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Talebi addresses the state of writing in Iran

By **Beth Winegarner**

Examiner Staff Writer 1/29/09

Niloufar Talebi, the founder of the Bay Area-based Translation Project, which translates Iranian literature into English, talks about the state of writing in Iran. The nonprofit group's Iranian Literary Arts Festival is Feb. 5-6 in San Francisco.

Persia was home to two famous Middle Eastern poets, Rumi and Hafiz. How has Iranian poetry evolved since their era? Contemporary literature is just as rich, but most contemporary poetry is in free verse — Rumi and Hafiz wrote in very formal rhyming structure. In addition, we now concentrate more on writing poetry of the people — social poetry, personal poetry.



Are Iranian poets in Iran focusing on different subjects than Iranians living in other parts of the world? In Iran, because of censorship, the issues poets concentrate on are different. They use more metaphors.

This year's festival is devoted to the 30th anniversary of the 1979 Iranian revolution. How is that revolution still influencing Iranian culture and arts today? In Iran, bookstores are shut down, editors are kidnapped from their homes late at night. But these are resilient, brave people who continue to work and create art under these conditions.

What are some of the most common misconceptions westerners have about Iranians? That we're victims, because we're not. We're just like any other people who are living out their history.

Niloufar Talebi is the founder of the Bay Area-based Translation Project.

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