



# **My Sister, Guard Your Veil; My Brother, Guard Your Eyes: Uncensored Iranian Voices**

*Lila Azam Zanganeh (Editor)*

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In the first anthology of its kind, Lila Azam Zanganeh argues that although Iran looms large in the American imagination, it is grossly misunderstood—seen either as the third pillar of Bush's infamous "axis of evil" or as a nation teeming with youths clamoring for revolution.

This collection showcases the real scope and complexity of Iran through the work of a stellar group of contributors—including Azar Nafisi and with original art by Marjane Satrapi. Their collective goal is to counter the many existing cultural and political clichés about Iran. Some of the pieces concern feminism, sexuality, or eroticism under the Islamic Republic; others are unorthodox political testimonies or about race and religion. Almost all these contributors have broken artistic and cultural taboos in their work.

Journalist Reza Aslan, author of *No God But God*, explains why Iran is not a theocracy but, rather, a "mullahcracy." Mehrangiz Kar, a lawyer and human rights activist who was jailed in Iran and is currently a fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, argues that the Iranian Revolution actually engendered the birth of feminism in Iran. Journalist Azadeh Moaveni reveals the underground parties and sex culture in Tehran, while Gelareh Asayesh, author of *Saffron Sky*, writes poignantly on why Iranians are not considered white in America, even though they think they are. Poet and writer Naghmeh Zarbafian expounds on the surreal experience of reading censored books in Iran, while Roya Hakakian, author of *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran*, recalls the happy days of Iranian Jews. With a sharp, incisive introduction by Lila Azam Zanganeh, this diverse collection will alter what you thought you knew about Iran.

"*My Sister, Guard Your Veil; My Brother, Guard Your Eyes* aims to corrode fixed ideas and turns cultural and political clichés on their heads . . . Iranians themselves live in a complex and schizophrenic reality, at a surreal crossroads between political Islam and satellite television, massive national oil revenues, and searing social inequalities."--From the Introduction by Lila Azam Zanganeh

Contributors include: Azar Nafisi, author of the best-selling *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, Marjane Satrapi, author of *Persepolis*, Shirin Neshat, internationally acclaimed visual artist, Abbas Kiarostami, award-winning filmmaker of *Taste of Cherry*, Shohreh Aghdashloo, Oscar nominee for *House of Sand and Fog*, Azadeh Moaveni, author of *Lipstick Jihad*

## **My Sister, Guard Your Veil; My Brother, Guard Your Eyes: Uncensored Iranian Voices Details**

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Uncensored Iranian Voices Lila Azam Zanganeh (Editor)**

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# **From Reader Review My Sister, Guard Your Veil; My Brother, Guard Your Eyes: Uncensored Iranian Voices for online ebook**

## **A Book Vacation says**

I liked the idea of the book: compiling essays by people from Iran in order to show the world Iran's true identity. Unfortunately, I found nearly every essay in the book extremely boring... While the book does give a little bit of an inside look into Iran, I find it somewhat ironic that most of the authors are banned from Iran, and some have not been back to their country in over 20 years... so are we reading about what Iran was, or is? And if they are telling about what it is, is it a valid portrait if the author has not been there is nearly 20 years? Perhaps I just need something a little more intriguing.

While there were some decent personal essays that made me think about racism, women's roles in different societies, etc., many of the critical essays were similar to my students' writing for assignments. I really couldn't stand the personal interviews, which were very weak and didn't give enough background information in order to make the read compelling... and perhaps that's my main issue with the essays? Even some of the personal essays did not give enough background information about certain aspects they were talking about, and if we read something that is not explained, we become confused and, ultimately, bored.

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## **Natalie says**

While I enjoyed this collection and learnt more about a country that, up until now, I knew very little about, I found some accounts and stories more accessible than others. Some of the introductions to the people and their writing could have been fleshed out more. As usual I loved Marjane Satrapi's story relatable and moving, but wish there could have been more - in retrospect I felt the same about other accounts in the collection.

