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Essay III  

The depiction of love and marriage in *The House of Bernarda Alba* and *Persepolis* are similar in the way that Bernarda has strict rules for Bernarda’s kids and the Iranian government limits Marjane’s independence. In some sense this seems like they try to take rule over the kids lives. Love and marriage are also portrayed as being forced by the parents and the new regime. In *The House of Bernarda Alba*, Bernarda has five daughters that she keeps under tough rule. Bernarda believes that nobody is as good or good enough for her daughters, which is why they have very little life experiences outside of their mother’s house. Only one of them has been in a relationship with a man and Bernarda’s youngest daughter is twenty years old. Similar to Bernarda, Marjane, a girl growing up in Iran during revolutionary protests, has her freedom restricted to the rules of the new Iranian regime. Marji’s parents support her in her protests against the rules that are discriminating towards women. For Marji, love and marriage are forced upon her as the government’s rules choose who she marries and how she lives her life. However the main depiction of love in *Persepolis* is Marjane gaining more independence for herself and the women around her. She loves to commit herself to bettering the way of life for her and most importantly all the women around her. Marji has also been rebellious against the government of the new regime and is trying to change the strict way of life in everyway she can. Love and marriage in both texts restrict women to miniscule rights that takes away the power for women to love and marry who they want, dress how they want, and make their own decisions to benefit
themselves. Marjane is under strict rule from the government and Bernarda’s daughters are under strict rule from their mother, which coincide with the strict societal norm around their homes.

Marjane is faced with conflict from the new Iranian regime that has taken away a lot of freedom from women. On the other hand, Bernarda’s daughters are faced with issues from their mother as her strict personality limits them from pursuing what they want in their love lives.

Bernarda Alba is the strict leader of her household who limits her daughters from displaying love and marriage in their town. In the eyes of Bernarda, not many men could meet the standards of her daughters. For marriage in the mid 1900’s it mostly consisted of an older man with a younger woman or marriage between people of similar socioeconomic characteristics (Esteve 173). This is why it made it hard to find a perfect match, especially for Bernarda’s daughters living in a small Spanish village. Bernarda and her daughters lived well-off from the money of Bernarda’s first husband who left behind a hefty inheritance. Since they had money in their family that also contributed to the slim amount of men in the village that came from similar backgrounds as Bernarda’s daughters. Bernarda also did not want them to just marry anyone and be trapped in a terrible relationship with a poor man. One of Bernarda’s daughters challenged the fact of having no freedom. Angustias, Bernarda’s oldest daughter was the only daughter that was able to be independent. She was on the verge of marrying a man named Pepe who was attracted to her by her wealth. There is not true love between the two, which keeps Angustias connected to her sisters because she still is not able to use her freedom to share a connection with a man. All of Angustias’ sisters are still angered by the fact that she is able to get out of the house and express her own opinions in the real world.
Bernarda also focuses on the society view of her daughters and wants them to be seen as the women that they are set out to be being raised in Bernarda’s household. There was once an incident in their village where a woman was taken out to the countryside, taken advantage of, and Bernarda believes that it was the woman's fault for being so “loose” (Lorca 15). This shows how uptight Bernarda is about the actions and appearance of her daughters and women in general. She does not want her daughters messing around with a bunch of men in the village. Bernarda forces love and marriage on to her kids in the way that she does not let them experience with new relationships. La Poncia introduced the thought of letting Bernarda’s kids find men in their village to help satisfy their only needs of a relationship. Opposed to the idea, Bernarda believes that no man is good enough for her daughters in the village and that it is ridiculous to think that her daughters would just settle for any ordinary man.

The Iranian revolution and the society norm in Iran hurt Marjane’s rights of freedom to live and express herself how she wants. She continuously tries to fight back against the regime because she loves to fight for her and the rest of the women in her society's independence. However, there are many laws in the middle east that are degrading towards women. Marjane is disappointed at the fact that men can wear whatever they want in public and she and the rest of the women in the society have to cover themselves from head to toe. One law that has been an issue for many years in Iran is the wearing of a hejab or chador, which are two different styles of head coverings for Islamic women. Most women in Iran are religious and believe that without their covering in public it is almost like they are naked (Mir-Hosseini 41). However, for some women this can be seen as degrading making them feel less superior than men having to cover-up their bodies in similarity to Persepolis when Marjane is forced to wear a head-covering
as a part of her school uniform. In Iran, the newly reformed government decided that “in 1983, Article 102 of the Islamic Punishments made appearing in public without hejab an offense against public morality, punishable by the “Islamic” penalty of up to seven-four lashes” (Mir-Hosseini 42). Many of the laws set by the Iranian government impacted women negatively especially Marjane who is striving for equal rights. The new regime restricted the way of life for women as they have to wear clothes that show nothing but their eyes.

