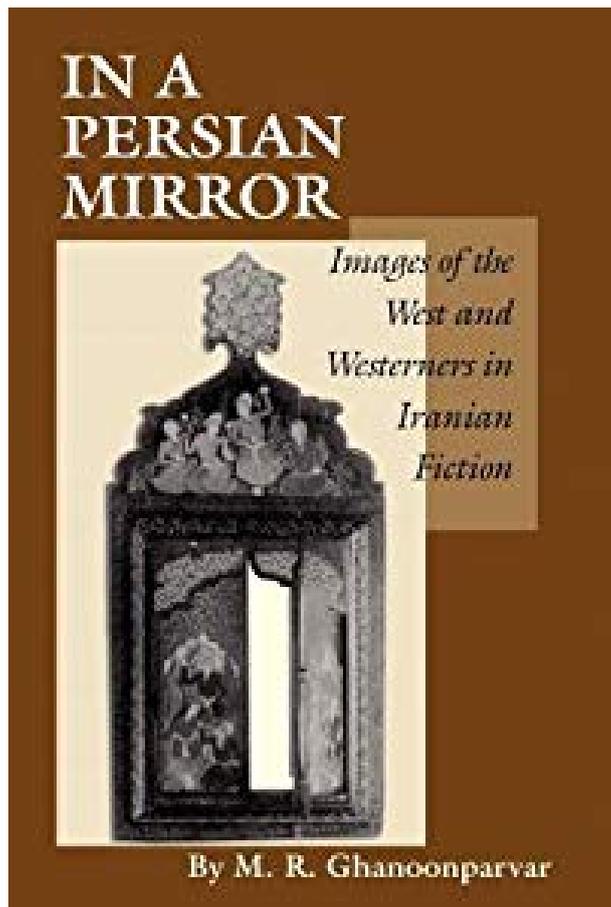


# In a Persian Mirror: Images of the West and Westerners in Iranian Fiction



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<b>Author:</b>	M.R. Ghanoonparvar
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The extreme anti-Western actions and attitudes of Iranians in the past decade have astonished and dismayed the West, which has characterized the Iranian positions as irrational and inexplicable. In this groundbreaking study of images of the West in Iranian literature, however, M. R. Ghanoonparvar reveals that these attitudes did not develop suddenly or inexplicably but rather evolved over more than two centuries of Persian-Western contact. Ghanoonparvar surveys literary images of the West and Westerners from the late eighteenth century to the present day. Notable among the authors whose works he discusses are Sadeq Hedayat, M. A. Jamalzadeh, Hushang Golshiri, Gholamhoseyn Saedi, Simin Daneshvar, Moniru Ravanipur, Sadeq Chubak, and Jalal Al-e Ahmad. Ghanoonparvar takes no polemical position in regard to their works, but rather uses a descriptive approach to allow each author's position to speak for itself. This survey significantly illuminates the sources of Iranian attitudes toward the West. Ghanoonparvar shows how Iranian respect for Western progress in science and technology has caused Iranians to emulate the West and devalue their own culture. At the same time, however, imitating Western culture has threatened to destroy traditional Iranian values and lifeways and has provoked both anti-Western reactions and the rise of the so-called Islamic fundamentalism. In addition, Ghanoonparvar finds that the legacy of Western colonialism in the Middle East has also forged anti-Western attitudes in Iran, even though Iran was never actually under Western occupation. This study of Iranian images of the West offers many surprising discoveries for Western readers, not least of which is the fact that Iranians have often found Westerners to be as enigmatic and incomprehensible as we have believed

them to be. And as the Iranian writers describe our alien culture, they naturally offer glimpses into their own worldviews that can only increase Western understanding of their cult