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International Literary & Film Agency

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Leonardo Araneo



Leonardo Araneo after having been working for 10 years on some of the most important Italian Tv series like *Elisa di Rivombrosa*, *RIS*, *Incantesimo* and many others, produced and directed his first feature film *Back from Hell* distributed in USA and UK. With his own *The Talking Tree* he both produces and distributes internationally, TV series and documentaries. *Gaia* is his first novel.

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FILM/TV RIGHTS

A co-production with Italy, UK, Spain, Czech Republic.

SHOOTING WILL START IN SPRING 2018

GAIA

GAIA

In the last one hundred years the human race has been responsible for the last mass extinction since the disappearance of the dinosaurs, 65 million years ago.

Nearly half of the living species on Earth, both animal and vegetable, have died out as a direct result of human action. What if the Earth, faced with a deadly threat, decided to react?

At the beginning the Earth reacts emitting an EMP signal that destroys all electronical devices, then she generates her own antibodies: humanoids Angels and huge Devas. Their target: exterminate the Earth's virus: mankind. It will all take place in seven days.

Gaia tells the story of how a small town of 30.000 inhabitants deals with a global crisis capable of bringing the human race to extinction. Gaia tells the story of Alex and Pedro, Anton and Isabella, Father Elias, Paolo and Ferdinand and how they change in a changed world - and what can they do to help humanity to survive, but most of does Humanity really deserve to survive.

pp. 657

IMAGE NOT AVAILABLE

Emanuela
Mascherini
Emanuela Mascherini

is an actress, writer, and director. She has earned a diploma in acting from the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia and in directing from the New York Film Academy, and has a university degree in Film Sociology. She has written, among others: the essay *Glass Ceiling*. *Oltre il soffitto di vetro* (Edimond, 2009; Premio Città di Castello and Premio Pari Opportunità 2009), the novel *Memorie del cuscino* (Castelvecchi, 2009; Premio Afrodite and Premio Livio Paoli 2010 per la Narrativa edita), the handbook *Non ci casco più. Donne che amano troppo, poco e male* (Kowalski – Feltrinelli, 2012).

www.emanuelamascherini.com

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Pendragon

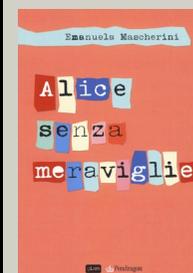
ALICE SENZA MERAVIGLIE

ALICE WITHOUT WONDER

A contemporary tale about the second virginity of a woman 'reborn' after a breakup

After ten years of living with the same man, she 'awakens' to a world that no longer plays by the rules she knows. Celeste Primavera's new life is a recovery of affective, sexual, and social literacy. The journey, at times tragicomic and surreal, of someone who hopes for a happy ending in the face of a past that is impossible to forget, of time marching on, of the lack of a job, of tomb-like houses rented as if they were luxury villas, of her frequent panic attacks contrasted by running in place, and of men with all kinds of neuroses. Like any heroine worthy of respect, like any human being before going to bed, or like Alice, but without the wonder. Celeste, ghost writer and actress, is me, or maybe she is you, or maybe she is all of us, alike in our misfortunes and utopias. Her travel companions are: Dottorix, a bisexual and polyamorous cardiologist of international renown, who after years of psychoanalysis and of cardiovascular studies thinks she has understood all there is to know about the heart without having yet learned how to cure it, especially her own; Donjuan, former serial seducer abandoned by his family; Semiepilex, an operable but not operated semi-epileptic who doesn't remember where she lost her family and who shows up at the end of the month to collect the money for her indemnity; Russotto, a traumatized goldfish who splashes around in Lexotan-scented water. All different in age, gender, origins and goals, but united by a single floor: the attic of a Roman apartment building where what used to be a single loft, today is divided into four miserable studio apartments, exposed to the sun as well as the bad weather of our unstable times.

pp.175



"With great irony Mascherini tells the tragicomic story of Celeste which can be the story of any thirty-year-old who has to start all over again after the end of a long relationship, with a precarious job and without a dream and a penny in her pocket."

- Ilaria Bagnati
THRILLERNORD

Link: [Lecture Metropolitana](#)
[Link: ThrillerNord](#)
[Link: Bella Magazine](#)
[Video: Youtube](#)

Gharbi M.
Mustafa



Gharbi M. Mustafa

is professor of English at the University of Dohuk in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. He has personally interviewed Yazidi women who escaped ISIS. He is also the author of *When Mountains Weep*, about childhood in Kurdistan.



