

**ORIENTALISM IN *NOT WITHOUT MY DAUGHTER*
BY BETTY MAHMOODY**

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Abstract

The term Orientalism has long been used to describe constructed interpretations of the East by the Westerners. Nowadays, these stereotypes most frequently apply to Arabs and Muslims, as well as others who find themselves in conflicts with the USA. At an appropriate historical moment, a single story can have a devastating influence on our perception of the 'Other'. One example is the book by Betty Mahmoody, *Not Without My Daughter*, which was released in a period when the West showed an increased interest in the Iranian culture due to various conflicts in the region. The story of a woman and her daughter, who are held captive in Iran and finally make a heroic escape, became more than just a 'true' story of one individual. Instead of focusing on problems which need to be discussed, like the role of women in Muslim societies, it exposed a number of condemning cultural, ethnic and religious stereotypes about the East.

Key words: orientalism, the 'Other', islamophobia

1. 0. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the last fifty years or so the tensions between Muslim cultures and the USA have become an important aspect not only when researching US history but in considering world history in general. These tensions, present both within and outside the USA, together with the mass media, have helped to create the image of the 'enemy'. The conflicts between the East and West (Gulf War, the hostage crisis, 9/11, Iraq War, etc.) have also contributed to the escalation of islamophobia. Politics, cultural background, the general atmosphere in a certain society, as well as the media, all contribute to the definition of the 'Other'.

The concept of the 'Other' has been discussed and formed throughout history. When we speak of the Muslim or Arab identity, we cannot ignore the impact of Orientalism¹, which therefore remains an important part of our perception of the East and,

¹ (from *The New Penguin Compact English Dictionary*, 621) : orientalism or Orientalism n 1 a characteristic feature of the peoples or culture of the Orient. 2 scholarship or learning in oriental subjects.

in the words of Edward Said², our “way of coming to terms with the Orient” (Said: 2). Although the set definition of Orientalism is an academic one, it represents far more than just the Western perspective on the East. Early on, in the colonial period, the term ‘Orientalist’ might have referred to those Westerners who studied the Orient, travelled there, came into contact with people and later described their encounters. But these were far more than just academic insights:

[...] Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said: 3)

Since most people never came into contact with the Orient, their perceptions of it had to be based on the insights of those who experienced it. Orientalism became a way of defining the East. With the emergence of the mass media, Orientalism has automatically become a part of its development.

In a time when the media are overwhelmed with images of Muslim extremists, US soldiers in desert gear and various political protests in Muslim/Arab countries, it seems almost impossible not to have an opinion about the situation. While we mostly consider the mass media to be informative, both books and films usually get perceived as ‘relaxing’, which is why they can often be overlooked as potential sources of manipulation. Whereas the media quickly get pegged for being ‘subjective’, ‘nationalist’ or ‘hateful’, individual texts and films frequently escape such criticism. Nevertheless, their role should not be underestimated, as they influence both our values and our emotions.

The media, literature and film therefore play an important role in defining the ‘Other’ and presenting it to their target audience. The things we read or see influence our perception of the world and at the same time help us define ourselves. By forming a definite image of the ‘other’ we also define ‘us’. For example – placing images of Muslim believers together with those of terrorist attacks may seem ‘logical’ to some, but it can lead to several negative stereotypes – by defining all Muslims as extremists, choosing the ‘Muslim’ identity of the attackers as the only criteria (ignoring racial, ethnic and other identities), accusing the Islamic religion of promoting terrorism, etc. This negative identification of the ‘Other’ automatically creates a positive definition of ‘us’ – if we consider the example of 9/11, a lot of the media reports, as well other presentations, defined the USA as the ‘victim’. Images of bloodied Americans, heroic firefighters and crying relatives helped unite the Americans against the ‘Other’. Following the tradition of Orientalism such images help preserve the division of East and West, ‘bad’ and ‘good’, ‘conservative’ and ‘modern’, and particularly as of late – ‘extremist’ versus ‘tolerant’.

Thus the influence of not only the media, but also the literary texts and films can be taken advantage of. Many mainstream texts and films – like for instance *Not Without My Daughter* – have helped shape the image of the ‘Muslim’, the ‘Arab’, their cultural and religious traditions and their life in the USA. In the absence of other – direct or indirect – contact with a certain culture, such presentations often become

² Edward Said (1935-2003) was an acclaimed author, academic and cultural critic, whose best known work is *Orientalism*, which was published in 1978.

definite. And since any representation of the ‘Other’ is constructed on the basis a certain cultural, religious, social and historical background, all of these things must be considered in its analysis. For example – if we want to understand why ‘the Iranian’ was so successfully demonized in *Not Without My Daughter*, we must first discuss the circumstances in which the story was released to the public.

