

Iran, America and Iranian American Community in Firoozeh Jazayeri Dumas' *Funny in Farsi*

Zohreh Ramin^{1*}, Muhammad Sayyaf Jalalizadeh¹

¹Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Tehran, Tehran, IRAN.

e-mail: zramin@alumni.ut.ac.ir

* Corresponding author

ABSTRACT

Post 9/11 the United States of America concerns the reconstruction of already demonized identities of Arabs and Middle-eastern cultures. Postcolonial works reside in their rendering a tragic or serious image of Middle Easterners to bring the Western (American) audience into sympathizing with the Middle Eastern ethnicities. Could it be the case that a fundamentally humorous (not derogatory) depiction might contribute to easing such cultural tensions? Firoozeh Jazayeri Dumas' works stand out as critically acclaimed and successful works familiarizing the American audience with the more humane, likeable, sweet and funny aspects of the Iranians and Iranian culture, and the hardships of being an Iranian immigrant and becoming a hybrid individual. This article explores the already-hybridized self and psyche of Firoozeh as an Iranian American. She writes about her mother land and her residence country and comparing the way she has written about them can help readers understand how one can make peace between different parts of her identity.

Keywords: Postcolonial identity, demonization, hybridity, post 9/11

INTRODUCTION

Some believe that good fiction writers must only concentrate on entertaining their readers, being a good Scheherazade eventually. On the other hand, there are others who consider a talented and skilled writer to be the one who can simultaneously tell a good story and accomplish his or her self-assigned social, political, cultural and historical duties. Firoozeh Jazayeri Dumas, because of her indisputable achievements, belongs to the second group. Her two books, *Laughing without an Accent* and *Funny in Farsi*, are best-sellers in both Iran and the United States. Her books appeal to a wide range of readers, regardless of their gender, political views and ethnic backgrounds, and she is eternalized in the pantheon of successful Iranian-American writers.

Firoozeh, both explicitly and implicitly, talks about her own obsession with being raised an Iranian immigrant and having a hybrid mindset. In her stories (which are essentially short article-like diaries), she talks about her life in Iran, her life in the United States and the transition which links these two periods of her life. Although Firoozeh Jazayeri Dumas is a famous hybrid writer but she is not a familiar name in academia and even among Iranian intelligentsia. There are a few reasons explaining her relative

anonymity, but the most notable one is being a commercial writer. Firoozeh belongs to a group of commercial writers who write about serious issues which are anthropologically and pragmatically important. Her works do not possess some of the qualities of academically canonized literary works but they definitely share one defining aspect: historical importance.

Firoozeh Jazayeri Dumas and her works are important because of her descriptions of Iranian American community, her hybrid lifestyle, her hybrid mentality and her relationship with her community. In the multicultural millennium which we live in, not having a voice equals lack of existence in every existing aspect. In the political arena it is commonly believed that the United States is the most powerful nation because of its monopoly of arts. If one accepts this common belief, one can argue that finding and constructing a voice in different arts (especially literature) is equal to gaining power. In her works she discusses the undeniable importance of Iranian American community/minority in American society and the urgency of having a voice to express what they want.

Becoming a hybrid immigrant/individual in a multilingual and multicultural world is more or less inevitable, especially if an individual migrates to another

country (like Firoozeh and her family). Hybridity is a necessary mental process which must happen to immigrants and it is “considered to be a positive alternative to unhomeliness” (Tyson, 1999, p. 420). Unlike Unhomeliness, the hybrid individual, though excruciatingly challenging, finds peace between her two selves or alter egos and learns to use the best of the both worlds (her two cultural backgrounds). Homi Bhabha is the famous post-colonial thinker and theorist who spent most of his academic career writing about hybridity, its effects and its side-effects on individuals. He believes in the resisting quality of hybridity which stands against the colonialists attempts to define the world the way they want, “Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through repetition of discriminatory identity effects (Bhabha, 2004, p. 159).