Rights available
All

WHAT COMES WITH THE DUST GOES WITH THE WIND

Today is Nazo Heydo's wedding. The day she will set herself on fire.

This is a profoundly moving true-to-life tale about a Yazidi woman, Nazo and a Kurdish female fighter Soz, and their struggle to survive. Nazo must escape slavery from ISIS to reach her forbidden lover. Soz is a female soldier who fights ISIS but also struggles with a secret love. Their fates are intertwined in a heart-wrenching story taken directly from the events we see on the daily news.

We follow her and her freedom-fighting compatriots into the depths of despair, and through— to a deeper understanding of forgiveness, love, suffering, and perseverance. On the brink of immolation, Nazo finds that life, the Life of the Soul, cannot be so easily extinguished.

While the characters are fictional, the atrocities are not.

pp.202

WHAT READERS SAY

This book is so well written. It transports the reader into the lives of the characters. You feel their heartache, their fear and their longing to live safely where they've lived for thousands of years.

Poki

By mixing real and fictional events, Mustafa has creatively projected the tragedy of Yezidi people in his fictional novella, that's not available in any other fictional medium so far.

Chia Abdulkarimon

Reading about these courageous and resilient women was an eye-opening and humbling experience. Mustafa has rendered this brutal episode in Yazidi history with honesty and compassion.

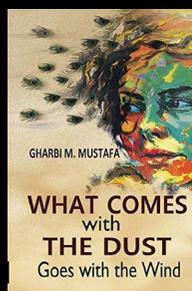
Gerry Stanek

Gharbi M. Mustafa



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is professor of English at the University of Dohuk in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. He has personally interviewed Yazidi women who escaped ISIS. He is also the author of *When Mountains Weep*, about childhood in Kurdistan.



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WHAT READERS SAY

A book that begged to be written. It is rightly classified as fiction; however, it is also the true story of genocide against a peaceful, loving people -- a genocide that is being largely ignored by the rest of the world. While the characters are fictional, the atrocities are real. From the moment I opened the door and stepped into this book, I was enthralled. I found myself witnessing events in a region half a world away. Merriment, dreams, danger, cruelty, love, and much more scrolled before my mind's eye. Gharbi Mustafa's lyric style captivates and touches the heart. I highly recommend this fascinating book.

Scrivener 44

This is a truly captivating story that describes through the lives of the characters, the brutal attack and subjugation of the Yazidi people by DAESH (ISIS/ISIL) that began in August of 2014.

Stephen Shelby

Rich in culture and characters, and jarring in its account of jihadist brutality, it is a story that keeps the reader turning the pages to the end. I simply could not put it down until I finished.

Robert C. Rogerson

From the first shocking encounter with Nazo, one is invested in her outcome. Gharbi Mustafa lovingly portrays characters who come alive and evolve masterfully through the telling of this tale. The novel is gripping, draws the reader through at a blistering pace, and instills an understanding of hardships being suffered yet today because of intolerance, provincialism and political unrest. Highly recommended.

Katercasperdotcom

Gharbi Mustafa pulls you in immediately with his RICH depiction of a young Kurdish girl's desert town on the Syria-Iraq border. The plot is a roller coaster ride that twists and turns as the girl is captured by ISIS, then escapes, then is captured again. The colorful symbolism and portrayals of indigenous cultures keep the tale buoyant and optimistic. Anyone who wants to know more about the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, how women are treated in other parts of the world, or the inner strength of the Kurdish people MUST read this novel.

Amazon Customer

This is the sort of story that worms it's way into your mind and stays a while. As I went, I got the flavor of a different paradigm, a cultural shift away from my own that put me into the mindset of another people, another place- a more violent place where life is clawed from despair and the tide of war can pull you along, or under at it's whim.

Nekko

Sacha
Naspini

Sacha Naspini born in Grosseto in 1976, lives between Tuscany and Paris. He has published many novels, among others *I sassi* (Il Foglio), *Never Alone* (Voras), *I Cariolanti* (Ellio), *Le nostre assenze* (Elliot) and *Il Gran Diavolo* (Rizzoli, 2014). He is also a screenwriter.

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E/O

F|12

LE CASE DEL MALCONTENTO
THE HOUSES OF DISCONTENT

A great love story inside a dark, almost Gothic, fairy tale in rural Italy

The return of Samuel Radi gives a jolt to the monotony of life in the country, stirring curiosity and resentment. The inhabitants of Le Case begin to tell the suggestions they have of him, of his past. But above all, they begin to tell their stories, as in a sort of long confession. This opens a dense web of intrigue and secrets that opens to the reader's eyes the rooms of the village, where for so long the lies and horrors remained well hidden in everyday life, made mostly of appearances.

