EXILE

# Ghorbati

*The purgatory of exile: Persian intellectuals in America*

By Abbas Milani
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*The Iranian*

*Woe unto him who has no country.*
-- Nietzsche

Exile is when you live in one land, and dream in another. From Iran -- the landscape of my dreams -- no land is farther away, geographically and metaphorically, than the America where I now live. America is, in the words of one of its more astute political observers, the "First New Nation." It is a country with little history, and even less patience for indulging the past. Iran, however, is a land where the past both haunts and enriches the present; it is a country that is, in the words of Hegel, where the light of reason first began to shine. "The Persians are the first Historical people."

As a nation, America is the land where the Frontier has been the formative mythology of its history, where mobility and exile have been central to the country's collective memory. Iran, on the other hand, though first peopled by exiles (the Aryans some 3,500 years ago) and though its Islamic calendar commences with the prophet's exile from Mecca, has for centuries been characterized by the insularity of its national experience; Iran, as an idea, seems almost synonymous with the sense of a protected plateau, walled and shielded by towering mountains and forbidding seas.

For Jews, exile has been a constitutive component of their 5,000-year history. Living in diaspora has become, for them, all but second nature, whereby, in the words of George Steiner, "the text" has become a home, and an "instrument of exilic survival." For Iranians, living in diaspora was, until two decades ago, a rarity, an oddity experienced only by radical intellectuals, the economically marginalized, or the stigmatized religious minorities.

The etymology, and the variegated connotations and denotations of *Ghorbat*, the common Persian word for exile, eloquently conveys the culture's troubled relationship with the exilic experience. In English, as well as the French and German languages, a touch of romance, of affirmation, is attached to the very word exile. Its dual meanings and genealogy -- "creating and coming forth" and "banishment" -- afford it an air of heroism. *Ghorbat,* on the other hand, itself an exile from the Arabic

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language, has the same root as dusk; it also shares its genealogy with *Maghreb*, Persian for the West, and for the land where the sun eternally sets.

Nasser Khosrow, the acclaimed eleventh century Persian poet, writes of exile as "a tarantula," and the poet Sa'di, who often captures the soul and spirit of Persia -- he was a favorite of Goethe's -- thought that a quick death at home was preferable to a long life in exile.

Indeed, as if to underscore the inevitable melancholy of exile, one of the secondary meanings for the Persian word for exile is "silent weeping." One of the derivatives of the word *Ghorbat* is *Ghorbati*, ostensibly meaning anyone who is away from home. It has, however, taken on harshly pejorative connotations. As a culture that has historically privileged the sedentary over the mobile, a culture whose traditional architecture eschews windows to the outside world in favor of enclosed, high-walled gardens and yards, *Ghorbati* is used as a derogatory word, synonymous with a Gypsy or a barbarian, or perhaps even a harlot.

*Mohajerat*, the other word commonly used for exile in Persian, is no less unequivocal in betraying the culture's attitude toward the affliction of exile. *Hejrat,* or the act of leaving home, not only refers to the prophet's forced departure from his birthplace, but it can also be used to refer to death. It seems that in the unconscious of the Persian language death and exile are part of the same continuum of rupture and departure.

And yet today, at least two million Iranians, from all walks of life, live in *Ghorbat*. Close to a million of them are in America, and I am here to report to you about the condition of Iranian intellectuals in the United States. And since the "international context" of exile is one of the themes of this conference, I would also like to search for some points of convergence and contrast between this experience and the fate of German intellectuals who fled Nazism and landed somewhere on the vast American continent.

The comparison is in one sense unfair, if not indeed untenable. Half a century has passed since the arrival of the large contingent of German intellectuals in America. Temporal distance has allowed for a full and dispassionate appraisal of their genius and accomplishments, their foibles and failures. The fact that German intellectual émigrés of the 1930s included an almost endless litany of towering twentieth-century figures -- from Albert Einstein and Bertold Brecht to Thomas Mann and Hannah Arendt, from Theodor Adorno and Ernest Cassier to Arnold Schoenberg and Walter Gropius -- the fact that they helped change the very fabric of social and natural sciences, as well as architecture and urban design in America, and finally the fact that a majority of this group were Jews, and as such were not only exiles in Germany itself, but also suffered some of the pangs of anti-Semitism in America, have all worked to facilitate, and encourage a large number of studies on the nature of their experience.