In a time in which many Iranian writers (especially female writers such as Marjan Satrapi and Nahid Rachlin) have published literally works denouncing their cultural backgrounds and heritages, Firoozeh Jazayeri Dumas becomes culturally relevant and significant. She, unlike her predecessors, does not see her surrounding world as black and white or right and wrong. She is a more rational and genuine person in her descriptions and one can see sincerity in her approvals or disapprovals of various American and Iranian cultural phenomena. She is an individual who has materialized *honesty is the best policy* in her writings, and therefore, her works can be seen as authentic cultural documents. The purpose of this article is to consider how she has portrayed her homeland and the country she currently lives in. In other words, how she has depicted the two countries/ two nations she has spent her life in.

Iranian American Community

Iranian Americans are mainly known to be comprised of a few different groups: descendents of Iranians who have lived in America, descendents of mixed marriages in which one of the parents is Iranian, Iranian immigrants who live in America and people who have the dual citizenship of both Iran and the United States (Hakimzadeh & Dickson, p. 1-2). Iranian Americans are famously and deservedly known for being highly educated and successful in business, sciences and arts. The US Census data shows that Iranians are among the most affluent minorities who are currently living in the United States and they earn one of the highest averages of income (Demographic and Statistics, www.paaia.org). These individuals and their remarkable achievements have affected the whole world and have given the Iranian American community much to be

proud of, individuals like: Pierre Omidyar (the founder and the chairman of ebay website), Anousheh Ansari (the first Iranian and the first self-funded woman to fly to the international space station) and Shohreh Aghdashloo (the first Iranian actor to be nominated for an academy award-Oscar).

A considerable number of Iranian Americans prefer to be called Persians. This group refers to their homeland as Persia and consider the language they speak Persian (Firoozeh in her second book's preface talks about how many Iranians criticized her for not using 'Persian' instead of 'Farsi' in her first book's title). This persistence of a group of Iranians, in using Persian instead of Farsi, is because of a variety of reasons: first they do not want to be associated with Iran and its current government. They are, whether, political dissidents or ordinary people who fear discrimination and racial profiling. Second, some believe Iran to be their nationality and Persian to be their ethnicity; by putting emphasis on being Persian they consciously want to point to their racial difference and dissimilarity with the Arab invaders (the Muslim conquest) who toppled the Sassanid Empire. Third, some of them use Persian because they hold themselves to belong to the fifty one percent Persian ethnicity who are living in Iran (the other ethnicities are Kurds, Lors, Azeris, Baloochs and Arabs) (Bahmani, 2004, p. 1, Eduljee, p. 1-4). Besides the different groups of Iranian Americans who can speak Farsi, interestingly, there is a minority of Iranian Americans who can't even speak Farsi and as a result are called non-Persian Iranians. In a nutshell, like Davaran states, “the Medes and the Persian certainly identified themselves as Iranians and the Achaemenid kings often attested their Iranian identity in their inscriptions” (2010, p. 11).

Iranians' migration to the United States started before the 1979 Islamic revolution and was strongly precipitated by the revolution, ideological changes which occurred because of the new-born government and the Iran-Iraq war which was the 20th century's longest conventional war (after the second Sino-Japanese war). Sociologists and researchers in the field of migration studies have divided this United State-side migration into two waves: the first wave started from 1950's and ended before the 1979 revolution, and the second wave started from the 1979 revolution and continues to the present day. The first wave was mostly comprised of Iranian scholars and students who were sent by Shah's government in order to learn the new technologies and help propel the industrializing Iran (Firoozeh's father, Kazim Jazayeri, a winner of Fulbright scholarship, belongs to this group). The second wave was mostly comprised

of political refugees and exiles, asylum seekers, political dissidents, supporters of the previous regime and people who just wanted to emigrate without having any political reasons for doing so (Hakimzadeh & Dickson, www.migrationpolicy.org).

Based on the results of Census 2000, only 0.91 percent of the 31.1 million foreign born immigrants who are currently living in the United States are Iranians, which makes their achievements of different natures to gain paramount importance. The United States is home to the largest population of Iranians outside Iran (diaspora) and over half of this population lives in the state of California (Whittier and Newport beach, two cities in the state of California, where Firoozeh and her family have lived and the settings of most of her short stories). According to census 2000, 50.9 percent of Iranian immigrants have attained a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 28 percent national average. Based on this data, Iranians have the highest rate of higher academic degrees among ethnic minorities (more than one in four Iranian Americans have a master's degree or PhD).