Around there is the region Maremma: the anger, the despair, the difficulty and the blood of a difficult land. But also the tenacity, the search for a better feeling.

In *The Houses of Discontent* is the legacy left by brigands and charcoal burners, miners and soldiers of all sides. In a network of plots and subplots, they present the legacies of that past, that still contaminates the life of all of them today.

The discontent of the rural houses is an epic, but at the same time universal. A microcosm-macrocosm that embodies the universal elements of human life: birth, death, sex, hunger, war ... A choral novel, taking the road of pure literary fiction, with elements of crime, of psychological thriller, Gothic, historical memoir, dark fairy tale. All of it wrapped up in a great love story.

pp.400 ca.

IMAGE NOT
AVAILABLE

Idanna Pucci

**Idanna Pucci**

Since leaving her Italian ancestral home in Florence, Idanna pursued her interest in diverse cultures through far-flung travels. First she worked in New York for her uncle, Emilio Pucci, when his designs ushered vibrant colors into fashion.

She later settled in Indonesia and began her studies of Balinese culture. Various writing assignments for the Hong-Kong based Asia Magazine enabled her to travel throughout the Indonesian Archipelago, South East Asia, Japan and across the Soviet Union on the last steam engine of the Trans-Siberian railway.

She returned to New York to pursue her degree in Comparative Literature at Columbia University. After she obtained the International Diploma in Humanitarian Assistance in Geneva, she served in the UN Mission to East Timor as an electoral officer during the referendum for independence in 1999. Later, she collaborated with the Burma Project (Open Society Foundations) on a special mission to Myanmar. She is also a board member of La Scuola di Eco-Narrativa in Anghiari, Tuscany. Aside from Italian, she speaks fluent English and French, and Bahasa Indonesia. She resides between Florence and New York. She is also the author of: *The Epic of Life: A Balinese Journey of the Soul*; *The Prince and the Pauper: Two Balinese Portraits*; *Against All Odds: The Strange Destiny of a Balinese Prince*; *Brazza in Congo: A Life and Legacy*. She produced also many documentaries.

Rights sold**Italy**

Longanesi, LEF

US+Northamerica

FourWallsEight
Windows
Vintage

Spain

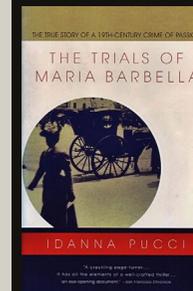
Lumen Editorial,
rights reverted

France

Editions Intervalles,
rights reverted

Optioned for film

Blenheim



THE TRIALS OF MARIA BARBELLA

THE TRUE STORY OF A 19TH CENTURY CRIME OF PASSION

The true story of Cora Slocomb, who shocked New York's Gilded Age by launching the first nation-wide campaign against the death penalty in 1895 to save a twenty year-old Italian immigrant from execution--the first woman sentenced to the electric chair.

When an Italian seamstress Maria Barbella, was tried, convicted, and sentenced to die for the murder of her former lover, a man who had raped and abandoned her, she found an unlikely ally in Cora Slocomb, Countess de Brazza, who starts the first campaign against the death penalty to save Maria from the newly invented electric chair. Domenico Cataldo, an Italian immigrant and shoe shine boy sat playing cards in a bar on East 13th Street with friend one bright spring morning in 1895. He was looking forward to boarding a ship leaving for Italy later that day, when his young lover, another Italian immigrant, Maria Barbella entered. After a brief exchange "Only a pig can marry you!" Maria whipped out a straight razor she had concealed in her sleeve and slit Cataldo's throat - so quickly he didn't even have time to scream. He staggered out the door, clutching his neck with both hands, spraying blood everywhere, only making it as far as the gutter, before dying. Thus began the trials of Maria Barbella, who after a brief court case became the first woman in history to be sentenced to death in the electric chair, a controversial new invention promoted by an employee of Thomas Edison, and adopted by the State of New York during what has come to be known as the 'War of Currents'.

And so it would have been, if Maria's dilemma had not been read by a remarkable woman, Cora Slocomb, Countess di Brazza - an American by birth and activist by nature, who decided to take up the young woman's cause. So moved by the case was she that she returned to her homeland and began a campaign to try save the girl.

pp.296

"Evokes the full dimensions of the larger social issues...Pucci's compelling, thoughtful account revives the stories of these long -invisible women."

