

Peyk



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Saeed Jafar

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Editorial

by Ali Sadr



As I am writing this editorial, Iran is immersed in chaos and unrest. These events are rapidly evolving and taking on new dimensions every minute. Despite the great distance, we keep ourselves almost constantly updated on the developments via advanced technology. I don't know what turn these events will have taken by the time you read this editorial. It will be at least two weeks from the time this is written to the time it will be in your hands, and meanwhile, many of you will have been brought up to date via various sources. Even newspapers cannot keep up with the rapidly evolving events. Newspapers can only report what has occurred the day before, while most people learn about yesterday and today's news via the internet. Thus, I don't intend to offer a journalistic report of Iran's current situation, rather I have a broader perspective on these events as well as the role of the Iranian-American community.

Please keep in mind that the Persian Cultural Center of San Diego is a nonprofit organization and must maintain a nonpolitical stance. However, "nonpolitical" can take on a spectrum of meanings. For instance, to adhere to the definition set by some, and with respect to Iran's presidential elections, we cannot write in support or against a candidate. What we can write is that Iranians voted with so much hope and in such staggering numbers that it is quite unprecedented in the contemporary history of Iran. However, we can write that the Guardian Council of the regime, based on their own regulations and standards, approved only four candidates, having dismissed four hundred candidates, including all women candidates. We can write that twenty days prior to the elections, Iranian society experienced an unusually open political atmosphere. We can write that for the first time televised debates took place between candidates.

During these televised debates many taboo subjects and facts related to the high official of the regime were discussed, while previously, one could face consequences varying from jail time to physical punishment, for even mentioning them. We can write that the youth, intellectuals, artists, and especially women participated exceptionally in the presidential elections. Hope was extraordinarily present amongst the people. However, we cannot write which candidate won the people's hope, or that a particular candidate was more prone to distorting facts, invoking violence, and creating crisis rather than engaging himself in the daily lives of the people and learning about their economic and social needs. We can write that finally the presidential election was conducted on June 12. Iranians voted in record breaking numbers; based on government statistics, eighty percent of those who were qualified voted. During a period of twenty days, a large portion of society became hopeful of change within the structure of the regime. The results that were announced immediately after the elections however, shocked all sides and their supporters.

We cannot hold the view, or provide any evidence, that the election results were fixed prior to the elections or that the votes may not even have been counted. However, some have called the Iranian elections a coup d'état to secure the survival and interests of the regime, and that the entire voting process was nothing but "pointless." Many were delighted with the results, while many felt that their rights were taken away, and of course the history of Iran is no stranger to witnessing the severe abuse of people's rights through coup d'états. Iran's history also reflects repression of a large portion of the people who complain and get silenced and will remain marginalized on the political scene. However, this time was a different story!

Those who felt repression didn't remain passive this time, but poured onto the streets of Iran to reclaim their rights, and it was all witnessed by the world. Street rallies, protests, strikes, and fights were all documented by the people themselves, and were shown on the internet in the form of video clips and photos. The world was watching. What was notable in the people's movement was their harmony and seamlessness which soon spread out to all Iranian communities around the globe.

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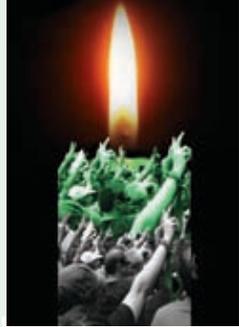
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Editorial

The participation of Iranian communities around the world was also unprecedented. San Diego's only elections ballot ran out of voting forms half way through the day. Many waited for several hours for the voting forms to arrive from Orange County. All told, the voting process was still in progress on the West Coast until 9 p.m. The Iranian government announced the final results at 4 p.m.! After the elections, the Iranian-American community reacted extraordinarily by protesting in various cities of the United States to inform the world of their view of the situation inside Iran. The Iranian-American community's solidarity with people inside Iran even surprised the world; followed by CNN's daily coverage on Iran's disputed elections. All the major networks focused on Iran's situation, which gave an international weight to the issue. Many were glued to their computer screens to learn more about the development of the opposition movement through email, Facebook, Twitter, and various other networks, while many were in touch with their friends and family in Iran via phone.

In Iran, most participants in the elections were under the age of thirty, and were armed with cell phones and cameras. They stayed connected by sending SMS and messages through the internet. It could be said that this was the first internet-driven civil rights movement in the world. Another feature of this movement was the absence of anti-American slogans. These slogans have been at the heart of every movement in the past thirty years in Iran. But with regime change in the United States, and President Obama's democratic policies towards Iran, those who continue to be enemy-hungry were also left disarmed. When it came to re-establishing political relations with the United States, all four presidential candidates tried to surpass each other's policies.

The elections are over in Iran now, but it has given birth to a vibrant movement, unprecedented in the thirty-year history of this regime. The future will tell as to what extent the Iranian people will see their demands met by the government, and whether or not leaders will try to avoid falling behind the fluid movement of the Iranian youth.

Solicitation of Material

Do you have an opinion on something you see here? Have you written an article that you would like us to publish? If so, we would love to hear from you! For directions on how to submit your piece, please contact PEYK- PCC's office at: P.O. Box 500914, San Diego, CA 92150. You might find your submission printed in the next issue of Peyk!

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THE GREEN HORIZON

by: Mersedeh Mehrtash



This June the world witnessed the beginning of a powerful uprising in Iran. While western media dedicated a significant portion of coverage to these events, they quickly were surpassed by other sources such as social networking sites, YouTube and individual blogs. The harder the Iranian government worked to suppress the outflow of information from Iran, the more committed the Iranian Diaspora became to find any trace of it.

The dynamic exchanges and postings on Facebook radically transformed the atmosphere of the site from its upbeat days of quizzes, jokes and casual status-updates to a sea of green profile picture, continuous news-feed postings and disturbing images. Disbelief, anger, grief, anxiety, and hope fluttered amid friends' lists; but in the end powerlessness and despair prevailed.

Thirty years after the Islamic Revolution and its ensuing exodus, it is safe to state that Iranians at home and in the Diaspora have numerous cultural, economic, and societal disparities. While life inside Iran represents compliance, organized disorder and survival; Western societies celebrate the exercise and expression of individual freedoms. The West encourages activism; Iran patience.

It appears that last month's elections reversed our two worlds. While masses of Iranian citizens took to the streets chanting slogans of freedom and change, we sat behind our screens and watched, and watched and watched... Rallies were held and the internet-savvy circumnavigated electronic communication barriers, helping the spread of news flowing out of Iran. Despite the unprecedented level of remote engagement, the bitter reality remains thousands of miles away, baton-in-hand.

While we sleep, someone is beaten, stabbed chased or shot; while we sit at work, students are hauled away to prison as thousands more gather to take their place; and as we return home, dawn is breaking in Iran where the brave prepare to do it all over again. We cannot communicate with, join or protect them; yet we feel their bruises and cuts, we feel their anger and passion, we chant their slogans; we cheer their smiles and we cry their tears.

Distance has managed to tie our hands over the years, but our hearts traveled back home this month.

The Narrative of Freedom

Blogs constantly update the world on the development of Iran's youth-driven movement. Pictures, video clips, and first hand reports are posted on-line, as events rapidly evolve. It is all a long poem in and of itself, the narrative of freedom. In these poems Iranians share their amazing stories, down to the marrow of the bone, in the hope that they be shared, read, and understood. With the hope that their poignant stories and struggle for freedom point to us our own vulnerabilities...their stories humanize them, heal their pains, and one day they would make justice prevail.



١

Tonight, the cries of "Allah O Akbar" grow even louder
Where is this place that's denied everything?
Where people can only cry for God...
I tremble...
Where is this place of innocents without help?
Where silence is our voice to the world...
Where we pray on the shed blood of our youth...
THIS PLACE IS IRAN.

٢

Today, a woman was shot during a rally in Tehran.

٣

Her name was Neda.

٤

Her name was Neda and
she is not a piece of
news - she is one of
us - who grew red for
Freedom.

