An Investigation into the Cinematic Representation of Hegemonic Spaces in 1960s and 1970s Iranian Rural Films

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By

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Abstract

This project examines the cinematic representation of hegemonic spaces in the films produced in Iran during the 1960s and 1970s. It argues that, unlike other historiographies in this field, it is possible to observe the effects of the capitalist mode of production in the cinematic production of hegemonic spaces. The thesis draws on Gramsci, Williams and other Marxist theorists to situate cinematic representations in their social and historical context. Also, this project discusses the historical blocs in that period, the role of organic intellectuals in the production of counter-hegemonic currents and the transformation of the subaltern and its cinematic representation in the film production of the aforementioned period. In this way, the representation of hegemonic spaces such as work places, farms, medical centers, schools, etc., according to the various types of cinematic frameworks, is critically examined. The project traces in films the significant transformation of hegemonic processes of incorporation from residual and alternative practices (considering Raymond Williams's terminology) in the 1960s to emergent and oppositional practices in the 1970s.

Contents

Introduction

This research investigates the transformation of the cinematic representation of hegemonic spaces in the rural areas in Iranian films. The inquiry is set in the turbulent decades of the 1960s and 1970s which witnessed a rapid period of industrialisation in the country and the transition from feudalism to early capitalism. The grand economic, social and political changes, which included the industry of cinema, generated new hegemonic force-fields such as schools, police stations, etc., and transferred the social meanings and practices in existing fields such as farms, fishing areas, pipelines of oil and gas in the rural places.

In the first place this research concentrates on identifying the hegemonic spaces. In order to provide an accurate identification, I discuss the narrative level of the films and contextualize it according to its historical conjuncture. After, I discuss the process of production in order to observe how the film found its final shape. Lastly, I discuss the representation of rural spaces according to their cinematic frames and I probe the relation between characters, natural and built environment, animals, etc. In conclusion, I assess each representation according to Raymond Williams' four categories of hegemonic processes of inclusion which are: emergent, residual, alternative and oppositional. In this way, it becomes possible to identify the structure of feeling in each film and to trace their transformation from the 1960s to 1970s.

The first chapter of this research provides an overview of the major books in the field of Iranian film studies. The core of this investigation is concentrated on the mode of production. I critically assess what other historians and critics said about the dominant mode of production in the industry of cinema. Furthermore, through a reference to Marx and Therborn, I propose that, unlike other researchers of this field, it would be more accurate to view the mode of production in Iran in this period as early capitalist.

In chapter two, I attempt to construct the theoretical framework through which the argument of proceeding chapters would be established. I firstly discuss Gramsci's idea of hegemony as the ensemble of structure and superstructure. In this approach towards hegemony, which is built on the existing scholarship, the notion of class alliance and historical blocs is foregrounded. Accordingly, to explain the particular hegemonic processes in the proceeding chapters, I rely on the construction of the historical bloc with reference to historical context. Furthermore, I discuss Raymond Williams perspective regarding the hegemonic processes of inclusion which I refer as a critical model throughout this thesis to map the structure of feeling of films.

In chapter three, I discuss the consequences of the so-called White Revolution and land reform in Iran in general and on the film industry in particular. The reform dismantled feudalism and formed new social groups and hegemonic formations. In the chapter, I demonstrate the formation of a historical bloc between new middle-sized landowners and the emerging bourgeoisie against the remnants of the feudal order. I also point at the emerging class of specialist and skilled workers in the documentary film about building gas and oil pipelines. I attempt to demonstrate the tension between emergent and residual hegemonic currents in the selected film.

In the next chapter, I engage with the themes and debates of counter-hegemonic intellectuals during the 1960s and 1970s in Iran. I particularly focus on the ideas of Jalal Ale-Ahmad and Ali Shariati and the notions of 'occidentosis' and 'return to self'. Through a reference to Gramsci's perspective on the role of intellectuals to carry out moral and social transformation, the effect of these intellectuals on the Iranian society is critically discussed. The introduction of their thoughts and efficacy is followed in chapter five and six whereby their perspectives found cinematic expression on the silver screen.

In chapter five, I discuss a village comedy series which became extremely popular in the 1970s because of its satirical form which illuminated the contradictions of modernity. I discuss the arrival of modern hegemonic force-fields in the village in three of these films. I demonstrate the transformation of the relation between characters and the built and natural environment. Finally, I discuss the conflict between pre-emergent and residual social practices which is depicted in terms of the representation of space in the selected films.

In the final chapter, I engage with two films of politically-motivated filmmakers and highlight their attempt to create a new picture of the subaltern people and provide them with a unified history. In addition, I discuss how these films attempt to break away from existing 'common sense' in order to open the way for the formation of a new revolutionary common sense based on the life and experience of the oppressed people. Furthermore, I concentrate on the allegorical form of these films which endowed them with the possibility to break away from the conventions of classic Hollywood cinema, and like their counterparts in Latin America, shaped new forms of representation.

It is noteworthy that I arrived at the idea of this research while thinking and writing about the hegemonic debates that corporate media outlets disseminated, yet, also through watching old films of 1960s and 1970s on the internet for free. The specific visual registration of factories and work places, the presence of female workers affected me to the point that I was encouraged to probe their specific

representation and their stylistic characteristics. I wanted to know how the process of production affected the hegemonic representation. Therefore, this research started with a plan to discuss urban factories and work places. However, as the research developed and I watched numerous films on the internet and in the National Film archive in Iran, I was attracted to the films which were predominantly set in the rural areas. They reveal the oppressed work places such as rural agricultural land, farms, and fishing fields in the sea. They also bring to the fore the hegemonic struggles around these work places which shape the particular everyday experiences of the participants. I was also interested in the rural beauties of the settings and was encouraged to think and write about the relation between human and natural environments; the fields, the sky, the mountains, the trees, the vivid water and the animals.

Therefore, this research became focused on the representation of hegemonic rural spaces. As I discuss the less known and debated films, I realized that it would be better to provide film stills that could accompany the arguments. The related stills of films could be found in the appendix section. I included more film stills from the films which are almost forgotten in the academic circles such as the village comedy series, and less film stills from well-known films such as *The Night It Rained* (1970, Shirdel) which are subtitled into English and French and can be accessed easily on the websites such as Ubu Web.

Also, I included my interview with the renowned Iranian film producer of the 1960s and 1970s Ali Abbasi in the appendix section. The interview provided helpful and illuminating points about the condition of producing films and the general atmosphere of filmmaking in the aforementioned decades. I referred to this interview in the first and second chapters of this research which elaborates the theoretical framework of the thesis. It is noteworthy that almost all of the people who I requested an interview with, which included a number of influential actors, actresses and filmmakers, refused my request. I think that probably their views and memories could have assisted me to provide a better investigation and I would have been able to set the arguments not just on archival materials and other researches, yet, on their invaluable contribution. It is particularly in this atmosphere that the support of the Department of Film and Television Studies in the University of Brunel and my supervisor Dr Mike Wayne find an immense importance. I would like to thank them all for their support throughout the last four years.

I hope that this thesis would be helpful for those who would like to engage profoundly with the history of contemporary Iran and the bitter and pleasant moments of the Iranian cinema.

Chapter One: Literature Review of History of Iranian Cinema

Introduction

In this chapter, I will explore the books that contributed significantly to the discussions concerning the history of Iranian cinema. In that, I attempt to critically engage with the research that has been carried out in order to highlight the outline of my research.

In my thesis, I am interested to study the production of space and specifically the hegemonic spaces in the Iranian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s. The fast pace of industrialization in this period effectively influenced the conception of spaces, private and public, in the film text. I would like to discuss space as a novel hegemonic force-field which was marked by the dominance of capitalist social relations yet, offered unanticipated ways to challenge this dominance and opened up new ways to think of social relations beyond capitalism.

Regarding the subject of my thesis, not many resources are available. The books written on the subject of Iranian cinema in English are primarily concerned with the history of the cinema in its totality. For instance, in my search I did not find a single research which investigated the cinema thematically or regarding certain subjects. The same limitation also exists in the Farsi publications whereby history, whether social or political, is the main interest of the researchers. What could be observed in the main research of the field is the lack of reference to critical frameworks of investigation and critical theory in particular.

Moreover, the link that critics sketch between the socio-political context and cinematic representation is often problematic. As I will demonstrate, Dabashi seems inconsistent with his application of critical theory, while Sadr seems to rely on a form of argument which views art as the reflection of material conditions. I will refer to Raymond Williams who examined the limitation of this analytical model. And, finally, I will critically explore Naficy's idea of the hybrid mode of production in cinema. I will discuss their approach to the base and superstructure argument in order to illuminate that it seems that a solid discussion is necessary regarding the progressive Marxist approach towards the mode of production in the cinema of 1960s and 1970s in Iran. There is an attitude to avoid such engagement and researchers attempt to compose a narrative line which claims impartiality and neutrality. Any investigation into this field would confront this ideological presupposition that 'neutrality' is not only possible but also

desirable. It is also possible to regard this tendency towards neutrality as the effect of theoretical hegemony of neo-liberalism which has been prevalent in the United States.

However, this research regards the claims of neutrality with scepticism and intends to follow its questions regarding the current critical frameworks of film studies, particularly historical materialism. The significant investigations of Iranian cinema both inside and outside the country (as I will discuss the books by Naficy and Sadr) did not neglect issues such as the economic background, infrastructure of the industry of cinema and class conflicts. However, in this research I will attempt to examine their engagement with the material basis and discuss the film text as a production which could be contextualized within a wider mode of production. I will start this exploration chronologically with Hamid Dabashi's book *Close Up* (2001) which is a significant contribution to a philosophical and historical understanding of the development of cinema in Iran.

A Brief Close Up

In *Close Up* (2001), a concise historical examination of Iranian cinema, Dabashi mainly concentrates on the Iranian cinema after 1979 and examines the emergence and the works of what is now known as New Iranian Cinema which includes filmmakers such as Kiarostami, Makhmalbaf, Naderi and others. Accordingly, the book is not completely related to my research yet the opening chapter examines the history of the Iranian cinema from its start until 1979. Also, three chapters which focus on Kiarostami, Beyzayi and Farmanara discuss their early films in the 1970s, yet continues without break to cover their films and others until now. The first chapter highlights the major difficulties that cinema as an art form and entertainment confronted especially with the religious authorities. Also, it composes a very insightful narration of the development of cinematic genres and the arrival of new talented filmmakers since 1960s in a historical context. Unfortunately, Dabashi does not focus on a certain period such as the period of rapid industrialization. His approach is mainly based on individual films and his critique develops based on the emergence of individual talented filmmakers. Furthermore, he discusses the films, life and thoughts of a selected range of filmmakers before and after 1979 revolution, as if this historical event did not bring a break in their personal, political and aesthetical views. Although, *Close Up* as the first invaluable research about the Iranian cinema is one of the few first attempts to contextualize this emerging cinema nationally and internationally and as such it provides a relatively accessible, acceptable and attractive arguments.

Reading the first chapter, I will refer to his illuminating insights about the reception of cinema by religious authorities and the idea of 'historical human' since I believe that it has been an unresolved obstacle since the arrival of cinema in Iran. Dabashi opens up his discussion with a nice reference to history. The first theatrical exhibition cinema in Iran named *Soli* was established in 1900 by Roman Catholic missionaries in order to expand the Good word of Jesus Christ and spread his glory. Then he adds that Ebrahim Sahhaf-Bashi, a Qajar aristocrat opened the first commercial cinema in Tehran in 1904. In this way, in his view the story of cinema as an industry starts in relation to religious conflicts, politics, Imperialism and capitalism in Iran. He points out that the active dialogue between the religious and political authorities of the culture since then has not been a recent phenomenon in the Iranian cinema but it has existed from its beginning. The early clash between cinema and the religious establishment occupies a significant place in his overall evaluation of the reception of cinema by the Iranian society. For instance, the Muslim theologians opposed the visual recreation of the human because it could be read as blasphemy and idolatry. Also, there were interesting ideological reasons such as cinema has an overwhelming effect and could influence one's reason in an unrealistic way. This is a kind of fear which was shared by many critical theorists too. The valorisation of image over the word has been simultaneous with the rise of capitalism in which vision as the master sense of the modern era becomes prevalent. 'As Martin Jay has shown, the visual field, from Foucault's panopticon, to Debord's Society of the Spectacle, to Althusser and Lacan's specular Imaginary to Metz's cinematic apparatus, was associated with power, domination, illusion and manipulation.'[1]

Dabashi expands the simple conservative oppositions to cinema from this philosophical aspect to a more significant issue and believes that it could be read as the opposition to modernity and even the Enlightenment: 'Islamic Theology, in both its juridical and philosophical aspects, ultimately failed to adapt to the project of modernity, in either its doctrinal beliefs or theoretical speculations. Its passive-aggressive opposition to cinema in fact became a token of its more universal failure to account for the Enlightenment.'[2] This claim is also acceptable, yet it would be illuminating to bear in mind that many critical theorists viewed mass visual culture, including cinema, as an anti-enlightenment project. For instance, Adorno believed that 'involved in market mechanism, film, like other products of the 'culture industry', loses its artistic integrity and quality, tending towards standardisation, stereotypes and

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[1] Mike Wayne, 'The Dialectical Image: Kant, Marx and Adorno', in *Marx at the Movies, Revisiting History, Theory and Practice* (eds) Ewa Mazierska and Lars Kristensen, Palgrave MacMillan 2014, p. 28.
[2] Hamid Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, Verso, 2001, p. 14.

simplicity'.[3] In his view, the culture industry promotes denial or resigned acknowledgment of the unhappiness in the world and cinema, which produces standardised and homogenised audiences, provides the culture industry with its desirable anti-enlightenment ambitions.[4] Therefore, the rejection of cinema by the Islamic theologians cannot be entirely regressive and reactionary since they had common views about the manipulation of the culture industry with notable critical theorists.

Another important argument about the analytical modality in *Close up,* is Dabashi's interesting discussion about the transformation of what he calls Quranic human to the historical human on the screen. He states that Persian visual arts have been grounded entirely in the Quranic conception of the human[5] which is viewed outside of history (Dabashi implies that Quranic vision seems to suggest an authentic essence which could not be affected by the history[6]), yet this perspective began to transform with the arrival of modern visual forms of representation[7]. He discusses how 'the introduction of foreign films opened up a whole new window to the world outside. The visual possibility of seeing the historical person (as opposed to the eternal Quranic human) on the screen is arguably the single most important event allowing Iranian access to modernity'[8]. In the light of his view, it is possible to see the history of Iranian cinema as an attempt to historicise the human outside the safe Garden of Heaven. Perhaps, the key question and conflict in this cinema has been how to depict the historical Iranians according to their specific time and place. Throughout the twentieth century various strategies evolved and developed in order to record the transformation of the historical Iranian subject. In my research, I am interested to investigate how this historical subject was represented on the big screen, how material and historical context influenced the production of film and particularly I would like to explore and examine how the representation of the historical subject found its signifiers in terms of the production of space. In other

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[3] Ester Leslie, 'Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film', in *Understanding Film; Marxist Perspectives* (ed Mike Wayne), Pluto Press, 2005, p. 36.

[4] Leslie, 'Adorno, Benyamin, Brecht and Film', ibid, p. 36-7.

[5] Dabashi's claim about the origins of Persian visual arts is problematic since this category of art actively existed before the arrival of Islam in ancient Persia and the perception of the human has gone through many phases according to art works of the time. For instance Basstani (available in Farsi from here http://anthropology.ir/node/27178) demonstrates that the lack of modern perspective in paintings is rooted in the pre-Islamic paintings which belonged to Ashkani era (247 BC – 224 AD) in which they developed techniques to give depth to the human figures. Indeed, Islam and this particularly Platonic vision of humankind has affected the Persian visual arts significantly yet it is arguable whether it is solely predicated on it.

[6] Despite the fact that Dabashi's view about the ahistorical figure of human in Quran is widely accepted, it seems that it would be more accurate to speak about various Islamic traditions which were intertwined with the feudal mode of production. Even the numerous interpretations of Quran have been affected by the religious centers entirely dependent on Feudalism.

[7] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, Op cit., p. 15.

[8] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, ibid, p.15.

words, regarding Dabashi's argument, I would like to observe how the process of historicising the modern Iranian subject finds its expression on the big screen at a spatial level.

He believes that the rejection of cinema as a valid and progressive apparatus could be observed as the rejection of modernity and the inability of the religious authorities to integrate it. Accordingly, he deduces that the history of cinema illuminates how the Enlightenment was received from a philosophical perspective. Regarding the history of enlightenment Kant attempted to

> Define a mode of subjectivity that rests on individual responsibility to a morality no longer predicated on any sacred certitude or biblical commandant. The plight of the project of modernity in Iran may indeed be seen as a prolonged history of failure to generate and sustain the kind of subjectivity that is conducive to the assumptions of "categorical imperatives". The history of Iranian modernity can be read at times as a remainder of that defeat, and at others as a joyous wish for its victory.[9]

Nonetheless, this fascinating debate is not developed profoundly and after a few pages he moves on to the later history of cinema. Dabashi starts his history from an interesting philosophical point yet does not expand the argument in relation to the changing modes of production. For instance, the rejection of modernity and failure of the Enlightenment could be rooted in the clash between the modern forces of production (here cinema as producing images) and the traditional relations of production (religious establishment as supporting aristocratic and feudal mode of production). Moreover, the suspicion of idolatry and blasphemy highlights the anxieties about the issue of authenticity. It seemed that the religious law against idolatry functioned to validate certain forms of originality and control, and in this way sacredness of the original was regulated by the religious establishment. The modern visual apparatuses such as photography and cinema radically destabilized the borders between the original and the copy and brought up the question whether the visual reproduction was a mere copy or more than a copy and undermined the power of the Word – for secular as well as religious elites. It is arguable that contemporary historians simplify the conflict concerning the issue of idolatry as only a religious and a philosophical rejection. The prohibition on reproducing images as idolatry limited the circulation and ownership of images to the hands of a few. The industry of cinema radically challenged the ownership of

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[9] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, ibid, p. 13.

moving images, this apparatus democratized the access to the visual representation of the world, which up until that time (early twentieth century), was only accessible to the aristocracy.

The effect of the loss of sacredness is what Benjamin discussed as the loss of aura of the art, particularly painting, because of the invention of photography and cinema. As he discusses, art before the mechanical production found its uniqueness in relation to the tradition which endowed it with a ritualistic function. Yet, after photography and cinema, the work of art becomes separated from its ritualistic function and its authenticity wanes. At this moment, the work of art becomes related to politics.[10] Considering the Iranian context, it is possible to deduce that the anxieties about the authentic and the copy illuminates the fear of the establishment through claims on authenticity. The new art could not be regulated by the power of the ruling classes, yet, it has endowed a medium to the masses to use moving images politically. Accordingly, Dabashi's view which regards religion as the main reason for the failure of modernity is questionable. It seems that ignoring the feudal mode of production and its related superstructure has limited the scope of Dabashi's critical analysis.

Dabashi discusses the mode of production briefly in terms of the role of colonialism in advancing modernity: 'the story of Iranian cinema is concomitant with the project of modernity as an extended arm of colonialism, itself necessitated by the rise of competing national bourgeoisies'.[11] In his view the role of colonialism was catastrophic as it prevented the growth of a self-conscious national bourgeoisie and consequently Iran was positioned in a disadvantageous place considering the productive logic of global capitalism.[12] Unfortunately, he does not explore the relation between modernity and capitalism which could shed light on the relation between modernity and colonialism. He postulates that cinema as an art form could not be restricted to its colonial agency through which it had reached Iran as a medium, and it was not possible for a single source of power whether colonial or patriarchal to control it, because of its unpredictable effects and vast audience.[13] In his argument the revolutionary potential of cinema as an industry is a point which is not discussed profoundly, how cinema could liberate itself and its audience from the intentions of colonialism remains a question. In this way, it seems that Dabashi maintains an ambivalent approach towards modernity whereby its destructive effect as colonialism was rejected yet it could contain revolutionary potentials beyond colonialism. How this double edge sword

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[10] Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Reproduction, IV, last access 14/May/2015, [available from https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm]
[11] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, Op cit., p. 12.
[12] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, ibid, p. 12.
[13] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, ibid, p. 16.

functions is not convincingly addressed. Hence, I believe that regarding the industry of cinema it is important to discuss the contradictory outcomes of modernity in relation to capitalism whereby the conflict between the forces and relations of production reveal this contradiction more convincingly. As Marx and Engels discuss in *The Communist Manifesto,* the bourgeois class has to constantly enhance the forces of production while the social relations of production change very slowly. The imbalance between the two results in perpetual crises whereby the modern proletariat equipped with the new forces of production has the possibility to transform the social relations on the foundations of material wealth developed within capitalism.

> Modern bourgeois society, with its relations of production, of exchange and of
> property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and
> exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether
> world whom he has called up by his spell.[14]

The relevance of this argument to my research lies in the fact that the development of the industry of cinema as programmed by the state and the bourgeois class partially lead to the socialization of the tools of producing and exchanging knowledge and information of the contemporary world through films. This possibility within the conflictual condition of domestic and global markets empowered the people to create an industry which reflected their demands, dreams and struggles on the wide screen.[15] This is a line of argument which in this research will be probed in relation to the condition of production of films and their spatial level of signification.

After his general argument about Iranian cinema, in the rest of the first chapter of *Close Up*, Dabashi focuses on individual films which became prominent in the history of Iranian cinema. Here, I mention those which were produced in the 1960s and 1970s as it is relevant to the temporal frame of my research. He places these films in a fascinating historical narration which illuminates the significance of film not just as an art work but as the expression of social changes, people's hopes, dreams and defeats, individually and collectively. He also highlights the publications of poetry and fiction (novel and short story) which were influential in defining the artistic, social and political horizon of the time. After composing a historical narrative based on popular social events and political struggles with colonialism

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[14] Marx and Engels, *the Communist Manifesto*, Pluto Press, 2008, p. 41.
[15] It is evident that sadly this claim does not include all the social classes in Iran, yet cinema as a collective art has been extended beyond the aristocracy and upper middle class and has nourished the hope for establishing democratic artistic practices which enforces the social, cultural and political struggle until the present time.

and authoritarian state-sponsored modernization, Dabashi concentrates on individual filmmakers. Thus, in the first chapter he sketches the historical horizon through which Iranian cinema nourished, then he moves on to investigates filmmakers who each have their own thematic preoccupations and personal expression.

In the second chapter Dabashi reconstructs the life of Abbas Kiarostami according to national historical events of his childhood. This historical background which also includes detail of poetical literary publication and the production of new films and development of industry provides a reasonable and convincing picture of factors that could form a national history but not necessarily a single person, here Abbas Kiarostami. I wonder what historical events he would single out or would ignore himself in a possible interview. In other words, the underlying assumption which connects the individual to the social is not discussed at all and is treated as given and already accepted. In my research, I will attempt to reconnect the issues such as the formation of an artist style, the production of a film, the historical and socio-economic horizon.

Returning to Dabashi's exploration of Kiarostami's cinema, he attempts to discuss films and other artists which he believes have influenced Kiarostami's works in various ways. For example, Dabashi observes that the films of Sohrab Shahid-Sales and particularly his *Still Life* (1975) about the monotony of the life of a railway worker framed a perception of reality which anticipated Kiarostami's view. 'What we see is not even the perceptible things themselves but things *before* their metaphoric mediated perceptibility – before they are perceived, understood, analysed, judge. The sheer physicality of being, prior to any attribution of meaning and significance, is what begins to surface in his cinema[16].

Here Dabashi points out a very crucial point at the development of Iranian cinema in general and Kiarostami cinema in particular that is the changing visual and textual strategies to perceive and represent reality. Indeed, both Shahid-sales and Kiarostami introduced a turning point in Iranian collective understanding of what could be known as reality. However, Dabashi does not analyse the momentous new ways of perceiving reality, for instance through Shahid-Sales in relation to the place of the labourer in growing capitalist social relations. The subject of alienation of the worker from himself and from the world around and the commodification of the labour is absent in his interpretations. And the new ways of understanding reality is not discussed in relation to the fast industrialization, here the case of the transport industry in *Still Life*. Generally, the political economy of both the society and

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[16] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, Op cit., p. 47.

cinema and the conditions of producing a film and how it could affect the aesthetics or style is not probed in this book. Dabashi is more interested in textual analysis with reference to archival documents such as views of film critics published at the time.

Another characteristic of Dabashi's analysis is that he does not refer to a theoretical and philosophical framework and does not base his discussion on a particular view completely. Rather, he attempts to refer to quotes and scattered views of thinkers. Yet he does not expand his argument according to that framework, hence his use of theory remains underdeveloped. For instance, while he discusses Kiarostami's perception of reality he refers briefly to Adorno:

> Given the prior givenness of the real, no theoretical understanding of it can remain outside, or, as Adorno puts it, 'art negates the categorical determinations stamped on the empirical world and yet harbours what is empirically existing in its own substance'. What Kiarostami's camera manages to do is to make us conscious at once of the fact that the being-there of the real is pre-theoretically 'there', and that, even more troubling, we *are* that being-there. Thus the being there of the real is the furthest away from us by nearly being always, already theoretical. i.e., culturally mediated. What Kiarostami's camera manages to do, however, is to constitute the pre-theoretically givenness of the real in relation to 'the world'.[17]

Further on in chapter three, he moves on to discuss some of the works of Bahram Beyzayi. In the interview with Beyzayi he investigates the roots of visual arts generally in Iranian and particularly in Beyzayi's cinema, how miniature and traditional performing arts such as public storytelling affected his cinema. The interview is not focused on a particular theme, aspect or films of Beyzayi but sketches an overall image of a filmmaker who is not well-known and celebrated much outside Iran. Then, he moves on to a sort of textual analysis of films and focuses on the mythical aspects of Beyzayi films. In fact, it is possible to see that Dabashi's line of inquiry significantly yet implicitly follows the transformation and variation of the representation of reality in Iranian cinema. If he connects the beginning of cinema to history, then he exposes a different approach to the physicality of things and materiality in *Still Life* and considering the cinema of Kiarostami, Dabashi highlights a new approach to reality which problematizes the materiality of the world and our perception. In the third chapter he examines Beyzayi's conception of myth. Again, Dabashi discusses his films before and after 1979 revolution in a

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[17] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, ibid, p. 50.

way that it could introduce a break in the conditions of filmmaking, textual production, themes and style. Instead, Beyzayi is successful because he created a sort of modern myth which 'prevent the collapse into a universe without myth … we are always at the mercy of falling into the abyss of nothingness of the things. Beyzayi cinema has always worked towards a new revelation of the universe in which we, as Iranians, as colonials, as those written out of the history of their own modernity, can be reborn'.[18]

In this way, for Dabashi the modern myth through cinema comes to open up a space for the Iranian subject which has gone through the process of modernization because of the necessity of domestic and international socio-economic conditions. He observes Beyzayi mythical cinema as a possibility to endow a voice to the people who have remained behind this process and therefore mythmaking could be seen as a possibility for a collective narrative based on collective experiences, sufferings and hopes.

> Far more important than defining myth as a 'sacred tale' or 'traditional tale', it is crucial
> to see the act of mythmaking as a form of communal signification. In the absence of
> such collectively binding myths that make life meaningful and trustworthy, the world
> atrophies into confusion and chaos.[19]

Broadly speaking, Beyzayi cinema, especially the myth based works such as the three films that Dabashi discusses here, *The Stranger and the Fog*, *The Ballad of Tara* and *Bashu* could be categorized as second cinema or art house cinema[20]. In my research, I will discuss a number of his films in the 1970s which were realist yet even then it was a sort of theatrical or performative realism. His understanding of cinema seems to be influenced by Brecht. Beyzayi has always been interested in the theatre and its possibilities in cinema. The development of the mythical signification in his films is in fact a fascinating debate which could be discussed in various ways. Along with the new perception of reality in Shahid-sales and Kiarostami films a number of films emerged which were set in unknown, imaginary and rather mythical places and times which is best exemplified in *The Stranger and The Fog*. These emerging allegorical and symbolic settings in films were the topic of many debates at the time. Dabashi celebrates the arrival of the mythical signification yet I believe that it is a subject which could be problematized. On the one hand, those emerging rather surreal signification could go beyond the

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[18] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, ibid, p. 107.
[19] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, ibid, p. 96.
[20] For an extensive discussion of First, Second and Third Cinema in the Iranian context please see page 71-78 in this thesis.

collective experience of reified reality; it is a possibility to think about what could be imaginable beyond the alienation that we encounter in *Still Life* as an example. It promises liberation from the time and space predicated on the requirement of capitalist social relations.

On the other hand, this type of film did not seem to fulfil such possibilities and Dabashi does not consider their failures. For instance, *The Stranger and The Fog* was not successful at the box office and neither with film critics. This rejection of second cinema by the audience, the elite and the masses, brings up questions about the condition of the production of film. The film was produced by the Ministry of culture. It was one of the costly productions of the time ($300,000) and it took about two years to be made which is one of the lengthiest film production in the history of Iranian cinema[21]. The question which arises here is about the internal and external factors which affected the process of production, the text and Beyzayi's style. This is an aspect which remains unaddressed in Dabashi's analysis and I will address in my research.

Further on, in the fourth chapter Dabashi concentrates on another filmmaker who is relevant to my research, Bahman Farman-Ara. For, he was a film director and producer before and after the 1979 revolution. This chapter includes a detailed interview with Farman-Ara about his career in cinema from his early documentary for the newly established national TV through the formation of various film companies in the 1970s and directing his own films. It is an interesting interview which provides a glimpse of how the film industry started to work particularly in relation to the state and TV. Farman-Ara was banned from making films after 1979 because his previous films included scenes of obscenity and insult to the religion. Inevitably, this historical event broke the continuity of his cinematic activities and forced him into exile where he worked as a film distributer in Canada and the US for a couple of years. Farman-Ara also speaks about censorship in both regimes and provides evidences of how it worked. Furthermore, he provides interesting information about the collaboration between writers and filmmakers before the revolution and illuminates the fact that the success of many good films lay in the fact that they were collective works that were carried out by low budget and informal circles of intellectuals. Dabashi discusses his film with himself in the interview and does not include a separate text. What is distinct about this chapter is that the political economy of cinema and the process of production is discussed here unlike the previous chapter, yet it remains at the level of informative

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[21] Hamid Naficy, A Social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years, 1941-1978 Vol 2. Duke University Press, 2001, p. 366.

dialogue and does not become the basis of further analysis. Thus, it is possible to deduce that the book's methodology is unfortunately non-systematic.

The rest of the book considers the more recent generation of filmmakers who started working after the 1979 revolution and is not related to my research. It is a book whereby Dabashi uses various resources such as interviews, archival materials such as film journals to accompany his social, political and aesthetic analysis. *Close Up* is the first fascinating analysis that looks at the history of Iranian cinema and discusses its development in the light of interesting historical background. And I think that particularly for a non-Iranian reader, the way that he puts the turning points of modern Iranian history next to the appearance of films familiarises an ordinary reader with this rather complicated and problematic social context. However, the use of history brings up many questions such as how exactly the historical context influences the production of a particular film or genre and vice versa. The relation between the film text and the outside world is problematic as it seems that he suggests implicitly that the film text is a reflection of society and therefore it remains a question whether filmmakers are historians, observers of their society, or active participants and part of that changing dynamism of that society.

Furthermore, it is important to indicate the way that his discussion of Iranian cinema is based on single talented filmmakers and their often one or two influential and well-known films. Dabashi does not seem to be interested in the mass audience and does not discuss the success of commercial cinema and the expansion of film genre such as film *Jaheli* [22] which in his words 'referred to a type of lumpen who embodied the most sordid traits of patriarchy.'[23] In his view, it was a 'catastrophe' which 'plagued' the cinema[24] and his attempt in *Close Up* is to introduce a cinema which is not defined by this catastrophe in the 1960s. Although, there is no doubt that the commercial sector and its particular genre such as film *Jaheli* or what is known as Film Farsi[25] was a purely profit motivated activity, yet, it could be seen as a phenomenon which had a relation with ordinary people's articulation of lack, suffering and hopelessness and their dream for a better life. The later historians discussed this

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[22] Jaheli was a subgenre of what is generally known as Film Farsi which I discuss it at length in the rest of this literature review. It indicates a type of popular feature film in which the story revolves around a *Jahel* or tough guy.

[23] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, Op cit., p. 26.

[24] Dabashi, *Close Up: Iranian Cinema, Past, Present and Future*, ibid, p. 26.

[25] Film Farsi was a title coined by the film critic Houshang kavousi to a type of very successful commercial film. Despising the type, Kavousi stated that nothing in these films are Iranian but their Farsi dialog so that he began to call it Film Farsi. In the context of Iranian film history it is referred to films adapted from commercial foreign films particularly American fraught with scenes of physical violence and cabaret style song and dance.

phenomenon in a more depth and in relation to other social changes. For instance, Naficy observes it as a hybrid phenomenon and a mixture with foreign American genres. Fredric Jameson discusses the opposition between the so-called high and mass culture which he believes is rooted in the emergence of modernism, 'the only form of "high culture" which can be said to constitute the dialectical opposite of mass culture is that high culture production contemporaneous with the latter, which is to say that artistic production generally designated as *modernism*'.[26] Therefore, Dabashi is right to pose the popular phenomenon of Film Farsi opposite and as an obstacle to the growth of modernist cinema.

Jameson, however, calls for a different approach towards the antagonism between the high and mass culture which has been recognised and widely discussed since the publication of the theorists of Frankfurt School. He emphasises that we need to rethink the opposition. For him the problem of high and mass culture indicates the double characteristics of capitalism. It points at an objective contradiction in the third or multinational stage of capitalism. And he suggests that 'we read high and mass culture as objectively related and dialectically interdependent phenomena, as twin and inseparable forms of the fission of aesthetic production under capitalism'.[27] Being critical about the positive perspective of Frankfurt School about traditional modernist high art which recognises them as genuinely autonomous works, Jameson argues that under capitalism all kinds of aesthetic productions are reified and instrumentalised and these two categorises should not to be viewed separately but dialectically.[28]

In the light of Jameson's view about the 'structural dependency'[29] of modernism and mass culture, in my research I will examine films which were categorized as high and mass culture together. The films of the commercial sector which are also known as first cinema films will be discussed along the modernist films as dialectically informing each other particularly at the spatial level of signification. I attempt to demonstrate how directly and/or indirectly these films address each other and contributed to the evolution of cinema.

In addition, Dabashi's preference for talented artists is accompanied by the view that for the progression of a modernist art the existence of a self-conscious national bourgeoisie and an urban middle class is necessary. In each chapter, he indicates the factors which assisted or prevented their

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[26] Fredrick Jameson, Signature of the Visible, Routledge, 1992, p. 15.
[27] Jameson, Signature of the Visible, ibid, p. 14.
[28] Jameson, Signature of the Visible, ibid, p. 14.
[29] Jameson, Signature of the Visible, ibid, p. 16.

growth and, accordingly, how it contributed or postponed the development of a modernist cinema. It seems that he believes that Iranian cinema could not establish itself without the middle class and it is the urban and educated generation which made the valuable Iranian cinema possible regardless of colonial forces, imperialism and commercial sector. In my view, it is a problematic perspective. On the one hand, the progressive role of the national bourgeoisie in assisting a film practice which made the national cinema distinct is not deniable. On the other hand, rooting the growth of cinema to the growth of the middle class limits the expansive sphere of cinema to a set of limited preoccupations, forms, styles, etc. As Wayne has discussed, the cinema of the middle class is the second cinema which is

> The cinema of institutionalized national culture, the cinema of authorial expressivity, the cinema of the middle class, the cinema of psychological crisis or, in its more outward facing, externally oriented 'realist' modes, the cinema of poverty as a great moral question (rather than a question of socio-economic relations), and sometimes the cinema of poverty as aesthetic beauty.[30]

This cinema is put against the first cinema which is controlled by corporations and influenced by Hollywood globally, and the third cinema which is politically motivated. In the essay Wayne discusses that more and more all three types of cinema are dialectically related to each other and it would be more accurate not to separate them sharply. However it seems that Dabashi distinguishes and prioritises the cinema of the middle class from the cinema of the masses. Rather Wayne demonstrates that

> These categories refer to cinematic practices that are constantly aware of each other and are in continual process of dialogue, critique and appropriation. The categories refer to a spectrum of possibilities within each type of cinema rather than a fixed homogenous list of pre-determined characteristics.[31]

As the final point it would be suitable to discuss how the political context – both internal to Iran and its relationship to America may have an impact on existing research. Iran and America have had a history of troubled foreign relationships since the end of the WWII. The tension became antagonistic due to

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[30] Wayne, 'The Dialectics of Third Cinema', in *The Routledge Companion to Film and Politics* (eds) Claire Molloy and Yannis Tzioumakis, Routledge, 2015, p. 1.
[31] Wayne, The Dialectics of Third Cinema, ibid, p. 15.

the 1953 coup and the overthrow of democratically elected Prime Minister Dr Mosaddeq. Since then, until the 1979 revolution, the neo-colonial politics of the United States affected the Iranian society, culture, economics and politics in all aspects. The history of Iranian cinema cannot be divided from this tense relationship nor can the historians be regarded as neutral since some of them such as Dabashi and Naficy are also American citizens who live in the United States. As my literature review will consider, this historical background affected historians and their perspectives differently. Dabashi could be seen as a post-colonial intellectual who would like to positively introduce the Iranian cinema and its philosophical, historical and cultural roots, and accordingly, he relies on the ideas of enlightenment, modernist tradition of critique and Frankfurt School. Therefore, within this politically tense force-field, he attempts to construct a bridge for a better understanding of the fate of modernism in Iran in general and cinema in particular.

Iranian Cinema; a political history

The next English book that I will discuss in the literature review is written by Hamid-Reza Sadr, an Iranian film critic and intellectual based in Tehran who wrote about the political history of the Iranian cinema. He has also written a book about the social history of football in Iran and recently has published a novel *You Will Die in Cairo* (2014). What might connect these seemingly scattered subjects is his interest in the history of modern Iran. All three books are based on detailed archives and astonishingly accurate information from primary and secondary resources. His contribution to the history of Iranian cinema is significant in many ways, yet it should be noted that it is not written according to academic criteria and is more akin to a realm that is known as public intellectualism. The book seems to be written for a general non-academic audience. It is a significant research which explores the relation between cinema and politics since its start. Like Dabashi's method it also connects major historical and political events with the production and screening of films yet Sadr's research composes this narration with exceptional knowledge of the socio-political changes in Iran. The information that the book collects is fascinating, new and controversial. The range of films that he examines is far wider than Dabashi's book primarily because he also includes mainstream, commercial and popular films in his analysis and is not limited to a talented few filmmakers.

He organizes his argument according to the historical and political context of cinema, in this way he split the book into chapters based on the chronology of decades in the twentieth century. In this

section, I only focus on chapters five and six which explores the 1960s and 1970s. He usually starts with an analysis of history, politics and economy and then moves on to discuss the films as a sort of 'reflection'. He is also interested to discuss the emergence of types of films, genres and characters which correspond to certain social realities. In other words, his analysis is preoccupied with the relation between base and superstructure yet he does not discuss his theoretical framework at all. It remains a question why sometimes cinema is limited to mere 'reflection' and at other times it had a more complicated dialectical movement. I will demonstrate examples of this approach in order to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of his discussion and sketch out my framework.

The chapter about the Iranian cinema in the 1960s is rich and full of references to less discussed films, he anchors his analysis around central themes such as rural-urban conflict, law and order, the masculine subjectivity and the emergence of the Luti genre[32], the role of censorship, consumerism and changing social relations, etc. At the heart of this chapter he puts the land reform (1962) which reorganized the agricultural work and transformed the social relations of land ownership in order to attract the rural community to enter the age of consumerism.[33] Like most Iranian historians he criticises the reform:

> The government executed the main planks of the rural reforms during 1961-62. An upper ceiling was introduced of 400 hectares for land ownership which meant, in practice, and thanks to new regulations, that businessmen with sufficient means or the right governmental connections were now able to purchase the arable farms on offer. The plan had been that the mechanisation of agriculture would free surplus labourers for employment in urban industries. However, these large industries were still a pipe dream and the reforms turned farmers into consumers. Divided villages were gradually ruined. The state's problems were reflected in the resignation of three prime ministers during 1962-63 period and the 'rural reforms' only added to the tensions. The clergy objected strongly to their content and peasants clashed with authorities in various regions. [34]

In Sadr's view, the consequent social transformations affected cinematic themes and subjects profoundly. For example, in 1963 the Shah severely attacked landowners in a speech and spoke of them

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[32] *Luti* is another name for *Jaheli* or tough guy movies.
[33] Hamid Reza Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, I.B.TAURIS, 2006, p. 90.
[34] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 91.

as stealing the possessions of farmers. Sadr takes the speech as a motivation for a popular cinematic cliché of films in the first half of 1960s; the theme of struggling and hardworking farmers and cruel feudal landowners.[35] In his view socio-economic changes also formed political thought which impacted cinema. For instance, in 1960s popularism and progressiveness were two major themes attributed to the land reform, for, 'both addressed the nation's anxieties over its cataclysmic transformation from an agrarian to a semi-industrial economy … a secret fear of homogenisation haunted the national psyche'.[36]

Sadr, also, indicates the subject of rural-urban conflict which is demonstrated in fears of the city, many films were produced which conveyed messages such as 'the city divides, the village unites'.[37] Another recurrent subject of films is the disappearance of the family as it became impossible to sustain such a form of reproduction in the competitive environment of the urban. 'The frequent disappearance of the parent in the films of this period reflects the situation of the rural family whose migrant father leaves the children in the care of the mother, exposed to multiple dangers'.[38]

Sadr's view about the relation between material conditions and cinematic representation is a novel approach considering the existing literature particularly in English. It shed light on one of the most controversial issues of Iran's modern history and cinema as the apparatus of modernity. As I will discuss further, he moves one step forward from both the common elitism of second cinema and the celebration of first cinema. However, a few points could be raised about his methodology in connecting the materiality with representation. This is a topic which has been discussed in great depth whether the base directly corresponds with the superstructure, or a mediation occurs in between, whether the superstructure is determined by the base and what level of autonomy it could acquire. It would be suitable to refer to Raymond Williams view in *Marxism and Literature* who thought that a Marxian theory of culture is usually started from the consideration about the determining base and the determined superstructure, although he reminds the reader that originally the discussion that how far social being determines consciousness was equally significant.[39] In order to consider issues such as the social process of the production of literature, he traces the changes that occurred in the interpretation of Marx's categories. From his perspective, in transition from Marx to Marxism and in translation from

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[35] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 93.
[36] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 95.
[37] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 95.
[38] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 94-5.
[39] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 75.

the German text to other languages many changes took place which attributed a solid and rigid quality to the categories of base and superstructure. Williams attempted to reconsider these qualities through the reference to various texts by others such as Engels and also references to Marx's original texts in German. He states that the base is often understood as an object and is commonly known as 'the real social existence of man' and 'the real relations of production corresponding to a stage of development of material productive forces' and 'a mode of production at a particular stage of its development'.[40] However, according to Williams, Marx opposes the definition of the base as category, and rather prefers to perceive it as a 'determined historical form'.[41] Williams acknowledges the meaning of base as related to real social existence, relations of production and a mode of production yet he argues for the base to be observed as not being uniform or static. For Marx the development of relations of production and the transformation of the social relations is a profoundly contradictory process. 'It is only when we realize that 'the base', to which it is habitual to refer variations, is itself a dynamic and internally contradictory process that we can begin to free ourselves from the notion of an 'area' or a 'category' with certain fixed properties for deduction to the variable processes of a 'superstructure'.[42] In this way, Williams argues that what is required for cultural study is not the examination of base and superstructure as categories but the particular, effective and often contradictory real processes which forms their relationship.

Regarding Sadr's examination of the consequences of land reform, he demonstrates a rather fixed view about the base. The transformation of the agrarian society into an industrial one finds clear results which are viewed as rather negative. Beyond all doubt, the role of imperialism to create a new class of urban labourers for the new industries and positing Iran in the global market of labour and consumption are among the most recognised and devastating consequences of land reforms. However, I believe that it would be more accurate to observe that historical transition as a contradictory process which produced unexpected and complicated new social relations which were sometimes promising and sometimes harmful. Sadr recognises the depth of land reform when he quotes Arsanjani the prime minister at the time who compared the effects of land reform with the nationalisation of oil.[43] Sadr primarily examines its effects on films yet his negative perspective could be derived from his overall discussion. What I would like to argue for is that despite all its consequences, the land reform liberated

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[40] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 81.
[41] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p81.
[42] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 82.
[43] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, Op cit., p. 92.

peasants from the feudal system, from the closed village life and expanded their possibilities. The new social classes produced new relations of production and new social relations which eventually came into clash with the patriarchal royal system and culminated in the events of 1979. Despite its fascinating approach towards cinema as collective consciousness, there are questions about the quality of Sadr's approach. As Williams proposes when the base-superstructure model is treated rigidly and as static, art and intellectual activities come to be thought of as the 'reflection' of the base. In this problematic approach towards art and cultural phenomenon 'art can be seen as reflecting not 'mere appearances' but the 'reality' behind these: the 'inner nature' of the world, or its 'constitutive forms'.[44] One of the consequences of this philosophically positivist approach is that the prime function of art is then identified as realism, which was to find and register the production and reproduction of life also known as the base. Another important consequence was the idea that if art does not reflect reality and material world then it is 'false' and 'distorted' reflection, the concept of ideology or metaphysics is rooted in this approach too.[45]

Regarding Sadr's approach to the relation between materiality and films, it seems that the reflection modality is deployed significantly. For instance, in the case of films of rural-urban conflict and law and order, they were discussed as 'reflecting' the finished objective world, even the social relations become objectified and in the words of Williams a sort of 'mechanical materialism' occurs.[46] Williams suggests to consider the material world as human activity and a sort of process in making. In the case of films, perhaps, it is also possible to question how films attempted to imagine life beyond what determined it, where the place of dream and wishes were, how the films envisage a desirable future, what rhetoric and visual strategies they invented to widen their expressive limits. It is rather sad when one thinks that in Sadr's account films belong to a finished past even at the time of their making.

Nonetheless, it is important to mention that Sadr does not usually deploy the reflection model. As the industrialization expands and its consequences spread, more complicated form of analysis is required to explain the emerging phenomenon. Sadr moves on to discuss the new *Luti*[47] genre which dominated the mainstream cinema in the 1960s. Sadr connects the emergence of Luti films to the tightening of political censorship towards the end of 1960s. The Luti became a sort of pseudo-rebellious hero who

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[44] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Op cit., p. 95.
[45] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 95-6.
[46] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 96.
[47] *Luti* or *Jahel* is a common name that is given to a sort of lumpen rogue and was one of the central characters of Film Farsi.

justified the passivity and submission of the majority of audience. He embodied the political conflict between the ordinary lower-class and the establishment as he stands for lost morality and traditionalism. Sadr believes that this tendency towards a hero who protects tradition is a consequence of integration into the global market, rise of consumer culture and westernization. As he notes:

> In 1961 the new Prime Minister Ali Amini declared the country bankrupt. The following years The World Bank, the IMF and the USA offered loans of $550 millions, $45 millions and $17 millions respectively … Tehran was rapidly metamorphosing with the arrival of large hotels, conferences for the international dealers, European and American banks concentrating mainly on currency exchange, boutiques, cabarets, discos, foreign cuisine, schools teaching dancing, ballet, piano and guitar. New magazines brought the latest fashion, decor and architecture to the attention of Iranians. Even streets were renamed in accordance with the new wave of Westernisation: Kennedy Square, Eisenhower Avenue, and Elizabeth II Boulevard.[48]

Regarding this rapid transference, Sadr observes the *Luti* hero as a resistive figure against the domination of modernity. Considering the class position, *Luti* belonged to the lower classes, he could not be identified according to his place in the job market and the rapid growing modern division of labour as he was not educated and did not possess enough first capital to start a trade. Sadr states: 'The honourable and lovable rogue of the *Luti* tradition stood for all the forgotten and alienated victims of urban growth: vagabonds, smugglers, extortionists, blackmailers, dealers, cut-throats, gamblers and pickpockets. The poverty and the hopelessness of the subculture created a great deal of sympathy'.[49]

Despite his socially low position, the *Luti* was proud of his poverty and the genre became a vehicle to humiliate the affluent and *Luti* self-respect was rooted in fighting with the tyrants and the westernized wealthy. For Sadr, the *Luti* was the antithesis of urban values in a period when consumer culture was gradually becoming dominant[50]

Another point which Sadr identifies is the depiction of the West as a sort of taboo in films of the period and particularly in the *Luti* genre. There were a number of films such as *The Foreign Bride* (1964) in which the cinematic rogue made fun of foreigners and through the mechanism of comedy and ridicule

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[48] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, Op cit., p. 111.
[49] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 117.
[50] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 116.

filmmakers attempted to approach this taboo yet they remained at a safe distance from it. Sadr indicates that this kind of film began to appear on the wide screen while the Law of Capitulation (1963)[51] came into effect and led to the assassination of the prime minister of the time Hassan-Ali Mansure.

The modality that Sadr deploys to explain the emergence and dominance of the *Luti* genre seems to be akin to what Williams called 'mediation' which attempts to go beyond the rigidity of 'reflection'. Mediation indicates an active process where intercession, reconciliation and interpretation between two adversaries become possible.[52] The general assumption is that a direct reflection of social realities cannot be identified in art since art enters a process of mediation through which the first object of investigation is transformed.[53] Not a negative ideology (which intends to unmask art from the disguised form that it takes up through mediation), Williams highlights a rather positive sense of ideology expressed by the Frankfurt School. 'All active relations between different kinds of being and consciousness are inevitably mediated and this process is not a separate agency – a medium- but intrinsic to the properties of the related kind'.[54] In this way mediation points at a positive process in social reality, 'to the extent that it indicates an active and substantial process 'mediation' is always the less alienated concept. In its modern development it approaches the sense of inherent constitutive consciousness.'[55]

Regarding the emergence and dominance of *Luti* genre in Sadr's argument, it seems that it is based on the modality of mediation. Here, a social and active process could be observed, in that the characteristics of an already present figure in culture, the Luti, which embodied patriarchy and traditional values of an agrarian society, comes to represent the resistive figure against the growth of industrialization, consumerism, westernization and intense class conflict. The *Luti* finds a new role and a new social meaning in this new genre. Sadr goes into a great length of description and discussion about the *Luti* genre which is the reason why I discuss it here. It is important to mention that in fact this section of the chapter in his book is an original contribution in English about this cultural phenomenon since other critics and commentators before him did not recognise its social and political significance and broadly speaking they categorise the *Luti* figure and films in the wide range of Film Farsi and

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[51] This law endowed legal immunity to the Americans who worked in Iran.
[52] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Op cit., p. 97.
[53] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 98.
[54] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 98.
[55] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 99.

downgrade it as commercial cinema. It is interesting that Sadr nowhere uses the term Film Farsi and it seems that the popular and mainstream cinema has its own value and conveys certain social meanings and practices of collective life. Also, I would like to highlight that in my research I am interested in his general outlook on the mainstream cinema and would not rely solely on second and third cinematic films since the first cinema also provides us with specific perspectives about history, space and place of people.

With emphasis on the arrival of a new kind of films which would provide an alternative view to social realities, Sadr moves on to the next chapter to discuss the films of 1970s. In his view it was a decade which was characterised by the increasing political pressure of the authoritarian royal regime and the rapid and constant growth of oil revenues. Despite the optimistic perspective that the state reinforced, dark, critical and bitter films were produced which demonstrated the emergence of a point of view other than the mainstream and commercial cinema. Sadr starts the chapter with an introduction of Mehrjouyi's films and particularly his seminal masterpiece *The Cow* (1969). He describes how the film was produced through what could be seen as an early example of a modern collective work. The film revolves around events in a closed village which under the pressure of the ministry of culture Mehrjouyi had to introduce it as belonging to decades before the reign of the second Pahlavi.[56] The self-subsistence economy of the village centred around the only cow in the village ends when the cow mysteriously dies. The film offers a novel view towards poverty, as it

> was not depicted as dignified or innocent. It was shown as ugly, bitter and desperate.
> This was the first Iranian film to deal with the small-scale, the unredeemed and
> unheroic … in *The Cow* we find evidence that the upwardly mobile forces of the period
> have halted: optimism had turned to paranoia. *The Cow* emphasises loss, insecurity
> and lack of true friendship. It is a post-apocalyptic vision of life in which hope is as
> scarce as a commodity as joy. At no time do we see peasants engaged in agricultural
> work, the bleakness of the environment militating against the very notion of growth.
> Apart from stark poverty, *The Cow* is saturated throughout by a suffocating sense of
> fear: the villagers' fear of cross-border raids by rival tribes, an invisible potential

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[56] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, Op cit., p. 133.

menace forever lurking beyond the boundaries. The conservative village in the story is

a microcosm of Iranian society.[57]

Another film directed Masoud Kimiayi is emblematic of the growth of Iranian film noir. His films *Geisar* (1969), *Reza, The Motorcyclist* (1970), *Dash Akol*(1971) and *Khak* (1974) are about characters who are driven by revenge and rebellion. Sadr believes that violence indicated anger about class inequality and corruption yet it was partly related to the fear that the true individual was disappearing in the rapidly developing industrial world. The cinema reflected a sort of conflict about the homogenisation of individuals[58]. 'The most striking figure of this new antihero was that he was a love-hate figure for the audiences, who had lost their taste for fantasy and were preparing to embrace violence'.[59] The change of social themes affected the aesthetics too. For instance, in *Khodahafez Rafigh* (*Goodbye Friend*, 1971) Amir Naderi deployed a new technique. He preferred natural instead of studio lighting and invented a new style of melodrama by moving the setting into the streets. The camera captures the dirty alleys of lower-class Tehran and provides a view into its desolation. In this way through the use of the black and white documentary style of its cinematography *Goodbye friend* becomes a classic film of low-budget and realist filmmaking which combined social concerns and natural settings and became an inspiration for other filmmakers.[60] My research discusses a number of important film noir as they present a substantial transformation in the representation of space. The move from studio to natural lighting, the frequent use of documentary style black and white cinematography for films which are set in outdoor urban spaces, the growth of the types of various spaces whether static, private or collective could be traced in the film noir of the period as it aimed to explicitly unmask the violence of the urban, the intense class conflict, the impact of imperialism on everyday life, etc,. Indeed, in the discussions about film noir Sadr comes to directly indicate the role of space to construct multiple levels of significations which are primarily related to class politics. For instance, when examining a film noir movie one cannot ignore the role of the representation of the city to transfer the sense of imprisonment, fear and helplessness.

