



Source: *The Times*, AFP, 'Putin agrees to finish Iranian reactor', *The Australian online*, 18/10/07.

Tags: [water](#), [Russia](#), [Iran](#), [China](#), [politics](#), [sport](#), [film](#)
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The President stands knee deep in mud, in a glowing mangrove on dusk, fireflies glitter on his jacket. 'Hey, hey, come close' he beckons. Kaboom. Camera glides over the milky surface of water, dodging twigs and debris like a hungry rat and arrives, draws in on the puckered lips of the President.

'Well today is a fine day, to celebrate the Opening Up of the Caspian Sea. Tonight, we anticipate, the whole of Russia, the whole of the Caucas region, will watch via satellite...no matter, just find a TV...watch via satellite, the blue-green bowl of a sea, the world's largest lake, heave up, Trident style. Imagine. Reverse the logic of that First Day, when the seas plunged down from the so-called heavens, spilling out of the hands of a so-called God.'

The President pulls a few coins from his pocket and drops them into the water for emphasis, 'The sea spilling out of the hands of God and pouring into the deep caverns of the Caspian, which at that point was just a rut on the earth's surface. And tonight during broadcast, we reverse the logic of that First Day and kaboom, the sea will rise up in a tremendous arc, touching what might seem to be the Very Atmosphere.

'Falling back, clattering back, sea filled with fragments of bridges and boats, white goods, coins, shards of a jetty, the sea will rise up and fall back and it will be Opened Up. I anticipate this Opening will be a viewing spectacle to rival the Beijing Olympics.'

He smiles and spits into the water, wipes mouth on sleeve.

'Now,' The President says, idly drawing a branch through the muddy banks, marking out what looks like countries, one, two, three...five states, then marking them with the brittle stab of a stick, a flag and number system.

'Now here,' stabbing, 'State Five, China, as you know is hosting next year's Olympics. Europe, or rather here, here, State Two is supplying said infrastructure, said telecommunications, said power,' he spits again, 'State Two supplies the creative forces and whips State Five into shape to broadcast their substantial assets.'

'Now,' turning back to camera, back to close up, 'Herzog and De Meuron, the Swiss architects, have fashioned a Stadium made of glass, like a sea, for Beijing. Quite an ocean of glass in the middle of a dustbowl. This Stadium is built on rotation. One worker up to work, bed empty, bell, two worker down to sleep, bell, changeover, three worker down in the sheets of one and two. A building forms like this.'

His eyes glitter blue. After this parable of how to build a monument, the President's silence makes a tremendous effect on screen, looking up and directly down the lens. The performance on the shores of the Caspian, thins down to his crystal blue eyes, winking without winking, severing without moving at all, mind reading each and every viewer. One could honestly say, he's making us wet with anticipation.

The Caspian Sea seen from above via satellite is luminous, green, deep. There are statistics given on the volume of

water it holds, and the prospect of the oil and gas deposits that sit deep under the sea bed. It could quench a thirst, that's for sure.

Now camera. Earlier in the rush towards the mangroves, we saw a woman in a boat on the Caspian Sea, a woman in a starched sail of a dress on a boat. There she is. Smiling, glasses, just drifting, every bit the conduit for mystery, like the black-haired woman in *L'Immortal*.

This woman on the Caspian Sea, she's Russian. This one when the camera gets in close is definitely Russian.

In the film *L'Immortal* by Robbe-Grillet, set in Istanbul, there is an alluring black-haired woman who is pursued by the camera and the narrator throughout the ancient public houses, mosques, monuments and tombs of old Byzantium, old Constantinople, Istanbul. This film takes Europe as far towards Arabia as it can go, with this spider of a woman weaving a sticky trap between the laneways of Istanbul.

The woman we see here, in the boat on the Caspian Sea is not weaving a trap. She is adrift amid aeries, working more in the way subtle poison does, drifting around in the humours of the body until the eyes freeze over.

Soon the President will encounter this boat, floating on the periphery of the mangroves, tipping into shore.

'States three, Iran and four, Azerbaijan are working with Russia, State one, and we are looking inwards, towards this sweet sea and the core of the earth.'

The President looks humbled, broadens his arms in a gesture of acknowledgement to 'out there', and the camera draws back to the wider view of him on the shore, diminutive, and the expanse of sea with that boat on the edge.

Belting over the top of this scene is sheer baritone, a barking, calling song from a choir of men.

An ocean in a bucket.

View of a woman in a boat with large open mouth.

View of a President, climbing out of the mangroves slick with silt, arms wide and calling in that boat from the green seas of the Caspian.

Five Lakes. Seven Seas. An ocean in a bucket. Inland Sea.

View of a woman. A woman in a boat with a starched sail of a dress.

View of a President, knee-deep in mangroves, lapping at the not quite salty sea, besotted, coins in his pocket.

Depth Charge. Kaboom.

Roiling green seas of the Caspian.

Depth charge. Kaboom.

Waves echo from the centre of the Caspian.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Caitlin Newton-Broad.