1. 1. BACKGROUND

One of the most important factors in analyzing the influence of such presentations is therefore the particular historical moment in which they emerge. As Margaret Miles points out:

Since every film is produced and circulated within a particulate climate of public events, conversation and concerns, it is only in relation to that “moment” that what a film communicates may be adequately examined. (Miles: xiii)

Considering the fact that in the last decades the American – and Western – society has adopted a predominately negative perception of the Arab and Muslim world, this creates a moment in which manipulating the audience is much easier. If we simplify the situation – in the months after 9/11 a story which includes a negative presentation of Muslims (e.g. a book about the exploitation of women in Islamic society) would have been found more interesting than a ‘neutral’ or ‘positive’ story (e.g. about the humanitarian crisis in Sudan).

The historical moment should therefore always be considered. Let us look at the story of Betty Mahmoody – *Not Without My daughter*, which was published in 1989, while the film was released in 1991. This was the period after the climax of Arabism (Hourani: 401-415) and the complex relationship between the East and the West was reaching a high point. In the East, alliances were changing, ethnic and religious divisions were more and more prominent and the West was making the most out of it. After 1967 the political situation was becoming increasingly unstable – most Arab countries and other countries in the region were at some point involved in military conflicts (Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan, Iran, Iraq, etc.). More importantly, this was also the period of the Iran-Iraq War, which lasted for almost eight years (1980-1988) and the Gulf War or Operation Desert Storm (1990-1991), when the United States led an attack against the Iraqis, who had invaded Kuwait. This meant that the West (predominantly led by the USA) was in direct conflict with the East. The American media was full of news about the events, bombing their audience with images of American military skill and success.

There were also two events which exposed a more specific enemy – Iran, namely the Iran hostage crisis and the Iran Air 655 incident. In November, 1979, Iranian students took more than sixty American hostages at the US Embassy in Tehran. This was the Iranians’ response to the American interference in their affairs. The hostages were freed 444 days later, in January, 1981 (Trotter). In 1988, 290 people were killed in the Persian Gulf, when a US navy cruiser shot down an Iranian passenger jet, claiming they had mistook it for a hostile Iranian fighter aircraft (Wilson).

In the 1980s and early 1990s the press covered all of these events in detail, providing a steady flow of information on the conflicting relationship between the East and West. The terminology the western media was using in this period underwent an interesting change. In the 1980s, the designation of the 'Other' changed from 'Arab' to 'Muslim' (GhaneaBassiri: 307). Both are, of course, stereotypes, but they indicate a change in the profile of the 'Other'.

As far as changes go, we should also focus on the 'Others' who were living in the USA at the time. In 1991, when the film was released in the USA, Arab Americans were in the process of establishing their position in American society. As Randa A. Kayyali points out: "...in the 1980s and 1990s, Arab Americans began to seek special community designations." (Kayyali: xvi) This meant that being classified as 'white' was no longer adequate – the Arabs were fighting for their own identity. These third-wave Arab immigrants, fleeing from war, hunger and unemployment (Kayyali: 33), were looking to the West for new opportunities. As more and more Arabs were moving to the USA, a new Arab American identity was forming, and the Arab/Muslim community was becoming more 'present' in American society. People were identifying themselves as Arab Americans or Muslim Americans and different organizations were formed to help preserve their traditions and heritage. This meant that the 'Other' was, in a way, becoming more prominent.

As Margaret Miles (72) points out, there could hardly have been a more adequate moment for releasing the story about an Iranian extremist who forces his wife and daughter to live in Iran. The media was full of anti-Iranian, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim propaganda, and the emergence of new, stronger Arab/Muslim communities was stirring things up in American cities – the 'Other' was omnipresent.

2. 0. NOT WITHOUT MY DAUGHTER

2. 1. ANALYSIS

In the midst of this turmoil, Betty Mahmoody decided to share her tragic experience with her fellow Americans and later, with the whole world. The story about life in Iran, based on the testimony of an American, who starts her first trip to her husband's homeland by asking herself what an American woman was thinking "flying into a country that had the most openly hostile attitude towards Americans of any nation in the world" (Mahmoody: 12)³ is anything but objective. And although the audience might realize that there is much more to the Iranian society than is depicted in the story, the absence of other opinions makes the story very misleading. Furthermore, this story is written in a manner which presents all of the background information as facts rather than opinions.

Not Without My Daughter, written by the authors Betty Mahmoody and William Hoffer and the subsequent film with the same title, tell the life story of Betty Mahmoody, an American, who marries Moody (Sayyed Bozorg Mahmoody), an Ira-

³ Although similar in meaning, the Slovene translation of the novel reads »kaj išče Američanka na letalu, namenjenem v deželo, kjer Američane na smrt sovražijo« (Hoffer: 9). The »openly hostile attitude« is therefore replaced by »where Americans are hated to death«.

nian doctor. Once Moody loses his job in the USA, he decides to take his wife and his daughter, Mahtob, back to Iran to visit his family. Soon after they arrive, however, he shocks his wife and daughter with his decision to remain in Iran permanently.