As a whole, reading this book was an educational yet fragmentary experience.

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## **Nicole says**

There are no such things as half stars, but if there were this one would get 2 and a half.

My review is less than articulate, based mostly on gut reactions. Its not that there is anything "wrong" with this collection of essays, pe rsay, but I just didn't want to keep reading. I was excited about the collection but the excitement, unfortunately, didn't last. Once I forced myself to read an essay, I found it interesting and informative...but the fact that I had to force myself was problematic.

It made for good discussion, though. You could pick a quote from any of the essays and launch into a debate/discussion on the meaning of the phrase "race relations", cultural censorship, or national/ex-pat identity.

I might be willing to concede that this book is more than the sum of its parts, provided you can make it through all the parts to get to the sum.

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## **R says**

Recopila ensayos y entrevistas de varios iraníes famosos, en especial cineastas, actrices y autores literarios, además de algunos intelectuales. Lo cierto es que me ha gustado bastante, pero sólo cubre en realidad iraníes en el exilio (si no contamos a Kiarostami) y tiene más que ver con la idea de comunidad, el retorno y el fenómeno de la emigración en sí que con el propio país y los puntos de vista que pueden tener sus habitantes que no han salido del país. En algunos relatos, como en el escrito por Salar Abdoh, encarna muy bien esta situación y se vislumbra al teheraní como el "Otro", por lo que se pone una barrera casi invisible entre el narrador y la población corriente y moliente.

Por otro lado, demasiado énfasis en la lengua persa - recordemos que no es la lengua materna ni de la mitad del país - y en intercambiar los términos "iraní" y "persa" de una forma un tanto inconsistente.

Me ha gustado bastante ya que muchos de los colaboradores en el libro son artistas cuya obra he visto y cuyas personalidades me interesan, pero no creo que precisamente este sea el libro que mejor hable de los iraníes de a pie.

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## **Jenny says**

As I told my friend, I like almost any book that teaches me about a culture, country, concept, etc. that I didn't know anything or much about before. This book taught me more about Iranian people, culture, and history. I enjoyed reading the essays and interviews by and with leading Iranian artists and scholars. My only problem with the book is that editor Lila Azam Zanganeh's introduction establishes the idea that this book is intended to dispel misconceptions that Westerners have about Iran and Iranians. However, in almost every essay, the Iranian writer or interviewee discusses the prohibitive regime, the need for sneaking underground for art and culture, the oppression and repression of women, and the stifling nature of the mullahs' reign. In other words, the book did more to confirm misperceptions than to eradicate them. I understand that the writers honestly depict their culture and mostly express the idea that not all Iranians are terrorists or Muslims or devoutly Muslim or against the spread of Western culture in Iran. To most Iranians, the regime IS oppressive, BUT there are still true Iranian history and culture present in Iran. The people struggle to understand just as much as we Westerners do. I just hope that readers can see beyond the obvious and find the truth. It doesn't seem all that clear in every essay that these people love their country and regret many of the events that have occurred to make people feel the way they do about Iran (most recently, of course, that it is a member of the "Axis of Evil").

All that being written, I can recommend the book to people interested in learning more about Iran from Iranians and to people who want to read well-written essays and well-conducted interviews with scholars and artists from a unique culture.

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## **????????? ??????? says**

The book is inspiring, especially the conversation with the magnificent Abbas Kiarostami.

And you won't be able to resist the poetic language of Azar Nafisi on "the stuff the dreams are made of"!

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### **Ramin says**

This is a short book, consisting of short accounts, vignettes, interviews, and stories about Iran, by famous artists and writers (like Azar Nafisi, Marjane Satrapi, Abbas Kiarostami, and Roya Hakakian). Each chapter is written by a different person, and many of them are about why they left Iran, why they returned, how Iran is (or is not) changing, and how it is misperceived by the West. Most of the chapters are well written and interesting to read.