The history of Iranian intellectuals in America is, on the other hand, a work in progress. The landscape of their accomplishments and failures has yet to be rigorously surveyed. Furthermore, it is a landscape that is still constantly evolving, changing as we speak. Any account of what they have sewn and harvested can at best be partial and anecdotal.

Exiles, at the very ontological level, are bifurcated beings. In the post-colonial lexicon, they have hybrid identities. For Iranian exiles, language provides an early clue to the ambiguities of this hybridity. Twenty years after the surge of Iranians arriving in America, there is still no consensus on what we should call ourselves. Are we to bank on the romance the word Persia conjures and call ourselves Persians? Should we, instead, resign ourselves to the less glamorous, and more politically entangled, title of "Iranian"?

The labyrinthine subtext of this choice becomes more meaningful when we remember that the official change of the name from Persia to Iran took place under the somber shadow of Nazism. In the mid-1930s, the Iranian ambassador to Germany convinced Reza Shah that in deference to Nazism's rising star, Persia should forfeit its name in favor of one that underscored the country's Aryan legacy. In the last two decades, this inauspicious genealogy has been further compounded by images of frenzied flagellating mobs. All remnants of the old Oriental lure was replaced by a constant barrage of television images, showing scraggly bearded, clench-fisted zealots, delirious in their chants, parading blind-folded American diplomats around the once opulent compounds of the American embassy.

In the early years of the revolution, being an exile in America was, paradoxically, no indemnity for Iranian intellectuals -- as it was for German intellectuals in the mid-1930s -- but instead something of a liability. Here was a group that had often, by no choice of their own, left their country. Their only crime had been their valiant opposition, at great danger to life and limb, to the oppressive nature of the Islamic regime in Iran.

But now in exile, all too many of their American hosts, rightfully angered by the treatment afforded American diplomats in Iran, were bent on venting their anger at the first Iranian they could find. If an Islamic firing squad, or warrant of arrest, haunted the Iranian intellectuals at home, in exile, not just the "bitter bread of banishment" but the malfeasance of the same Islamic regime haunted them halfway across the world.

In the tumult of those angry days, the safest path was for the Iranians to opt for a hyphenated identity and call themselves, Persian-American, or Iranian-American -- a name that, by its very morphology, by the sheer weight of its hyphen, emphasized emotional detachment from Iran, and posited political distance from the regime at home; a hyphenated name for a bifurcated identity.

Adorno, the gloomy poet and philosopher of exile, considers this bifurcation, this suspension of attachment to a permanent home, an essential component of exile. For exiles, he writes, "homeland is the state of having escaped." Exile is coterminous with awaiting and transience, and with the solitude of the stranger; it begets and breeds a near neurotic dependence on news from "home."

Exiles refuse to recognize the permanence of the status quo, and thus endlessly engage in the Sisyphean task of trying to forge a cohesive narrative to surmount the real and imagined travails and torments of their present purgatory, while at once also nurturing utopian dreams of an edenic homeland. And thus exiles emulate the Jewish experience and seek the same kind of panacea for their plight as pariah. A text, a language, an imaginary homeland become tools of survival. In exile, speaking

Persian becomes a momentary escape from the constant feeling of disenfranchisement. It is a gesture of communion, of solidarity. It is an act of defiance, with elegiac qualities.

Exiles are in the words of Elias Caneti, "custodians of a dead treasure." Adorno, too, suggests the same idea by writing about what he calls his "damaged life" in exile. Infusing into his narrative of exile his deep disdain for all that is American, as well as elements of his pioneering work in criticizing what he calls "the mass deception" of the "late capitalist era," he writes that here "the past life of émigrés is, as we know, annulled. Earlier it was the warrant of arrest, today it is intellectual experience... Anything that is not reified, cannot be counted and measure, ceases to exist."

In other passages, he offers an even more gloomy image, suggesting that the problem might indeed have little to do with the kind of reification eminent in capitalist structures. "Every intellectual in emigration is," he writes, "without exception, mutilated, and does well to acknowledge it to himself... His language has been expropriated, and the historical dimension that nourished his knowledge, sapped." Adorno even abhors the American natural landscape, for "it bears no trace of the human hand."