٥

I'm dying with
WORRY- please pray for us
I'm worried - she has not
returned - my young sister
has taken to the streets as well
things are horrible - please
pray for us.

٦

They're going into people's
HOMES - they're destroying
EVERYTHING!

٧

Silent protest in the Azadi street
more are joining...
Voice of shooting in the Azadi street.

٨

Today I saw a blind
young man - accompanied by his father
people with broken limbs - bruised eyes

and many who carried the pictures of
those
killed - I had so much to tell!
It's so good talk to each other.

٩

The feeling in the crowd
today or never - all
together and heave!

١٠

My daughter bruised by baton - I hear
my brother injured - I do not know
much now.

١١

I am not afraid to die
for freedom - I am afraid to
die without getting it
for my daughter

١٢

I am not afraid of
death - I fear living!

١٣

My silence howls.

١٤

I've never been politically
active - but I feel like if I
don't go my place will be
empty.

١٥

Allah O Akbar echoes
throughout the night - for
those that woke
the woken that
now awake.

١٦

We've heard gunshots
in the distance - with people
on streets - we have not
heard from.

١٧

My sister had big hopes.

١٨

I dreamt of being surrounded by
children - I was playing to
distract them - from what was going on
outside - I burst into tears because
I couldn't see a future for them - all the children
turned and looked at me - I covered my face
with my scarf - I was choking
on my sobs.

١٩

Where do I look for morals?
within the bleeding narratives of bodies
just bodies - bodies
creating self - hood
never seen before
here, in this great land
you cannot afford anything less
than this great-
ness

where do I look for morals?
on the baton-struck-
head of a woman
who had never looked
so red before
wrapped all in green

where do I look for morals?
within the posthumous voices
that proved their being-
by not being any-
less than
Koranic narratives.

٢٠

Where do I look for God?

Editorial

Be Careful What You Wish For ...

By: Shahri Estakhry

Time and again life's circumstances prove the old saying of "be careful what you wish for"...

September 2008 – at a meeting of the Association of Iranian-American Professionals (AIAP), minimally invasive robotic surgery was introduced to the audience. I found the presentation on what the robot can do fascinating and exciting. I made a comment to a friend sitting next to me that robotic surgery was awesome...that we lived in an amazing time... and how great it would be to qualify for this new technology if and when surgery becomes necessary. Be careful what you wish for!!!

Several years ago I chose as my cardiologists two young physicians whom I've known since their childhood days and knew of their abilities and caring manners. I also felt that they would be familiar with the most up-to-date technology the field of medicine would have to offer. I knew that when the time arrived, they would help me make difficult decisions. I say "when" because I am the inheritor of heart disease and have been certain that someday I would have to make some choices in this regard – if I was lucky.

April 2009 – at the recommendation of my cardiologists and cardiothoracic surgeon, I underwent single bypass, less invasive, robotic heart surgery. It is a new procedure and I believe the road to so many possibilities in the field of medicine and surgery. To hear about it is a different story than to have actually gone through the experience; it is indescribable. As far as the recovery is concerned, I stayed in the hospital for three days, had no cuts in my chest, no vein was removed from my leg, and there was far less possibility of infections. And, as I write these words in early May 2009 – three weeks after the surgery – I'm leading my normal daily life. Knock on wood!

Whether we decide to be pioneers, or more skeptical, is and will always be our individual choice. My



decision to choose the robotic surgery path came after months of research, speaking with my team of physicians (all of whom took the time to explain the benefits and risks of all the options), trusting in their collective expertise, and in their genuine interest in choosing the best option for my case. Ultimately, all of these factors led to my decision and comfort in choosing the robotic surgery.

There are so many other subjects that I could have written about, but I wanted to touch especially on this experience and the fact that for those of us living in the United States, many possibilities exist. We have the good fortune of coming across knowledgeable physicians – with amazing bedside manners – as well as, living in a nation that gives us new innovations with updated technology. These go hand-in-hand with opening the path to healthier and better living.

So although my comment at the AIAP lecture was made in an unsuspectingly care-free manner, lacking in the seriously weighty considerations that I was about to face at the prospect of my own surgery, I am happy to report that my enthusiasm has increased with personal experience. This is not to say, of course, that you should not always "be careful what you wish for."

RECYCLING IS EASY—FOR NOW!



On June 9, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed new recycling and mandatory composting rules. For example, residents should now throw organic material such as orange peels and coffee grounds into new green compost bins. Any offenders may be fined up to \$1,000. The city has put a moratorium on fines until 2011 to give people time to adjust. To some this mandate may seem too harsh, but to those who have already been doing their part to lessen landfill waste as part of the solution for climate change reduction, it's about time everybody else came on board to make a dramatic difference. Whether you like it or not, such an aggressive recycling program is likely to eventually come to your city. And if you're not recycling already, you'll have an expensive time catching up with the crowd. So, below you'll find a primer on basic recycling. It's never too late to start or too obvious to be reminded!

Things that can be recycled through your curbside recycling program or by taking materials to a recycling center:

- Aluminum/tin cans
- Empty aerosol cans
- Pie tins
- Cardboard egg cartons
- Computer/white paper
- Milk jugs/plastics
- Juice bottles
- Newspapers/inserts/magazines
- Coupons
- Cardboard/12-pack soda boxes
- Cereal boxes (lining removed)
- Tissue boxes
- Glass bottles/jars
- Laundry detergent boxes/bottles
- Junk mail/magazines/phone books

To help the process along, you should rinse food residue from containers and flatten cardboard boxes.

If you have a green waste program, you can also recycle the following in your green waste can (don't place these items in plastic bags):

- Lawn clippings

- Leaves and weeds
- Tree branches and shrubs
- Garden trimmings
- Sawdust

The following should not be put into your recyclables can or bin - when in doubt, throw it out! If you aren't sure if something belongs in the recyclables can, place it in your trash can. Mixing trash and recyclables can ruin the whole batch!

- Disposable diapers
- Pet-soiled paper
- Clothing
- Foam padding
- Carpeting
- Ceramics
- Drinking glasses
- Window glass
- Auto glass
- Mirrors
- Paint cans
- Oil cans
- Rubber/latex items
- Plastic bags (check with your local supermarket to see if they have a bag recycling program)
- Plastic covering from the dry cleaner's
- Styrofoam
- Toys

Steel items

Source: www.wastemanagementsd.com.

Report of Persian Cultural Center's 2009 Annual General Meeting and Election



PCC's annual meeting took place on May 31, 2009, at Standley Middle School in San Diego, CA. The annual report was presented and was followed by the election process for new Board of Director members. The past year's activities were presented by Mrs. Shahla Salah, PCC's chair, the *Peyk* and Iranian School of San Diego (ISSD) reports by Mr. Ali Sadr, ISSD Principal, and the Financial Report by Mrs. Fariba Babakhani-Ghazi, PCC's Treasurer. A Summary of PCC's annual report is as follows:

Board of Directors and Committee members for the past year were as follows:

- * Shahla Salah (President)
- * Shaghayegh Hanson (Vice-President)
- * Fariba Babakhani-Ghazi (Treasurer)
- * Aria Fani (Secretary)
- * Rosita Bagheri
- * Eamen Hameed
- * Sara Hosseinizad
- * Maryam Irvanian
- * Saeed Jalali
- * Ali Sadr
- * Mohammad Sammak
- * Torang Asadi (Alternate)
- * Rocio Giraldez-Betron (Alternate)
- * Margaret Rance (Alternate)
- * Atefeh Oliai (Alternate)

Advisory Board:

- * Hengameh Ayari (Persian Dance Academy)
- * Shahri Estakhry

The Board had twelve meetings in the past year. At their first meeting the Board elected its Executive Committee and established the following committees:

Educational Committee: Ali Sadr, Fariba Babakhani and Rosita Bagheri

Arts & Culture Committee: Ali Sadr, Sara Hosseinizad, Maryam Irvanian, Eamen Hameed, Rocio Giraldez, Abdy Salimi, Merseleh Mehrtash, and Shirin Abbaspour.

Membership and PR Committee: Shaghayegh Hanson, Fariba Babakhani, Eamen Hameed, and Shahrzad Julazadeh.

