

Between Nostalgia and Activism: Iranian Australian Poetry and Cinema

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My pain maybe from freedom
I am immersed in it
I drown in it
where is my air?

Roshanak Amrein (60)

The above stanza from Roshanak Amrein's poem 'Letter' illustrates some of the problematics of the forms of writing and the themes I examine in this article. 'Letter' is translated here from the original Persian. In Walter Benjamin's words, 'the looseness with which meaning attaches' to translations can lead to the expansion or restriction of meaning, or even both these effects simultaneously (81). The possibilities and impossibilities of translation reflect those of transnational writers' texts more generally, as ideas are stretched or compressed, dropping some elements and acquiring others as they are pulled in different directions. As Dorothy Wang puts it, 'referentiality does not function straightforwardly' in global diasporic writing (n.pag.)¹. In Amrein's translated poem, it is not immediately clear whether 'it' refers to 'freedom' or 'pain'. This ambiguity contributes to the recurring notion in her work and others' that 'freedom', inasmuch as it is ever attainable, is always limited or interrupted by transnational knowledge or memories. In some diasporic contexts, 'freedom' is painful and, paradoxically, even stifling, capable of 'drowning' those who enter into it. For the narrators of Amrein's poems, this pain comes partly from separation from distant loved people and places, combined with a form of survivor guilt or a sense of unfulfilled responsibility for the fate of those considered less 'free'. It also entails questions around belonging, or the search for 'my air', in Amrein's words.

Variations on this notion of 'my air' recur in Asian Australian writing. To live and breathe in the 'air' to which one belongs—or to desire and seek such air—is sometimes represented as a class-determined luxury, sometimes as a complicated question of local or national identity and occasionally as a self-Orientalising fantasy. Transnationalism may be a name for some Asian Australian writers' 'air', but this air—entailing a sense of transnational belonging—is not so easily 'possessed'. For both writers and readers, obstacles persist. As Tseen Khoo notes, the field of diasporic Asian studies is infused with 'an awareness of the limitations of a culturally nationalist approach' (239). However, as Wenche Ommundsen observes, 'transnational critical practice does not leave the nation behind' (88). Ommundsen explains:

... on the contrary, much of the critical energy is invested in debating national loyalties and sensitivities, and in assessing the modalities within which the national categories that participate in the particular transnational exchange that is diasporic writing are juxtaposed and played out against each other. (88)

This article analyses two examples of Iranian Australian writing that illustrate such juxtaposition and playing out of national categories, within modalities enabled respectively by the forms of poetry and film. Amrein is an Adelaide-based dentist who fled Iran after she was refused entry to university because of her Baha'i religious practices. She has lived in Australia since 1994 and has written poetry since her teenage years in Iran. In this article I focus on three poems from her 2010 volume, *One Million Flights*, which was translated from Persian to English and published in Germany. Some of the poems in *One Million Flights* were written in Iran before Amrein emigrated, but most were written in Australia and a few written elsewhere in the world; one reflects on her flight over Iran eleven years after leaving—en route to Turkey, she was able to see Iran's highest mountain in the moonlight from the plane. I also examine the 2009 film, *My Tehran For Sale*, which was written and directed by Iranian Australian poet Granaz Moussavi. A realist drama set in contemporary middle-class Tehran, *My Tehran For Sale* was shot in 2008 in Tehran, mostly in Persian, and post-produced in Australia, with English subtitles. It is an Iranian-Australian co-production, jointly funded by the South Australian Film Corporation, the Adelaide Film Festival, and a private investor in Iran. Moussavi's writing of *My Tehran For Sale* draws on her personal memories and her conversations with friends in Tehran, especially Marzieh Vafamehr, who plays the film's lead. The film's fictional narrative is inspired by the experiences of Moussavi, Vafamehr, and their friends in urban Iran.

