97.

Khaksar, Nasim. "Goftogu ba Nasim Khaksar," *BBC Persian*. Interview by Jamshid Barzegar. 18 May. 2006. www.bbc.co.uk/persian/arts/story/2006/05/060517_jb_nasimkhaksar-interview.shtml, accessed 23.03.2015.

"Khezr." *Loghatnameh-ye Dehkhoda*. 2nd edition. 1998.

Khorramshahi, Baha'addin, and Goli Taraqqi. "Javabiyeh-ye Baha'addin Khorramshahi va Goli Taraqqi bar yek "naqd"." *Ketab-e mah-e kudak va nowjavan* 23 (1999): 34–36.

"Khvari." *Loghatnameh-ye Dehkhoda*. 2nd edition. 1998.

Mace, John. *Persian Grammar: For Reference and Revision*. New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003.

Mahak, Francine Timothy. *A Critical Analysis and Translation of a Modern Persian Novel: "Winter Sleep" by Goli Taraqqi* (*Iran, Modernization, Jungian Psychology*). Diss. The University of Utah. Salt Lake City: 1986.

Mazare'i, Mehrnush. *Khakestari*. Los Angeles: Nashr-e Rira, 2002.

McHoul, Alec, and Wendy Grace. *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject*. 1993. Rpt. Abingdon: Routledge, 2002.

Mikula, Maja. *Key Concepts in Cultural Studies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Milani, Farzaneh. "Veiled Voices: Women's Autobiographies in Iran." *Women's Autobiographies in Contemporary Iran*. Ed. Afsaneh Najmabadi. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990. 1–16.

Milani, Farzaneh. *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1992.

Milani, Farzaneh. *Words, not Swords: Iranian Women Writers and the Freedom of Movement*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011.

Mir'abedini, Hasan. "Gozareshi az adabiyat-e dastani dar sal-e 1372." *Kelk* 47 and 48 (1993): 150–162.

Mir'abedini, Hasan. *Hashtad sal dastan-e kutah-e Irani*. Vol. 1. Tehran: Ketab-e Khorshid, 2006.

Mir'abedini, Hasan. *Sad sal dastannevisi dar Iran*. 4 vols. 2nd edition. Tehran: Nashr-e Cheshmeh, 2007.

Mirsadeqi, Jamal." Goli Taraqqi: zaban-e ehsas, zaban-e andisheh." *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 285–95.

Mirsadeqi, Jamal. "The Short Story," *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Ehsan Yarshater. 10 Apr. 2012. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/fiction-iic-the-short-story, accessed 24.03.2015.

Mirsepassi, Ali. *Intellectual Discourse and Politics of Modernization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Mo'ayyad, Heshmat. "Naqd va barrasi-ye ketab: Rah-e deraz-e Estanbul." *Iran Nameh* 22 (1988): 327–32.

Moayyad, Heshmat, ed. *Stories from Iran: An Anthology of Persian Short Fiction from 1921–1991*.Washington, D. C.: Mage Publishers, 2002.

Mozaffari, Nahid, and Ahmad Karimi Hakkak, eds. *Strange Times, My Dear: The Pen Anthology of Contemporary Iranian Literature*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2005.

Nafisi, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2003.

Na'imi, Zari. "Tajrobeh-ye ma'sumaneh-ye osyan va 'eshq." *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 357–70.

Nanquette, Laetitia. "An Iranian Woman's Memoir on the Iran-Iraq War: The Production and Reception of *Da*." *Iranian Studies* 46.6 (2013): 943–57.

Nanquette, Laetitia. *Orientalism versus Occidentalism: Literary and Cultural Imaging between France and Iran since the Islamic Revolution*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013.

Nuri 'Ala, Partow. *Mesl-e man*. Nashr-e Elektroniki-ye Asar, 2008. http://www.ketabfarsi.org/ketabkhaneh/ketabkhani_3/ketab3306/ketab3306.pdf, accessed 25.03.2015.

Nushazar, Hoseyn. *Na digar tak, na digar tab*. Los Angeles: Nashr-e Ketab, 1998.

Pirzad, Zoya. *Seh ketab*. Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, 2007.

Purkhoshbakht, Farzad. "Hefaz-e sabz-e pichakha." *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 467–75.

Qahreman, Sasan. *Gosal*. Toronto: Nashr-e Afra, 1995.

Qasemi, Reza. *Hamnava'i-ye shabaneh-ye orkestr-e chubha*. Los Angeles: Nashr-e Ketab, 1996.