Philadelphia Inquirer

"A crackling page-turner...It has all the elements of a well crafted thriller...an eye-opening document."

San Francisco Chronicle

"The first crusade against the death penalty. The author, after years of work in the archives of newspapers masterfully puts together the pieces of a stunning and sprawling mosaic of pride, ignorance and misery that make up the pages of this book."

Gianpaolo Pioli, Il Messaggero

"The incredible account of a true story, rich in implications, meticulously reconstructed ..."

Mirella Serri, La Stampa

"A fascinating novel, very well constructed, with great cinematic rhythm, in which the protagonists find the humanity that the arid papers yellowed by time could not possibly have."

Giovanni Nardi, La Nazione

Wolf Schäfer

**Wolf Schäfer**

is a Professor of Technology and Society and of History at Stony Brook University. He received his higher education in Marburg, Bonn, Kings College London, Munich, and Bremen, earned an MA in History, International Politics, and Philosophy and a PhD in History of Science and Technology and Social History. Dr. Schäfer has worked at a Max-Planck-Institute with C. F. von Weizsäcker and Jürgen Habermas, became a professor in Darmstadt, and moved to the United States in 1989. He pioneered global history as an alternative to world history, founded the Center for Global & Local History and the Stony Brook Institute for Global Studies, which he heads. The author of over eighty articles and ten books, Schäfer is currently researching the management of big science projects in the US and Germany during

Rights
available
All

F|16

DARK WORDS PLUS WINDS OF CHANGE

HOW DONALD TRUMP ACQUIRED THE WHITE HOUSE

Dark Words Plus Winds of Change answers the question: How did Donald Trump win the American presidential election? The author, a professional historian and naturalized American from Germany, explains Trump's capture of the White House to both Americans and observers of America as an anti-democratic breakthrough. This book puts Trump and Trumpism into the dark contexts of rising populism and authoritarianism, disruptive technological trends, strategic allocations of big money, despair about rising inequality, unsettling demographic shifts, corruption of party politics, global geopolitical pressures, commodification of culture, and the postmodern inability to distinguish between beliefs, opinions, lies, facts, and truth.

pp. 100 ca.

IMAGE NOT
AVAILABLE

Terence Ward



Terence Ward is a writer, documentary producer and cross-cultural consultant who grew up in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Egypt. Graduating from UC Berkeley, he worked for 10 years for Middle East Industrial Relations Counselors consulting with clients across the Gulf. Author of *Searching for Hassan* and *The Guardian of Mercy*, he serves as international trustee for World Conference of Religions for Peace. He is a member of the noted Middle Eastern Institute (ISMEO) in Rome and divides his time between Florence and New York.

Rights sold
Italy
 LEF

US+Northamerica
 Under Negotiation

ISIS EXPLAINED TO YOUNG MILLENNIALS

TO UNDERSTAND THE MIDDLE EAST TODAY

“Uncle Terry, can you tell me, what’s happening in the Middle East?” asked my sixteen year-old niece, Mirabel. “My friends and I are so confused. Please, help us understand!”

Moved by Mirabel’s anxious plea, I agreed to speak to her small group the following week. When the day arrived, I entered the large library and was stunned. It was packed with kids, parents, and elders... I realized then how little anyone knew about the roots of ISIS, and the Sunni/Shiite conflict.

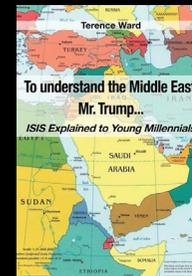
Having grown up in Saudi Arabia and spent 30 years in the Middle East and the Gulf, I see things differently, and clearly. I’ve had a first-hand, insider’s view. And, after my talk, everyone insisted I put it down in writing.

That day, this book was born. Not as a polemic or a tedious history, but as a simple accessible response to today’s Middle East chaos that has spilled across the Mediterranean and beyond.

To begin, I recount story of the austere Wahhabi sect founded in the central desert of the Arabian peninsula in the 18th century—1,500 years after the birth of Islam. Its severe, ultra-conservative doctrine now serves as the official religion of Saudi Arabia, and also is the core ideology of ISIS, Al-Qaida, the Taliban and Boko Haram. I describe how the followers of this sect claim to represent “true Islam” while condemning all other Muslims as apostates. Their mission is to eliminate the great diversity of Islam and reject its millenary multicultural heritage. Their obsession to eradicate the past is symbolized by the wanton destruction of the monumental Buddhas of the Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan, the classical ruins of Palmyra, and most of the sacred historic sites in Mecca and Medina.