In August 2008, a public opinion survey of Iranian Americans by public affairs alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA) was published whose results are not only useful to know, but also will later help understand some themes of Firoozeh Dumas' stories. First, ethnic heritage is important to most of Iranian Americans in defining their identity, but at the same time they have succeeded in assimilating into American society. Second, two-fifths of Iranian Americans identify themselves as Muslims, two-fifths of Iranian Americans do not belong to any specific religion or practice any of them, and the rest are Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. Third, the two important issues which concern Iranian Americans the most are facilitating greater understanding between people of the two nations and making sure that their image, their values, their accomplishments and their hybrid identities are correctly reflected in media (considering these issues, Firoozeh's accomplishments in portraying this community is completely in line with what they needed and asked for). Four, nearly half of the Iranian Americans who have participated in this survey have experienced discrimination or have known another member of this community who has been a victim of discrimination. The most common types of discriminations against Iranian Americans are airport security discrimination, social discrimination, employment discrimination, racial profiling and discrimination at the hands of immigration officials, and interestingly all these discriminations have been experienced by Firoozeh

and her family members and have been reflected in her two memoirs. (Opinion Survey of Iranian Americans 2008, www.paaia.org).

Another important survey of (PAAIA) which will directly help illustrate some themes of this study was published in 2009. Some of the important findings of this survey confirm the aforementioned 2008 survey's findings. First, the importance of ethnic heritage among Iranian Americans has not lost its place and Iranians keep having close emotional ties with their motherland. This strong emotional bondage stems from the fact that most Iranian Americans have family members and friends with whom they are regularly in touch. Second, Iranian Americans are in favor of political negotiations between the Iranian and the American government and peaceful changes, and they also detest any threat of war against their motherland (Opinion Survey of Iranian Americans 2009, www.paaia.org). This apprehension of war and hostility toward Iran is comprehensively reflected in one of Firoozeh's stories, *Encore, Unfortunately*.

Encore, Unfortunately is about how Firoozeh started searching for a copy of *Bomb Iran* for a one-woman show she hosted about growing up an Iranian in America. *Bomb Iran* was a song about how Iran and Iranians should have been bombed after the Iran hostage crisis which made it to the top hits of 1980 (Firoozeh addresses this song the soundtrack of her nightmares). In this story, she mentions how she found Vince, the singer, and how apologetic and sorry he was for what he sang, but in the last paragraph of the story, due to some unforeseen twists of fate, the soundtrack of her nightmares came back to life:

Bomb Iran recently came back, thanks to John McCain, who sang part of it during one of his speeches. I called Vince (real name Andrew Franichevich) to see what he thought. He didn't return my call. Maybe he was too busy; he is after all, a very successful guy. Or maybe he is a bit horrified like I was that the song, like a disease that we think has been eradicated, was back. (Dumas, 2008, p. 86)

Hollywood, American cable channels and news channels are notorious for distorting the façade of Iranian American community and accommodating their viewers with nothing but fabricated lies, which obviously have political intentions. Until recently, Iranian and Iranian American actors and actresses were only found suitable to play the villains, Middle Eastern terrorists, helpless political refugees and backward Muslims. Maz Jobrani, a famous Iranian American stand-up comedian, in his *Axis of Evil* comedy tour show confesses that he was only invited

to auditions in order to play the evil and shouting Arab terrorist (Axis of Evil).

Nevertheless, persistence and perseverance of Iranian Americans in trying to alter, if not completely change, the way they have been portrayed have been partially successful in recent years, but this change of course has a long way until it reaches the favorable destiny. TV series and movies like *90210*, *Crash* and *Shahs of Sunset* (although this reality show has done more damage than good) have given a new portrayal of Iranian Americans in the media. It has been proven by experience and history of other minorities living in the United States (such as American Jews or Indian Americans) that if Iranian Americans want to survive and succeed as a community, they must sustain, protect and promulgate their cultural identity by using whatever means they have access to: books, TV shows, newspapers, movies, music etc.