The city in film therefore came to represent a prison that incarcerated men who had

reached breaking point. In *Deadlock* (*Tangna*, Amir Naderi 1973) and *Zir-e-Pust-e Shab*

(*Under the Skin of the City*, Freydoun Gole, 1974) Tehran becomes a symbol of social

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[57] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 131-2.
[58] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 138.
[59] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 137.
[60] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p.143.

injustice and urban squalor. The failure of *Deadlock* 's protagonist to find somewhere

safe to hide only serves to underline the city's indifference towards romantic notions

such as sanctuary … The central character in Gole's *Kandu* (*Beehive*, 1975) fares little

better. His journey from café to café, where he gets through numerous drinks without

paying a penny, becomes an excuse to comment on the vast class differences tearing

the capital apart. The film presents us with a disquietingly grotesque parody of this

dynamic at its most savagely self-destructive.[61]

In the rest of this chapter Sadr concentrates on the emergence, enhancement and achievements of the
new wave filmmakers. Unlike Dabashi, Sadr discusses the new wave filmmakers not individually but as a
group. Attempting to find similarities, he defines a chronological order for their emergence which
started in the mid 60s with the *Night of the Hunchback (Shab-e ghouzi, 1964)* and continues through
various genres. He believes that whether in a hyperrealist form such as Shahid-Sales films or lyrical and
allegoric films such as *The Stranger and the Fog*, this group of films sought a true Iranian *essence*
through creating an alternative to the mainstream cinema. 'These works successful or otherwise
represent the golden age of Iranian cinema before the revolution, an age belittled by those who equate
Iranian cinema simply with its international achievements in the 1990s'.[62] Thus, the prime question for
many of new wave filmmakers was what this essence of being Iranian was and how it could best be
represented.

Towards the end of the chapter Sadr focuses on individual filmmakers and their films and discusses
their approach to portray the social life of the society and their political signification. Among the films
that he points out, *Mogholha* (*Mongols*, 1973), *OK, Mister* (1978) directed by Parviz Kimiavi. All these
films are preoccupied with the economic and cultural consequences of the increase of oil revenues
during 1970s. Sadr believes that *Mongols* engages with the effect of technology, new media and
especially television. At a metaphorical level the film compares the invasion of television to the rural
communities with the invasion of Mongols and criticises the submission of people to consumerism. *OK,
Mister* provides a satirical, sharp and critical account of the Western presence in Iran. What these films
share is a non-realist, satirical and critical portrait of 1970s Iran. In my research I engage with them as
they are set in allegorical and metaphoric spaces. The last chapter of Sadr's book concludes with the

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[61] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 161-3.
[62] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 152.

events of 1979 and an account of a strike of workers in all sectors including in cinema.[63] Sadr states that it was not possible to continue filmmaking and screening because of the bankruptcy of the whole industry

> many factors were to blame: an increase in the cost of production and promotion; high taxation of filmmaking; disorganised distribution; arbitrary censorship; lack of screening in decent cinemas for native films; lack of support from the ministry of art and culture; the invasion of the market by cheap, vulgar foreign films, and intense competition from national television.[64]

Even the cinema owners went on strike in 1978 and during the upheaval of last year before the revolution nearly 31 cinemas were burnt by the public. It is interesting that the day of revolution 11 February was the day that NIRT[65] was occupied and the people broadcast the voice of revolution from the radio. During the months after 11 February only four hours of programs were broadcast in which films of the scenes of revolution combined with the new revolutionary songs announced a new era of film therefore new types of emerging spaces.

In this way, Sadr concludes the history of the two decades which he started by Land Reform and ended by the 1979 revolution. To historicise this complicated period of time he applies various methodologies. Primarily his analysis relies on films' textual analysis while he juxtaposes them with selective historical and political events. The interpretation of the narrative level of films occupies a significant weight in his overall comments. Sometimes he refers to the process of production and distribution particularly if the film met obstacles such as censorship. Sadr's analysis also relies on the audience and he provides a reading of viewer's heart and mind such as the fantasies that films induced. Nonetheless, the viewer's positive or negative reception to films is not based on statistics or documented evidences. Generally, he does not refer to journal articles, archives, interviews etc. I believe that his analysis is reliable since as a film critic he is familiar with the realm of Iranian cinema. Also, he grew up and worked in the environment that he describes and it is possible to refer to his analysis as the reflection of the discursive knowledge on cinema. Sadr's book is a valuable resource which reflects the already existing views in the Iranian discourse. However, the methodology of my research relies both on textual analysis and documented perspectives such as interviews, archives, journals and the already existing views available

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[63] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 161-2.
[64] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, ibid, p. 164
[65] National Radio and Television Institute

in the general discourse of pre-1979 cinema. Also, I attempt to engage with films not through the duality of base and superstructure but as productions of continuing processes. In this way the films do not merely reflect the past but also envisage a future.

A Social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years, 1941-1978

The third book *A Social History of Iranian Cinema* written by Hamid Naficy was published in 2012 by Duke University Press. This book which is based on a significantly wide range of research of primary and secondary resources is an invaluable reference in English about the history of Iranian cinema. Naficy explores the entire trajectory of cinema until recent years, thus only volume two is relevant to my research as it considers the Industrializing years, 1941-1978. Even this thick volume includes an expansive area of discussions about the political economy of the industry and the contextual and textual formations of the new film genres. Unlike the previous books that I explored, Naficy's research offers a remarkable resource of information about the previously unexplored realms of the Iranian cinema. It is written in an academic style and it seems that it addresses a specific range of readers who are interested in professional research about Iranian history and Iranian cinema in particular.

His methodology is based on interpretation and analysis of many interviews, books, periodicals and articles in Farsi. He has also used government statistics and research for the first time which offers an extraordinary glimpse into the textual formation of cinema during 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, he used the archives of British and American governments which illuminate how these two states assisted the Pahlavi regime to form modern cultural institutes and ministries and guided them through their cultural policies. It is particularly important to note that the issue of censorship which has existed until now is first structured and formed with the advice of American cultural agents in Iran. The issue of censorship which Naficy discusses in length is in fact one of my main criticism of his analysis. He believes that censorship was a cultural heritage of Oriental despotism, but I will argue that it is a modern phenomenon and it is the outcome of the contradiction between forces and social relations of production within capitalism.

Another significant characteristic of Naficy's book is that he highlights the mode of production and attempts to base his cultural analysis on it. This is a remarkable step forward in the area of research about Iranian cinema as the previous researchers did not refer to the mode of production explicitly or implicitly. Sadr highlights the transition from agricultural to the industrial society during the 1960s and

also refers to the relation of the Pahlavi regime with IMF and similar global institutes which indicates the growth of financial capital during the 1970s. Yet, he does not explicitly discuss films as cultural products in relation to the existing mode of production. Therefore, Naficy's methodology to consider the mode of production as one of the bases of his analysis could be seen as a major transformation in the framework of interpretation.

Nonetheless, Naficy's conception of the mode of production is rather problematic and raises many questions. He does not recognise feudal or capitalist or socialist modes of production as adequate terminology to describe the Iranian context. Therefore, he refers to a hybrid mode of production which is a composition of capitalist and statist mode of production and believes that the Pahlavi regime embodied a mixture of artisanal, capitalist and socialist modes of filmmaking. In fact he seems to imply that state funding could transfer a capitalist state to a socialist one. Although, the evidence that he provides for this type of production is strong and relatively convincing yet in my exploration I will discuss that it could be seen as the capitalist mode of production. To do this, I will refer to Marx's analysis of capitalism and will particularly emphasise on the length of working day and will suggest that the mode of production during the 1960s and 1970s could be seen as a case of the mode of producing absolute surplus value. Moreover, I will refer to Wallerstein theory of world-system in order to situate the industrialization process in the context of the global expansion of capitalism and it seems that the Iranian cinema demonstrates a case of fast integration into the growing global system of the entertainment industry which facilitates the flow of capital and modern division of labour.

I will start this section with the documentary cinema as Naficy himself started the book with this type of filmmaking. This chapter of his book is the first and only research in English which is written about the Iranian documentary cinema and provides an appropriate framework to construct the formation of modern practices of filmmaking in Iran.

Iranian Documentary Cinema: A Tableau of the Contradictions of Modernism

The national documentary cinema in Iran has been at the centre of political struggles from its early days until now. Today, it is common for Iranian youth who have cultural, artistic, intellectual and political interests to make a short documentary film. Considering the development of technology it has become easy for individuals to make films without the support of capital or the state. In recent years it has even become a sort of artisanal practice through which only one person can write, shoot, edit, produce and

distribute a short film. This is a condition which offers significant freedom to the practitioners who do not want to be subjugated by the rules of the state and the market, particularly in a situation whereby in the context of feature films a group of elite filmmakers receive capital from foreign cultural institutes and other directors have to rely on profit-seeking private sector or follow the demands of the state to receive funding.

This flourishing culture of the documentary cinema did not appear suddenly since, as Naficy explicates in his book, it has inherited a substantive culture of resisting power through developing a diverse range of strategies in the mode of production, textual formation, genres and various authorial tactics to save documentary cinema from the control of imperialism, totalitarianism, exploitation and censorship which were largely developed during the 1960s and 1970s. In my exploration of this invaluable chapter I will first consider the process of modernization which started in the time of the first Pahlavi Shah who developed the industry with a view at its ideological outcomes. Then I will look at how the second Pahlavi continued and extensively expanded this process with the direct aid of American government both in terms of infrastructure of the industry and the required training of technicians, producers and directors which formed a sort of propagandist, pro-royal, pro-imperialist and specifically anti-communist productions characterized by an official statist and institutional style. Furthermore, I will discuss how the emerging and young filmmakers attempted to resist this wave of homogenisation by developing a counter-hegemonic style which Naficy has named *poetic realism*. However, Naficy criticises the political and critical motivations of this group of filmmakers and blames them for not being grateful for the opportunities that the state provided for them. I will suggest that the clash between the state and the independent filmmakers could be seen as an example of the inherent contradiction of modernism which Marx identified as the incongruity between the forces and the relations of production, thus the filmmakers did not oppose modernism but exhausted the possibilities that the modern mode of production offered them in order to socialize the production of information and knowledge for the people and not the ruling class.

Naficy starts his discussion by illuminating the mode of producing film during the reign of the first Pahlavi, Reza Shah. At the time, in his view it was characterized by a sort of artisanal production whereby a limited number of skilled people produced short films, mostly newsreels, in the workshops and were screened at the public places. In Naficy's view Reza Shah changed the artisanal sector into an ideological apparatus[66] and issued the Public Opinion Guidance Organization (POGO) in 1938 which was

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[66] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Op Cit., p. 50.

'the most far reaching and coherent effort at propagating an official culture, but this short lived endeavour did not systematically involve film.'[67]

Naficy states that his son Mahammad-reza Pahlavi transformed the artisanal mode of documentary production and exhibition into a largely statist, hybrid and semi-industrial production along with the centralization and modernization of all other sectors which was advised by the Allied power's embassies and cultural attaches[68]. The institutionalization of documentary production was assisted and set up by USIS[69] and Syracuse Team[70] who finally founded the Ministry of Culture and Art (MCA). They provided technical support such as sound stages, black-and-white and later colour film processing labs, a recording studio and graphic, photography and publication department. In addition, they trained filmmakers and technical personnel to run the centre during 1951-1959. After the Syracuse Team left Iran they had educated eighty filmmakers and one hundred and ninety five audiovisual specialists[71]. In this way MCA was formed which administrated fine arts practices and had the responsibility of overseeing the visual, performing and literary arts throughout the country. In addition, the National Institute of Radio and TV (NIRT) was established which was a place to produce, exhibit and broadcast nonfiction and short subject films.

In general, Naficy connects the expansion of the documentary cinema in relation to the military, the national Iranian oil company and various other governmental ministries and several nongovernmental organizations as they commissioned projects for them. Also, independent and commercial film studios started producing non-fiction films for the purpose of education, training, propaganda and publicity[72].

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[67] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p.51.
[68] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 49.
[69] United States Information Service
[70] Naficy introduces this team through 'Don Williams, the head of Syracuse University's Audiovisual Centre, who engaged in September 1950 to conduct a feasibility study of producing films inside Iran. He met with government ministers, people from the University of Tehran, U.S embassy officials, and representatives of the Iran-Rockefeller and Near East Foundations. He also visited agricultural, public health, and teacher-training institutes. He was impressed by positive and welcoming Iranians and came to believe that visual education could be an inexpensive conduit for scientific education in a country as vast as Iran. He worked out with these officials the outline of a plan for visual education to further modernity in Iran. The plan recommended that an audiovisual centre be established at the Ministry of Education and that the USIA (United States Information Agency) became directly involved in filmmaking and visual education. Under a contract between the USIA and Syracuse University, Williams headed a team eventually comprising thirty-eight audiovisual and film production specialists – known as the Syracuse Team – that operated in Iran from March 1951 to June 1959'. Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 40.
[71] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 63.
[72] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 65-7.

Naficy indicates that at this early stage of development the American model of production and film style became prevalent as

> The USIS-educated filmmakers trained in the style fanned out and took positions throughout the blossoming motion-picture industry. By making widely distributed official films themselves, they set the standards for the documentary form; as managers of film production in government agencies and elsewhere, they enforced those standards; and as teachers in film schools and colleges, they set a powerful model of style for new practitioners in training.[73]

Naficy's description of the involvement of American state and American commercial companies to establish the documentary cinema in Iran points at how the modernization of industry took place as the process of integrating Iran into the world-system mainly through expanding the structures of the division of labour. As Wallerstein defines it:

> world-system is a large geographical zone within which there is a division of labour and hence significant internal exchange of basic or essential goods as well as flows of capital and labour … it is not bounded by a unitary political structure, rather there are many political units inside the world-economy, loosely tied together in our modern world-system in an interstate system. And a world-economy contains many cultures and groups – practicing many religions, speaking many languages, differing in everyday patterns.[74]

Wallerstein emphasises the division of labour as the constituting factor of the system[75] 'since world-economies lack the unifying cement of an overall political structure or a homogenous culture, what holds them together is the efficiency of the division of labour, and this efficiency is a function of the constantly expanding wealth that a capitalist system provides'.[76]

In the light of the theory of world-system and its constituting function as division of labour, it is possible to observe that the state support for the development of documentary cinema was far from a socialist

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[73] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p.64.
[74] Emanuel Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis: An Introduction*, Duke University Press, 2006, p. 23.
[75] Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis: An Introduction*, ibid, p.23.
[76] Wallerstein, *World-System Analysis: An Introduction*, ibid, p. 24.

strategy that Naficy states.[77] The fact that the American and Iranian states were involved in the process could illuminate how the division of labour was transferred to the Iranian unit as part of the world-economy to facilitate the flow of capital within the entertainment industry to support the cultural hegemony required for its function. Naficy indicates that

> the imbrication of foreign policy and global commerce were instrumental in the formation and politics of cultural inc. and had far-reaching consequences for both foreign policy and media industries, as one fed the other. In developing countries such as Iran television stations equipped by American companies provided a key tool for fighting communism and a powerful venue for exhibiting American culture, commercial movies, USIA[78] and USIS films and indigenous official films.[79]

In this way a new cultural phenomenon appeared as civil servant filmmakers, who earned a regular salary from the state and were required to make propaganda about the Shah himself, his family, his policies and also the institutions that employed them. Their reliance on the state made them independent from the demands of the market and also the choices of the audience. Instead of the requirement of the box-office they had to meet the approval of the government. The statist documentaries seemed to play a constitutive role to construct new power relations between the sovereign and the people. For instance, the films that they produced were used by the information agency for the purpose of surveillance. As Naficy notes Issari, one of the filmmakers trained by the American team, shot the scenes of people's demonstration against Shah in 1963 which was called by Ayatollah Khomeyni. It appeared that his aim was to document the events of the day yet in fact surveillance was the prime aim of documentation. The film was used to identify and arrest the protesters and was brought as evidence against them at the court.[80] Therefore, it would not be

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[77] Naficy calls the dominant mode of production in cinema a hybrid mode which was a blend of socialist and capitalist mode of production: 'The state did not own all the means of production. Instead, a hybridized state-private political economy had been instituted, one in which the state set the terms for the public and private sectors by organizing massive, long-term, national development plans (like communist and socialist countries) through the gigantic Organization Plan (Sazman-e Barnameh). It controlled the private sector's compliance with its plans and laws through judicial processes, coercion, corruption, censorship, and force; and it collaborated with the private sector and did its bidding in developing rules and regulations that benefited that sector (as in capitalist countries).' Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 148.
[78] United States Information Agency
[79] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Op cit., p.62.
[80] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 56-7.

irrelevant to deduce that the first documentaries commissioned by the state had a clear political function one to document the people for the sovereign and the other to be used against the people.

Along with the industrialization of the country which transformed the power relations in the society 'these filmmakers constituted a one-way, top-down means through which government officials communicated both with their institutional subjects and with citizens at large'.[81] This condition influenced the style and form of their films which generated an official style of documentary through which 'a wall-to-wall, voice-of-God, off screen narration which provided description, gave information, and cued viewers to particular aspects of each scene, became the norm.'[82]

At this point MCA was the major sponsor of its own civil servants and other freelance directors which commissioned productions about the fine arts, architecture and archaeology. The projects had both internal and external markets. Naficy categorises the films as ethnographic documentaries[83] which included films about culture and rituals, tribes and tribal migration, about indigenous technologies, travel documentaries and social protest documentaries. One of the impetuses of the institutional support was to facilitate the formation of national identity. Another impetus was that because of the displacement of the population and psychical and social restructuring of society a sort of urgency to document emerged which aimed to preserve the country's traditions, cultural expressions and lifestyles before their disappearance due to rapid modernization.[84]

I would like to suggest that this situation was the starting point for new and independent filmmakers to produce films that criticized their statist institutes, who treated the commissioning projects as an opportunity to document the effect of industrialization on people instead of celebrating their sponsors. This motivation generated a sort of clash between the state and filmmakers which resulted in the censorship or banning of their films. To resist their limitations, the filmmakers created new styles and audiovisual strategies to bypass the sensor. Naficy names their strategies as *poetic realism*, 'a style through which filmmakers subvert the official style of the documentary and its direct, propagandist forces by various lyrical and symbolic uses of indirection, by contra punctual strategies of sound and image editing and by poetic narration.'[85]

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[81] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 61.
[82] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 74.
[83] By ethnographic films Naficy means those productions which aimed to represent one culture to another or to itself.
[84] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Op cit., p. 99-100.
[85] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 76.

Naficy discusses many filmmakers yet I indicate only two which I find relevant to my research, Ebrahim Golestan and Kamran Shirdel. These two filmmakers pioneered making industrial documentaries and developed the poetic style in their own way while they were funded by the state. Ebrahim Golestan founded a production company known as Golestan film workshop where with the assistance of Arthur Elton the head of Shell Oil Company Film Unit the most recent equipment was provided in the workshop. The oil consortium commissioned many of his films and did not interfere in their work. In *Wave, Coral and Rock* (1961) one of the first institutional industrial documentaries that Golestan made, the work of oil company sponsor was highlighted which celebrated a sort of nationalist theme that anticipated a modern and industrial Iran. However, Naficy does not believe that it was a propaganda film as it demonstrates awareness of the social cost of industrialization,

> The film encapsulated one of the ironic paradoxes of socially conscious documentaries, almost all of whom were leftists and opposed to the rapacious and repressive state, such as Golestan, who in making the film indirectly promoted the state that they opposed. Through the sponsorship of documentaries the state either co-opted and rewarded its dissidents or alternatively tamed, side lined and banned them.[86]

Here we encounter a problem with Naficy's explanation as to why the Pahlavi state banned the films that it funded. Naficy does not probe this question profoundly. He blames political criticism in films for absolving 'Iranians of any responsibility for their own failures'. He also calls socially conscious filmmakers rather lazy 'for instead of digging into the deeper and multiple causes of social misery and protests, they simply blame the government. In turn, this facile political critique paved the way for filmmakers' censorship, thus providing them with another reason to demonize the government and thus strengthening a vicious circle that bound an oppressive government to its nagging critics'.[87]

Instead of blaming the committed filmmakers and in order to illuminate the reason of the contradiction of the state, I would like to draw attention to the Marxist theory of contradiction between forces and relations of production. The forces of production in terms of industrialization of industries and the production of film come into conflict with the existing social relations. Further into this argument, I will illuminate this argument through a reference to other films.

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[86] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 89.
[87] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 124.

For instance, the condition of Shirdel could be helpful to examine this situation. Kamran Shirdel who is a graduate from Rome school of architecture, made some of the first social protest documentaries as I will extensively discuss his films in my research, Here, I only critically explore Naficy's ambivalence towards Shirdel's works. Shirdel made all his documentaries with the support of MCA. Yet all of them were banned and were not screened until 1979. I think that it is possible to view his works as the case of guerrilla cinema. In that 'filmmaking was undertaken when filmmakers are working in conditions of political danger and state authoritarianism, when their work may be seized, censored or when they themselves might be imprisoned, the only way they can film is by using secrecy and subterfuge'.[88]

For instance, in *Qale* (or *Women's quarter*,1970) he was commissioned by the organization of Women headed by Ashraf, the Shah's sister, to make a film about the progress that the organization made in the life of prostitutes in Tehran. In appearance he accepted this mission but in reality he made a film about the miseries of prostitutes and demonstrated that institutional help was minor and indicated that prostitution was systematically produced by the growing poverty and in his film he drew our attention to the fact that for many women it was not a choice but the force of industrialization which absorbed unskilled labour from the rural and periphery to prostitution. Indeed the organization of Women would not fund a protest documentary, thus Shirdel resorted to subterfuge to be able to interview people freely, otherwise such a film was not possible to make. And in fact, MCA discovered the materials he had collected and just before finishing the film all his voice files and negatives were seized and the project remained unfinished until 1979 when the materials were returned to him and he finished and screened it right after the revolution.

In an interview that I conducted, Shirdel mentioned how he deceived the authorities to attract their trust and use their equipment while he was making radical films. To subvert the official style of state sponsored documentary he created a style which Naficy identifies as "Critical Juxtaposition" in that he relied 'on the visual to counter the oral' and put the 'official ideology next to lived experiences'. In this way he invented a modernist and counter-hegemonic style which included multi layers of signification. Naficy discusses that in this style Shirdel 'conforms to a powerful Iranian ideological orientation which distrusts manifest meanings (i.e. the world of appearance) in the interest of uncovering a valued and authentic core meaning'.[89] Indeed, such rhetorical strategies could be seen as being rooted in the culture and tradition. Nonetheless, I think that it is more sensible to consider it as it aimed to subvert

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[88] Wayne, *Political Film: The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, Pluto Press, 2001, p. 56.
[89] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Op cit., p. 124.

the official form of documentaries since it expresses a non-official, critical and militant proposition about the reality of poverty and contemporary injustices. Instead of indiginisation of cinematic strategies that Naficy is interested in, it is possible to observe Shirdel's editorial inventions such as critical juxtaposition as being influenced by political modernism. It seems that in Shirdel's film we encounter what Brecht called a social gestus that is a typical condition taken from tangible everyday experiences and presented for the purpose of analysis.[90] 'For Brecht realism takes its cue from the technological and social exigencies of the moment: new technologies and the mass nature of man. To work with those new exigencies demanded experimentation and the invention of new aesthetic techniques'.[91] Similarly, critical juxtaposition could be seen as an aesthetic strategy to use the sound and visual technologies in order to produce new interpretation of reality which the official style did not allow.

However, as I quoted above, Naficy believes that the latent meaning of Shirdel's work is not accurate and comprehensive and in his films he represented people as the victims of the state and ignored people's responsibility to enhance their lives. It seems that Naficy relies on liberal judgment which emphasises individuals and underestimates the power of social and political structures which limit people's freedom to make progress in their lives.

Nonetheless, I believe that when a film highlights a social phenomenon it would be accurate to first identify the existing structures which affirms and reproduces it. Moreover, in my research I will not rely on the notion of the laziness of filmmakers since I believe that censorship and authoritarianism affected the scope of investigation and limited the boundaries of documentation.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight that Naficy's investigation on documentary cinema is an invaluable resource which I rely on for the information that he collected. Yet, I believe that filmmakers were not lazy and were not ungrateful to the facilities that the state provided. Also, they did not oppose modernism or industrialization, rather with the assistance of statist infrastructure they aimed to transform the existing social relation, to subvert the authoritarian nature of civil servant's production and to uncover the hidden injustices which was denied under the guise of celebrating progresses. They brought forward the fact that only a limited number of people within the ruling class benefited from its

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[90] Leslie, 'Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film', Op cit., p. 48.
[91] Leslie, 'Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film', Ibid, p. 49.

advantages and the main aim of filmmaking was to democratize and socialize the advantages of modernism.

What was the mode of production?

In the following chapters of the book Naficy discusses in length the commercial cinema and its evolution, its contextual and formation characteristics and examines the relation of private sector with the state. He illuminates the process of industrialization and its consequences for the cinema industry and provides evidence for what he has named as the hybrid mode of production which is 'combining industrial and artisanal practices, statist and commercial funding and control, and Iranian and Western cultural and narrative and cinematic forms'.[92] Naficy proposes that because of the state intervention in the circulation of capital by means such as pricing the tickets and censorship which regulated the production of films, the mode of production was not entirely capitalist but rather a hybrid form of various contradictory practices. I attempt to re-consider his reading of the hybrid mode through a reference to Marx and Engels, and also Therborn. First in *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels argued that the state could be seen as the organizing committee for the bourgeoisie and the ruling class. What is referred to as the commercial sector had strong economic and political bond with the royal bourgeoisie which managed the state for the purpose of making more profit (surplus value) and centralization. Second, that censorship demonstrated the internal contradiction within the process of industrialization whereby films as new technological media destabilized existing social relations beyond the capacity of the bourgeoisie to estimate its consequences. Censorship could be seen as a mechanism to regulate the effect of cinema on the social relations. Third, that there is evidence which could lead us to deduce that the mode of producing films was capitalist although it did not develop in the way that it did in the West. My proposition relies on the issue of the length of the working day which demonstrated a mode of extracting absolute surplus value. To further this proposition, I will rely on the detailed information that Naficy himself collected in the book illuminating the capitalist nature of production. This argument has an important consequence for my research as I will investigate the production of hegemonic spaces in relation to the capitalist mode of production.

Naficy states that

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[92] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Op cit., p.147.

the state did not own all the means of production, instead a hybridised statist-private political economy had been instituted, one in which the state set the terms for the public and private sectors by organizing massive, long-term national development plans (like communist and socialist countries) through the gigantic organization plan (sazman-e barnameh). It controlled the private sector compliance with its plans and laws through judicial processes, coercion, corruption, censorship and force; it collaborated with the private sector and its bidding in developing rules and regulations that benefited that sector (as in capitalist countries).[93]

Naficy identifies the industrialization as transference from artisanal mode to the assembly production which contributed to a culture of montage. The main consequence was the growth of production for mass consumption, a new star system and diversification of movie genres.[94] He categorises some of the factors which established the hybrid mode of production which I briefly indicate:

1) There was an increase in population and a demographic change occurred which provided new spectators for cinema. Although, Naficy does not indicate but it is possible to think that the surplus labour which migrated to the urban in search of work contributed to the growth of spectators.[95]

2) The number of cinemas and movie houses increased in the urban centres particularly in Tehran which offered low ticket prices as it was subsidised by the state until the mid-1970. The policy of fixing the price of tickets became gradually problematic for the commercial sector.[96]

3) The import of foreign films increased which were American, European and particularly Italian and Indian. During the 1970s because of disagreement with American companies on the issue of ticket prices the American and European films were replaced by films from India, Hong Kong and Soviet Union. In addition, the number of domestic production increased due to the growing demand and cultural policies. In this period there was also a substantive growth in the film periodicals and festivals.[97]

4) A copyright law was enforced which protected the rights of authors and artists until thirty years after their death. Naficy states that 'this law, part of the country's and film industry's modernization process, served to protect Iranian films within the country; however Iranian films were not protected

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[93] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 148.
[94] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 149.
[95] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 155.
[96] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 156-8.
[97] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 159-61.

internationally, nor were foreign movies protected in Iran, for Iran was not a signatory to the Geneva copyright conventions of 1952.'[98] It is important to mention that the cinema industry, particularly the commercial sector, benefited significantly from the lack of copyright law considering the foreign movies. As my interview with Ali Abbasi and other evidences brought by Naficy illuminated the emerging domestic production relied on adaptation from foreign films particularly in the beginning. The absence of a good script and professional script writers propelled many producers to adaptation which combined elements from the native culture with foreign scripts. This kind of hybridity was not possible if Geneva conventions were fully enforced.

5) Another factor which in Naficy's view established the hybrid mode of production was the formation of labour unions which represented professionals in the industry. Because of the efforts of these unions film was registered as an industry in 1965 with Iran's Chamber of Commerce. It included actors' syndicate, film exhibitors, the society of the Iranian film industry which chiefly included producers and dabbers.[99] In my interview with Ali Abbasi, who was also the chairman for the union of producers, he recalled that the union was often unsuccessful to protect the rights of producers, there was competition between the producers and themselves with the state. It seemed that the union mainly served to reconcile hostile and competitive bodies of producers, cinema owners and the state. Therefore, it more resembled a trade organization which aimed to control and regulate the increasingly aggressive market rather than protecting the labour.

6) Naficy also indicates the establishment of film production studios, distributers and chain cinemas in detail[100] which reveals that many of their founders were investors in other fields who realized that cinema was turning to a modern field of capital accumulation and it was a suitable industry to expand the flow of capital. For instance, Naficy mentions Mohammad-Karim Arbab who came into this business in 1942 without any background in cinema. In 1965 he founded his own film and distribution company named Ferdowsi Films, while he owned thirteen movie houses and seven nightclubs.[101] Among the studio owners were also professional directors such as Ismail Kushan known as the father of Iranian film Industry who founded Pars Film Studio and produced ninety-one movies and directed twenty-eight himself.[102]

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[98] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 168.
[99] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 168.
[100] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 168-76.
[101] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 175-6.
[102] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 175.

7) The arrival of film periodicals such as *Setar-e sinama* and the expansion of film related news and articles in other periodicals.

8) The opening of film clubs (some of these clubs were in relation to foreign embassies such as British, USSR, German, French, etc).

9) The development of censorship apparatuses and regulations: Naficy believes that the enforcement of new laws and regulations about censorship contributed significantly to the establishment of the hybrid mode of production in that the state evolved the existing laws and introduced new and precise limitations for cinema. These regulations considered the whole process of making films and were overseen by a group called the Exhibition Committee 'which in Tehran comprised representatives of the Ministry of interior, of the MCA, of the national police, of NIRT, and of the film exhibition industry'.[103] Its permission was required and valid for the production and screening of films in the country which strengthened the place of Tehran as the centre for construction of films. Here I recount some of the regulations which allowed the banning of a film:

1- Opposition to religious principles of, and propaganda against, the twelve Shiite branches of Islam

2- Opposition to constitutional monarchy and insulting the person of the Shah or the royal family

3 – Showing political revolutions anywhere in the world that lead to removal of constitutional regimes

4 – Inciting revolution or uprising against the government or against the monarchic regime

5 -Propagandizing in favour of any ideology or belief that is illegal in the country

6 – Letting murderers, criminals or robbers who commit homicide go unpunished

7 – Showing uprising or revolt in a prison that results in the defeat of security forces and in the prisoners' victory

8 – Provoking workers, students, peasants, and other social strata to fight the security forces and to destroy or set fire to factories and educational institutions[104]

And many more …

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[103] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 184.
[104] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 185-6.

Naficy states that limitations were so pervasive that many producers and critics believed that it was not possible to make any meaningful or critical movie let alone a political one. Sometimes the committee enforced that level of censorship which rendered the film incomprehensible. This is a point where Naficy emphasises as the intervention of the state which did not allow the free production of all kinds of movies whether statist or commercial. I would like to highlight a number of points in order to propose that the states intervention could be observed as intending to protect the benefits of the bourgeoisie and some of the motivations were economical and some were political.

This is a notion, as I mentioned above, highlighted by Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*. The modern state as a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie aims to centralize population, production and property under the control of a few. In order to achieve such a state of centralization the bourgeois class has to constantly enhance the forces of production while the social relations of production remain unchanged. The imbalance between the two finally results in a crisis whereby the modern proletariat equipped with the new forces of production would transform its social relations. In their own words:

> Modern bourgeois society, with its relations of production, of exchange and of
> property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and
> exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether
> world whom he has called up by his spell.[105]

It seems that state censorship aimed to protect the existing social relation and centralize the forces of production against the arrival of the new members of the bourgeoisie class. As the example of Mohammad-Karim Arbab demonstrates the flow of capital within the field of cinema industry attracted new investors and consequently affected the competition in the market. Limiting the freedom of the market through censorship and partial blockage of the circulation of capital through all sorts of banning could be seen as the strategy of the state to control the flow of capital in favour of the ruling bourgeoisie. There are other examples which could testify to such a proposition. For instance, we can observe the fate of Rashidian brothers, the owners of Rex Cinema and the Rex Cinema-Company. They were businessman and Naficy narrated their involvement with the 1953 CIA backed coup against the Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq and later became one of the political elites. However, in the mid-1960s, Shah grew uncomfortable about their political power and one of them had to immigrate to the

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[105] Marx and Engels, *the Communist Manifesto*, p.41

UK.[106] As I mentioned, it is possible to observe censorship as a way to limit their political and economic power.

The above mentioned examples lead us to search for recent methodologies which apply historical materialist models to analyze the complexities of state, ruling class and mode of production. Therborn argues that in order to clarify how the state rules, it would be more instructive to investigate the nature of power,[107] and to do so it would be illuminating to identify the class character of a particular state.[108] Thus, it is crucial to first adequately assess the process of production and social reproduction and observe how the state affect the mode of production and social transformation.[109] As I quoted Naficy above, he believes that because the Pahlavi state apparatuses intervenes in the process of production and realization of capital through policies such as censorship, it could not be categorized as a capitalist state. However, Therborn argues that the intervention of the capitalist state into the reproduction and relations of production is a common practice.

> Recent decades have witnessed an enormous expansion of the state's role in the
> reproduction of advanced capitalism, to the point where in the United States about
> 40%, and in several West European countries more than half of the domestic product
> passes through the state. This marks a highly significant change from the beginning of
> the century, when in the Unites States less than a tenth of the nation's newly-created
> wealth fell within the sphere of the state. But the fact that capitalism continues to be
> reproduced shows that there are no fixed 'commanding heights' of the economy.[110]

Another reason to point out in order to see that the mode of production was capitalist, is to view censorship as a strategy to confront the unanticipated effects of the film on the audience. Like the documentary films, the state could not envisage how a script would influence the masses until it became a finished film and went on screen. For instance, we can consider the example of the neorealist film *South of the City* (1958) directed by Farrokh Qaffari. He co-wrote the script with Jalal Moghaddam both

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[106] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, p170-1.
[107] Goran Therborn, *What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules? State Apparatus and State Power Under Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism*, NLB, 1978, p. 131.
[108] Therborn, What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules? State Apparatus and State Power Under Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism, ibid, p. 132.
[109] Therborn, *What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules? State Apparatus and State Power Under Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism*, ibid, p. 144.
[110] Therborn, *What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules? State Apparatus and State Power Under Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism*, ibid, 166.

of whom probe the impoverished and overcrowded neighborhoods of south Tehran for three months in order to create a realistic portrayal of the spaces such as vegetable market, the bazzar, street vendors, its restaurants and though guy cafes. The story line was about the love affair of a café servant and a tough guy which became entangled with the rivalry of tough guys in the city. In the first round of censorship the Exhibition committee removed a number of scenes since the depiction of poverty and the southern neighborhoods distorted their desired image of Tehran. It was screened in six cinemas and was welcomed by the audience but after five days of screening police collected the film and it was banned. After the banning, Qaffari was summoned to explain about the film in a meeting were highest ranks of the government were present, people such as the Prime Minister Manouchehr Eqbal, the minister of the interior, Lieutenant General Batmanqelich and the head of SAVAK, General Teymour Bakhtiar and his deputy, the brigadier General Alavi Kia. It seemed that they suspected that Qaffari had connections with USSR and Iranian communists. Qaffari demonstrated many documents to prove that he was funded by his own company *Iran Nama* Film which included the members of his family. He could prove his financial independence yet the police could not permit the re-screening of the film since there were rumours about the revolutionary nature of the film which could attract masses of people and the police feared the consequences.[111]

South of the City remained banned for three years and when Qaffari received the negative and positive prints of the film he realized that many scenes were missing. He re-edited the available materials and added scenes of song and dance and entitled it as *Rivalry in the City* (1963) which was not successful at the box office. I mentioned the example of this film in order to highlight that officials were worried about the possible effects of cinema on the people to the extent that they could not even allow the screening of a film they once viewed as unproblematic.

As Therborn discusses the state power 'is exercised not according to a pre-established functionalist harmony, but in and through the struggle of antagonistic classes'.[112] Therborn suggests that the various mode of state interventions in the process of production and social reproduction does not aim to legitimize its presence yet seeks to have representation in all societal functions and to mediate the fundamental contradictions which form the political struggle.[113] Accordingly, it is possible to observe

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[111] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Op cit., p188-90.
[112] Therborn, *What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules? State Apparatus and State Power Under Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism,* Op cit., p. 146.
[113] Therborn, *What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules? State Apparatus and State Power Under Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism*, ibid, p. 162.

censorship not as a sign of hybrid mode of production (as Naficy suggests), yet as a mechanism through which the capitalist Pahlavi state maintained its representation in the cinema industry and mediated between the fractions of competing bourgeois class.

This is a point where the role of the state to maintain the existing social relations becomes prominent. As the new technology allowed a young filmmaker to shoot a film in the south of the city, the existing social relations blocked its circulation and therefore it was banned. The censorship apparatus could not identify what could potentially disrupt the existing social relations. Perhaps, this condition could be seen as the effect of the operation of forces of production, particularly capitalist forces. The authorities and the state were confronted with new cinematic technologies that they could not entirely incorporate in their desired hegemonic process. Therefore, the censorship process could be seen as the attempt to incorporate new forces of capitalism. This deduction could lead us to the proposition that in fact the mode of production was a capitalist one since its contradictory operation could be traced in many social and political conflicts within the industry.

Popular Feature film in the context of Culture Industry

Since the early 1960s in Iran a type of feature film emerged which became very popular although the practices and conventions of this native commercial cinema was rooted in the 1950s but they were consolidated during the process of industrialization and the enthusiasm of audience for two films of this kind *Qarun's treasure* (1965) and *Qeisar* (1969) encouraged the industry to treat them as models to imitate[114] until the 1979 revolution stopped its production. In general this type of popular feature film is called *Film Farsi* and the term was coined by the film critic Amir-Houshang Kavousi who once wrote that that type of film was a terrible imitation of popular foreign films and its only Iranian element was Farsi language 'otherwise they are formless, structureless and storyless.'[115] Naficy partially agrees that this genre was the outcome of the growth of the culture industry and it was the product of a commercial and assembly culture. However, unlike critics that entirely refute the social, cultural and political values of FF, Naficy discusses its structures, politics and poetics in order to demonstrate that popular culture objectified and commodified by industrialization still reserved its resistive and creative value and mirrored people' lives, dreams, fantasies and defeats. Naficy relates the formal characteristics of the

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[114] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Op cit., p. 154.
[115] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 149.

industrial product to the inadequate division of labour as in his view it was not completely implemented and one person carries out various tasks. For instance, Siamak Yasami the producers of *Qarun's Treasure* was a producer, director and co-writer of the script of his films. Some of the subgenres of FF such as stewpot and tough-guy movies owed their development to the multifunctionality of male super stars such as Fardin and Naser Malekmotii who like Yasami had various responsibilities in the films they acted.[116] Naficy regards this way of filmmaking as a defection, 'Such multifunctionality in Iran, born out of necessity, was the obverse of the division of labour and the specialization of tasks, which were the engines of the highly industrialized cinema and the studio system in the West. Multifunctionality allowed resourceful and nimble producers, directors, and stars to pull a movie together fast and on the cheap despite (or because of) a dearth of professional means'.[117]

Naficy emphasises that multifunctionality affected the forms of the FF movies negatively particularly it affected the *pace of production* in which films were made in the least possible time. There was also a lack of planning. The reliance on spontaneity and improvisation rendered their work dependent on chance and luck. The crew would start shooting without a complete screenplay. Fardin, one of the superstars of the 1960s, recalled that Kushan, the head of Pars Film Studio and an established commercial director prepared his scripts on the run.[118] Fardin also remembered that Jalal Moghaddam employed he and others to make the film *The Secret of Jujube Three* (1971) but he told them the story orally and promised to provide them with a full written script which never happened. When the shooting began he wrote each scene on its set while the actors were not prepared for the scene that was about to be shot. Even when the shooting finished the end of the story was not apparent.[119]

Since the production relied on improvisation the lack of preplanning 'often created chaotic and tense situation during filmmaking, as film crews, for example, would discover that they did not have a proper lenses or stage properties for the day's shoot. This production would stop until what was missing was found or the crew and cast improvised around the missing element'.[120] The chaos affected the textual formation as it made the production team resort to generic convention, story formulas and stereotyping. In addition, in the absence of a plan there would be extra time to be spent on other films.

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[116] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 204.
[117] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 204.
[118] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 217.
[119] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 218.
[120] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 219.

Naficy mentions that another superstar of the 1960s, Reza Beik-Imanverdi, would act in multiple films during one day to use the dead time of each film set.[121]

It might seem that this way of unplanned filmmaking was a sign that the production mode was not capitalist since as Marx states, 'moments are the elements of profit' in capitalism[122] and capitalist attempts to take advantage of every single minute available during the working day. However, I discuss that we could highlight the fact that the profit-driven industry invested on the lack of preplanning filmmaking rather than a planned one, thus the multifunctionality of the crew and the spontaneity would compensate for the dead time that was not turned into value.

Here, what I would like to draw attention to is the unusual value (which I mean the surplus value) of time within the production process. As David Harvey demonstrates surplus-value is generated when the labourers work more that the amount of time that is required to reproduce their labour-power.[123] Therefore, the element of time plays a crucial role in the production of exchange value. The magnitude of value is measured 'by means of quantity of the value-forming substance, the labour, contained in the article. This quantity is measured by its duration, and the labour-time is itself measured on the particular scale of hours, days, etc.'[124] The valorisation of labour- time though, is not based on a fixed objective category. Accordingly, the capitalist attempts to control the length and value of time as much as it is possible since it directly affects the production of exchange value and the accumulation of capital. As Harvey indicates 'the social manipulation of time and temporality is a fundamental feature of capitalism'.[125] It is a point where we can comprehend why the length of the working day is important. As Marx states, the working day is less than a natural day and it cannot be stretched beyond a certain point. This is a point whereby the labour requires to satisfy his or her human needs such as to eat, sleep, wash, clothe and conduct intellectual and social requirements. These requirements rely on the general level of civilisation thus, the length of the working day oscillates between the categories of physical and social requirements and accordingly generates various lengths of eight, ten, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen hours.[126] The length of the working day forms the mode of extracting surplus-value. 'The prolongation of the working day beyond the point at which the worker would have produce an exact equivalent for the

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[121] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 219.
[122] Karl Marx, *Capital,* Penguin Books, 1982, p. 240.
[123] David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital*, Verso, 2010, p. 136.
[124] Marx, *Capital*, Op cit., p. 129.
[125] Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital*, Op cit., p. 140.
[126] Marx, *Capital*, Op cit., p. 341.

value of his labour-power, and the appropriation of that surplus-labour by capital – this is the process which constitutes the product of absolute surplus-value'.[127]

Regarding the production of FF movies, we encounter a condition that despite the lack of equipment and professional personnel, production process continues to generate chaotic and low quality films through which an extraordinary amount of surplus-value was raised and the rapid accumulation of capital became possible. The deficiency of the commodity did not disturb the production and it increased massively to the point that in 1972, ninety-two films were produced, a quantity that even the Iranian cinema at its present moment, considering the facilities of globalisation, has not reached yet. Consequently, the crisis of over-production was inevitable and during the 1970s the industry went into the various phases of crisis which the events of 1979 stopped the production of FF films altogether.[128] I think that a complete picture of capitalist mode of production was present at this industry and the fact that the production was carried out through artisanal modes could be regarded as having secondary importance in the circulation of capital. The characteristic of multifunctionality and the unplanned mode of filmmaking seemed to contribute to the extraction of absolute surplus-value since it saved time for the capitalist as it reduced the amount of time required to carry out various tasks by several people. As Marx notes, the mode of absolute surplus-value prepares the ground for the general foundation of capitalist system through which the mode of relative surplus-value arises.[129] The fact that the artisanal mode of production was dominant does not make a hybrid production mode since as Marx states 'a merely formal subsumption[130] of labour under capital suffices for the production of absolute surplus-value. It is enough, for example, that handicraftsmen who previously worked on their own accounts, or as apprentices of a master, should become wage-labourers under the direct control of a capitalist.'[131] Therefore, I would like to suggest that what Naficy relies on as the hybrid mode of production could be seen as an early stage of capitalist mode of production that despite the deficiency of the process it

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[127] Marx, *Capital*, ibid, p. 645.
[128] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Op cit., p179.
[129] Marx, Capital, Op cit., p645.
[130] In the appendixes of *Capital* Marx clearly argues that 'the labour process becomes the instrument of the valorization of process, the process of the self-valorization of capital- the manufacture of surplus-value. The labour process is subsumed under capital (it is its *own* process) and the capitalist intervenes in the process as its director, manager. For him it also represents the direct exploitation of the labour of others. It is this that I refer to as the *formal subsumption of labour under capital*. It is the general form of every capitalist process of production; at the same time, however, it can be found as a particular form alongside the *specifically capitalist mode of production* in its developed form.' Marx, *Capital*, ibid, p. 1019.
[131] Marx, *Capital*, ibid, p. 646-7.

manages to fully develop into a recognisable capitalist mode which provided the possibility of massive accumulation of capital within the field.

However, it should be mentioned that the idea that aesthetic and creative labour could impede the real subsumption would oppose my argument. A Garnham indicates, the artisanal nature of aesthetic practice leave a space against subsuming to capital. It should be bore in mind that the concepts of real and formal subsumption are relative, particularly considering the non-western context of my investigation. Yet, the relative nature of these categories also means that the real subsumption of aesthetic labour to capital is also relative-even in the Fordist Hollywood factory system; compared to producing other manufacturing goods, there remains a degree of only formal subsumption of labour and a degree of artisanal labour within the core capitalist film industries. Regarding this argument Garnham states that

> [The] artisanal modes of labour organization ranging from individual craft production, i.e the authorship of a book, to a small group, i.e independent film company or record producer, remain common and important within the cultural sphere. Such residues have been the focus for struggle against the logic of capital and have produced a powerful anti-economic cultural ideology. Nonetheless, in certain instances such artisanal organization may be functional for capital so long as capital controls the means of mass reproduction of the authorial product and of the means of mass distribution, because it ensures the necessary production of a range of heterogeneous cultural artefacts from which capital can choose for further exploitation without capital having to bear the risks and overheads for this production which are born directly by labour.[132]

Despite the doubts that the defenders of creative freedom would raise, I believe that the chaotic qualities of the production point to formal subsumption and absolute surplus value production in the field cinema industry. This argument will directly affect my investigation about the production of hegemonic spaces in films. With the establishment of capitalism as the dominant and only mode of production in the film industry, I will discuss the spatial level of signification not as natural, accidental or

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[132] Garnham, N. Contribution to a political economy of mass-communication in 'Media, Culture and Society', 1979; 1; 123, p. 139.

a given condition but as the result of the operation of capital which forms both the forces and social relations of production that shape the space and its cinematic representation.

Conclusion

In this lengthy literature review, I attempted to provide an overall examination of the resources that I have found relative to my research. It is notable that in the main three books of the history of Iranian cinema, *Close Up*, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, *The Social History of Iranian cinema Vol.2*, I discussed their approach to the period of time that I will concentrate in my research which is the period of rapid industrialization in 1960s and 1970s. All the three books more or less and through various methodologies, consistent or inconsistent, provide a view to the discursive knowledge as well as primary and secondary resources about the cinema of the time. Through a close reading of these books I attempted to sketch the outline of my research and illuminate the pre-supposition that I will construct my argument according to them. All the three books, demonstrate a methodology which is historical and sometimes materialistic, yet in my investigation I will apply historical materialism thoroughly. I have demonstrated that the notion of the historical human as opposed to platonic and religious figure of the human is the bases of my examination which I attempt to examine through the signifiers of space. Furthermore, following Sadr, I attempt to provide a reading of the spatial level of films which is in connection with historical and political transformation such as the land reform. And I will construct my discussion on the assumption that during the 1960s and 1970s we encounter the rapid development of capitalism as the dominant mode of production in the field of cinema. A significant part of this chapter concentrated on the discussion regarding the mode of production of that period. Through various references to Benjamin, Brecht, Marx and Engels and Therborn, I attempted to demonstrate instances of the operation of early and advanced capitalist mode of production. Therefore, unlike Naficy who argues for a hybrid mode of production in the film industry, I discussed that the existence of the instances of formal subsumption of labour prove that the main character of state interventions was capitalist in nature. Thus, in the next chapters of this thesis, I will construct my argument based on the assumption that the field of engagement of this research is characterised by the capitalist mode of production. In the next chapter of my research, I will attempt to provide a theoretical framework which will shape the analysis of the representation of hegemonic spaces in film productions.

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Chapter Two: The Theoretical Framework

Introduction

In this chapter, I attempt to construct the theoretical framework of the arguments and discussions in the subsequent chapters. As I will critically explore the representation of hegemonic and counter hegemonic spaces in the films of the 1960s and 1970s, it is foremost crucial to clarify what the notion of hegemony is applied in this thesis. I will engage with the Gramscian perspective about this concept, also, as recently various interpretations were provided by the scholars, I will illuminate which interpretation of the Gramscian concept is applied in this thesis. Moreover, I will discuss hegemony as being related to the concept of the historical bloc, thus the economic, social and political condition of the hegemonic forces become crucial to assess. Next, I will discuss Raymond Williams' engagement with the concept of hegemony. Through identifying hegemonic practices such as the emergent, the residual, the alternative and the oppositional, he attempts to provide a theoretical framework which could identify the structure of feelings in cultural production. Since I will apply this model of analysis in every film that I examine in the proceeding chapters, I will discuss it here. After, I explore Williams' method of analysing the rural in order to drive a methodology which could shape my approach to the rural films. Then, I will engage with Adorno's idea of 'blind' film in order to illuminate my approach towards spatial signification in films.

Gramscian Hegemony: Politics, Historical Bloc and internationalism

It seems that it is important at this point to explain the notion of hegemony as applied in this research. Gramsci, the prominent Italian theorist referred to this notion, in order to transcend the narrow economistic relation between base and superstructure which was prevalent in his time. In his view, it seems that it was not accurate to think of the superstructure as merely the 'appearance' of the base. For him this relation is far more complex and contradictory than it appears in the term 'appearance'.[133] Structures and superstructures form a 'historical bloc'. That is to say the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructures is a response to the ensemble of the social relations of productions. It refers to the political orchestration of class forces in 'the base' as it were, in a particular

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[133]Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: selected writings, 1916-1935*, New York University Press, 2000, p. 194.

historical conjuncture, and it highlights the role of politics, strategies, ideologies, persuasion and coercion in building alliances between class forces to pursue certain interests.

Like other concepts that Gramsci derive from the non-Marxist tradition of thought[134], he re-defines the idea, and calls the 'historical bloc' as the dialectical unity of structures and superstructures. In order to avoid Croce's accusation that speculative approach towards structures has ascribed them the place of a 'hidden God' in Marxist thought, Gramsci emphasises the historical approach. The latter views structure as the constellation of social relations in which real people operate as the ensemble of objective conditions. Consequently, Gramsci understands superstructures 'not as mechanically driven from an orginary 'base', but as constituting a dialectical unity or 'historical bloc' with the dominant relations of production, the means by which they were organised, guaranteed , and made to endure'.[135]

The particular difficulty of grasping the relation between structures and superstructure, in Gramsci's perspective, comes from the fact that identifying the structure statically is problematic. 'Politics is in fact at any given time the reflection of the tendencies of development in structure, but it is not necessary the case that these tendencies must be realized'.[136] Therefore, the concept of historical bloc comes into the debate in order to account for the contingency of the dialectical unity of structures and superstructure. One of the most vivid examples of a historical bloc was sketched by Gramsci himself as the modern prince; the working class hegemonic party. It is 'the fusion of new type of political party and oppositional culture that would gather together intellectual (organisers) and the masses in a new political and intellectual practice; organizing the organizers, …[it] was posited as the non-existing element necessary to fill the constitutive of the present, in order to open it to the future'.[137]

The concept of historical bloc highlights the fact that the relation of forces in the base cannot be totally reflected in the superstructure, rather it contributes to the formation of hegemony.

> The forging of hegemony is the process by which the dominated or subaltern groups
> are brought into the social, economic & cultural order and that order is in turn brought
> *into them*. This process of inclusion and internalization requires the dominant groups to

[134] Peter Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*, Brill, 2009, p. 89.
[135] Peter Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*, ibid, p. 100.
[136] Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: selected writings, 1916-1935*, ibid, p. 191.
[137] Peter Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*, ibid, p. 437.

adapt where necessary, concede ground where necessary, channel resistance and

dissent where necessary into less disruptive forms.[138]

In addition, Gramsci believed that hegemony like a political class could successfully achieves the acknowledgement of its moral, political and cultural values by other classes. The success of the ruling class is maintained through the least application of force which is evident in the liberal governments of ninetieth century.[139] For Gramsci, the struggle for intellectual leadership takes place in various arenas including the realm of art, science and cinema which could be seen as one of the important and effective arenas particularly during the 1960s and 1970s where the allegorical story of these conflicts was recorded.

The term hegemony seems to appear in Gramsci's vocabulary in relation to Russian Social Democracy and the Third International. This idea seems to be rooted in the Soviet debates in 1923-26 and is frequently discussed in Gramsci's prison notebooks. He believes that if the proletariat seeks political leadership, it is important that they overcome economic self-interest and achieve the support of the poor peasantry and southern intellectual. Gramsci relates the concept of hegemony to Jacobinism and national- popular against economism and economic-corporation. 'It is defined precisely by an expansion beyond economic class interest into the sphere of political direction through a system of class alliance'.[140]

There are many approaches toward the concept of hegemony particularly in recent decades, it is often treated as a merely cultural phenomenon while in, my analysis, I will highlight its political and economic dimensions. Also, some of the widely accepted aspects of hegemony have been problematized by researchers such as Peter Thomas which is helpful for my application of the concept. For instance, in the *Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci* written by Perry Anderson the concept of hegemony is associated with a number of features. It refers to a strategy which intends to create consent instead of coercion. Also, its field of operation is situated in 'the West' where 'war of position' is desirable as opposed to 'the East', the proper terrain of war of manoeuvre.[141] Considering these assumptions, a number of questions arise such as whether the study of hegemonic struggles suites the Iranian context as it is more close to the

[138] Mike Wayne, *Understanding Film; Marxist Perspective*, Pluto Press, 2005, p. 6.
[139] James Joll, Gramsci, Fontana, 1977, p. 110.
[140] Gramsci, The Antonio Gramsci Reader: selected writings, 1916-1935, ibid, p. 397.
[141] Peter Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*, Op cit, p. 160.

current conception of 'the East'. Therefore, it seems that my approach towards the theory of hegemony in this research requires illumination.

