

C. Hiatt O'Connor  
On the Aegean:

The sunless sea is  
but a mirror of  
the starlit night,  
speckled with salt. Irises  
amethyst, lilacs. Her blush  
is stirred and fluent.  
She slips  
over silent eyes, placid  
and wakeless.

Samah Rash

To my people of Persia: my wish for you is for society to see your exquisite beauty in place of your fallacious politics. A crumbling government does not dictate a lack of majestic splendor. Your people constitute your truth, your history, your Kingdom, your Empire.

“چای” [Tea]

I hear the clinking  
of steaming tea glasses on a  
golden tray, being carried  
up the stairs and to  
the sun-heated rooftop  
at dusk.

“چای آمد”

[The tea is here]

Crimson tea—the color of  
an equatorial sunset; a bonfire’s  
embers not yet extinguished.  
The balmy Persian nights envelop  
my shivering figure — washing me,  
cleansing me; in the essence of  
orange blossoms and jasmine flowers.  
Turquoise fountains and starry skies,  
songs of early autumn nights, which  
sing with the call-to-prayer at sun-down, while  
lines of poetry slip between my  
grandmother’s teeth and into the breeze.  
She reads my fortune aloud. It catches the  
currents and floats my way. I reach  
for a glass of crimson tea:

Poinsettia Red and Rugged Brown, mixed  
to form the weakness of my people.

Glasses glowing  
with latent inferno-light  
emanating from within.

Holding it up to the indigo sky,  
waves of fiery vapor melt into the air.  
Ephemeral twists of smoky water paint  
fleeting pictures into the dark.

My grandmother's words sing in my ears:

"از هیچ چیز نترس"

I hold the glass beneath my nose and  
gasp for a breath of my homeland's smell  
of rose water and pomegranates.

I inch the burning tea closer to my mouth,  
tipping it as if to drink,  
but the beauty is too intense.

Lowering the glass, I place it on the  
rooftop ground, watching  
it into the evening until  
no more twists of smoky vapor rise  
to the heavens to wish me  
goodnight.