Iranian Americans have proved to belong to model minorities (who are ethnic minorities with great contributions to their resident country) and this remarkable achievement must not only be reflected and shown to Americans, but it also must be celebrated. Firoozeh Dumas' memoirs successfully accomplish both these objectives.

NOTION of NATIONALITY in *Funny in Farsi* Iran

Firoozeh Dumas is originally from Abadan and, before moving to California, she spent her first seven years in Abadan. Some Iranian immigrant writers like Nahid Rachlin and Marjan Satrapi have described their homeland and hometown without having a sense of nostalgia. In other words, their descriptions are full of latent hatred toward anything related to their past. This is not the case in Firoozeh Dumas' stories. The first time she mentions her hometown, Abadan, is in chapter four of the book (*Save Me, Mickey*). This story is about how Jazayeri family and a few family friends visit Disneyland, since it is one of Kazim's favorite places in the United States. When Firoozeh is talking to the Mickey Mouse phone booth, her family and friends move away and forget to take her. Kazim's biggest fear was child kidnapping and he was deeply concerned about how dangerous America was. Firoozeh says, "Abadan was about as safe a place as one could hope for. We knew all the neighbors, everyone looked out for everyone else's kids, and there was basically no crime other than petty theft" (Dumas, 2008, p. 19).

Firoozeh does not have an idealistic and romantic depiction of Abadan and she does not glorify it as a

utopia. She mentions the good aspects of living in Abadan and, when needed, talks about the hardships they experienced. In chapter 9, *of Mosquitoes and Men*, when her husband, François, suggests they should spend their honeymoon in India, she objects by saying that she does not want to spend her romantic holiday in a hot place with mosquitoes, because she had her share of living in hot temperature and mosquitoes' bites, "as much as I loved living in Abadan, I hated the heat and mosquitoes, if everyone has a lifetime quota of bug bites, I reached mine by age six" (Dumas, 2008, p. 60).

Aside from Abadan, the first time Firoozeh talks about Iran is, again, in chapter 4, *Save Me, Mickey*. In this story she talks about the dangers of living in America and compares it with Iran, "in Iran, citizens do not have access to guns, so we do not have the types of crimes that so often lead to murders in America" (this first description of Iran is interesting regarding American government's stereotyping of Iranians as violent and belligerent people) (Dumas, 2008, p. 19). The next Iranian phenomenon she talks about is Iranian cuisine. Firoozeh numerous times criticizes Americans for their fast foods, unhealthy ways of eating and not having family dinners. In *Swoosh-Swoosh*, while making the comparison, she gives detailed description of Iranian cooking and finishes her detailed descriptions and comparisons with, "... when the meal is finally ready, we all sat together and savored the sensuous experience of a delicious Persian meal. Upscale restaurants in America, calling themselves "innovative and gourmet," prepare food the way we used to. In Iran, it was simply how everybody ate" (Dumas, 2008, p. 25-26).

Iran petroleum industry is another recurrent motif in her stories. Kazim enthusiastically and proudly talks about it with Americans in order to demonstrate how modern and independent Iran has become. In *If I Were a Rich Man*, Firoozeh and her family face financial problems and in retrospect, she talks about how their life in Iran was comfortable and ideal, "in Abadan, we never had to think about money, not because we were rich, but because the national Iranian oil company took care of everything ... for entertainment, everyone converged at the local clubhouse for bingo, swimming, movies and concerts. Except for food, it was all free of charge" (Dumas, 2008, p. 180). Aside from the company's effects on their lives, Firoozeh and her father show great interest talking about Iran and its oil resources. In *With a Little Help from my Friend*, Firoozeh writes about her family members' reaction to many stereotypes about Iran being a depraved and destitute Sahara, "intent to remedy the image of our homeland as backward, my

father took it upon himself to enlighten Americans whenever possible. Any unsuspecting American who asked my father a question received, as a bonus, a lecture on the successful history of the petroleum industry in Iran" (Dumas, 2008, p. 32).