Gramsci's intellectual and political life was concerned with the attempts to produce a sort of political theory which would endow expression to the attempts of popular and subaltern classes to change their history and, this life-long attempt, gradually shaped the concept of hegemony.[142] Thomas highlights that, following Lenin, Gramsci uses the concept of hegemony as synonymous to leadership, it is not the antithesis of domination rather, it constitutes the moment of domination. In this regard the relation of consent and coercion has been discussed. Unlike Anderson who posits the two as an antinomy, Thomas states that Gramsci conceived them in dialectical relation. 'This dialectical integration of hegemony with domination, of consent with coercion, united in their distinction, was Gramsci's true 'starting-point'.[143] In Gramsci's view the relation of coercion and consent are not lead by either/or logic. It also cannot be situated in a temporal distance (when one of them follows the other). They are governed by their dialectical inclusion and implication.

> One emerged from the other and vice-versa, depending upon specific conditions of the conjuncture as a form of appearance of the other … Gramsci's real concern in this note, therefore, read in both theoretical and political context, was to emphasize the underlying dialectical unity within the commonly accepted opposition he adumbrated at the outset.[144]

In this way consent and coercion appear as distinct moments within a political hegemonic project.[145] This assumption suggests a different view to the study of hegemonic conflicts which often ascribes a certain autonomy to the political superstructure of the society. This view foregrounds the relation between the forging of hegemony in a dialectical manner to the historical bloc. The alliances of certain classes at a particular temporal conjuncture could produce certain hegemonic force-fields which are fought for through both consent and coercion. In my research, particularly in the analysis of rural condition and its representation in films, I attempt to apply this paradigm of the production of hegemony. As I will discuss in the chapter on rural films produced during the 1960s, a certain class alliance could be identified in this period. One is a new class of peasantry and rural workers who

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[142] Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*, ibid, p. 159.
[143] Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*, ibid, p. 164.
[144] Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*, ibid, p. 166.
[145] Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*, ibid, p. 167.

benefitted from the land reform as it outlawed feudalism and endowed them land and freedom to work for themselves. This new class which emerged from the fragmentation of feudalism seems to share the fascination with the consequences of the changing mode of production with that of the new bourgeoisie at least for the short period in the early 1960s. The new bourgeoisie which gained power and social influence with the disappearance of feudalism, encouraged engagement with the capitalist mode of production and the benefits of its social relations. Although, this temporary class alliance was short lived and disappeared in the late 1960s, it produced the relevant supportive hegemonic debates and force-fields in order to support its historical leadership. A number of these hegemonic conflicts could be observed in film productions. The hegemonic influence of this class alliance could be seen in the denouncement of feudal social relations and the emphasis on the new and autonomous community of villagers, middle size land owners and workers. The engagement with new technology, new education and modern facilities is encouraged. It seems that these socio-political fields constituted the domain of emergent hegemonic processes. Hegemony, as Therborn discusses, does not primarily involve ideological supremacy. It is above all a political concept which refers to the mode of leadership. 'Moreover, ideological direction of a heterogeneous alliance involves as a global perspective attention to the needs and demands of all its components. The need of other sections must be not reduced but related to those of the leading fraction albeit as a subordinate part'.[146]

It is notable that various components of the members of the hegemonic alliance could be observed in residual processes. Through confrontation with the limitations of newly established capitalist social relations, residual practices such as religious beliefs and rituals are summoned and they persist through the transformation. Moreover, against the growth of capitalist social relations, its brutality and limitations, other residual practices appear which celebrate, promote and idealise the rural and the traditional way of life attached to it. In the rural films of early 1960s, we can observe the residual practices which make reference to the pre-capitalist mentality and lifestyle. In chapter three, I will discuss these hegemonic processes and practices generally in films and particularly in the way they shape the comprehension of space.

In addition, regarding the theoretical assumptions of this research, I think it would be helpful to note the new perspective considering the question of the distinction between 'the East' and 'the West' in Gramsci's thought. Thomas argues that they do not figure as a juxtaposition in Gramsci's perspective.

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[146] Goran Therborn, *What Does the Ruling Class Do when It Rules; State Apparatus and State Power under Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism*, NLB, 1977, p. 158.

Rather, in any historical epoch there is a complex dialectic between the hegemonic centre and the peripheral regions that it gives shape to. Gramsci opposes the geopolitical division of the globe into qualitatively different historical times and is against stagism.

> West and East are comparable, just as variations in the West itself, because both participate in the dynamic of an expansive politics and economic order that is fundamentally and essentially internationalist in character.[147]

In this way, it is possible to discuss the Iranian context not as a qualitatively different social and political field but in a dialectical relation to the global hegemonic centres of the time. I attempt to develop an analysis which demonstrates similarities with the global hegemonic processes and at the same time identify and assess the characteristics of this particular context.

In conclusion, in this section I have discussed the general theoretical framework which will shape the underlying argument of films in the next chapters. I illuminated the theoretical frame that I would like to apply in order to relate the historical context and the film productions particularly through the concept of historical bloc. In the next section of this chapter, I will engage more in detail with the forms of hegemonic analysis. I will discuss Raymond Williams's framework to approach hegemonic practices and processes in a cultural text that is film in my research.

Raymond Williams's approach to analyse hegemonic processes

Since the introduction of Gramsci's thought, there have been numerous approaches to his ideas which aimed to develop and extend it to various fields of society. In this research, I will refer to Raymond Williams' engagement with the Gramscian concept of hegemony and the ways he proposed to appropriate it for artistic analysis. For Williams, the notion of hegemony is adequate since it helps to overcome the theoretical difficulties that the base and superstructure model generates. Also, Gramsci's concept moves beyond 'culture', as it was expressed in the past. Moreover, hegemony goes beyond 'ideology', as it emphasizes not only on the conscious system of ideas and beliefs but the lived processes that organize the dominant world-views and values.[148] Hegemony is more than simply the articulate upper level of ideology and cannot be reduced to concepts such as manipulation and indoctrination.

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[147] Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*, Op cit., p. 203.
[148] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 109.

Also hegemony allows for making material concessions, something the category of ideology tends not to include.

> It is a whole body of practice, expectations, over the whole living body: our senses and
> assignment of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived
> system of meanings and values- constituent and constituting – which as they are experienced
> as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most
> people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very
> difficult for most members of the society, to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to
> say, in the strongest sense a 'culture' but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived
> dominance and subordination of particular classes.[149]

In Williams view, hegemony is never static but always a process. It cannot be defined as a system or a structure. It could be observed as a perceived multi-layered whole of experiences, relationships and activities which acquire unstable and changing level of pressures and limits. At any moment, it does not remain singular. Williams proposes not to perceive it as a passive form of dominance. Hegemony is always in the process of renewal, re-invention and amendment. On the other hand, it is constantly challenged, transformed and resisted. Thus, Williams proposes to include the concept of counter-hegemony and alternative hegemony in our analysis as they exist in the elements of practice.[150]

In addition, another advantage of Williams' method of analysing hegemonic processes in art is that he does not engage with artistic production as merely an object, a text and an isolated artifact. Instead, he believes that the analysis should consider the conditions of the production of an artwork. Williams finds it unfortunate that most contemporary critical theory has become something that he calls as consumption theory since it is passively applied on a text without investigating the conditions of production of that text. Rather, he advocates a type of analysis which regards an artwork, a cultural product as a practice not an isolated object. Instead of investigating the component of an isolated artwork, Williams suggests to researchers to view and search the nature of a practice and its conditions of production. Therefore, it is possible to identify Williams' method of analysis as focusing primarily on discovering the nature of a particular practice, then on the nature of the relation between an individual

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[149] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 110.
[150] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 122-3.

project and a collective condition, also focusing on the analysis of its active compositions and its conditions of compositions.[151]

In order to perceive the artwork in his proposed conditions, Williams moves forward and engages with the hegemonic processes in detail. Williams postulates that the only way to comprehend an effective and dominant culture is to identify and realize 'the real social process' that is the process of incorporation.[152] There are modes of incorporation/resistance which Williams identifies as residual, emergent, alternative and oppositional.

The residual practice is the one that has been shaped in the past yet it is alive and effective in the present cultural processes. The active element of the residual process is not an element of the past yet influential element of the current times. It is notable to mention that the dominant culture appropriates the resources and materials from a source that lies outside it- temporally that existed prior to it. In contrast, the residual element is different from the 'archaic'. The latter entirely belongs to the past and in order to be discussed and assessed it requires to be intentionally revived.[153]

> Thus certain experiences, meanings, and values which cannot be expressed or
> substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and
> practiced as the basis of the residue- cultural as well as social- of some previous social
> and cultural institution or formation.[154]

For instance, Williams names organized religion as a predominantly residual practice. However, he draws the attention to the fact that in it there are both alternative and oppositional practices (such as helping others without expecting reward) as well as incorporated practices of the dominant culture (such as official morality).[155]

Another relevant example to my research that Williams discusses is the idea of rural community which is residual. Nevertheless, it has the same divided characteristic as the organized religion. On the one hand, it reflects an alternative and oppositional idea to urban industrial capitalism. On the other hand, it is incorporated significantly into the social meanings of capitalism as a sort of fantasy, it is idealized as an

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[151]Raymond Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', *New Left Review* no 92, 1973, p. 15.
[152] Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', ibid, p. 9.
[153] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Op cit., p. 122.
[154] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 122.
[155] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p.122.

exotic place suitable to escape from the urban. In the dominant culture it is ascribed a sort of leisure function for the urban. As I will discuss in the chapter three of this research, these residual practices could be observed in the Iranian films of the early 1960s too. For instance, in the film *Swallows Always Return Home* (1963, Majid Mohseni) the religious world-views and practices are summoned to help the characters through the changing social relations from feudalism to capitalism. However, they also go through transformation during the film and support the characters to sustain their alternative positions while new social values of capitalism such as individualism emerges.

In order to recognize the residual processes, Williams separates them into two groups of 'oppositional' and 'alternative'. The alternative practice could be defined as a different way to live individually (or in small groups) and the practitioner wishes to be left alone with it. On the other hand, the oppositional practice is also a different way to live yet the practitioner intends to change the society in its light.[156] In the chapter three of my research, I will identify and discuss both processes in the Iranian rural films of the early 1960s. It is notable to state that there are numerous examples of proliferated alternative processes yet the oppositional processes are few and rare and they could be observed in the films set in the coastal regions. In the early 1960s, oppositional practices were not desirable and often times did not appear on the wide screen. Yet, during the 1970s, they could be identified in politically conscious films of New-Wave directors and I will discuss this transformation according to the changing socio-political condition of the time.

Another important social process in Williams' perspective is the 'emergent'. It refers to

> New meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship
> are continually being created. But it is exceptionally difficult to distinguish between
> those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture (and in
> this sense 'species-specific') and those which are substantially alternate or oppositional
> to it: emergent in the strict sense, rather than really novel.[157]

Williams believes that it is less complex and difficult to identify the social location of the residual, for, it largely belongs to the already existing social formations and stages of cultural process. It is possible to decipher its movement as there is always a social basis for its operation.

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[156] Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', Op cit., p. 17.
[157] Williams, Marxism and Literature, Op cit., p. 123.

Williams notices that the difficulty of distinguishing emergent and residual could be observed in the case of the emergence of a new class.

> A new class is always a source of emergent cultural practice, but while it is still, as a class, relatively subordinate, this is always likely to be uneven and is certain to be incomplete. For, a new practice is not, of course, an isolated process. To the degree that it emerges and especially to the degree that it is oppositional rather than alternative, the process of attempted incorporation begins.[158]

Williams provides the example of the emergence of the nineteenth century working class in Britain and their cultural formations. He identifies an effective process of incorporating the radical popular classes. With this new class emerged new writing practices yet they confronted the problems of incorporation through the literary forms that they applied. These already existing cultural formations limited and conditioned the emergent element of their writing practice. The vivid process of incorporation was more concerned with the overt alternative and oppositional class elements such as trade unions, working class political parties, working class life, etc.[159]

Williams points out that in order to decipher the character of the dominant order and to perceive the prime elements of both the residual and the emergent we should be attentive that 'no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention.' There is always an area which remains excluded which is seem as personal, private, natural or metaphysical. [160]

Williams acknowledges that in advanced class societies it becomes ever more difficult for the emergent to appear and operate independently. The dominant culture manages to access what has been viewed as 'reserved' and 'resigned' domains of experiences, practices and meanings due to the transformation of the social character of labour, communication and decision-making. Yet, the existence of the emergent is undeniable and its creation relies on finding new forms or adaptations of form.[161] Williams recommends that along with our search for the emergent we must also probe a pre-emergence that which is not entirely articulated and is in the process of development. Thus, together with the residual,

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[158] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 124.
[159] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 125.
[160] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 125.
[161] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 126-7.

the dominant the emergence and pre-emergence Williams arrives at the concept of structure of feeling which I will discuss in the next chapters.

In my research the concept of emergent seems relevant when it comes to discuss new practices and social meaning of the transitional phase from feudalism to capitalism. As I will discuss in chapter three closely, the arrival of new technologies induced a new type of social relations and promised a brighter horizon for individual and collective life. New practices such as engaging with modern education, modern health facilities and new industries became popular and widespread. The rural films of the early 1960s vividly demonstrate this fascination, excitement and hope. Nevertheless, the hegemonic process of incorporating this emergent culture is tangible too. We can observe how the emancipatory side of the emergent comes into conflict with capitalist dominant order in the way we observe the growth of competition culture, profit-making as the final goal, and individualism versus collective life. In this research, I will discuss how these films demonstrate the hegemonic struggles which aim to incorporate the emergent into the dominant hegemony of imperialism and early capitalism. In the next section of this theoretical chapter, I will move on to engage with Williams's perspective considering the rural. As chapter three, five and six of my research regards the rural films, Williams literary discussion is relevant to observe how the rural is represented in the field of art.

Raymond Williams' Thought: A Framework for Analysis of Rural

In order to elaborate theoretically my approach to the rural image, I start the discussion considering Raymond Williams' perspective in his book *The Country and The City*. When discussing the celebration of rural life, its idealised representation, its constructed harmony and peace it would be helpful to refer to Williams' perspective as he also probed the subject in his research. Although, the scope of his research is significantly different to my research, as his argument encompasses many centuries of literary productions until the modern time, yet his critical methodology to read these texts is illuminating. Williams has a historical approach to the texts and he closely reads them according to their temporal transformations across a long period of time from Virgil to the nineteenth century. He foregrounds the contradictions of the texts and highlights what remains unsaid and neglected.

Moreover, he practices a sort of textual analysis which corresponds with social and cultural relation and itself corresponds to the changing mode of production. Therefore, I refer to his discussion where he highlighted pastoral, idealised nature and innocence. These are notions which could be observed in the

Iranian films of the rural before 1965 too where people are depicted similarly and spaces are organized accordingly. In this way, it becomes possible to develop a reading of these spaces which does not treat it as natural and given but as the artificial production of hegemonic force-fields.

For instance, one of Williams' subjects which is related to this research is the multi layered signification of the pastoral as an artistic category. Williams argues that this type of literary texts acquires various meanings through its long history which unfolds social, cultural and political significations beyond its simplicity and peacefulness. In the poetry of Hesiod nine centuries before Christ, pastoral in its early stages appeared as the description of simple community life and the delight and difficulties of living close to nature. Two centuries later, in the works of Virgil, the pastoral became more idealised, yet it also reflected directly 'the hopes and fears of the small farmers under threat of confiscation of their land'[162], 'thus the contrast within Virgilian pastoral is between pleasure of rural settlement and the threat of loss and eviction'[163]. In this way, Williams deduces that even in its early developments, when the first tone and images of this category emerged, pastoral came to indicate social experiences and tensions beyond its idealised picture[164]. Later in the fifteenth and sixteenth century new dimensions were ascribed to the 'pastoral', 'with its once precise meaning, was undergoing in the same period an extraordinary transformation. Its most serious element was a renewed intensity of attention to natural beauty, but this is now the nature of observation, of the scientist or the tourist, rather than the working countryman'[165]. In the same period pastoral also became theatrical and romantic as a completely new form 'in which the eclogue and natural description were absorbed into the essentially different world of an idealised romantic love'[166]. Another transformation occurred whereby pastoral found a space in the courts and of the aristocratic houses where it was isolated in time and status. In Williams' view this relocation indicated the 'artificial mode in the direction and in the interest of a new kind of society: agrarian capitalism' whereby the neo-pastoral emerged as court entertainment and found a space in country-house and its estate.[167]

In Williams' view throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century the pastoral was transformed into idealised images of nature while the social relation in the rural was also changing. The new pastoral

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[162] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, Spokesman, 2011, p.16.
[163] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p. 17.
[164] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p. 18.
[165] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p.20.
[166] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p. 20.
[167] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p. 22.

poetry seemed not to be concerned with the reality of country life, for instance when poets described the quiet, peace and comfort of the rural life in contrast to the city, they did not mention the working conditions of the people they hired. In this way, Williams argues that the social and economic relations became idealised. Williams believes that the celebration of pastoral values could be related to the celebrations of feudal values against the growing capitalism and this perspective has political implications since reviving such values, for instance the hierarchies, could oppose contemporary values such as democracy.

> Thus in the poems we have been looking at there is no historical reference back. What we find, nevertheless, is an idealisation of feudal and immediately post-feudal values of an order based on settled and reciprocal social and economic relations of an avowedly total kind. It is then important that the poems coincide, in time, with a period in which another order – that of capitalist agriculture – was being successfully pioneered. For behind that coincidence is a conflict of values which is still crucial. These celebrations of a feudal or an aristocratic order have been widely used, in an idealist retrospect, as a critique of capitalism. The emphasis on obligation, on charity, on the open door to the needy neighbour, are contrasted, in a familiar vein of retrospective radicalism, with the capitalist thrust, the utilitarian reduction of all social relationships to a crude moneyed order.[168]

Williams believes that it could be a dangerous tendency:

> This kind of critique of capitalism enfolds social values which if they do become active at once spring to the defence of certain kinds of order, certain social hierarchies and moral stabilities, which have a feudal ring but a more relevant and more dangerous contemporary application. Some of these 'rural virtues, in twentieth-century intellectual movements, leave the land to become the charter of explicit social reaction: in the defence of traditional property settlements, or in the offensive against democracy in the name of blood and soil.[169]

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[168] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p. 35.
[169] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p. 63.

For Williams it is important not to idealise one order over the other, rather, it is better to refer to history and observe how this idealisation was formed as partial and misleading responses to reality.[170] For instance, Williams discusses the example of 'natural order' as the rural is described and cherished. Yet, he believes that natural is not an accurate description of the rural since there was little natural in the way it was constructed. The social order of that agricultural system was as difficult and unfair as the later and modern social order in the urban. In his view, it was based on the exploitation of working people whereby forced labour was a common practice and was protected by law and custom the way property, land and stream were protected. Therefore, Williams raises this important point that in discussing this kind of issue it is necessary to clarify the point of identification: with whom the researchers identify, with the working people or the abstract order which was dominant in the rural for centuries and treated the people instrumentally.[171]

In addition, Williams argues that the quality of innocence which is attributed to the country life in contrast with the city is a superficial contrast and averts the attention from the real ones.[172] He states that the structure of feeling in that condition was not based on the idea of the 'happier past' only yet more on the related idea of 'innocence': 'The key to its analysis is the contrast of the country with the city and the court: here nature, there worldliness. This contrast depends, often, on just the suppression of work in the countryside, and of the property relations through which this work is organised'. Williams indicates that regarding the emphasis on the notion of innocence, presumably, an ideological separation occurred 'between the processes of rural exploitation, which have been, in effect, dissolved into a landscape, and the register of that exploitation, in the law courts, the money markets, the political power and the conspicuous expenditure of the city'.[173]

Williams points out that what is described as the retreat to the peace, simplicity and innocence of the country is mostly narrated from the perspective of the rentier, the lawyer, etc., and not the labourers and the working people in the field. In his view, the contrast between country life and city life could correspond to the post-feudal social relations which were forming within new social classes '… a real conflict of interest, between those settled on the land and those settled in the city, which continually defined itself in the shifting economy of the time, could be more the basis of an ideology, in which an innocent and traditional order was being invaded and destroyed by a new and more ruthless order. The

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[170] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p.37.
[171] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p.37-8.
[172] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p. 54.
[173] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p.46.

complicated shifts in ownership, in the whole period of the dissolution of feudalism, are certainly evident. Merchants and lawyers were the most identifiable and the most isolable kinds of new men'.[174]

Accordingly, it is possible to identify a method in Williams' text to analyse categories such as the pastoral and notions such as natural order and innocence regarding their historical context and he connects his analysis to the changing mode of production from feudalism to the contemporary time. In my research, however, it is not possible to follow the changes of a concept, category or notion through centuries since researches in this area are not sufficient and generally speaking my research considers a smaller period of time with an emphasis on fast modernisation. Therefore, I concentrate only on the analysis of some of the similar notions throughout 1960s and 1970s and I discuss the transformation of ideas within this limited period of two decades. Also, I attempt to provide a reading which is in close connection with the changing economic, social and cultural relations in the rural. I discuss the available point of views in films and demonstrate the formation and struggle of hegemonic forces in the allegory of films.

In the next section, I will move on to discuss the underlying assumption which has shaped my selection of films in this research. In this thesis I attempt to engage with First cinema, as well as Second and Third cinema, in order to identify the hegemonic practices. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the underlying critical perspectives that finds the first cinema productions worthy of attention. So far, I have elaborated my theoretical approach towards hegemonic practices and, through Williams' perspectives, I have illuminated the theoretical framework of this research. It seems necessary now to discuss how and why I have selected a combination of all three categories of cinema to construct my reading of the structure of feeling in that period.

Iranian Cinema and the Three Categories of Films

In order to discuss the film productions in Iran considering their social, Economic and political orientation, in this thesis I will rely on the categories of First, Second and Third Cinema which was primarily outlined by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, then further elaborated, extended and theorised by contemporary filmmakers and theorists. As Wayne points out, the approach towards politics in this categorisation 'address[es] unequal access to and distribution of material and cultural

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[174] Williams, *The Country and the City*, ibid, p. 49.

resources, and the hierarchy of legitimacy and status accorded to those differentials'.[175] Therefore, it has developed an appropriate theoretical tool to probe historical conditions of production of films, particularly, in a context of Imperialism and early capitalism.

Solanas and Getino defined First Cinema as a 'consumer good', that its best examples merely testify to the decadence of bourgeois lifestyle and remains a witness to the prevalent social injustices, while the category probes the effects not the causes. It is a cinema of mystification and anti-historicism. They name it as 'surplus value cinema'. In this condition films 'were destined to satisfy only the ideological and economic interests of the owners of the film industry, the lords of the world film market, the great majority of whom were from the United States'.[176] First Cinema is the Mainstream cinema, commercial film productions which primarily includes Hollywood and its national imitators around the world.[177]

The other category Second Cinema is also known as the art house cinema and authorial cinema. It is the cinema of 'institutionalized national culture, the cinema of authorial expressivity, the cinema of the middle class, the cinema of psychological crisis, … the cinema of poverty as a great moral question (rather than a question of socio-economic relations), and sometimes the cinema of poverty as aesthetic beauty'.[178] Often Second Cinema converges with First Cinema when it attempts to create mythical and archetypal narration that transcends history. The evasion of both First and Second Cinema from historical specificity of social problems highlights that these modes of filmmaking attempt to avoid the roots of inequalities and injustices produced by capitalism. [179] While Second Cinema is interested in the stories that tend to be ignored by the First cinema, it transforms particular stories into the example of general human condition, hence making a new myth. Moreover, 'While First Cinema is generally quite positive and affirmative of the capacity of individuals to change their circumstances, Second Cinema tends to be more pessimistic, hence the importance of cyclical structures and motifs, repetition or the prevalence of psychological break down'.[180]

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[175] Wayne, *Political Film; the Dialectics of Third Cinema*, Pluto Press, 2001, p. 1.
[176] Solanas and Getino, 'Towards a Third Cinema; Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World' in *New Latin American Cinema*, (ed) Michael T.Martin, Wayne State University Press, 1997, p. 33.
[177] Mike Wayne, 'Dialectics of Third Cinema' in *The Routledge Companion to Film and Politics* (eds) Claire Molloy and Yannis Tzioumakis, Routledge: New York, p.20.
[178] Wayne, 'Dialectics of Third Cinema', ibid, p. 21.
[179] Wayne, *Political Film; The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, Pluto Press, 2001, p. 53
[180] Wayne, *Political Film; The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, ibid, p. 91.

Third Cinema, however, is not limited to the mythical patterns and notions since it is deeply rooted in the history. As it is not reduced to anti-historical structures and cycles, in this mode of filmmaking it is social and cultural emancipation that motivates filmmaking. Third Cinema, nonetheless, does not seek to invent completely new cinematic form and language. It does not appear as the opposition to or rejection of the dominant and the art house cinema. Rather it has a dialectical relation with them through transforming their already established conventions.[181] This type of theory and practice was pioneered by Latin American intellectualise in 1960s and 1970s who saw cinema as a wonderful communication tool in their relation with the masses during the liberation movements. In that context Third Cinema seemed like a developing method for 'decolonization of culture'[182], a way to construct a new type of liberated subject both though the filmmaking process and as a film text on the big screen. The contemporary film theorists recognise four key markers in the Third Cinema productions that continue to resonate in present time and inspire new generations of politically motivated practitioners.

First of all Third Cinema is committed to historicity. It attempts to recognise history as a process of transformation, contradiction and conflict. This type of cinema seeks to provide a response for questions such as where we are, how we reached here, who we are, etc. Second is the commitment towards politicisation; Third Cinema is a cinema of awakening, an image-creating medium to represent why and how people become conscious about their exploitation and oppression. Third marker of this type of cinema is its critical commitment. This type of films attempts to nourish and teach the intellectual and cognitive power of the spectator. Instead of mere stirring up the emotions, it encourages rational examination of the particular conditions that it sketches. And the last characteristic of Third Cinema is its interest in cultural specificity. This cinema pays a particular attention to culture and demonstrate an admirable level of familiarity with both cultural practices such as dance, rituals, literature, etc. and also culture as a way of life.[183]

Although the aims of Third Cinema appear highly sophisticated and maybe elitist, it is noteworthy that Third Cinema insists on finding ways to reach the greater masses of people. Some of the filmmakers approached narrative fiction in order to reach a wider public. Fernando Birri mentions that Third Cinema has four key elements; it was supposed to be a nationalist, realist and critical cinema as well as a popular

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[181] Wayne, *Political Film; The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, ibid, p. 10.
[182] Solanas and Getino, 'Towards a Third Cinema; Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation, Op cit, p. 37.
[183] Wayne, *Political Film; The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, Op cit, p. 14-22.

cinema. Since, 'the narrative construction had a much greater power of communication, and can embrace a much wider horizon than the documentary'.[184]

The move towards the masses did not stop at the level of spectator but went beyond that and reached the process of production. The founders of Third Cinema call it 'a cinema made collectively'[185] which points at the involvement of ordinary people in the making of a film. Third Cinema pioneered democratic modes of production which aimed to change the division of labour and hierarchies of command which the film industry as microcosm of the social totality has institutionalised.[186] At the level of working practices, Third cinema creators are concerned with how a production group operates, what kind of internal structures they adhere to, how they transform the prevalent hierarchies in their context of filmmaking in order to shape innovative collaborative models, whether participation of the non-professional people (particularly those who are filmed) is possible through feedbacks, etc. 'Here there is a whole deeply complex set of issues regarding the relationship between the middle class professionals and their relationship with groups who have not had the cultural and educational benefits of their upbringing'.[187]

Going back to the discussion of Iranian cinema, it is noteworthy that the category of First, Second and Third Cinema has not been applied by the film scholars on the Iranian cinematic productions and this thesis makes the first attempt to undertake this task. As will be briefly mentioned further down, the particular economic, social and political structure and historical condition of Iranian society, especially the cinema industry, did not significantly contribute to the development of Third Cinema practices as it was undertaken by Latin American and other progressive filmmakers around the world. However, in this thesis I will address this categorization in order to highlight the dialectics of First, Second and Third Cinema productions, the way that they address, interrelate and enrich each other in terms of cinematic form and content.

The first issue that arises is whether First Cinema as characterised by the theorists and practitioners existed during the period under investigation in this thesis that is the 1960s and 1970s in Iran. As I mentioned above, this type of films has markers such as it indicated the Hollywood productions and its

[184] Birri, F, 'For a Nationalist, Realist, Critical and Popular Cinema' in *New Latin American Cinema*, (ed) Michael T.Martin, Wayne State University Press, 1997, p. 96.
[185] Getino, O, 'Some Notes on the Concept of a 'Third Cinema'' in ibid, p. 100.
[186] Wayne, *Political Film; The Dialectics of Third Cinema*, Op cit, p. 46.
[187] Wayne, 'Dialectics of Third Cinema', Op cit, p. 20.

national imitators around the world. At the level of production team they rely on a highly professionalised cast who follow a standard division of labour in the industry. Also, the big studios produce films with a significantly high budget and they collaborate with established networks of distributions which secure their almost monopoly position in the film market. Moreover, at the level of narrative and representational form, they adhered to conventions of classic Hollywood films which follows the standard realist mode of representation.

When we compare the Iranian commercial film production with its global counterparts, we encounter a number of differences. Primarily, we should bear in mind that the Iranian cinema industry underwent intense transformation from the 1960s to 1970s. Therefore, here the object of inquiry did not remain static and intact throughout this period of fast industrialisation. The memoirs written by the people involved in this industry perfectly testify to this quality. For instance, Ayyob Shahbazi an expert and technician of developing analogue film, who started his cinematic career as a simple technical worker in the production teams,[188] writes about the condition of commercial studios that he worked in during late 1960s and 1970s. According to him there were numerous small film studios in Tehran which were mostly located in one neighbourhood. In the 1960s the starting capital of most of the studios was relatively modest, and the investors could become easily bankrupt as it repeatedly occurred. Therefore, a film producer or director would use various studios to carry out all the technical processes required to make a film. The studio was often an apartment in a residential area were each room was allocated to a particular laboratory such as sound, film developing, etc. [189]

In addition, one person was in charge of numerous responsibilities. In the film *Mardi Az Jonoob-e Shahr* [*A Man from South of the City*] (1960, dir Saber Rahbar) Shahbazi was the director's assistant also the sound recorder among many other responsibilities.[190] The director of the film Saber Rahbar would set the lighting and do decoupage along with directing actors.[191] In another instance, Shahbazi indicates that the costume designer did not exist among the cast, thus the extras of the film had no one to tell them what to wear on the film set. They were obliged to bring their own cloths. They would wear large suites

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[188] Shahbazi, A, *Yek Roustayi Dar Lale-Zar; Panjah Sal Xaterat Sinamyi Ayyob Shahbazi [A villager in Lale-Zar; Fifty years of Ayyob Shahbazi' Cinematic Memoir]*, Rozane-Kar Press, 2012, p. 211.

[189] Shahbazi, A, *Yek Roustayi Dar Lale-Zar; Panjah Sal Xaterat Sinamyi Ayyob Shahbazi [A villager in Lale-Zar; Fifty years of Ayyob Shahbazi' Cinematic Memoir],* ibid, p.125-209.

[190] Shahbazi, A, *Yek Roustayi Dar Lale-Zar; Panjah Sal Xaterat Sinamyi Ayyob Shahbazi [A villager in Lale-Zar; Fifty years of Ayyob Shahbazi' Cinematic Memoir],* ibid, p. 204.

[191] Shahbazi, A, *Yek Roustayi Dar Lale-Zar; Panjah Sal Xaterat Sinamyi Ayyob Shahbazi [A villager in Lale-Zar; Fifty years of Ayyob Shahbazi' Cinematic Memoir],* ibid, p. 205*.*

and various types of ties and hats. The discrepancy of clothes particularly in a film set for a luxury party (which was a recurrent scene in the commercial films) would leave a laughable effect on the spectator.[192] These are a number of instances which indicate that in the commercial sector of 1960s in Iran the division of labour was quite unprofessional and the studio system, as existed in Hollywood, could not be found in Tehran. The films discussed in Chapter three of this research (apart from *Wave, Coral and Rock*) were made in this condition and in such studios. Although they were made by the commercial sector, yet they cannot be called as mere consumer goods. They positively addressed familiar traditional values and even novel practices such as modern education, hence the recurrent theme of 'emergent' and 'oppositional' (according to Williams's terminology) practices in films.

However, this mode of filmmaking changed drastically during the 1970s as the filmmaking companies developed, expanded and began to influence the process of production and distribution. For instance, the Rex Film Company which produced the Samad village comedy series (discussed in chapter five of this thesis) owned a highly equipped studio and several cinemas in Tehran and other cities. As Ali Abbasi states,[193] during 1970s the success of some of the Film Farsi productions encourages big investors to enter the cinema industry only to make faster and greater profit. He names Karim Arbab, who owned several cabarets in Tehran and in the 1970s founded Ferdowsi film studio and participated in the production of commercial movies. Therefore, we could assume that although the category of First Cinema production was not completely similar to its global counterpart in the 1960s, it went through various stages during the aforementioned decades in Iran and its infrastructure and working pattern transformed. This consequently affected the film text as we could see the prevalence of 'residual' and 'alternative' themes in these productions rather than 'emergent' and 'oppositional' practices of the previous decade.

As I will discuss later, the first productions of Second Cinema films appeared along with the consolidation of First Cinema production from mid 1960s in Iran. *Mudbrick and Mirror* [Xesht o Ayne](1965) was a low budget film directed and produced by Ebrahim Golestan in his private workshop. The private sector was active in this field and many producers and studios of mainstream cinema participated in making Second Cinema productions. For instance, Parviz Sayyad, who directed and acted in the popular village comedy series, which I will discuss in chapter five of this thesis, was the producer

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[192] Shahbazi, A, *Yek Roustayi Dar Lale-Zar; Panjah Sal Xaterat Sinamyi Ayyob Shahbazi [A villager in Lale-Zar; Fifty years of Ayyob Shahbazi' Cinematic Memoir],* ibid, p. 209*.*
[193] My interview with him in 2014 could be found in the appendix section of this thesis.

and the lead actor of *Far From Home* (1975,) which was praised in international film festivals. As I will discuss in chapter five, Sayyad mentions that he invested the benefits of the sale of the Comedy village series in Second Cinema films such as *Still Life* (1974), which won the Silver Bear Prize in the 24th Berlin International Film Festival. This type of cinema was developed mainly by filmmakers who were graduated from Western Universities and film institutes such as Parviz Kimiavi and Daryoush Mehrjouyi, and consequently was received enthusiastically by upper middle class audience and elite film critics who were often highly educated. Their productions significantly developed the quality of cinematic language and form in the Iranian cinema, however, they were not successful in attracting the masses of people. This condition resulted in their instable financial situation as the unsuccessful sale of *Sattar Khan* (1972) shows, another Second Cinema film which nearly bankrupted Sayyad.

In this way, the main consistent supporter of Second Cinema productions (mainly colour documentaries about the fine arts, architecture, archeology and the performing arts) remained the state which through the Ministry of Culture and Art (MCA) and the National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT) participated in the limited productions and distribution of documentary films. The MCA chief, Pahlbod, stated that both internal and external market for such documentaries existed. It included the Iranian embassies in foreign countries, lending them to foreign schools and universities.[194] As the directors of such films despised commercial cinema, they chose MCA as their alternative path of working. People such as Houshang Shafti and Manouchehr Tayyab made more than ten films about art and crafts. 'In the process, they experimented not only with their films' aesthetic contents, the various arts, but also with their aesthetic form, or style, achieving some stunning results'.[195]

Unlike First and Second Cinema films, it is difficult to find Third Cinema productions in the Iranian cinema. During 1970s several attempts were made to produce political films, which aimed to break through the conformist and stereotypical representation of society, films which attempted to convey revolutionary messages in order to awaken people. Yet, it is a question whether they could exactly be categorized in the group of Third Cinema production. As I have mentioned above, the markers of Third Cinema, the Iranian productions mostly avoided historisation. It is not quite clear where exactly the setting of the narration was and when it happened. Any indication of historical periods, political regime, their administrative government and the state in general is obscured. The films did not bring up the question of the social and political structure. Perhaps, the severe censorship of the Pahlavi regime was

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[194] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Op cit, p. 92-3.
[195] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 93.

one of the central reasons, yet, it is noteworthy that mystification and anti-historical approaches were a common stance because, artists aspired to make films that could be generalized to all human conditions and not specified to one only.[196] In addition, the critical films of the time such as *The Cow* (1969), *The Circle* (1953), *Downpour* (1971) and many more were preoccupied with the effects of social injustices and not the causes.

Moreover, the democratic production model which was so cherished by the Third Cinema practitioners was not taken up by Iranian directors. They were not interested in questioning the established hierarchies, going beyond the professional division of labour, bringing ordinary people to participate with their feedbacks and comments and other democratic practices. The critical socio-political films produced at the time were not made collectively. Perhaps, this disinterest explains a typical difficulty in Iranian cinema that still exists; the problem of original scenario. As Ali Abbasi states[197], from the beginning of
his cinematic career he was searching for a good scrip and was confused why they did not exist in Iran. The frequent use of foreign and often Western texts for Iranian films might be connected to the fact that the writers did not develop organic relations with the everyday experiences of people and they did not collaborate with people to write a script collectively as was common among Third Cinema filmmakers.

There were exceptions such as the documentary films made by Kamran Shirdel which Naficy calls them 'protest documentaries'. 'These films used direct and confrontational strategies in terms of the choice of the subject matter and the critical juxtapositions and politicised contrapuntalism of verbal and visual elements, which pitted official pronouncements against popular opinions'.[198] Shirdel's films such as *Women's Prison*, *Tehran is the Capital of Iran* and his most cherished film *The Night that It Rained* were all produced by the MCA, yet the ministry confiscated the films and banned them and until 1979 revolution they were not publicly screened. It is noteworthy that even the critical, political and revolutionary films such as Shirdel's were not collectively made. Perhaps because the intense censorship did not allow him to practice a collective model of production. Also, we should bear in mind that unlike some of Latin American Third Cinema films which were sponsored by trade unions and workers'

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[196] This is a perspective that is also prevalent in post-1979 revolution films particularly those which are praised and recognized in international film festivals.
[197] Please see Appendix section.
[198] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid, p. 119.

support, in Iran such independent organization did not exist- and still is non-existent. Therefore, directors like Shirdel had no independent, collective and democratic workers' organization to assist them.

In this section I discussed the equivalent of First, Second and Third Cinema in the Iranian context in order to shed light on the similarities and differences between the Iranian cinema and the rest of the world. Despite the differences, I continue to use the terminology in this thesis since I find the categorization appropriate for a historical materialist investigation. Although it will be a broad usage, yet it indicates the general characteristic of production, the film text and its distribution. I will now turn to the discussion of high and low art which shapes another theoretical approach of this research.

Fission of High and Low Art during the 1960s

Recently, one of the leading Iranian film magazines, *Film*, published a special issue celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the release of *Qaroun's Treasure* and *Mudbrick and Mirror* in 1965. It was surprising to see that the former film which was always regarded as the low culture production of the culture industry of the previous royal regime was elevated to the place of a landmark film next to the other modernist production. *Qaroun's Treasure* had been a source of controversy and heated debates since its opening in November 1965. It was screened in six cinemas of the capital simultaneously and reached the highest rate of sales in box-office record. An astonishing number of 870000 of Tehran's residents at the time saw this film during sixty days which produced the tremendous amount of two million Toman. According to critics of the time *Qaroun's Treasure* inaugurated new genre of so-called 'stewpot films[199]' as it

> consolidated some of the existing stylistic, thematic, generic, and industrial
> conventions of Film Farsi (FF) and introduced new generic elements, which together
> were solidified by the film's immense popularity into the conventions of Iranian
> melodramas, particularly the stewpot genre.[200]

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[199] Stewpot film is a generic term that is almost equivalent with film Farsi since in almost all of these popular films there is a scene where the characters eat a particular stewpot called Ab-Gousht which was and still is a favorite dish among the Iranian working class.

[200] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Op cit., p. 197.

There were numerous imitations and adaptations of this film which helped the mainstream cinema to establish itself as the modern entertainment industry. Yet, the film critics, intellectuals and artists denounced this film as the product of mass culture which aimed to make the audience passive receivers of the 'illusions' of the culture industry.

Approximately, during the same period, the second cinema also began its first productions with films such as *Mudbrick and Mirror*. This film has always been discussed as the art house production with its specific audience. Some critics attempted to identify the Iranian new wave cinema as being rooted in Golestan's films and most importantly *Mudbrick and Mirror*.[201] Naficy states that this film is 'perhaps the best example of existentialism in Pahlavi-era, conterminous with the height of existentialist philosophy in Iran, for it condemns the human desire to seek a saviour. In this it is also a modernist work'.[202] Therefore, regarding the special issue of *Film* it is possible to deduce that *Mudbrick and Mirror* is recognised as the first prominent modernist production of second cinema when the first cinema as a distinct category was consolidated. In that special issue various positive and negative critical texts about both films were collected and through the interviews with the crew the style and mode of production was explored. For instance, Shamim Bahar believed that *Mudbrick and Mirror* was a novel cinematic experience but a failed one. A kind of cinema which attempted to develop a new visual language but did not succeed.[203] Accordingly, it seems that it is possible to regard the release of these two films in 1965 as the distinct date of the fission of cinema production into high and low culture.

Nevertheless, For *Film* contributors, (as for many other film critics) it seems that it remained a question what the relation between these two films was and whether it was an accident that both films were produced in the same year. Surprisingly, the editorial did not open a dialogue between the two films. Even fifty years after, the tension between high and low culture remains controversial. If culture is 'the authentic expression of collective life and experience'[204], supporters of both films believe that their film was more successful too. Therefore, it is also possible to observe that the gap between these two films could be associated with the conflictual perspectives about the role of art in the collective life.

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[201] Parviz Jahed, *Neveshtan Ba Dourbin, Mosahebe ba Ebrahim Golestan*, [*Writing with the camera, Interview with Golestan], Akhtaran*, 2005, p. 10.
[202] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Op cit., p. 360.
[203] Shamim Bahar, About a Cinematic Experience, Film magazine no 491, 2015, p. 30-32.
[204] Fredrick Jameson, *Signature of the Visible*, Routledge, 1992, p. 24.

Fredric Jameson is one of the prominent critics who addresses this problematic relation between high and low art in his essay 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture'. I will discuss his view in order to illuminate the structural dependency of *Qaroun's Treasure* and *Mudbrick and Mirror*, and accordingly, I could consider the film productions before 1965 as attempts to deliver organic productions of art which were not yet totally reified commodity. Jameson believes that popular art of the past should be distinguished from mass culture. In his view the former was 'the organic expression of many distinct social communities or casts such as peasant village, the court, the medieval town, the polis and even the classical bourgeoisie', yet capitalism has dissolved, fragmented or atomized them into 'agglomeration of isolated and equivalent private individuals, by way of the corrosive action of universal commodification and the market system'.[205]

In Jameson's view such popular art has disappeared and is replaced by the mass culture which is also referred to as mass audience culture, commercial culture and the culture industry. Its concern is to attract the most possible strata of the population. On the other hand the opposite is the high culture which in Jameson's view is an establishment phenomenon and in relation with various institutions particularly university.[206] The novelty of Jameson's argument lies in the fact that he does not regard high and low art as distinct opposite phenomena but as being structurally dependent.[207] Instead of discussing them as separate categories, Jameson suggests to replace the opposition of high culture/mass culture (which is based on a sort of timeless realm of absolute aesthetic judgment) with a historical and dialectical approach. In this way it becomes possible to read them as 'objectively related and dialectically interdependent phenomenon' and 'as twin and inseparable forms of the fission of aesthetic production under capitalism'.[208]

For Jameson the split between high culture/mass culture is the outcome of dissolving the fabric of all social groups. In this condition, the aesthetic of both modernist and mass culture productions become disassociated from group praxis.

> Capitalism constantly dissolves the fabric of all cohesive social groups without
> exception, including its own ruling class and thereby problematizes aesthetic
> production and linguistic invention which have their source in group life. The result,

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[205] Jameson, *Signature of the Visible*, ibid, p. 13.
[206] Jameson, *Signature of the Visible*, ibid, p. 10.
[207] Jameson, *Signature of the Visible*, ibid, p. 16.
[208] Jameson, *Signature of the Visible*, ibid, p. 12.

discussed above, is the dialectical fission of older aesthetic expression into two modes,
modernism and mass culture, equally disassociated from group praxis. Both of the
modes have attained an admirable level of technical virtuosity; but it is a daydream to
expect that either of these semiotic structures could be transformed, by fiat, miracle,
or sheer talent, into what could be called, in its strong form, political art.[209]

Considering Jameson's argument, I think that it is possible to discuss *Qaroun's Treasure* and *Mudbrick
and Mirror* as texts which demonstrate the fission of artistic productions into two modes of mass culture
and modernist art. This separation of artistic production could be also observed in the emergence of a
film genre that was called Film Farsi and its consolidation as the main and profitable genre of
commercial cinema and mass culture throughout 1970s. Naficy states that Amirhoushang Kavousi, an
elite film critic and graduate of Hautes-Etudes Cinematographique (IDHEC) in France, coined the term in
1953 for film productions that except for Farsi language, did not present any cultural affiliation with
Iranian society at the time and were 'formless, structureless and storyless'.[210] Naficy ascribes the term to
popular feature films which were a mixture of melodrama and popular tales. They primarily represent
the clash between good and evil according to class, value and social contrast. This genre was dismissed
by the critics as the product of the culture industry.[211] Naficy identifies some of the formal
characteristics of Film Farsi as 'uneven pacing, repetitive shots, a chaotic point of view, unmotivated
action, disrupted space and time continuity and theatrical dialogue'.[212]

However, as I have closely watched the early films of 1960s and studied the cinema journals of the time,
I have noticed that such characteristics could not be attributed to all popular feature films of
commercial cinema during the early 1960s. For instance, in *Setare Sinema* a poplar cinema magazine, by
Film Farsi they simply indicated Iranian films and it included some of the good quality and artistic films
of the time such as *Swallows Always Return Home* which I am going to discuss in the next chapter. Some
of the structural characteristics such as uneven pacing, etc., that critics mentioned could not be found in
the many films of early 1960s. Also, thematically, many films were occupied by religious, pedagogic and
political concerns. The magazine reported the production process of Iranian films along with interesting
reports from film festivals such as Moscow. However, as I noticed, towards the end of 1960s the content
of the magazine gradually changed and became filled with superficial comments instead of thoughtful

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[209] Jameson, *Signature of the Visible*, ibid, p. 23.
[210] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p. 149.
[211] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 150.
[212] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p.152.

articles and reports, and fraught with full page pictures of often half-naked Iranian and foreign film stars. It seems that the genre of Film Farsi as described by critics emerged and consolidated by the end of 1960s and established itself fully as a profitable genre during 1970s.

I mentioned this discussion in order to highlight the fact that the separation of high modernist art and mass culture in film production as discussed by Jameson could be observed in the emergence of Film Farsi genre too. It seems that such separation did not exist vividly during the early 1960s considering the cycle of production which included films, magazines, etc. Yet, the production of *Qaroun's Treasure* and *Mudbrik and Mirror* in 1965 marked a new phase of production characterised by the split of high and low culture. Therefore, in my discussion about the hegemonic spaces in films, I will discuss the early 1960s films as more organic productions before this split and filmic texts of 1965 afterwards as products of high and mass culture being interrelated and in dialectical relation.

In chapter three, I concentrate on a number of films which were produced before 1965. Although, limiting the discussion into exact date does not seem helpful since the formation and emergence of various hegemonic force-fields could not be precisely identified. Yet, it is possible to consider that the development and modernization of the oil industry in the South of Iran by the late 1930s and the Land reform in 1962 both generated significant transformations in social relations and formed new hegemonic forces which their visual allegories could be seen on the big screen of cinema. In these films it is possible to observe organic expression of life by communities in the village which is not affected by the commodification of cinema as it occurred later in the late 1960s and 1970s. The star system was not established, plots were not professionally written and produced, no proper set design could be observed, these characteristics made this cinema close to what Adorno called the *blind film*, a sort of mechanical operation that could record without the strict domination of planned filmmaking. 'Works which have not completely mastered their technique, conveying as a result something consolingly uncontrolled and accidental, have a liberating quality'.[213] In the next chapter, I discuss this liberating quality in terms of the organisation of space, how the individual, collective and community spaces convey the organic forms of collective life which are intertwined in the fabric of hegemonic and counter hegemonic forces in the film.

In the next section of this chapter, I will move on to engage with the perspectives of critical theorists about the medium of film in order to illuminate my analysis of cinematic production. Also, I will discuss

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[213] Adorno, 'Transparencies on Film', New German Critique, No. 24/25, 1981-2, p. 154.

my approach regarding the formation of social spaces, particularly the hegemonic spaces through which I will engage with in the proceeding chapters.

Critical Theory, Film and Space

When we examine the mainstream Iranian cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, it is inevitable to refer to the critical views of Theodore Adorno, one of the most influential theorists of Frankfort School. In a number of writings he expressed his ambivalence about the progressive nature of film as a modern medium in relation to the masses. On the one hand, he viewed cinema as the result of deploying industry to art and the first imperative for making film is purely to extract exchange value.[214] He looked down on film as an industrial product which is of significant political and economic value for the ruling classes. Adorno problematizes the realistic and representational aspect of film arguing that it creates a 'semblance of immediacy' which forges a look of reality[215] while it makes the viewers increasingly passive and accustoms them to the harsh reality of capitalist environment and neutralizes the destructive effects of their alienated world.[216]

> Involved in market machinations, film, like other products of the culture industry, loses its artistic integrity and quality, tending towards standardisation, stereotypes and simplicity. In the process film creates appropriate audiences, who are equally standardized and homogenised. Denial or resigned acceptance of the unhappiness in the world was what the culture industry was organised to promote.[217]

Adorno's critical perspective could also be applied to the mainstream Iranian cinema which in the first place was an industrial commodity. As my interview with Ali Abbasi demonstrates, many of the producers joined the industry purely for profit-making imperatives. People who had not had relevant education or experience made more than five films a year to earn more exchange value. Abbasi himself accepts the fact that what evolved into a cinema beyond profit-making owed its development to the mainstream cinema as the latter produced the surplus money required for the former.[218] Furthermore,

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[214] Esther Leslie, 'Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film', in *Understanding Film; Marxist Perspectives*, Op cit., p. 36.
[215] Adorno, 'Transparencies on Film', Op cit., p202.
[216] Leslie, 'Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film', Op cit., p. 34.
[217] Leslie, 'Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film', ibid, p. 36.
[218] This is a view which is acknowledged by many people in the industry. Behrouz Vosougi, the famous actor of the late 1960s and 1970s, mentions in his memoir that in order to produce decent films directors needed to produce a

the production, organization and arrangement of various types of spaces played a particular role to deliver a 'semblance of immediacy' which conjured up a sense of reality for the audience. In the well-known film *Qarun's Treasure* (1965) the film moves alternatively between the wealthy household of Qarun and the household of his newly made friends in an impoverished setting. The easy and simple sliding of camera between the two extreme poles of wealth and poverty, exhibited and affirmed by the arrangement of furniture, attitudes of people towards the vast or narrow space of their living environment, etc., is captured and framed as a simple, familiar and accepted reality. The camera does not problematize the limitations imposed by the space for both the rich and poor and unquestionably neutralises the class conflict which captures our eyes through the arrangement of space. I refer to this brief example in order to demonstrate that Adorno's pessimistic views on film could be helpful when we assess the role of the spatial level of films.

On the other hand, Adorno maintains a liberating characteristic for film which becomes possible through its incompleteness, error, unintentional effects and objectivity. In an interview, filmmaker Alexander Kluge recalled what Adorno mentioned about the value of the unintentionality of film in a discussion, that when 'one records something without intention, then something will always be tracked down … the film that is recorded without intention is cleverer than that which you intend.'[219]

For Adorno, the productive capacity of film lies in the possibility that something objective could be caught without the intervention of the filmmaker's consciousness or the production team in general. As Leslie names it, the blind film 'would allow film to record something objective in the world, without the conscious intervention of filmmakers or participants, who all conspire to produce something staged for the film. Perhaps something more akin to an unmediated reality would emerge, from this mediated form.[220] The blind film could be regarded as subjective dimensions of film (including script writers, editors, directors, camera operators, actors, etc.) allow the 'objective' film to appear which is relied on the machinery, the camera, the recording material. It is notable that Adorno's rather positive reading of film was expressed as a negation of what mainstream dramatic cinema represented until 1960s which was carefully scripted, plotted and acted.[221]

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couple of stereotypical, simple and standardized films each year. Thus, through their surplus money they could invest in a valuable film which their profit was not guaranteed.

[219] Leslie, 'Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film', Op cit., p. 39-40.
[220] Leslie, 'Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film', ibid, p. 40.
[221] Leslie, 'Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film', ibid, p. 40.

The blind film could be explicated through the opposition of what Adorno called 'kiddy cinema' versus 'daddy cinema', the latter indicates the masterful and excellent production of cultural industry as opposed to the former which lacks the skilful quality of the latter. Adorno states:

> In this comparatively awkward and unprofessional cinema, uncertain of its effect is inscribed the hope that the so-called mass media might eventually become something qualitatively different. While in autonomous art anything lagging behind the already established technical standards does not rate, vis-à-vis the culture industry works which have not completely mastered their technique, conveying as a result something consciously uncontrolled and accidental, have a liberating quality.[222]

I would like to suggest that Adorno's idea of blind film, which its production capacity lays on the technological instruments, is relevant to my research as I examine the spatial signification of films particularly the mainstream cinema. In the above paragraphs, I discussed how a film reproduces and neutralizes the social conflicts at the level of arranging the space. However, this limitation is related to the subjective aspect of film which intentionally organizes the space. I would also like to argue that the camera is capable to track down spaces which evade the 'subjective' aspect of film, the mechanical eye could record and highlight various type of spaces which remain ignored, forgotten and downgraded by the production team. My argument is particularly relevant to the mainstream cinema known as the first cinema (and Film Farsi as discussed above). The films in the period of 1960s and 1970s were made while the industry had not mastered its technique and the process of production was not skilfully excellent. On its way to reach a level to compete with the global products of Hollywood and European cinema, many films were produced which unintentionally reveal more than their repetitive and unconvincing stories. Among the many unintentional aspects their spatial level is of particular importance since it became able to capture the fast changing environment of the rural and the urban, of what was not registered and discussed at the time and even now. In my view, it provides a fantastic opportunity to delve into an area of study which has not yet been probed.