Poetry and film are characteristic formal choices for Iranian Australian writers, perhaps more than in most other Asian Australian contexts, as these forms play significant roles in cultural life in Iran and its diaspora. The two forms often overlap in Iranian contexts, with many poets directing films and filmmakers writing poetry.² For the related reasons of poetic convention and decades—arguably, centuries—of forms of censorship, much Iranian poetry and cinema typically features ambiguity, multiple layers of meaning, allegory, non-linear structure, and rearranged temporalities. The layers of meaning may include 'off-screen' narrative elements that writers invite their readers and viewers to 'complete'. In filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami's words, this is 'a cinema which gives more possibilities and more time to its viewer—a half-fabricated cinema, an unfinished cinema that is completed by the creative spirit of the viewer, [so that] all of a sudden we have a hundred films' (quoted in Rosenbaum par. 12). In this article I use the term 'off-screen' to refer to narrative elements that are implied rather than shown in the film or stated in poems, elements that I, as viewer and reader, imagine to take place outside the texts' explicit narratives. As Moussavi's and Amrein's texts are self-referential, I also refer to some aspects of their respective biographies as 'off-screen' elements of their texts.

Before turning to the texts, I will briefly outline the Iranian context from which Amrein and Moussavi emerged. Both poets were born in Iran before the Islamic Republic was founded in February 1979, following what was claimed as an Islamic Revolution. They lived through the eight years of war that followed the 1980 invasion of Iran by Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Casualties were very high on both sides of this war; chemical and other weapons left a significant population of veterans and their families suffering ongoing effects. Amrein and Moussavi both emigrated during the 1990s, a period of postwar reconstruction. From 1997, when Moussavi emigrated and Mohammad Khatami was elected President of Iran, a period of minor reform began. New technologies and affluence, in sections of Iran and the diaspora, enabled closer communication and contact between those who stayed in Iran and those who had left. These two categories grew more fluid, as it became easier and safer for some emigrants to move between Iran and their diasporic homes. In the diaspora, many saw their positions in relation to contemporary Iran as shifting gradually from the irrevocability of

‘exile’ to the more connected notion of diaspora and the ostensible inclusiveness of transnationalism. Increased and new levels of contact among diasporic and transnational Iranians have also contributed to the repositioning of some attitudes around class, gender, religious and ethnic difference.

It was during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s that considerable, but not huge, numbers of Iranians began to arrive in Australia as refugees. In the 1990s, Australia became a more popular destination for skilled migrants from Iran, as well as students on temporary visas. Some students are funded by Iranian government scholarships that oblige them to return to Iran after their studies, while others migrate permanently. Today there are growing second and third generations of Iranian Australians—Australian-born children and grandchildren of former students, skilled migrants, and refugees. In the twenty-first century, people fleeing Iran have represented a significant proportion of asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat. Many of these asylum seekers have been held in immigration detention for extended periods, several years in some cases, as they are unable either to return to Iran or to prove their cases for asylum to the satisfaction of Australian authorities.³ Despite the disproportionate Australian media attention paid to the arrival by boat of asylum seekers, they represent only a small minority of the population identifying as Iranian Australian, which is estimated at around 29,000. Most migrants from Iran to Australia have gained residency and/or citizenship through the immigration points system, as skilled migrants. A substantial proportion of officially recognised Iranian refugees in Australia are followers of the Baha’i faith, who did not arrive by boat, but through other networks.

Amrein is a member of Australia’s Baha’i community and, unlike most other Iranian Australians, she is not able to revisit Iran, for political reasons. Her ‘transnationality’ is therefore mediated primarily through online communication, memory and imagination. While most Iranian Australians live transnationally in a physical sense as well, with frequent returns to Iran, Amrein remains in exile. Much of her writing focuses on this separation and the gap between her comfortable and ‘free’ life in Australia and the ‘caged’, ‘polluted’ life of those left behind in Iran. Amrein often represents her reflections on that gap as a conversation across time and space—between her current and past selves, and between her narrating voice in Australia and ‘her people’ in Iran, especially other young women. In her poem entitled ‘Conversation’, Amrein writes:

Every time spring
pours green confetti on trees
and the noisy flocks of parrots
with their magical colours
fill the backyard,
every time jacaranda trees
paint the city purple
and the sky becomes the bluest blue,
I remember you.
You, who in your strange polluted loneliness,
spend the days of your life
one at a time.

I go to the seaside
free as a bird.
Freedom wraps around the beachgoers

and like the sea breeze
 strokes their carefree cheeks
 and I remember you
 covering your black hair
 to come out of the house
 so that in the chaos of the grey city
 you may earn your bread.