Marriage, in Iran, is mostly staged instead of a genuine feeling that you get when you have a connection with another person. Marriages in Iran are set up and run by the husband’s command. We can see this when Marji’s dad tells Reza, the boy she marries, that Marjane needs to have the right to divorce him if she wants (Satrapi 159). This shows how one sided marriages are in Iran being dominated by the male. The male had all the power to decide if they would stay married or not. This is why Marji's’ father is looking out for his daughter because he believes in independence and equality because it is the way he raised his daughter and the way him and his wife are living their lives. Marji’s father does not want her to get sucked into a terrible relationship at a young age that she can not get out of. The Iranian government had terrible laws and restrictions for married couples. An “Iranian law permits temporary marriage, known as sigheh, but it must be for a fixed time period” (Moghadam 5). The law is basically contradicting saying it's ok to divorce, but you must dread yourself throughout your relationship for a certain period of time before it is ok to actually separate. Also along with their lack of marital rights, women in Iran are supposed to take care of the family and accommodate to the their husband’s needs and nothing else. “The Islamic regime [...] excluded women from numerous fields of study, occupations, and professions” (Moghadam 2). Most women were thought of as to run the
household and never leave home, but Marjane being a strong activist for women's equality expected way more. Love in marriage is essentially non-existent as the women are bossed around and forced to do whatever they are told with no repercussions for the man’s actions.

In both texts love and marriage is expressed in untraditional ways with the men having all the power and the women following under the rule of everyone else around them. The similarity of these texts is evident because in Iran, women have no rights when it comes to expressing themselves and in Bernarda’s household her daughters have no say in what they do outside their home. Bernarda’s daughters have been living in the household of an intimidating tyrant, which has limited their ability to express who they truly are. Bernarda decides what they do, how they act, and who they hang out with, which has put them in a bubble when trying to expand their social relationships. Similar to Marjane, Adele, one of Bernarda’s five daughters, rebels against her mother's strict rules like Marjane rebels against the Iranian Government. She feels that her and her sisters should have every right to have freedom in the outside world. Angered by the fact that her oldest sister gets to have freedom, Adele decides to cause commotion in any possible way to fight against her mother's strict rules. First, at Bernarda’s husband's funeral she decides to wear a green dress instead of a black one to show a statement. Then, Adele rebels when she starts to have an affair with Pepe, Angustias’ husband. Having sex, not telling her mother, and stealing her sister's husband are all impactful ways for Adele to feel free and try and gain independence in her own mind from her mother.

Marji is also under tough command from the Iranian government who has restricted her and the rest of the women in her society from living the equal lives that they should have. Marji gets in trouble and rebels against society to better herself and the way of life for other Iranian
women even if the outcome is miniscule like Adele in *The House of Bernarda Alba*. An example of a small thing she did but stood out to others including her grandmother was that she took the initiative to design new school uniforms for girl students because the old ones were too degrading. She also likes to rebel against society and create issue because she believes what she is doing should not be wrong in her community. When she was at school the students were asked to paint the body of the man in front of them, but not look because it was “against the moral code” and of course Marji stared at the man and gave her teacher a wise remark. Marji said, “should I draw this man while looking at the door” (Satrapi 146)? Marji’s experience with love and marriage were also thrown upon her and she knew that she could not take in any part of it. Her main love was for fighting against the new Iranian regime trying to gain every ounce of respect and equality that she could. On the other hand, her marital life was terrible. She was cheated on, married a man she knew she would divorce, and eventually grew too tired of the new regime that she moved away from her parents to get out of the tight rule of women having no rights in her community.

The representation of love and marriage in *Persepolis* and *The House of Bernarda Alba* can be viewed in many different ways under one main topic of Marjane and the Alba sisters fighting for freedom, independence, and equality. Marjane and mostly Adele are similar in the sense that they both tried to do everything they could to rebel against the power above them. In both texts there was a power trying to rule over the society and they both kept restrictions and limitations for the less superior to abide by. These texts show how in eastern countries women have a lack of rights in comparison to men, which can hurt the overall success, cooperation, and balance of the society as a functioning whole.
**Bibliography**