To illustrate this tendency, here I will refer to a film produced by Ali Abbasi. The film T*hree Cavalries* (1968) narrates the story of an accidental encounter between three friends with a young woman who intended to commit suicide because her lover left her. The provincial woman who was alone in the strange environment of Tehran accepts the offer of friends to live in their apartment and help with their

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[222] Adorno, 'Transparencies on Film', Op cit., p. 199.

daily life. Meanwhile, the friends find the ex-lover who intends to deceive the daughter of a factory owner into marriage in order to possess their wealth. He conducts this plot with the assistance of a cabaret owner and his criminal gang. The three friends who distribute gas capsules and work in the service industry during the day help the young woman to reveal the plot and stop it. At the end of the film, one of the friends and the woman fall in love and marry.

In my interview with Abbasi[223] he mentioned interesting details about the film. He thought that the film as his first production had a rather weak and unconvincing script. The acting was not attractive and the director Bahram Reypour was not familiar with the standards of an average good film. When the shooting was finished they encountered another problem which was that the finished film was short of a standard time of a feature length film by nearly 10 to 15 minutes. The crew went to a greenery area of North Tehran, called Pol-e-Rumi, and to Tehran Zoo. They recorded scenes of talking and leisure time which Abbasi thought they were completely irrelevant to the actual story. However, Abbasi was surprised that despite all its faults the film was welcomed by the audience and was successful at the box office. He stated that the success of the film still remained a question for him.

If we examine the film closely we could realise that despite its familiar story and happy ending there are other reasons for its positive reception. On the one hand, the film highlights the brutality of the urban Tehran through the story of a girl drivien to commit suicide and the struggle between different groups to acquire wealth through dispossessing other people. On the other hand, the film offers the possibility of collective happiness through the emotional and human bond between people as it grows between the three friends and the woman. In this way, the film is positive about the contradictions of urban life. This theme is brought forward through the way that the urban space is represented in the film. The three friends have a car through which they navigate the broad streets of the city, for talking and having fun they visit the zoo and a park and then they walk around aimlessly in the tree-lined boulevards (as part of the producers' attempts to reach the time of a standard feature length film). Although, the film does not emphasise this point, but it is helpful to bear in mind that the freedom of city is opposed to the steady and prison-like life of the rural where the peasants had to be in a limited space of a farm or village and did not have the freedom to move around. Having the hardships of rural life at the historical background, we could discuss that the freedom of movement and the exploration of urban spaces is represented as leisure since there is an indirect historical comparison with the rural life where such

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[223] This interview is in the appendix section of this thesis.

pleasures were not available to the peasants in the feudal system. The three friends which could be considered as free wage-labourers (because of their type of job), could enjoy the free movement in the city and encounter new places and people.

Going back to Adorno's idea of the possibility of blind film, I would like to argue that what makes *Three Cavaliers* such a joyful and pleasant film is the accidental production of spaces whereby the characters could delve into the possibility of the city and enjoy it. The film did not intend to demonstrate the freedom of wage-labourers as opposed to the closed and limited life of the rural, yet, the exploration of sites specific to Tehran and having pleasant times there convey a sense of freedom and new type of social relation between people and places which was not intended in the original script. It was Abbasi who mentioned that the scenes of wandering in the zoo and park were unplanned and were shot only to reach the time limit. However, precisely these irrelevant scenes of new urban Tehran provided the film with the sense of freedom, possibilities and joy. It was the mechanical eye of the camera which moved ahead of the script which is the reminiscent of Benjamin's idea about the problem of the plot. He believed that 'plots fall back on clichés or templates from theatre, not allowing the tendencies imminent to film technology to dictate development'.[224] In the case of this film we have a script which has a fairly familiar story with a simple happy end yet the hopeful representation of the urban Tehran as it is unfolded through the camera makes it an especial registration of the possibilities of the city.

I discussed this example in order to highlight how Adorno's idea of blind film could be illuminating in examining the representation of spaces in the film text. The interview with Abbasi was quite helpful in identifying the unintentional scenes yet not such a detailed information is available about all films. One of the methodologies of this research that I would like to recommend is to identify the seemingly irrelevant and accidental element of films (to their script) at the spatial level and analysing them according to what seems to be prominent in the space itself such as social and class conflicts.

Up to this point I have discussed the first cinema productions, in my research also I focus on a number of political and third cinema productions which consciously focus on the representation of spaces which are intentionally ignored and oppressed.

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[224] Leslie, 'Adorno, Benjamin, Brecht and Film', Op cit., p. 41.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to draw the theoretical framework of this research. First, I discussed what notion of hegemony will be applied in my proceeding arguments. Gramsci's perspective considering the idea of hegemony according to the notion of historical bloc is applied to my analysis. Furthermore, I engaged with Raymond Williams's perspective about the hegemony as a social process of inclusion. I discussed the hegemonic practices such as alternative, oppositional, emergent and residual in order to outline how my analysis will be shaped. In addition, in order to clarify how the spatial level of signification will be discussed, I referred to Adorno and through an example, I discussed his idea of blind film and the value of unintentional registration of the camera. In this chapter, I attempted to explicate the general underlying assumptions that forms my research. In the next chapter, I will engage with the analysis of films and their spatial significance according to what is outlined here.

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Chapter Three: The Representation of Hegemonic Rural Spaces of 1960s Films in Iran

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the historic blocs that I mentioned in the last chapter and I will explore their hegemonic forces, then I will discuss a select number of documentary and feature films produced in the early 1960s at the height of industrialization period. I attempt to demonstrate how the historic blocs of the time influenced the formation of the hegemonic force-fields and demonstrate the hegemonic process in the films. Also, I will critically engage with the representation of hegemonic spaces in films.

As I discussed in the last chapter, regarding the films of the early 1960s, it is possible to identify two hegemonic processes in the films' rural setting. One is the enthusiastic and hopeful desire for the new and modern technology and the profound transformation that they could generate in the lives of people. This emergent practice in films appears in various ways. For instance, in the industrial documentaries about the oil and gas production a sort of fascination with the industrial power could be observed. On the other hand, there is an admiration for the past ways of life that resists modernisation. The older mode of accumulation of wealth exemplified in feudal order and self-sustained economy appears as a residual hegemonic process and the social relations of the past are summoned to convey a sense of authenticity and stability versus the speed of modern life.

The Historic Blocs of Early 1960s

In this section, firstly I will explore the historical context in order to highlight the historical blocs that contributed to the formation of hegemony. As Abrahamian argues the second Pahlavi Shah, Mohammad-Reza Shah, attempted to continue his father's plan to construct a massive modern state structure and industrialization was a necessary step in that direction. The modernization and reform which promised new standards of life for all Iranians intended to transform both the mode of production and the related social relations through which the older social classes such as nobles and aristocracy disappeared and new social classes such as free laborers emerged. The second Pahlavi named this comprehensive plan a 'White Revolution' which intended to 'compete and preempt' a red

revolution[225]. At the heart of White Revolution was the land reforms which was initiated by the Shah in 1963 and was regarded as his most important achievement.

> Land reform accomplished what it was designed to do, undercut notables, even though some large landowners, including the Pahlavi family, managed to transform themselves into successful commercial farmers. Land reforms made redundant such terms as feudal, notables, aristocracy and large landlords. It instead stratified the countryside into some 1300 commercial enterprises each owning more than 200 hectares; some 640,000 landlords owning between 10 and 200 hectares; 1,200,000 families – most former sharecroppers with tenancy rights – owning less than 10 hectares; and more than 700,000 laborers – all former non-tenant peasants. Since 10 hectares was the minimum needed to survive in most regions, many small holders were not better off than the landless laborers.[226]

In addition, Abrahamian indicates the development of modern infrastructure:

> While land reform transformed the countryside, five year plans drawn up by the Plan and Budget Organization, brought about a minor industrial revolution. They improved port facilities; expanded the trans-Iranian Railway, linking Tehran to Mashed, Tabriz and Isfahan; and asphalted the main roads between Tehran and the provincials' capitals. They financed petrochemical plants; oil refineries; hydroelectric dams- named after members of the royal family; steel mills in Ahwaz and Isfahan – the Soviets constructed the latter; and a gas pipeline to the Soviet Union ... Between 1953 and 1975, the number of small factories increases from 1500 to more than 7000; medium-sized factories from 300 to more than 800; and large factories – employing more than 500 workers – from fewer than 100 to more than 150. They included textile, machine tool, and car assembly plants in Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz, Ahwaz, Arak and Kermanshah. The smaller plants specialized in clothing, food processing including beverages, cement, bricks, tiles, paper and home appliances. The regime's showpieces

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[225] Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 131.
[226] Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, ibid, p. 131-2.

were the Dezful Dam in Khuzestan, the steel mills in Isfahan and the nuclear plant in Busher. Key production figures indicate the extent of this industrial revolution'.[227]

These developments profoundly affected the class structure in the country. According to Abrahamian the new structure included an upper class of one percent which consisted of the Pahlavi family, military offices, senior civil servants and court connected entrepreneurs. Then a middle class was formed, ten per cent of it included the modern salaried middle class such as professionals, civil servants, office employers and college students. Also, thirteen percent of it was the traditional propertied classes such as clerics, bazaaries, small-factory owners, workshop owners and commercial farmers. At the bottom, there was a lower class which consisted of thirty two percent of urban population who were industrial workers, small factory workers, workshop workers, construction workers, peddlers and the unemployed. The rest which amounted to forty five per cent, was the rural population who included landed peasants, near landless peasants, landless peasants and rural unemployed.[228]

Abrahamian provides a detailed description of the rural condition which could illuminate the condition of the aforementioned historic blocs:

> The rural population – some 40 percent of the labour force – consisted of three strata: prosperous farmers, hard-pressed smallholders, and village labourers. The first layer included former village headmen, bailiffs and oxen-owning tenant sharecroppers who had benefited most from land reform. They numbered around 600,000 – less than 17 percent of the rural population. The second included some 1,100,000 sharecroppers who had received less than 10 hectares – the minimum needed in most regions. Many had no choice but to exchange their small plots for shares in state cooperatives. The third comprised peasants without sharecropping rights. Having received no land whatsoever, they survived as farm hands, shepherds, labourers, day commuters to nearby towns, and wage earners employed in the many small plants that flourished in the countryside during the early 1970s – small plants manufacturing carpets, shoes, clothes and paper. Some migrated to the urban centers. Thus the White Revolution failed to provide land to the bulk of the rural population. [229]

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[227] Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, ibid, p. 133.
[228] Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, ibid, p. 140.
[229] Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, ibid, p. 139.

According to this information it is possible to observe that the removal of traditional aristocracy, the nobles, the large landowners opened the way for the growth of prosperous farmers. The village headmen and bailiffs are common characters in the rural films of the period. The second group also appears in a number of films as they struggle to adapt themselves to the new situation, and in many films – along with the third group of landless peasants – they set out to work in the urban city even temporarily. In a number of rural films, it is possible to observe a class tension between the two groups of newly prosperous farmers and the second and third groups. In addition, it is possible to recognize that in such films the desire for the traditional social life, the innocence of the pastoral and the simplicity of self-sustained economy is tangible.

On the other hand, as Abrahamian discusses, the minor industrial revolution had a profound impact in the country. For instance, the Pahlavi regime dismantled the power and social class relations associated with the aristocracy. Accordingly, the social value system of feudalism was discredited and new values related to the new social classes emerged such as the value of modern education and the importance of modern knowledge about health and agriculture. As many films of the period demonstrate, the lower social classes observed an opportunity for social mobility, which was not imaginable in the feudal order. Thus, the hope for constant and endless change and improvement of social position shaped the mentality of people and the direction of their efforts. Also, the regime strengthened its position by helping the new social classes which supported it such as the new entrepreneur. Through the development of the new technology the regime established its source of wealth in many fields such as oil and gas production, commercial farming, industrial fields, etc. Therefore, it is possible to observe that the Pahlavi family and the one percent upper class of the society were the key supporters of modernization in all areas. They advocated modern technology and its assured benefits.

In conclusion, I illuminated the main historic bloc of the period which contributed to the formation of hegemonic force-fields. One is the one percent upper class of the society which includes the ruling family of Pahlavi. Through the transformation of the class structure, the old feudal mode of production and its social relations were removed and their rival aristocracy and large land owners disappeared. Instead, the new classes of entrepreneurs and supporters of new social order emerged which wholeheartedly supported modernization in all aspects of life and claimed it would have benefits for all people. The developments affected the mentality of people and promised social mobility for the lower classes and encouraged new values such as the value of modern education instead of traditional values.

On the other hand, the old feudal system and its traditional values did not disappear easily and resisted against the new order. As Abrahamian mentioned only prosperous farmers who were less than 17 percent of the rural population benefited from land reform. The majority of peasants either had to work on lands which did not suffice their expenses or become completely landless and had to work on industrial plants and become free labourers. Those were groups of people who may have cherished the self-sustained economy of the past, the simple social relation of feudal order and the innocence and traditional beauty of rural life. In the rural films of the period, we could invariably find characters who are in this position as they are confused between the contradictory benefits of modernisation and those of the previous order.

It is possible to regard these groups as constituting the Gramscian historical bloc of the aforementioned period and accordingly they shaped the force-fields of hegemony in the rural films. In the next section, I will discuss a number of selected films and the main hegemonic subjects, then I will move on to follow the hegemonic conflicts at the spatial level.

Hegemonic Conflicts of Rural Films

In order to research the rural films produced from 1960 to 1965, I visited the National Film Archive in Tehran and watched the films that were available in their archive. According to my information there must have been seventeen rural films produced from 1960 to 1970 yet I could only find thirteen films. The rest were either too old to watch as they were old negatives which needed to be restored professionally or, they were not in the archive. The majority of rural films were produced before 1965 and as I noticed making films set in the villages gradually became undesirable as the urban stories attracted larger audiences, especially after the success of *Qarun's Treasure* (1965). Towards the end of 1960s, the mainstream cinema was not interested in rural themes and conflicts, however, the rural films returned to cinema in the films of socially conscious and politically motivated filmmakers. Many directors of the so-called New Wave Cinema (1969-1979) made at least one film set entirely in rural areas and explored the social, cultural and economic issues of the people. In their films the rural even found an allegorical signification of the country. Nevertheless, the rural films of the mainstream cinema in the early 1960s were sharply different from the rural films of the New Wave Cinema. The former were light-hearted, full of joy, humor and hope for future yet the latter were mostly tragedies such as *The*

Cow and were set in surreally dark, skeptical and satirical atmospheres which drew attention to the failure of two decades of modernization and industrialization.

In this section, I critically discuss a number of films that exemplify the characteristics of the films of this period (1960s). It is possible to divide them into three categories: the first group includes the majority of films which are related to the work and life on land and they primarily engage with a small community dependent on agricultural activity. Land and its physical representation feature one of the important elements in rural films. As Fowler and Helfield discuss in relation to 'land films' internationally:

> What figures most prominently in rural cinema is the relationship between land and
> inhabitant; the importance of this relationship is indicated through the preeminence of
> physical and social landscape. This is the geographic and topographic environment in
> relation to which the rural inhabitant is defined and in turn defines himself.[230]

The second group includes piscatorial films which are related to the work and life of the people living on the coastlines. And the third regards industrial films which demonstrate the development of new industries mostly related to gas and oil production mainly in the unpopulated regions or where nomadic people temporarily resided.

What the three categories seem to share is that these types of production relied on the representation of typical characters which could be recognized through their social classes. The landowner, the bailiff, the middle-size land owner and their families are common and repetitive figures in the mainstream cinema. Even in the industrial films one could observe the division of workers, engineers, managers and native people. (Figure 1) Nevertheless, there is a possibility in the feature films for the emergence of the individuality of characters so that they could move beyond their typical class positions. For instance, situations such as love stories allow the people to appear individuated through their dialogue, behavior and decision. This possibility is absent in the documentary industrial films, rather, they are wonderful registrations of collective human effort and labour for development.

Accordingly, one scarcely finds a close up of only one person in these films. In all three types of films the medium shots of small groups are common which mostly include more than one person. Both feature

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[230] Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield, *Representing the Rural: Place, Space, and identity in Films about the Land*, Wayne State University Press, 2006, p. 6.

and documentary films are interested in the community and groups of people. In the feature films a close up shot includes at least two people who are mostly lovers or are people conversing. (Figure 2) Even when there is one person in the frame, he or she is visibly surrounded by the nature as if it is accompanying the person. (Figure 3)

The feature films, whether on land or coastline, share similar conflicts, however they were distinct in details and spaces. All three groups of films were set in the natural and ordinary settings and studio production was not desirable, lighting was natural and costume was not professionally designed and was more based on the cloths of natives. It is important to point out that in the films of this period whether in title sequence or closing credits, I could not find the name of art director, set designer or someone responsible for decoration.[231] In the periodicals of the period such as *Setar-E Sinema*, which encompassed a wide range of news about film production and had many interviews with crew members, I did not find a single reference to set designers. Also, many book length interviews with directors, actors, camera people, producers, etc, have been published about this period yet the issue of decoration and set design and preparation of the spaces and locations for shooting is rarely discussed.

Accordingly, it is possible to deduce that this work was generally carried out by the production team according to the views of the director and it was not done professionally. In other words, the division of labour within the production line was not fully professionalized. It seems that only with the advent of New Wave Cinema and the emergence of socially and politically conscious directors the set design became an important issue. For instance, Daryoush Mehrjouyi, one of the pioneers of New Wave Cinema has mentioned that for the location of *Cow*, they looked for a suitable village and then they converted the exterior spaces to suit their story.[232] Also, he mentions that before the revolution he himself was responsible for the decoration and preparation of the spaces, he even had to find the furniture for the interior location.[233]

Regarding the organization of space in the rural films before 1965, I do not think that the spaces were not prepared for shooting, yet I would like to highlight its conventional and unprofessional quality as opposed to other kind of spaces which were carefully planned and made. It seems that the common way

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[231] The title sequence only included the names of actors and actresses, camera and lighting, editors, producers and song writers, composers and singers. Perhaps it demonstrates the importance of film score and theme song.
[232] Mani Haghighi, *Karname Chehel Sale: Gofto go ba Daryoush Mehrjouyi [forty years of Work, An Interview with Daryoush Mehrjouyi]*, Nashr-e Markaz, 2014, p. 25.
[233] Haghighi, *Karname Chehel Sale*, ibid, p. 61.

of organizing the space was to look for a location which seemed suitable and affordable to rent. Therefore, we could observe a surprising diversity of spaces. For instance, the interior of the village home of a farmer or fisherman is always distinct from other homes of other films. The unprofessional division of labour endows a wonderful original quality to the spaces which allows us to have a glimpse to the common social spaces. In previous chapter, through reference to Adorno's view, I extensively discussed the merit of non-professional cinema.

In the first sight, the films of early 1960s in Iran were similar to new-realist cinema in Europe, however, they lacked the aesthetic, social and political views of new-realist movements and what distinguished them dramatically were the presence of professional actors, familiar happy-ending stories and the absence of original scripts.

Another point about the general characteristics of the rural films before 1965 is the unusual length of films. The majority of feature films lasted more than 120 minutes which decreased towards the end of the decade. In contrast, the length of the documentary films was not standard and seemed to be more experimental as they varied between short films to feature-film length. It seems at the time cinema as a national industry was gradually forming its standards for production and during the 1960s it was influenced by other cinemas. For instance, it is possible to observe that the long length of the films was modeled on the Indian cinema which has always been very popular in Iran. Talking about his first film *Diamon33* (1965), Mehrjouyi informs readers that the producer pressured him to increase the length of the film to more than 120 minutes. While he believed that it seriously damaged the structure of film since the story-line did not have the capacity to be stretched to that level, apparently, the producer hoped that he could screen the film in India and therefore imposed the expansion of the film's duration.[234]

It is generally acknowledged that Iranian cinema at the time was influenced by the Indian cinema in many ways. For instance, the singing in the films was modeled on Indian films. Mehrabi states that singing in films was learnt from Indian cinema and it was even performed in the same way as the actors/actresses ran between trees, flowers and plants, held hands and danced in circles and chased each other. Even the sober content of songs resembled Indian songs in the films. This tendency which appeared in the early 1950s particularly after 1953 CIA backed coup became an indispensable element

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[234] Haghighi, *Karnameh Chehel Sale*, ibid. p. 6.

of Iranian main stream cinema.[235] Approximately, all of the rural feature films of the aforementioned period have several scenes of singing characters which do not directly contribute to the development of narration, rather it seems that they aimed to appeal to the audience by stressing the pleasures of visual spectacle.

The aforementioned similarities among the rural films of the period could illuminate the general context of the production of films where the hegemonic force-fields were at work. As cinema represented the historical process of two decades – from the hopefulness of the 1960s to the bitterness of the 1970s – it is possible to observe the forceful transition that industrialization induced. The presence of characters from various class backgrounds could point at the hidden and on-going class struggle which was expressed in personal stories. The lack of art directors and set designers highlights the positive sides of artisanal mode of production where the division of labour was not professionalized. This attitude could be pertinent with the idea of imperfect cinema advocated by Julio Garcia Espinosa. In that he discusses the undemocratic effect of professionalizing the arts as it becomes limited to few elite people. Espinoza along with other Latin American filmmakers at the time sought the possible means to make art available to the masses. He states 'the task at hand is to ask ourselves whether art is really restricted to specialists, whether it is, through extra-human design, the option of a chosen few or a responsibility for everyone.[236] Espinoza believes that once the means of artistic production is democratized – that is it become accessible to the masses- it becomes possible for art to be practiced by the masses.

> The new outlook for artistic culture is no longer that everyone must share the taste of a
> few, but that all can be creators of that culture. Art has always been a universal
> necessity; what it has not been is an option for all under equal conditions.[237]

Regarding this privilege of imperfect cinema it is possible to suggest that the absence of trained and educated designers opened the way for production team to engage directly with the common way of life and organization of space. And some of the features of the films such as the length and singing could

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[235] As many historians such as Naficy and Mehrabi discuss, after the 1953 CIA backed coup the general policy of including cabaret song and dance in all the films was enforced by the government. These scenes were imposed on many directors and even were inserted into foreign American and European films. It is said that they aimed to divert public' attention from political concerns. Mehrabi, *Tarikh Sinamay-E Iran* [*History of Iranian Cinema*], Film Publication,1984, p 59-60.

[236] Julio Garcia Espinosa, For an Imperfect Cinema, in *New Latin American Cinema*, (ed) Michael T.Martin, Wayne State University Press 1997. p. 75.

[237] Espinosa, *New Latin American Cinema*, ibid. p.76.

indicate that the elements of Iranian cinema as a cultural product were under the influence of international cinema. As I have illuminated the general hegemonic characteristic of the aforementioned period, I will now move on to discuss each category briefly.

Rural Films on Land

The first category of rural films engaged with life and work on the land which primarily represented a farming community in a small village. The class struggle between the three groups in the rural areas (as discussed by Abrahamian) including prosperous farmers, middle size landowners and landless laborers, is a common subject. As Naficy indicates in what critics of the time called 'village films', 'class differences between peasants and landlords are wrapped in personal plots, such as a landlord preventing the marriage of his daughter to a peasant. Yet, often the peasant surmounts the class barrier by hard work, education and gainful employment'.[238] He identifies a number of popular themes such as the theme of village versus city life in that a person from a village migrates to the city and despite hardships saves money and makes progress in life and finally returns to the village. Naficy believes that many variations of this theme expanded and established the village films. [239]

In addition, it seems that it is possible to identify other concerns and conflicts in this type of film which directly relate to the class struggle and that is the problem of the feudal mode of production. What this category of films primarily demonstrates is the inability of the feudal mode of production to produce enough profits to suffice the expenditure of a farming family and their community. As I referred to Abrahamian's view above, the fast process of modernisation planned and enforced by the ruling upper class in the country aimed to transform the traditional and feudal way of agricultural production into the industrial farming. Accordingly, social changes in the class structure occurred which removed the traditional class of nobles and large land owners and provided lands to other farmers, although only 17% of the rural population benefited from this economic and social transformation. The new middle sized land owners and landless farmers had no choice but to leave the countryside for work in the city.

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[238] Hamid Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Vol 2, Duke University Press, 2011 p. 234.
[239] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, ibid. p. 234.

It is possible to argue that the rural films on land largely reflect the struggles concerning the inability of feudal mode of production to produce sufficient profit and the transformation of a self-sustained economy of the countryside to the one dependent on the industrial and modern city. Here I discuss *Swallows Always Return Home* (1963) acted and directed by Majid Mohseni [240] which Naficy believes is an exemplar of village films.[241]

The film's story apparently takes place in the late 1940s and is set in a village where the opening scene starts with a full shot of the daily prayer of Ali (Majid Mohseni) next to a river and the wonderful background of mountains behind him. The story starts with the tragic death of Ali's daughter because of a curable illness as he and his wife takes her to the next village's medical centre. The loss of their child affects the couple profoundly as they find out that the feudal's child, who suffered from the same illness, is alive and healthy. The incident motivates the couple to encourage their son to become a modern doctor. In order to provide facilities for their son to receive a modern education, the family sells their main property, a farming land and house, and move to the city.

In the city, the couple find themselves as outsiders despite the efforts they make to integrate. In the beginning they were fascinated with modern urban developments and facilities but they could not enjoy and use them. Ali works hard as a simple worker and he is seen working in the construction sector, and as a porter in the city. He even accepts to perform as Haji-Firuz (a humorous traditional figure) late at nights which makes him a sort of clown for the wandering drunks in the city. His wife also accompanies him wholeheartedly in all the sacrifices; when confronting challenges, hardships and obstacles, she supports Ali by all means and offers the sympathy, companionship and trust that he needs. Unlike other women in urban situation, she does not seek her satisfaction individualistically, for instance, through having money or fame. Rather she honestly devotes herself to her husband and her desire is entangled with the happiness of her family. The emotional bond of the family is so profound to the extent that the couple even endures hunger through eating a minimum of food to be able to buy their son's school books.

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[240] Some of the famous actors of this period enhanced their techniques of acting and became popular and well-known through creating typical village characters such as Majid Mohseni (1923 – 1990). He started working as a young actor in popular theaters in Tehran. Later he became a successful and popular comedian in the national radio and in 1950 began his career in cinema. He directed and acted in a number of films as a familiar village character and was interested in social issues regarding the rural life. Mohseni went on to be an MP (1963 – 1969) and later the cultural advisor of the national institute of radio and television.
[241]Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978 , Op cit., p. 243

In their daily life, the city is depicted in complete contrast to the village. It is unkind, rife with hostility, dark, insecure, unpleasant and humiliating. Ali is seen in working conditions through close up shots which highlights his loneliness. It seems like establishing social relations with co-workers such as the ones they had back in the village was not possible. They are either in their tiny home or at work which could indicate their limited social life. The film indirectly alludes to the absence of unions and even social clubs for workers which is the consequence of political pressures.

On the other hand, the village is depicted through full shots of trees, the sky and background of mountains which conveys a sense of harmony between the people and the nature. Even at times of mourning such as the beginning of the film when the grieving couple return to their villlage with the dead body of their daughter, there is a full shot of the three of them surrounded by the gloomy sky, sunset and a lonely tree. Also, at times of excitements, happiness and satisfaction such as when the son and his lover – his cousin –spend time in the bushes, looking at each other, talking, dancing and holding hands, the natural fields are at the background. In this way, at many points the film emphasizes the relation between nature and people as accompanying each other in various stages of life. In the village, the family is seen through many medium shots of socializing and conversing with other people, moving around as if the space is limitless.

Accordingly, it is possible to identify a tension between the narrative content and the filmic form. On the one hand, the story line depicts the rural as a place where survival from diseases is unlikely as the daughter of Ali and his wife passes away. Also, the rural is represented as a place whereby it is not possible to access new science, technology and modern facilities. In other words, the narrative content highlights the backwardness of the rural. On the other hand, the film form, the visuality and the choice of framing the scenery allude to the eye-catching beauty of the rural. The tranquility and calmness of the nature are brought forward in many scenes as I described above. It is highlighted as a bright and colorful place for individual and collective joy. The picturesque treatment of the rural space awakens a sense of nostalgia for the viewers and an admiration for the loss of pastoral way of life. Therefore, it is possible to say that one of the main contradictions of the film is the disjuncture between the pictorial aesthetics and the narrative of hardships.

Such a disjuncture is also possible to identify in other well-known rural films such as *Los Santos Inocentes* (1984, *The Holy Innocents*) by the Spanish director Mario Camus. As Faulkner discusses 'while the temporal structure of *The Holy Innocents* indicates a desire to question a nostalgic response, the

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formal representation of rural space in the film, especially through choices of mise-en-scene, cinematography, and editing, seems to encourage that response.'[242] This conflict seems to be rooted in the opposite cinematic traditions in the Spanish cinema. The conservative tradition particularly during the time of Franco's government tended to idealize the rural and promoted the agrarian notion of Spain. It 'fashions a stereotype of the Spanish countryside as the cradle of Spanish national identity which complemented the regime's initial economic policy of autarky'.[243] In contrast, the temporal structuring of the film through which the key events of the narrative is unfolded, recounts the injustices that are done to the peasant family which eventually culminate in the murder of the landlord.[244] Faulkner argues that this aspect of the film is influenced by the dissident strands in Spanish cinema which reveals the exploitation and condemns the backward rural environment.[245]

The unsettling and unresolved conflict between the conservative and dissident strands of the film also implicitly indicates the audience's tension. It was a successful film in the box office as it reached a record number of sales in 1984. In addition, it won the best actor awards at Cannes festival in 1984 and was nominated for the Golden Palm. Therefore, it is possible to state that the film pleased both audience and the critics. Accordingly, it is possible to deduce that 'if analysis exposes the disjuncture between film form and narrative content in *The Holy Innocents* as problematic, audience's enthusiasm suggests that this duality if at times unsettling, was experienced as pleasurable'.[246]

Going back to *Sparrow Always Return Home*, it is possible to identify such duality in this film too, although, the utopian ending of the story seems to attempt a reconciliation between the opposing strands in Iranian cinema. Also, it is plausible to indicate that the success of the film suggests the existence of the same Spanish duality among Iranian audiences as the film was significantly popular and was the only cinematic production of Pahlavi regime that was screened after the 1979 revolution in cinemas. The duality perhaps alludes to the conflicting hegemonic forces; one the one hand, the powerful desire for engaging with emerging practices related to technology and modern science and

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[242] Fowler and Helfield, Representing the Rural, Op cit. p. 35.
[243] Sally Faulkner, Nostalgia and Middlebrow: Spanish Ruralist Cinema and Mario Camus's *Los santos innocent The Holy Innocents*, In *Representing the Rural*, (eds) Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield, Wayne State University Press, 1997. p. 37.
[244] Faulkner, *Representing the Rural*, Ibid, p. 39.
[245] Faulkner, *Representing the Rural*, Ibid, p. 42.
[246] Faulkner, *Representing the Rural*, Ibid, p. 44.

facilities. One the other hand, the residual practice of promoting rural simplicity and pastoral ways of life that the feudalist mode of social relations encourages.

In *The Sparrows Always Return Home*, when the son intends to go to university the family sells their last bit of land in the village to provide for his fees and the couple returns to the village to continue their hard work of farming while their son is in Europe studying. The son is engaged to his cousin and at the time of the departure to Europe, the cousin promises to wait for him and study as a nurse too. During these years, the family attempts to build a medical centre in the village, Ali goes to the main landowner to ask for his help in the construction of the centre but the feudal lord is not interested. Disappointed, the father speaks to the villagers and encourages them to contribute to the construction as a community. The village mobilises and through collective labour they build the centre. The scenes in which the couple talk to community, justifying their cause, and the contribution of villagers, men and women, young and old in every bit of the work of construction is fascinating; depicted through a series of full and medium shots of men and women as joking, working and signing together, accompanied by the natural surroundings, the film conveys the potentiality of the space to be in the service of people. It takes place in an atmosphere of cooperative work, sympathy and collective labour for the benefit of community itself. In this way, the village is represented in sharp contrast to the city where competition is the driving motivation of people. There is no sign of dark and narrow spaces and the abundance of light alludes to the brightness of people's future. Interestingly, as I will discuss further on, the scenes of building a school or developing infrastructures such as roads could be found in many films of this period along with scenes of working people at the harvest. The spirit of group working is cherished and *Swallows Always Return Home* is an exemplar. Eventually the son became a doctor but refuses to return home as he has a comfortable life and a new fiance in Europe. The news devastates the family and his fiance in the village, and in a symbolic gesture the father sends him a handful of Iran's soil which affects the son profoundly and he decides to return.

The film ends with the scenes of fiesta for the opening of the medical centre when the community gathers to celebrate it through traditional live music and group dancing. The village offers a space for progression, sympathy, trust and collective life. The opening day coincides with the return of the son of the family who joins his fiancé in the nursing dress at the medical centre. In this way, the marriage of lovers, personal happiness and satisfaction, is demonstrated as being simultaneous with collective happiness.

Swallows Always Return Home has had a mixed reception since its release. As Sadr points out, although Mohseni attempts to restore self-respect for Iranians and particularly the villagers yet the story seems unrealistic. Sadr believes that Mohseni's conformist outlook was in line with the state's propaganda about the modern developments in the rural areas and the enhancement of life standards.[247] Indeed, the ideological perspective of film about the achievements of industrialisation is acknowledged by other critics too. Tahaminejad also argues that Mohseni in his first films intended to resolve the class hostility between the feudal and the farmer and advocated peaceful relations, yet along with land reforms he conforms with the ideals of the White Revolution and advocated transformation of the mode of production and modern social relations. Therefore, gradually the large Landowners in his films were depicted negatively. In Tahaminejad's view, Mohseni wished to transform his social position as a simple actor in theaters of the capital and he successfully fulfilled the capacities for social mobility as he became an MP during the late 1960s. Accordingly, Tahaminejad deduces that it is possible to see the popular cinema as a cultural field between the people and the capitalist and it attempts to maintain and protect the desired social relations of capitalism.[248]

Both Sadr and Tahaminejad indicate the incompatibility of the reality of rural life and the general condition of the country with its cinematic representation in *Swallows Always Return Home*. For instance, Sadr, against the happy ending of the film, points out the decline of agricultural production at the time as

> Only a year after the implementation of the reforms, agricultural production was
> halved, forcing the government to import 60,000 tons of wheat from the Soviet Union,
> as well as 5,000 tons of corn and 140,000 tons of wheat from the United States.
> Peasants, unable to maintain their farms, were forced to migrate, resulting in sprawling
> squatter towns at the periphery of urban centers. By the end of 1960s, the silver screen
> would be the only place where the dreams of the peasants were still fulfilled.[249]

In addition, Tahaminejad[250] postulates that the films remains unrealistic in many aspects. For instance, it is unable to demonstrate the problems of transition from the feudal social order and traditional

[247] Hamid Reza Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, I.B.Tauris, 2006. p. 98.
[248] Mohammad Tahaminejad, *Sinamaye Royapardaz* [dream-waving cinema], Aks-e Moaser, 1986, p. 115-6.
[249] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema: A Political History*, Op cit., p. 98.
[250] Tahaminejad, *Sinamaye Royapardaz*, Op cit., p. 118.

management of a village community to the modern social relations. The relation between the farmers, middle size land owners and the large land owners seems like a caricature of the reality, and the brutality is not seen due to the extreme conservative views of Mohseni. Also, during the dates that is referred to in the film (late 1940s) the spaces and locations of the time of shooting (1960s) are used unchanged, for instance, in the 1940s many roads were not asphalted, the new means of transportation such as a bus from the village to the capital was not available, the medical centre of the nearby village where the family takes their ill daughter was the achievement of 1960s developments. Tahaminejad indicates many similar examples.

Nonetheless, both Sadr and Tahaminejad interestingly appreciate the sense of idealism in the film through which the enhancement of life standards for the villagers is cherished. As if the film reminded the viewer what true social, economic and cultural achievements would be like, and how peaceful, productive and joyful life could be. In other words the viewers could be impressed by the utopian vision of the film about the ideal social order. Accordingly, Jameson's view about the relation between social tensions and utopian vision about the ideal social order in popular films could be helpful in order to observe *Swallows Always Return Home* from a perspective other than mentioned above.

In Jameson's view, for mass cultural productions to be manipulative and effective, it is important that they primarily engage with genuine social and historical content and express them, then they go through a process of manipulation and containment. This starting point relates mass culture and modernist high art production as they both work on the same raw materials which are social and political anxieties and fantasies in order to transform them. In other words, Jameson argues that, in both types of production the revival of true and real social and political tensions is a condition for a process of ideological transformation.

> Both modernism and mass culture entertain relations of repression with the
> fundamental social anxieties and concerns, hopes and blind spots, ideological
> antinomies and fantasies of disaster, which are their raw materials; only where
> modernism tends to handle this material by producing compensatory structure of
> various kinds, mass culture represses them by the narrative construction of imaginary
> resolutions and by the projection of an optical illusion of social harmony. [251]

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[251] Fredric Jameson, 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture' in *Signature of the Visible*, Routledge, 1992, p. 25-6.

The question which arises at this point is that in what way one could comprehend the progressive aspect of mass culture production. Jameson's answer is to identify what he called the utopian dimension 'that is, its ritual celebration of the renewal of the social order and its salvation, not merely from divine wrath, but also from unworthy leadership'.[252]

> All contemporary works of art – whether those of high culture and modernism or of
> mass culture and commercial culture – have as their underlying impulse – albeit in
> what is often distorted and repressed form- our deepest fantasies about the nature of
> social life, both as we live it now, and as we feel in our bones it ought to be lived.[253]

In this way it is possible to derive a mode of analysis based on Jameson's perspective that is to identify the true and real social hopes and fantasies which are essential for a cultural production to be effective, and then it is possible to search for its utopian vision through the way that it engages with the obstacles and challenges in the collective life and social order. In Jameson's view the utopian dimension reveals the collective fantasies about an ideal social order.

Regarding *Swallows Always Return Home*, it is possible to identify the social anxieties of the class of middle size landowners in rural life as Ali, his family, relatives and acquaintances represent it. One of the main sources of worries is the fear for life and their inability to reproduce it. This fear could be observed in the fact that Ali and other villagers lose their children due to the lack of proper medical facilities while the feudal landowner's child is rescued from the disease as they have fast and easy access to medical facilities. In order to overcome this lack and prevent further death in the villages, Ali and his wife intend to provide facilities for their son to become a doctor for the villagers and help them. However, it is not possible to access modern education in the village, especially regarding a farmer's income. Thus, they sell their property and move to the urban since both the relevant education is available there and Ali as a worker could earn more money. Accordingly, it is possible to deduce that the film illuminates a situation whereby the feudalist forces and social relations of production cannot provide what a middle-sized landowner needs to produce and reproduce in order to continue their family lives. Therefore, the film indicates the social worries about the inability of feudalism as a mode of production to provide for their life.

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[252] Jameson*, Signature of the Visible*, ibid, p. 27.
[253] Jameson, *Signature of the Visible*, ibid, p. 34.

In addition, the utopian vision of the film could be observed in the way they attempt to overcome the challenges of feudalism. Although, the feudal lord does not help them with their ill children and does not contribute to the construction of a medical Centre, the film does not encourage political confrontation with feudalism. Instead, it encourages people to achieve what they need and desire through personal sacrifice and collective operation. For instance, regarding the personal level, Ali and his wife devote their life to their son so that he could serve other villagers as a doctor and other people would not suffer the loss of a child -because lacking a medical centre- as they suffered. On the collective and social level, Ali and his wife encourage the whole community to mobilize for a sacrifice that is to dedicate their money, land and labour for the medical centre. In the meeting of the villagers they enumerate the hard sacrifices they made in the past, devoting their labour, time and youth for their cause-having modern doctors and facilities in their village- in order to attract their support. And finally the village mobilizes and through collective work they achieve what they need and desire without the contribution of the feudal landowner. The close of the film as critics mentioned seems not to be realistic since in the period mentioned villagers migrated to the city due to consistent increase of population plus the shortage of arable land which induced growing shanty towns around cities.[254] The return of Ali's family from the city and even from abroad to the village and the group work of villagers might point at collective fantasies about an ideal social order rather than actual reality and as such it highlights the form and content of utopian community.

This utopian tendency also illuminates the desired solution of hegemonic conflicts. It indicates the various effective powers of the force-field which are often contradictory. In order to analyze the effective forces, it would be helpful to apply Raymond Williams's perspective on how hegemony could be recognized in an art work. For him, the notion of hegemony is adequate since it helps to overcome the theoretical difficulties that the base and superstructure model generates. In his view hegemony is a central system of practice, meanings and values which are dominant. It is not abstract or mere opinions and manipulation. Rather it is a whole set of practices and expectations which people assign their energy, it could be found in people's common reception of the nature of human beings and their world, it constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society. Hegemony, however, is not a static system. Williams postulates that the only way to comprehend an effective and dominant culture is to

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[254] Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, Op cit., p. 140.

identify and realize 'the real social process' that is the process of incorporation.[255] There are modes of incorporation/resistance which Williams identifies as alternative or oppositional, residual or emergent.

Williams states that in studying hegemony some elements could be seen as not being incorporated and those are practices, experiences and meanings which are not part of the dominant culture. He suggests that they could be seen in two ways: alternative or oppositional. The alternative practice could be defined as a different way to live individually (or in small groups) and the practitioner wishes to be left alone with it. On the other hand, the oppositional practice is also a different way to live yet the practitioner intends to change the society in its light.

Another type of hegemonic process of inclusion that Williams identifies is the process of residual or emergent. The former indicates those 'experiences and values which cannot be verified or cannot be expressed in the terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practiced on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as the social – of some previous social formation … a residual culture is usually at some distance from the effective dominant culture, … it may get incorporated into it.[256]

In this way, Williams formulates a method for the analysis of hegemony in artworks which does not engage with it as merely an object, a text and an isolated artifact. Instead, he believes that the analysis should consider the conditions of the production of an artwork. Williams finds it unfortunate that all contemporary critical theory have become something that he calls consumption theory since it passively applies one theory on a text without investigating the conditions of production. Rather, he advocates a type of analysis which regards an artwork, a cultural product as a practice not an isolated object. Instead of investigating the component of an isolated artwork, Williams suggests to researchers to view and search the nature of a practice and its conditions of production. Therefore, it is possible to identify Williams' method of analysis as focusing primarily on discovering the nature of a particular practice, then on the nature of the relation between an individual project and a collective mode, also focusing on the analysis of its active compositions and its conditions of compositions.[257]

In the light of Williams' method of analyzing hegemonic processes in an artwork, it is possible to observe particular meanings and practices in *Swallows Always Return Home*. Indeed, the film could be seen as

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[255] Raymond Williams, Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory, in New Left Review no 92, 1973, p. 9.
[256] Williams, Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory, ibid, p. 17.
[257] Williams, Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory, ibid, p. 15.

advocating all possible and available alternative practices. Since, for instance, despite the disagreements with the feudal lord, it does not encourage political confrontation at a personal or a collective level. Ali and his family exhaust all the alternative means to achieve their aim that is acquiring modern education for their son and construction of modern infrastructure such as a medical centre.

Another type of hegemonic process of inclusion is the way the film adapts religious beliefs, meanings and practices in order to incorporate emerging new sciences and technology. In a dominant culture that is framed by religious beliefs, the film demonstrates a transformation in the way religion shapes everyday practice and this change coincides with the changing mode of production as transition from feudalist forces and relations of production. For instance, the opening scene of the film registers Ali as praying in the natural scene and the closing scene of the film demonstrate Ali and his wife in the collective fiesta while they express their gratitude for god as their lifelong wishes were fulfilled. In another example, villages perform religious rituals to cure Ali's ill daughter, yet Ali takes her to a doctor and a modern medical center. Ali refuses superstitions (which could be seen as remnants of feudal social relations) yet, he incorporates religious meanings and practices in a different way. For instance, although he worked hard to provide for the modern education of his son yet, he prays for his success in his studies and also for his return from abroad. In addition, he prays so that god would help him to construct the medical center.

Therefore, it is possible to observe that a typical farmer community experiences a specific hegemonic conflict in which old religious values and meanings shape new practices through the changing mode of production. For, the feudalist forces and relations of production (including old religious superstitions) are not productive and cannot provide the means of productive life for the community. At the same time, there are opportunities for social mobility in the urban society and the villagers – mostly middle size land owners – would like to engage with emerging practices related to new sciences and technology – through acquiring modern education. The process of incorporation includes the emerging practices and ascribe them religious values while they contribute to the peaceful transition from feudalism. The utopian vision of the film is demonstrated in how the hegemonic conflicts are resolved in favour of new social classes who break away from feudalism and engage with an ideal social order based on collective life.

I discussed the hegemonic process (alternative and emergent) in order to illuminate the context in which the hegemonic spaces are formed in the films of early 1960s in Iranian cinema. *Swallows Always*

Return Home contains many typical scenes that could be found in the other rural films set on the land. In the next section, I will continue the introduction of rural films and introduce other categories.

Rural Films on Coastline

The second group of films that I identified is the piscatorial. This category of films engages with small village communities who live on the coastline. They could be seen as piscatorial films since the life of the community primarily relies on fishing. Films with this characteristics are few yet, as they represent a distinct story, conflicts, context, memorable characters and personal stories, they could be distinguished from other rural films. In these films, unlike the rural films on land, the villagers confront the person who owns the means of production (the fishing tools), rents the allocated spaces for fishing and controls the relation between the fishers and the market. This confrontation and also the specificity of social life on coastlines, forms the general characteristic of these few films. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that, regarding Williams' method of analyzing hegemonic processes in artwork, these films represent personal, social and political oppositional practices and provide space for the expression of emergent experiences. They often lack the hopeful ending of the first category of films yet it is fascinating that these films register a collective struggle for better life conditions. In addition, they express the exploitation and brutality of the working environment and the sharp class struggle that exists in the small community. Moreover, the representation of family and women in these films is active and prominent as they participate in the social and political activities of the community.

In order to critically engage with the hegemonic spaces of these films, I will introduce *Shore of Awaiting* (Siamak Yasemi, 1963) which was controversial at the time of release. The film narrates the love story of Ahmad a young and simple fisherman and Maryam a young woman from the village (Figure 4). Their passionate love is entangled with the fate of the fishermen of the village as they confront the master and struggle to protect their rights as independent fishermen (Figure 5 and 6). Defeated in the first violent confrontation of the film, the fishermen intend to go on fishing again, thus the lovers, Ahmad and Maryam endure a short separation. Meanwhile, the son of the master, Mansour, protests against the greedy and profit-seeking behavior of his father, abandons him and joins the villagers as a teacher to teach the illiterates including Maryam. While an emotional bond appears between Mansour and Maryam, the fishermen on the trip suffer from a hurricane and many of them disappear and die. Far away, the injured Ahmad is found by an isolated woodcutter and his daughter, Qazaleh, who rescues

Ahmad and looks after him. Qazaleh falls in love with Ahmad yet he intends to search for Maryam. Meanwhile Maryam who is pregnant with Ahmad's child is threatened by her father and is saved by Mansour who claims to be the father and promises to marry her. At this moment, the fishermen seem to compromise with the master and the village prepares to celebrate the wedding of Mansour and Maryam. Yet Ahmad who has recovered from his injuries secretly returns to the village and meets Maryam and asks her to leave the village with him. Maryam who is still in love with Ahmad is hesitant since she is grateful for Mansour's passionate love and admires his kindness and affectionate personality. Finally, in a meeting point on the seashore the three of them meet and in silence Maryam chooses to stay with Mansour as she loves him while Ahmad who is accompanied by Qazaleh leaves the village.

The film was not hugely successful with the national audience. As Jamal Omid the Iranian cinema historian states[258] that in Tehran it was seen as a good quality film thus it went on the big screen in luxury uptown cinemas who only showed foreign films such as cinema Rex and cinema Asia. It was supposed to go on screen in June and was widely advertised yet on the first day of screening, 5th of June 1963, the historical upheaval called 15 Khordad[259] began in which people joined the anti-establishment protest in support of Ayatollah Khomeyni. A violent clash between people and army occurred after which a siege was announced in Tehran. Yet the cinemas were not closed and people went to see *Shore of Awaiting*. As Omid narrated, however, the reception was not significant and it did not sell as expected.[260] Also, the cultural and artistic magazines did not have a positive opinion about it. In the interviews with the crews that I researched, social and political aspects, even the love story of the film was not discussed and the interviewers mostly focused on technical details.

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[258] Jamal Omid, *Tarikhe Sinemaye Iran [A History of Iranian Cinema],* Negah, 1982, p. 353-4.
[259] The demonstrations of June 5 and 6, 1963, in Iran (also called the uprising, or the events of June 1963, and known in Iran by the Iranian calendar as 15 Khordad) were protests against the arrest of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeyni after a political speech by him in which he criticized Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Israel and the United States. In that speech Khomeyni condemned the law of capitulation through which the American citizens in Iran were granted judicial immunity if they would commit crimes and break the law. The Shah's regime was surprised by the massive public demonstrations of support, and although these were crushed within days by the police and military, the events established the importance and power of (Shia) religious opposition to the Shah, and Khomeini as a major political and religious leader. After his arrest he was exiled to Najaf, Iraq and continued his political activities for fifteen years. In 1979 Khomeyni was to lead the Iranian Revolution which overthrew the Shah and his Pahlavi dynasty and established the Islamic Republic of Iran
[260] Omid, *Tarikhe Sinemaye Iran,* Op cit., p. 354.

Surprisingly, the film seemed to be agreeable to the government. The commission of performances in the Home Office chose the film for international film festivals such as the Moscow festival. The cinema magazines *Setareh Cinema* even claimed that Khrushchev personally saw the film and Moscow awards were highly probable.[261] However, according to *Setare Sinema*, the Soviet's embassy in Tehran denied the news through Iran's foreign ministry as baseless.[262]

In addition, in Paris, the film was also bought by a distribution company. Cheerful and proud, in an interview Mehdi Misaqiyeh, the producer, stated that the success of the film was indebted to the fact that it had an original story which was entirely Iranian and the film represented an Iranian space and atmosphere.[263] Siamak Yasemi the director, also, mentioned that he intentionally aimed to make a completely Iranian film in order to present an authentic view of Iran to the international audience.[264] Moreover, Mohammad-Ali Jafari, who acted as Mansour in the film and was a well-known theatre director and actor, believed that the success of the film was rooted in the rare perspective that it provided from Iranian culture and thought that the only way for the Iranian cinema to achieve international success was to follow the Italian model of filmmaking (instead of imitating American cinema), and that was to draw subjects and stories from national culture, tradition and social and local issues and costumes.[265]

It is important to note that in addition to the original story and authentic traditional space and atmosphere, the film provides a glimpse of the oppositional and emergent experiences, meanings and practices within the hegemonic force-field of the time in the rural regions.

For instance, the villagers decide to protest against the hard working conditions and resist despite the brutal and violent oppression. What is foregrounded in the film is the meeting and collective decision-making process of the villagers who includes women and families. These processes take place in the public spaces of the village in the presence of nature, children and animals. In this way, the oppositional experiences form new ways of organizing the social space (Figure 7).

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[261] Omid, *Tarikhe Sinemaye Iran,* Op cit., p. 353.
[262] Setare Sinema, July 1963.
[263] Setare Sinema, July 1963.
[264] Setare Sinema, August 1963.
[265] Setare Sinema, August 1963.

In addition, the oppositional practice seems to be possible since new outlooks to the world has emerged and that is the freedom to choose one's life. This freedom of choice could be seen in other activities too. For instance, the villagers are convinced that literacy is essential thus, they begin to build a school and learn reading and writing. Perhaps, this condition demonstrates the contradiction between modernization and the retention of capitalist social relationship.

Moreover, the tender love story of the film highlights choices and hesitations of characters in choosing the emotional path of their life. Although there are limitations the central characters such as Maryam are free to choose between Mansour and Ahmad and Qazaleh is free to follow Ahmad or to forget him. Also, Mansour provides a condition for Maryam to choose her true love. And at the end Ahmad, instead of compromising with the new personal and social conditions in the village, chooses to leave the village along with Qazaleh towards an unknown future.

Despite its fascinating allegory of oppositional and emergent practices which struggled to be incorporated into hegemonic and dominant culture, the film is rather forgotten. The historians of Iranian cinema did not discuss this film in terms of its personal, social and political significance. That might be rooted in the fact that Siamak Yasemi, the director, went on to make *Qaroun's Treasure* (1965) which became a model for Film Farsi cinema and as I discussed earlier in chapter two, could be seen as the point of fusion between mass culture production and high modernist art. Moreover, the political oppression increased during the following years and oppositional practices such as the one represented in *Shore of Awaiting* seemed not to be incorporated into dominant culture any more. However, I discussed the film here and will engage critically with the hegemonic spaces since it contains distinct, beautiful and thought-provoking scenes of rural life on the coastlines which could contribute to a more encompassing analysis of the rural spaces in films of the time. In order to complete the introduction of films, I will move on to discuss the last group of films which are documentary production.

Documentary Rural Films

This group of films contains documentary and industrial productions which were shot in the rural and unpopulated regions. Industrial documentary film is one of the oldest branches of documentary in Iran which approximately started in 1944. Before this date, the western companies themselves made films about the various stages of discovery and extraction of oil and gas. They were produced to inform the

companies' shareholders about the activities of the company and did not intend to engage with the Iranian audience.[266]

However, the Iranian films were produced mostly in Farsi and although they received financial support from the state and governmental organizations, they intended to speak with the Iranian audience and to reflect what the majority of people felt about the industrial developments through various artistic styles, metaphors and symbols.