Qasemi, Reza. "Agar kolahi midashtam." *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 446–9.

Ranjbar Irani, Nasrin. *Dastan-e yek ruz*. Berlin: Nashr-e Gardun, 2012.

Riffaterre, Michael. "Interpretation and Undecidability." *New Literary History* 12.2 (1981): 227–42.

Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2002.

Rowshangar, Majid. "Adabiyat-e mohajerat hasel-e napaydari-ye ejtema'i," *BBC Persian*. Interview by Sirus 'Alinejad. 9 Jan. 2005. http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/arts/story/2005/01/printable/050108_la-cy-roshangar.shtml, accessed 23.03.2015.

Sadr, Rowya. "Tanzi keh zendegi ast…." *Goli Taraqqi: naqd va barrasi-ye asar*. Ed. 'Ali Dehbashi and Mehdi Karimi. Tehran: Nashr-e Qatreh, 2003. 501–7.

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993.

Sarduzami, Akbar. *Hadis-e ghorbat-e man*. Uppsala: Entesharat-e Afsaneh, 1992.

Shafiq, Shahla. *Sug*. Paris: Khavaran, 2000.

Shafiq, Shahla. *Az anja va az inja*. Paris: Khavaran, 2010.

Sharifiyan, Ruhangiz. *Cheh kasi bavar mikonad, Rostam*, Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2003.

Soja, Edward W. "Third Space: Toward a New Consciousness of Space and Spatiality." *Communicating in the Third Space*. Ed. Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner. New York and London: Routledge, 2009. 49–61.

Sotudeh, Marziyeh. "Emruz cheh khvahi shavi." *Kalamat*. Akbar Sarduzami. Jan. 2010. https://sardouzami.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/emrooz-che-khahi-shavi_marziyeh-sotodeh.pdf, accessed 26.03.2015.

Strawson, Galen. "Against Narrativity." *Ratio* 17 (2004): 428–52.

Stümpel, Isabel. "Die Literatur in der Islamischen Republik Iran." *Orientalische Erzähler der Gegenwart*. Ed. Konrad Meisig. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999. 77–100.

Talattof, Kamran. *The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000.

Talattof, Kamran. "Taraqqi, Goli." *Who's Who in Contemporary Women's Writing*. Ed. Jane Eldridge Miller. London: Routledge, 2001.

Taraqqi, Goli. *Man ham Che Guevara hastam*. 1969. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008.

Taraqqi, Goli. *Khvab-e zemestani*. 1972. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2009.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Bozorg Banu-ye ruh-e man." *Ketab-e jom'eh* 5 (1979): 38–50.

Taraqqi, Goli. "Khaneh'i dar aseman." *Kelk* 20 (1991): 76–88.

Taraqqi, Goli. *Darya-pari kakol-zari*. 1999. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Farzanruz, 2005.

Taraqqi, Goli. *Do donya*. 2002. Rpt. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2008.

Taraqqi, Goli. *Ettefaq*. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2014.

Taraqqi, Goli. *Forsat-e dobareh*. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2014.

Tavakoli-Targhi, Mohamad. "Women of the West Imagined: Persian Occidentalism, Euro-Eroticism, and Modernity." *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis* 13.1 (1997): 19–22.

Tavakoli-Targhi, Mohamad. *Refashioning Iran. Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

Vahabzadeh, Peyman. "Space, Identity, and Bilingual Poetry: Rethinking Iranian 'Emigration Poetry'." *Literary Review*. Spec. Issue of *Iranian Diaspora Literature since 1980* 40.1 (1996): 42–58.

Vahdat, Farzin. *God and Juggernaut: Iran's Intellectual Encounter with Modernity*. New York: Syracuse, 2002.

"What and Where Are the *Seven Seas*?" *World Atlas*. http://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/infopage/sevensea.htm, accessed 02.01.2015.

Yavari, Houra. "Post-Revolutionary Fiction Abroad." *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Ehsan Yarshater. 15 Dec. 1999. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/fiction-iie-post-revolutionary-fiction-abroad, accessed 24.03.2015.

Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Young, Robert J. "The Void of Misgiving." *Communicating in the Third Space*. Ed. Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner. New York and London: Routledge, 2009. 81–95.

Zarlaki, Shahla. *Khalseh-ye Khaterat: Tahlil va barrasi-e asar-e Goli Taraqqi*. Tehran: Entesharat-e Nilufar, 2009.

Zarshenas, Shahriyar. "Jayi digar." *Zamaneh* 7 and 8 (2003): 76–83.

Index