Peyk Committee: Saeed Jalali; Shahri Estakhry; Sara Hosseinizad; Merseleh Mehrtash; Shaghayegh Hanson; Maryam Irvanian; Shahrzad Julazadeh; Reza Khabazian, Aria Fani and Ali Sadr.

Grants and Finance Committee: Shaghayegh Hanson, Rosita Bagheri, Fariba Babakhani, Shahla Salah, Margaret Rance and Shahrzad Julazadeh.

Fundraising Committee: Shahla Salah, Fariba Babakhani and Rosita Bagheri.

Charity (Iranian Foundation): Shahla Salah, Rosita Bagheri and Shahri Estakhry.

Governance and Nominating Committee: Shaghayegh Hanson, Rostia Bagheri, Ali Sadr, Margaret Rance, and Shahri Estakhry.

Finance Committee: Fariba Babakhani, Shahla Salah, Rosita Bagheri, and Shahrzad Julazadeh

Summary of Cultural Activities

2008-2009 was a fruitful and busy year for PCC. During this time, PCC sponsored or co-sponsored the following programs:

A-Persian Cultural Center (PCC):

- 1- May 23: Zarbang Ensemble and Morshed Mehregan.
- 2- July 12: Mastan Ensemble and Homay with Mehregan Foundation and Zaman Production.
- 3- Aug 9: Rumi-Nation Concert with Hamed Nikpay.
- 4- September 19: Mohsen Namjoo with Beyond Persia.
- 5- September 20: Ustad Aziz Heravi with World Music.
- 6- September 27: Namad Ensemble.
- 7- October 13: Mehregan Celebration with NIPOC.
- 8- October 16-19: Movie with San Diego Asian Film Festival.
- 9- December 13: Persian Family Festival with House of Iran and Mingei Museum.
- 10- December 20: Yalda Celebration.
- 11- January 17: Global Village and International Festival.
- 12- January 23: Lecture and Poetry Reading (Niloufar Talebi).
- 13- March 4: Kamkaras in Concert.
- 14- March 7: Nowruz Family Festival with House of Iran and Mingei Museum.
- 15- March 8: Nowruz Preparation at Iranian School of San Diego.
- 16- March 15: Nowruz Celebration at Iranian School of San Diego.
- 17- March 17: Chaharshanbeh Soori with AIAP and HOI.
- 18- March 21: Nowruz joint program with AIAP.
- 19- Presentation of Haft-Seen along with literary, cultural, and historical exhibitions in seven public libraries throughout San Diego.
- 20- April 5: SizdehBedar with AIAP and HOI.
- 21- April 18: Musical and Dance Group Celebration with Carlsbad Library.
- 22- April 23: Co- Sponsor of author Firoozeh Dumas with Carlsbad Library.
- 23- May 28: Dastan Ensemble and Homayon Shajarian.
- 24- Daf classes with Ali Sadr at the PCC office.
- 25- Setar Classes with Kouros Taghavi.

B- Iranian School of San Diego (ISSD):

The academic year 2008-09 was ISSD's twenty-first year of operation. More than 230 students attended both branches of ISSD in the past year. The School's Nowruz program was held on March 17, 2009, and attended by 550 parents and family members. A variety of dance presentations, plays, music recitals, and songs, was presented. Students received awards for their academic achievement. ISSD's end of the year event was held on June 14, 2008, with plays and dances performed by the students. Ms. Banafshe Sayyad, dance teacher for post-Nowrouz dance classes, treated the audience to a Sufi inspired dance performance.

ISSD's first branch offers 11 classes which are separated into three levels: beginner, intermediate and advanced. ISSD offers beginner and intermediate Persian classes for adults.

Extracurricular classes such as Dance and Theatre have been offered as well. The second branch has a total of seven classes, which are also separated into three levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. ISSD is honored to announce that the Persian language program at ISSD has become accredited by the San Diego Unified School District and the San Dieguito School District. This means that high school students can fulfill their second language requirements by taking Persian language courses at ISSD. This year, the PTA of both branches worked very hard and cooperated successfully with the teachers and administrators on issues such as curriculum and extracurricular activities. The PTA was also instrumental in helping to raise funds for the school.

C- Persian Dance Academy:

With more than 100 students under the supervision of Mrs. Hengameh Ayari the Persian Dance Academy met on Sundays at ISSD branch I. The dance students performed in the following programs:

- 1- PCC and AIAP Nowruz Event
- 2- ISSD's Nowruz Event
- 3- Classical Music for kids (6 Programs: Civic Theater, Balboa Theater, and Escondido Center for Arts)
- 4- City of San Diego Nowruz Celebration
- 5- Persian Parade in New York
- 6- Carlsbad Library Nowruz Celebration
- 7- San Diego Museum of Art
- 8- Mingei International Museum
- 9- UCSD Nowruz Celebration

For the second half of the year the dance classes were under supervision of Ms. Banafsheh Sayyad.

D- Public Relations and community Outreach:

During the 2008-2009 operating year, PCC used its bi-monthly publication, *Peyk*, to reach thousand of readers per issue. *Peyk* is a bilingual publication published in Persian and English. Its circulation includes San Diego, Orange and Los Angeles Counties, the Bay area, Washington DC, Maryland and Dallas. *Peyk* is also available and read via the Internet on PCC's website (www.pccus.org/peyk or www.pccsd.org/peyk).

Membership: During the 2008-2009 the Persian Cultural Center started to place membership advertisements in *Peyk* magazine. The goal was to increase our membership. PCC issued a membership card to its members. PCC also managed to get discounts from various Iranian businesses for its members.

Public Outreach: In the past year, a number of PCC events were featured on KPBS, San Diego, and KIRN, Los Angeles radio stations, and on the San Diego Arts and Sol website. These programs not only reached the Iranian-American community, but other communities who attended our featured programs.

Website: In order to improve its website, during 2008-2009, the Persian Cultural Center invited individuals with expertise in web design to help PCC re-design and improve its website. Currently that project is being reviewed and the new website will be completed in a few months. Our hope is to have a more interactive website capable of presenting *Peyk* Magazine online. Please refer

to our website at www.pccsd.org or www.pccus.org to read about PCC's many activities, renew your membership, and make your tax-deductible contribution online.

E- The Iranian Foundation- a charitable organization:

This organization provided needed assistance to an Iranian family.

F- Other: PCC's governance committee continues to review and improve PCC's existing corporate documents in line with the most current best practices for nonprofit organizations.

G- Pirouzan Trust:

Last year Dr. Amir Pirouzan friend of ISSD and PCC passed away and bequeathed a number of properties to PCC for the benefit of ISSD. The legal process of transferring ownership of these properties is still in progress. These properties include his own residence in Spring Valley, a house located in the town of Jacumba and two undeveloped parcels located in Spring Valley and Cadana Street in East San Diego. PCC intends to sell these properties and ultimately use the assets as seed money for a permanent home for ISSD.

H- Special Thank You: In closing, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the following board members who are leaving us. We are grateful for the time, energy, and talents they generously gave to PCC and our community. We look forward to having them back on the PCC Board again. The members who are leaving are: Torang Asadi, Rocio Giraldez-Betron, Atefeh Oliai, and Saeed Jalali.

After counting the votes the following members were elected as voting members of the Board of Directors.

- Fariba Babakhani-Ghazi
- Eamen Hameed
- Margaret Rance

The following members were announced as alternate members of the Board of Directors.

- Ali Nouri
- Roohangiz Assiri

At the first meeting of the Board of Directors held on June 3, 2009, the following members were elected to serve as the executive committee of PCC for one year.

- , President - Shahla Salah
- , Vice President - Shaghayegh Hanson
- , Treasurer – Fariba Babakhani (Ghazi)
- , Secretary – Aria Fani

Other members of the BOD will be leading various committees, such as: Arts and Culture, Events, Education (ISSD), Publications (*Peyk*), Grants, PR, Membership, and Finance.