There is a great distance between us
 hard impassable walls
 have separated our hands.
 I was a bird
 with dreams of flight in my wings.
 I took off
 soared and built a nest
 and now every spring
 every time streets
 become purple
 and the parrots full of song
 I remember you,
 my once companion,
 who spent the days of your youth
 in the rusty cage of life
 one day at a time. (10-11)

Amrein juxtaposes two chronotopes, which may be identified as ‘Australia’ and ‘Iran’, ‘now’ and ‘then’, ‘my air’ and ‘your air’, ‘mobility’ and ‘stasis’, or ‘freedom’ and ‘captivity’. Some critics may read this as a binary mode of remembering and representation that lacks reflection on the narrator’s relatively privileged position within Australian hierarchies and disregards the existence of forms of mobility and freedom, or women’s agency, within contemporary Iran. However, these ‘absences’ are arguably present in this poem’s ‘off-screen’ space. Even as the narrator celebrates those spring moments in which the differences appear black and white—or multicoloured and grey, she acknowledges the ‘hard impassable walls’ that limit her vision.

As in any transnational community, questions of fairness and levels of prosperity, as well as freedom, lurk around many Iranian Australian narratives. Amrein’s narrator remembers her addressee not only ‘covering her black hair / to come out of the house’, but ‘earning her bread’ in ‘the chaos of the grey city’. This is as much a reflection of the narrator’s perception of Australian ‘freedoms’ as it is of her memories of Iran. Australian ‘freedom’ is represented here as both political/religious and economic, with the latter also having implications for the natural environment and personal wellbeing, among other things. This Australian narrator is not required to cover her hair in public and she earns more than bread in her clean, orderly, colourful city. Of course, for some Australians, these are not central elements of freedom, and not all Australians have such ready access to their desired forms of political, religious or economic liberation. Amrein represents one of many forms of Iranian Australian life narrative, one which typically ends in comfortable suburbia. Here, the Iranian Australian narrator may confront a kind of survivor guilt in relation to Iran, as well as paradoxical Australian media narratives of degrees of worthiness.

Reflecting on uncritical applications of the term ‘diasporic’ to a range of literature and ensuing evasions of complex analysis, Wang notes the roles of ‘hierarchies of suffering’ in this literature’s reception (n.pag.).⁴ As well as in readings of Asian Australian literature, ‘hierarchies of suffering’ are accompanied by hierarchies of worthiness in broader Australian contexts. Mainstream media narratives may represent political or religious refugees as deserving, and so-called economic migrants as greedy and undeserving; they may present financially successful migrants as admirable—or, conversely, as undeserving of perceived privileges that are seen as unavailable to Australian-born ‘battlers’. These narratives are familiar to Iranian-born writers such as Amrein and Moussavi and are repositioned in their Australian contexts. As in Australia—or as popularly represented in Australia—there is a tradition of respect for the battler in Iran, for the hard worker who persists against all odds, who defies unjust laws and uses his or her limited power for good. This tradition is present in the dominant Shi’a Islamic faith, in revolutionary thought and historiography, classical Persian poetry and the values promoted in popular Iranian theatre and cinema. However, for centuries, Iranian society has also been based on various forms of hierarchy and deference to, alongside mockery of, those who exercise power. Both Amrein and Moussavi address these conflicts in subtle ways, acknowledging unfairness in both Iran and Australia, as well as the two writers’ relatively privileged positions. These observations are amplified by globalisation, which enables further comparisons between different parts of Iran and the diaspora.

While the longing for an imagined Iran in Amrein’s texts draws primarily on memories of a seemingly fixed and distant past, Moussavi’s texts present less static forms of nostalgia. Moussavi’s writing shares some imagery with Amrein’s, such as colour, skies, the moon, rain, seasons, flight, obstructed movement, and childhood pictures, but the cinematic form arguably enables greater differentiation between various narrators’ representations of memory and imagination. *My Tehran For Sale* presents the story of Marzieh, a young actor and fashion designer whose theatrical work is banned in Iran. Estranged from her observant Muslim family, Marzieh spends her time partying with friends in affluent North Tehran. A friend introduces her to Saman, an Iranian Australian, who becomes her boyfriend and moves into her flat.⁵ Saman offers to help Marzieh through the complicated process of migration to Australia. As well as negotiating queues at Tehran’s Australian Embassy, Marzieh undergoes a medical test and packs up ‘her Tehran’, putting her belongings up for sale to fund the journey to Australia. While still in Tehran, Marzieh is represented as longing for the cultural and social life she has led there, lamenting her looming separation from a small, beloved part of the large, polluted city. She also articulates nostalgia for the city’s past cultural life, represented by the gravesite of poet Forough Farrokhzad (1935-1967), which is now obstructed by a locked gate. Marzieh also longs for her lost closeness to her family.

