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## EXILE

### ■ Saïdeh Pakravan

Exile is a complicated, ambiguous state. Take Iranians. We say we now belong here, but we don't. We think we no longer belong there, but we do. Iranians here are "us"; those in power in Iran are "them." We want sanctions imposed on Iran for unacceptable behavior—such as the death *fatwa* on Salman Rushdie—but we fret when international loans are not forthcoming or Iran is condemned as a terrorist state.

We are ashamed of the tieless Iranian diplomats representing our country abroad, but we are pleased that their beards are impeccably groomed.

There is a bitter vindication in the fact that we are recognized, in the chosen lands of our exile, as "good" Iranians. At the same time, there is a shameful and secret glee at seeing "bad" Iranians deride the Western values we have embraced. We hate to be identified with what remains of Iran, but we feel the pull nonetheless. We have made our lives abroad, but we all want to be able to go back for visits. For those of us who have had political activities, we feel offended when told that there wouldn't be any risk in doing so. (The implied judgment is that we are too insignificant for anyone to bother about us.) We want to go back, and we want to be afraid of going back.

A complicated, ambiguous state indeed.

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