Betty is deeply upset, as she desperately wants to return to the USA, but is prevented to do so by her husband and the Islamic law. Although devastated, she is determined to escape, and after a long and treacherous journey, she manages to return home with her daughter.

In the subsequent film there are some minor differences in the plot, mainly to do with Moody's transformation, but as Margaret Miles points out they "have less to do with particulars of Betty Mahmoody's story than with the conventions of the film narrative" (Miles: 75).

The autobiography of Betty Mahmoody was widely publicized as a 'true story'. Although the story was in fact based on the author's experiences, the term itself poses a problem. How does the reader know that the story is 'true' and what exactly does that mean? Does 'true' mean the same as 'objective'? We could of course state the obvious – it is 'true' because it was told by the person who experienced it. Yet we are then faced with another question: can the person who lived through such an ordeal and is, by her own accord, a tragic heroine at the very least, really be realistic? The fact is that the story is told by one person, without any real evidentiary support or any 'witnesses'. If Betty had decided to keep the story to herself or share it only with her friends and relatives, all of these questions would be irrelevant. At the moment when she decided to share her life story with the world as a 'true' story, she predetermined as to how it would be perceived. For all the readers and/or spectators, who had never been in contact with the 'Other', the effect was definite – Moody is portrayed as a tyrant, the Iranian society as fundamentalist and the religion as extremist. These elements are not introduced as impressions, but rather as facts. And since this is a 'true' story, there can be no doubt about that.

If the general impression is stereotypical, a more detailed reading shows a whole array of negative remarks about the 'Other' (Iran) and positive remarks about 'me' (the USA). In the beginning of the book Betty states that Iran is a country, where there is 'the most openly hostile attitude towards Americans of any nation in the world' (Mahmoody: 12). This statement is not substantiated in any way, it is mentioned in passing, when describing the flight to Iran. The reader never learns how Betty might have come to this conclusion – did she hear about it on television, read about it in a newspaper or heard about it from a friend? Similar 'facts' can be found in every chapter, sometimes on subsequent pages. The stereotypes are in regard to Iranian culture, religion and even everyday life.

Considering the fact that the story is told solely from Betty's perspective (first person account), the story is even less legitimate. Her statements are presented as absolute facts, while her use of the 'me and my daughter' acts as a false attempt at objectivity. Her daughter, Mahtob, never really gets a word in, but there is an implied agreement. This is not only a means of making the story appear 'real', but rather an emotional manipulation – a small child is less likely prejudiced. The idea that Betty was intentionally misleading people is plausible, but the same would probably not be true for Mahtob. Clearly, the question is not only whether Mahtob experienced Iran in the same way, but rather why her opinions were almost completely ignored.

And if Iran – as the ‘Other’ – is presented in a stereotypical manner, the same can be said about the USA, which is almost deified. Somewhere in between listing the horrors of life in Iran, Betty reacts in a surprisingly determined manner when she hears comments about the USA on the Iranian television broadcast:

Americans were dropping like flies from AIDS. The American divorce rate was staggering. If the Iraqi Air Force bombed a tanker in the Persian Gulf, it was because America told them to do it. I quickly tired of the rhetoric. It this was what they said on the English-speaking news, I wondered, what did they tell the Iranians? (Mahmoody: 38)

Betty is also startled when she hears the exclamation ‘Maag barg Amrika!’ – ‘Death to America!’ (Mahmoody: 99) in the streets and in Mahtob’s school. This means that Betty realizes that Iran is presenting the USA in a negative and stereotypical manner, but does not seem to realize she is doing the same. On the contrary, she leads us to believe that Iranian people can be easily misled – “I marveled at the power their society and their religion held over them” (ibid. 14).

On numerous occasions we are provided with remarks which extol the USA. For instance, this is how Betty describes her husband’s life in his new homeland:

He found a world far different from his childhood, one that offered affluence, culture and basic human dignity that surpassed anything available in Iranian society. (ibid. 68)

We cannot be certain as to what kind of ‘affluence’ Betty is referring to, but she is certainly very skilled in contrasting the two countries. On the previous page she makes this reference to the Iranians who live in America:

Iranians proved to be stubborn about assimilating western culture. Even those who lived in America for decades often remained isolated, associating mainly with other expatriate Iranians. They retained their Islamic faith and their Persian customs. I once met an Iranian woman who had lived in America for twenty years and did not know what a dish-towel was. (ibid. 67)

If Betty obviously expects the Iranians to adapt to the American culture, she is obviously unwilling to adapt to theirs. And although this passage implies that she believes they have some sort of culture, they should, in her opinion, strive to discard it as soon as possible. Rather, they are expected to assimilate to the American way of life, which is clearly superior. She implies that before his disintegration, Moody was close to achieving this goal: “ ‘Anesthesiology is where the money is,’ he replied, giving evidence that he was, indeed, Americanized” (ibid. 69). This passage also clarifies Betty’s concept of affluence. By constantly referring to the fact that Moody was well educated and a doctor, she also implies as to what attracted her to her husband in the first place.