Laughter and Self-Reflection for Foreigners and Americans Alike

Reflections on *Funny in Farsi* by Firoozeh Dumas and Attending the Author's Talk at Carlsbad Library

By Congcong Zheng

I first heard of the memoir, *Funny in Farsi*, by Firoozeh Dumas, on a Chinese language website (of all places!). My boyfriend is Iranian and I asked him whether he knew the book. He had not heard about it at the time. Intrigued by the book title, I obtained a copy and read it in about four weeks before going to bed every night. It was a very easy read (great for bed time) and made me laugh out loud constantly. Dumas' stories brought back so many memories of my own childhood, and my early 20s; some sad, some funny, some heartbreaking, some exhilarating, but all cherished moments of life.

All foreigners, who are an increasing percentage of the population in this global age, can identify with Dumas' stories. They are intimate and touching; they reach the deepest part of our heart and soul, where we constantly ask ourselves: Who are we? Are we the same as others? How are we different from others? How have we come here? Where are we going? These deepest tunnels are where our self-identities are formed and are forming.

Our increasingly global culture demands that we be aware of, and live side by side with, those who are different from us.¹ In the face of cultural differences, we have a choice. We can either choose to be cosmopolitan; accepting and welcoming the differences, or choose resistance, fear, and isolation from others. Ms. Dumas chooses the former, showing readers that our similarities far outweigh our differences. Her life experiences reflect that our similarities are what bind us together and that our differences can make us smile and sometimes laugh out loud. Diversity makes this world beautiful, amazing, and exciting, not scary. In her book, Ms. Dumas takes us down memory lane, beginning with her move to a foreign country (America), and describing how she learned to adapt to a different culture embracing the differences, with smiles and laughter, and a few tears here and there. Bravo!

I am not an American and thus can only speculate what Americans might think of the book. I suspect that all Americans who have traveled to another country, perhaps another coast or city, or even another house that practices a different culture, can also identify with some of her stories. It is at those times that you leave what is familiar behind and walk/leap/dive into what is foreign in front. There will be things that you expect but will not see and things that you never suspect that will surprise you. Experiencing those incongruities expands your horizon.

I was lucky to meet Ms. Dumas in person at the Carlsbad City Library on April 23. She gave a talk in the Ruby G. Schulman Auditorium in front of a large, receptive and diverse audience (50% Iranians and 50% other ethnicities). My boyfriend

and I first heard of the event online. The library has several very modern facilities and the Schulman auditorium is large (it can comfortably seat up to 200 people) but has a cozy, home theatre feel to it. We arrived early enough to enjoy the traditional Persian tea and sweets (Baklava among others). The event was organized very efficiently and the audience was able to submit questions before the talk.

The audience was visibly excited about the event. People were eagerly discussing who she was and what she might say (half of the people had read the book and half not). We sat next to an older American gentleman. We asked how he heard of the event. He was a member of the library, had seen a screening of an Iranian movie the week before, and heard of the event through the library. I was impressed by the multicultural, varied, and rich cultural events that the library supported. For example, the library hosted reading group meetings, staged an Indian movie (the *Namesake*, a great movie), an Iranian movie (the *White Balloon*), and a Broadway show in a matter of weeks. If we lived in Carlsbad, we would definitely become library members and enjoy more of its social events. Such functions bring another dimension to the mostly solitary reading experience.

When Firoozeh Dumas finally appeared she did not disappoint. She was as fun, as exciting, and as warm in person as she had been throughout the pages of her book. The audience just could not stop laughing at her stories. She reminded me of my chatty aunts back home in Northern China who are warm, loud, and hilarious...

Stylistically, the book is more of a collection of separate stories rather than one continual narrative. Although the stories could have followed a clearer time line at times, this small flaw does not distract the reader much.

So my call is: read the book. Take yourself to a different world; an America through a different lens, at a different point in time, with a different family, adapting to a different host and meet a culture that's more the same as your own. It's a great feeling.

Endnote

1: Read the *Runaway World* by renowned sociologist Anthony Giddens to get a broader picture of how globalization has affected and will shape the world.

Congcong Cheng is a professor in the Department of Management at San Diego State University.



Alzheimer's Requiem of a Dream

Anita Tassviri

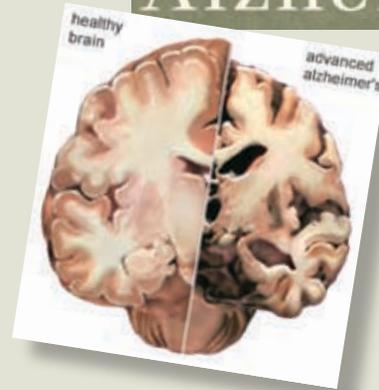
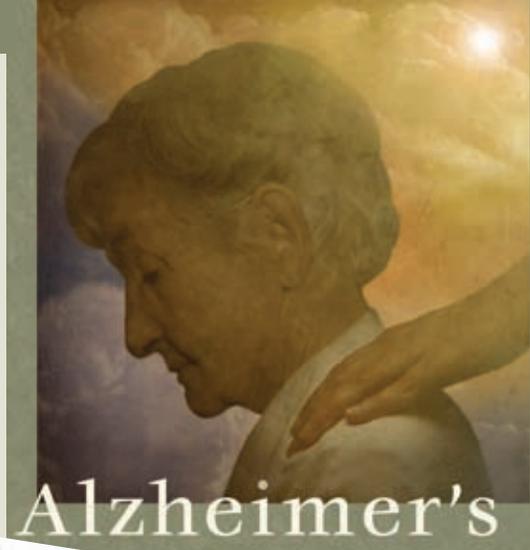
In my dreams my mother does not have Alzheimer's. She is the same feisty strong woman that propelled me forward in life with hurricane like wind. Believing in me wholeheartedly when I doubted myself. Reminding me everyday that the world was here for me to conquer it and overcome its challenges.

I substituted her confidence and fearlessness for my own. Wandering back to her often to refuel on determination and fortitude. Her diagnosis of Alzheimer's in her fifties and my twenties jolted me reluctantly toward independence. I scrambled to fill the void this disease created in my life. Robbing me of my personal advocate and sponsor far earlier than I ever imagined.

My mother and I have now switched roles. I encourage her when she is uncertain, and set boundaries for her where appropriate. Limitations she fights with the remnants of her vigorous sense of self. Barriers she would have encouraged me to tear down, always flustered by my excessive cautiousness.

My first indication that my mother was not well occurred when she filled out a form and spelled the country of her birth as "I3an." The letter "r" was consistently substituted with the number "3". When she then drew lipstick across her forehead, I took her to an optometrist. Hoping that new glasses would help her distinguish her forehead from her lips. When she drew lipstick across her forehead a second time, I gathered and hid all of her lipsticks. A futile attempt at shielding myself from the indignities this disease had in store for me. Alzheimer's torments the caretaker while it alters the memory of its victim. Erasing transgressions and turning dreams into reality. My mother remembers her life not as it truly was but the way she always dreamed it would be.

My freefall is tempered by two women. Complete strangers who have made it their life's work to help people like me. The first is Lisa Snyder of UCSD's Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. The Center's mission is to carry out research into the causes, treatment, and prevention of Alzheimer's disease. The Center provides outreach to the San Diego community regarding diagnosis, treatment, and care for persons with the disease. I call Lisa often as my mother's disease continues to unfold. She is never surprised by the new symptoms we are facing



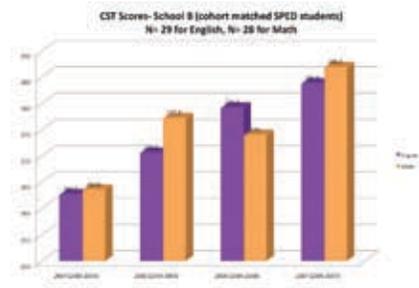
and gives me guidance on how to proceed. Lisa suggests I contact the Southern Caregiver Resource Center for additional assistance.