In the same chapter, Kazim tries to rectify the false image of Iranian ethnic roots by explaining that "Iranians are indo-Europeans and not Arabs, but have two things in common with them: Islam and petroleum" (Dumas, 2008, p. 33). In *the Ham Amendment*, she spends a few pages informing western readers on how the British exploited Iran's oil and one can see how vehement her nationalistic feelings are, "with no teacher present to remind the participants of the universal concept of fairness, the British applied a different universal concept, greed. The agreement between British petroleum and the government of Iran was destined for disaster" (Dumas, 2008, p. 84). Later in this chapter, she continues giving a brief introduction about Dr. Muhammad Mossadegh and calls him the national hero. This chapter's brief but thorough history of Iranian oil industry and its exploitation by Western powers is very important. After ousting Dr. Mossadegh, she continues, "history partly repeated itself, and the foreign oil companies once again took over the operation and exploitation of the Iranian oil industry" (Dumas, 2008, p. 84).

It is worth mentioning that Kazim had the chance to meet Albert Einstein in person and when he asked him, "what he knows about Iran?" Einstein replied, "I know about your famous carpets and your beautiful cats" (Dumas, 2008, p. 94). Although Kazim and his family did not know anything about the value of Persian cats, but this topic was discussed again, years later, when an old kind neighbor asks them whether they had precious Persian cats in Iran.

Firoozeh's description of Iranian cities is not limited to Abadan and Ahwaz (where her family lived). She talks about vacation in Iran and how every year during the summer holidays started they spent a week in Mahmoabad, a city on the Caspian shore. She describes the road and the land between Tehran and Caspian shore as, "one of the most beautiful stretches of land I have ever seen" (Dumas, 2008, p. 53). She goes on by describing the *beautiful sceneries, purple wildflowers and the cool climate*. The next few paragraphs are descriptions of Jazayeri family spending enjoyable time in Mahmoabad. In another story, *Waterloo*, she makes another reference to the Caspian Sea, when despite being to different beautiful parts of world, "she has never forgotten the first gentle wave in the Caspian sea" (Dumas, 2008, p. 73).

The Islamic revolution

The Islamic Revolution of Iran or the 1979 Revolution irreversibly affected lives of Iranian who were living inside and outside Iran. The Islamic Revolution of 1979, the hostage Crisis of 1980 and their aftermaths are abundantly talked about in both Firoozeh Dumas' books. The first time she talks about the revolution and how it affected their lives as Iranian immigrants is in *With a Little Help from My Friend*, "I was lucky to have come to America years before the political upheaval in Iran, the Americans we encountered were kind and curious, unafraid to ask questions and willing to listen" (Dumas, 2008, p. 31). She explains how Americans did not know anything about Iran or even where it was located, so Jazayeri family had to *try hard to educate them on the subject*, "you go south at the Soviet Union and there we are ... south of the beautiful Caspian sea, where the famous caviar comes from" (Dumas, 2008, p. 31).

According to Firoozeh, Americans were kind and friendly with Iranian immigrants, but the hostage Crisis of 1980 changed everything. Their family members who came to America after the hostage Crisis never met the same America which Firoozeh saw, when she first came to the United States: "they saw Americans who had bumper stickers on their cars that read "Iranians: go home" or "we play cowboys and Iranians"(Dumas, 2008, p. 36). The Americans rarely invited them to their houses. These Americans felt they knew all about Iran and its people, and they had no questions, just opinions. The social discriminations and common people's reactions were so unbearable for Jazayeri family that Nazireh, whenever she was asked about her nationality, introduced herself as *Russian or Turkish* (Dumas, 2008, p. 39).

According to Firoozeh, Americans were either *thrilled* or *horrified* when they heard she was from Iran. Sometime a few of them were scared of her because they thought she was *a female terrorist* and sometimes telling them she was from Iran *completely ended the conversation* (Dumas, 2008, p. 40). The process of demonizing Iran and portraying Iranians as enemies of the free world did not end after the revolution. Domke (2004, p. 39) talks about how George Bush and his addressing of Iran as a member of axis of evil, helped propel this discourse, "contrasts to 'American values', such as the phrase 'enemies of freedom', were thus counted as evil [countries like Iran], as was the term 'fear' which the president often placed in opposition to the U.S value of freedom".

