Four lectures on Forugh Farrokhzad by Farzaneh Milani
University of Virginia

Thursday 20, Friday 21, Monday 24 and Tuesday 25 October 2016
7.00pm-8.30pm
Farzaneh Milani is Raymond J. Nelson Professor and Chair of the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures and former Director of Studies in Women and Gender at the University of Virginia. She has published several books, most recently *Words, not Swords: Iranian Women Writers and the Freedom of Movement* (Syracuse University Press, 2011; co-winner of Latifeh Yarshater Award), and over one hundred articles, epilogues, forewords, and afterwords in both Persian and English. She has served as the guest editor for special issues of *Nimaye-Digar, Persian Language Feminist Journal, IranNameh* and *Iranian Studies: Journal of the International Society for Iranian Studies*. She has written for the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Christian Science Monitor, Ms. Magazine, Reader’s Digest, USA Today* and contributed to National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered*. She has presented 240 lectures nationally and internationally. A past president of the Association of Middle Eastern Women’s Studies in America and a Carnegie Fellow, Milani was the recipient of the All University Teaching Award as well as Zintl Leadership Award (2015).
Thursday 20 October

_I Cannot Lie_: The Literary Biography and Unpublished Letters of Forough Farrokhzad

Forough Farrokhzad (1934-1967) lived a rich and complex life and produced poetry more autobiographical than any other Iranian before or after her. A rebel who challenged cultural and political absolutism in her all-too-brief, 13-year literary career, she was a figure of intense controversy. Although banned after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, she, who adopted the pseudonym “Iconoclast,” is now an icon, the Iranian equivalent of a rock star, a guru. Her work sells like hot cakes inside and outside Iran. Indeed, a whole new industry has developed around her name. This series of four presentations focuses on the life and art of this daring, often irreverent trespasser of sacrosanct boundaries and explorer of taboo topics.

Friday 21 October

_Remember Flight_: the Iranian Icarus

A woman not only needs a room of her own as Virginia Woolf remarked in _A Room of One’s Own_, but also the freedom to leave it and return to it at will. A room without that very right is a prison cell; a house without it turns into house arrest. The unconditional right of entry and exit is a basic human right and central to Farrokhzad’s artistic universe. It epitomizes, in its embodied form, the capacity for exercising and enjoying an elemental sense of self-propelled, self-willed, and self-choreographed freedom. Farrokhzad’s work, a relentless search for the open road, for physical mobility and personal growth, is the tale of an Iranian Icarus, who refused to live a life disciplined by delineated spaces.

Monday 24 October

_The House Is Black_: A Model Life Narrative

I vividly recall the first time I watched the short documentary, _The House Is Black_. It was one hot summer evening, the smell of jasmine everywhere, and suddenly the indelible images of children, women, and men disfigured by leprosy appeared on the television screen. Watching the film through teary eyes, I was jolted by its magnetism, its humanity and visual poetry. Refusing to map the world based on binary opposites – health or ailment, purity or impurity, beauty or ugliness, captivity or freedom – the young director articulated various conflicting stories. She offered detailed information, without invading privacy, without prying, without sensationalizing and moralizing. Like Picasso, who could paint a portrait with just a few lines, she zoomed her camera on the essentials and welcomed paradoxes and ambiguities.

Tuesday 25 October

_I Feel Sorry for the Garden_: Democratizing the Family

If defying the age-old patterns of gender apartheid is the central trope of Farrokhzad’s artistic universe, advocating and mirroring the shifting lines of power within the family is its most consequential outcome. Her message, as I understand it, seems to be simple: a democratic society cannot be achieved without a democratic family. Structural inequities at the political level find their reflection in and are based upon inequities implemented within the family unit. Without an egalitarian family, where gender equality and mutual respect govern, enduring democracy and genuine advancement of social justice are impossible. Tyranny at home prepares the grounds for accepting and perpetuating political tyranny.
Yarshater Lecture Series on Persian Literature
Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS

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Venue
Khalili Lecture Theatre
SOAS, University of London
Russell Square
London WC1H 0XG

Admission
Admission Free - All Welcome

Organised by
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