Southern Caregiver Resource Center is a non-profit organization which assists families to master the challenges of caring for adults with chronic and disabling conditions by addressing the emotional, physical and financial needs of caregivers by providing cost-effective and prevention-oriented programs and services in San Diego County. At Southern Caregiver I meet Andrea Cangiano. Andrea is my project manager and coach. She calls me every few months to see how I am doing. She mails me literature on the new ailments we are facing and provides me with action items to complete. I would be lost without Lisa and Andrea. They are my advocates as I wander through this hazardous journey. I promise both ladies that I will one day donate lots and lots of money to their organizations.

You do not have to have a family member be diagnosed with an incurable disease in order to appreciate the cycle of life. I remember as a little girl looking up at my mother. She seemed like a colossal being to me. Standing tall and firm, fearlessness and confidence emanating throughout her whole being. I would then look at my grandmother, short and feeble with a slight hunch which would rise and fall with her heavy labored breathing caused by acute asthma. I would wonder how the two were related. How such height could fall. As I now grow tall, my mother shrinks. I begin to carry a camera with me everywhere capturing my husband and I's life. As he begins to protest, I remind him that one day we will be old and feeble, and he will look back on these photos and thank me.

EDUCATION

by Sheiveh Jones



I recently engaged in a conversation with someone who had asked me how the beginning teachers in my program did this year. Little did I know she was lulling me into a comfortable conversation so she could interject her emphatic opinion that “illegals” and parents who cannot speak English bring down test scores and are ruining public education. Needless to say, I was initially appalled by her comment and ready to disengage from the conversation, but as I thought it over, I realized this is not the first person I have heard this opinion from. Given I often think about understanding the root of the problem, I reflected on this person’s comment and asked myself whether she really understood what test scores mean. My answer? No.

The test scores she referred to were the California Standards Test also known as the CST. Students in second grade and above take this exam around May every year. The test assesses how well students learned standards taught to them up to that point. If you are a parent with a child in public education, chances are you are familiar with this assessment; you also might recall receiving test scores in the mail every summer indicating whether your child earned a score of advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, and far below basic. From second grade up all students are assessed in math and language arts. In fifth grade and up they are assessed in science and from sixth grade up they are assessed in history-social science. But what in the world do these assessments really mean and what can you glean from your child’s test scores? Before I explain this, I need to explain “behind-the-scenes” planning more and more schools employ to prepare for these assessments.

In response to testing, several districts, schools, and grade level (or subject matter) teachers determined they must come together within their districts to create a pacing guide. The pacing guide maps out what must be taught throughout the year; it is broken down into days, weeks, or months. Looking at the CST Blueprint and analyzing how many questions target each of the standards determine all this. For instance, if there are several questions focused on one particular standard, more time will be spent teaching that concept. Essentially, the idea is to map out the school year in a way to prepare students for the CST, thus the term “teaching to the test.” You might have heard of benchmark assessments. These are district or school created tests administered periodically throughout the year to make sure students are on the right track to doing well on the CST. Teachers are supposed to analyze the benchmarks to guide their own teaching. If they notice several students missed a particular problem correlated to a particular standard, this is a good indicator they must go back and re-teach the concept. If the school does not use benchmark assessments, it is up to each individual teacher to make sure he/she consistently assesses students’ knowledge based on standards throughout the year.

Yes, this is indeed quite complicated particularly in elementary school where one teacher teaches multiple subjects. But again, what does this mean to you as a parent when you receive the test scores during the summer? The CST scores are a good indicator of how well your child met the standards for his/her grade level. But it truly goes deeper than that. There is a comic

strip we often laugh at as educators. It is a picture of two teachers standing in the teacher’s lounge with one telling the other “I taught it so I know they learned it.” The comedy in this is that imparting information to the class does not mean students have learned it. A good teacher goes far beyond imparting information. A good teacher does in fact map out what will be taught throughout the year. This mapping will assist the teacher in planning effective instructional strategies and assessing student learning. Assessing student learning should be used to help a teacher reflect on his/her teaching to decide what changes must be made.

When you look at your child’s scores, you will want to see either advanced or proficient. This indicates your child is on target with where he/she should be. Basic indicates your child is on the border of being on target while below basic and far below basic indicates your child is not fully meeting the standards for his/her grade level. No matter what score your child receives, you should ask yourself (and possibly the teacher or school) the following questions:

- Was there a pacing guide so the teacher could ensure he/she was on target to teaching all the standards assessed?
- Did the teacher assess my child’s progress throughout the year to make sure my child was on target?
- What instructional strategies did the teacher use throughout the year to make sure my child had opportunities to interact with and process the information taught?
- Was I involved in my child’s learning by supporting what was being taught (i.e. helping child with homework, reading to child, etc)?
- Lastly, does my child have special needs that either the school/teacher or I is unaware of?

These questions are great in helping guide your next steps in making sure your child’s learning needs are met.

So what did I tell the individual who blamed the problems of public education on “illegals” and parents who don’t speak English? Every parent wants his/her child to be successful so to blame test scores on this particular group of parents is irrational. I rest most of the responsibility on the teacher and what goes on in the classroom. We know, as research shows, it takes one adult in a child’s life to have a great impact. This adult is often a teacher. This impact could be good or bad. A good teacher will ensure the child progresses. I personally have seen this first hand in the last six years in the extensive work I have done with beginning teachers and have been amazed by the impact an effective teacher has on a child’s success.

Note: for more information about testing, go to www.cde.gov
For the CST Blueprint go to www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/blueprints.asp

Sheiveh has worked in public education for twelve years; she taught high school math and English. Currently, she directs a program that mentors beginning teachers from twelve local school districts and inducts them into the profession.

Calendar of Events

Dar Shahr Cheh Khabar?

Visit Our web site at www.pccus.org

Persian Cultural Center

Tel: (858) 653-0336 - Fax & Voice Mail: (619) 374-7335
Website: www.pccus.org

Setar Classes by Kourosh Taghavi (858) 717-6389

Tar Classes by Ali Noori (858) 220-3674

Daf Workshop with Ali Sadr,
Tuesdays 6 to 7:30 PM at PCC office.



Iranian School of San Diego (858) 653-0336

Registration

Branch I: Sunday Sept. 13, 2009

Branch II: Thursday Sept. 10, 2009



Persian Dance Academy of San Diego

Every Sunday at Iranian School of San Diego Branch I
From 1:30 to 5:30pm (858) 653-0336

Dollar a Month Fund

Tel: (858) 653-0336
www.dmfund.org



Association of Iranian American Professionals (AIAP)

Tel: (619) 645-7273 www.aiap.org
Last Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm



Kamal Cultural Foundation

Tel: (858) 538-0829

House of Iran

Tel: (619) 232-Iran Balboa Park, Sundays 12:00-4:00pm

Iranian-American Scholarship Fund

Tel: (858) 653-0336



Mehrgan Foundation

www.Mehrganfoundation.org Tel (858) 673-7000

7th Annual Seminar

September 4 -7, 2009

Marriott Hotel, San Diego, Del Mar

Iranian Women's Study Group of San Diego

Meets: First Sunday of the month • Contact: (858) 952-6713

Association of Iranian American Network of Services

(760) 729-9979 www.niabo.org

SDMA presents: 'Art and Jazz' - 7 pm Thurs
July 16, 2009

The San Diego Museum of Art presents a 10-minute lecture on the connection of jazz to visual art, along with an hour long concert.

Copley Auditorium 1450 El Prado San Diego, CA
619-232-7931

Price: \$15 members/\$20 nonmembers/\$10 students.

Snorkel with the Sharks - July 26, 2009

Swim with harmless schooling leopard sharks, smoothhound sharks, guitarfish, rays, flatfishes and sand-dwelling invertebrates. Birch Aquarium presents this ocean filled adventure.

Recreation event type: Scuba Diving
La Jolla Shores Beach and Kellogg Park
Camino del Oro La Jolla, CA 92037

619-221-8900
Price: \$30.. Ages: 10

Bravo Broadway Today - 7:30 pm

Sat, Aug. 8, 2009

Broadway's favorite songs will be performed live with the San Diego Symphony as a part of its Summer Pops concert series.

Embarcadero Marina Park South
Marina Park Way San Diego, CA 92101

Price: \$15-\$75. Ages: All ages.