The films in this group are few in number yet they represent a diverse approach to the industrial process. For instance, Farokh Qafari chose to contextualize electricity production with reference to folkloric ceremonies and Abolqasem Rezayi chose to register the realistic details of the often severe and dangerous conditions of working in the industrial sector. However, as I did not have access to these films[267], I chose to discuss *Wave, Coral and Rock* (1961) as it is available and critics regard it as one of the important and well-known documentaries of the Iranian cinema.[268] Indeed, it represents an institutional industrial documentary which supports the work of Western oil companies who sponsored it. Nevertheless, Naficy regards it as a nationalist documentary that foresees a modern Iran advanced through industrialisation.[269] He also believes that the film is the most accomplished product of the pioneering Golestan Film Workshop for the oil consortium. Moreover, Kavousi the famous and influential film critic of the time considered it a masterpiece which narrated an epic about the human labour and its efforts against nature.[270]

The film was produced, wrote and edited by Golestan yet also co-directed by Alan Pendry and Neilson Baxter, and filmed by many cameramen. The group production of the film lead many critics and historians to have different views about the originality of the film which contributes to the contradictory perspectives on the social and political messages of the film. Nonetheless, it would be relevant to discuss the discrepancy of perspectives as the consequence of the operation of conflicting hegemonic practices. The film could be seen as demonstrating both residual and emergent hegemonic processes.

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[266] Mohammad-Said Mohassesi, *Sinemaye Mostanade Sanati Iran* [The industrial documentary cinema in Iran], Jhad Daneshgahi, 2014, p. 125.
[267] Unfortunately, despite my efforts, I could not see the films I mentioned above and I have only read about them as they are not available for sale and are not accessible to general audience. I was told that they exist in private film collections and the archives of some of the industrial institutes which sadly is not accessible for students.
[268] Mohassesi, *Sinemaye Mostanade Sanati Iran*, ibid, p. 143.
[269] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema*, Op cit., p. 89.
[270] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema,* ibid, p. 89.

For instance, as Mohassesi indicates the GFW[271] carried out many tasks for the foreign companies of oil consortium such as Shell which included dubbing their films for public audience. The aim of these cultural products was to advertise the consortium in order to show Iranian people that the industrial developments and achievements of the foreign companies would lead to a promising and prosperous future for the Iranian people. [272] This goal could also be observed in this documentary as it celebrates the emergent ways of life related to modern technology and as I will discuss is highlighted by the European directors of this documentary.

As Naficy describes *Wave, Coral and Rock* is a process documentary which does not develop through personification or character development.[273] It is the outcome of three years of shooting and post-production process and was among the most expensive films of its time which cost approximately two million Tomans. The film narrates and demonstrates the various stages of discovery, drilling, extracting and exporting oil from Gachsaran inside the Iranian mainland to Khark island terminals in the Persian Gulf. During the first stage a magnificent harbor was constructed in the deserted Khark island where for centuries the sound of waves reaching the rocks were the loudest sounds and the shining white corals breath in silence deep in the underwater world of vivid and clean sea. The camera slowly and thoughtfully observes the remainders of Anahita temple in the island where the forgotten human ritual is demonstrated as in harmony with the nature. Then suddenly that calm and harmony is shaken with the arrival of advanced machineries of oil development transforming that ancient silence and beauty which entirely changes the face of the landscape and transforms the everyday lives of the natives in the Khark Island. The gigantic airplanes bring workers first and then what is needed for their life and work is brought later. The calm of the island is replaced by the sound of installing the harbor's base. The working environment of the workers and engineers is one of the camera's preoccupations and in many scenes they are registered in various medium shots. Also, from the full shots of groups working with gigantic machinery, the camera constantly moves forward to observe the work of a single worker and is fascinated with modern tools and apparatuses. It invites us to look through advanced cameras, listen to amplifiers and scrutinize automatic apparatuses. Moreover, the film goes beyond the working hours and chooses to observe the resting and leisure time of the workers on the island and we find them listening to the radio, joking, cooking and doing traditional sports such as wrestling (Figure 8, 9, 10).

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[271] Golestan Film Workshop
[272] Mohassesi, *Sinemaye Mostanade Sanati Iran*, ibid, p. 126.
[273] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema,* ibid, p*. 90*.

In the second stage the camera moves into the mountains and valleys of the mainland inside Iran. The connection between the two stages is made through the question that the serious voice-over asks, which is where and how the oil comes to the Khark Island. As critics have indicated the stylistic voice over written by Golestan himself is an indispensable element of the film. Naficy regards it as indicating Golestan's authorial presence in the documentary which is 'seemingly objective, poetically rhetorical and in impersonal official style … [it] tends to be authoritarian, weighing the film down and competing with the visuals'.[274] It is important to note that comprehending the oppositional scenes such as the juxtaposition of natural harmony and modern technology seems to become more accessible with the assistance of the voice-over which attempts to guide the viewer towards the sharp contradiction between the forces and relations of production. For instance, in the second stage of the process when the camera moves into the mountain the viewer could see wide shots of herds of animals, shepherds and villagers including children and old people. The young people leave the agricultural activity and abandon the self-sustaining economy in order to join the newly arrived oil industry as field workers. The poetical narration draws the attention from the natural branches of trees to the steel branches and pipelines of oil apparatuses and highlights the fact that the natives and residents of the country achieve the least from the mineral treasures (Figure 12 and 13).

Nonetheless, there is another aspect in the film which is fascinated with the modern industry despite its social and political cost. The enthusiasm for modernization could be seen in the scenes of installing pipes in the heart of mountains which is accompanied by an epic music score as if the music adores the heroic efforts of ordinary human bodies against the power of nature. The editing of medium shots of workers laboring in the absolutely warm weather, under the burning sunlight and in dangerous conditions seems to convey the positive aspects of industrialisation as human achievements (Figure 14 and 15). It is in this line of interpretation that Naficy discusses that *Wave, Coral and Rock* could be regarded as promoting principles of modernity such as motion, speed and change. For, the film also emphasises the movement which could be found within the frame (such as the motion of heavy machinery in constant movement).

Towards the end of the film, in the third stage of the process of transferring oil, the camera follows the gigantic pipes with workers and their machines as they connect the mainland oil wells to the shore of the Persian Gulf and in the last stage the underwater pipelines are constructed which transfers the oil from the shore to the Khark Island.

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[274] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Ibid, p. 90.

Tahaminejad, the Iranian historian of cinema believes that, generally speaking, Golestan's films are based on the creation of oppositions such as between death and life, the past and the future. For instance in *Wave, Coral and Rock* from the very beginning the film foregrounds the opposition between the past (the ancient temple, the natural history of the island, etc.) and the present (modern oil industry and its apparatuses, the arrival of heavy industrial machines, the non-native workers and engineers, etc.). Tahaminejad also indicates the opposition between the glorious past of the Iranian people conveyed through the metaphor of castles of coral and the remains of the ancient empire as the camera sorrowfully observes it and the present of the same people who have to work for foreign companies as workers and the benefit of their mineral treasures is not accessible to them.[275] In this way the opposition between the pre-modern harmony of nature and the arrival of modern industry finds political significance in his interpretations.

Interestingly, Tahaminejad believes that these oppositional significances are not registered in front of the camera. Rather, they are constructed in the post-production stage. In his view this is one of Golestan's stylistic qualities. Although, shooting is carried out while the reality is unfolding and the events are not staged, yet the discovery and research does not take place during the time of shooting. It is during the post-production process and editing that the discovery of the documentary is shaped.

> The search for reality does not occur before the lenses of camera and we hardly witness the transformation and events of the everyday as they unfold. The film rather considers the relations between the objects, through careful lighting and the play of shadows on the objects, the film connects them in its own way. Accordingly, the objects are neutralized, a new meaningful relation between them is construed and the desirable effect is achieved through the movement of light on the objects, editing and the brilliant voice-over.[276]

In his view, Golestan watches the reality yet the drama of life and history is shaped through the editing process in that each object (such as oil pipelines, heavy machineries, ancient ruins, etc.) finds a role.[277]

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[275] Mohammad Tahaminejad, *Sinemaye Mostanade Iran; Arseye Tafavotha*, [The documentary Cinema of Iran; the plane of differences], Soroush, 2003, p. 44.
[276] Tahaminejad, *Sinemaye Mostanade Iran*, ibid, p. 44.
[277] Tahaminejad, *Sinemaye Mostanade Iran*, ibid, p. 45.

Mohassesi, another film historian of Iranian cinema who has extensively researched the industrial films, postulates that another opposition in *Wave, Carol and Rock* could be identified too, which is the opposition between modern and foreign industrial form and the native and local forms of life. He compares this film with Robert Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* (1948) in which the film narrates the installment of oil pipelines in a naturally wild region. One of the memorable effects of the film is achieved through the shots of a native boy who frequently appears on the construction sites with his raccoon and indicates the same opposition between the alien industry and the native people who merely witness changes, and does not achieve the benefits.[278]

Mohassesi also draws attention to another discrepancy in the film. He highlights the opposition between the sorrowful glimpse of the camera to the heritage of the past and its fascination with the installment of gigantic oil storages or the scenes of filming forty foot long nails of the jetty in the shore or the long scenes of putting cement covered pipelines from the shore to the storage containers in the middle of the Persian Gulf. These are scenes which in his view could hardly be found in the other works of Golestan or other Iranian filmmakers as they are rare, considering the style of shooting, sound-recording and editing. In order to comprehend this opposition, Mohassesi indicates that it would be helpful to consider the presence of Alan Pendry the co-director of the film, who also made other industrial films such as *Looking at Steel* (1971) for British Steel Corporation. This exemplary film has similar scenes to *Wave, Coral and Rock* and demonstrates fascination with new industry, machineries and their sounds and the hands and faces of workers and engineers.[279] Indeed, Mohassesi, more confidently than Naficy and Tahaminejad, emphasizes on the role of the co-director in order to explain some oppositional aspect of the film.

Nonetheless, it is possible to discuss the oppositional structures and messages of the film not in relation to the authentic presence of a particular director but regarding the existing hegemonic operations which found their signifiers in the film text. It seems that there were two hegemonic discourse which were in conflict in the social and political force-field through which the structure of feeling in the film was shaped. The first discourse was related to Golestan Film Workshop which was the first of its kind in the country and formed a sort of collective way of production. Many young artists, filmmakers and photographers collaborated with the workshop or worked there as a trainee who in the later years

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[278] Mohassesi, *Sinemaye Mostanade Sanati Iran*, Op cit., p. 144.
[279] Mohassesi, *Sinemaye Mostanade Sanati Iran*, ibid, p. 145.

became acclaimed artists. As historians and critics mentioned the collective provided a space for intellectuals who attempted to keep the spirit of protest active and alive after the 1953 CIA backed coup. During those years protests against the colonial presence of Imperialist powers were repressed and an atmosphere of fear was dominant. However, as direct criticism was not possible artists resorted to a symbolic mode of expression of which the poetic and metaphoric form of *Wave Carol and Rock* could be observed as one of its refined examples.

On the other hand, it cannot be ignored that the film was sponsored by an oil consortium and particularly by the Shell Company and it provided recording apparatuses.[280] It is notable that a filmmaking unit in Shell was established which for its framework it followed the principles of well-known British documentary filmmaker John Grierson. His significant contribution was to develop documentary as a genre in English-speaking countries as he suggested ways to put art in social use. His innovative idea which was to find institutional sponsorship for the documentary cinema provided a solution for talented filmmakers, since, it encouraged them to seek private and public resources instead of relying on box office sales.[281] Grierson is seen as an influential figure who affected the documentary movement in Britain during 1930s and 1940s.

> It is his multifaceted, innovative leadership that Grierson is to be most valued. As a theoretician he articulated a basis of the documentary film, its form and function, its aesthetic and ethics. As an informal teacher he trained and, through his writing and speaking, influenced many documentary filmmaker, not just in Britain but throughout the world.[282]

Considering the stylistic characters of *Wave, Coral and Rock*, it would be illuminating to indicate that Griersonian principles of realism shaped the criteria of filmmaking in Shell.[283] [284] This company used to

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[280] Golestan mentions in an interview that the camera, lighting, sound recording and similar tools which were new and highly advanced were sold to him as part of his wage for the project on his request.

[281] Betsy A.Mclane, *A New History of Documentary film*, Continuum, 2012, p. 89.

[282] Mclane, *A New History of Documentary Film*, ibid, p. 88.

[283] Mohassesi, *Sinemaye Mostanade Sanati Iran*, Op cit., p. 130.

[284] It seems that Shell had a film unit in order to inform the shareholders about its operations, yet during the 1930s it was transformed and new goals and strategies were introduced. In 1937 a regulation was introduced from the high ranking managers of the company which defined new aims and audience for each film and included three fundamental principles for filmmaking: firstly the filmmaking aimed to enhance the functions of Shell organization through creation of consciousness about its product. Secondly, filmmaking aimed to enhance the demand in the market. And thirdly, filmmaking aimed to induce positive public opinion which its effects could not be immediately and directly measured. Mohassesi, *Sinemaye Mostanade Sanati Iran*, ibid, p. 53.

send filmmakers to its branches around the globe, yet, in the case of Iran they decided to employ the native filmmakers who was Golestan, assigned Allan Pendry to co-direct the film and they even arranged for an educational tour in Britain for Golestan in 1957.[285] Accordingly, there is a possibility that Golestan was influenced by the style that shaped the Shell film unit. Arthur Elton who directed the unit was a young member of Grierson team in Empire Marketing Board (EMB) who had technological and scientific talents and interests.[286]

Mohassesi believes that the Shell film unit aimed to induce positive opinion about the miracles of mechanical advancement in the twentieth century and intended to demonstrate how the human being could solve local and geographical obstacles. The managers of the film unit did not intend to educate people yet they intended to demonstrate the attractive and fascinating aspects of science and industry which could contribute to a new vision about culture and human relation.[287]

Accordingly, it is possible to identify the hegemonic processes in *Wave, Carol and Rock*. On the one hand, we could observe emergent practices in relation to science, technology and modern industry. The fascination of the camera to the new developments of the foreign industry which is constructed in the distinct editing style could reflect the effect of Shell film unit on the directors. It is notable to draw attention between the similarities of *Drifters* (1929, Grierson) with *Wave Coral and Rock* in order to illuminate how the latter is influenced by the former. A comparison with other documentaries could demonstrate the innovative editing style that distinguishes *Drifters* and could be observed in *Wave, Coral and Rock*.

> In *Drifters* the loving long takes of Flaherty are cut up and hanged together in
> Eisensteinian montage to provide a modern dynamism, and the individual
> accomplishment of Nanook are replaced by the collective efforts of a crew as in
> *Potemkin*. It is unlike both sources in certain respect, however. Instead of the exotic of
> Flaherty or the heroic of the Soviets, the drama of *Drifters* is in the everyday of
> workday … It was an unusual, perhaps unique instance in British cinema up to that

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[285] Mohassesi, *Sinemaye Mostanade Sanati Iran*, ibid, p. 131.
[286] Mclane, *A New History of Documentary Film*, Op cit., p. 77.
[287] Mohassesi, *Sinemaye Mostanade Sanati Iran*, ibid, p. 132.

point in which work had been given this sort of importance, and members of the

working class presented with dignity rather than as comic relief [288]

Accordingly, it is possible to observe such stylistic characteristics in *Wave, Coral and Rock*. Just like *Drifters* the camera is interested in short cuts of medium and close up shots of modern machineries of work and the camera focuses on their appearance with curiosity. If in *Drifters* the worker is framed in medium shots with the modern working instruments, the camera in *Wave, Coral and Rock* also concentrates on the gigantic machineries which transfer and restore the oil both in Khark Island and in mainland Gachsaran. In both films workers are represented in collective action with dignity, also the details of human labour are foregrounded in both films in interchanging full and medium shots. In addition, *Drifters* demonstrates workers in their leisure time, and when they sleep and eat. Similar shots could also be found in the Iranian documentary. In both films the natural environment is highlighted, in *Drifters* there are several full shots of the sea, and medium and close shots of seabirds and fishes. Also, in *Wave, Coral and Rock* natural environment is important, the coral, the waves, the mountainous work fields and their trees are notable features.

It is pertinent to indicate that in this documentary about the production of oil and gas in Iran the naturalistic representation of collective labour, the relation with nature, etc., is subordinated to symbolic expressions which reflects the Griersonian principle of filmmaking, since Grierson thought of filmmaking as 'abstracting structures from empirical detail'.[289] He explicitly argued that

> The intrinsic empirical naturalism of the documentary representation must be
> organized in order to express general truths, which exists at a level of abstraction
> beyond the empirical. The raw material of documentary representation is meaningless
> in itself, and can only become significant when invested with interpretive intention and
> achievement.[290]

Likewise it is plausible to seek the symbolic expressions that *Wave, Coral and Rock* attempts to construct through relating the empirical details of collective human labour, development and industrialization. Through the influence of Grierson and his team in The Shell film unit it is possible to identify their

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[288] McLane, *A New History of Documentary*, Op cit., p. 80.
[289] Ian Aitken, *Film and Reform: John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement*, 2016, Routledge, p.110.
[290] Aitken, *Film and Reform: John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement,* ibid, p. 109.

fascination and enthusiasm with modern developments, and industrialization, and its assured benefits for all. As discussed above, the Shell unit advocated the view that science and industry are apolitical and neutral and believed that its aim solely was to create a new type of culture and global relation which all the people around the globe would be benefitted.

On the other hand, another hegemonic process, that of residual and oppositional practice, could be identified in the film too. It includes the poetical, formal and rhetorical voice-over of Golestan. It expresses concerns about the loss of traditions and cultural heritages of the native people. In contrast to the optimism of Shell film unit, it does not believe that industry and technology would lead to a prosperous culture and new human relation in the world. Instead, when demonstrating the native people of Gachsaran living in tents or when it demonstrates the natives who work as workers in the field, it pauses to remind us of the discrimination and inequality in the distribution of technological services to the viewer. It constantly highlights how the Iranian people do not benefit from the grand industrial transformations.

It is notable that it seems that the emergent practices could be observed in the visuals of the film and the residual aspect is more identifiable in the voice-over and construction of narration. Between the two elements we could consider a constant conflict which forms the oppositions of the documentary. In other words, both emergent and residual practices exist and signify alongside each other, yet, it does not seem that one becomes dominant over the other and the opposition does not seem to be resolved in favour of one of the arguments. Both practices seem to remain powerful and thought-provoking. In conclusion, I attempted to introduce the third group of rural films produced in 1960s in Iran which are about industrial transformations and primarily oil and gas production. In order to become familiar with the hegemonic force-fields in this type of films, I discussed *Wave, Coral and Rock* and highlighted its oppositional structure. I indicated the conflict between the past and the present, the self-sustained rural economy and the modern industrialisation, the contradictory fascination with both the cultural heritage and the modern forces and relations of production. Through stylistic referencing to Griersonian influence, I demonstrated the fascination with modern technology and industrialization. And on the other hand, I highlighted the opposite current which cherished the pre-development conditions which asks what benefit the Iranian people acquired through this transformation. This context helped to explain the hegemonic process which included both emergent and residual practices. I discussed how both practices remain convincing throughout the film and the conflict does not seem to resolve. In the

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next chapters, I follow these hegemonic conflicts during 1970s in the hot debates of intellectual movements in order to identify their representation in films at the spatial level.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to demonstrate the hegemonic operation in the rural films produced in the early 1960s. Firstly, I discussed the historic blocs of the decade in which the feudal mode of production went through a significant process of transformation through the government's program known as the White Revolution. This process of fast industrialisation and modernization affected the forces and relations of production in the country and particularly in the countryside, villages and rural areas. The opportunity for social mobility and enhancement of living standards motivated the new social classes to exercise new social practices which contributed to the formation of new hegemonic force-fields and processes. Then, I discussed how these economic, social and cultural changes affected the rural films. In the early 1960s new films were produced which represented the conflict and the context of new hegemonic conflicts and processes of incorporation.

I suggested that these films could be divided into three groups of land, piscatorial and industrial films, and I discussed one film of each group in detail in order to highlight their typical hegemonic processes, meanings and practices. I demonstrated that regarding Williams's perspective about hegemony, alternative hegemonic practices were encouraged in films. Also there are examples of oppositional practices in which political confrontation with the dominant social order was depicted, yet, these films were not welcome. In both feature and documentary films it is possible to see that there is an extensive fascination with technology and modern industry. The new emergent practices related to development were powerful and promising. In most of the films there is excitement, optimism and enthusiasm about the positive changes that modern development could induce. However, these emergent practices were met with skepticism and were challenged by residual practices. I demonstrated what kind of hegemonic processes were active and how they were received and interpreted. In this way I illuminated the historical and hegemonic context through which the organization of spaces in the films of the 1960s were formed. In the next chapter, I continue to identify the hegemonic debates and force-fields during 1970s in Iran. In that I will discuss the emergent practices by the intellectuals which influenced cinema in that decade.

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Chapter Four: Hegemonic Struggles and Intellectuals during 1960s and 1970s in Iran

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I discussed the socio-economic changes in Iranian society and the formation of new historical blocs and explored the impact on the film productions focusing on the representation of space in films. I concentrated on the rural films of 1960s and demonstrated how the fast process of industrialisation induced hope for the grand transformation in the lives of masses. The cinema sketched the possibility of new horizons in the collective and personal life of people.

In this chapter, I will examine the intellectual context of 1970s films made in Iran. In this complex and critical decade, along with the consolidation of the culture industry and the establishment of mainstream cinema known as Film Farsi[291], a new wave of artistic and intellectual cinema emerged which was politically motivated. Naficy calls it a counter cinema which was based on the reality of peoples' lives, regarded with empathy and respect and 'against the fiction of the official culture of spectacle perpetrated by the government and the commercial cinema'. It combined realism with uncanny surrealism and broke from the fantasy-driven and narratively chaotic commercial cinema[292]. According to Naficy 'it was not so much of a genre cinema as an authorial cinema: each filmmaker engaged with the social and intellectual discourses of the time and developed his own more or less individual style[293]. However, the previous historians and critics of the Iranian cinema did not discuss closely the impact of the intellectual practices on cinematic production. I attempt to provide a link between the two and discuss the films in a dialectical relation with the intellectual discourse.

Therefore, it seems necessary that before engaging with the films, I provide an overview of the intellectual scene in 1970. In the proceeding chapter, I attempt to critically explore the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic debates of the time which influenced the production of films. In that, I will assess the influential works of a number of Iranian intellectuals and their contribution to the contemporary debates considering the questions of industrialisation, progress, development, national culture and collective heritage that have formed the hegemonic discourses. In order to assess their contribution to

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[291] Following the convention of English text in this field I use the abbreviation of FF for Film Farsi.
[292] Hamid Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years* 1941-1978, Duke University Press, 2011, p. 340.
[293] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p328.

the forming of a counter-hegemony, I will refer to Gramsci's perspective regarding the role of intellectuals in constructing a hegemony which would lead the masses in their revolutionary struggle.

Gramsci's Perspective on Intellectuals, Education and Hegemony

Schwarzmantel, a contemporary Gramscian scholar, opens his discussion about Gramsci's view on the role of intellectuals in a revolutionary movement through situating it at the heart of Marxist debate about the revolutionary struggle in the modern times. The widely accepted perspective states that a revolutionary struggle in our time beyond all doubts requires a revolutionary theory. And Gramsci engaged with this debate hoping to contribute to its development. His prime question was how a revolutionary theory could be advanced by the agents of the movement. Gramsci believed that examining the condition of intellectuals and their production is closely associated with the study of political power. [294] His new insights on this debate proved to be profound and influencial throughout the years to come.[295]

Gramsci starts his enquiry by re-defining the notion of intellectual: who this agent of change, this new type of intellectual is. In his view, every person is an intellectual, since intellectual activity cannot be detached from human activity. Every human being engages with that type of 'cerebral elaboration' that characterizes intellectual activity, yet it has various levels. 'There is no human activity from which all intellectual intervention can be excluded –*homo faber* cannot be separated from *homo sapiens*'.[296] Every person at some level is a philosopher, an artist, the owner of taste, could develop a conception of the world and has a consciousness that is required for moral behavior. Thus, every person engages with activities that maintains or transforms the existing world and has a capacity to create new ways of thinking and conduct.[297]

> The philosophy of philosophers is quantitatively, not qualitatively, different from the spontaneous philosophy of the less educated. The latter's worldview is spontaneous in the sense that it has been uncritically absorbed in the social environment in which they have culturally developed and it has, therefore, been formed in an uncontrolled and to

[294] Marci Landy, *Film, Politics and Gramsci*, University of Minnesota Press, 1994, p. 23-4.
[295] John Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge's Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebook*, Routledge, 2015, p. 71.
[296] Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings,* International Publishers, 2011, p. 121.
[297] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, ibid, p. 121.

some extent incoherent manner… The critique of 'common sense' and that of 'the philosophy of philosophers' are therefore complimentary aspects of a single ideological struggle.[298]

In this way, Gramsci develops a perspective which includes those people who are traditionally excluded from the intellectual sphere such as the working people and widens its scope from the traditional fields such as philosophy, politics and art protected by its educated elite to a field open to every person and beyond its traditional territory mentioned above.

This line of thought leads Gramsci to argue that in order for the intellectual to move beyond the elite community, it is necessary that they form the organic intellectuals of the subaltern people. This specific function is what in the contemporary world distinguishes this group as the 'functionaries of the superstructure'.[299]

The intellectuals are the 'dominant group's 'deputies' exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government'.[300] Gramsci redefines the category of intellectuals as 'the ensemble of those who in a given society have an 'organizational' or 'connective' function both in the public sphere (as bureaucracy) and in the private one (as promoters of activity in civil society).'[301] His perspective about the two levels of superstructure could illuminate the place of its 'functionaries'. The working mode of superstructure could be divided into two spheres: civil society and the state. The former is a constellation of private organisms which are also active in the formation of hegemony. The state consists of juridical government, a domain where 'direct domination' or 'command' is exercised. In Gramsci's view Intellectuals are effective in both hegemony and direct domination.[302]

Gramsci contributes to this debate through an analysis which differentiates organic and traditional intellectuals.[303] This distinction refers to his view that 'every social class, coming into existence on the original basis of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates with itself organically, one or more groups of intellectuals who give it homogeneity and consciousness of its function not only in the economic field but in the social and political field as well'.[304] For instance, the

[298] Alessandro Corlucci, *Gramsci and Languages: Unification, Diversity, Hegemony*, Brill, 2013, p. 59-60.
[299] Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge's Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebook*, Op cit., p. 73.
[300] Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge's Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebook*, Op cit., p. 73.
[301] Fabio Frosini, 'Subaltern, Religion, and the Philosophy of Praxis in Gramsci's Prison Notebook', *Rethinking Marxism*, 28: 3-4, p. 528-9.
[302] Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge's Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebook*, Op cit., p. 74.
[303] Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge's Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebook*, Op cit., p75.
[304] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, Op cit., p. 118.

capitalist class creates the political economist, those who invent new culture and law according to the capitalist's taste and worldview.[305] Or in the past, the class of ecclesiastics could be regarded as a sort of intellectuals, organically bound to the landed aristocracy.[306] In this way, one of the prime preoccupations of Gramsci in his prison notebook is unfolded which is the issue of agency and the problem of the formation of working class organic intellectuals.[307] 'The drive by subaltern classes to give themselves forms of autonomous organizations was challenged by an equivalent intervention by the state, which 'entered' into society to prevent the masses from organizing themselves autonomously and thereby mounting a hegemonic challenge'.[308] The crucial implication for Gramsci regarding the intellectuals' debate is that in order to lead its struggle for hegemony, the proletariat requires to create its own strata of intellectuals, a new class which provides knowledge and awareness about its capacities, potentials and to assist it to be liberated from subalternity. To achieve this aim, it is important that proletarian organic intellectuals move beyond the economic-corporate level and create a horizon for the hegemony of the proletariat. In Gramsci's view, the task of organic intellectuals

> Is to enhance and reinforce emergent elements. The factory councils in Turin for
>
> example, were part of an effort to realize new forms of learning and social alignments.
>
> Not mere study groups, the councils were also designed to augment the worker's
>
> power to make decision and acquire greater autonomy.[309]

In addition, Gramsci asserts that the nature of organic intellectual activity is rather different from what is commonly acknowledged to be traditional intellectualism. According to his view, in the modern world, it is implied that the intellectual needs to be tied to the world of production, industry and science. Therefore, we could see the image of a sort of worker-intellectual as the proletarian organic intellectual who possess the characteristic of being practical and experienced while being capable to reflect on broader problems and is not confined to the mode of thinking formed only by the economic-corporate levels.[310] Gramsci believes that in the modern world technical education, strictly tied to even the most primitive and unqualified industrial work, must form the basis for the new type of intellectual[311]. Based on this perspective, Gramsci organized his work and others in the newspaper *Ordino Nuovo*. Their

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[305] Gramsci, The Modern Prince and Other Writings, International Publisher, 2011, p118.
[306] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, ibid p. 119.
[307] Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge's Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebook*, Op cit., p. 75-6.
[308] Frosini, Subaltern, Religion, and philosophy of Praxis in Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, Op cit., p. 523.
[309] Landy, *Film, Politics and Gramsci*, Op cit., p. 31.
[310]Schwarzmantel, The Routledge's Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebook, Op cit., p. 86.
[311] Gramsci, The Modern Prince and Other Writings, Op cit., p. 122.

intention was to develop a new type of intellectualism and to introduce new concepts and Gramsci

believed that this perspective is the main reason for *Ordino Nuevo*'s success since it corresponded to

real forms of life and to the unspoken aspirations of people.[312] In this vein, Gramsci developed some of

the characteristics of this new organic intellectual:

> The mode of existence of the new intellectual can no longer consist of eloquence, the
>
> eternal and momentary arousing of sentiments and passions, but must consists of
>
> being actively involved in practical life, as a builder, an organizer, "permanent
>
> persuader", because he/she is not purely an orator – and nevertheless superior to the
>
> abstract mathematical spirit.[313]

Schwarzmantel regards Gramsci as being unique in the Marxist tradition since he provides a view of the

role of intellectuals which brings knowledge and awareness to the proletariat not from the outside of

the class (as Lenin's theory of revolutionary class suggests), but as emerging and being formed from

within the class and through the masses and in contact with them. Therefore, it seems that intellectual

struggle for Gramsci consists of 'sustained opposition to the existing order'.[314] This new mode of

intellectualism has the ability to transcend the primitive notions of folklore and common sense that

relates culture and society to the existing order and thus is a necessary requirement for radical political

change and movement.[315]

In this part of the chapter, I discussed Gramsci perspective about the definition, nature and

characteristic of the new type of intellectuals which are organically related to the modern world and its

new rising classes. In the next section, I will move on to discuss a number of influential intellectuals

which contributed significantly to the formation of radical hegemony in 1960s and 1970s in Iran, in order

to assess how these debates found their cinematic expressions in the representation of space in films.

The Hegemonic Struggles and Debates

It is unfortunate that the history of Iranian intellectual struggles has not been critically researched and

up-to-date references on this subject matter are not available. In order to identify this history, its

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[312] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, ibid, p. 122.
[313] Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, ibid, p. 122.
[314] Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge's Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebook*, Op cit., p. 93.
[315] Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge's Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebook*, ibid, p. 93.

failures and achievements, its prominent figures and their ups and downs, one has to also rely on the oral information provided by the people who experienced that condition. And, as such narratives are highly personal and affected by the historical changes since then, it is extremely difficult to glimpse the actual condition of the past. I encountered this problem while I was researching this thesis and particularly for this chapter as providing a reliable source of information was complicated. Many reasons could be enumerated for this problem; for instance, I realized that the dissatisfaction with the post - 1979 government in Iran lead many intellectuals and artists to misrepresent and even hide their revolutionary and leftist aspirations before 1979. In particular, as the post-1979 revolutionary government assimilated with political perspective of pre-1979 dissident thinkers and intellectuals in order to acquire legitimacy, now, those perspectives and attitudes have become undesirable and condemned as failures.

For instance, in a book length interview about forty years of his filmmaking, Daryush Mehrjouyi, the pioneer political filmmaker of the time whose film *The Cow* I will discuss later, refutes having Leftist and radical motifs in his works, particularly those related to class conflict. Commenting on his film *Postman* (1972), he asserts that critics attempted to derive a sort of political symbolism from the film which did not exist, and film critics were under the influence of Sartre's idea of social commitment. While the film contains explicit references to class conflict and the social consequences of the changing mode of production, Mehrjouyi insists that his preoccupation was the existential dilemmas of characters.[316]

He also indicates how the 1979 revolution changed his views:

> Before revolution our main motivation for work was to act like an intellectual and provide a sort of criticism that changes the social conditions. But after that, the society changed and people like me played no role in that transformation[317] … Our world-view changes through the years. Before revolution we were very serious and tragic and a sort of social criticism about the social backwardness, which we were immersed in during those years, was the underlining idea [of our work]. After the revolution, the time of such films had gone; before, we were defending the wretched and exploited classes but then [those classes] became dominant. It is absurd to defend or support a class which control the government and has the power.[318]

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[316] Mani Haghighi, *Mehrjouyi Karnameh Chehel Sale*, Markaz, 2013, p. 41.
[317] Haghighi, *Mehrjouyi Karnameh Chehel Sale*, ibid, p. 82.
[318] Haghighi, *Mehrjouyi Karnameh Chehel Sale*, ibid, p. 106.

Mehrjouyi's statement seems to be vague. Does he mean that after revolution exploitation ended? Does he imply that the time of class conflict as perceived in the past is gone? He does not clarify but his choice of subjects and characters since mid 1980s onwards has significantly changed. He concentrated rather on the cultural conflicts of the middle class and in his recent films the characters were chosen from the affluent and bourgeois class preferring issues such as addiction and aging. The question of exploitation and class conflict does not seem to be attractive for him anymore.

As I have read many interviews and memoires of the intellectuals and filmmakers of 60s and 70s, I realized that it would be better to rely on my analysis of the condition rather than the exact information provided by the people as it is affected by the historical and political changes such as the dissatisfaction with the Leftist politics. For instance, some of the directors who had obvious and direct Leftists tendencies deny an affiliation with Marxism. This also includes the struggle with the royal Pahlavi regime and the attempts to contribute to radical politics against the intellectual tendency which supported the regime. As the post-1979 government became reactionary, the idea of revolution and fidelity to radical politics gradually comes to be regarded as a mistake, outdated and failed.

It is against this background that providing an objective view of the intellectual history of the aforementioned decades become complicated and problematic. In order to provide such a historical overview, in this chapter, along with published researches and debates, I will also rely on a critical analysis of the present discourse whose remnants can be found in newspapers, heard in lectures and seminars, discussed in documentary films and programs. As it is mentioned in the documentary film *Being a Writer* (2016), the intellectual scene of these two decades consisted of two main tendencies; one was the group of artists, writers and thinkers who were supported by the Pahlavi regime, the royal court and indirectly by the person of queen Farah Pahlavi who had an interest in cultural activities. This group included people who were keen on cultural modernization and westernization uncritically and were rather detached from the contradictions that modernization and fast industrialisation induced in the life of ordinary people. Seduced by the achievements of capitalist culture, they sought assimilation with the western cultural trends in all aspects. Their activities and impact could be also identified in the field of media, television and radio productions. As Naficy indicates this is a time when the massive Ministry of Culture and Art, National Radio and Television and other institutions were established and were run by the people affiliated to the royal court.[319] The filmmakers and program makers, many of

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[319] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p. 50.

them trained by the American Syracuse team (I have discussed their activities extensively in my literature review), became akin to civil servants.

> While they were required to make films that propagandized the person of the Shah, his family, and his policies (as well as institutions that hired them), they were not court employees and thus were bureaucratically removed from direct royal control. In addition, they did not have to pay much attention to market forces or to audience's tastes, for their films' success did not depend on box-offices receipts but on government largesse and approval. These filmmakers constituted a one-way, top-down means through which government officials communicated both with their institutional subjects and with citizens at large.[320]

Moreover, Naficy mentions rather independent filmmakers such as the group working in Golestan film workshop (who I discussed one of their prominent film *Wave, Carol and Rock* in chapter three). Regarding the hegemonic tendencies, the rather independent small groups did not follow the path of civil servant filmmakers and artists, and as Naficy stated they even developed an authorial style called poetic realism[321] to contest the official style and norms. However, I would like to discuss that even this group could be included in the first tendency of intellectuals as they did not question the power relations and did not critically assess the foreign politics of the regime. Their films created epics of industrialization and promoted the process of westernized modernization and Shah's policies. This intellectual tendency also included many people who were graduates of Western Universities and supported the transformation of the Iranian society according to capitalist standards of the day and held the art and culture of the capitalist world as their desirable model.

The other intellectual tendency which grew gradually as a response to the grand economic, social and cultural transformations was heavily critical of the path of fast industrialization and had sympathy with

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[320] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p. 61.
[321] Naficy argues that the tension between the institutional sponsorship (such as government or agencies like the oil consortium) and the desire of artists and filmmakers to maintain their authorial freedom resulted in a sort of style called 'poetic realism' in which the official style of making documentary was subverted and its direct propagandized force was replaced by 'various lyrical and symbolic uses of indirection, by contrapuntal strategies of sound and image editing and by poetic narration'. It is possible to deduce that the style could be regarded as the outcome of hegemonic struggles within this first tendency. Naficy asserts that even this style maintains its similarity with the dominant power structure; 'The introduction of poetry into film, particularly of poetic voice-over narration, ironically encouraged discursive monovocalism and authoritarianism as opposed to the multi vocalism that dialogue and ordinary speech could have offered, even more ironical, this ascendance of authoritarian poetry within documentary form fit the undemocratic tendencies of the government', *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p76.

the planetary anti-colonial and liberation movements of the time. Intellectuals such as Jalal Al-Ahmad supported the politics of people such as Jean-Paul Sartre, his wife Simin Daneshvar wrote a prominent anti-Imperialist novel of the time, and Ali Shariati supported the politics of Fanon and was in correspondence with him. In the realm of culture and art they encouraged a re-evaluation of national heritage which included religious tendencies and traditions as an aspiration for political and social change, also to re-connect the socially alienated intellectuals with the masses.

With this brief historical introduction, perhaps it becomes clearer why it is complicated and difficult to provide a present day overview of those decades. If we bear in mind that the post-1979 revolution government denounced all forms of modernization in favour of a linear, static and conservative reading of tradition and religion which could suit its totalitarian power structure, the current stance of the intellectuals towards the past becomes more comprehensible. Unfortunately, the main current intellectual tendency (not all the currents) relies on the denunciation of the struggles and achievements of the counter-hegemonic intellectuals of the past and it is argued that their anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and pro-national activities opened the way for the establishment of the current regime. As I will demonstrate extensively in the rest of this chapter, I would like to discuss that if 1979 revolution did not meet the expectation of intellectuals, the counter-hegemonic intellectual were not to be blamed. As Gramsci's model of hegemony demonstrates, the intellectual of a rising class attempts to assimilate with the most legitimate and progressive currencies of thought in order to achieve hegemony. Accordingly, the new class of post-1979 revolution society aligns with the progressive thoughts and beliefs of the prominent counter-hegemonic currents of 60s and 70s in order to develop its cultural-political level so that it is equipped to deal with the problems posed to it by historical development. Yet, this does not devalue and discredit the essence of pre-1979 intellectual struggles and revolutionary ambitions. For instance, they believed in the power of tradition and religion to form radical changes yet none of them supported the institutionalization of religion and were fierce critics of any totalitarian regime.

On the other hand, this second group of intellectuals supported the development of independent technology but were not aware that technology is not a neutral phenomenon and would induce the social alienation that they criticized. This argument has important implications as the progressive value and the heritage of the cultural productions of the time which were influenced by the counter-hegemonic tendency currently under question and it seems to be urgent to re-assess the achievements and failures of the second intellectual tendency and its discourse which was effective in the production

of politically motivated cinema of 1970s. Therefore, I will move on to engage more in detail with this counter-hegemonic intellectual tendency before I discuss the films in chapter five.

The Phenomenon of Occidentosis

One of the important intellectuals before the 1979 revolution who considerably influenced the production of thoughts and ideas, and after his sudden death in 1969 became a controversial figure, was Jalal Ale-Ahmad (1923-1969). He was a prolific writer whose published works encompassed a wide range of essays, fictions and non-fictions. As a child who was interested in books, throughout the 1980s I remember that in the house of educated people, politically aware or those interested in literature who had a modest personal library, one of the books written by Ale-Ahmad or his wife Simin Daneshvar could always be found; whether a collection of short stories, novels, monographs, biography, memoires, itineraries, social and political essays, translated plays, novels or articles. These are writings which still after half a century remain gripping and thought-provoking.

Ale-Ahmad's work as a radical journalist, fiction writer and essayist does not fit in with the commonly accepted forms and are enriched with fresh observation and commentary. The cultural and literary critics even in his own time claim that he was not familiar with the principles of writing a short story and novel or his political and social commitment were outdated. Yet, it is often neglected that his intention was to reach forms of expression rooted in the people's world-views, customs and heritage. In response to literary critics, he wrote that he did not have any claim in such formal knowledge since for him the matter was that he was a witness to all the plots and conspiracies[322] and he seems to seek forms which could assist him to be a better witness.

For instance, in order to reflect upon social and political conditions, he experimented with allegorical form such as the novel *Noon Val-Qalam* where he recounted his involvement with Leftist party politics. In the introduction that he wrote on the *Kharg Island, the Orphaned Pearl of Persian Gulf* (1960) he asserted that his intention in writing monographs was to register how the individual locations encountered modernism and the arrival of the machine.[323] He seems to identify the effects of a changing mode of production on native people's lives.

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[322] Jalal Ale-Ahmad, *Yek Chah va Do Chaleh*, Ravvagh, 1964, p. 43.
[323] Jalal Ale-Ahmad, *Jazire Kharg, Dorre Yatim Khalij Fars*, Amir-Kabir, 1991, p. 11.

Figure 1. Jalal Ale-Ahmad and Simin Daneshvar in their youth

This type of writing affected the young generation of writers of the time, who started traveling to villages to observe the rapid changes in people's lives and its destructiveness, this new practice was even conducted by radicals who later joined armed struggle against the Pahlavi regime.[324] Ale-Ahmad's critical and pessimistic perspective lead commentators to label him as an anti-modernist which in my opinion does not seem accurate. Assessing his novel *Curse of Land* (1967), one literary critic postulated that he had an anti-development stance[325] and that his novel suffered from the lack of appropriate characterization.[326] As I will engage with *Occidentosis*, it will be demonstrated that he was far from being anti-development, rather, his intention was to detach development from what imperialism and growing capitalism required. Moreover, it is better to bear in mind that he is among the first people who write about a new social condition that modernism brought to rural and urban life and if his literary practice does not meet our present expectations, it is perhaps due to the fact that at the time no appropriate form of expressing such an unprecedented social and individual experience existed in the literary tradition and he was experimenting to find the suitable framework for his observations, thoughts, visions and passions. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that he is the first writer to treat the rural condition as an allegory for the whole country.[327] This creative perspective opened up the way for many politically motivated filmmakers during 1970s to take the rural and the village as a symbol of the society and could be found in films such as *Mongols* (1973), *OK, Mister!* (1978) and *Journey of Stone* (1978).

On another instance, after publishing monographs about individual Iranian villages (their history, political economy and general way of life, particular traditions and their encounter with modernism), he

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[324] Hasan Mir-Abedini, *Sad Sal Dastan Nevisi Iran*, Cheshmeh, 1998, p. 516.
[325] Mir-Abedini, *Sad Sal Dastan Nevisi Iran*, ibid, p. 520.
[326] Mir-Abedini, *Sad Sal Dastan Nevisi Iran*, ibid, p. 521.
[327] Mir-Abedini, *Sad Sal Dastan Nevisi Iran*, ibid, p. 523.

was invited to supervise a series of anthropological monographs in Tehran University. Yet, after a couple of issues he did not continue the cooperation since the University asked him to work in the academic style of the day. Ale-Ahmad stated that the University

> intended to make a commodity of those publications to present to the foreign universities and inevitably it had to be conducted according to their principles. And it was not my type of work. Since my aim was re-identification of ourselves, and re-evaluation of the local environment according to our own principle.[328]

This insistence on preserving and modernizing the cultural heritage keeps his work still innovative, fresh and controversial as it simply does not fit familiar categorizations and his essays are written in the same vein. Here, I also would like to demonstrate how his ideas influenced film production through focusing on his book *Occidentosis*. I will discuss a number of the issues he raises in that thin book and how they were taken up by directors, found cinematic expression and become widespread.

Figure 2. Ale-Ahmad in his middle age

In order to demonstrate how influential he is in the formation of counter-hegemonic currents, it would be helpful to briefly consider his intellectual life and activities. As he wrote in his short and modest autobiographical essay, he was born into a religious petit-bourgeois background in Tehran, and grew up with a very strict religious upbringing by a clergyman father who refused to work with the first Pahlavi Shah and missed his comfortable income in registry offices. As a result, the teenage Ale-Ahmad was asked to leave the school and work as an apprentice in small workshops. He did so yet secretly enrolled at an evening school and was graduated by the arrival of the allied forces in Tehran. Living through the period of famine, grave illnesses and foreign occupation, he finished his university studies in literature in

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[328] Ale-Ahmad, *Yek Chah va Do Chaleh*, Op cit., p. 52.

1946 and entered the educational system. Detached from religious background and family, he became a member of the newly established communist party *Toudeh* and started his journalist career inside the party. Within four years he reached the Tehran's central committee yet because of Stalinist tendency in the party, he and a number of other socialists resigned and formed a new party, Third Force. However, sabotaged by the Toudeh party, they could not continue their political activity. During the1953 oil nationalization movement he once again engaged with politics, yet, after the American and British organized coup, he become silent and left party politics for good. Nonetheless, he continued his activities in the field of education and it became one of the main areas of consistent engagement, observation and resistance in various positions as teacher, principle, writer of educational books and consultant of the ministry of education.

In addition, he started traveling around the country by any means possible; whether by car, bicycle or even on foot to connect himself with farmers and villages of diverse background and in this way he acquired a first-hand knowledge of ordinary people, he created relationships and contacts with them, finding out about their general condition of life and work.[329] It is possible to regard Ale-Ahmad's attitude as the one Gramsci recommends to the intellectuals in that a modern day intellectual should be always close to industry, to the process of production and be a worker-intellectual. Ale-Ahmad seemed to tie himself with farmers, workers and villagers in order to retain such a position. He was not a traditional intellectual sitting in his office in town writing in isolation. Rather, he was close to the heart of the grand industrial transformation that took place in the country, thus, he became able to discuss the effects of modernisation and its contradictions, the changing social relations and emerging cultural phenomenon in his works.

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[329] Ale-Ahmad, *Yek Chah va do chaleh*, ibid, p. 47-52.

Figure 3. Ale-Ahmad and his students

Ale-Ahmad could also be considered in relation to the rising and new urban social class that emerged in Iran as the consequences of modernisation. According to Ervand Abrahamian's perspective (I explored it in chapter three), Iran was experiencing a sort of small industrial revolution that formed a new class structure. It included an upper class of one percent which consisted of the Pahlavi family, military offices, senior civil servants and court connected entrepreneurs. Then a middle class was formed, ten per cent included the modern salaried middle class such as professionals, civil servants, office employers and college students. Also, thirteen percent of the middle class was the traditional propertied classes such as clerics, bazaaries, small-factory owners, workshop owners and commercial farmers. At the bottom, there was a lower class which consisted of thirty two percent of the urban population who were industrial workers, small factory workers, workshop workers, construction workers, peddlers and the unemployed. The rest which amounted to forty five per cent, was the rural population who included landed peasants, near landless peasants, landless peasants and rural unemployed.[330]

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[330] Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 140.

The new middle class included those who were graduated from modern educational institutions, some of them like Ale-Ahmad completed their studies in Iran and a number of them such as Ali Shariati, who I will discuss later in this chapter, used state scholarships to complete their higher education in the West and then returned Iran. Together they formed the class of intellectuals who were involved in the translation and production of thoughts and ideas and could be observed as the organic intellectuals of the historical blocs throughout 1960s and 1970s. The new emerging urban social class was eager for the modern changes but was preoccupied with its social, political and cultural transformations. It acquired higher social position through the new yet uneven developments, while the new class sought democracy and social justice for all. The contradictions seem to become one of its historical characteristics which is reflected in the hegemonic struggles between the aforementioned two poles of intellectuals. I believe that it is through critical perspectives such as the one discussed in *Occidentosis* that the characteristic contradictions of this emergent class found its expression and was enabled to form the counter-hegemonic currents of the time.

Writing about the political, cultural and social importance of the book *Occidentosis*, Dabashi points out that

> In terms of its appeal to a generation of social activists, this was perhaps the single most important essay published in modern Iranian history. In creating a wide range of positive and negative reactions, in constituting the very vocabulary of Iranian social criticism in the two decades proceeding the revolution, and in formulating the most essential 'anti-western' disposition of the Islamic revolutionary discourse, no other single text comes even close to *Westoxication.*[331] [332]

In addition, he indicates its wide circulation

> There is no underestimating the influence this single text had on the political culture of the 1960s. From its very inception, and while Ale-Ahmad was still alive, *Westoxication* immediately became a success. Numerous photocopies were prepared and distributed clandestinely in Iran and beyond. Ale-Ahmad himself spoke sarcastically about the state of publication which led to

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[331] The original Farsi word *Qarbzadeghi*, found a number of English equivalent in translation. I use *Occidentosis* as the English book is translated into this title, however, in order not to interfere with Dabashi's original text, here, I also quote his translation as *Westoxication*.

[332] Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Republic in Iran*, New York University Press. 1992, p. 74.

his book being 'more trumped than discussed'. But *Westoxication* was read and discussed in high school and universities as the first bibliographical item on a hidden syllabus with which the Iranian youth of the 1960s came to political self-consciousness.[333]

It is interesting that Dabashi who wrote highly critically on this text, nevertheless acknowledges its importance in 'capturing the imagination of a generation in search of a revolutionary identity, a language of revolt … [Ale-Ahmad] suddenly exposed a whole new set of possibilities in terms of ideological build-ups, for potential revolutionary activities'.[334] While he indicates the book's widespread acceptance, I think that Dabashi overemphasizes the link between the book and revolution. Dabashi might describe the aura around the book but the essay itself does not provide a revolutionary language and outlook, it seems that it provides a new critical horizon to think of society and culture and encourages critical observation and a desire for change. *Occidentosis* also highlighted themes, issues and problems to address, explore and assess which were taken up by the youth particularly in creative fields such as literature, fiction, theatre, cinema, music. Even now this book questions and challenges the existing order yet does not provide 'ideological build-up' in Dabashi's word. Many of its ideas as confessed by the writer are hypotheses and what captures attention is the invitation to change attitudes towards the West and Imperialism rather than a manual for it. This brief allusion to the contradictory reception of the book perhaps could illuminate its place within the hegemonic struggles of those decades and even at the present time. Now I will turn to the book to provide a summary of some of the subjects and discussion related to the counter-hegemonic currents which also found their way to the silver screen of cinema.

The essay revolves around the definition, explanation and discussion of a phenomenon called Occidentosis. Ale-Ahmad regards it as a social, political and cultural phenomenon yet in a historical materialist reading he dialectically relates it to the materiality of the contemporary world and the conflicts between industrial and nonindustrial nations around the globe. As a first step, he attempts to identify a notion of West and East which transcends geographical locations and political concepts and is more bound to the state of development and the relation with the machine. Writing in early 1960s, his definition of West includes both North American, Europe and the former Soviet Union, generally all the developed and industrial nations, affluent countries who are capable of transforming raw materials with the mediation of machines to commodities. At the other extreme pole stands the East, the nonindustrial

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[333] Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, ibid, p. 76.
[334] Dabashi, Theology of Discontent, ibid, p. 77.

and developing countries in Asia and Africa who are characterized as consumer of the commodities produced in the West yet who possess the very raw materials that are required for production there.[335] Therefore, East and West are not geographical or political concepts yet economic concepts between hungry nations and non-hungry ones. Even at his time he found the division of the world in Communist and non-communist blocs outdated since in Ale-Ahmad's view the superpowers compromised on the issues such as Suez Canal and Cuba. The contemporary struggle is no more rooted in the ideological distinction since it is possible to identify the trace of colonial companies and their supporting countries in every conflict. The contemporary conflict is rooted in the ownership of raw materials like sugar, diamond and oil or for the protection of routes of commerce (such as Cyprus, Vietnam, etc.)[336]. He does not deny the conflict between the worker and the capitalist yet this conflict has outgrown national boundaries and stretches to the arena of the earth in which 'one is producing and exporting machines, and the other importing and consuming them and wearing them out[337][338]. Therefore, mechanization finds a central role in his assessment of conditions yet he states clearly that 'I am not speaking of rejecting the machine or banishing it, as the utopianists of the early nineteenth century sought to do. History has fated the world to fall prey to the machine. It is a question of how to encounter the machine and technology'.[339]

This confrontation, in Ale-Ahmad's opinion has become infertile and destructive. Considering the fact that the machine is not produced inside the country, and regarding various political and economic determinants and the global condition of confrontation between the poor and the rich, the Iranian society and all its aspects has to conform to the necessity of the Machine.[340] As a result, 'we have been unable to preserve our own historical character in the face of the machine and its fateful onslaught … we been unable to take a considerable stand in the face of this contemporary monster… So long as we remain consumers, so long as we have not built the machine, we remain occidentotic' and he immediately adds what has befallen to the producers of the machine in the West: 'our dilemma is that

[335] Jalal Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis; A Plague from the West*, Mizan Press, 1983, p. 28.

[336] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis; A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 29.

[337] Of course, at the time the global movement of capital which occurred in the proceeding decades had not occurred, a movement whereby corporations moved their factories to the global South in order to reduce the cost of labour. However, at the time many Western industries such as car-making factories were opened in Iran which Ale-Ahmad did not regard them as the process of industrialization since they were merely a type of consuming machines and the Iranian side did not have the technology and was at the level of operator and repairer.

[338] Ale-Ahmad, Occidentosis; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 30.

[339] Ale-Ahmad, Occidentosis; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 30.

[340] Ale-Ahmad, Occidentosis; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 30.

once we have built the machine, we will have become mechanotic, just like the West, crying out at the way technology and the machine have stampeded out of control'.[341]

In this way, Ale-Ahmad unfolds the argument in the book which in his words diagnosed the problem yet remains pessimistic about his own solution. In his opinion, it is the very condition of consuming that empties people's out from their historical culture and prepares them to conform to the requirements of the machine, yet even producing the machine would lead to the same problem experienced in the West where people have become mechanotic. Therefore, he implied that his solution would be temporary, yet, as the rest of the book illuminates it would be necessary to awaken people from the spell of the machine. According he characterized the era of occidentosis as the one

> in which we have not yet acquired the machine, in which we are not versed in the mysteries of its structure. Occidentosis characterizes an era in which we have not yet grown familiar with the preliminaries to the machine, the new science and technologies. Occidentosis characterizes an era which the logic of the marketplace and the movement of oil compels us to buy and consume the machine.[342]

Ale-Ahmad's approach to culture seems rather essentialist, in that he assumes a stable and recognizable essence of culture which is unfolded in the history and occidentosis had destroyed it. Rather, culture in its temporal conjunctures is not discussed and this approach resulted in a sort of strict demarcation between cultures. In this way, it is often forgotten that a cultural entity in its historical continuation experiences numerous breaks and transformations which challenge its seemingly unified totality. In particular, his approach implies that an invariant identity could be accessed throughout history, nonetheless he encounters difficulty to clearly point at this identity in the essay.