Their first encounter is portrayed as a kind of romantic Orientalist meeting of the East and West – Moody is described as being generous and an excellent lover – Betty states she “had never experienced such a strong physical attraction” (ibid. 70). He also excels in the role of a stepfather and the entire family is enthusiastic about his – Iranian – cuisine. Betty even shows an interest in Islam, although she clearly states

that Moody disapproves of the fundamentalism that is spreading throughout Iran. The initial encounter between the East and West seems to be quite optimistic. This was probably the result of the ideal conditions – Betty was in her homeland, while Moody was ‘American’ enough so that his quirks seemed exotic rather than harmless. While his origin is clearly stated, so is the fact that “he truly wanted to be a Westerner” (ibid. 68).

The romance is sadly short-lived. Underneath Moody’s calm and loving exterior, Betty notices some problems:

[...] no one knew Moody’s paradoxical personality as well as I. Moody was a loving husband and father, yet given to callous disregard for the needs and desires of his own family. (ibid. 12)

Betty does not provide any specific examples as to how this is manifested, but clearly their relationship is less than ideal even before they head to Iran. There, things only get worse. This is not only true in regard to the relationship between Betty and Moody, but her opinion of the East in general also changes drastically.

Since Betty comes into first-hand contact with Iran, we would expect her to discuss her impressions and experience, but not in such an obviously judgmental manner. Teheran is described as an overcrowded, filthy place, and its inhabitants as unkind, shameless people with bad hygiene.

Everywhere we went we encountered hordes of people, scurrying about their business, grim-faced. Not a smile was to be seen. Zohreh or Majid guided the car through incredible traffic jams, compounded by pedestrians willing to gamble their shabby lives and children who darted chaotically across crowded streets. (ibid. 43)

Betty reacts similarly to Iranian customs and traditions. If she states that Iranians who live in the USA should assimilate and except western traditions, she is unwilling to start the same process in Iran, making it apparent that she considers Iranian culture to be inferior. This is how she describes a traditional Iranian feast:

[...] the Iranians attacked the meal like a herd of untamed animals desperate for food. [...] Within seconds there was food everywhere. It was shoveled indiscriminately into chattering mouths that spilled and dribbled bits and pieces [...] The unappetizing scene was accompanied by a cacophony of Farsi. (ibid. 26)

If becoming an ‘American’ is a good thing, being Iranian obviously is not. The Iranian people are described with a myriad of negative comments – aiming at different cultural and religious characteristics. However, these comments are not directed solely at strangers, but also the members of Moody’s – and thus also Betty’s – family.

One the most extreme is surely the portrayal of Moody’s sister Ameh, whom Betty refers to as the wicked woman she hates (ibid. 103):

Her nose was so huge I could not believe it was real. It loomed beneath greenish-brown eyes glazed with tears. He mouth was filled with crooked, stained teeth. (ibid. 19)

The apparent likeness to a witch is reaffirmed with further comments about her appearance, character (“the old crone approached me directly, screaming in Farsi at the top of her lungs”, *ibid.* 102) and even her homemaking skills (“she left a thick trail of sugar along the carpets, inviting cockroaches to breakfast”, *ibid.* 33). Some of the other relatives get a more positive review – Zia, for instance, charms Betty with his smile and appearance, but this is used as a sort of contrast to other Iranians – he is “taller than most small-statured” Iranians and “best of all, he was clean” (*ibid.* 16). Similarly, she describes a visit to Moody’s relatives:

We enjoyed our visits with Reza and Essey. [...] Essey and a few of the other relatives helped alleviate a measure of the boredom and frustration. But rarely was I allowed to forget that, as an American, I was an enemy. (*ibid.* 47)

Even though life in Iran was undoubtedly very different, even shocking for her, she seems to take this too far. Real issues become over-dramatized and every Iranian becomes the enemy. This creates an ominous atmosphere, which somehow becomes characteristic of Iran rather than Betty herself. This is exemplified by her description of the Iranian countryside, which is “as bleak as my soul” (*ibid.* 101).