San Diego International Children's Film Festival

10:30 am-5 pm Sat, Aug. 23, 2008

Museum of Photographic Arts
1649 El Prado San Diego, CA 92101
619-238-7559

Price: Free

Summer Organ Festival - 7:30 pm

Mondays, June 22-Aug. 31, 2009

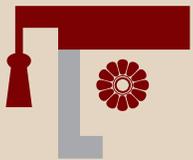
A Balboa Park centerpiece, the Spreckels Organ Pavilion hosts this free concert series on Mondays. Spreckels Organ Pavilion

1549 El Prado, Suite 10 San Diego, CA 92101

619-702-8138

Price: Free.





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- 2. INSTILL IN OUR APPLICANTS A STRONG SENSE OF PRIDE IN THE COMMUNITY THAT SUPPORTS THEIR ACADEMIC OBJECTIVES, AND**
- 3. INSPIRE OUR APPLICANTS TO DONATE BACK TO OUR ORGANIZATION TO CONTINUE THE TRADITION OF ASSISTING DESERVING CANDIDATES.**

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"Thank you for the generous scholarship that you have granted me. Your confidence in me and the support of my educational endeavors are greatly appreciated. I will do everything possible to be one of the best students at UCLA and merit the confidence you have shown in me. I hope that in the future, I can emulate the same support that has been afforded to me." Roxana

"As recipient of your scholarship, I thank you with my deepest sincerity. I am honored to receive the award and will remain dedicated to strengthening the Iranian-American community in all future endeavors." Arya

"Please accept my heartfelt thanks for your gift. I want to express my appreciation for your generosity for supporting me; it will make an immediate difference in my life. I can never thank you enough." Farhad

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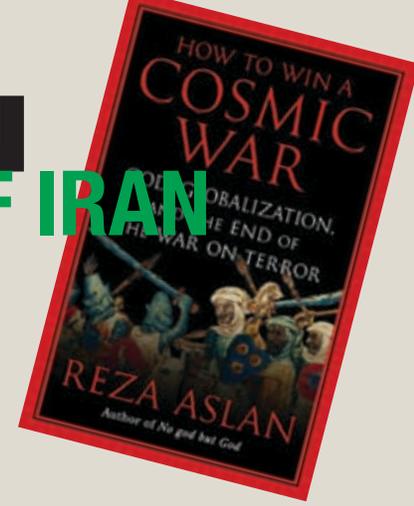
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REZA ASLAN SPEAKS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF IRAN AT AIAP VENUE

By: Shaghayegh Hanson



On June 23, 2009, the American Iranian Association of Professionals (AIAP) hosted a presentation by world-renowned scholar and Iran expert, Reza Aslan. Aslan, author of “No god, but God” and recently, “How to Win a Cosmic War,” was slated to speak about the future of US/Iran Relations but as the post-election chaos and upheaval in Iran demanded, he devoted the talk to a roundup of the latest political developments in Iran and what they may mean for the future of democracy in Iran. This presentation could not be more timely and the presenter could not be more respected and qualified; the hundred or so attendees were thirsty for the type of sophisticated analysis and discussion Aslan was able to generate. The community felt grateful to AIAP for having “borrowed” Aslan, at least for a couple of hours, from his busy television interview circuit.

Aslan began his talk by placing the current events in a historical context. When Ayatollah Khomeini came to power, he created the “Revolutionary Guard” because he could not trust the established military. Thus, the Guard became the Supreme Leader’s personal army, answerable only to him. Over time, individuals in the Guard became more influential, and harder to control for the less forceful and charismatic Khamenei, who took the Supreme Leader position directly from Khomeini. This resulted in the Guard becoming independently powerful and being able to wield the clout to push its preferred candidate up for election in 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Knowing his power base was the Guard, Ahmadinejad rewarded its members by elevating them to highly-ranked bureaucratic positions within the government, such as diplomats, members of important sub-committees, and members of parliament. One-third of the members of the Iranian parliament or the *Majlis* are made up of Guard members. Aslan described these developments as the “militarization of Iranian politics.”

Thus, at this juncture, Aslan believes the recent election was not one that was stolen by the mullahs, but by the Revolutionary Guard. This explains the unprecedented split by some in the clergy from Khamenei, and the coming together of ideologically varying groups, in opposition to Ahmadinejad’s alleged victory which they consider to be a military “coup d’etat.” Such assessment of what happened in the elections is reflected in the force behind the protesters’ chants against the “dictator” and Mousavi’s use of the word “treason” to describe the election results.

Aslan stated much of what happens next would depend on whether Khatami and Rafsanjani can persuade senior clerics in Qom to replace Khamenei and the Supreme Leader position by a committee which is not influenced by or supportive of Ahmadinejad and the

Revolutionary Guard. If this were to happen, according to Aslan, the Islamic Republic will become less “Islamic” and more “republic,” with Iran becoming more of an international player, opening up to a free market, being less isolationist, acting more democratically, and eventually allowing more freedoms. If the opposition were to fail in achieving its goal, Aslan sees Iran turning into more of a police state. Aslan believed Iran was heading towards a structure that would either resemble North Korea or China. While he acknowledged that most people want to see secular democracy established in Iran, he stated that this would not happen overnight and that the best hope for such an aspiration is to move a moderate Islamic Republic, resembling China, slowly toward that goal.

Aslan concluded by stating that this was just the beginning of change in Iran and that the process of transformation could take at least a year, as did the 1979 revolution which actually began in 1978. In the meantime, he believed President Obama was being pitch perfect in his approach to the upheavals, despite criticisms from some that the United States should more vocally condemn the election results and the government’s brutality. Iran is the new Super Power in the Middle East, according to Aslan, and it has the most robust political culture; President Obama needs to continue to seek diplomatic relations with Iran, no matter who ends up at the helm of the Islamic Republic.

Following a robust question and answer session, the participants, lead by Aslan, held a one-minute silence in respect for those who have died in the streets of Iran. Aslan then spared time to sign copies of his books before jetting off to New York City for an interview with Jon Stewart on *The Daily Show* to air the next evening. Thank you Reza Aslan for a stimulating, timely, and informative lecture!

Reza Aslan was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1972, and left the country in 1979. He is an internationally acclaimed writer and scholar of religions, and is a columnist at the Daily Beast (thedailybeast.com). He has degrees in Religion from Santa Clara University, Harvard University, and the University of California, Santa Barbara, as well as a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Iowa, where he was named the Truman Capote Fellow in Fiction. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities, and the Pacific Council on International Policy. He serves on the board of directors for the Ploughshares Fund, which gives grants for peace and security issues.

FRANCIS BACON: FIGURATIVE IN THE AGE OF ABSTRACTION

Francis Bacon (1909-1992), the Irish painter, whose powerful works have continuously haunted our eyes since World War II, is one of the most original painters of the Twentieth Century. Bacon brought the human figure back into painting during a period in which abstraction had taken over all areas of art. (Fig.1)

It was an exhibition of Picasso's work in the late 1920s in Paris that shaped Bacon's decision to become a painter. In 1929, Bacon acquired a studio in London and started working as an interior decorator, experimenting with painting on the side. Only a few of Bacon's paintings remain from that period as he destroyed most of his early works. The early pieces have Cubist tendencies and are comparable to the works of Fernand Léger and Picasso's biomorphic shapes.