In the following chapters, he refers to history and traces the relation between East and West since the advent of Islam and the expansion of Muslim world and the confrontation of Christianity with it. Unfortunately, unlike the last chapter he does not construct his argument on the materiality of the condition, instead he discusses the field of culture and history. It is somehow a genealogical inquiry to the origins of occidentosis which seems to remain unconvincing and at the level of hypothesis. It would have been illuminating if he had considered the political economy of the confrontation between the Muslim and Christian world, if he had discussed their relation in the light of changing modes of

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[341] Ale-Ahmad, Occidentosis; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 31.
[342] Ale-Ahmad, Occidentosis; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 35.

production, forms of accumulation of wealth, the type of property ownership and the condition of labour.

One of the significant problematics of *Occidentosis* is the way it attempts to connect base and superstructure in contemporary Iranian society and to arrive at an understanding of a possible totality. Unfortunately, the argument suffers from the lack of theoretical framework, for instance, he discusses the issue of oil and how it has affected the politics in the last sixty years, and as an example he mentions that it was the foreign companies who decide what to sell to Iran in return for oil. Ale-Ahmad was interested to know how that imposed type of commerce was established. Accordingly, he related that type of problematic exchange to the cultural sphere and asks about the domination of western artistic news in periodicals. He wonders why the literary and cultural events and the festival of India, China and Latin America are not discussed. He observes the same imposed exchange in this field too, yet he remains unable to justify his claim regarding the relation of base and superstructure theoretically, for instance, with reference to Gramscian idea of hegemony or theories of reification and alienation.

Therefore, the strength of his argument remains in the field of observation and direct engagement with the real conditions. In chapter five, War of Contradictions, he turns to some of the most dramatic and tangible contradictions that could be found in the society, which in my view could be seen as the result of the struggle between the forces and social relations of production, that in his view is enforced by the arrival of machine. As these contradictions became the topic of many films directly or indirectly during the ensuing years, I will indicate them here. Ale-Ahmad provides fresh examples, for instance he points out how the usage of the machine in the rural areas (which included seventy five percent of the population at the time) in the form of using tractors was enforced since they were imported in return for oil export, while in the very same village the instruments for heating or cooking remained traditional and people used to consume a small amount of 250 liters of gasoline annually. The tractors arrived while villagers were not trained to attend them, there was no accessible repair station nearby and there was no highway to take tractors to the cities for repairs. In addition, after land reforms the arable land was divided into small plots which caused many difficulties for using the tractors as it required vast lands and the state encouragement for small landownership destroyed the cooperative spirit between the villagers and caused severe struggles among the farmers.[343] Despite the arrival of modern machines,

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[343] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis; A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 64-5.

villagers were unemployed at least for three months of the year and struggled to survive from primary

problems such as cold, flood, drought, etc.

Therefore, the consequence of the arrival of machine was mass migration to the cities which were

stuffed with imported commodities from the industrial world but suffered from the lack of basic

facilities.[344] 'To respond to machine's call to urbanization, we uproot the people from the villages and

send them to the city, where there is neither work nor housing and shelter for them, while the machine

steps into the village itself'.[345] The new people in the city fascinated with urban trends and fashions,

become the consumers of service industries and in the absence of meaningful community activities,

political parties and societies and cultural clubs they were attracted by cinemas dominated by the star

system and foreign mainstream productions.[346]

Another tangible contradiction is the mass unemployment and the closure of traditional workshops that

was caused by the development of industry.

> I have seen with my own eyes that all the windmills from Qa'in to Gunabad are stilled, like the
>
> discredited demons in the old fables, or like the old guards dozing in the villages and settlements.
>
> In Dezful alone, with all its beautiful brickwork and exemplary architecture, I counted about a
>
> hundred windmills, all in disuse. When the machine sets foot in the village, it destroys all the
>
> accoutrements of the pastoral and rural economy that is all the local craft industries.

However, Ale-Ahmad also observed the positive side of this transformation, that those industries in the

past damaged the hands, eyes and lungs of many children whose product of labour furnished the

properties of the wealthy and he observed the abolition of those local industries as a necessity and an

achievement and envisaged that there were many ways to adequately rescue them while supporting fair

condition of labour.[347]

Another important contradiction that he highlighted was the effect of urbanization on people's belief.

On the one hand, many people preserved the superstitions that the previous way of life (feudal mode of

production in my view) sustained in their life, and they practiced it in the modern context of the city. For

instance, Ale-Ahmad recalled a bulldozer attendant and taxi drivers who hung various types of Talisman,

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[344] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis; A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 65.
[345] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis*; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 66.
[346] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis*; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 67.
[347] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis*; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 68-9.

prayers and imprecations on the machine to protect them.[348] On the other hand, he considered that the incompatibility of traditional belief and practices with the urban life, and the fact that the religious world-views were not adapted considering the new changes in the life of people, induced disappointment and disbelief and had transformed many people 'into a criminal, a complete cynic, or an outright opportunist'.[349]

Another important consequence of the problematic development that he illuminated was the condition of women in urban centres. He stated that despite the unveiling and opening of modern education to women, the urban life had not been appropriated for their meaningful personal and social contribution to the community and it was in sharp contrast to the role of women in the rural. These women for centuries were deeply involved in all aspects of life alongside men. However, in urban centres, women were not given equal rights and opportunities, thus in the new modern life they had become passive consumers of imported commodities. Ale-Ahmad believed that

> Unless the work of men and women and their services to society are equally valued
> and paid, unless, alongside men, women assume responsibility for administrating a
> sector of society (other than home, a private function shared between men and
> women), unless material and spiritual equality is established between the sexes, we
> will have succeeded only in swelling an army of consumers of powder and lipstick – the
> products of the West's industries-another form of occidentosis. [350]

Throughout the rest of this chapter, Ale-Ahmad enumerated other contradictory social and political issues too yet as they are not related to my research I will not discuss them. Here, it is important to mention that Ale-Ahmad's discussion brought these issues into public discussion and integrated them as the issues of counter-hegemonic discourse of the day. As my discussion of films will illuminate, these contradictions could be identified in the films of the 1960s and 1970s. In that, mainstream cinema engaged with them uncritically, and politically motivated filmmakers demonstrated these issues or discussed them in specific local and historical context or even challenged them and attempted to advance the argument a step further. The cinematic characters of the time could be better comprehended and analyzed in relation to Ale-Ahmad's argument. And we realize that the sudden arrival of confused villagers, mass migrators to the cities, the urban criminals and gangsters, the women who were depicted only as passive consumers of the latest urban trends without social contribution and

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[348] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis; A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 69.
[349] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis; A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 70.
[350] Ale-Ahmad, Occidentosis, p70.

other similar characters on the silver screen of cinema did not appear unprecedented, and critical texts such as *Occidentosis* played an important role in initially identifying them. This is perhaps what distinguishes my argument in this thesis from other research, whereby the critics investigate the newly arrived themes, characterization and settings regarding the social, political and economic condition. Yet I highlight the emergence of organic intellectuals such as Ale-Ahmad and their critical inquiries that formed the new discourse gradually. In the argument of this thesis the direct and intentional involvement of organic intellectuals for radical change is assumed as the precondition for social and cultural change such as the one that could be identified in the cinematic production during those decades. In other words, this research provides evidence for Gramsci's opinion about the vital role of intellectuals in bringing about cultural changes of any sort.

Nonetheless, it is important to indicate that Ale-Ahmad's argument suffered from the lack of a comprehensive view towards the machine in particular and development, modernization and capitalism in general. And this problematic could be more closely observed in the solutions he offered to the problem of occidentosis. In the next chapter, How to Break the Spell?, he states that it is not possible to close the doors to technology and return to the tradition and the past, nor is it viable to remain submitted to the rule of the machine and the system that it generates and to remain mere consumers and occidentotic. Rather it would be possible to think of a third way to conform industrialization to the needs of the people and use the machine for their benefit. His solution is to build the machine, rather than importing it through an imposed exchange with the oil. 'The machine is a means, not an end. The end is to abolish poverty and to put material and spiritual welfare within the reach of all'. [351] He then searched for the obstacle to that dream. Through similes that reminds one of Marx's description of capital, as he compared capital with a Dracula who needs the blood of labour, Ale-Ahmad compares the machine to a jinn that should be put into a bottle[352]. And a string of similes starts whereby he attempts to explain why and how the machine charms people:

> To achieve control of the machine, one must build it. Something built by another- even if it is a charm or sort of talisman against envy- certainly carries something of the unknown, something fearsome of the "unseen worlds" beyond human access. It harbors a mystery. The one who

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[351] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis*; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 79.
[352] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis*; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 79.

carries that talisman does not possess it but in a sense is possessed by it living under its aegis, in taking refuge in it and living in constant dread of giving it offense.[353]

Ale-Ahmad argues that the occidentotic treats the machine like a talisman, hopes to be protected by it and ignores the fact that is an instrument of intimidation and exploitation[354]. In order to demystify the machine, people must engage with the production of technology and science independently, yet, there was apathy towards that solution since people were confident in the permanence of oil resources[355]. Ale-Ahmad also considers the fact that unlike national and local industries there is no tradition in using the machine which makes the country dependent on foreigners. [356] The last obstacle he identifies is the unwillingness of the West to change the condition of that unfair exchange. As a seller who benefits considerably from the inability of the East to produce its own machine its priority is to sustain the current condition. Ale-Ahmad indicates such an inappropriate condition with the example of oil.

> The Westerners extract, refine, transport, and compute the cost of the oil themselves and figure our annual share at, say, forty million pounds sterling, given us as credits toward purchase of their manufactures and deposited in their own banks in our accounts. We are necessarily compelled to return these credits by buying from them. Who are they? Forty percent is America and its satellites, 40 percent, England and its adherents, and the rest, France, the Netherlands, and other Western European nations. In return for the oil they take, we must import machines, and in the wake of the machines, specialists in the machines, and in the wake of the specialists in the machines, dialectologists, ethnologists, musicologists, and art historians. Thus Morrison-Knudsen brings whatever it likes from America, from bulldozers to wire to nuts and bolts; the same holds for Agip Mineraria from Italy, John Mowlem, the highway contractor, from England, and Antar Petroles from France. [357]

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[353] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis*; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 79-80.
[354] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis*; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 80.
[355] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis*; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 80.
[356] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis*; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 82.
[357] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis*; *A Plague from the West*, ibid, p. 84-5.

Ale-Ahmad's view toward the machine, the West and his solution had been the topic of assessment ever since. Some critics found it reductive and too mechanical and others mentioned that his hopeful idea to localize the use of machine remains doubtful.

1970s: Formation of Counter Hegemonic Current of 'Return to Self'

It is not possible to discuss the organic intellectuals of the 1970s in Iran and not immediately mention Ali Shariati. The controversial writer, influential lecturer, well-known political opponent of the Pahlavi regime and the modern interpreter of religion. Ervand Abrahamian the reliable Leftist historian of modern Iran describes Shariati's influence and place as 'the outstanding intellectual of the Liberation Movement- if not of the whole contemporary Iran'.[358] Naficy proposes that 'his most influential concept 'return to self' which ruled the 1970s complemented Ale-Ahmad discourse from the 1960s of Westonist [occidentosis]'.[359] And Dabashi investigates the inspiration that formed his intellectual integrity as he states 'that Shariati energized the Iranian political culture, or at least a significant component of it, beyond anything known in its modern history is, more than anything else, an indication of a deep conviction on his own part, the conviction that he had a vision'.[360] Perhaps, it is a type of vision that effectively captured the imagination of a generation and left its mark even on the children of the 1979 revolution which includes people like me who were born and grew up after that magnificent event. Even decades after the time Shariati's speeches and lectures in and out of University electrified his young and eager audiences, the effect of his vision and thought could be felt. It is said that Zahra Rahnavard and Mir Hossein Musavi, the couple who after the 2009 rigged presidential election have been under house arrest, were Shariati's students and close to him, and this could be seen as an example of those who found a new vision of collectivity and social change in their youth through Shariati's ideas. Other examples are numerous. I have personally met people who through reading the transcribed texts of his free lectures became motivated, formed radical small groups and in various ways contributed to the grand transformations that resulted in the 1979 revolution. I met women whm Shariati's lecture on Fatemeh, the daughter of prophet, encouraged them to take a personal decision and started to wear hijab. There is no doubt that in his life time and after, he has contributed effectively to hegemonic struggles considering issues such as Imperialism, Marxism, religion, occidentosis, national and cultural heritage. The post-1979 intellectual discourse finds it inevitable to confront his legacy whether to

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[358] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 466.
[359] Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978,* Op cit., p. 416.
[360] Dabashi, *The Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Republic in Iran* Op cit., p. 103.

modify, develop, critically assess or to refute. There are various ways to engage with his thought and practice, yet in this research I will only concentrate on the idea of 'return to self' which dramatically influenced the social, political and cultural productions ever since. I will also discuss how he approached Marxism and Fanon's revolutionary perspective as they had indispensable effects in the formation of counter-hegemonic discourse throughout 1970s. A brief introduction to his intellectual life seems relevant and helpful here.

As Ervand Abrahamian indicated Ali Shariati was born in 1933 in North Khorasan and was raised partly in his home village Mazinan and partly in the holy city of Mashhad. He grew up in a religious and petit-bourgeois family. He completed his higher education in Mashhad and received a master degree in Foreign Languages, specializing in Arabic and French and obtained a state scholarship to study a doctorate degree in Sociology and Islamic studies in Paris. Early in the 1960s he arrived there at the height of student political movements which was affected by the Algerian and Cuban revolution which he engaged with it wholeheartedly. Shariati was involved with the Algerian Liberation movement and Iranian student confederation and attended lectures of well-known orientalists (such as Massignon) and radical professors (such as Gurvitch) and widely read the literature of contemporary radicals such as Sartre and Fanon. [361] He returned to Iran in 1965 and was jailed for his activities in Europe. After his release, he started teaching in Mashhad University then went to Tehran to take up a lectureship at Huseinieh-Ershad.[362] His lectures continued for approximately four years and later they were transcribed into fifty book-length volumes. In addition, tapes of his lectures were circulated widely and received instant acclaim from college and high-school students.[363]

In 1972 SAVAK[364], which was worried about Shariati's increasing popularity and his growing references to contemporary issues in his lectures, closed down Huseinieh-Ershad, banned his works and imprisoned him until 1975, when due to a petition from the Algerian government he was released. He spent two years under house arrest which propelled him to leave for London where shortly after he passed away, reportedly because of a heart attack in 1977.

Shariati's thought received vast positive reception throughout 1970s. As Abrahamian indicates

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[361] Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, Op cit., p. 465.
[362] It was a meeting hall which was built with the aid of religious veterans involved with oil nationalization movement.
[363] Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, Op cit., p. 466.
[364] SAVAK was the secret police, domestic security and intelligence service established by Pahlavi regime with the help of the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (the CIA) and Israeli Mossad.

He had immediate success among the young generation of the intelligentsia especially among the thousands of graduates produced every year by the new provincial universities, high schools, and technical, vocational and teacher's training schools. Like Shariati many of his followers were born into the propertied middle class –into bazaar, clerical and small landed families – grew up in devout households, and took advantage of the recent growth in the educational system to enter the new universities, colleges and specialized schools. Like Shariati, his followers harbored a host of deep-seated grievances against the Pahlavi dynasty. They felt that the regime deprived them of access to political power; rode roughshod over their cultural sensibilities; and favored the rich at the expense of the middle and lower classes.[365]

It is important to mention that Shariati developed his ideas through a critical assessment of social, cultural and political issues. Therefore, unlike Ale-Ahmad who engaged with political economy through close observation, he concentrated at the level of superstructure and attempted to layout not just a new critical horizon but a framework for analysis and novel perspectives. No doubt that during his studies in Europe and after he had access to the prime critical paradigm of the day, including Marxism, and he benefited considerably from the knowledge that it offered to examine modern history and society. Abrahamian believes that he did not see himself as a Muslim Marxist nor an anti-Marxist. Rather he viewed himself as a theorist who was inspired by Shieism and applied the modern social sciences, especially Marxism. He was successful to formulate 'a secular religion that would appeal to modern intelligentsia without alienating the traditional bazaaris and the religious masses'.[366]

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[365] Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, Op cit., p. 472.
[366] Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, ibid, p. 467.

عکس و تاریخ آن در سایت رسمی دکتر موجود است

www.aboutshariati.blogfa.com

دکتر علی شریعتی همراه با همسر و خانواده اش
اول فروردین ۱۳۵۴

Figure 4. Shariati and his family

Therefore, it is possible to argue that Shariati identified a strategy to integrate Marxist perspectives into the counter-hegemony that was at the point of formation, endowing the oppressed people with a critical and political tool to acquire consciousness about their society. In this way, he managed to pass through the censorship and oppression that prevented the spread of Leftist ideas and practice. Shariati acknowledged the paradigm that identified society through economic base, class structure and political-ideological superstructure, therefore he recognized that history was formed through the class struggles, yet, he believed that struggles were centered on political power and not material possessions. Moreover, he attempted to modify the view that regarded Marx as a crude materialist and an economic determinist[367]. In a number of his lectures he discussed Marxist stages of history according to the type of ownership and property and recognized that the growth of private property, particularly the bourgeois mode of ownership, had caused exploitation and social alienation.[368]

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[367] Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, ibid, p. 467.
[368] Ali Shariati, *Mashin dar Esarat-e Mashinism*, Milad, 1971, p. 17-25.

Figure 5. Shariati at a lecture in Huseinieh-Ershad

On the other hand, he criticized the institutionalized Marxism of orthodox communist parties.

> He – like Fanon-, Abrahamian postulates, argued that those parties, as well as other
> socialist movements in Europe, had fallen victim to the iron law of bureaucracy: that,
> having won mass support and government recognition, they had institutionalized
> themselves and thereby lost their revolutionary fervor. He –again like Fanon- charged
> that these parties denied aid to national liberation movements, and refused to admit
> that in the modern age the main struggle was not between capitalist and workers but
> between imperialist and the third world. [369]

This is an aspect of Shariati's thought which brought him to the idea of 'return to self'. He postulates that classical Marxists believed that nationalism was advocated by the ruling class to avert the masses from socialism and internationalism. However, in Shariati's perspective it is not possible for the developing world to liberate itself from imperialism and dispel social alienation and acquire western technology with dignity before they identify and prioritize their roots, national heritage and popular culture.[370]

This is an issue which distinguished Shariati's concerns from other Leftist intellectuals of the 1970s in and out of university and he unfolded his perspective towards 'return to self' in relation to various topics and in a number of lectures. In order to engage with his idea, I will refer to a long essay entitled '*Return to Which Self?*' First published in 1979.

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[369] Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, Op cit., p. 467.
[370] Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, ibid, p. 469.

Similar to his other lectures and writings, Shariati started the essay through discussing the critical responses to his thoughts, whether religious figures who denounce him as an infidel or secular scholars who support capitalism and adherence to the West. The discussion was usually a heated debate which revealed that the topics and themes of the debate is at the centre of hegemonic struggles. In this essay, he related the challenges to the necessity of 'return to self' and attempted to elaborate what he meant by this idea. It could be seen as an expansion of the discussion of Occidentosis by Ale-Ahmad as he enumerated various instances of the contemporary occidentotics, yet did not stop at this point and in a dialectical move attempted to argue for a social movement which could dispel occidentosis. He highlighted the status of occidentotic who he renamed as the 'assimilated'. A type of person who suffer from deprivation of their collective past, roots and original values due to the growth of consumerism and a tendency to assimilate to the West. Without imitation and assimilation those people do not adhere to an identity. They wear a European mask to resemble them, a type of people who are disconnected from their social and historical background and attempt to survive through humiliation of their collective past.[371] It is a condition whereby the consumption of all types of Western cultural, social and economic commodities induce, thus the assimilated are metamorphosized since they are dependent on values, needs and world-views which do not derive from their historical condition, they are disconnected from their contemporary reality which in his view seems to have a geographical element. He also names the phenomenon as cultural alienation since these people are alienated by another culture, he goes on to name them not only as pseudo-Europeans, pseudo-civilized yet also pseudo-human, since in his view to be human is to be born into a conception of history and people derive their characteristics, way of life and world-views from their particular history.[372] Then he moves on to highlight that colonialism attempts to produce assimilated subjects disconnected from their history[373] and provides the example of Makah and Medina (two Islamic religious cities) where Americanized modernism has transformed these ancient historical sites into a free market for American and European commodities.[374]

It is important to mention that one of the main themes of cultural production, particularly in 1970s is centered on the representation of the assimilated people. It also entered cinematic production as a social type and numerous example of assimilated people could be observed both in mainstream cinema as well as politically motivated films. In the popular cinema they are often depicted as the new

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[371] Ali Shariati, *Return*, Elham, 2005, p. 93.
[372] Shariati, *Return*, ibid, p. 99.
[373] Shariati, *Return*, ibid, p. 99.
[374] Shariati, *Return*, ibid, p. 100.

bourgeoisie or the new urbanite and are the topic of ridicule who the ordinary people finally defeat. In politically motivated films, they are the representative of the new order, particularly the growing capitalism.

Shariati himself provides numerous urbanite examples and to explain their metamorphosis, he refers to the introduction Sartre wrote to Fanon's *The Wretched of Earth*. In that it is indicated that mere imitation of appearances forms the assimilated people. Shariati too points out that assimilated people replace traditional imitation with newly arrived forms of imitation. For instance, the women who consume traditional rites turn to consume modern trends. Here, the form of imitation do not change but the content, the appearance changes without a subjective and meaningful transformation. In Shariati's opinion both ordinary people and the educated classes suffer from assimilation and are engaged with various types of imitation through consumption.[375]

He argues that the assimilated represent imitation and consuming trends as a civilized gesture and act, while civilization requires a completely different subjective and collective process. In his opinion, the process of civilization-making cannot be represented in consumption and appearance, in contrast it is a transformation of vision, world-views, social and ethical relations and the organization of values. The process of civilization-making requires integrity, spontaneity, creation and liberation from imitation. It develops through adhering to a belief, which includes a dynamic world-view and collective target, in other words, it necessitated having 'faith'. Shariati postulates that all the magnificent civilizations of the past and modern social movements fulfilled the faith of their contributors, whether it was Christianity, Islam or socialism, it was the collective faith of the people which brought about progressive transformations of culture and society. He argues for civilization as the alternative to assimilation.[376]

Furthermore, he engages with the question how it would be possible to nourish civilization and accordingly he indicates the indispensable role of the intellectual. He recognizes that there is a group of intellectuals who prepare the society for ever more consumption and are the stabilizers of the existing order. This idea reminds one of Gramsci's perspective about hegemonic intellectuals who are in his word the 'deputies' of the system as 'the functionaries of the superstructure'. Shariati states that when a country has to be transformed to a modern one, it has to invent a classical sense of country, a proper market for the sale of foreign commodities, and hundreds of new occupations, missions, responsibilities and technics arrive which also require people who could function in these new positions and that is

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[375] Shariati, *Return*, ibid, p. 122-4.
[376] Shariati, *Return*, ibid, p. 126-8.

where this group of intellectuals are needed.[377] In other words, he indicates that that group of intellectuals aims to develop and stabilize the modern division of work and professionalization of any experience and knowledge.

However, there is a second group of intellectuals who Shariati introduces as

> those who acquire social and political consciousness, who find their destiny bound to the fate of their society, they analyze the social issues and identify the movement of their society and its historical route and inevitably feel the social responsibility. They take up an intellectual, political and class-oriented stance and in a word they comprehend their time.[378]

Regarding the history of religion he compares the contemporary intellectual to the prophets of the ancient world and views them as those who are concerned with the well-being, evolution and happiness of human kind.[379] In this way, he illuminates his point that there is a difference between the professionals of humanities and other sciences from the intellectuals. In Shariati's opinion the ideal intellectuals have reached a type of awareness of their self, society and the world, which could not be reached through philosophy, natural sciences, humanities, art, industry, literature and other specialized disciplines[380], a type of awareness that Moses accessed but Philon the philosopher lacked, a type of knowledge which transforms human and society and is not scientific and technical. It is the responsibility of the intellectuals to assist people to acquire this awareness in order to make historical progress.[381] Accordingly, Shariati distinguished between the ways that an intellectual and a professional acquire their knowledge. He postulated that

> The nature and quality of the knowledge of a sociologist is different to an intellectual. A sociologist is someone who knows numerous definitions of the concept of social class, has learnt about the history of class evolution and has read about the class psychology based on sociological basis. An intellectual, however, is someone who feels her social class, has a first-hand, objective and direct knowledge of it, the class conflict is not

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[377] Shariati, *Return*, ibid, p. 129-30.
[378] Shariati, *Return*, ibid, p. 130.
[379] Shariati, *Return*, ibid, p. 131.
[380] Shariati, *Return*, ibid, p. 132.
[381] Shariati, Return, ibid, p. 138.

what she read in socialist books and valid sociological references, and she feels the class conflict with her flesh and skin. For sociologists the mass is the equivalent of what Marx, Engels, Plekhanov and Lukacs have stated about. [In contrast,] the intellectual is the one who observes the truth from the profile of people she knows and it is in their community that she recognizes it. Her scientific reference is the streets, markets, workshops, farms, villages, events, costumes and ritual, language and condition of people's lives.[382]

Therefore, it is possible to deduce that Shariati believes that it is the masses who are the source of knowledge of the intellectual and in relation to the community, history and faith the intellectual could develop a kind of awareness of time which is required for the process of civilization-making. However, in Shariati's view, akin to Gramsci's perspective about the organic intellectual, the intellectual has the responsibility of making people aware of their knowledge.

It is important to mention that the distinction between the specialist and intellectual had significant consequences for the hegemonic debates of the time. It endowed an originality to the ordinary people that a specialist, a professional could most possibly lack. If the sedimentation of capitalist social relations created new hierarchies according to the place of people in the division of labour and the degree of their specialized knowledge, Shariati's debate recognizes a sense of originality that exists in collective knowledge of community which has to be identified by the intellectual.

Thus, it is an argument which destabilized the strength and power of capitalist hierarchies regarding the modern division of labour. This is also a theme and subject which could be identified in the cultural productions of 1970s. If in the 1960s mainstream cinema advocated modern education as a way to acquire a better life and the scenes of constructing schools prevailed many films, in 1970s we do not see the trace of that hopeful idea any more. Rather, a kind of search for where originality lies preoccupies films. It appears as a question which occupies the characters, the struggle between assimilation, national and cultural heritage, and the creative process of civilization-making seems to be the topic of many films. Nonetheless, by the late 1970s films were produced which were influenced by Shariati's idea about faith, community and the role of intellectuals such as the *Journey of Stones (1978)*.

In this section, I attempted to introduce briefly Shariati's perspectives which has contributed significantly to the formation of counter-hegemonic discourse in Iran during 1970s. As various historians

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[382] Shariati, Return, ibid, p. 138.

and commentators indicate his ideas are influential on the masses which lead them to the events of 1979. Shariati could be observed as an intellectual who developed a stratum of intellectuals who belonged to the new rising class of the time. They fulfilled Gramsci's vision whereby as organic intellectual of their class, they endowed them with 'homogeneity and awareness of its own function not only in the economic field but also in the social and political fields'.[383] Shariati and those influenced by his ideas, concerns, challenges and world-view were able to carry out a 'moral and intellectual reform', a phrase Gramsci borrowed from Renan and frequently used, which meant 'a cultural transformation which would give the hitherto subaltern classes a sense of their own worth and ability to transform, and direct, the economy and society in general'.[384]

Considering the new framework and terminology he provided, which originated in social sciences, plus the fact that he modernized already existing concepts and practices, he could be seen as someone who provided new economic, social, political and cultural horizons for the rising urbanite middle class to move beyond their economic interests and become qualified political intellectuals. In the similar vein, Gramsci recognizes this transformation as the ideal function of organic intellectuals. 'The political party functions as an educational association through which the members of a particular social group (class) are able to transcend the purely economic-corporate level, and develop a different level of awareness'.[385] In this way, within the dictatorship and brutal oppression of the Pahlavi regime, where no political society and party was allowed and even having alternative and critical books could result in arrest, even torture and imprisonment, Shariati was capable of forming a counter-hegemonic current and influenced the youth of the rising class, artists, graduates, etc. There is no doubt that Shariati is influenced by Fanon's perspective and in shaping the idea of 'return to self' he attempts to actualize Fanon's vision about the ideal type of relation between people and the intellectual.

In the well-known essay *On National Culture*, Fanon discusses the three different cultural positions that the people of the colonized territories go through and experience. Although Iran was not colonized in the general sense of the word, yet the country experienced the devastating consequences of the struggles between the imperialist superpowers of the modern age. Accordingly, it is possible to observe Fanon's three positions in the history of Iranian society particularly in the works and activities of Ale-Ahmad and Shariati, yet as Wayne indicates they are not linear processes which occurs but once 'but rather a triangle of positions which a struggle may revolve through according to circumstances and

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[383] Schwarzmantel, The Routledge Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, Op cit., p. 81-2.
[384] Schwarzmantel, The Routledge Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, ibid, p. 82.
[385] Schwarzmantel, The Routledge Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, ibid, p. 83.

social interests'.[386] At the scene of the three positions it is possible to find the colonialist, the native

middle class who after independence change to the new bourgeoisie, the intellectuals and the people.

The last one consists of two groups of farmers and urban workers; these classes in Fanon's view engage

with struggles for the sake of their social interests.[387] And the site of this latent conflict is culture, since

although culture is less tangible than material resources of a community such as land, yet it is the last

resort of resistance whereby it entirely distinguishes the colonizer from the colonized and its destruction

enables the colonizers to justify their *- unfair domination and presence in the native land. As Fanon

indicates

> Colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and future of
>
> dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip
>
> and empting the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it
>
> turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it …the
>
> total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that
>
> colonialism came to lighten their darkness.[388]

In this force-field the middle class and intellectuals attempt to adhere to the first cultural position

encouraged by the colonizers that is to assimilate to the culture of the colonizer. They exercise European

cultural practices, way of life and artistic trends and Europe becomes the valid source of inspiration.[389]

Likewise, during the 1960s and 1970s in Iran, as I mentioned above, we encounter similar view among

intellectuals as it is described as occidentosis by Ale-Ahmad and assimilation by Shariati. The writings

and activities of these people unfold the extent to which it has developed in Iran and other countries in

the West Asia. In various ways, they attempt to discuss its roots and history and identify people, fields

and trends that are similar to Fanon's idea of assimilation.

Fanon continues that nonetheless a fraction of people are disturbed by this position, and unable to

concede to assimilation they break away towards the second position. They return to their native

people, their culture, costumes and particularities and value them as original. In this position the

intellectual prioritizes the traditions and appearances of the people, yet the resort to the exterior layer

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[386] Michael Wayne, 'The Dialectics of Third Cinema' in *The Routledge Companion to Film and Politics*, Routledge, 2016, p. 13.

[387] Wayne, 'The Dialectics of Third Cinema' in *The Routledge Companion to Film and Politics*, ibid, p. 13.

[388] France Fanon, 'On National Culture' in *The Fanon Reader*, Pluto Press, 2006, p. 161.

[389] Fanon, 'On National Culture', ibid, p. 169.

of people's life prevents her to recognize and adhere to the dynamism of the culture. The native intellectual returns to the past events, childhood memories, ancient stories in order to re-interpret them.[390]

However, Fanon observes that even in this process of extracting the past according to the 'borrowed aestheticism', the native intellectual is applying the techniques and languages that are estranged from the people.[391] In the same vein, this position could also be identified in the intellectual works of 1960s and 1970s in Iran. The dominant hegemony, supported by the establishment and the royal court, advocated return to ancient Iran and folklore art and costumes. This movement which was financially backed by the state demonstrated the arbitrary revival of stereotypical traditions which spread a sort of exoticism. In this period mainstream and second cinema returned to traditions and folklores. In documentary cinema in particular topics such as ancient historical sites, the life of nomadic people, old rituals and traditions, etc, drew the attention of young filmmakers, which according to Naficy demonstrated the anxiety about the disappearance of national culture in the modern age.

Fanon 'is critical of this recovery of tradition because it is purely defensive and above all static, fixed and not profoundly grounded in the movements of change, not profoundly grounded in the historical dimension of culture'.[392] He identifies a third position which he calls the fighting phase. In that 'the native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on the contrary shake the people. Instead of according the people's lethargy an honored place in his esteem, he turns himself into an awakener of people; hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature and a national literature'.[393] In his view culture cannot be confined to particularities and even it opposes custom, since culture distances itself from simplification that could be found in custom, what Fanon calls 'the deterioration of culture'.[394] For Fanon the truth of a nation cannot be observed in its customs yet in its realities.[395] This is a stage whereby people become aware of the relation between culture and struggle for change and the previous reservation to fight do not exist.[396] This is a position suggested by Fanon, for it is where the native intellectual could connect with people in their real life.

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[390] Fanon, 'On National Culture', ibid, p. 169.
[391] Fanon, 'On National Culture', ibid, p. 170.
[392] Wayne, The Dialectic of Third Cinema, Op cit., p. 14.
[393] Fanon, 'On National Culture', Op cit., p. 169.
[394] Fanon, 'On National Culture', ibid, p. 170.
[395] Fanon, 'On National Culture', ibid, p. 171.
[396] Wayne, 'The Dialectics of Third Cinema', Op cit., p. 15.

According to these three positions, it is possible to correlate the thought and activities of counter-hegemonic intellectuals such as Ale-Ahmad and Shariati with the third position. They are critical of assimilation to European culture and advocate a social, political and cultural stance according to the present realities of people. They argue that referring to the ancient past, traditions and customs of people do not suffice the nation in their struggle for change and highlight the historical dimension of culture in order to derive a new framework. Their work has an uncompromising revolutionary aspect whereby they insist on the ability and capacity of ordinary people to develop new ways of life according to their collective resources, demands and wishes.

The last notable point useful for current counter-hegemonic struggles, is the social structure and forms that intellectuals chose in order to connect and speak to the people. It is a question that why and how they were successful to achieve significant public support for their thoughts, ideas and visions to the extent that they influenced a generation of intellectuals and beyond. This question is urgent when we observe that other contemporary intellectuals such as Gramsci scholars ask how it is possible to form organic intellectuals in the absence of meaningful and effective party of the subaltern people. In Gramsci's perspective, the party is an essential institution whereby the organic intellectuals could grow and fulfill Gramsci's desired task, whereas in today's condition the party principally has an electoral role.[397] Moreover, it is argued that envisioning the intellectual as being a worker-intellectual, permanent persuader, the mobilizer of people who spread an alternative vision of structures of meaning in society is difficult.

> It might be difficult to envisage anyone performing such a function in contemporary
> society, all the more so as the means of communication remain dominated by capitalist
> and market-oriented concerns, represented by figures like Rupert Murdoch and Silvio
> Berlusconi, whose economic power gives them great control over the media and the
> means of manipulation popular consciousness. This raises a point made by many
> commentators on Gramsci who question where there might be the space (in a
> metaphorical sense) needed to elaborate the organic intellectuals of an ever more
> complex society.[398]

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[397] Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks*, Op cit., p. 87.
[398] Schwarzmantel, *The Routledge Guidebook to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks*, ibid, p. 88.

Regarding the case of Iranian intellectuals there are important points about their success to fulfill Gramsci's perspectives. Firstly, the organic intellectuals attempted to reach new forms of communication with the people and particularly the young intelligentsia. For instance, Ale-Ahmad tried various literary forms to spread his views and connect intellectually and emotionally with the public. He could be seen as a writer who his whole life searched for that form of writing which could shake people in Fanon's word. Abandoning academic and scholarly styles of writings, he deployed the everyday language and developed new style of hurried and informative writing which was unprecedented. Secondly, effective intellectuals such as Shariati decided to concentrate his activities out of academia and chose a free and public venue such as Huseinieh-Ershad. It is a type of meeting hall run by public and religious donations. He gave weekly lectures every Thursday for approximately four years which were open to public, and the audience who belonged to various social and political background attended. In today's Tehran various institutions parallel to academia exist whereby intellectuals have lectures and seminars on various critical topics, yet, they do not attract any significant audience and their influence is limited to a very small portion of middle class Tehraners. If the lectures become free and offered to larger fraction of social classes, it is possible to once again observe the positive response of the public to the call of intellectuals. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that the structure of the party as necessitated by Gramsci could be extended to other fields, particularly to the field of modern education. It could act as a space whereby the organic intellectuals could nourish, form and organize. However, the precondition is the existence of organic intellectuals who have an uncompromising stance against the existing order and dominant structures of meaning, those who do not wish to speak to authorities but to the subaltern people. Those who crave to connect themselves to the process of production, identify the realities of their people and awaken them. Through the case of Iranian intellectuals of the 1970s, I would like to highlight that Gramsci's vision about the role of organic intellectuals to construct the hegemony of the subaltern classes, despite the contemporary limitations, is still significant, important, valid and practical.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to discuss the formation of counter-hegemonic currents during the 1970s in Iran. In order to do that, I engaged with Gramsci's theory of hegemony in which he argues for the important and constructive role of intellectuals in the formation of hegemony. He believes that for the radical transformation of society, a theory developed by organic intellectuals of the subaltern class is

necessary and through their creative frameworks, grand changes become imaginable. The underlying idea of this chapter – which distinguishes it from other researches in this field- is that the representation of hegemonic struggles in the cultural productions of those decades, particularly in cinema, was firstly envisioned by the organic intellectuals and in order to decipher the arrival of new themes, settings, characterization and spaces, it is important to illuminate their background in the intellectual literature produced during the aforementioned period.

Hence, I engaged with the debates and works of two well-known and influencial intellectuals. Firstly, I provided a brief introduction to Jalal Ale-Ahmad life and work and demonstrated that according to Gramsci's perspective, he could be regarded as the organic intellectual of the newly formed middle class urbanite. Then I discussed some of the topics of his widely read book *Occidentosis* which critically assesses the arrival of the machine in Iranian society when it was slowly changing from a feudal mode of production to the early capitalist one. This condition propels people to assimilate to the culture of the societies that provide technology and machine, namely the West and he named the condition of blindfolded assimilation as occidentosis. Moreover, I indicated the contradictions between forces and relations of production which he discussed in the book and postulated that those were the issues that could be found in the films of the period too.

In addition, I discussed Ali Shariati's ideas, another radical theorist who significantly contributed to the formation of counter-hegemonic currents at the time. I highlighted the influence of Fanon's theory on his ideas and attempted to demonstrate that his theory correlates to the third cultural position that Fanon famously formulates. In that, he attempts to develop a framework for identifying and creating a cultural process which would counter the assimilation and imitation of the occidentotics. He called it the process of civilization-making which is carried out by intellectuals distinct for their original awareness and organic relation to their native people, not for their scientific and technical knowledge. Shariati's idea profoundly influenced the public, particularly the young generation considering issues such as a critique of cultural assimilation to the West, valuing a return to self as a return to the history and realities of native people, developing a novel perspective about the organic relation of the intellectuals with their community, history and the knowledge that it aspires.

In every section of this chapter, I pointed out that how each issue was related to my thesis as the counter hegemonic debates found their way to the silver screen of cinema. In the next chapter, I will engage with a number of selected films set in the1970s rural Iran and attempt to identify the issues that I raised in this chapter.

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Chapter Five: The Representation of Hegemonic Spaces in 1970s Films of Mainstream Cinema in Iran

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the rural spaces of the First Cinema films which were produced during the 1970s in Iran. During my research when I watched the mainstream films of the aforementioned decade decade, I realised that there are important issues considering the representation of hegemonic spaces in popular films which distinguish them from Second Cinema and politically motivated films. Therefore, I decided to discuss the critical mainstream cinema in a separate chapter which will follow.

In this section, I will firstly highlight the importance of mainstream cinema which would support my decision to pay particular attention to this category. Then I will engage with the atmosphere of filmmaking during that decade, as the sharp distinction between popular and art house cinema was developed in the 1970s. It is a time when the concept of high culture and mass culture began to appear in the discourse of people involved in the movie-making industry and in the production of the films. Yet, unusual phenomenon which pointed to the arbitrariness of this distinction also emerged. For instance, directors such as Parviz Sayyad and actresses such as Gogosh and Sayyad himself were active in the both fields. After, in order to critically engage with the organization of hegemonic spaces, I will discuss the films, their process of production and reception, I will point at the cultural roots which were transformed and modernized in the popular mainstream cinema. Lastly, I will concentrate on the representation of rural spaces in these films and discuss its characteristics and differences from the previous representation in 1960s. I will illuminate the changes in the representation of nature and the relation between characters and nature in the filmic frame. I will argue that it is the consequence of the changing mode of production in the rural community through which the establishment of capitalist forces and relations of production intensified the social alienation of community, particularly in relation to nature. Also, the prevalence of a new culture of capitalist consumerism, changed the organic relation of people to land and agricultural production. The arrival of new hegemonic spaces in films such as the police station and the school in the rural areas would be critically considered.

The Importance of Mainstream Cinema

In this section, I attempt to discuss a number of reasons which encouraged me to allocate a separate chapter to forgotten films of the 1970s produced in Iran which I selected. I concentrate on the comedy series that have not been critically debated by the critics and historians of Iranian cinema so far. As I read the film periodicals of that period, I realised that the success was reflected by the publications at the time and aroused questions. The village comedy series diverged from the mainstream commercial films of Film Farsi cinema centred in the urban. Moreover, it has a long lasting effect as Parviz Sayyad the director of this comedy series has also stated that the Iranian public remembers this comedy and its characters far better than the second cinema films that he made, even after approximately fifty years, which he finds surprising.[399] The village comedy which had Samad as its most popular character in the centre aroused shock and astonishment even at the time of production in the early 1970s. The first films turned out to be popular and sold well. The success became unbelievable and shocking in 1973 when the fourth film of the series *Samad Goes to School* went on the silver screen and professional film magazines such as *Film va Honar* reported that it sold more than any other film in the history of Iranian cinema.[400] And this surprising reception occurred at the time when the commercial cinema was dramatically unsuccessful in the box offices and many film studios and producers were reportedly bankrupted. Sayyad, the director and actor of the role of Samad, states in an interview that the Samad series brought the Iranian family back to cinemas as they had deserted the movie houses previously due to the high level of physical violence and sex scenes of the Iranian commercial cinema at the time.[401] In addition, it would be illuminating to point at a distinct characteristic of this comedy series which Sayyad was well aware of and that is in the profit-driven environment of 1970s commercial cinema in Iran, where imitations of successful films were pandemic, not a single film could imitate Samad film's topics, characters, plots, etc. Throughout the decade, the series remained unique and inimitable.

The positive reception of the public was simultaneous with the puzzlement of the progressive filmmakers. In a phone interview that *Film va Honar* magazine conducted[402] they stated their confusion

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[399] Parviz Kardan interview with Parviz Sayyad for Tavana Website appeared on YouTube in 2010. The video is available online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqHH3uCaE6E (accessed 5 February 2017).

[400] Film va Honar, no 446, August 1973.

[401] Parviz Kardan interview with Parviz Sayyad for Tavana Website appeared on YouTube in 2010. The video is available online at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqHH3uCaE6E> (accessed 5 February 2017). Also see Hamid Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Vol 2, Duke University Press, 2011, p. 362.

[402] Film va Honar, no 446, August 1973.

as to why the public loved this film. People such as Kamran Shirdel (director), Masoud Kimiayi (director), Farzaneh Tayidi (actress) expressed their dislike. Fereydoun Gole (director) said that it was humorous and funny yet could not be counted as serious cinema. Zakaria Hashemi (actor and director) believed that the public was not interested to see reality of life in the cinema despite the fact that their lives were fraught with pain. Implicitly, these artists labelled people as ignorant, reality evaders and superficial. None of them could explain the reasons behind the success of the film. It seems that the intellectuals of the day underestimated the power of comedy to challenge the status quo and the dominant political order. Regarding the relation between politics, comedy and satire, it is proposed that 'where humour offers a release from the frustrations of social justice, a nation's appetite for comedy is formed in direct proportion to the degree of political oppression it experiences'.[403] According to historians, comedy from its early days in the ancient Greece engaged with politics and the state. For instance, Aristophanes comedy constantly highlighted and criticized the well-known Athenian public figures and ridiculed their policies. A play like *The Frogs* demonstrates that drama was at the heart of Greek cultural and political discourse and comedy was the sole literary form 'able to enlist fantasy and disregard boundaries as a means of retrieving lost ideas'.[404] Moreover, in modern and contemporary time, the comic has found new social and political function. For instance, the satire and parodies in the plays by Bertolt Brecht 'makes visible unseen realities to reveal their ideological underpinnings as historical construct'.[405] Although his methods, such as the Alienation effect, sought disillusionment of the audience, yet he insisted that theatre is better to be entertaining and to demonstrate the pleasure of changing the world.[406]

Therefore, my approach to popular cinema is different from this common dismissive view of intellectuals as I will refer to the views of Gramsci and Bloch about popular productions. What I would like to highlight is that the village comedy presents us with a challenge to understand the taste of the public, the cultural, political and social roots of Iranian comedy and its commonalities with high art productions which I would like to briefly address in this chapter.

Another important reason to discuss the rural spaces of mainstream productions separately, is the palpable distinction in representing the hegemonic spaces in contrast to second and third cinema. Through researching the archives of film reviews and also based on my conversation with older people

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[403] Andrew Scott, *Comedy*, Routledge, 2014, p. 147.
[404] Scott, *Comedy*, ibid, p. 152.
[405] Marc Silberman, 'Bertolt Brecht, Politics, and Comedy' in *Social Research*. Spring 2012, Vol.79 Issue 1. p. 171.
[406] Silberman, 'Bertolt Brecht, Politics, and Comedy', ibid, p. 172.

who remembered Iranian rural spaces during 1970s, I realised that rural spaces in mainstream cinema were far less constructed spaces than the second cinema films. In the former, the real life spaces were not transformed and appropriated for filming, therefore we could observe the historical registration of material conditions as they existed. This is not to claim that the sense of reality was one hundred percent compatible with the actual conditions. Of course, any artistic production relies on a sort of reality construction, particularly in cinema, where the frame of each scene is arbitrary, a combination of selection and omission of materials itself. However, what I would like to highlight is that in the first cinema this construction seems to be minimal. Moreover, it was the reception of films which described second and third cinema's setting as distant from real life conditions.

Here I point at an example regarding *The Cow* (1970), which is a pioneer second cinema film, and in my view a political allegory about the effect of imbalanced development on the fate of villagers struggling to survive amid the turbulent transformation from subsistence economy to globalization. When the film was released a number of commentators challenged the realist style attributed to the Cow by art-house critics, arguing that it did not represent a real life depiction of village life and its people. Iraj Pezeshgzad, a popular novelist stated that: 'If we look at *The Cow*, can we assume that we saw a realist film? A village is a place where farmers earn their living through agriculture and breeding hens and roosters and cows. Even if a village has as limited a number of inhabitants as twenty people they still need more than one cow. It is impossible to imagine a village without cattle, donkey, hens and roosters. Since the human came out of caves to do farming, they have tamed animals, it means that since nine thousand years ago village life in Iran was indispensable from animals. Today according to the latest statistics, Iran has fifty eight thousands villages and please find a village which like Mehrjouyi's film has only one cow.' He continues to discuss the characters who in his view were modelled after an American Western film's village and far from Iranian farmers and their community.[407]

I think that Pezeshgzad's criticism is valid yet it does not damage the delicacy of the political allegory of the film. In that film, the emphasis on only one cow could be interpreted as the reliance of people on the subsistence economy which suddenly and without adequate replacement vanishes and leaves people mentally disturbed. The spaces of the village are not realistic yet constructs an allegorical atmosphere to feel and experience the sense of deprivation in Iranian society. Therefore, it is not false but surreal and allegorical and the spaces are organised in a way to suit this purpose.

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[407] Jamal Omid, *Tarikhe Sinemaye Iran [A History of Iranian Cinema],* Negah, 1982, p. 546-7.

However, such surreal environments and spaces do not appear in the mainstream cinema, rather, it relies on a familiar and recognisable representation of the rural. This means that in satirical films such as Samad's comedy series we encounter a more realistic and historical registration of the environment which is worth to be discussed independently.

The Split between High and Mass Culture

In the second chapter of this research, I extensively discussed my theoretical approach towards mass culture production according to Jameson's perspective about the structural dependency of modernism and mass culture. For Jameson both mass culture and modernism work on the same raw materials which is social and political anxieties and fantasies, both transform these basic common materials.

> Both modernism and mass culture entertain relations of repression with the fundamental social anxieties and concerns, hopes and blind spots, ideological antinomies and fantasies of disaster, which are their raw materials; only where modernism tends to handle this material by producing compensatory structure of various kinds, mass culture represses them by the narrative construction of imaginary resolution and by the projection of an optical illusion of social harmony.[408]

This structural dependency of the seemingly opposite fields of cultural productions comes into sight when we assess the cultural productions of Parviz Sayyad, the creator of a village comedy series yet also the artist behind numerous second cinema productions. Sayyad as the writer, director, producer and actor of village comedy could not be counted as a businessman whose purpose of involvement with cinema was solely driven by profit-seeking. He was a graduate of School of Economy from Tehran University and started his artistic career as a play writer. His involvement with theatre opened his way to the newly established state's television and he participated in the writing, directing and acting of popular TV serials, including *Mr Sergeant*, which became the model for the production of the village comedy. He began making popular films such as Samad's series as a way to earn the budget required to make second cinema movies.[409] For instance, he was the co-producer of distinct third cinema films such

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[408] Fredrick Jameson, *Signature of the Visible*, Routledge, 1992, p. 25-6.
[409] See the interview of Manoto tv channel with him available online at <www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHTNtJXFH7M> (accessed 10 February 2017).

as the *Circle* (1972, Mehrjouyi) and the Berlin Silver Bear award winner *Still Life* (1974, Sohrab Shahid-Sales). He acted in controversial politically charged films such as the *Secret of the Treasures of the Jenni Valley* (1974, Golestan) while contributing to the film's production cost. He also produced and acted in *Far from Home* (1975, Sohrab Shahid-Sales) which depicts the repetitive and limited life of Turkish migrant workers in Germany. According to Naficy

> Sayyad seems to have become radicalized in the late 1970s, perhaps partly because of
> his involvement with the PFC[410] and his co-production of Shahid-Sales's
> uncompromising Still Life'. In Dead-End his social criticism previously suagarcoated by
> comedy, assumed the mantle of the harsh, paranoid realism so characteristic of new-
> wave movies.[411]

Dead-End which was made with the support of the PFC, depicts the panoptic surveillance of the Pahlavi regime which people either internalized or misread causing tragic consequences. [The film] 'became a protexilic film for him [Sayyad], as he completed it the year the revolution started, and it may have been the reason behind his political asylum in the United States. In exile, he revived the Samad character to mock the regime of the Islamic Republic'.[412]

I mentioned this short introduction of Sayyad's work in order to highlight that before the 1979 revolution the creator of the Samad films was also well-aware of the characteristics and requirements of second and third cinema. He seems to have constructed a dialectical relation between his popular series and intellectual works. He is perhaps one of the last artists who in his works attempted to address the mass public while maintaining his social critical stance through sophisticated productions. Since then, in Iran's contemporary cinema, the division between modernism and mass culture is profoundly internalized to the degree that the filmmakers, critics and even the viewers do not cross the formal line between the two fields. It seems that despite the resentment of his contemporary intellectual filmmakers, Sayyad acquired the opportunity to highlight urgent social upheavals of the time through creating a village and its characters. Sayyad reluctantly admits in an interview after the success of *Samad and Solomon's magic Carpet* that Samad's village is a caricature of a small community and states that: 'While I aimed to make a film that people would like, I meant to emphasise [social] issues, I meant to

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[410] The Progressive Filmmakers' Cooperative
[411] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p. 362.
[412] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 362.

make a commercial film which both sells well yet also contains an idea and a message.[413] Two years later when *Samad Goes to School* was on the screen, in an interview he points out that the character of Samad is an excuse for him to bring to fore the basic social problematics and to discuss that as a caricature character it could induce awareness in the people.[414] He believed that it would be possible to engage with bitter social realities through humor and satire since they could absorb their bitterness and make it acceptable and bearable.[415] Indeed, Sayyad selected the appropriate genre for this intention since satire reprehends inanity, immorality and corruption. It prompts ethical and political transformation through examining thoughts and ideas by humorous analysis. Satire and comedy 'take their subject matters from the heart of political life or cultural anxiety, re-framing issues at an ironic distance that enables us to revisit fundamental questions that have been obscured by rhetoric, personal interests or *Real Politik*'.[416]

Therefore, it is possible to deduce that, as Jameson indicated, in Sayyad's films, whether first or second cinema, he engaged with the same raw materials, social anxieties and fantasies, yet in the first cinema productions, the narrative was influenced by the utopian dimension of the final organic community liberated from consumerism, social alienation and class conflict which I will turn to in the next section.

A Rare Vision of Community in the 1970s

In order to critically explore the hegemonic spaces of the Samad comedy series, it is relevant to first discuss their stories, characters, topics and also their cultural background and the process of production. One of the striking characteristics of the series is that it offers a rare view of life in community during this decade. Unlike the rural films of the 1960s in which the story usually develops through the interaction of the inhabitants of a village, the rural films of the 1970s seldom provide such a perspective. Atomisation, extreme concentration on the life of a few characters and following them separately seems to be the dominant tendency of the films.

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[413] *Film va Honar*, no 343, August 1971, p13.
[414] Film va Honar, no 444, August 1973.
[415] Film va Honar, no 446, August 1973.
[416] Scott, *Comedy*, Op cit., p. 156.