Nader Naderpour, the recently deceased and laconically embittered Persian poet who had for many years lived in Los Angeles, captures much the same sentiments in his last collection of poems. His anguished voice captures the predilections of an older generation of intellectuals who stubbornly refuse to assimilate into any aspect of the host country. They prefer the comforts of the intellectual ghetto -- real, or imaginary -- where they can rest on their past laurels.

Here in America, "a landscape without a history," cities are, for Naderpour, "full of noise, empty of words." All that is left of him, he laments, is the "mirthless ruin" of his soul. Everywhere he turns, he meets only the "black shadow" of his own loneliness. Indeed, in the desolate landscape of his exilic poetry -- a "land as vast as grief and waiting" -- everything is bereft of magic and affect.

"In the night of this exile," he writes, "there are no stars." Even the moon, the eternal muse of all poets, is dead and lifeless in America, appearing as only "food for vultures." His new abode in Los Angeles, "this city of angels," is "an inferno as beautiful as paradise itself" and its soul-less, and greedy, inhabitants are only in search of a new forbidden fruit. Here, houses, opulent or modest, streets, busy or quiet, harbors and seas, serene or stormy, all conjure no memory, arouse no emotion. Here, he says, with no memory, and no trace of his accomplishments, he rides time towards the penultimate destination.

The exilic laments described in these poems are certainly not unfamiliar to the Iranian intellectual community. For one thing, ever since Plato tried to banish poets from his Republic, poets and intellectuals have returned the favor, and felt like exiles at home. Exile in this sense is more a state of mind than a fact of geography. Cervantes, whose novel *Don Quixote,* heralded the advent of the modern age, knew this well. His Don Quixote is a sublime image of an exile: At home neither in his native land, nor in the wilderness of his imagination. To this condition of exile, geography and locality is but a mere backdrop.

Naderpour captures the same sentiments when in his essay, called "The Poetry of Exile and the Exile of Poetry," he writes that all poets are always exiles, and "all genuine poetry of the world, is the poetry of exile." But aside from this metaphoric exile, the past generation of Iranians have had some, albeit limited, experience with banishment. The history of that experience can, I think, be divided into three distinctive phases. While there is much that separates the three phases, they nevertheless converge on two important points. Each has occurred in crucial moments of Iran's encounter with modernity, and in each phase, language has been a central problem.

The first large-scale exodus of Iranian intellectuals created the Hindi School of Iranian poetry and criticism. Just around the time when Cervantes in Spain, Shakespeare in England, and Martin Luther in Germany were contributing to the creation of national languages, and thus preparing the ground for nationalism and other constitutive elements of modernity, and jut as Iran's attempt to enter the modern world, orchestrated by Shah Abbas was aborted, many of the brightest Iranian intellectuals, fearing the frenzy of the Shiites, and the chaos of a war unleashed by the Afghan invaders, fled Iran and sought a safe haven in India. In exile, they created what has since been called Sabeque Hindi, or the Indian School.

Hazim, whose poetry is undergoing something of a revival in Iran today, was perhaps the quintessence of the first generation of exiles. For him, and his compatriots, poetry was the narrative form of choice, and in their verse, poetic tropes, words, and metaphors implode unto themselves. A concentric cacophony of metaphors, with no "objective correlative" other than the poet's ability to construct ever more arcane, obtuse, and beautiful metaphors was one of the main accomplishments of their exilic experience.

But this obsession with language had also another, unexpected result. It helped foster a refreshingly modern, or more accurately post-modern, hermeneutics. Much along the line advocated by Nietzsche in the late nineteenth century, literary critics in the 16th century Indian school arrived at notions about the ephemeral nature of meaning in a text, and about the contingency of language, and truth itself.

The second phase came around the time of Iran's constitutional revolution of 1905-1907. When reactionary forces tried to resurrect oriental despotism in Iran, many of the most prominent advocates of modernity, fearing for their lives, fled the country. This time the safe haven they sought was not India, but Europe. Most of them ended up in Berlin. Germany was a relative newcomer to the "Big Game" of colonial domination in the Middle East; she was more than willing to support the efforts of the Iranian nationalists to fight Russian and British influence in Iran. The "Berlin Committee" could count as its members a truly impressive group of Iranian writers, poets, and scholars.