From the 1940s onward, Bacon became a full-time painter. He quickly arrived at a style that would become his signature treatment of the human figure: columnar creatures against a monochromatic background in an empty space, like a room or a box. (Fig.2)

The history of Modern Art and the process that lead to the birth of Abstraction in art started at the end of the Nineteenth Century with the elimination of narrative elements in painting. As a result, the human figure, perhaps the most crucial role in any narration, began to disappear from painting. Modern artists questioned the place of portrait painting as an apt genre for the modern time. The problem was that when one sees a face or a human figure, one at least expects an expressive notion if not a full story. That expectation dominates the formal aspects of the painting by entering the elements of narration into the painting; these are the elements, which were already removed from the painting. And that was a challenge. For example, Picasso is one of the first to confront the issues of modern portraiture. When developing Cubism (1909-1914), Picasso and Braque started by breaking down the surface of the picture into smaller fragments, layer by layer. In this manner, the naturalistic details of a face or a human body would become unrecognizable and only an outline would remain. (Fig.3)

After the Second World War, Bacon challenged the problems of depicting the human body and face in Modern Art. Instead



Fig.1 Francis Bacon in his studio, 1984

of separating the traditional painting from the modern painting, Bacon joined the two together. His paintings are mostly based on photographs, specifically the images printed in newspapers. Bacon started by drawing a clear image based on one or a variety of photographs. At this point, Bacon was close to the realistic depiction in traditional painting. Then, however, he estranged the figures by applying paint to the canvas flatly and at the same time using strong brushstrokes. Art historian Peter Burger describes Bacon's creative process as "the contrast between calculation and spontaneity." Burger further describes Bacon as a painter who depicts "the individual in the moment of disintegration."

Francis Bacon brought tradition and modernity together in the depiction of figure in search of reality. He said, "I believe that realism has to be re-invented." Bacon not only presented a new reality, but one that transforms constantly. This is perhaps the strongest point of his paintings. Bacon's works are based on historic photographs. The photographs can be seen as proof of reality. But at the same time, they are not real because they are frozen in the time, and reality is in constant

An Evening with Shirin Neshat: Women Without Men



By: Rosita Bagheri

In collaboration with Persian Cultural Center, on June 18, 2009, the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego screened "Women Without Men," the first feature-length film in progress by celebrated Iranian visual artist/filmmaker Shirin Neshat. Neshat was personally present at the screening which included a question and answer session.

Neshat, a leading Iranian artist, rose to prominence following her work on the gender divide in Islam. Among her well-known works are a photographic series entitled "Women of Allah" (1993-1997), along with a trilogy of award-winning, dual-screen, video installations – "Turbulent," "Rapture" and "Fervor."

Set in Tehran in 1953, *Women Without Men* is Neshat's screen adaptation of exiled Iranian writer, Shahrnush Parsipur's, magic realist novel of the same title. The film chronicles the experiences of five women during the U.S. and British-backed overthrow of the country's democratically elected government in 1953.

Mixing magic, tragedy, history and politics, Neshat has spent the last six years adapting the novel into a film, with complex, interwoven tales of women from very different parts of society in the 1950s--upper class and poor, observant and secular--who exist as real characters but are also capable of becoming ghosts, and even trees, that grow and blossom with the seasons. Unfolding in an atmosphere of magic realism, the characters struggle for freedom and survival in a regime of strict rules, prohibitions, and guilt related to the social behavior and the personal self-determination of women trapped and seeking personal freedom in the garden. The Garden is the theme where these characters go back & forth into which is magic and then some realism.. Taking it out loses the main theme of the book & the film

Shirin Neshat is one of the most innovative, thought-provoking and exciting contemporary artists of our time. She considers herself a "passionate inquirer" who "prefers raising questions as opposed to answering them."

Over 350 people attended the preview and stayed through a vibrant Q and A session.



Fig.2 Three Studies for a Crucifixion, March 1962



Fig. 3 Pablo Picasso, Seated Female Nude, 1909/10,



Fig. 4 Study from the Human Body

motion. Bacon broke free of the cage of reality by tearing open the curtain of time.

A good example of Bacon's angle of realism is *Study from the Human Body*. (Fig.4) One can feel the pain in the paint. Bacon is a realist, an expressionist and a modernist in the manner of Van Gogh. He is the painter of pain, power, and the paradox of modern life.

If you happen to be in New York, pay a visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art where a retrospective exhibition of Francis Bacon's works is on view until August 16, 2009. This is the first major exhibition of Bacon's work in New York in twenty years.

Notes:

Francis Bacon the Violence of the Real, ed. Zweite and Muller, Thames & Hudson, 2006 Article by Peter Burger (pp. 29-37)

To read more on Francis Bacon:

Figurable: Francis Bacon / David Sylvester, 1993
Francis Bacon and the tradition of art / edited by Wilfried Seipel, Barbara Steffen, Christoph Vital, 2003

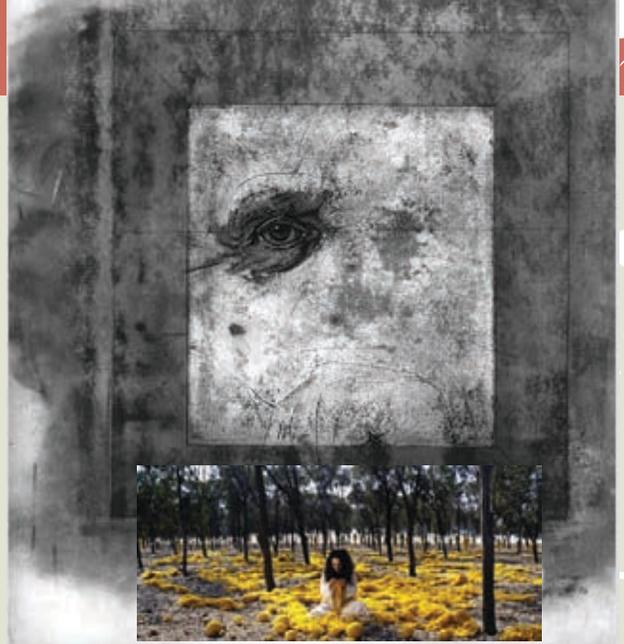
Iranian Poetry Today

A snapshot of “post-modern” Iranian poetry

The voices of women writers have been absent from Persian literature, perhaps until recently. Is literature the only realm in which women could not nurture their creative talents? Women are absent from the history of Iran, absent from many figures of Persepolis, absent in the religious hierarchy of Islam, and invisible on the political scene. This analysis does not undertake the studying of women’s long silence, and the repression that denied them any access to power in the literary or social arena. Nonetheless, in order to understand the voices of contemporary women writers, it is essential to de-construct a culture that has often categorized all that is feminine as “vulgar” and “private.” In the Persian culture, women’s voices are veiled, entrapped in the binary opposition of private/public spheres. This seems to have been rooted in all aspects of life, moral, sexual, social, and political.

“In a veiled society, walls surround houses. Religious *Taqiyeh* [deliberate dissimulation] protects faith. *Ta’arof* [ritualistic mode of discourse] disguises some thoughts and emotions and plunges both parties, the addressee and addresser, into a kind of factual suspense. Feelings become disjointed in *Zaheri* [external] and *Biruni* [internal] spheres,” Farzaneh Milani, a professor of Persian literature writes in “Veils and Words.” In a society that tends to separate the private sphere from that of public, hierarchies are created. The world related to women is considered “trivial,” “personal,” and “in-door,” while the men’s world of money and politics [out-door] is highly privileged. Thus, it is not hard to imagine how little the literary arena would have been invested in the voices of women writers. In spite of repression, women’s voices have emerged against all the odds. Parvin E’tessami, Forugh Farrokhzad, Simin Daneshvar, and Simin Behbahani have all broken the silence of their times, overcoming some of the cultural constraints placed on the female identity. Partow Nooriala’s poem, “Four Springs” fits well within these rebellious female voices. In “Four Springs,” Nooriala speaks candidly of women, all stages of her life, and puts her fresh perspective on the women’s body and voice. Her story of womanhood is no longer that of silence and passivity, no longer veiled. Having broken many cultural taboos, Nooriala further expresses her personal autonomy and self-hood through her poetry.