In contrast, Samad films provide a glimpse to the collective life of villagers as their social attitudes, misbehaviours, thoughts, plans, sympathy and cunning shape their community, thus, the allegorical tendency of the story to represent the Iranian society. It is notable to mention that

> From Aristotle on and in contrast to tragedy, comedy was for centuries the most
> appropriate genre for representing the lives, not of the ruling classes, of those with
> extensive power, but of the 'middle' and 'lower' orders of society, those whose power
> was limited and local and whose manners, behaviours and values were by their
> 'betters' to be either trivial, or vulgar, or both.[417]

Naficy in his *Social History of Iranian Cinema* very briefly points at the Samad films in the chapter on family melodramas and comedies, categorising them as belonging to mainstream cinema related to the subject of social divisions and class struggle. He states that 'the class differences between peasants and landlords are wrapped in personal plots, such as the landlord preventing the marriage of his daughter to a peasant. Yet, often the peasant surmounts the class barrier by hard work, education and gainful employment'.[418] He indicates that

> Parviz Sayyad developed a comic persona named Samad, a country bumpkin, who in a
> series of popular comedies debunked the upper classes, city slickers and various
> authority figures – government officials, religious leaders, village elders and fathers –
> by a combination of rural wiliness and morality.[419]

These incidents are often unfolded in the context of the confrontation between the villagers and threatening outsiders, who are often a band of professional international thieves as *in Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug* (1970), or a dangerous band of drug smugglers as in *Samad in the way of Dragon* (1975) and *Samad goes to School* (1973). Sometimes the villagers are abused by urbanites who disguised as professionals, promising modernisation through new cultural practices such as filmmaking, as in *Samad becomes an Artist* (1974). It seems that in all of Samad's rural movies, the film probes the rather contradictory tendencies that construct the small community which are nonetheless resolved in order to maintain its existence particularly against abusers.

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[417] Frank Krutnik, *Popular Film and Television Comedy*, Routledge, 2006, p. 19.
[418] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p. 234.
[419] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 234-5.

Following the TV serial *Mr Sergeant* (1967-1970), the main characters were formed and established: Samad, a young, impoverished, landless and illiterate country person who is ignored by the authorities of the village. Samad's mother, Nane-Aqa who is also an impoverished, landless and illiterate middle aged woman, attempts to reconcile the ignorant community and her son. Leila, Samad's beloved, who is the young daughter of the chief of the village, in love with Samad, yet her father prevents her marring him because Samad is considered poor and irrelevant to his higher social position. A central and dominant figure who appears in every film of the series is the sergeant who manages the police station of the village and attempts to maintain the new order established by the modern central government and is invariably depicted as in conflict with Samad. There are other marginal figures who construct the diversity of the community and are essential for the formation of the main story in each film. There is the group of the elders of the village including Leila's father and the religious authority of the village whose cunningness and greed generate internal problems for the community. Samad's acquaintances who are the unemployed and landless youths some of whom practice the professions which have become out-dated such as the morshed[420] and margir[421] [traditional entertainers]. The villagers are distinguished by their clothes and accent throughout the whole series which is in sharp contrast to the urbanite western clothes and modern social attitudes of other characters. The two factors represent their social and economic position in a changing environment which aspires to assimilate with global standards of elegancy. Perhaps the clothes and the accent point at their poverty and lack of social capital which is required for an average life in the modern world. In short, the village seems to represent the people left behind from the aggressive process of industrialisation and development yet they remain proud and self-confident. The grim and disturbing divide between the developed and underdeveloped, the urban and the rural is overshadowed by the comic and satirical incidents that the confrontation of the two parallel world generates. Therefore, the massive popular appeal of the comedy series seems to rest in satire's 'ability to speak truth to power and to effect the resistance implied by George Orwell's proposition that 'every joke is a tiny revolution' '.[422]

In *Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug*, the village is alarmed by the arrival of a group of urbanite professionals which includes a professor of archaeology who has just left Europe, a civil engineer, a professional boxer, a famous singer, a young photographer and a westernized woman who arranges their plans and meetings and seems to be the mistress of the professor. In response to villagers'

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[420] popular story-teller
[421] snake-catcher
[422] Scott, *Comedy*, Op cit., p. 160.

questions as to what they do there, the group pretends to deliver a series of modern developments such as road-construction and to provide new entertainments. They take photos from the location, yet they in fact search the houses for an invaluable ancient rug that is assumed to be in the village while the villagers know nothing about its value. They organize modern music shows and song and dance in the public square for the inhabitants and while they are preoccupied the urbanites take the opportunity to steal the rug. The rest of the story follows the hilarious struggle between the urbanite thieves and the people in order to claim back the mysterious rug. The conflict is depicted as the confrontation between professional criminals who possess the latest knowledge and instruments to rob the people versus the villagers who have nothing but their honest desire to defend the community's property and existence. Finally, with the assistance of the police station they plot to trap the thieves and confiscate the rug.

Unlike the rural films of the 1960s where the livelihood of the village is depicted as being dependent on agricultural farming on land and fishing from the sea, in the 1970s films the means of subsistence in the rural is vague and unclear.   And regarding the Samad films it does not seem to be dependent on the production of food but rather on the protection and consumption of already existing properties which have found a particular value in the global market- here an antique rug. It is possible to observe the rug as symbolizing other man-made treasures such as ancient artefacts yet also it could implicitly point at other existing natural treasures such as the oil revenues. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that the film indicates the social consequences of the changing mode of production from self-subsistence to reliance on the global market. The urban professionals encourage the villagers to exchange their treasure with their modern commodities such as new western-style developments and new type of entertainments. One cannot help but to recall Ale-Ahmad's argument regarding the imposed and unfair terms of exchange enforced by multinational companies:

> The Westerners extract, refine, transport, and compute the cost of the oil themselves
> and figure our annual share at, say, forty million pounds sterling, given us as credits
> toward purchase of their manufactures and deposited in their own banks in our
> accounts. We are necessarily compelled to return these credits by buying from them.
> Who are they? Forty percent is America and its satellites, 40 percent, England and its
> adherents, and the rest, France, the Netherlands, and other Western European nations.
> In return for the oil they take, we must import machines, and in the wake of the
> machines, specialists in the machines, and in the wake of the specialists in the
> machines, dialectologists, ethnologists, musicologists, and art historians. Thus

Morrison-Knudsen brings whatever it likes from America, from bulldozers to wire to

nuts and bolts; the same holds for Agip Mineraria from Italy, John Mowlem, the

highway contractor, from England, and Antar Petroles from France.[423]

Moreover, the film presents us with an up-to-date collection of occidentotics, the urbanite professionals who have perfectly learnt how to utilize the imported machines whether it is the instruments of road-construction of the civil engineer, the highly advanced photographic camera of the photographer, the western musical instruments of the singer or the car that the professor's mistress drives. It introduces us to the elegant consumers who are emptied out of their cultural and historical heritage and live under the spell of the fetishism of commodity market.

Therefore, considering the popular reception of the public, it is possible to assume that one of the prime social anxieties of the masses was related to the effect of fast modernisation and the new culture that it disseminated. The urbanite mafia in the guise of professional international thieves were received as a threat to the authentic community that the village represented. The immense appeal of this film to the Iranian public points at the notable function of comedy which was acknowledged by Brecht too. He, as a comic author, believed that 'the comic is a way of describing reality, of interrogating it and defining its social purpose'. The constructed worlds of his plays 'aim to make reality visible after it has become functional, common sense, second-nature'.[424] Regarding the production and reception of *Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug* it is possible observe that the genre of comedy appropriately rendered the reality palpable and successfully created a distance required for critical observation of the so-called 'normal reality'.

The next film *Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily* (1971) concentrates on what Ale-Ahmad called the war of contradictions. The conflict between the forces and relations of production was explored in the stagnation that people confront in their daily lives both in the rural and the urban. The arrival of a motorcycle in the village allows Samad and Leila to run away from the village where the class conflict and the absence of social mobility block their marriage. Seeking liberation from the rural limitations, aiming to reach the happiness that the urbanite who are called as az-ma-behtaroon [those better than us] live out, they ride that bike towards the city where they encounter Sami and Lily acted by the same actor and actress (Parviz Sayyad and Shahnaz Tehrani). They belong to the bourgeois and westernized

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[423] Jalal Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis; A plague from the West*, Mizan Press, 1983, p. 84-5.
[424] Silberman, 'Bertolt Brecht, Politics, and Comedy', Op cit., p. 183-4.

families in the city and are fed up by the arbitrary and formal cultural and social limitations of their class. They fantasize about the natural freedom they assume that it is available in the rural, which one could sense in their demands the echo of the American Hippie practices. They are also running away from the city riding on an expensive motorcycle. In a petrol station in the middle of the road they exchange their clothes and decide to disguise in each other's characters and continue riding in opposite direction. The rest of the film demonstrates their disillusionment both in the rural and urban, to the point where both have to return to where they escaped from in the first place.

Naficy indicates that the theme of mistaken identity was widespread as approximately fifty movies regarding this subject were produced from the early 1950s to the late 1970s.[425] Unlike *Samad and Leila, Sami and Lily* though, they were intricate melodramatic family sagas which confirmed the pivotal importance of the nuclear family.

> Chance separated characters and fortuitously reunite them, allowing filmmakers to get out of narrative tight spots created by improvisation and energizing films in need of it. Fateful losses and the disappearance of family members were often handled as profoundly sad and tragic, while their equally fated recovery and reunions were celebrated, as in folk narratives, in numerous tear-jerker films. [426]

In contrast, *Samad and Leila, Sami and Lily*, demonstrates no interest in heroic family saga celebrating the nuclear family. Rather, the mistaken identity is voluntarily carried out by choice and the break from family is represented as hopeful and promising liberation from the impositions of class boundaries. If in the first cinema productions 'mistaken identity allowed to transgress social norms by imagining forbidden relationships such as incest'[427], in this film, however, it was deployed to undermine the social boundaries that the rights of private property protect and recommends the viewer to ponder about the consequences of individual social mobility. At one level the film exposes the dead-end of the social life both in the urban and the rural. It registers that acquiring wealth has only resulted in the proliferation of the commodities and has diversified consumption as in the urban household Samad and Leila literally play around with shiny goodies like children. Unfamiliar and unaccustomed with new imported rules such as traffic regulations or modern gestures practiced in the dancing club and restaurant, they invariably create trouble and are referred to the police station. While Sami and Lily, are aggressively

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[425] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p. 237.
[426] Naficy, A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978, ibid, p. 237.
[427] Naficy, A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978, ibid, p. 238.

confronted with the traditional practices, religious rules and limitations remnant of feudal social relations in the rural, they are monitored and chased by the rural authority figures and police officers in the village. Therefore, the film seems to argue that individual liberation from class boundaries are fruitless and absurd, since, in the absence of collective effort to transform the class structure of the whole society, lucky individuals are accidentally freed from one traditional social cage only to voluntarily enter into another modern one.

On another level, *Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily* unapologetically points at the drastic conditions of life and labour in the rural and exposes the brutal divide between the seemingly developing and underdeveloped spheres in the countryside. The sharp contrast between the fairytale that the bourgeoisie live out and the impoverished environment of the working people is unfolded through the leaping editing style and jump cuts which suddenly confronts the viewer with the sharp contradictions of both spaces. For instance, while Leila in the urban wanders around without any responsibility and only consumes new trends, Lily is forced to cook, wash and bring water from the river all day. Finally, starved and imprisoned by her father, she is taken to an arranged marriage ceremony.

Moreover, this film is one of the rare productions of the 1970s which demonstrates the process of rural labour and its consequent social alienation. For instance, Sami who is now acting out the life of Samad, the landless and unemployed youth, has to collect brambles all day in order to sell it to the baker as his only possible source of income. The camera follows him as he firstly enthusiastically devotes himself to this seemingly organic job, freed from the limitation and repetitiveness of modern division of labour, yet soon registers how he is physically and mentally worn out by the brutal condition to the extent that he forgets about himself and Lily's first motivation for escape which was to practice free love, liberated from class boundaries, in the company of nature. Sami becomes socially alienated in his new position to the extent that he ignores Lily and does not attempt to rescue her from the arranged marriage. Ultimately, the village's police officer helps them to return to their life in the urban and forcibly brings back frightened Samad and Leila. The film closes with a heart-breaking scene whereby Sami and Lily who have quite Hippie practices, on their way to honeymoon stop by Samad's village and see him in a spot where the first scene of the film took place. Samad is found collecting brambles near the main road (Figure 1), he has returned to the usual social and economic dead-end that he and Leila attempted to escape. The urbanites happily wave goodbye to him and exit the narrative forever (Figure 2), while Samad wonders why he and Leila are stuck with their misfortune.

In this way, the film reveals how modernization, industrialization and development are hollow, empty and delusive promises for most of the population. While it sheds light on the fact that individual attempts to transgress class boundaries are absurd, it implicitly recommends the viewer to ponder on what has been ignored throughout the film; that is to consider collective efforts to radically transform the class structure of the society.

As it is discussed above, *Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily* works through contradictions in the form of comedy. This way of exposing the paradoxes of capitalist social order also had appeal with radical artists and writers such as Bertolt Brecht. As he became familiar with the dialectic as the theoretical core of Marxism in the seminars by the philosopher Karl Korsch, Brecht began to observe all social formations as historical instead of universal, hence they become changeable.[428] Dialectics becomes an effective instrument in his plays to recognize, examine and represent social contradictions and antagonisms, therefore, the enlightened viewer would reflect upon transforming society.[429] Brecht sought 'to reestablish the comic as a tool for blowing open what he saw as the paralyzed consciousness of the masses'.[430] Likewise *Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily* seems to construct the same structure of paradoxical situations as a method to demonstrate the incongruities of capitalist social system. The powerful and effective tool of comedy in this film draws the attention of the viewer to the possibility of changing the social contradictions while it points at its pleasures.

In the fourth film[431] Samad *Goes to School* (1974), Parviz Sayyad returns to his favorite subject of collectivity and sets the entire film in one village and engages with the problematic of modern education as the pre-condition of modernization. It depicts an evening school for adults which includes a wide range of learners who are left behind by the fast process of industrialisation and struggle to learn what is required of a modern citizen. In chapter three of this research which considered the rural films of the 1960s, I indicated how the issue of modern Western style education became important to the extent that film characters advocated that through learning the new science they could transform their wretched lives. The central character Forouzan in *The Shore of Awaiting* blames the misfortune of the fishing village on being uneducated in the modern way. In those hopeful films the process of progression in the village included collectively building a school whereby women and men from various generations

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[428] Silberman, 'Bertolt Brecht, Politics and Comedy', Op cit., p. 174.
[429] Silberman, 'Bertolt Brecht, Politics and Comedy', ibid., p. 175.
[430] Silberman, Bertolt Brecht, Politics and Comedy', ibid, p. 172.
[431] In 1973 another film Samad and the Foulad-Zere monster was released which was the third in the series yet as it was entirely set in the urban and deals with the urban issues I do not discuss it here.

and backgrounds would receive free education. In *Sparrows Always Return Home* the central character, a middle sized landowner, devotes all his variable and fixed capital to acquire enough money for his son's medical education. In this way, we could assume that the hegemonic current of that decade represented modern education, new knowledge, science and technology of the developed world as a neutral phenomenon that could be achieved and consumed without problematic consequences. However, during the 1970s this positive view towards modern education changed and films registered the growth of skeptical perspectives which highlighted the demands for alternative forms of education. Traditionally, Maktab-khane was a place whereby reading and writing was taught through teaching Quran and prime classic literary texts which also advocated certain social and cultural values. In addition, traditional entertainments such as Naqali in coffee houses transferred collective wisdom through old epical and romance stories. By the arrival of modern education these practices became abandoned as they seemed not to be related to the modern social relations.[432]

Thus, it is not surprising to notice that, unlike the 1960s films, the productions of 1970s do not depict the rural population as gathering in coffee houses to listen and watch Naqali performances. Rather, the performers appear in films such as *Samad Goes to School* as the marginal characters of adult evening classes who struggle to learn the modern way of life. The film demonstrates a sort of revolt as the learners comically resist to adapt to the requirements of the new school. In a series of repetitive actions, they disturb every single educational regulation, for instance, the assistant superintendent of the school attempts to teach them the manners of entering a class yet, instead of conforming to his advice, they take every opportunity to disobey and disperse. Their arrival resembles a sort of collective attack and they rather prefer to escape from the windows (Figure 3).

Moreover, in a series of hilarious dialogues they challenge the competency of the teachers (Figure 4). Sayyad in an interview admits that the entertaining dimension of the film is rooted in its illogicality and situation comedy.[433] And as I will discuss later, the playful treatment of language seems to be rooted in the characteristics of traditional performances such as Ruo-Hozi whereby similar words, expressions, images and situations are intentionally mixed up and replaced in order to create hilarious conditions

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[432] It is notable to mention that Sayyad himself was interested in traditional performances such as Naqali and Rou-Hozi. In an interview he mentions that traditional practices required the special support of the state. As an independent supporter, he provided the performers with modern and urban spaces also attempted to integrate them in the theatre productions he conducted in Tehran and other cities (*Film va Honar*, no 446, August 1973, p. 44.

[433] *Film va Honar*, no 441, July 1973.

while it ridicules the authority figure. In this way through playing around with language and mocking formal regulations the learners exercise a discursive version of collective disobedience. Meanwhile, a powerful and professional mafia of drug smugglers attempts to misuse the chaotic condition of the school to reacquire the drug that the police confiscated. They take the students as hostages and demand that the police officers of the village return the drug. When armed criminals become involved, the village mobilizes again. Other members of the community such as Leila, Samad's mother, chief of the village and authority figures plot to rescue the hostages. Finally, without any facilities and through their collective action and experiences of rebellious exercises, the villagers defeat the modern-day hostage takers and regain their freedom.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of these films is the way women are depicted. Unlike the women in urban settings who invariably appear as mere consumer subject of the latest commodities and trends of the global market, in the rural women are depicted as contributing both to the process of production and social life. Perhaps this is one of the qualities of the comedy series that still connects it to the rural films of 1960s whereby women are demonstrated as participating in farming, helping out in the construction of schools and medical centers, taking important roles in familial and community decision making. In the village comedy series, rare scenes of women's labour are registered. For instance, in *Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily* there are several scenes which demonstrate how Samad's mother bakes bread at home (Figure 5). It is important to mention that at the time the wave of art house cinema supported by the cultural policies of the royal court, attempted to promote traditional rural works as cultural heritage and folklore. Performances were conducted in Festivals which celebrated the hard and dangerous works in the rural as beautiful rituals of ideal rural community. However, the film demystifies this imaginary aura and directly demonstrates how exhausting and difficult it is. Moreover, as the plots of the films develops into hilarious conflicts with various outsiders, the narrative never loses the sight of working women in the village. Along with the main story, the viewer can see women cooking, washing and engaged in various hard reproductive activities (by reproduction I refer to Marxist term of reproduction). Nevertheless, they are invariably present at the centre of the dramatic knots. They propose smart and clever ideas, they participate in the operations against the thieves and drug mafia and are represented as central members in the life of the community.

However, their influencial and active presence is what the viewer cannot find in the urban films of the period, perhaps because the nature of rural life is woven with the contribution of women. In a number of films, Samad is found in the city and the limited life of women as Jalal Ale-Ahmad pointed out could

be observed there. In *Occidentosis*, he stated that despite the unveiling and opening modern education to women, the urban life had not been appropriated for their meaningful personal and social contribution to the community and it was in sharp contrast to the role of women in the rural who for centuries were deeply involved in all aspects of life alongside men. However, in the urban, women were not given equal rights and opportunities, thus in the new modern life they had become passive consumers of imported commodities. Ale-Ahmad believed that

> unless the work of men and women and their services to society are equally valued and
> paid, unless, alongside men, women assume responsibility for administrating a sector
> of society (other than home, a private function shared between men and women),
> unless material and spiritual equality is established between the sexes, we will have
> succeed only in swelling an army of consumers of powder and lipstick – the products of
> the West' industries - another form of occidentosis.[434]

In the urban scenes of Samad's films, women could be seen in latest fashionable clothes who appear in parties and restaurants or as singers and actresses in cabarets and films. They do not seem to have social responsibilities and unlike village women, they do not contribute to the development of the main story. This could be interpreted as the critical stance of the film regarding the limitation of social life in the urban for women at the time.

Samad Goes to School could be counted as a comedy of manners. In that the behavior and social attitudes of the middle class is problematized and ridiculed.[435] The members of the well-dressed drug gang remind one of Ale-Ahmad's description of the occidentotics who become the consumers of the latest urban trends under the influence of cinema's stardom culture. They behave in a completely estranged and alienated manner and represent no resemblance to someone who lives and works in the Iranian society of the time, rather, they seem to assimilate to an imaginary global subject devoid of collective history and background. Moreover, the school staff as a social type registers a complete shift from the heroic teachers that 1960s films offered. In films such as *Shores of Awaiting* the teacher is

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[434] Ale-Ahmad, *Occidentosis; A plague from the West*, Op cit., p. 70.
[435] A kind of comedy that mocks the arbitrary and superficial bahaviour of a social group often middle class and wealthy, See Ansari, Namaesh Rou-Hozi: Zamine, Zamane va Anasor Xande Saz [Rou-Hozi Theatre: Cobtext, Setting and Elements], Soureh Mehr, 2008, p. 35.

represented as a moral and conscious person who devotes himself to the progression of the village, a modern day prophet who freely chooses to support villagers against injustice, feudalism and the ignorant state. In contrast, in *Samad Goes to School* the assistant superintendent and the teacher are chic urbanites who dislike the rural school and adult learners immensely and express no solidarity or sympathy with them. The principal of the school has selected a rural place in order to escape the air and sound pollution of the city and seeks an imaginary tranquility and calm that the urban inhabitants ascribe to village life.

In addition, most of the village series film (from the eight movies produced before 1979 revolution) could be categorized as Situation Comedy whereby the humor is created through putting characters in ludicrous conditions. It is a genre shaped around every day subject matters and similar to TV serials it is based on the repetition of incidents. Yet, it is also consisted of singular narratives through which the ordinary process is threatened or discontinued, then a movement to the first stable position takes place. In Situation Comedy the end of an episode is usually a return to the primary situation, and the aim of this genre is familiarization to that singular narrative in order to protect the primary condition. Through the various breakdowns of the initial condition a new definition of the primary condition is introduced which protects it from the vicissitudes. In other words, transformation of the situation is not allowed and the story is reliant on the renewed stability. It moves in a circular form which encourages the viewer to forget the multiple events of the previous episodes. Therefore, the Situation Comedy rests on a play between endurance and oblivion.[436]

The characteristics of the genre could be identified in the village comedy films whereby no matter how profoundly and alarmingly the usual condition is shaken by singular events, the narrative and characters return to the point they started without much transformation. Perhaps, that is one of the reasons that despite the engagement of these films with threatening and serious social problematic, it cannot be regarded as radical, revolutionary and according to Raymond Williams' terminology, 'oppositional' cultural practices. In chapter two of this research, I extensively discussed Williams's approach to the analysis of cultural artifact and its relation with hegemonic processes. In order to discuss the cinematic representation of hegemonic spaces, it would be relevant to first discuss the comedy village series according to the types of social processes that Williams's introduced. He argued that the operation of hegemonic struggles attempts to incorporate all the contesting social elements. Nonetheless, there are

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[436] Ansari, *Rou-Hozi Theatre: Context, Setting and elements*, ibid, p. 36-7.

always resistive practices which are either residual of the past or emergent contemporary exercises. For instance, Williams points at the idea of rural community. On the one hand, it reflects an alternative and oppositional idea to urban industrial capitalism. On the other hand, it is incorporated significantly into the social meanings of capitalism as a sort of fantasy, it is idealized as an exotic place suitable to escape from the urban. The dominant culture ascribes to the rural a sort of leisurely function for the urban.[437]

However, it is difficult to categorize the above discussed films as advocating the rural community as a residual practice since the films seldom demonstrate the signs that connects the community to an ideal past. On the one hand, some of the villagers such as Samad, Nane-Aqa (his mother), Leila and Samad's friends aspire to maintain the mindset and social values of the rural community such as honesty, simplicity, originality, true love for the community, etc. On the other hand, the village is depicted as embedded in the post-feudal social relations, established after the land reform, whereby no traditional large land owner is in sight. The community is not illustrated as relying on agriculture, rather it achieves its unity through a resistance towards westernization and capitalism. Therefore, it could be discussed that the community attempts to practice a new social relation liberated both from feudalism and globalized capitalism. Although, it is arguable how successful the community is in that attempt, nonetheless, it could be seen as an emerging practice rather than a residual one.

It is notable that the films could not be simply observed as an emergent practice either. Williams believes that

> New meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created. But it is exceptionally difficult to distinguish between those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture (and in this sense 'species-specific') and those which are substantially alternate or oppositional to it: emergent in the strict sense, rather than merely really novel.[438]

For instance, he discusses the emergent social process in relation to the formation of a new class and highlights that although a new class as a class is subordinated yet it is surely not complete. For, the new practice is not, of course, an isolated process. 'To the degree that it emerges and especially to the degree that it is oppositional rather than alternative, the process of attempted incorporation begins'.[439]

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[437] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 122.
[438] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 123.
[439] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 124.

Williams provides the example of the emergence of nineteenth century working class in Britain and their cultural formations. He identifies an effective process of incorporating the radical popular classes. With this new class emerged new writing practices yet they confronted the problems of incorporating the dominant culture through the literary forms that they applied.[440]

Regarding the village comedy series, it is possible to assume that the mentioned village demonstrates a break from the feudal mode of production and its consequent social relations, yet socially, culturally, politically and above all economically, it does not demonstrate the new characteristics, world-views and values of an emerging class. The viewer witnesses the appearance of a community which resists the process of development yet does not refer to residual practices. For instance, any reference to religious practices or superstitions is absent. The film demonstrates its concerns for the marginal people such as traditional entertainers yet does not advocate the return of traditional ritual in its old forms. Nowhere at any level of interpretation, whether narrative or pictorial, does it express any nostalgia for the ideal rural community of the past.

Rather, it is enthusiastic and lighthearted, it signifies a sense of energy which resists consumption by global capitalism, consumerism and industrialisation. It could be distinguished with a tendency for originality that the imposed process of modernism confiscates from the subjects and attempts to regulate them even violently. Therefore, regarding the incorporating process of hegemony, it seems that it would be more appropriate to consider the comedy film series as what Williams termed as 'pre-emergent' practices. It is a type of social process that is not entirely articulated and is in the process of development. This characteristic is the most evident in the fourth film *Samad Goes to School*. In that it is possible to observe that people unapologetically quit the traditional education yet do not confirm to the Western modern one. Through their hilarious disobedience, they demonstrate a desire for an alternative form of order in the community, yet it is not clear what this alternative is like. Mocking the new system is a way to disturb the novel practices of the dominant hegemony yet, it remains unarticulated and incomplete.

Moreover, it is notable that the village comedy series cannot be viewed as an 'oppositional' social practice, rather, it remains an 'alternative' one according to Williams's terminology. In this category people individually or in a small group attempt to conduct their lives distinctively and do not engage with wider social arrangements. In these films the small community of the village establishes the edge of

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[440] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, ibid, p. 125.

their social horizon and people do not attempt to develop their objections and disobediences into a collective demand which would lead to the radical transformation of the entire society. Therefore, it is possible to propose that despite its novelties, uniqueness and contemporariness the village films could be seen as representing the alternative practices of a pre-emerging class; a new social group aroused from the fragmentation of the feudal village that was supposed to form the work force required for the establishment of capitalist wage-labour system. Yet, they did not aspire to fulfill this destiny and occupy the planned place in the society. Accordingly, they did not conform to the dominant culture, yet this new social group did not resort to residual practices to demonstrate its dissatisfaction with modern development and changing social order towards capitalism. It is a social group which is left behind by the transformation of the changing mode of production and attempt to seize its control and establish distinct social relations other than the dominant culture. These characteristics will become evident when I directly engage with the representation of spaces later in the last section of this chapter. However, it seems that it would be relevant if I firstly explore the condition of the production of the village comedy films series which contributed to the form of its social process and assess the relation between individual and collective mode of work in order to analyze the conditions of composition. As Williams suggested the illumination of factors numerated above assists the researchers observe the artwork as a practice particularly in relation to hegemonic struggles.

The Condition of Production

The village community that appears in the comedy series was not formed suddenly and without a background. As Parviz Sayyad has pointed out in numerous interviews, the characters of the community gradually evolved from a popular TV serial named *Sarkar Ostovar* (*Mr. Sergeant*) aired from 1969 until 1971. In that Sayyad and Parviz Kardan co-wrote and co-directed each episode. Sayyad has confirmed that Samad and the related people were first marginal characters yet due to the popular demand and the many telephone requests that the TV audience made, they came to the fore and were allocated important roles in the development of the story. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that the TV serial underwent transformation while it was in the process of making according to the taste and desire of the public. In the beginning the plot was primarily based on the comic representation of the social tensions that the sergeant dealt with in the village. Thus, it is possible to assume that the TV serial engaged with the modern form of centralized government of Pahlavi regime and its difficulties to establish a new hegemonic order based on coercion and consent. Following the Land reform, fragmentation of feudal

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order, establishment of wage-labour system, growth of consumer capitalism, mass migration to the urban city and the consequences of imbalanced development, numerous social and cultural tensions emerged. *Mr. Sergeant* seems like an attempt to represent and justify why and how the Pahlavi regime confronted the condition through police, security and military institutes. It is notable that the production of the TV serial was carried out by the newly established *National Institute of Radio and Television*, NIRT, and it is arguable that the institutional structure and aims of NIRT left its stamp on the early characteristics of the program. It would be relevant to discuss the operative structure and the aims of NIRT. As Naficy discussed, NIRT was formed in line with Shah's cultural policy to transform and modernize the media in the service of propaganda for the White Revolution and further national integration. In 1966 a monolithic nationwide broadcast network was established and Reza Ghotbi, a European-trained engineer and cousin of Farah the Queen was appointed as its chief manager.[441]

According to Naficy, NIRT adapted both the French television standard and the framework of American commercial TV channel, the latter influenced the production of programs. The process usually included a small group of western-trained professionals who followed the American and European conventions in producing programs and subsequently naturalized them.[442] He acknowledges that 'the establishment of television in Iran, which was patterned after American commercial television, represents another form of technological and cultural transfer, which disseminated to a wider public American culture and programming and the official style of documentary'.[443]

Therefore, it is possible to infer why the village comedy films were not supportive of residual hegemonic practices, perhaps because from the start the story and setting was developed in an institution that was in harmony with the principles of White Revolution and did not celebrate nostalgia for the feudal economic and social system. Moreover, it is possible that the American and European programs influenced the formation of Iranian situation comedy as I discussed above, in a way that the conventions of the genre was naturalized and adapted to the Iranian production.

However, the village comedy series as succession of popular films were not produced by NIRT. It was the growing private sector of cinema industry which supported the production of popular movies. The first comedy *Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug* was produced by the young, risk-taking and innovative producer Ali Abbasi who I appended my 2013 interview with him in the appendix section of this thesis.

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[441] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978, Op cit*., p. 66.

[442] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978,* ibid, p. 68-9.

[443] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 65.

In that, he mentions that for the first time he approached Parviz Sayyad and recommended him to make a film based on the characters of the village. As I discussed in that interview-based article, Abbasi was interested to produce sophisticated films which demonstrate the Iranian identity and culture while its sale would be reasonably profitable. Yet, in order to produce that kind of film he needed a starting capital that he lacked at the time. Thus, through producing popular films and their success in the box office, he collected the starting capital required for sophisticated productions. Abbasi did not seem to be content and proud of the production of *Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug*, yet he highlighted that the production of sophisticated films required a type of budget that the successful sale of Samad's film ensured. As I read through the memories and interviews of the people in the industry, this mentality seemed to be predominant at the time. Sayyad himself mentioned that he made the village comedy film series in order to provide the starting capital for the making of art house production such as *Still Life*. Therefore, it seems relevant to assume that the production of the comedy series was at the start driven with the intention of investment in order to accumulate capital.

Moreover, it is notable that in 1971 cinema magazines reported that Rex Cinema Company signed a contract with Sayyad which obliged him to produce a film based on Samad's stories every year. According to the terms of contract, Sayyad could not use the character of Samad in other cinematic productions.[444] In this way, soon after its first success, the character became a private commodity sold to the famous, production and distribution Rex Company which owned several cinemas across Iran. Having illuminated this background, it is possible to observe why the filmic text invariably anchored around alternative hegemonic practices and did not move beyond this signifying structure to become an oppositional one. The boundaries of private production also affected the formation of the story as it never went beyond the horizon of a small community to the field of national collectivity.

Modernizing the Traditional Performance

Although, the popular films discussed above were significantly influenced by the contemporary and globalized hegemonic practices, it is notable that, even within the domain of the institutional and private practices, the village comedy series seemed to be capable of applying and transforming the trends of traditional performative arts. The roots of popular Iranian cinema in the traditional

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[444] *Film va Honar*, no 351, October 1971.

performative arts such as Rou-hozi and Naqali often remains undiscussed. Naficy in his groundbreaking research which probes the background of popular genres of Film Farsi does not indicate this heritage. Rather, he concentrates on Persian classical literature, oral storytelling, popular epics and romances and demonstrates how the new Iranian melodrama is affected in form and content by this heritage. He states that 'the romances used many formulaic devices: phrases, correspondence, dreams, divine intervention, battle, love, and stereotyped characters. And almost all of these were incorporated into genre movies'.[445] He even goes on to briefly discuss the influence of Iranian miniature painting on Film Farsi:

> Like art music, abstract geometric tiles, carpet designs, oral poetry, and now FF movies, Persian miniatures are formed through the repetition and slight variation of limited but recognizable number of motifs, optemes, forming a dense visual repertoire. Those optemes are coded according to certain rules of representation. One of these encourages the creation of character types rather than distinct individuals. Unlike the modernist visual arts and cinema, then, miniature paintings and FF movies tend to *present* a crowded social world instead of *representing* individual subjectivity – either of the characters within the diegesis or of the artist and viewer outside the text.[446]

It is notable that typifying characters and repetition of themes is also rooted in the characteristics of traditional popular plays which was formed gradually since Safavid[447] era in Iran. I would like to draw attention particularly to a type of popular play called Rou-Hozi which the village comedy seems to be remarkably influenced by i. A brief introduction of this type of play would illuminate this comparison.

Rou-Hozi is a type of delightful, lighthearted comedy based on language, movement and music. Since two hundred and fifty years ago, it has gradually evolved and undergone various forms to reach its present status.[448] Traditionally the structure of this type of play is formed by the struggle between Haji or Sultan (the king) against the Black and their related people. As Ansari discusses Haji was a representative of the traditional merchant (Bazari) who was known as greedy, profit-driven, cunning and

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[445] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p. 225.
[446] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 228.
[447] Safavid dynasty was a royal family which ruled the old Persia from1501 until 1722. They consolidated the various Iranian ethnicities to form the first major empire after the demise of ancient Iran in the seventh century. They also announced Shia religion as the formal religion of their empire and spread it. Their era is considered to be the start of nation-state building efforts in Iran.
[448] Farideh Razi, *Naqali va Rou-Hozi [Naqali and Rou-Hozi]*, Markaz, 2008, p. 119.

exploiter. The Black represented the masses who was sometimes the servant of Haji or King, or the clown of the court, in any condition the Black was the defender of truth and justice.[449] Alongside these two characters, there were also other important roles such as Haji's wife and daughter, his rival or ally whO was sometimes interested to marry Haji's daughter. As it included female characters, it also engaged with women's social issues such as marriage, love, household problems of bourgeoisie, etc.[450] The characterization in Rou-Hozi is fixed yet the content of the play is never the same and it is based on improvisation. There was no ornamentation on the stage which traditionally used to be carried out on the large pieces of circular wood located on the Hoz.[451] The main aim of the performance was entertainment particularly during collective celebrations and feasts.[452] The only make up was worn by the black who darkened the face and hands. The black stood outside the widely accepted framework of culture. He was regarded as both clever and silly, witty and tragic, who sharply criticized his master[453] yet does not rebel. Haji was a profit-driven master who committed all sorts of exploitation including usury. Haji's wife was an unhappy woman always in search of more money, wary of being divorced or marginalized through Haji's second marriage. She disliked black and was always ready to punish the black.[454] In Rou-Hozi the condition of the youth was a significant issue and it included the young daughter of Haji who was mostly represented as a good figured person and kind, struggling with a possible undesirable marriage to a wealthy person. The black acted as a messenger between her and her young and poor lover and disrupted the proposal of the wealthy people.[455] What propelled the play forward was the struggle between the two main sides which formed the binary of exploiter and exploited, the wealthy versus the poor. Through various linguistic and performative devices a sort of disobedience was practiced which endowed autonomy to the exploited.

The social and historical roots of this type of comedy have not been investigated properly, particularly, a historical materialist reading of the emergence and evolvement of characters are not available in Farsi yet. However, according to the limited recourses that I referred to, this type of play seems to be

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[449] Ansari, *Namayesh Rou-Hozi: Zamine, Zamane va Anasor Xande Saz [Rou-Hozi Theatre: Context, Setting and Elements]*, Op cit., p. 51.
[450] Razi, *Naqali va Rou-Hozi [Naqali and Rou-Hozi]*, Op cit., p. 122.
[451] It is a kind of small pool in the Traditional Iranian houses used for everyday activities such as washing dishes and cloths.
[452] Razi, *Naqali va Rou-Hozi [Naqali and Rou-Hozi]*, Op cit., p. 119.
[453] Ansari, *Namayesh Rou-Hozi: Zamine, Zamane va Anasor Xande Saz [Rou-Hozi Theatre: Context, Setting and Elements]*, Op cit., p. 62.
[454] Razi, *Naqali va Rou-Hozi [Naqali and Rou-Hozi],* Op cit., p. 129.
[455] Razi, *Naqali va Rou-Hozi [Naqali and Rou-Hozi]*, Op cit., p. 129.

historically rooted in a condition whereby in the eighteenth century the slave trade of African people brought the new social group of servants into the household of wealthy urban merchants in Iran. The African- decedent servants, were deprived of all social, political and economic rights, also did not know Farsi well and the historical issue of language barrier formed one of the characteristics of their social type. In the artistic representation of the black, the language barrier is treated playfully in the service of mocking the powerful and the wealthy, to disobey the exploiter and practice a sort of symbolic autonomy. According to Ansari, Rou-Hozi reached the height of its popularity by the late nineteenth century and after the 1953 British-American coup declined. Due to the strict surveillance of the coup government, the social and political criticism of the play was affected and neutralized by massive censorship. The expansion of cabarets and the increase of song and dance entertainment which was the prime cultural policy of the coup government, in order to avert the attention of people from political concerns, left no place for Rou-Hozi.[456]

What I would like to draw attention to is that Rou-Hozi seemed to be revived, transformed and modernized in the village comedy film series. At the level of the diegesis, a return of the typical power struggle between the exploiter and the exploited could be observed; this tension is however, transformed and appears in a new form. In a contemporary condition whereby the power structure of the society has become complicated and modernized into a centralized state, the agency of exploitation seems to disseminate into various statist and non-statist forces. While criticism of the Shah and Pahlavi regime was forbidden particularly in an institute such as NIRT and later in the private sector, the ordinary people in the village comedy series were depicted as in struggle with various exploiting forces. The invariable presence of a professional criminal gang in all the village comedy films could point at one side of the social and economic struggle. Also, the constant existence of the police and the finalization of all the narrative struggles through the often forceful intervention of the police, could indicate another major power structure. Therefore, it is possible to assume that the simplified struggle between the haji and the black found new expressions while the figure of the exploited and impoverished proliferate in the various characters within the village and produced characters such as Samad's mother and friends.

In addition, what is more important is the deployment of figurative devices to convey multiple meanings and to generate humor and laughter. As Ansari discusses various rhetorical figures masterfully carried out by the black artist form one of the prime factors of entertainment in Rou-Hozi. In that, figures of

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[456] Ansari, *Namayesh Rou-Hozi: Zamine, Zamane va Anasor Xande Saz [Rou-Hozi Theatre: Context, Setting and Elements]*, Op cit., p. 60.

speech such as ambiguity, chiasmus, antimetabole, repetition, allusion, pun, play of words, homonym, lipogram, figures of sound and words, hyperbole, alliteration, assonance are used significantly.[457] These literary devices are deployed to mock the powerful, its dominant culture and logic. As it is entertaining it also provides the space for disobedience and autonomy. The linguistic devices could be observed as forming a sort of structure of feelings which is modernized in the village comedy series. The members of community, particularly Samad, resort to these devices frequently and practice disobedience and mock the new order promoted by the modern state, police officers , educational system and the criminal gangs. The height of deployment of Rou-Hozi formulaic devices is practiced in *Samad Goes to School* whereby the storyline is fairly simple and at the first sight seems familiar and even repetitive. What makes it remarkably distinct is the use of traditional Rou-Hozi style figures of speech which made it entertaining as it also developed new forms of alternative hegemonic practices which attracted the public and made it immensely successful in the box office.[458] Perhaps, this is the point which the intellectual and politically motivated filmmakers of the time missed and left them puzzled about its significant popularity. As I recounted their dismissal at the start of this chapter, they wondered why the audience were not eager to observe the pains and suffering of their lives on the silver screen and why they resorted to fantasies far from their actual life.

These crucial questions could perhaps be responded to through the ideas of Ernest Bloch who discussed the utopian dimension of popular culture. Bloch developed a method of cultural criticism which expands conventional Marxian approaches to ideology and provides one of the richest treasure houses of ideology critique in the Marxian tradition. His theory highlights the role of hope in the construction of artistic artifact as well as everyday life and he regards hope as the emancipatory aspect of popular phenomenon. Kellner discusses that Bloch's theory is more useful than other well-known models of cultural theory and ideology critique which conflate bourgeois culture and ideology. The analytic models that could be observed in the words of Lenin and Marxists-Leninists such as Althusser and to some extent in the words of the Frankfurt School, regards ideology as a means and medium of mystification, error and domination which is the opposite of sincere critical theory. The adherence to this model aims solely to illuminate the errors and mystifications and the influence of the ruling class in the formation of

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[457]Ansari, Namayesh Rou-Hozi: Zamine, Zamane va Anasor Xande Saz [Rou-Hozi Theatre: Context, Setting and Elements], p64-66-68-69-70.
[458] For instance, Samad keeps repeating his expressions often in irrelevant circumstance. This could be observed as the deployment of repetition as a figurative of speech.

the ideological product.[459] However, for Bloch ideology is two-sided. On one side, it is imbued with mistaken beliefs and practices, it is an instrument of manipulation, while on the other side it accumulates utopian residue or surplus that could be deployed for the advance of progressive politics.[460] The purely negative and dismissive approach to ideology in Bloch's perspective is called a half-enlightenment view, it 'exposes and denounces the textual mechanism of mystification and attempts to replace ideology with the truth … an attitude i.e. rationalistic dismissal of all mystifications, superstitions, legends and so on that does not measure up to its scientific criteria'.[461] Instead Bloch proposes a sort of genuine enlightenment whereby the ideological phenomenon is assessed critically yet it is treated seriously and aims to provide a close reading in order to discern emancipatory potentials.[462] This type of analysis identifies an anticipatory dimension in the ideological product that generates utopian images of an ideal world.

> Critique of ideology, Bloch argues, is not merely unmasking, or demystification but also uncovering and discovery: revelations of unrealized dreams, lost possibilities, abortive hopes- that can be resurrected and enlivened and realized in our current situation. Bloch's cultural criticism thus accentuates the positive, the utopian-emancipatory possibilities, the testimony to hopes for a better world.[463]

In this chapter on village comedy films, I attempted to practice this type of approach in order to shed light on the anticipatory and utopian dimension of these popular First cinema productions. It is possible to argue that the series demonstrates the utopian social community that was disappearing as a result of the expansion of capitalist social relations. It offers an image of people who despite their incompetency in the modern world attempt to stay together, fight for their collective interests against the expropriation and exploitation of criminal gangs as well as the modern state. It depicts a group of people who care not just for their individual interests yet for the well-being of their community and demand prosperity, happiness and satisfaction for all members.

In addition, what sharply distinguishes the series from other popular films is its anticipatory aspect regarding the desire of the public to participate in the management of its community. Each film

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[459] Douglas Kellner, 'Ernst Bloch, Utopia and Ideology Critique', available at <www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/kellner.html> last access 30/5/2017, p. 2.
[460] Kellner, 'Ernest Bloch, Utopia and Ideology Critique', ibid, p. 3.
[461] Kellner, 'Ernest Bloch, Utopia and Ideology Critique', ibid, p. 3.
[462] Kellner, 'Ernest Bloch, Utopia and Ideology Critique', ibid, p. 3.
[463] Kellner, 'Ernest Bloch, Utopia and Ideology Critique', ibid, p. 4.

demonstrates the members of the community who leave their individual affairs aside in order to take part in an action to govern their collective life. They do not retire their collective responsibility to the police or political institutes. Instead, they are in favour of direct action and acceptance of a share of responsibility. This tendency could be interpreted as the anticipation of revolutionary politics whereby the representative system of liberal democracy is treated as undesirable and people are demonstrated as eager to participate in the political action against exploitation, rather than leaving it to the civil society, political parties and the government. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the immense popularity of the film partly relies in the revolutionary hopes that it envisages, and the utopian depiction of unity and community that surpasses the social alienation caused by the development of capitalist social relations.

In the last part of this section, it is also relevant to indicate briefly the impact of the intellectual discourse on the production and reception of popular films. In chapter four I discussed extensively the ideals of Ale-Ahmad about Occidentosis and Shariati's theory of the civilization-making task of the intellectuals. Throughout this chapter, I demonstrated that this discourse, particularly Ale-Ahmad's perspective about the cultural changes, significantly affected the films at the level of narrative and characterization. For instance, I pointed out how the popular cinema produced exemplars of occidentotic characters. Particularly, they could be found among the criminal gangs who aim to exploit the people and expropriate their collective wealth.

In addition, I pointed out a number of instances that demonstrate the war of contradictions that Ale-Ahmad indicates. In popular cinema of the village comedy series the conflict between the forces and relations of production discloses itself in the struggle between the urban and rural life, the impossibility of social mobility, the alienation of labour in the rural, etc. Also, the social and economic contribution of rural women in contrast to excessive consumerism of urban women that Ale-Ahmad alludes too is demonstrated several times in the hard working of the women in the village. The series also highlights the negative sides of the growth of consumerism, as people become dependent on the machine that they possess, whether it is a photographic camera, a motorcycle or a car.

The question that arises here is that whether the producer and the filmmaking crew knew Ale-Ahmad's view on occidentosis and observed it as a guideline to identify the growing social problems of the Iranian society. Also, one wonders if the positive reception of the village comedy series amounts to the collective awareness about the phenomenon of Occidentosis. It is possible to assume that Parviz Sayyad

was familiar with the social criticism of counter-hegemonic intellectuals as he was a member of progressive filmmakers syndicate and participated in the production of many politically motivated films.

However, this personal involvement cannot be counted as the basis for the popularity of the critical stance of the film. In order to comprehend that condition it would be useful to refer to Gramsci's perspective about knowing of the intellectuals and the feeling of the people. He discusses that if the revolutionary struggle attempts to become a social force and creates a historical bloc in the service of the subaltern people, both intellectuals and the people have to go through a passage of connected knowing and feeling.[464] Since knowledge and emotions are often separated. In a hegemonic situation the popular element feels the truth of the condition while the intellectual is often familiar with the truth through knowing it abstractly. This separation forms an axis whereby on the one hand pedantry and philistinism grows and on the other side blind passion and sectarianism find roots.[465] In this kind of condition the intellectuals assume that the essence of intellectual activity is to remain separate and distinct from the people-nation. It means that they assume they can act as intellectuals 'without feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying them in the particular historical situation and connecting them dialectically to the laws of history and to a superior conception of the world'.[466]

Gramsci warns that it is not possible to achieve historical political transformation without this passion. The connection of feeling between the intellectual and people-nation is mandatory, otherwise this relation would be reduced to a purely bureaucratic and formal order and the intellectuals turn to a caste.[467] Gramsci proposes that the relationship between the intellectuals and people-nation 'is provided by an organic cohesion in which feeling-passion becomes understanding and then knowledge, then and only then is the relationship one of representation'.[468]

It is possible to assume that the uninterrupted production and positive reception of the village comedy series could allude to the gradual formation of such a link between the organic intellectuals and people-nation. It was a situation where the artists, play writer, actors and actresses attempted to transform their knowledge of the socio-political condition into cinematic expressions that could materialize

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[464] David Forgacs, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader; Selected Writings 1916-1935*, New York University Press, 2000, p. 350.
[465] Forgacs, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader; Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ibid, p. 349.
[466] Forgacs, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader; Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ibid, p. 349.
[467] Forgacs, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader; Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ibid, p. 350.
[468] Forgacs, The Gramsci Reader; Selected Writings 1916-1935, p350.

people's lived experiences and passions. It points at the formation of a social cohesion that provides a passage from knowing to understanding and to feeling and vice versa from feeling to understanding and to knowing. In the next section of this chapter, I will demonstrate these cinematic expression in terms of the new visual frameworks that convey the new organization of hegemonic spaces in the films discussed above.

The Visualization of Hegemonic Spaces

As I indicated briefly at the start of this chapter, one of the points that distinguishes first cinema from second cinema productions during the 1970s in Iran is their realistic approach to the depiction of spaces. While art-house and politically-motivated filmmakers tended towards surrealism, marginal conditions and multiplication of allegorical meanings, the first cinema productions concentrated on already existing spaces and used the real locations with minimum changes. This tendency lead to the creation of a sort of realism which produced familiar images of the rural for the majority of audiences. Realist spaces are even more accentuated in the village comedy series as an intention to engage with the reality of rural life could be sensed. The spaces which demonstrate the structure of the village such as alleys, roads, meadows, fields, gardens, rivers, bridges as well as the means of transport, animals, the mudbrick houses, rural kitchen, furniture, etc. are represented with minimum changes. Therefore, as figure 6-11 demonstrate, the films have a historical value as they registered the appearance of spaces which during the last fifty years have undergone massive transformation. The realistic representation in the films illuminate two main characteristics which sharply distinguished them from the rural films of 1960s in Iran.

The first is the disappearance of the organic relation of people with nature and the consequent social alienation which was caused by the changing mode of production and the establishment of capitalist hegemony. Compared to the rural films of 1960s, what is striking about this decade's production is the significant reduction of full shots which contain characters and natural features together. As I discussed in chapter three, the natural environment played a crucial role in the construction of visual frameworks in the 1960s. A close up shot of an individual was rare and the medium shots usually registered two peoples who were lovers or in conversation. Even when there was one person in the frame, the character was surrounded by the nature as if it accompanied the person. In contrast, in 1970s rural films, the full and wide shots are rare and close ups of one individual significantly increases which often allude to the loneliness and vulnerability of a character (figure 12-18).

In addition, the number of medium shots of lovers and people peacefully conversing decrease and the medium shots mostly contain people who are in conflict and arguing. It conveys hierarchical relations and highlights class struggles (Figure 19-23). There are a small number of full and wide shots of nature yet the signification has sharply transformed. If in the 1960s full shots of sky, trees and background mountains conveyed a sense of harmony between the people and the nature, in 1970s films this kind of congruity could not be felt. The natural scenes in the past impressed the viewer as demonstrating the emotions and feelings of the characters; a gloom sky, a bright morning, the supporting field of lively trees or a dried tree seemed to express the hopes and sufferings of the people. However, such expressive relation between the nature and the people is faded in the village comedy series. Nature is depicted as alienated from the hopes and pains of people. As I discussed in chapter three, in films such as *Sparrows Always Return Home*, the rural spaces seemed to be supportive of collective human labour. However, nowhere in the Samad films, the framework of the spaces imply a sense of unbounded possibilities. The visual framework of nature does not seem to reflect the mentality and emotions of the villagers. Its existence in the background appears as accidental (Figure 24-28). It is demonstrated as mute and indifferent. In the past, the misery or fulfillment of the villagers could be recognizable from the framing of natural sceneries which alluded to a link between human being and the nature. However, the natural full shots in the 1970s often serve as the accidental background of chase scenes between gangs and the villagers; it is where people are hit or get shot (Figure 29- 33).

Therefore, it is possible to assume that the alienation of human beings from nature is communicated frequently. The trace of previous harmonic relation between human and nature could not easily be found in the village comedy series. It is notable to mention that the films of 1960s represented a sort of harmonic relation of human and nature considering their labour in the nature and the process of production and reproduction. This relation was visual and palpable through the self-sustained economy in the community. For instance, agricultural works in an agricultural farm in *Sparrows Always Return Home*, or piscatorial works in a fishing community in *Shore of Awaiting* or industrial work in *Wave, Stone and Carol* and the reproduction activities of women related to production, all represented the existing forms of labour, particularly collective labour of men and women which had formed the basis of people's not-alienated relation with the nature.

However, in the 1970s films, considering the dismantlement of self-sustained economy, the growth of global consumer culture, the establishment of the wage-labour system, the mass migration of peasants

to the urban cities in search of work and the transformation of farming due to the arrival of multinational companies in the agricultural industry, the relation of a community with the process of production and reproduction and subsequently with land and nature significantly changed and resulted in social alienation. In one of the rare scenes of labour in *Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily* we observe Sami who in search of liberation from the alienated urban social relations resorts to Samad's way of earning money which is to collect brambles and to sell to the baker. In a conversation with Lily he confesses that the first day of working in the fields was perfect but after a while he could not care anymore for nature because of excessive tiredness and waist and back pains. This disappointment could indicate the hard labour of seasonal field workers in rural places alienated the rural worker almost in the same way as the alienation of labour-power in the capitalist wage-labour system.

In the films such as *Samad and Solomon's Magic Carpet*, *Samad and Leila, Sami and Lily* and *Samad Goes to School* the viewer would guess that the villagers might engage with farming as a landless farmer or a middle sized land owner. However, there is no explicit or implicit sign of such activities. They are not depicted at any form of working on the land. Their relation with soil and nature is hypothetical and is founded on the audience's guesses. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the narrative, visual and spatial signifier which indicates the harmonic relation between people and nature is absent. In these films we encounter characters whose income is rather formed in relation to urban seasonal jobs while they attempt not to entirely surrender to the consumerism and commodity fetishism of growing capitalism.

Another characteristic of the above mentioned 1970s films is the reduction of the presence of women. It is notable that in the rural films of 1960s in Iran both men and women contribute to the process of production. For instance, in *Sparrows Always Return Home* we can observe that Ali and his wife both work on their land. Later, when they return to the village as landless workers both work together on other people's land. In addition, women freely participate in the collective works. For instance, in the general assembly of the village women speak in favour of the construction of the medical centre and both men and women contribute with their savings and properties to the cost of construction. Surprisingly, the women of all ages even participate in the construction of the building itself along with men. They help to prepare construction materials and prepare food for the working people. In the films of that decade we can also see that the women are present in the protesting spaces of the village. In *Shores of Awaiting* when the picadors fight with the monopolizer's forces, women join them in the physical fight and support them. When the village mobilizes to build a school, women participate in the

construction too. Furthermore, when the class starts both women and men of all ages attend the class together.

