

impede the liberation of women?" that he attended and even spoke at by chance. He quotes the participants and describes the event's atmosphere to such a degree that we feel like we are attending the seminar with him. This method and style is repeated throughout the book. Thus, as he takes us from the distant to recent past to the present, sometimes on a day-by-day or month-by-month basis, we feel that we are living through the lead up to the law in real time. It makes for enthralling reading.

This method also allows a multiplicity of voices to speak through Bowen's rendition, such that he conveys, both respectfully and with a sense of understanding, the many-shaded perspectives both for and against the law, as well as for and against the veil, without interposing his own opinion too much. He also permits the critiques made by all sides to be heard. In fact, he seems to take pride in the fact that even after reading the book, people may not know exactly what he himself thinks of the law. He writes that his interest lies less in supporting a pro or con perspective than in exploring the reasons and processes behind a public deliberation over social policy (p. 7).

Bowen's anthropological approach provides a compelling insight into the French context and allows for similarities and differences to be noted in other contexts, as many other countries deliberate publicly over the place of Muslim headscarves in their societies.

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Tehran Blues

Kaveh Basmenji

London: Saqi Books, 2005. 272 pages.

This informative and timely book, *Tehran Blues: How Iranian Youth Rebelled Against Iran's Founding Fathers*, is skillfully crafted into eleven chapters that showcase current Iranian politics while drawing insights from its past. Its author, Kaveh Basmenji, was born in Iran in 1961 and is a journalist, translator, and writer. The book's main aim is to explore Iran's present-day youths and their growing disillusionment with the rigid mores of the present regime. Theirs is a generation whose parents rose up against the Shah's excesses and who now feel distanced from the strict religious ideology held by their forbearers of two decades ago. Demanding liberalism and seeking pleasure, the Iranian youths of today are a force to be reckoned with

and a potential powder-keg of societal instability. Why has Basmenji chosen to focus on them? He answers this question by referring to George Orwell: “Every generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it.”

Through numerous interviews as well as an assessment of contemporary Iran’s sociopolitical landscape, Basmenji argues that contemporary Iranian youths are in near-revolt, often openly defying the mullahs and their hard-line religiosity. His premise is that Iran’s young people are tuning out their Islamic government and are instead embracing an alternative world of private parties, personal weblogs, movies, study, and dreaming about moving to the West.

The book’s captivating title is just the start. When one looks through the “Table of Contents,” one finds such equally catchy chapter titles as “Dormant Volcano,” “Theocracy and Techno,” and “A Utopia of Ideas.” Perhaps Basmenji’s background as a journalist gives him the gift to select attention-getting headlines that can also serve as a seductive call to the reader. Even the image on the book’s front cover is not of an ordinary Iranian youth, but rather of a pensive, cigarette-smoking young woman with a hijab that covers only half of her head and whose non-traditional appearance is a testament to her rebellious nature.

Basmenji begins the book using metaphors from Rumi’s *Masnavi* (“Tale of the Elephant in the Dark”), in which people who touch various parts of the elephant (e.g., its trunk, leg, and ears) describe the creature according to their experience. Thus, each person has an entirely isolated and different understanding from another person who touches the exact same animal. Using this analogy, the author points out that the understanding of the Iranian population among the generations, or even within the same generation, is just as fragmented as it is for the characters in Rumi’s tale. The writer also shows how different people’s perspectives evolve over time. Some zealous pro-revolutionary militants mellowed as the decades progressed and became less radical and idealistic.

The book is a type of exposé, detailing the hardships that a nation is undergoing and revealing the serial killings of dissidents and freedom fighters. Yet Basmenji masterfully does not bore the reader with a heavy-handed approach, for his prose is never dull or repetitive. Occasionally, however, the book contains run-on sentences. For example, on page 22, the second paragraph consists of only one sentence. In spite of this minor flaw, readers are enticed to immerse themselves in the events of past and present eras. In addition, the quotations chosen for inclusion are brilliant. He taps into a wealth of classical and modern thinkers, philosophers, and politicians and,

reflecting his international upbringing, draws from both eastern and western cultures.

On a somber note, chapter 9 shows that the power struggle among the reformists and conservatives in Iran is indeed desperate. As the chapter title "Playing Chess with an Ape" suggests, in spite of the fact that in 2000/2001 the reformists made some limited progress in Parliament and municipal councils, the real power remained in the hands of the conservatives. And these people exercised their authority by banning newspapers; imprisoning journalists, students, and political activists; and vetoing any progressive motions made by Parliament, to name just a few actions. As reformed Majles deputy Mohsen Armin stated, it was "like playing chess with an ape."

This book belongs in several categories, such as history or sociology, and can even be considered a lengthy analysis of a social science research endeavor. Due to Basmenji's accessible and engaging writing style, I recommend this book not only to scholars of Persian culture and history, but also to anyone who aspires to be more informed about Iranian society and the chasm between its older and younger generations.

Kaveh Basmenji ends his book on a hopeful note with a quotation from Michael Ignatieff, who, reflecting upon his 2005 trip in Iran, writes: "Though it cannot be much comfort to those who have to live, here and now, under public and private tyrannies, I came away from a night in Isfahan believing that Persian pleasure, in the long run, would outlast Shi`a Puritanism."

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Jordanian Jerusalem: Holy Places and National Spaces

Kimberly Katz

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For centuries, Jerusalem has been revered as the holy site of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; strategically coveted as a means to consolidate territorial gains; and conquered thirty-seven times between its foundation and the sequestering of its ancient hub by Israeli forces during the Six-Day War. As the region underwent significant change after World War II, the Holy City increasingly became contested. While the Palestinians nurtured concerns regarding land sales and the escalating influx of Jewish settlers, their appre-