Saman’s return to Iran is represented in less nostalgic and less idealistic terms. He flees financial obligations in Australia and seeks financial gain in Iran. When Marzieh’s medical test reveals her HIV-positive status, he flees his emotional obligations and leaves her to make her own way to Australia, without a visa. Saman’s apparent pragmatic self-interest and cultural ignorance is presented in the ‘off-screen’ context of his personal history of loss and feelings of abandonment, to which he refers only briefly. Until his abandonment of Marzieh renders him decidedly unsympathetic, Saman’s representation is not all negative. He demonstrates a level of personal morality with such observations as: ‘People around us have more problems than I do. And the ones doing well, who knows who they’ve ripped off?’ Saman may also be read as representing ‘Australia’ in more complex ways—as seemingly easygoing, but unwilling to take on some less pleasant responsibilities.

As Dean Chan points out, collaborative storytelling entails a ‘discursive tension’ that is both problematic and productive (n.pag.). Filmmaking requires levels of collaboration that are intensified when the writing is based on personal and collective memory and experience and when the cast includes close friends who contribute their related memories. In Moussavi’s case, she wrote a script for a largely Iran-based cast, including her close friend Vafamehr in the leading role of Marzieh. According to current Iranian law (as referred to in Amrein’s poem, above), women must cover their hair in public. Because *My Tehran For Sale* includes indoor scenes where the character of Marzieh would not have covered her hair, Moussavi and Vafamehr took the precaution of cropping Vafamehr’s hair closely, believing this would satisfy the legal requirement not to show a woman’s hair on film. As well as the particular demands of filming in Iran, Moussavi’s Australian funding required her to include ‘Australian content’ in her script. Moussavi has commented that, in her opinion, anything in an Australian citizen’s memory and imagination should be considered Australian content. However, in part to satisfy this criterion explicitly, she included scenes set in the Woomera immigration detention centre, Marzieh’s Australian destination. These scenes were also shot in Tehran. The discursive tensions in this complex form of collaborative storytelling reposition narratives that are familiar to varying degrees to the film’s diverse audiences. *My Tehran For Sale*’s relatively small Australian audiences have tended to read the film as primarily ‘Iranian’—it is set mostly in Iran and the dialogue is mostly in Persian. Thus, when ‘Australia’ appears, most explicitly in the form of the Woomera scenes, but also in those set outside Tehran’s Australian Embassy and, arguably, in the character of Saman, Australia is ‘the Other’. This Australia is not Amrein’s breezy freedom and ‘magical colours’ (though Saman’s account includes a fleeting version of this), but rather a maze of impenetrable bureaucracy, ignorance, and unmoved rigidity.

Unlike Amrein, Moussavi was able to visit Iran frequently until 2011, when Vafamehr was jailed for her role in *My Tehran For Sale*, despite the precautions taken in 2008. Vafamehr’s sentence was widely reported in mainstream Australian news media, because of the film’s Australian production team. Of course, the broader context of the film’s Iranian and Australian settings was not ‘news’. The partial media representations of one element of Vafamehr’s real-life story reflect the broader context that *My Tehran For Sale* complicates. As Iranian characters in the film see only the incomprehensible immigration laws of an inflexible Australian government, or an indifferent Australia that fails to deliver on its grand promises of happiness, so too Australian news audiences might see in Vafamehr only the victim of an incomprehensible Islamic government law, rather than a complex participant in an urban subcultural life that negotiates innovative artistic possibilities. In *My Tehran For Sale*, the character of Marzieh may be seen as a kind of activist, working for freedom of expression, although she appears more interested in her personal fate than that of her country. Not all viewers see Marzieh as heroic and some, such as film critic David Stratton, simply do not warm to her (ABC Television). She is represented, perhaps, as self-centred, while also a victim of unfair circumstances and unjust laws.