Together, and with financial help from the Kaiser's coffers, they published the journal *Kaveh*. By nearly every conceivable measure, it turned out to be one of the most important publications of Iranian intellectual life in exile. Ultimately, it would also help change the intellectual landscape in Iran. The first modern Persian novel, as well as the first scholarly texts in economics and diplomatic history, were all published in the pages of this journal. In every issue, there was also articles about the inadequacies of the Persian language in facing the challenge of modernity, a challenge that was, in

the mind of *Kaveh*'s writers, as inevitable as it was welcome and auspicious.

In articulating these views, one of the main contributors to the journal, Seyyed Hassan Taghizadeh, wrote words that he would later regret. "Iranians must," he said, "in their blood and bone, become western. Shedding all that is Persian, and retrograde, and embracing all that is Western, is for them the sole path to salvation and progress." Though he would later repeatedly modify and retract his statement, the damage was done.

Soon enough, *fokoli* (literally, the bow-tied) found its way into the Persian lexicon. They were comical figures, who at the mere whiff of the European air, had come to denigrate all that was Persian In the classical disposition of colonized souls so brilliantly depicted by authors like Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, and the novelist Patrick Chamoiseaua *fokolis* insisted that Iran's only chance of salvation was to forfeit its own culture and language, and become entirely European.

But Taghizadeh's words at the same time echoed an important historic fact about Iranian intellectuals of the time. By then, for a whole generation of writers, poets and thinkers, Europe had become a beacon of progress and hope. As a historic force, these intellectuals were all children of the age of Enlightenment. The messianic propensity of Iran's culture, ever awaiting a redeemer, was in perfect congruence with the Enlightenment notion that intellectuals are the very repository of light and reason.

But many of these modern ideas traveled to Iran through Russia. In trying to explain the intellectual climate in 19th century Russia, Isaiah Berlin has offered a useful taxonomy of intellectuals. The French intellectuals, he suggests, consider themselves "purveyors" of ideas and images, and accept no responsibility other than producing the best possible works, while the Russians require "total commitment" and think of themselves "a dedicated order, an almost secular priesthood,."

It was the Russian notion of the intelligentsia that came to dominate intellectual discourse in Iran. These factors made it easier for the modern Iranian intellectuals to fill in the historic grooves created by the Shiite idea of a Mehdi. In other words, modern intellectuals became secular versions of the warrior-knight messiah, steeped in a Promethean sense of social esteem.

The Pahlavi regime strengthened the intellectual's sense of self-importance. Both Reza Shah and his son, Mohammed Reza Shah, had a peculiarly schizoid relationship with the intellectual community. It is, I think, hard to find another Third World regime that courted and coveted the intellectuals as much as the Pahlavi regime. But wooing was only one side of the relationship; violence and bitter disdain was the other constant component of the monarchy's troubled relationship with intellectuals. On the one hand, the Pahlavis craved intellectual support, and on the other, they jailed, censored, and occasionally killed prominent intellectuals.

With the fall of the Pahlavi regime, Prometheus gradually metamorphosed into a pariah, stranded on the hard rock of shattered hopes, miscarried ideas, dissension and division in intellectual ranks, a disillusioned public and a budding totalitarian power structure that, contrary to the previous regime, had only distrust and animus for the secular intellectuals.

Part of this distrust was political in nature: Many intellectuals had been in the

forefront of the fight against the new Islamic despotism. But there was also another, historico-epistemological source to this tension. Throughout the centuries, the clergy had considered themselves the sole and ultimate source of sacred and profane truth. They had doted on such self-proclaimed titles as the *Ulama*, or the learned. The genesis of modern intellectuals was clearly a direct threat to the clergy's lucrative monopoly of truth.

As failed Prometheans, Iranian and German intellectuals who had come to America had important points in common: They had both fled their respective countries after calamitous upheavals, and the rise of new and menacing social forces. Both had witnessed the development of a kind of persona in their country they could not fathom. The thought and sight of "Hitler's Willing Executioners" in Germany, the presence of hundreds of thousands of religious zealots, willing to kill and die for their faith, provided the intellectuals of the two countries with a disheartening image of their nation. Their response was to heed the advice of the Oracle at Delphi who said, "Know thyself." Each group turned inward, and tried to lay bare the collective unconscious, the unadorned histories of the countries they had left behind.