In the beginning, when Betty is on the plane, she sees “a woman on the ragged edge of panic” (9) and she wonders how she had lost control. The fact that her daughter is with her, only makes things worse. The “heat that seemed to physically press down upon us” (13), the “saggy mattresses, musty blankets, and prickly pillows” (29) and the general boredom and desperation caused “an assortment of physical ills” (77), which plagued Betty and Mahtob. Before she finally realizes that she will have to find a way to escape herself, Betty states:

Days passed – countless miserable, hot, sickly, tedious, frightening days. I slipped further and further into melancholy. It was as if I were dying. [...] Why didn’t somebody help me? (81)

The fact is that until her mother’s call wakes her up, Betty seems almost complacent. Even though she regularly complains about Moody’s sudden change, she still believes that his ‘American persona’ will eventually prevail and he will return to being ‘himself’.

How long must we endure? I could not bring myself to think in terms of years. Moody would not – could not – do this to us. He would view the filth around him, and it would sicken him. He would realize that his professional future was in America, not in a backward nation that had yet to learn the lessons of basic hygiene and social justice. He would change his mind. (74)

Of all the stereotypical elements, Moody has to be the most dramatic one. His transformation from a handsome Oriental into a demonic Iranian is one of the most controversial issues in this representation of the ‘Other’.

First of all, Betty’s descriptions of her husband are dubious from the start. On the one hand, she seems surprised at his behaviour in Iran, which is ironic, since she had obviously doubted him before they even left the USA.

Try as I might, I could not bury the dark fear that had haunted me ever since Moody's nephew Mammal Ghodsi had proposed this trip. [...] But I was obsessed with a notion that my friends assured me was irrational – that once Moody brought Mahtob and me to Iran, he would try to keep us there forever. (12)

The fact that their friends have to defend Moody's intentions clearly suggests that his 'change' was not as sudden as implied. Even though he works in the USA and considers it as his home, Betty senses a conflict within him:

His mind was a blend of brilliance and dark confusion. Culturally he was a mixture of East and West; even he did not know which was the dominant influence in his life. (12)

The 'dark confusion' seems to indicate his Eastern, pre-USA identity. While his Western identity seems to be closely linked to his profession and success, the other part of his persona appears to be more emotional. When he returns home, his reunion with family members and friends triggers the 'dark' in him and he no longer seems interested in returning to the USA and re-establishing his medical career.

'It doesn't matter,' I said. 'You can get another job, and I will go back to work.' Moody was inconsolable. His eyes grew dim and void, like those of so many other Iranians. (55)

By turning into an 'Iranian', Moody is also refusing his American identity. This would appear to be one of his greatest faults.

Time seemed to mean nothing to the average Iranian, and Moody re-adopted this attitude easily. [...] Once he attended an anti-American demonstration and he came back babbling gibberish against the United States. (81)

This seems to be the turning point – once Betty realizes that Moody is satisfied with his life in Iran and he does not intend to 'reform' by rejecting his culture, she begins to plot her escape. If her first sacrifice was for her husband, when she 'tried' to accept his past, the second is for her daughter, as she saves her from a surely horrible life in Iran. Their flight is described in epic proportion and the following events are both dramatic and emotional. Since the entire story is told from Betty's perspective, we never learn what Mahtob really wanted. By letting the reader believe that Mahtob's wishes were the same as her own, Betty gives false credit to her story.

Mahtob is described as innocent and helpless – "sunshine" (13), "tiny and troubled" (62), "an innocent four-year-old caught among the cruel realities" (62). Everything that happens to Mahtob seems to end in disaster, and her father is usually to blame. There is an intense relationship between Mahtob and her mother, and while some tender moments between father and daughter are mentioned at the beginning, they stop quite abruptly upon arriving in Iran. Moody seems to be lost somewhere between being excessively caring towards his daughter and not being caring enough. Therefore it is up to Betty to provide a safe haven for Mahtob.

Betty constantly blames herself for her daughter's misfortune:

All night long I berated myself. How could I bring her here? But I knew the answer. How could I *not*? Strange as it seemed, the only way I knew to keep Mahtob out of Iran permanently was to bring her here temporarily. Now even that desperate course of action had failed. (62)

This tells us two things – Betty obviously knew, at least to some extent, that Moody was not happy in the USA and that he wanted to return home. On the other hand, she seemed to have decided in advance that her daughter could not lead a happy life in Iran. Betty obviously had negative perceptions before she even left the USA – but what about Mahtob? As far as she was concerned, she was travelling to Iran with her loving parents to meet their family. Was Iran a cultural shock for such a small child? It might have been, but we never learn what Mahtob really felt and whether she was really as eager to leave as her mother. The fact is that by leaving Iran, she left behind her father and her family, and that she never saw them again, despite her father's attempts to be reunited with his daughter.