In chapter 10, *the F-Word*, she describes how social injustices and discriminations continued even after

she was graduated from UC Berkley and when she started looking for a job. Firoozeh, in this story, recounts how the discriminations led to changing her name to Julie, and applying under her new name. When she was applying for work with Firoozeh as her name, *an identifiably ethnic name*, she was rejected all the times but when she added Julie to her resume, “call it a coincidence, but the job offers started coming in” (Dumas, 2008, p. 65).

The revolution affected Kazim the most. Overnight, constructing more refineries were stopped in Iran, his service was no longer needed, and consequently he was retired. In chapter 18, *I-raynians Need not Apply*, Kazim’s hardships as an Iranian looking for job is fully described; When the Hostage Crisis happened, he was laid off from his work in an American company and started looking for a new job. His pension was cut-off since he must have returned to Iran to receive his money, and to worsen the situation, “nobody wanted to hire an Iranian” (Dumas, 2008, p. 117). The hardships, after the Hostage Crisis, that Jazayeri family went through had deep impacts on their lives and there are so many references to this phase of their lives:

For 444 nights, we waited. With each passing day, palpable hatred grew among many Americans, hatred not just of the hostage takers but of all Iranians. The media didn’t help. We opened our local paper one day to the screaming headline “Iranian robs grocery store.” Iran has as many fruits and nuts as the next country, but it seemed as if every lowlife who happened to be Iranian was now getting his fifteen minutes of fame. Vendors started selling t-shirts and bumper stickers that said “Iranians go home” and “wanted: Iranians, for target practice.” Crimes against Iranians increased ... many Iranians suddenly became Turkish, Russian, or French. (Dumas, 2008, p. 117)

Firoozeh, as she continues describing how Iranians became targets of social discrimination and harassment, emphasizes on an irony of Iranian immigrants then-situation, “perhaps the greatest irony in the wave of Iranian-hating was that Iranians, as a group, are among the most educated and successful immigrants in this country. “Our work ethic and obsession with education make us almost ideal citizens” (Dumas, 2008, p. 117-118). Another ironical situation was that even Saudi Arabia Oil Company rejected Kazim because of being an Iranian, this happens while most Americans considered Iranians to be Arabs or coming from Saudi Arabia. After the hostage crisis, according to Firoozeh, Iranians became very *unpopular* and Americans thought all Iranians could instantly *get angry and take prisoners* (Dumas, 2008, p. 39).

Despite all the aforementioned troubles and struggles, Jazayeri’s family stayed in the United States and benefited from the best of the both worlds (Iran and the United States). Even Kazim, who was around forty when he immigrated to the United States, is described by Firoozeh as someone who “remained an Iranian who loved his native country but who also believed in American ideals” (Dumas, 2008, p. 121). As Alejandro Portes states in *Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America*, “the immigrants and their children are themselves being transformed into the newest Americans” (Portes 1)

America

The United States and its influence on Jazayeri family, Firoozeh in particular, started before they even immigrated to the country. Before the revolution, Kazim was sent to Texas by the government to consult for an American company for two years. During his stay in Texas, Kazim was so infatuated with America and American culture that:

My father often spoke about America with the eloquence and wonders one normally reserves for a first love. To him, America was a place where anyone, no matter how humble his background, could become an important person. It was a kind and orderly nation full of clean bathrooms, a land where traffic laws were obeyed and where whales jumped through hoops. (Dumas, 2008, p. 3)

America might have been Kazim’s first love in a metaphorical sense, but it had a huge effect on finding Kazim’s first love and wife, Nazireh. Since coming back from the United States, Kazim wanted to marry “a fair-skinned woman with straight, light-colored hair”; therefore, he brought a picture of an American woman to Iran and asked his sister to find someone with the same physical features (Dumas, 2008, p. 5).

In chapter 1, *Leffingwell Elementary School*, Firoozeh briefly introduces her family. In her introduction she talks about how his father and his older brother Farid, left Abadan to study in America because, “like most Iranian youths, he had always dreamed of attending college abroad” (Dumas, 2008, p. 3). The way Kazim felt about America and the stories he told his family members were very important in persuading them to move to America. In chapter 2, *Hot Dogs and Wild Geese*, Firoozeh talks about how his father’s relentless story telling about America left them with “the distinct impression that America was his second home” (Dumas, 2008, p. 8).