Adorno and his colleagues' monumental study of the Authoritarian Personality; Leo Lowenthal's in-depth analysis of the German mass-culture during the years before the rise of Nazism, Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus, Eric Fromm's Escape from Freedom, Hannah Arendt's influential study of the Origins of Totalitarianism, Franz Neuman's Behemouth and its description of the Nazi economic system are only a few examples of studies by German exiles that tried to come to theoretical grips with the unfathomable fact that in the land of Marx and Beethoven, Hegel and Mozart, the likes of Goebbels and Hitler had come to power.

A similar "historical turn," a critical appraisal of Iran's past, a vigorous attempt to criticize, and when needed debunk the dominant ideological discourse, has been evident amongst Iranian intellectuals in America. A veritable, albeit belated, Renaissance has been taking place. *Encyclopedia Iranica*, a project whose genesis predates the revolution by a few years, could easily be considered the most ambitious modern effort at a full, detached, and impartial appraisal of Iran as a civilization. Housed at Columbia University in New York, (not far from the New School for Social Research where many of the German intellectual exiles landed) it attempts to describe every major and minor historical event and personage, every town and village, every writer and river in Iran.

Furthermore, two journals, one called *Iranameh*, the other Iranshenasi, generally considered two of the most respected Persian journals in the world, have been regularly published in America for some twenty years. There are also two oral history projects, one based at Harvard University, the other at the Foundation for Iranian Studies in Washington, which have attempted to save for posterity, the recollections of some of Iran's most influential intellectuals and politicians. A third oral history, centered in Los Angeles, is devoted to chronicling the life of Iranian Jews.

There are several theoretical and literary journals of various political persuasions as well -- from the Socialist *Elem-o Jamee*, to the literary *Persian Book Review*. There are at least two distinct organization of scholars ("Iranian Studies" and CIRA) whose work is concerned solely with Iran. There are a number of feminist organizations that regularly host conferences and talks. For many years, they helped publish a quarterly

called *Nimeyeh Digar* (the Other Half) that only stopped publication a few months ago because of financial constraints.

Many of the bigger cities have their own Persian theater groups. Sometimes -- as in the case of the Darvag group in Berkeley, whose productions have toured much of Europe over the last decades- -- they stage avant-garde productions, other times they perform the more traditional fare of comical or classical plays. The question of exile, the battle of the assimilated young with the stubbornly unchanged old Iranians, a kind of comedy of manners, is the leitmotif of most of these theatrical productions.

Iranians in Hollywood, too, have had their share of success stories: From Reza Badii, who directed such diverse productions as "Mission Impossible" and "Baywatch", to Darius Khonji, whose cinematography in such films as the "Sheltering Sky" has won him many awards and favorable notices. The artistic director of one of premiere opera houses in the world, the San Francisco Opera, is a Persian, as are hundreds of managers, and researchers of small and large computer companies. Few indeed are American colleges and universities were at least one Persian does not hold an important faculty position.

Even a cursory look at the collective portrait of Persian exiles in America will reveal that in their ranks, there is now a new breed of intellectual who has opted for some measure of assimilation, and immersion in the host culture. They have mastered the English language, and often publish their works in both Persian and English. They are as comfortable with Shakespeare as with Sa'di; in contrast to the generation of Taghizadeh, they are neither awed, nor overly impressed with the West; and in distinction to the *fokolis*, they are also not oblivious to Iran's rich cultural legacy. The poet Ali Zarin speaks for this generation when he writes, "America/ in the Poems of Walt Whitman/ Langston Hughes/ Allen Ginsberg/ the songs of Woody Guthrie/ and Joan Baez/ I made you mine." [Made you mine, America]

Over the last few years, an impressive number of these intellectuals have published acclaimed literary anthologies, novels, memoirs, and innumerable works of scholarship, all written in English. Taghi Modaressi was that rare Iranian who was already an accomplished novelist in Iran before he arrived in America. Here he reinvented himself by writing and publishing novels in English. His novelistic ruminations dissect the agonies of the exilic mutilation, and yet are not despairing in their final effect.

Nahid Rachlin is another successful member of this generation of writers. Her forte is describing the plight of Iranian émigré women. And finally, if a book's gross sales are to be taken as a measure of success, then Gina Nahai's *Moonlight on the Avenue of Faith*, an acclaimed magic realist account of women's lives at the turn of the century, in Tehran's Jewish ghetto, is clearly the most successful novel written by an Iranian in exile.