Mahtob is assigned the role of a victim because she had to go to Iran – but one could as easily argue that she was a victim because she had to leave. Although Mahtob is one of the main characters, she is actually not allowed to be the protagonist, because Betty takes the role so vehemently. Betty uses their child as a reason and as an excuse. Whatever she does right, she does because of her daughter and whatever she does wrong she does on her daughter's behalf.

Betty seems to be determined and confused at the same time – she plays the role of the heroine as well as that of the victim. She describes these feelings on subsequent pages:

I detested and feared the man who slept on the other side of the bed. [...] All I ever wanted was happiness and harmony for my family. But that night, as my mind replayed a thousand memories, it seemed that what few sparks of joy we had experienced were constantly tinged with pain. (62)

I felt good about myself and reveled in my newfound ability to handle my life independently. Everything pointed toward progress, toward the vague but real ambition I had set for myself as a teenager. (63)

Betty is therefore a very conflicting character – if she seems eager to fight in one moment, she gives up easily in the next. This is true both of her marriage and her reaction to the situation she finds herself in. These are characteristics in which many readers might recognize themselves and what is more, they provide Betty with a unique position of being both pitied and admired. The fact that Betty is represented as a victim is not a problem in itself – what is dangerous is that she exposes herself as just one of the victims. On several occasions, we are led to believe that American women living in Iran, as well as Iranian women, suffer in the same way, but are unable to express their feelings due to the male-oriented society. One can therefore only sense a “deep empathy” (151). This turns the focus from Betty's story to create the stereotype of women entrapped in a prison-like society.

If *Not Without My Daughter* were purely fictional, we might regard some of these stereotypes as merely remarks. The fact that it is a ‘true’ story probably makes

them more plausible. At the end of the story we find ourselves faced with a lot of conclusions: Iran is bad, the USA good; the USA is an example of a successful and tolerant society, while Iranian society is conservative and cruel; Americans strive for success and personal growth, Iranians are lazy and fanatically religious; Betty is the hero, Moody the villain.

On the other hand there are also a lot of unanswered questions. On the personal level – why would a father bother to fight for a daughter he does not care about, or wish to stay in such an oppressive environment? We are also left to wonder about the women in Iran and their thoughts on how they are presented in the story. Since there are no testimonies apart from Betty's, we are left to draw our own conclusions.

2. 2. CRITICAL RESPONSE

Neither the book nor the film seemed to excite the critics, since there were relatively few reviews. Many of the critics agreed that the representation of the 'Other' was negative and stereotypical.

Roger Ebert of the Chicago Sun-Times (Ebert, *Not Without My Daughter*) points out the emotional component – while the film tries to evoke sympathy for Betty and Mahtob, it on the other hand includes troubling moral and racial stereotypes.

This is not to say that an emotional reaction is not expected, but rather that this is an easy way to manipulate the audience. Since Betty and Mahtob are presented as the victims, they are the ones with whom the audience sympathizes. While Moody undoubtedly also suffered throughout the ordeal, especially when his wife and daughter disappeared, the way he is presented prevents the audience from assigning him the role of the victim.

Ebert also stresses the importance of the historical moment – the film assigns various negative characteristics to groups of people who found themselves in the role of the 'enemy' of the United States. As Margaret Miles points out, the film was shot in a period when several crises in Iran stirred up interest in Iranian culture. Interestingly, the week when the film achieved its biggest success was the week when the Persian Gulf War began. This might be merely a coincidence, but the impact of the historical moment must not be ignored.

Vincent Canby of The New York Times (Canby, *Not Without My Daughter*) states the film "goes grossly comic when it means to be the most solemn" and describes it as "the first major clinker of the year". He also points out that even though the intention of the film was not to create prejudice about Muslims, this is what it achieved. All in all, such a complex issue should not be treated in a superficial manner.

Although it might seem impossible that a single 'true' story could make its audience believe that the Iranian nation as a whole is extremist, this is what can happen, at least in the absence of other presentations. Betty became the hostage of an Iranian brute and their daughter the victim of the conflict between the East and West. What is important is that, like her mother, Mahtob seemed to instinctively know which side to choose.

Caryn James from the New York Times (James, *Embrace the Stereotype; Kiss the Movie Goodbye*) proclaims the film to be "an artistic failure", which makes good use of the stereotype of the demonic Iranian as well as other cultural stereotypes. One of

the turning points in Moody's attitude is when he swears on the Quran – this is when he supposedly decides to abide to all Islamic traditions. This raises the interesting question of which identity causes a greater problem – ethnical or religious.

With regard to the religious stereotypes there were also some comments from the catholic side. They mostly emphasize the fact that the two female heroines were not only American, but also Christian.