Kazim stayed in Texas for a few years and after he was graduated, he went back to Iran. On his arrival to

Iran, he was, as Firoozeh describes him, full of "American optimism" (Dumas, 2008, p. 83). Kazim is seldom depicted as critical of anything related to America, except for the post-hostage-crisis period. He likes American landscapes, architecture, Disneyland, free markets, TV programs (he even participated in one), foods, voting system etc. Firoozeh does not share the romanticized vision of his father towards America. She tries to be an honest witness of her surroundings and, when needed, a brutal critic of America, American ideals and American culture.

When in Abadan, Kazim urged his wife to make *jell-o* and *ham* (his regular food in America) and as Firoozeh recalls, "eating his beloved jambon always put him in a good mood, which then led to stories of America and his exciting graduate years" (Dumas, 2008, p. 86). Kazim's ideal remembrance of his years in Texas resurfaces when he recalls his meeting with Albert Einstein and then states, "Anything is possible in America" (Dumas, 2008, p. 94).

Firoozeh, in *Save Me, Mickey*, talks about her families never-ending amazement with America, "because we were new to this country, we were impressed not just by big attractions but also by the little things like smiling employees, clean bathrooms, and clear signage" (Dumas, 2008, p. 17). Disneyland is where Kazim was most attracted to and he considered it to be a sign of Walt Disney's genius. In Disneyland everyone regardless of their age, could have fun and Kazim found it to be a proof of Americans' tendency to enjoy life, creativeness and patiently waiting in lines.

You Can Call Me Al is a story about Jazayeri family's trips to Las Vegas. Firoozeh considers Las Vegas to be his father's favorite place on earth because it was cheap. These trips gave Kazim the opportunity to talk a bit more about why he thinks America is great, "clean bathrooms, great restaurants and all-you-can-eat buffets" (Dumas, 2008, p. 51-53). Firoozeh considers these trips to be awful, since she compared them to how they used to spend their holidays in Mahmoodabad, Iran. *America, Land of the Free* is a story which describes American marketing and how Kazim and his brother Nematollah were fascinated by it. The title of this short story is a clever reference to the abundant free samples which are given to potential customers in American marketing. For Kazim, these things were considered a kind of loophole in the system, and as it is described in the story, Kazim and his brother spent the next few days, eating free of charge samples of various foods. Kazim even attended free marketing conferences (in order to use the free facilities available) and he sometimes lied about his birthday at Danny's restaurants, in order to get free food.

There are two important key points which must not be overlooked when looking for American elements in Firoozeh's works: 1. Her books are meant to be funny and hilarious, so whenever Kazim is encountering an American phenomenon or experience, the tone of the story changes into a more light-hearted one. 2. There are many Iranian phenomena or historical events which have been thoroughly explained by Firoozeh for the American audience. However, since her books were written with American readers in mind, she has done little explaining of American elements, historical events and phenomena (as they have been taken for granted).

CONCLUSION

Firoozeh is a rare and successful example of Iranian immigrant and hybrid writes who has succeeded in becoming commercially successful and at the same time socio-politically influential. Through respecting one's cultural heritage, one can not only evade inferiority complexes and similar physiological conflicts, but one can also use it to gain success and inner peace. Stories of *Funny in Farsi* are historical documents showing how Iranian Diaspora in the united states have lived through thick and thin and how cultural identity has been a noble obsession of Iranian immigrants.

Finally, Firoozeh's strategy in her first book provides a viable narrative technique to sidestep the "Unholliness" brought up by the experience of living as an immigrant in America. Reading *Funny in Farsi* and *Laughing without an Accent* can accommodate people who have been hunted by noble questions regarding their identities as immigrants, with proper, satisfactory and freeing answers. Firoozeh's memorable books will hopefully stand the arduous test of time, because they are essentially delicate stories of people who love their motherland and do whatever they can to save their grace and survive in a foreign land.

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