Traditional Islam is now besieged by the Wahhabi imperialist “mission” financed by Saudi public funds and private foundations from Morocco to Indonesia, from Kosovo to Brussels. Countless madrasa schools and mosques with Wahhabi teachers and imams threaten all other Muslims--Shiites, Sufis, Yazidis and Sunnis. The Saudi regime buys silence in international media with its petro-dollars, and Western political leaders say nothing as they bow lowly to secure lucrative arms purchases and their ever-important oil flow. So, the truth remains hidden to the average citizens.

Now, it is in all our interests to speak truth to power. By ending the silence, Saudi imperial projects will be examined in the cold light of day; innocent lives in both the Islamic World and the West will be saved from jihadis; and UNESCO cultural heritage sites will be protected for Mirabel and her our children, long after we are gone.



Terence
Ward**Terence Ward**

is a writer, documentary producer and cross-cultural consultant who grew up in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Egypt. Graduating from UC Berkeley, he worked for 10 years for Middle East Industrial Relations Counselors consulting with clients across the Gulf. Author of *Searching for Hassan* and *The Guardian of Mercy*, he serves as international trustee for World Conference of Religions for Peace. He is a member of the noted Middle Eastern Institute (ISMEO) in Rome and divides his time between Florence and New York.

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Ponte alle Grazie
TEA
Giunti
LEF

US+Northamerica

Houghton Mifflin
Anchor Books

Germany

Frederking und Thaler
Piper Verlag

France

Editions Intervalles,
rights reverted

Indonesia

Rajut Publishing

Iran

Ketabaaraya Tandis
Jayhoon

SEARCHING FOR HASSAN

A JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF IRAN

CURRENTLY, BOSHRA FILM IN TEHRAN IS PRODUCING A FEATURE FILM ADAPTED FROM THIS BOOK. IT WILL BE THE FIRST IRANIAN AMERICAN CO-PRODUCTION TO BE SHOT IN IRAN SINCE THE REVOLUTION.

The unique culture of Iran and the sweep of history are revealed in this evocative personal journey.

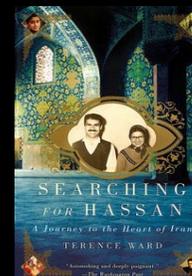
Growing up in Iran in the 1960's, Terence ward and his brothers were watched over by Hassan, the family's cook, housekeeper, and cultural guide. After an absence of thirty years, Ward embarked on a pilgrimage with his family in search of Hassan. Taking us across the landscape he plums in imaginably rich past, explore his entrenched conflicts with its Arab neighbors, and anticipates the new "Great Game" now being played out in Central Asia. Insightful, informative, and moving. Searching for Hassan enhances our understanding for the Middle East with the story of a family who came to love and admire Iran through their deep affection for its people.

pp.322

NOTE:

This title has been published already in some territories, but we offer it again now due to the importance of the film based upon the novel.

US+Northamerica (Houghton Mifflin, Anchor Books), German (Frederking und Thaler, Piper), France (Intervalles - rights reverted) Italian (Ponte alle Grazie, TEA, Giunti, LEF), Indonesia (Rajut Publishing) , Iran (Ketabsaraye Tandis, Jayhoon)



SEARCHING FOR HASSAN

A JOURNEY TO THE HEART OF IRAN

PRESS REVIEWS

"Astonishing and poignant, as flavorful as Hassan's pomegranate-walnut chicken Fessenjan, Searching for Hassan blends wide ranging literary allusions with endearing family interactions. The book that describes this quest easily could have been one more sentimental journey, a look at Islamic Iran leavened with a dose of childhood memories. What makes it so much more is the compelling story of two remarkable families, the Wards and the Ghasemis, each embodying the best of their respective cultures. The trip back to Iran proves to be a new beginning in the saga of the Wards and the Ghasemis. For something very unusual happened in that Persian garden more than 30 years ago: the family of an American Christian oil company executive and the family of an Iranian Muslim cook became one. And if they could bridge the great divide, Ward reasons, perhaps there is hope for us all."

Gelareh Asayesh, *The Washington Post Book World*

"Equipped with little more than a garbled village name, a photograph and their indomitable sense of adventure, the Ward family embarks on a quest to find Hassan, the Iranian man they had all grown to love during their expatriate life decades earlier. Swaying across the Islamic Republic in a rented bus, the four now-grown sons and their parents discover the new, the enduring and the comic in an enigmatic country swept by some of the most startling events of recent history. Readers prone to wanderlust beware."