The story is not all about what the 'wrong side' loses, but also about what the 'right side' gains. One of the winners is surely Christianity – although the heroine is almost too pathetic, she receives the audience's sympathy. Throughout the whole film her religion is shown as a minor but vital part of her existence – when things go wrong, Betty and her daughter comfort themselves with silent prayer. This is contrasted with the loud and violent fanatics who passionately impose Muslim beliefs onto others. When Betty and Mahtob arrive in Iran, they are immediately confronted with the fact that they must follow local traditions. Muslim women are portrayed as determined and almost violent, since they try to convince Betty to become a proper Muslim. All of this forcefulness can only be fought of by their secret and silent belief in the Lord, who helps them to understand and be patient. Although Christianity is not mentioned as the only religion, we could hardly say that the Muslim faith is portrayed as anything but fanatical.

Brett Willis (Willis, *Not Without My Daughter*) states that the film is in fact "somewhat anti-Muslim" but that Betty's story should be told as there are other women who might themselves in a similar situation.

The few other reviews mostly reiterated what has been stated above. The fact is that critics might not have shown much interest in the story, but it was still a 'hit' as compared to the 2002 Finnish documentary *Without My Daughter*. The documentary aimed to tell the story from Moody's perspective. Even though it did receive some positive reviews, since it aims to establish an intercultural dialogue, it reached a far smaller audience than the original story.

There are several reasons why this happened – first of all, *Not Without My Daughter* (both the book and the film) was released earlier, giving it a temporal advantage. Secondly, although the reviews were hardly positive, the book was translated into a number of languages – including Slovene. Thirdly, the film was quite successful as far as it reach is concerned – it was not only shown in cinemas, but is still occasionally televised. This means that although it did not succeed financially, it is available to a relatively large audience. We should not neglect to mention the historical moment – *Not Without My Daughter* was released at a very opportune time. Since the documentary was made much later, it also perhaps missed the right moment to state a counter-argument. Its audience was limited to those who frequented several film festivals (in Finland, Sweden, etc.) and the small number of people who learned about it and gained access to it over the internet or in some other manner. The documentary was released in 2002, after 9/11, in a period which was all about discussing the 'Other', but was not exactly tolerant towards Muslims and Arabs.

3. 0. CONCLUSION

My intention in analyzing *Not Without My Daughter* is not to judge whether Betty is a reliable witness or not, or if the events in the story really took place in the manner they were described. Nor do I want to deny the fact that Betty and Mahtob were indeed denied their freedom. The problem lies in the fact that any such story which is either unintentionally or intentionally full of stereotypes affects our understanding of the other. The portrayal of the 'demonic Iranian' in this story affected the beliefs of at least some of the hundreds of thousands who read the book or watched the film. Even though Betty intended to tell the story as a warning to other women, who might find themselves in a similar situation, she achieved much more than that.

The story became a modern Orientalist text – the West's understanding of the East. Instead of exposing problems which need to be discussed – for instance the woman's role in contemporary Islamic society, it merely generalizes these issues. This trivializes many of the ethnical, religious and cultural issues that need to be questioned and talked about.

The fact that the book and the film were released at a moment in time when Iran was all over the news due to the turmoil of war and the conflicts in the East increased the importance of Betty's story. Images of American hostages being released after being held captive by Iranians at the U. S. Embassy for over 444 days, followed by the plight of innocent Mahtob from her cruel father can hardly leave one unaffected. The story not only condemned the 'Other' but also deified the USA, presenting it as a kind of global moral authority. Such presentations of the 'Other' can have a profound effect. The fact is that Betty's story ended with her and her daughter returning to the USA to resume their 'normal' lives. Moody – Sayyed Bozorg Mahmoody was left to spend his life trying to come into contact with his daughter. The Finnish documentary *Without My Daughter* from 2002 tried to tell the other side of the story – without much success. The attempt to establish a new dialogue between the East and West was unsuccessful. All progress aside, the story of the East mostly continues to be told by the West.

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na Slovenskem Angele Vode, ki so jo vodilni slovenski partiji izključili iz komunistične stranke, ker je kritizirala pakt Ribbentrop-Molotov (Hitler-Stalin) ter slovenskega pisatelja ter urednika Igorja Šentjurca, ki je zaradi zanj neugodnih domačih okoliščin emigriral ter postal nemški avtor uspešnic. Avtorja in publicista, ki ju ločita spol in stoletje njunega rojstva, povezuje življenjska izkušnja. Integralni del njunega življenja je bila praktično vse do smrti matična država s svojimi represivnimi, legalnimi službami: komunistično partijo, tajno policijo ter sodstvom.