My Tehran For Sale opens with the juxtaposition of Marzieh’s experience of the so-called morality police at a party and an impoverished Afghan family’s experience of arrest on charges of working illegally in Iran. Marzieh and her partying friends occupy quite a different space in the Iranian hierarchy from the Afghan family. Later, as an asylum seeker herself and an inmate at Woomera, Marzieh sees her position move much closer to that of Afghan refugees. In Tehran, Marzieh is not forced into illegality by war and deprivation, like the Afghan refugee family, but she suffers the unjust consequences of her artistic and relationship

choices. When she thinks about Australia, she wants to know if she can work there as an actor and if she can be with Saman. Saman, who migrated in his early teens, represents Australia—or, at least, Adelaide—as an initially pleasurable drug rush, followed by an unpleasant comedown:

Marzieh: So what kind of place is Australia? Can you perform there and does it get recognised?

Saman: Australia is very cool. Full of beaches and oceans. Full of trees and forests. Green grass. Light. Colourful clothes. Australia is like paradise. A paradise made of coloured paper.

...

Saman: Back then, for a 14-year-old boy like me, at first it was really cool. You get on the plane. And you fly up there for 17, 18 hours. You cross seas, oceans. You arrive in a big city full of light. Just like a fairytale. A city that's very different from yours. When you get off the plane, light and colour hit you in the face, as if your E has just come on. But a couple of weeks later, the effect is gone. And you start to wonder ... who are these people, what is this place? You don't know what they're saying, what they want. You don't know their language. You've left your school, your schoolmates. Friends and neighbours. Your family. You've left your father. When we were going, my father wasn't allowed out of the country. ... No trace of what they did to him ...

My brother and I had to go to school alone and come back home alone. I left school and went to work. You open your eyes and see that ... you've forgotten what you wanted to do when you grew up. You forget what you were after in life.

Saman's memory of Adelaide as a 'big city', when he had come from Tehran with its population of approximately 12 million, perhaps reflects the abundant spaciousness of Adelaide, as well as its evident affluence, order, and various forms of light. As Saman had left Iran before he was old enough to enter into the kind of cultural life enjoyed by Marzieh and he has apparently not found such life in Adelaide, the longing he comes closest to expressing is for disrupted family and childhood relationships. Saman and Marzieh each present narratives that are unique, but are closely connected to their Asian Australian contexts. While Saman is a teen migrant who sees himself as a failure in Australia and attempts to rectify things by seeking his fortune in Iran, Marzieh is an artist unable to work freely in Iran and dreaming of a future in Australia.

Marzieh's dream will turn into a nightmare, but Moussavi presents a counterpoint by briefly introducing her own off-screen narrative, that is, the 'real-life' narrative of a relatively 'happy' migration from Iran to Australia. The above conversation between Saman and Marzieh takes place at a party in Tehran. This scene is followed by one in another room at the same party, where Moussavi herself appears, reading her poetry:

Search my bag, what's the point?

My sigh that has forever heard 'Halt'
lies in hiding, in the bottom of my pocket.
Let go of me.

You know that I will sleep with the raspberry bush
 and not regret.
 Why always set your sights on the woman
 who sponges up her broken pieces
 and pins her heart to her sleeve?
 There is nothing in my baggage except innocent locks of hair.
 Let me go!

For viewers who recognise Moussavi and know her real-life story, she represents a ‘successful’ artist and migrant who works productively in both Australia and Iran. Of course, none of the above three Asian Australian narratives is really so neat. Each one takes different turns in and outside the frame of the film. Vafamehr did not have to serve her full jail sentence, but she is in some ways less ‘free’ today than she was before *My Tehran For Sale*. Despite Moussavi’s success in all aspects of her career, she too is no longer free to work easily in Iran.

Moussavi shot *My Tehran For Sale* before the 2009 Iranian presidential election and its violent aftermath. In Adelaide, watching footage of that unrest, Amrein was inspired to write several poems in honour of the dissidents, especially those calling for women’s rights. The title *One Million Flights* is drawn from the one million signatures campaign, begun in 2006 by activists seeking to change Iranian laws that discriminate against women. Amrein’s poem ‘One Million Signatures’ directly supports this campaign:

You who sway in the direction of the wind,
 open your dull eyes
 look at the light for a moment
 come out of the cage of indifference.

Straighten your back.
 You have been bowing to injustice
 for too long
 look a bit further
 this is purity
 in bondage
 this is truth
 being destroyed.

Yet this commotion
 is for you
 is so that you can reach
 the streets of freedom.
 It is so that your girls
 can hold their heads up high
 can look into the eyes of people
 and ask for their rights.
 Let awareness come to its home
 and stay a while.