Neil MacFarquhar, *The New York Times*, Middle East correspondent

"The publication of Searching for Hassan could not come at a more opportune time. No doubt it will take much more than 300 pages to dispel stereotypical images of Middle Eastern mobs burning U.S. flags, and the 1980 hostage crisis still obstructs our current attempt to understand Islam. Yet Ward's sympathetic and humane portrayals of everyday Iranians can help us transcend today's policy papers and State Department briefings in order to find commonalities."

Steve Lyons, *USA Today*

"Who had a childhood like this? Other than Nabokov, that is, who wrote that the Russia of his youth was an enchanted Xanadu, a land to be gotten back to. Terence Ward's Iran, where he grew up in the '60's in a life of "tropical nobility," was a lush, splendid place made up of "teahouses under the stars, surrounded by honeycomb walls," "silkworms in mulberry groves," "treasure-filled bazaars."... This is a wonderfully tactile, rich book, written from the right place (the heart) and with the right kind of search in mind (the search for grace)."

Adrienne Miller, literary editor, *Esquire*

"This is an enlightening work, in culture and history--a true bridge-builder between East and West. In his memoir, Terence Ward offers an informative and artful description of the rich Iranian culture. His revealing account reflects a profound understanding of Iranian traditions and ways of life through real human experiences. The publication of Searching for Hassan can only lead to a better understanding of this complex and often misunderstood part of the world, promoting, at the same time, the noble art of conversation between peoples. This book could not come at a better time!"

Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan

"As an admirer of Iranian culture, I have taken immense pleasure reading this beautifully written tale of love and hope and nostalgia. Thank you for this journey into the soul of a great people and removing the pest of the ayatollahs. Bless you for having given us this book."

Dominique Lapierre, *City of Joy, Freedom at Midnight, Is Paris Burning*

"This is a lovely book--part memoir, part family odyssey, but most important: a wise and lyrical appreciation of one of the world's great cultures. Terence Ward knows Iran and loves it in a way that transcends the politics of the moment. He points the way, through his insight and sensitivity, toward a reconciliation of two great nations--Iran and the United States--that may soon be a reality."

Joe Klein, *Time Magazine*

"For another view of Iran, the country President Bush has reduced to an "axis of evil," along with Iraq and North Korea, Terence Ward refers you to his new book, Searching for Hassan. Just released by Houghton Mifflin, the book is part cultural history, part travel memoir, but most of all it is Ward's impression of a country that shows is far more subtle than most Westerners know. Ward describes a more intricate image of a nation caught in a tug of war with itself, he shows the country in all its complexity. Most Westerners would hardly recognize it."

Mary Rourke, *Los Angeles Times*

"There is a remarkable artifact tucked inside Searching for Hassan: a snapshot of a brood of children and puppies sprawled on a lawn. Three of the boys, with their grins and freckles, just look as if they stepped of a Kennedy-era cereal box. Two others have dark hair and brown skin. On their left sits a Muslim woman, her head wrapped in a scarf, smiling too but more cautiously, as though she knows this happiness cannot last...When the Wards--Terence, his parents, and his three brothers--set out across Iran in search of the Ghasemis, all they had to guide them were some old pictures and a vague recollection of the name of the village that Hassan and his wife Fatimeh had come from: Toodesht or Tadoosht, or possibly Quashtood. Somewhere among the more than 60 million citizens of the Islamic Republic of Iran, they hoped, their friends were still alive. The Ward's quest was worthy of one of Hassan's medieval sagas--a quixotic journey by minivan over the deserts of Central Asia, among the holy cities and spice-trading centers that lie between the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea... In Ward's telling, the journey becomes a search not just for Hassan but for the Iran he remembers and loves--a country not of black-robed mullahs but of cherry orchards, sitar music and saffron-flavored ice cream. For thousands of years, he reminds us, the very word "Persia," suggested a realm of pleasure, color and light, inspiring Westerners as diverse as Goethe, Whitman and Emerson. For most Americans, all that history has been erased, and the ancient empire of Cyrus the Great and Xerxes is just another hostile wasteland. Ward is intent on discovering how much of the old, aesthetic Persia remains beneath the surface of the new, ascetic Iran. The typical form of Hafez's poetry is a ghazal, or song of praise. In a sense, Searching for Hassan, is itself a kind of ghazal, an unexpected ode to Iran. Miraculously--in finding all the Ghasemis alive, safe and prosperous, such optimism seems almost to have received a kind of divine blessing."

The New York Times Book Review

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