In “Puberty,” the first poem of “Four Springs,” Nooriala recalls the innocent days of childhood, and celebrates the newfound energy of a little girl that “sets out in the breeze,” with her “disheveled hair [and] bare feet.” Nooriala brilliantly captures the rapid and mysterious transition during which a girl arrives at womanhood. “Puberty” depicts the innocent



gaze of a “twelve-year-old,” who is given a complete sense of her identity through “dolls, jump ropes and cardboard house.” She is clueless about her childhood identity, for “the lost games linger[ing] in afternoon haze,” are abruptly disrupted by a “drop of blood.” There is a feeling of fear and anxiety that marks the transition between childhood and puberty. But is the little girl prepared to face the world as a woman? “Bashful, clinging to childhood, she bathes her breast-sprouts.” In the second stage, “Love,” she is suddenly awakened to a different sensual being, to her newfound desires, driven by the “thumpings of her heart.” The limpid language of “Love” celebrates the high emotions of the sixteen-year-old, storming through her life. In “Labor,” she is compelled to submit to all the pain that her “creature” assigns to her. Her body is torn by pressure and pain; and “in one instant” she gives birth, which marks her eighteenth year. “Labor” is not depicted as vulgar or distasteful, but rather as a new beginning. Somewhere in the midst of pain and pressure, the woman’s body and mind profoundly mature and blossom to a new age, motherhood. The last stage is “Menopause.” Although time for her reproductive fertility has come to an end, her mind is far from reaching its limits. Menopause profoundly de-stabilizes her; yet she embraces another coming of age, marked by wisdom. Menopause will not stop her growth, a woman who has loved and given birth. Her aging is beautiful, and her coming-of-age knowledge is celebrated. Menopause inevitably brings its own restrictions, pains, and frustrations, but only for her to look back and see that her “old shrub of heart had never blossomed so red before,” even in her youth. She stands before high horizons, about to transgress new boundaries.

There is a profound sense of age and movement in Nooriala’s “Four Springs,” which puts a unique and fresh perspective on all the stages of a woman’s life, each bringing its own growth and wisdom.

FOUR SPRINGS

Puberty

Yellow silk cocoon
Butterfly flaps fluttering.
Disheveled hair, bare feet,
The little girl sets out in the breeze.
Children flittering and
Lost games linger in afternoon haze.
Where is that twelve-year-old girl?
With my dolls and jump ropes
And cardboard house.
And a drop of blood
Cloaking a childhood.

Love

Bashful, clinging to childhood,
She bathes her breast-sprouts
In morning dew.
She is budding spring
In the sudden pageantry of green.
She averts her eyes from her beloved,
But the thumpings of her heart
Are audible even through a storm.
The almond blossom
Caresses the sixteen-year-old girl
As has the here and now of love,
My lustrous skin.

Labor

How it burns,
Dagger gouging. Skin pins and needles.
A thousand blows on the bones,
Half-conscious and torn asunder.
Pressure, pressure, pressure...
She claws at the sheets, those mercurial clouds.
Bright wet hallucination and dry
Tongue stuck to palate.
Pressure, pain, perishing...
An impatient child escapes the uterine strait.
My howls drown my eighteenth year.
In one instant
My creation assigns its pain to me.



Menopause*

Forty-nine-year-old
Is not wary of phobic fuddy-duddy chitter-chatter.
Time spins in a frenzy of repollination
And the ray of light emanating from my soul
Releases me from decadent superstition
And wrath.
Ecstatic in yet springing anew,
Finally wise to seasoned love,
Change of Life, this annulment
Fights an uphill battle,
For this old shrub of a heart
Has never blossomed
So red before.

*In Persian, the word for menopause also means *annulment* and/or *despair*.



Partow Noorials was born in Tehran in 1946. She acquired a BA in Philosophy and an MA in Social Work Management. Her first book of poetry, *A Share of the Years*, was printed and ready for distribution in 1972, but eventually banned by the Pahlavi regime for seven years. The ban was finally lifted during the 1979 Revolution. She moved to the United States with her two children in 1986. She is the author of *Of the Eye of the Wind*, *My Earth Altered*, *With Chained hands in the House of Fortune*, *Like Me*, and *Mihan's Future*. She regularly appears on panels, lectures at conferences and provides television commentary.

Translated by *Niloufar Talebi*, retrieved from *BELONGING: New Poetry by Iranians Around the World*. For more, please visit: <http://www.thetranslationproject.org/>

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SUMMER READING—PEYK PICKS



By Shaghayegh Hanson



Chances are you're looking forward to some relaxation this summer, and whether your vacation plans involve traveling or staying at home, this is a great time to sneak in some personal reading pleasure. Friends who know I'm an avid reader always ask me for book recommendations and I, in turn, ask others for theirs. I thought you might gain some inspiration from a few suggestions we have at *Peyk*. Whatever you choose, I hope you're able to find a cozy space of your own, where you can tuck into a great book, and be transported to another world!

Shaghayegh's Picks

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice* (Classic). United States: Bantam Classic Book, 1983. \$4.95. ISBN-10:0553213105. 352 pg.

Every few years I have to re-read this gem to remind myself of the timeless follies of human nature, and the meaning of true wit and true romance (not the Danielle Steele kind).

McCourt, Frank. *Angela's Ashes* (Memoir). United States: Scribner book 1996. \$19.76. ISBN-10: 068474350. 368pg.

Rarely can authors combine a good laugh with a good cry in the way McCourt manages in this book about his poverty stricken and grief-ridden upbringing in Ireland. With folksy Irish wit and the honesty of one who has endured the worst life can offer, McCourt rips out one's heart, fills it with love, and places it gently back, ready to beat twice as compassionately as before.

Follett, Ken. *The Pillars of the Earth* (Historical Fiction). United States: Signet Book, 1990. \$7.99. ISBN-10: 0451166892. 983pg.

Don't be put off by the size of this book; it's actually a quick read and a highly entertaining way of learning about important European history. Set in 12th century England in the fictional village of Kingsbridge, during a time of civil war, famine and religious strife, we become captivated by the lives of Tom, the master builder of the magnificent cathedral, Aliena, the noblewoman, Philip, the prior of Kingsbridge, Jack, the artist in stone and Ellen, the woman from the forest who casts a curse.

Amirrezvani, Anita. *The Blood of Flowers* (Persian Historical Fiction.) Reviewed in *Peyk* No. 118.

Mortenson, Greg. *Three Cups of Tea* (Current Affairs/Philanthropy/Pakistan). Reviewed in *Peyk* No. 116.

Shahri Estakhry's Picks

Angelou, Maya. *Letter To My Daughter*. United States: Random House Book, 2008. \$16.50. ISBN-13: 1400066123. 192 pg.

This new book is from one of our much loved, respected, and best writers, Maya Angelou. "Dedicated to a daughter she never had but sees all around her, *Letter to My Daughter* reveals Maya Angelou's path to living well and living a life with meaning. It's part guidebook, part memoir, part poetry and pure delight."

Welch, Suzy. *10-10-10*.

10 Minutes
10 Months
10 Years

United States: A Scribner Book, 2009. \$15.29. ISBN-10: 1416591826. 240pg.

"A transformative new approach to decision making. 10-10-10 is a tool for reclaiming your life at home, in

love and at work. The process is clear, straightforward, and transparent. In fact, when you're facing a dilemma, all it takes to begin are three questions: What are the consequences of my decision in 10 minutes? In 10 months? And in 10 years?"

Aria Fani's Picks

Singer, Isaac Bashevis. *A Day of Pleasure*. United States: A Sunburst Book, 1986. \$8.95. ISBN 0-374-41696-6. 227 pg. Recommended age: Middle School & Up.

"A Day of Pleasure" is one of the last works of Isaac Singer, the Noble Prize winning author. Singer employs an unadorned language, delightfully mixed with wit and humor, to depict the childhood of a boy growing up in Warsaw. Itchele's life is marked with countless religious, cultural, and social barriers, and yet no hindrances can overshadow the observations, explorations, and inquisitiveness of childhood years. "A Day of Pleasure" is a total delight.

Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese*. Illustrated by Lark Pien. New York: First Second Books, 2006. ISBN 978-1596431522. \$ 17.95. 233 pages. Recommended age: Middle School and Young Adults.

Gene Luen Yang's "American Born Chinese" is a graphic novel. It begins with three seemingly different tales, all thematically connected via the search for identity. Luen Yang brilliantly combines a Chinese legendary folk tale with a modern story of second-generation Chinese-American, to depict the profound and inward journey of identity. "American Born Chinese" is a wonderful read for the summer!



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