Even Persian cooking has found its rightful place in the gourmet pantheon of America and the popularity of this cuisine is to no small measure the result of the untiring work of Najmieh Batmanglij, who has established herself as a world-class aesthete and culinary maestro. Her books have transformed the cookbook genre from a simple manual of a craft to a sublimely beautiful representation of an art. Mage Publishers, which has published her books, has been devoted to publishing books

about Iran in the English language for two decades. It has succeeded in not just surviving, but establishing an impressive reputation in the highly competitive publishing world of the United Sates.

There are hundreds of sites on the internet, devoted solely to the issues of Iran. Everything from the songs of the popular female singer Googoosh, to Koranic verses, from soccer memorabilia, to the latest news about Iran can be found on the Net. So vast are the number of Iranian sites that there is a special search engine, called IranMania that can help you find everything from photos of the famous to old stamps from the Qajar dynasty. Iranian chat-rooms also abound.

Persian music too has been transformed by this new genus of exiles. A promising musical trend has been created by some young, second-generation, Iranians. A refreshingly eclectic mix of Spanish cords, used in counterpoint with new interpretations of Persian movements, or *dastgahs*, give this new music a delightful timber, at once familiar and altogether strange. But the creative and critical work of this vast army of old and new exiles has not been without its obstacles.

Nostalgia is the narcotic of exile, and the nemesis of sober and critical appraisal of "home." Catering to this affliction has become, like much else in America, a "big business." Numerous companies produce the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of the old country and sell them at often hefty prices. The plethora of newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television channels and cultural groups that exist in every town and city affords the exiles a fleeting glance at the imaginary homeland they crave. There are, for example no less than 90 magazines and newspapers in Los Angles alone. Furthermore, "over 130 feature fiction films made in Iran before the revolution" bring home to "ravenous [audiences] sights and sound of the homeland."

A mercilessly long litany of singers, many of them mere novices, with more bravado than singing talent, cater to the exiles' endless appetite for sounds of Persia. Much of what they produce is a strange, discordant mix that combines somber and melancholic verse with jubilant and ecstatic music. Their songs are an awkward combination of kitsch and pathos, cheap poetry and heartfelt laments for the lost home. The same incongruity has been also observed in their music videos, where "the incoherent and fragmented style" of the visuals is "accompanied by 'cohering' ballads whose oft-repeated refrain is 'I am afraid..'"

A far more important obstacle on the road to intellectual consummation for Iranian exiles in America are the events that have taken place in Iran over the last three years. For nearly all of the last century, cities in the West, from Berlin and London to Paris and Berkeley, have been the intellectual Mecca for most of Iran's secular intellectuals.

Oppression at home -- a constant fact of 20th century life in Iran -- had meant that those who suffered the pangs of exile were at least rewarded with the feeling that their ideas, thoughts and theories would be the vanguard of cultural, literary and political developments in Iran. It was generally assumed that the West is the smithy where the finest, and the most sophisticated ideas and theories about Iran can be fashioned. Exiles, in short, were in the coveted, and privileged theoretical position. What they lost in authentic "living at"home," they more than made up for by their mastery of theory, their ability to speak freely, without fear of retribution and jail.

The advent of the computer age, the inability of oppressive regimes to control cyberspace promised to increase the privileged status of the exiled intellectuals. They could, unchallenged by the native Procrustean authorities, enlighten the minds of Iranians back home. The advent of the information revolution held out the promise that exiled Iranians could become a forceful presence in Iran. The global village was no longer a corny cliché, but an almost tangible reality.

But then something uncanny happened in Iran. Relative freedom of the press came, and soon Iranian intellectuals at home began to write with such bold vigor and innovation that the creative texture, the immediacy, and the theoretical depth of their writing soon eclipsed nearly all that the exiled intellectuals had to offer. A change of historic dimension is taking place. The main arena for new ideas about politics and democracy, civil society and reform, even modernity and tradition is no longer in the West, but in Iran.

The world of scholarship, with its requisite long years of research and rumination, and its dependence on archives and libraries, seems to be the only arena where the exiles can still claim to enjoy a privileged position. Prometheus is now doubly bound: estranged from his home, stranded half-way across the world, he is also exiled from his self-affirming, and self-declared role as the ultimate source of light.

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