UDK 929Radics P.:94(436–89:497.4)

Tanja Žigon

KRANJSKI POLIHISTOR PETER PL. RADICS MED DVEMA JEZIKOMA IN KULTURAMA

Prispevek se osredotoča na življenje in ustvarjalno pot kranjskega polihistorja, vsestranskega raziskovalca, zgodovinarja, germanista in teatrologa Petra pl. Radicsa (1836–1912), ki je bil rojen v Postojni, a po rodu ni bil Kranjec. Na osnovi študije primera avtorica obravnava vprašanja, kaj v 19. stoletju zaznamuje intelektualca, ki deluje na Kranjskem, kje je njegovo mesto v družbi ter kakšno je njegovo razumevanje lastne identitete. Nadalje preverja hipotezo, da lahko na Slovenskem v 19. stoletju govorimo o vsaj treh pripadnostih, regionalni, nacionalni in dinastično habsburški, osvetljuje ozadja, ki so zaznamovala Radicsevo življenje in delo, ter poskuša pojasniti, zakaj je raje izbral življenje v kranjskem mikrokozmosu, kot da bi svojo srečo kot publicist, raziskovalec in avtor poskusil v centru monarhije, na Dunaju.

UDK 821.111(73)–31.09Mahmoody B.:316.722(55:73)

Maja Mugerle

ORIENTALIZEM V *NE DAM SVOJEGA OTROKA* BETTY MAHMOODY

Članek obravnava vlogo orientalizma pri predstavljanju 'drugega' v literarnih delih, predvsem v delu Betty Mahmoody *Ne dam svojega otroka*. Pojem orientalizem zaznamuje konstrukte o vzhodu, ki jih ustvarjajo zahodnjaki. V minulih petdesetih letih so subjekt stereotipov predvsem Arabci in muslimani, ki so se znašli v kontinuiranem sporu z ZDA. Namen članka je prikazati, da pri nastanku podobe 'drugega' pomembno vlogo igrajo tudi literarna dela in zgodovinski trenutek, v katerem nastanejo. Podrobna obravnava dela *Ne dam svojega otroka* pokaže, da je bila zgodba, polna stereotipov o Irancih in muslimanih, predstavljena v ključnem trenutku. Mediji

so bili preplavljeni z novicami o Zalivski vojni in krizi s talci v Teheranu, to obdobje pa je zaznamovalo tudi formiranje nove arabske in/ali muslimanske identitete med priseljenci v ZDA, zaradi česar so le-ti postali bolj 'vidni'. Zgodba o ameriški materi, ki s hčerjo beži pred svojim fanatičnim iranskim možem, je v danem obdobju vzbudila pozornost. Kljub dejstvu, da med kritiki ni bila dobro sprejeta, je med občinstvom uspešno širila stereotipe o 'drugem'.

UDK 821.111–31.09Bridge A.:94(560)«1900/1922«

Isil Bas

DEJSTVA IN FIKCIJA: SUBVERTIRANJE ORIENTALIZMA V *THE DARK MOMENT*

Postkolonialna kritika je obširno analizirala zapise zahodnih žensk o Orientu, medtem ko je prispevek Ann Bridge k temu žanru ostal neznan. V knjigi *The Dark Moment* pripoveduje zgodbo o ustanovitvi turške republike po boju proti zahodnemu imperializmu, ki je bila zelo kontroverzna tema za ženo britanskega diplomata. Še več, pisateljica se poigrava s konvencijami in predstavitvenimi strategijami tradicionalnih orientalističnih pripovedi, s tem, da jih zasuka tako, da ustvari pri bralcih zavest brez predsodkov o zgodovinskem kontekstu ter družbenih in kulturnih specifičnostih Turčije in Turkov, s tem pa vzpostavi temelje za transkulturalnost namesto medkulturne penetracije.

UDK 821.111–313.2.09Morris W.:929Hudson W. H.

Caterina Novák

SANJAČ V DIALOGU: EVOLUCIJSKI SEKS IN SPOL V UTOPIČNI VIZIJI WILLIAMA MORRISA IN WILLIAMA HENRYJA HUDSONA

Članek raziskuje paralele med dvema utopijama iz poznega 19. stoletja, *A Crystal Age* (1882) Williama Henryja Hudsona in *News from Nowhere* (1891) Williama Morrisa. Ugotavlja kako ti dve deli odgovarjata na prehod iz kinetičnega v statičen koncept utopije, pod vplivom evolucionističnih in feminističnih diskurzov, ki se je začel v tistem času. Poseben poudarek je na načinu v katerem se to odvija preko prikaza evolucije, seksualnosti in spolnih vlog v posameznem delu. Prikaz teh 'disruptivnih' elementov lahko učinkuje kot način za zagotovitev bralčeve aktivne vpletenosti v političnem, intelektualnem in emocionalnem smislu.