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### **Nayantara says**

Some stories were definitely more interesting than others. Overall it was eye opening because it's a side of Iran that is not shown in main stream media and is not spoken about either. It really motivated me to read more non-western literature, movies etc.

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### **Grace says**

This book is a collection of essays, stories, and interviews by famous, elite Iranians. The book is almost exclusively about the arts in Iran. A few essays are not.

It's not very representative of the average Iranian voice when everyone represented here is a famous journalist, academic, actor, writer, filmmaker, or artist. Many, if not all of them, do not presently live in Iran.

This is a good book for people interested in the arts in Iran, but not what I wanted or expected by the title. Some essays were painstakingly boring.

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### **Batool says**

When i first start reading this book i thought it would be all about the role of iranian women in the world. But it took another road, a bunch of iranian artist talk about their art and inspiring thing.

I love it.

Thank you Moudi for the recomndation.

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### **I says**

I found this accidentally while looking for Reza Aslan books, and I'm very glad that I happened upon it. A wonderful collection of memoirs, essays, stories, and interviews by Iranian artists, writers, actors, and scholars about a variety of issues affecting Iranian culture. I felt different after reading the numerous selections, especially the ones by Marjane Satrapi (of Persepolis fame), Shoreh Aghdashloo (Oscar

nominated actress), Babak Ebrahimian, and Negar Azimi. The more I read about Iran and all the tumultuous changes it's undergone in the last century, the more I desperately want to learn and understand. The sections on cinema, sex, and art are especially intriguing. I was aggravated, warmed, amused, and given hope that more Iranian voices can pierce through all the negative preconceptions held in the West.

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## **Trin says**

Essays and interviews by and with Iranians about what life is really like in their home country, and about their receptions in and reactions to the rest of the world. As with many collections, some of these pieces were really excellent, while others were not; the interviews were in many ways the weakest, veering off into somewhat pretentious discussions of post-modern works I haven't seen. But I'm glad that (inspired, unsurprisingly, by Persepolis) I read this; I would love to read more good books about Iran and the Iranian experience.

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## **metaphor says**

Most of us retain an ability to appreciate each other as individuals and regard each other with respect, admiration, even affection. But at some preprogrammed level, we remain ever conscious of otherness. In times of doubt, it becomes all too easy to interpret actions through this distorting prism.

\*

At present, dear friend, we entertain the same wounds; only our harbors are distinct.

\*

[...] I still bear the wounds of a vivid relationship, the outcome of which is far from conclusive. [...] she is always there, and as long as her presence endures, I will not be entirely free.

\*

I have fond memories of this old road—when I was a child, I used to be dazzled by its proud summits; I would marvel at its awe-inspiring mountains appearing and disappearing in the snow and fog. All these images are so powerfully engraved in my mind that they form, as it were, like some intensely present vision, the topography of my soul.

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## **Jabiz Raisdana says**

Really liked this one. Learned a lot about contemporary Iranian artists, and now I have a list of new artists to check out. Each short chapter/essays gives an insightful look at what the "real" Iran could look like. A few of the essays are beautifully written and a pleasure to read, but they all offer something.

I was thinking that this book would be more about the role of women in Iranian society, but it was more about the Art scene on modern Iran. Not sure that many MS readers will appreciate this one, but if you want a stretch book about a dynamic culture you most likely know little about, check this one out.

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## **Sarah says**

This book was not what I thought it would be. I was anticipating something far more political; something heavier and more in-depth. Turns out, these authors focused almost exclusively on cinema and the arts in Iran. Hm.

Interesting and valuable, don't get me wrong, just not what I was expecting. It was a quick and informative read! And, yes, there were bits and pieces that were political and controversial, but it seems to me that this book would benefit enormously from a second volume including the voices of 1) everyday citizens still living inside Iran, 2) responses to the many stereotypes that are forced upon Iranians and their country, and 3) folks who speak to a broader range of essay topics.

At least that's what I was looking for when I bought this book!

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