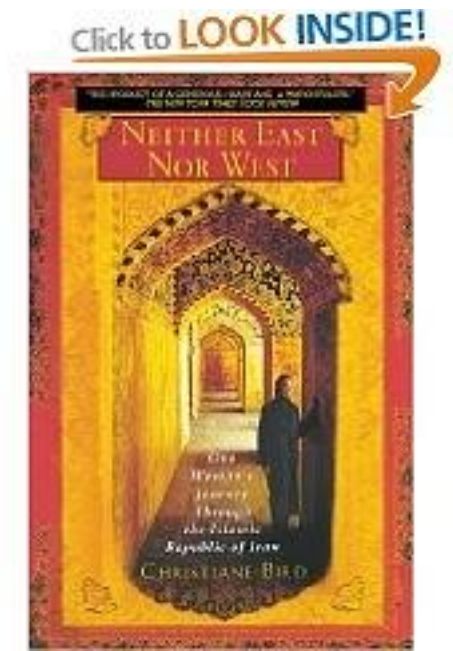


Neither East Nor West



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著者:Bird, Chirstiane

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Amazon.com Review

The recent opening of Iran has been met by the curiosity of a number of writers wanting to understand and illuminate a country that has been shrouded by a lack of access--and by prejudice--for three decades. Neither East Nor West joins Honeymoon in Purdah by Alison Wearing and Persian Mirrors by Elaine Sciolino in its humane examination of Iran and its willingness to lay aside the received orthodoxies of both nations and listen with a receptive (if not always open) mind. Once again, Iranians reveal themselves to be a generous, literate, and fun-loving people, and their nation far more complex, multilayered, and Westernized than news stories reveal.

As a young child, Bird spent three years in the northwestern town of Tabriz where her father served as a doctor for the Presbyterian ministry. She returned in 1998 to see the effects of the Islamic Revolution herself. One of her first acts was to look for the infamous DEATH TO AMERICA sign which hung at the Laleh International Hotel.

Two hotel employees with grizzled cheeks gave me a half-flirtatious, half-interrogatory stare. Taking a deep breath, I asked them about the sign.

"Gone! Gone!" they said, laughing as if I were asking about ancient history. "You are American?"

This could be the theme of Bird's travels, where everyone--from security police to government officials to men yelling "Welcome to Iran!" as they whiz by on their scooters--are practically ecstatic to meet an American. In the privacy of their homes they watch the Flintstones and CNN, listen to Michael Jackson and Metallica, drink alcohol and complain, mostly about the economy. In the end, Iranians start to seem not so unlike Americans in many ways--criticizing their government while loving their country all the same.

The fact that Bird, like Sciolino and Wearing before her, is a woman makes her story even more interesting, as she looks behind the veil and finds both the power and the constrictions that it represents. Her biggest strength is in asking direct questions about such ticklish issues as women's rights, but at times, her lack of heavy-handedness is enough to make you squirm. Wearing, with her lovely sense of humor and openness, did a superb job befriending and capturing the people. Bird, on the other hand, seems to have no sense of humor and has an irritating habit of getting irritated. Nevertheless, she fills in the essential historical and political background Wearing couldn't be bothered with. Together, the two paint a penetrating portrait of a rich and evocative land. --Lesley Reed --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly

Bird's account of her travels in Iran is enriched by her having spent three years of her childhood in Tabriz during the reign of the Shah. Not naïve about popular Western misconceptions of Iran, she sets out to debunk them in this book: "we had demonized Iran so completely that it no longer seemed to be populated by human beings." Still, she is surprised by encounters with her own assumptions. In a relatively liberal section of Tehran, for instance, she finds young people flirting with one another, in open defiance of the komiteh (a watchdog for illicit activities), and even drinking alcohol--forbidden in Islamic society. Even so, she encounters religious devotion in people of every class and level of education. "What is it," she asks, "about the human mind that likes to categorize so, neatly slipping people into slots, which in Iran usually translates into: educated, middle-class, and Westernized = nonreligious; uneducated, poor, or working class = religious." Gradually, and only to a certain degree, Bird comes to understand the Iranians' dedication to Islam. This travelogue affords fascinating portraits of people of many social circumstances, while not sugarcoating the gritty realities of life in Iran. But it is Bird's continual investigation of her own and her culture's prejudices that distinguishes this book, and that will help shine light into a part of the Middle East hitherto hidden from the West by its own misunderstanding. (Mar.) Forecast: While booksellers shouldn't expect breakout sales, they should take note that with the recent publication of *Persian Mirrors* by Elaine Sciolino and *Honeymoon in Purdah* by Alison Wearing, Bird's narrative indicates a trend of books written by women traveling in Iran.

作者介绍:

作者是个美国记者，生于伊朗，长在美国。

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