You who sway in the direction of wind [sic]
 behold the storm
 behold the sun
 in the faces of homeland's daughters.

In the eyes of the lions
 behold the sun. (56-7)

While there is considerable appreciation of Amrein's poetry and her support for the one million signatures campaign and other aspects of movements for women's rights in Iran, the level of earnestness in this representation of women as 'purity / in bondage', 'truth / being destroyed' and lions with the sun in their eyes, combined with the slightly preaching tone, addressed from her seemingly comfortable Australian distance, means that this kind of poem is not always so well received by some of the activists it supports. Of course, there is earnestness and romanticisation among activists themselves, but there is also a great deal of black humour and irony among those living and working in Iran, that seems to be absent in Amrein's work. Irony—and the complication of heroic characters—are more evident in Moussavi's poetry and in the work of more recent Iranian emigrants.

Amrein's poem 'The Child of Homeland' is written from the arguably more effective perspective of the Iranian Australian narrator's own exile and longing. It brings together notions of unfairness, nostalgia and thwarted activism:

'What had I done wrong Motherland
 that made you push me away
 I
 your favourite child?'

I ask
 and she remains silent
 sorrow in her heart
 sighs in her chest.

Her soil trapped in drought
 her fields beneath the thorn bushes
 her cypress trees fallen
 her lions in cages.

'I am the rain for your fields
 I am the breeze on your seaside
 I am the leaves for your trees
 I am the blossoms for your gardens.'

I say and Motherland
 as if giving her child for adoption
 turns away
 sorrow in her heart
 sighs in her chest.

And I remain
longing for her.

And that is the story of our times. (51-2)

Here, Amrein returns to the symbolism that is characteristic of much Persian poetry. 'Off screen', Australia appears as a benevolent adoptive mother, but one who cannot provide her adopted child with the 'air' she desires and to which she imagines she belongs.

As Alison Broinowski notes, the 'transnational turn ... significantly expands and reinvigorates' the ways we think about Australian literature (4). This is especially evident in the reception of work such as Amrein's and Moussavi's. As the problematics of translatability are foregrounded, so too notions of freedom and fairness are read in new ways. Australia and its narratives are 'othered' and repositioned, as are aspects of Iran and its narratives. In these relatively new forms of Asian Australian writing, neither nostalgia nor activism emerges as straightforward. Nostalgia is articulated for the here and now, as much as for 'there' and 'then', while activism is obliged to remain alert to its ever-shifting objects. Like the films of Abbas Kiarostami, these Australian texts invite their readers' 'creative spirit' to expand on their meanings.

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¹ Editor's note: The author is working from a spoken version of Dorothy Wang's paper. The final version of this paper can be found in this edition.

² There is also an Iranian tradition of collaboration between poets and filmmakers, most famously between Forough Farrokhzad and Ebrahim Golestan in the 1960s.

³ Asylum seekers travelling by boat to Australia in the twenty-first century have predominantly come from Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq, and Iran. It has generally been more difficult for asylum seekers from Iran, especially Muslims, than for those from the other three countries to convince Australian authorities that their lives are in danger. This is partly because, unlike the other countries, Iran has not been at war since 1988, and it has been an Islamic Republic since 1979. However, Iranian citizens have continued to seek asylum in Australia in significant numbers. Factors include the increasing obstacles to gaining asylum in other Western countries since 11 September 2001 and since the implementation of economically or politically motivated restrictions on the granting of asylum in much of Europe and North America, the effective end of Iran's period of political reform since the 2005 election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president and the range of social challenges, from high unemployment rates to restrictions on cultural activities, facing Iran's very large youth population (which resulted from a postrevolutionary baby boom in the 1980s).

⁴ Khoo ('Selling') presents related arguments, with particular reference to Asian diasporic women writers: 'While Appiah and Gates declare that the impact of race/class/gender considerations is disintegrating because of their overuse, I would argue, more precisely, that it is the *unthinking* usage of these terms that render them banal' (164) and 'The argument surrounding whether groups are considered oppressed *enough* can dictate the level of authenticity their experiences are assigned' (166).

⁵ While the character of Marzieh bears some similarity to the actor Vafamehr, Saman is played by Amir Chegini, who shares little with the character except migration from Iran to Australia. Chegini is a Melbourne doctor and Moussavi's husband and cousin.