This quality is limited to the rural life because in the urban feature films of the 1960s we cannot see women who engaged in outside-home labour. They are largely absent from factories, workshops, shops and in the films women were depicted as working as housewife, or as singers in cabarets and bars. There are a few number of documentaries which demonstrates urban women's jobs such as Women's *Prison* (1965, Shirdel) which is about female inmates and women who work there as the staff or for charity talk in the film too. Also, in a number of urban drama such as *Impasse* (1971, Naderi) the supportive female actress was briefly demonstrated as a beauty salon stylist. No doubt that women's out-side home careers in the urban existed at the time, yet it was not the prime preoccupation of the commercial feature films to depict them in films.

The depiction of women in the rural films of 1960s was not limited to the farm, construction sites and assembly points. They were also shown at home. The space where a child is raised, the kitchen where the food is prepared and cooked, the corner of a room filled with instruments to create handmade products such as rugs and cloths also appear in the films and continue to last in the 1970s films where we see Nane-Aqa, Samad's mother, and also Leila who constantly bake bread, prepare food and wash the dishes and clothes in their yard. At times, we see Nane-Aqa sewing and knitting something late at night in the narrow space of her home narrating a fairytale for her son. She is also the only person in the film which is depicted as praying in the small balcony of their modest mudbrick house. However, the depiction of the social contribution of rural women in the 1970s films seems to reduce as they are not demonstrated as working in the farm, gathering with other women at assembly points and participating in collective labour or social protest. They are not seen in modern educational spaces either. However, we see that the female members of the village community including Nane-Aqa and Leila repeatedly go to the school or police station in order to help Samad and rescue him from trouble. Almost every film starts at the police station where Nane-Aqa attempts to solve a problem Samad and the villagers had made. She is depicted as more smart and clever than her son and even Mr. Sergeant while she is an illiterate woman. It is notable to mention that the criminal gangs always recruit a female member to carry out necessary tasks. The professional thieves and the drug mafia both deploy urbanite women for their projects and these women could freely move through all the spaces including schools. However, they come into conflict with rural women and during the struggle with the mafia they are often beaten up by Nane-Aqa and Leila.

In conclusion, the comparison between the various spaces that women are depicted to inhabit in the 1960s and 1970s cinema productions seem to demonstrate that women's contribution to the private household and social activities decreased in the 1970s movies. The visual evidence of their outside home and farming labour was reduced. This is a surprising point as one expects that with the development of modernisation and industrialisation women are said to be free to work and would be summoned to work in modern spaces. However, it seems that along with the general decline of agricultural labour in the rural, the professionalization of the type of labour previously carried out by women had negative effects on their social and economic condition.

The last characteristic of the representation of hegemonic rural paces in the 1970s films is the arrival of novel modern spaces. We could observe the unprecedented spaces in the films that form new relations between people and point at the emergence of new social, political and cultural issues in the village. For instance, the police station is a new space which could not be found in any of 1960s films in the rural. One wonders if police forces even existed in the rural at that time since no trace of them either at the level of the narrative or the visual could be identified. The sudden emergence of the police and its central role to consolidate the power and class struggle in the 1970s films perhaps indicates the new function of the modern centralized government in establishing the modern order in every possible corner of the country. The representation of this crucial hegemonic space which is run by both coercion and consent is fairly simple. The scenes in the police station are often close ups of the police and medium shots of the people in conflict framed in confined dark and small rooms. The walls are covered with photographs of Shah and also primitive posters of didactic aphorism promoting discipline and order.

Another notable modern space is the school. In the traditional school, the building belonged to the teacher who taught Quran and classic literary texts. The students would bring food and other commodities as a sort of fee for the teacher who could be a man or a woman. The strict class boundaries organized students and teachers relation as well as relations between the students. In contrast, the modern school of 1970s that we observe in films belong to the state and the teachers were sent from the central ministry of education. The school was free yet it is clear that those who come from wealthier backgrounds and have accumulated more of social capital perform better. There are several full shots of the school, its vast yard and the students engaging in collective activities. It has a fairly simple architecture devoid of any ornamentation or traditional or modern design. The yard has no similarities to a familiar Iranian yard, no pool, no fence, no trees and flowers. Only a net is provided for

football games. The medium shots of inside the classrooms show the teachers and the principal in conflict with the students; one attempts to establish its superiority and discipline, the other to mock it. The representation of this hegemonic space seems to revolve around hierarchical tensions. In *Samad Goes to School* the school becomes easily influenced by the drug gang as their female member manages to work there as a teacher. In general deception and education, hierarchy and competition conflate. Even group practices such as doing exercise seem arbitrary as they do not relate to the demands and requirements of people. The police officers are always present at the school and the film highlights their close cooperation to maintain their desired order. In conclusion, modern spaces convey social alienation and are depicted as being cut off from previous cultural and social heritages whether in terms of architecture or the organization of people's relation. They represent the space of alienating modern social order which is imposed by the central government (Figure 34-42).

What could be observed in the representation of hegemonic spaces seem to suggest that in the 1970s, a sort of social alienation in all aspects of life is tangible. The relation with nature and land is transformed, the contribution of women is reduced, the new modern spaces convey the hegemony of modern state. None of the hopeful promises of collective fulfillment of the 1960s film could be seen in the popular films that I discussed. They rather highlight severe dissatisfaction with industrialization and the growth of capitalist social relation. In the next chapter, I am going to discuss films produced by politically-motivated filmmakers which signify a departure from this conception. Through resistance and protest people practice a different relation with nature, also the representation of women engaged in work and social activities increases and new oppositional practices emerge by the end of 1970s in films which reflect new utopian images of ideal community and anticipate the revolution.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed three selected first cinema productions that previous historian and critics did not explore in detail. My archival research and the positive reception of the public encouraged me to concentrate on the films' characteristics and discuss their narrative and pictorial specificity. I attempted to analyze their condition of production and relate them to the filmic text. Considering Williams's perspective about the incorporating process of hegemonic practices, I demonstrated that these films could be seen as pre-emergent practices of a new social class that was not interested in the residual practices nor engages with proper emergent and oppositional practices. I argued that the dependency

to the institute of NIRT and limitations of the private sector prevented these socially progressive films to expand into proper oppositional practices. I also highlighted that they are influenced by American culture, particularly the conventions of the genre of situation comedy. Yet, they move beyond this influence and engage with traditional performative art and plays in order to express new forms of political oppression and exploitation.

I also demonstrated the effect of the counter-hegemonic discourse of radical intellectuals in these films and pointed at the problematic such as occidentosis, contradiction of forces and relations of production and the condition of women. After, with reference to Ernest Bloch, I argued that the selected films attempt to provide a utopian view of community and the unity that was at the brink of disappearance in the 1970s due to the growth of capitalist social relations. Moreover, I engaged with Gramsci's view about the necessity of a connection between intellectual's knowing and people's feelings. I postulated that the production and positive reception of these films could indicate a new organic social cohesion that Gramsci cherished whereby the passion and lived experience of people and intellectuals, abstract knowledge gradually formed an artistic link.

In the last section, I engaged with the representation of hegemonic space and through a comparison with 1960s rural films I pointed out the transformation in this depiction. Increasing social alienation could be observed as the main characteristic of the visual registration. In the next and last chapter of this thesis, I will engage with distinct third cinema and politically motivated films of 1970s in order to highlight the formation of oppositional practices, the new expressions of resistance and protest and the arrival of spaces and visual frameworks which anticipated the 1979 revolution.

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Chapter Six: The Representation of Hegemonic Spaces in 1970s Films of Third Cinema Filmmakers in Iran

Introduction

When the 1979 revolution in Iran is discussed, complicated questions about the role of art, literature, poetry and cinema invariably arise which problematize the relation of intellectuals and people's consciousness during that stunning period. What the role of art was and if it met its commitments remains ambiguous and open to interpretation. A critical assessment of the cinematic production of organic intellectuals of that period, would illuminate these issues. What I would like to highlight in this chapter is the advent of politically-motivated cinema which attempted to put forward a unified history of the subaltern people and in that process itself moved beyond the position of subalternity – considering its lack of original and national cinematic expressions- and shaped what could be observed as an original signifying system of representation through various kinds of allegorical form. That was a decade which witnessed the emergence of national cinema against global Hollywood cinema and also against art-house second cinema productions. It contested its conventions of normality, realism, memory and history. Consequently, the rise of this national cinema affected the hegemonic force-fields and contributed to the empowerment of the subaltern people to transform their fragmented consciousness towards a unified counter-hegemonic position which demonstrated its influence in the events of 1979.

In this chapter, I attempt to highlight the social, cultural and economic condition of this transformation in the cinematic production. I will engage with issues such as how this break occurred and what aesthetic and socio-political theories would help us to understand it. In the previous chapters, I discussed two different groups of films set in the rural places produced during the 1960s and 1970s which is known as the fast period of industrialisation and modernisation of cinema in particular and the country in general. The first group of films produced in the mid to late 1960s demonstrate a positive and hopeful perspective towards the changes that land reform, dismantling of the traditional feudal order and industrialisation produced. I highlighted the hegemonic force-fields within which the historical bloc of the time was formed and operated in various spheres including art and cinema. The fascination with modernisation was shared by an alliance of classes which included on the one hand the royal Pahlavi court and its dependent entrepreneurs who replaced the feudal aristocracy. And they seemed to ally with the newly emerging classes which included nearly landless peasants and free labourers who –

liberated from the ties of feudalism- sought social mobility through working in the new urban industries. The rural films of this period engage with the life and work, sufferings, loss and efforts of this rising class as they eventually achieve what they hope for. The second group of rural films dealt with the disappointment of this class from the promises that industrialization and modernisation made. By the end of the 1960s and early 1970s and as the hopes for social mobility faded, we observe the arrival of critical comedies which I discussed through the cycle of films based around the character of Samad in the previous chapter. The consciousness about the failure of modernisation and its roots, and hypothetical solutions were informed by the writings and lectures of organic intellectuals such as Ale-Ahmad and Shariati. Their theories contributed to the formation of counter-hegemonic currents that made possible a sort of 'moral and intellectual transformation' of the consciousness of people. In the previous chapter, I discussed how the socially critical idea of Westoxication found its expression in the Samad village comedies.

It seems that the aforementioned transformation prepared the social condition for the emergence of politically motivated filmmakers who created original forms of expression in order to redefine the history of the subaltern classes and to consolidate their fragmented world-views, experiences and memories. I will start the chapter by providing an overall view of the turbulent conditions of cinematic production in the mid-1970s and point out a number of obstacles that the industry encountered at that historical moment. After, I will move on to discuss an epistemological break that occurred in the world-views which lead to the separation of progressive filmmakers from the conventions of global realist cinema and the emergence of allegorical film.

In addition, I will refer to Gramsci's perspective considering common sense and discuss how organic intellectuals attempted to transform the 'folklore of philosophy' of the subaltern classes through the form of allegory. The point is to illuminate how this break assisted both the organic intellectuals – here the progressive filmmakers- and the subaltern people to move beyond the fragmented and isolated position of subalternity and form a new signifying system which enabled them to appear as a unified counter-hegemonic force and contributed to the revolutionary atmosphere of the late 1970s in Iran. In the last section, I will discuss two films which epitomize this process and they are: *The Night That It Rained* and *Tara's Ballad*. In that, I will also engage with Raymond Williams' theory of hegemonic processes of incorporation and exclusion. I will illuminate how the aforementioned films mark a departure from the 'residual' and 'alternative' practices of their predecessors to the 'emergent' and 'oppositional' ones.

The Discontent with Commercial Cinema

As mentioned above, the industrialization of cinema produced its own crises which began to appear in the early to mid 1970s in Iran. As I have extensively discussed in the first chapter through the literature review for this research, the Iranian commercial cinema was modeled on classical Hollywood cinema and attempted to appropriate its conventions and genres. FF productions were generally divided into two main genres: one was the stewpot movie genre which followed the principles of family melodramas and comedies, the other was the tough-guy movies which appropriated the characteristics of western films. It seems that by the mid 1970s the features of the production of this genre reached a point where the industry could no longer remain innovative and consequently successful in the box office. For instance, as Naficy reports, the private-sector studios heavily relied on what he called artisanal mode of production which culminated in the multi-functionality of the workshops. However, if this mode of production was beneficial for the neo-realist filmmakers, and third cinema theorists such as Espinosa argued for the innovative outcomes of imperfect cinema, in Iran (as I argued in the first chapter) it gradually became a way of producing absolute surplus value. As the 'unprofessionals' took up multiple tasks in the studios, the length of the working day increased in order to achieve maximum profit.[469] In addition, as the directors were engaged in several responsibilities and were required to make a couple of films within a year, 'they had no time to think, reflect, or revise, for they were in constant activity. As a result, their approach to cinema was practical and utilitarian, not intellectual, and their films kept repeating the same formulas'.[470] Naficy attributes some of the stylistic defects of FF films - such as uneven pacing, repetitive shots, a chaotic point of view, disrupted space and time and theatrical dialogues- to the problems of multi-functionality. This way of mechanical production gradually became widespread as Naficy indicates the absence of originality in tough-guy movies and describes them as 'authorless' since the directors 'did not develop a coherent worldview or a consistent individual film style, but instead intuitively followed, improvised, and elaborated on the contents of a deep sociopolitical encyclopedia and an evolving set of conventions, which they negotiated and internalized alongside government censors, film financiers, and audience'.[471]

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[469] Hamid Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Vol 2, Duke University Press, 2011, p. 205.

[470] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 362.

[471] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 265.

Furthermore, Naficy argues that family melodrama and comedies inherited their subject and structures from the traditional popular romances and miniature paintings. I also, in the previous chapter, indicated that the traditional performative arts such as Ru-Hozi influenced the stewpot genre significantly. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that the popularity and success of the FF films was partly rooted in the fact that they were nourished by the common sense of people, by the widespread worldviews which continued from pre-modern times and the private-sector managed to commercialize.

It seems that this way of commercializing the existing fragmented and scattered common sense lead to the production of a cultural atmosphere whereby organic intellectuals and politically motivated artists felt that the culture of the people is not adequately framed and represented in the Iranian cinema.

For instance, as I read the cinematic periodicals of the 1970s, I realized that it seems to be a widespread impression that Iranian culture was misrepresented and even neglected. For instance, in 1973 *Film va Honar* magazine conducted roundtable interviews with young and socially committed filmmakers and critics whereby they discussed the influence of culture in filmmaking. In an interview with Amir Naderi, one of the pioneers of Iranian new-wave, they question how intellectuals learn about culture. It is said that written literature is indispensable but all three speakers emphasized something they call 'conscious living' which is transmitted through social relations with other people. More or less they agreed that even an illiterate person practices this sense of culture, and they discussed the ways that this knowledge could be conveyed in the cinematic productions.[472]

In another interview conducted by *Film va Honar* magazine, the journalist spoke to Parviz Kimiavi who already made the ground-breaking film *Mongols* (1971), about the fast transformation of communicative fields and media in Iran as a result of modernization. In the interview, he expresses his preference for novel 'cinematic forms' and indicates that the author should have consciousness about it. He even goes on to prioritize the content and states that 'Iranian directors have a reasonably good visual imagination but are unable to transfer it as cinematic expressions and are unfamiliar with its instruments such as lighting and decoration… there are beautiful and eye-catching scenes in the films but that's it [he probably meant that the conscious framing is limited to scenes and does not include an entire film], directors stick to Tehran and do not work in the provinces'.[473] In this way, it is possible to realize some of the problematic issues of the commercial cinema in Iran at the time, as the inability to create cinematic forms, lack of experience and training, and confinement in industrial centers. This latter

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[472] Film va Honar, 1973, no 446, p. 26-7.
[473] Film va Honar, 1971, no 330, p. 45.

issue seemed to produce repetitive and stereotypical vision of contemporary life in urban. Many of these issues would be addressed in the films of politically motivated filmmakers. It is possible to observe the arrival of new cinematic forms, the expansion of artistic vision and the move to outside familiar urban centers.

Alongside formal and authorial issues of the Iranian cinema, the establishment of the private-sector and the growth of monopolization also limited the scope of filmmaking. The arrival of movie-house chains contributed to the pressure. 'Several first-run or second-run movie houses, owned by different entities, would agree to coordinate their film programs, forming channels of access for insider film exhibitors and formidable barriers for outsiders'.[474] They opened new cinemas in other cities and through investing in films attempted to intervene in the production process.[475] It is evident that monopolization of the private sector became another obstacle for the development of independent and socially committed cinema.

However, the politically-motivated and socially-committed directors did not remain inactive and in July 1973 they formed the Progressive Filmmakers' Cooperative (PFC) in Tehran. The formation of this group could be seen as a crucial moment in the consolidation of scattered and fragmented counter-hegemonic currents into a leading and integrated force. The group which consisted of nineteen well-known producers, directors, cinematographs, composers and actors appeared in a news conference and announced that they resigned from the National Syndicate of Film Industry. All the people involved in the production of films were required to join this organization which was dominated by the private-sector. In their manifesto the rebellious members of the cooperative announced that they gathered to create a new cinema against the commercial cinema which is 'worthy of our culture and nationality'[476], and they intended to use all possible and available funds to bypass the distribution monopoly of the commercial sector.[477] They desired to provide the spectators with 'the right to choose' between the commercial cinema and its alternative.[478]

Moreover, the members decided to become financially independent, thus they started to invest in each other's films. For instance, Parviz Sayyad whose Samad films I discussed in chapter five provided the funding for Sohrab Shahid-sales *Still Life*. As Sayyad's films became successful at the box office, he was

[474] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 173.
[475] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 173.
[476] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 353.
[477] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 353.
[478] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 354.

able to become involved in the projects of the new wave. However, it did not become a trend and most of PFC productions were funded by the government or semi-governmental agencies such as the MCA, NIRT, TelFilm, The Ministry of Economy and FIDC.[479] Although, as I discussed in the first chapter, the government banned many of these films despite the fact that the government had produced them. This attitude demonstrates the contradictory policies of the state which I extensively discussed in the first chapter. Nonetheless, it is notable that the rise of the new social class from the subaltern position was not a project assisted by the private sector.

Naficy's assessment of the post-PFC time is that the cooperative indeed was capable of generating a dual-track movie industry which was commercial and new wave. Therefore, it seems that it is possible to highlight this current as a significant historical movement for the cinema to emerge as the visual language of the oppressed people, and also to rise from the position of subalternity and achieve its own original form. In the next section, I will engage with characteristics of this emergence which are shared between their films.

Towards A Cinema for the Subaltern

One of the prime claims of this chapter is that cinema in the late 1970s became capable of engaging with the subaltern people and itself rose from the position of subalternity. In order to probe this claim, it is necessary to illuminate what definition of subalternity is referred to in this discussion. In general terms, those classes of people who are considered non hegemonic are regarded by Gramsci as 'subordinate', 'subaltern' or sometime 'instrumental'.[480] It is said that Gramsci uses the word subaltern instead of industrial proletariat in order to avoid prison censorship. However, many scholars believe that the word denotes meanings beyond the classic Marxist term. Gramsci refers to the Southern peasant in Italy as subaltern and in his description he points out characteristics that associate this group with the limited consciousness about their social and political position, and as such they remain different form the industrial proletariat.[481] In his view, the subaltern classes, by definition, 'are not unified and cannot unite until they are able to become a 'state': their history, therefore, is intertwined with that of civil society, and thereby with the history of state'.[482] The Southern peasants, viewed by Gramsci, were

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[479] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 353.
[480] Antonio Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*, International Publishers, 1971, p. xiv.
[481] Stephen Morton, *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Polity, 2007, p. 96.
[482] Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*, Op cit., p. 52.

constantly in a state of ferment, yet 'as a mass they are incapable of giving a centralized expression to their aspirations and need.[483] Therefore, he deduces that the subaltern class is 'a great social disintegration'[484] who, because of the perpetual interruption of the ruling groups, cannot form an independent organization.[485] It is evident that Gramsci immediately arrives at the question of the organic intellectual of the class and comments on their relation to the subaltern. He observes that the characteristic disintegration also could be generalized to the intellectuals in the South of Italy at the time. Despite the great accumulation of cultural rituals, knowledge and intelligence these intellectuals lack what Gramsci calls 'any organization of middle culture'.[486] By that he seems to point at the divide between the sophisticated elite in the South Italy and the masses, where no medium or small size centre of active intellectuals connected these two peoples. Elsewhere, on a note about the popular novel, Gramsci also viewed popular art necessary for the building up a hegemonic force, since, these middle agents are capable of transferring to the masses the progressive knowledge and practices developed by theorists and philosophers and required for class unity. Gramsci regrets that such a strata of intellectuals does not exist in Italy as in France and therefore the class conflicts remain individual and scattered rebellions with limited impact.

> In fact neither a popular artistic literature nor a local production of 'popular' literature exists because 'writers' and 'people' do not have the same conception of the world. In other words, the feelings of the people are not lived by the writer as their own, nor do the writers have a 'national educative' function: they have not and do not set themselves the problem of elaborating popular feelings after having relived them an made their own.[487]

Going back to the discussion regarding the transformation of the cinema, it should be noted that in the early 1970s, it seems that politically motivated filmmakers attempted to depict the real condition of subaltern classes under the influence of realism (conventions of classic realist cinema) and Italian neo-realist cinema to offer an alternative to the fantasy-driven and narratively chaotic first cinema productions. However, as I will examine in the next sections it was not an appropriate style for the

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[483] Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks,* ibid, p. 179.
[484] Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*, ibid, p. 183.
[485] Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*, ibid, p. 183.
[486] Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*, ibid, p. 183.
[487] David Forgacs, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader; Selected Writings 1916-1935*, New York University Press, 2000, p. 365.

Iranian intellectuals and they were encouraged to break away from neorealism and experiment with other novel forms such as allegory.

It would be relevant to discuss *The Cow* (1970, Mehrjouyi) as an example of the complex stylistic, authorial and socio-political issues that the new-wave cinema inaugurated. This film was successful at the box office and as Naficy claims positively affected the sale of Iranian films in the 1970s, since, it encouraged audience to watch domestically made films. It also won awards in domestic and international festivals, therefore was cherished by both general cinema-goers and the critics.[488] It introduced new conventions to the Iranian cinema. The film's choice of the setting in the underdeveloped rural location countered the preoccupation of the commercial cinema with the developed urban life. As Naficy discusses, the film was perceived as a return to the masses who were considered the majority of the population and established 'a kind of modernist "village genre" in which the drama of self and other, Iran and the West, could unfold in favor of Iranian authenticity'.[489]

Although Naficy argues that new-wave production in general and *The Cow* in particular could not entirely be counted as neorealist, yet he admits that despite the hybrid style, neorealism was significantly influential in their textual and thematic characteristics. The trace of realism could be observed in the use of invisible style of filming and the continuity of time, space, and causality. Similar to neorealism long shots and long takes were common. Exterior and natural locations were preferred to interior and artificial (studio-based) ones. Artificial lighting was utilized occasionally and natural light was employed for the outdoor sequences. The directors preferred working with non-actors and the characters of the narrative were chiefly from working class and rural backgrounds. Also, the conventions of the genre of documentary were present in these productions. And the closure of these films were often circular, or opaque and obscure and left the viewer uncertain. The desire for intact reality, social criticism, anti-authoritarianism, and moral and ethical considerations were prevalent.[490] The general philosophy of neorealism as

> principally a moral statement about the world with a certain poetics, whose aim was to promote true objectivity, one that would force viewers to abandon the limitations of a strictly personal perspectives and to embrace the reality of the 'others,' be they

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[488] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p. 336.
[489] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 339.
[490] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 351.

persons or things, with all the ethical responsibility that such a vision entails, was

perceivable in the new wave productions.[491]

There is no doubt that the advent of neorealism and its effect on the formation of authentic national

cinema in Iran cannot be ignored. Similar to Latin American cinema, it transformed the entire process of

filmmaking and the role of cinema in creating bonds between artists and the masses. During 1950s the

young filmmakers of the continent who rejected Hollywood found the only feasible alternative cinema

in the Italian neo-realism. It became an aspiration for those who sought to shape their national cinema

in the underdeveloped world. Neo-realism assisted them to express an epistemological break. It enabled

them to create representational strategies to promote the formerly unrepresented.[492]

Also, it opened an entirely novel way of producing films through artisanal practice. Fernando Birri, the

renowned Argentinian filmmaker (and third cinema film theorist) stated that 'neorealism's influence

was not as much its style as the example it offered of making independent, highly artistic, nationalist,

sociological films. And, in fact, this neo-realist declaration of independence for film-makers is perhaps its

greatest contribution to post second World War film-making'.[493] However, encountered with radical call

for transformation as occurred in post-revolutionary Cuba, the filmmakers felt the urgency to move

beyond Italian neorealist framework in order to achieve critical expressions which they could associate

with their national and historical condition.

In this context, Hess following other critics, states that neo-realism as an aesthetic and political system

that re-oriented cinema is rooted in the ideology of the popular front and inherited its problematic

historical and political issues. This European movement called for 'a cross-class alliance and nationalism,

and proposed a range of humanism that set good versus evil and freedom versus oppression'[494] (He

probably meant that it was over-simplified). For the adherents, it was necessary to distinguish politics

from polemics and the neorealist directors advised the younger generation not to follow programs of

parties. This problematic strategy lead to dubious situations whereby, speaking about *Bicycle Thieves*,

Hess points out that the film refrains from introducing an alternative community for the protagonist. 'In

a world with a very high degree of unionization and the largest Communist party in Western Europe

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[491] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 351.

[492] John Hess, 'New-Realism and New Latin American Cinema; Bicycle Thieves and Blood of the Condor' in *Mediating Two Worlds*, BFI Publishing, 1993, p. 104.

[493] Hess, 'New-Realism and New Latin American Cinema; Bicycle Thieves and Blood of the Condor', ibid, p. 110.

[494] Hess, 'New-Realism and New Latin American Cinema; Bicycle Thieves and Blood of the Condor', ibid. p. 106.

[Italy], De Sica sees no alternative for this worker except spiritual communion with a child'.[495] Moreover, critics of neorealism point out 'the overwhelming influence of idealism and how artistic imagination is seen as autonomous' in this artistic framework. They separated imaginative impulse from the intellective and active dimensions, and history was reduced to mere environmental consideration.[496]

Nonetheless, It is possible to comprehend the critic's claim by highlighting the fact that neorealist cinema limited its historical perception to the environment. Hess indicates that neorealist films employ no cinematic devices to historicize their narratives. He views its films as without memory. Sometimes, time in these films flows in the specific present (as in *Bicycle Thieves*), sometimes in indefinite present (as in *La Terra Trema*) and sometimes it starts from a recent past which is quickly joined with the present (as in *Rome: Open City*). 'There are no films about Italy under the fascists, very few films about the partisan wars, no flashback or multiple time films, and no use of memory as an organizing device. They are about people in a specific present context and not about their evolving relation to that context'.[497]

In this way, Hess deduces that the representational cinematic strategies did not correspond to the political demands of Latin American filmmakers as they intended to engage with experience of colonialism and Imperialism. The collective memory of the masses from violence and foreign intervention required a strategy for the construction of history that neorealism did not offer. The Latin American directors did not admit the prevalent historical narratives and felt the need to go beyond neorealism as a form. Therefore, they began to employ flashbacks, multiple time layers, historical constructions, historical documentary inserts and numerous other devices to shape their own narratives.[498]

Hess argues that this epistemological break with neorealism was not merely a formalist experimentation but necessary historical act facing the oppression in their countries. The Latin American filmmakers for most of their lives were in struggle with the states who banned, censored and destroyed their films. Many of them were forced into exile and moved between various countries. Far beyond neorealism's

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[495] Hess, 'New-Realism and New Latin American Cinema; Bicycle Thieves and Blood of the Condor', ibid, p.113.
[496] Hess, 'New-Realism and New Latin American Cinema; Bicycle Thieves and Blood of the Condor', ibid, p. 107.
[497] Hess, 'New-Realism and New Latin American Cinema; Bicycle Thieves and Blood of the Condor', ibid, p 115.
[498] Hess, 'New-Realism and New Latin American Cinema; Bicycle Thieves and Blood of the Condor', ibid, p 115.

provoking humanist sympathy, they intended to participate in their continent's struggle for radical change and they saw cinema as way for intervention into social and historical reality.[499]

Going back to the condition of Iranian cinema in the 1970s, it seems that the socially committed and political-motivated filmmakers encountered identical necessities about transforming neorealism as a form. They noticed that this artistic style cannot be simply imported and used in their productions and attempted to reconstruct their narratives based on their materialist and historical condition. And it seems that the new national cinema was framed around allegory as an appropriate cinematic form. In the next section, I will discuss the arrival of allegory with reference to *The Night it rained*.

The Epic of the Subaltern in the Time of Disintegration

In 1969 Kamran Shirdel, who had recently finished his education in Italy, had already made three short documentaries which today are known as the beginning of protest documentaries in Iranian cinema. At the time, when he was the official filmmaker of Ministry of Art, those short films did not earn him respect and popularity. Mehrdad Pahlbod, the minister of Art and the brother-in-law of the Shah, regarded them as subversive productions which sharply contested the achievements of the Shah's White Revolution. The negatives and sound recordings of his last short film *Qaleh*, which was about the hardships of prostitute's lives in Tehran's red light district, were confiscated by the ministry and he was denied entry to the laboratory. He could finish the remnants of his materials only after the 1979 revolution which won him an award in the Moscow film festival in 1980.

Having been in difficult struggles with the ministry, one day Pahlbod summoned Shirdel to his office in order to give him his last chance to redeem his career as the ministry's young and educated filmmaker. He showed Shirdel a piece of newspaper about the heroic act of a village child in Gorgan province, north east of Iran, which in the middle of a night in a flooded area, managed to stop a train from a devastating crash. Pahlbod assigned Shirdel to make a film about this epic. Evidently, he sought a film about the faithful citizens of the Shah's Great Civilization and provided Shirdel with all the facilities required to register this epic for generations to come. One should bear in mind that, the commission took place in a condition whereby filming equipment were entirely the property of the ministry and independent filmmakers did not have access to such luxury. The private-sector was not interested in such stories, also

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[499] Hess, 'New-Realism and New Latin American Cinema; Bicycle Thieves and Blood of the Condor', ibid, p. 111.

the tight security would not allow the politically- motivated filmmakers to access industrial sites such as railway stations and their workers. Therefore, the film commission was a lifetime opportunity which Shirdel did not intend to miss. He pretended that he would make an epic, and without any idea about how to proceed, he and the ministry's crew went off to the site of the proposed epic.[500]

The result was a film which shook the history of Iranian documentary cinema for years to come. Critics and historians interpreted the film in various ways, and with the exception of Pahlbod and the ministry of Art which fired Shirdel for its indecent and intolerable stylistic iconoclasm[501], they regard it as the pioneering modern production in Iranian cinema. Naficy considers this film as among the best avant-guard production of the industrialization period which enhanced the authorial, textual and spectatorship formation of the documentary cinema. It challenged the codes of the official style and provided a critical perspective of the official institutions and culture, not just through its inflammatory content, yet also, through its contrapuntal of subjective uses of sound, visuals, and editing.[502]

The film has two official titles *The Night It Rained … or the Epic of a Gorgan Village Boy* (oon shab ke baron omad … ya Hamase Roostaze Gorgani) which reflects the unusual approach of the director to its subject matter. Throughout the film and by inserting numerous official letters of governmental agencies into the film, the director foregrounds its role as the one who under the request of the statist institutions had to meet their expectation of documenting a provincial epic which promotes the faithful subjects making sacrifices for the Pahlavi regime. On the other hand, through revealing the living condition of people, mostly workers, and through the social and economic context of the event, the film attempts to offer another face of the people, those who were exploited and deprived of ability to express an opinion based on their collective condition, had to follow the official narration of the event. The film opens with photographs of the film crew in the aforementioned village searching for the supposed hero who in the absence of minimal medical facilities in the village had to go to the town with his father for health issues. In their absence, the voice-over declares that the crew intended to register anthropological observations of the village. In this way, the film establishes the point that they were required to treat local people as objects of their research. However, the visuals demonstrate not the achievement of modernisation which we suppose the expansion of railway brought but the shocking

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[500] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p. 129-130.
[501] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 133.
[502] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 128.

signs of underdevelopment. Deprived of modern facilities of living, they merely live around the railway tracks as the workers who have to maintain the track's efficiency.

After, the curious voice-over announces that the film crew continues its search for the truth of the event in the city of Gorgan through interviews with witnesses, journalists and state officials. The films sets up its internal tension based on the claims of two newspapers. One the statist newspaper of Kayhan which insists on the heroic story despite the contested details. The other is a private local newspaper which questions various aspects of the story and denies the event through providing details from alternative sources. The staged confrontation of the journalists speaking from their offices and juxtaposed through a fast and short rhythm of jump cuts bring to mind that probably the truth of the event is affected by the competition between the two newspapers as both attempted to attract attention. Meanwhile official letters from the government are inserted in the film which proposes that the occurrence of such an epic demonstrates the problematic and unprofessional safety standards of the railway company and has to be brought forward and disciplined accordingly. As we see the interviews with the supervision of the line and various workers, train drivers and their colleagues, it is assumed that they find the existence of such sacrifice problematic and attempt to provide counter evidence in order to deny it. What is deeply disturbing is that the train drivers and other workers speak like their bosses, and instead of acquiring an independent position which would correspond to their working conditions in the time of flood, they identify with their employers and defend them. Here, we evidently encounter the characteristic of the subaltern as Gramsci observed which was a disintegrated mass. The workers and villagers do not unify against the administrator of the modernisation process in order to protect their own benefits. They do not support each other and they do not acknowledge the narrative of the child.

In the third part of the film in which the crew returns to the village we see interviews with elders of the village who defend the child but lack proper expression to reason adequately against the urban journalists (statist and private media) mentioned above. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that the film depicts the position of subalternity, the condition of non-hegemonic groups (here the villagers versus the urban officials) who cannot defend themselves.

Nonetheless, the film does not remain indifferent and passive facing the fate of the subaltern. Through its unique style of contesting the hegemonic struggles, it explicitly intends to provide a voice for the subaltern. As Naficy points out the film

provides a textured, sly, humorous, and incisive indirect form of criticism, not only of

officials but also ordinary people, including himself… the film's ironic and subjective

voice-over, also broke with the official and objective narration so characteristic of the

official documentary style. Indeed because of these narrative and ideological

innovation, The Night It Rained represents a break with the official style'.[503]

For instance, the film reverses the social hierarchy. It could have only conveyed the information through officials, governors and journalist yet it puts the information of poor villagers, the child and his teachers next to the former hegemonic group and emphasizes the opinion of the people who are powerless in the hegemonic battle. The hegemonic agents, the representative of the states and media speak about the event like an omnipresent narrator who has already illuminated the truth. On the other hand, the child, the villagers and the workers speak from the first person point of view, they have a provincial accent which is not easily comprehensible for Farsi-speakers.

It is interesting to mention that the film invariably registers the former group in a closed official space, filmed through the high contrast of artificial lights and grim darkness which alludes to their hierarchical authority. On the other hand, the latter group as the director reveals at several points, is intentionally situated in the open air, seen in the bright natural light of the surroundings. The non-hegemonic groups are mostly framed in medium shots with the industrial machines or constructs. We see them at their work place, dominated by the technical instruments. For instance, the journalist of the private media speaks in what seems to be a basement workshop without windows. While he complains about the non-existing myth of a child hero, the camera switches to the workers who are working to put the pages of newspaper together. Unlike the chic journalist in a suit, they are dressed in the casual uniform of the workers, their backs to the camera. They deliver the hegemonic information (through the newspaper), yet, they cannot participate in the production of its content and political signification. This choice of representing the hegemonic spaces highlights the subordination of the subaltern to the existing order, to the machines and those who own them.

This structure of signification delivered through creating gaps and insufficient meanings highlights that the film intentionally distances itself from conventional realism and even symbolism. It is possible to identify the early formation of the allegorical style. Jameson believed that it is not viable to expect that

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[503] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 132.

allegory as a form would follow its traditional pattern (formed like a double structure which each point referred to a specific meaning). Rather he argues that

> Allegory consists in the withdrawal of its self-sufficiency of meaning from a given
> representation. That withdrawal can be marked by a radical insufficiency of the
> representation itself: gaps, enigmatic emblems, and the like, but more of them,
> particularly in modern times, it takes the form of a small wedge or window alongside a
> representation that can continue to mean itself and to seem coherent. [504]

In his view, allegory is a possibility that is opened up by creating a reverse wound in the text. It is a kind of wound that corresponds to the unexplained and enigmatic points we encounter as the audience.[505]

In *The Night That It Rained* we encounter a form of modern allegory. In that, certain gaps and unexplained points in the text create a sort of wound that Jameson indicates. The creation of the gaps appears through depriving the signifying structure of the film from self-sufficient signifiers. For instance, critics point out that this film is one of the early documentaries in which 'sound, dialogue and editing have dramatic function'.[506] For instance, a line of a worker who repeats 'this is a pure lie' is inserted as an organizing statement into the narration which questions the accuracy of the hegemonic construct. The voice-over is a narrative construct, explicitly exposed as torn between the official and the subaltern. The voice-over incessantly reminds the viewer that it is on a mission commissioned by the Ministry of Art and Culture. The reminders, a little too insistent, seem to add ambiguous signification to the staged interviewees. The viewer constantly asks what the point of revealing the behind the stage preparation is, who conceals the truth and why, what the relation between the truth, the epic, the machines and the constant insert of scenes of underdevelopment is.

Moreover, another level of gap is created through the intention of the director to juxtapose the voice-over with the contradictory visuals. It is conducted in a way that the latter do not support the former, rather questions and challenges it. For instance, in the beginning the objective and formal voice-over announces that it intends to register anthropological characteristics of the village. Clearly, it meant that it sought to provide evidence for the achievements of industrialization. However, what it demonstrates is the medium shots of alleys in mud and dirt, crumbling shacks and primitive agricultural tools. The

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[504] Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, Verso, 1998, p. 122.
[505] Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, ibid, p. 122.
[506] Mohammad Tahami-nejad, *Sinema-ye Mostanad-e Iran; Arse-ye Tafavotha [The Documantry cinema of Iran; the Plane of Differences]*, Soroush, 2002, p. 72.

choice of a mixture of medium and close up shots is cleverly taken, since, it provides an opportunity to probe the details and the specific conditions. In other words, if the official TV documentaries used full shots to emphasize the grand transformation of White Revolution, *The Night It Rained* provides a closer look at the faces, hands, clothes, shoes, homes, alleys and school of the people.

The use of allegory as a signifying structure for the expression of subaltern classes brings up the discussion between Fredric Jameson and Aijaz Ahmad about the place and function of allegory as a progressive form in the developing countries. In an article Jameson proposes that

> All third-world literature are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, in a very specific way. They are to be read as what I will call national allegories, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms developed out of predominantly Western machineries of representation, such as novel.[507]

In this way Jameson separates the western cultural production from the rest of the world and categorizes them to be allegory by their nature. Moreover, what makes them particularly distinct for Jameson is the role of politics as first world literature is characterized by the split between politics and poetics, public and private, etc. He postulates that Westerns have been trained in a deep cultural convention that the lived experience of their private existence is somehow incommensurable with the abstraction of economic science and political dynamics. In Jameson's perspective 'third world texts, even those which are seemingly private and interested with a properly libidinal dynamic – necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory.' In his view the narrative of private individual fate is usually an allegory of the conflictual condition of the social and cultural public in the third world.[508]

In an article Ahmad responds to Jameson's proposition and doubts that such a thing as a 'third-world literature' exists, one that could be constructed as an internally coherent object of theoretical knowledge. In his view, Jameson's 'third-world literature' is epistemologically impossible.[509] Ahmad argues that 'Jameson's theoretical conception tends … [in the direction] of homogenisation. Differences between the first world and the third world is absolutised as otherness'.[510] Moreover, he examines

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[507] Fredrick Jameson, 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism' in Social Text, no 15 (Autumn, 1986), p. 69.
[508] Jamesonm 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', ibid, p.69.
[509] Aijaz Ahmad, Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory' in *Social Text*, no 17 (Autumn, 1987, p. 4.
[510] Aijaz Ahmad, Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory', ibid, p. 11.

Jameson's recurrent insistence on national allegory as the narrative of that homogenized experience of third-world. Ahmad criticises Jameson for conflating notions of nation and collectivity which suggest that they are equitable.

It seems that Jameson's insistence regarding the homogenization of all cultural productions in the so-called third world is not accurate. The films which are referred to in this research reveal that not all of the cultural productions of Iran are allegorical. For example, a film such as *The Sparrows Always Return Home* (discussed in chapter three) represents the world-views of a particular rising class and indicates the hegemonic currents of a particular and contingent historical bloc not the whole nation. However, it would be inaccurate to dismiss Jameson's proposition in that article altogether. As *The Night that It Rained* demonstrates the form of allegory has the potential to transcend the Western cultural convention of separating private and public, political and economic. However, it would be accurate to assume that this potentiality does not extend to all the cultural productions of the developing world. National allegories do not seem to be automatically produced in the non-western countries. Yet, if the cultural producer aims to draw on the discussed potentiality of the allegory, as Shirdel intentionally and consciously did, it is possible to agree with Jameson that allegory has a remarkably rich possibility to move beyond the western conventional limitations of signifying structures such as novel and film.

Moreover, regarding *The Ballad of Tara*, critics and historians point out that the prominence of the film lies in the fact that it 'cleverly problematizes the notions of 'reality' and 'documentary truth' in a different way… by self-reflexively offering multiple, and often conflicting, views on real-world events.'[511] However, it would be relevant to indicate that it does not seem that the film intends to merely deconstruct its own ontology by foregrounding its own production. Indeed, the film has a political intention to reveal that the social truth is a product of hegemonic forces. The film does not remain impartial to the multiplicity of reality that it unfolds. Through its allegorical form which is formed through the style of editing, contradiction of the sound and visual, the reversal of hierarchies and the voice-over which mocks the omnipresence of the narrator, it intends to participate in the hegemonic force-field in favor of the subaltern and provide evidence for its claims.

Another way of analyzing the issue of reality in the film is to view it as a form of common sense. It seems that through allegorical techniques *The Night It Rained* attempts to highlight that what is known as reality is a form of common sense, a conception of the world and life that is often accepted passively,

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[511] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p. 129-130.

and has direct relation with power struggle and needs to be contested. It is not mere false consciousness. Gramsci seems to observe it as a form of ideology which absorbs elements of truth as well as misrepresentations. Hence, it becomes contradictory, and as the subaltern lives it often uncritically, it leads to their further subordination.[512]

In this film we see that workers and villagers deliver contradictory views, since some adhere to the way the elites, such as journalists and governors, describe and establish the event. The truth seems to be that the child rescued the train as a voluntary act to save its community from destruction and expected to be rewarded adequately. It does not seem to be a sign of integration into industrialism since it brought no development to the village and its inhabitants. The villagers did not attempt to promote the state's celebration of faithful subjects. However, they are subordinated to the narration that state and media attempt to construct of the event. The film attempts to challenge the common sense and strives for a total transformation of how it is passively and uncritically received by the society.

As Liguori discusses, an inquiry into the writings of Gramsci reveals that his ideas about common sense transformed from the days of *Ordine Nuoro* to the prison years. It is believed that the advent of the Russian revolution, the defeat of revolution in the West and Gramsci's own imprisonment, which is indicative of the rise and increasing power of fascism, were effective in the evolution of his thoughts. The fall of the progressive political movements in the West propelled him to ponder upon the forms of hegemony and its relation with social structures in the West. The historical situation encouraged him to re-think the condition of the subalternity which is characterized by common sense thinking among other factors.[513]

In the prison notebooks, while criticizing Bukharin's view about this topic, Gramsci unfolds his ideas about the crucial need of the revolutionaries to engage with people's common sense. He values it as the philosophy of the non-philosophers, the multitudes.[514] He situates it as a discourse between folklore and the philosophy, the science and economics of the scholars.[515] Therefore, it is not completely deprived of any truth, rather it is adverse to innovations and is an obstacle to social change.[516] Gramsci believes that the flaw of Bukharin's perspective is that it is not based on the critique of common sense. For him, it is

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[512] Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks,* Op cit., p. 421.

[513] Guido Liguori, 'Common Sense in Gramsci' in *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture and Social Theory*, Routledge, 2009, p. 133.

[514] Liguori, 'Common sense in Gramsci' in *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture and Social Theory*, ibid, p. 129.

[515] Liguori, 'Common sense in Gramsci' in *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture and Social Theory*, ibid, p. 124.

[516] Liguori, 'Common sense in Gramsci' in *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture and Social Theory*, ibid, p. 129.

not an issue to be simply eliminated. Rather in a struggle for hegemony, this basic 'conception of the world' should be superseded and a new common sense should be born. Hence, it is crucial that this 'simple', widespread and non-hegemonic account of the social world be brought into account.[517] For Gramsci 'the alternative to hegemonic bourgeois cultures, however, is not to be found in a philosophy based on common sense'. The historical-materialist world view, in Gramsci's opinion, is established by superseding existing common sense in order to create another common sense.

Furthermore, to avoid being perverted and defeated, the new conception of the world must remain in touch with the simple practical life. For the new philosophy –i.e. the new conception of the world to become widespread, it is necessary, in a dialectical fashion, to take into account common sense (the need it expresses, the level of consciousness of the masses that it reflects, etc.) while at the same time enabling the subaltern classes to acquire a new awareness and, thus, a new 'spirit of cleavage'. [518]

Going back to the problematic of reality in *The Night It Rained*, it seems that the film engages with the social strategies that Gramsci promoted. On the one hand, it does highlight the existing common sense that is absorbed passively from the already existing dominant order. The disparate views of railway workers confirming the hegemonic battles indicates it. However, the film does not stay at this level and through the form of allegory constructs a contested dialogue between the subaltern who strive for a change and the resistance it faces. The so-called multiplicity of views about the 'truth', seems to call for a radical transformation in the 'conception of world', and highlights an authentic demand on the part of the subaltern to supersede this primitive philosophy and move towards a new one. In the next section, I will move on to discuss the cinematic attempts to arrive at the new hegemonic formation of history, what could endow the subaltern a frame of unity and a new common sense.

The Ballad of Tara

The formation of the alternative cinematic narratives and histories during the 1970s seemed to be rooted in the economic, social, cultural and political transformations that shook the country in that period. The historians and cultural critics indicate that the expansion of the modern state and the so-called oil boom could be observed as the significant historical forces active in the sphere of hegemonic

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[517] Liguori, 'Common sense in Gramsci' in *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture and Social Theory*, ibid, p. 131.
[518] Liguori, 'Common sense in Gramsci' in *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture and Social Theory,* ibid, p. 133.

battles. In fact they were interweaving factors as Abrahamian believes that the second Pahlavi fulfilled the first Pahlavi's dream of building an extensive state structure through the rising sale of oil revenues.[519] It is a period whereby the production of oil increased to the level that made Iran the fourth largest oil producer. In particular, during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, OPEC quadrupled the international price of oil. Accordingly, Iran's oil grew augmented from $34 million in 1954-55 to $5 billion in 1973-74, and even more in 1975-76 to the price of $20 billion. It is estimated that within these two decades Iran earned $55 billion which amounted to 60 percent of government revenues and 70 percent of its foreign exchange. This condition contributed to the formation of a petroleum or a rentier state.[520]

This flow of capital to the country did not enhance the general life standards of the majority of population. On the one hand, it contributed to the formation of an urban and industrial bourgeoisie. The capital accumulation of the private sectors increased. 'The state provided credit to business managers at favorable rates, and inflation created windfall profits from land speculation and real-estate developments. State incentives to substitute domestic products for imports lead many importers of industrial goods to establish factories in Iran, which increased the contribution of the private sector to capital acquisition in machinery and construction (from $750 million in 1959 to $6.7 billion in 1977)'.[521] Accordingly, it is possible to see the appearance of merchants, industrialists, import traders, contractors, consulting engineers, commercial farmers which formed the prosperous modern bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, a large majority of the people in the rural areas did not benefit from the growth of the petroleum state. The life standards in the countryside remained unchanged. At the time that chic apartment housing appeared in the industrial cities, 63000 of Iran's 66000 villages did not have piped water. The oil boom induced 50 percent inflation each year which forced many farmers to abandon their villages and migrate to the cities in search of industrial jobs. The country which was once self-sufficient in agricultural farming had to import basic food from abroad.[522] Therefore, it is possible to observe the intensification of class conflicts and the widening gap between the affluent people and the shanty town residents.

It seems that during 1970 a new wave of subaltern classes emerged who did not have access to the modern and industrial facilities such as education, art and even proper labour. In chapter five, I have

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[519] Ervand Abrahamian, *A history of Modern Iran*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 123.
[520] Abrahamian, *A history of Modern Iran*, ibid, p. 124.
[521] Hamid Reza Sadr, *Iranian Cinema; a political history*, I.B.Tauris, 2006, p. 158.
[522] Sadr, *Iranian Cinema; a political history,* ibid, p. 162.

extensively discussed that at this time state sponsored media facilities developed such as NIRT and MCA. Yet, they become the propaganda tool of the state and did not voice the demands and changes in the society, particularly the new class of shanty town free labourers and farmers.

Instead, they created spectacles of the state's achievements which ignored the reality of the majority of population. As Naficy observes, 'from the 1960s onwards, the Shah intensified his policy of syncretic Westernization, creating an official culture of spectacle that depended both on westernizing Iran and on revitalizing a partly fabricated monarchic and chauvinistic ideology and history that predated Islam'.[523] The state's media broadcast cultural events and made grandiose spectacle of it. Events such as theshah's coronation in 1967, which was celebrated for a week across the country, the twenty five hundredth anniversary of the Persian Empire in 1971 during which state leaders were invited to the highly protected and lavishly designed ceremony in Persepolis, annual festivals such as Shiraz festival of culture and art, Isfahan popular tradition festival, and Mashhad Tus Art Festival, etc.[524]

The height of this media pageantry was the twenty five hundredth anniversary of the Persian Empire. I have talked to many people who saw the ceremony from their television and it has always shocked me how much people despised the whole celebration despite the varied cultural and class backgrounds they belong to. While poverty was visible everywhere in the country, the Pahlavi regime spent thousands of dollars to order food for the guests from famous Parisian restaurants, and commissioned from European designers the outfits of the ancient soldiers in the parade. It is widely accepted that even the participants in the parade carried guns under their beautiful clothes since the interruption of the ceremony by leftist guerrillas was deemed an imminent threat. Naficy believed that the creation of these spectacles was related to the Shah's top-down reforms. 'In seeking massive financial aid from the United States, the Shah presented the funding of these reform programs as instrumental to making Iran the "show case" for all Asia, "the place with the best prospects of a great transformation"'. [525]

Henceforth, it is possible to observe the formation of counter-hegemonic cinema as a socio-political protest against the condition of the country and the media propaganda. When watching and discussing the modern allegories of struggling villagers and rebellious farmers in the cinematic frame, it would be relevant to remember that these films were made at a time where no medium of representation was offered to the subaltern. This forgotten and exploited class was systematically absorbed into the

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[523] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, Op cit., p. 328.
[524] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 328.
[525] Naficy, *A social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years 1941-1978*, ibid, p. 329.

hegemonic struggles of the ruling elite and they could not find a chance to form their own group and party through which they could represent themselves.

The socio-political condition of the 1970s seemed to raise a new problematic to ponder upon for the politically-motivated filmmakers such as the issue of history and the place of ordinary people. Gramsci puts great emphasis on this issue. By definition the subaltern is a class whose fragmented condition does not allow it to construct its own history. Therefore, it is subordinated to the version of history that the civil society and groups of states enforce.[526] For subaltern groups, in order to rise as a hegemonic power, the creation of its own perspectives, details and subject matters is integral. In this context, some cultural productions in this period put forward questions such as what is history? Is it a narration of victorious kings and powerful land owning dynasties who built monuments like Persepolis? Who is the agent of history? What is the role of the silent productive classes such as artisans and farmers in the making of history? And if the oppressed people are to be priorotised in the narration of history, how the traces of their struggle, labour, production, rituals, belief and lifestyle could be identified?

One of the cinematic productions that dealt with such issues is the *Ballad of Tara* directed by Bahram Beyzayi. Apparently Beyzayi wrote the script in 1975 [527] when the ideology of chauvinistic monarchism was at full strength in the media. Yet he could only access the facilities to produce it in 1978 at the height of revolution. When streets of major cities in Iran were burning in blood and fire, he went to the North of Iran to direct this distinguished and enigmatic film about the fate of a woman who engages with the history of oppressed people. Therefore, it is possible to identify the spirit of the rebellious days of the revolution in the production condition and the text itself.

At the time Bahram Beyzayi was a well-known theatre scholar and director, had already directed two distinct films which are now regarded as the early productions of Iranian new wave cinema. 'He is considered as a playwright who has always been looking for discovering and inventing non-classic and non-western narrative templates'.[528] In the time that westernization swept the country, he was one of the few people who through self-study attempted to modernize this heritage. It is suggested that this powerful bond with Iranian heritage is the effect of the historical condition that he was brought up in. Born in 1938, as a child he witnessed the collapse of the first Pahlavi's authoritarian rule and the

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[526] Gramsci, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks,* ibid, p. 296.

[527] Hamid Amjad, 'Farhang; Farrah Shahr', Shargh Newspaper, December 2017, no 3044, p. 1.

[528] Naghmeh Samini, Narration of Violence or Violence of Narration: Bahram Beyzaie's the Eighth Voyage of Sinbad and The One Thousand and First Night', in *Iranian Studies*, 2013, p. 737.

occupation of the country by the allied forces and the consequent disasters such as nationwide famine. Talajooy believes that these collective experiences encouraged a generation of intellectuals 'to implement a new sense of nationhood in which the nation acquired its meaning from its people rather than a king'. [529] Afterwards, Beyzayi lived through an intense period of political oppression during which the authoritarian westernization was underway in the time of the second Pahlavi, therefore, he experienced the conflict between hegemonic narrations of nationhood and emerging counter-hegemonic discourses. Talajooy believes that Beyzayi's preoccupation is to represent the realities of ordinary people through resorting to historical and mythical origins in order to arrive at new narratives to challenge grandiose political constructs.[530] Beyzayi in an interview in 1979 says that

> I am searching for forms of expression inspired by Iranian civilization: miniatures, myths, *taziyeh* and *tamasha* (*taqlid*). I am a carrier of these forms in the era in which I am living. All my creative works deal with Iranian history and culture and with what we can do with it at a time when the influence of western culture and civilization is felt in all areas of our lives.[531]

Since the release of *Ballad of Tara* at the height of revolution, it has provoked a wide range or responses. Some regard it as mythical, others as feminist, and some as a political statement supporting the farmers. Indeed, the multi-layered character of Tara, at the center of film, is still controversial.

The narrative starts with full shots of Tara –a young widow- and her two young children on the carriage crossing a background of cultivated land, returning home from a journey. From the beginning of the film she senses something uncanny in the road which crosses the fields and she feels the presence of a stranger. On arrival, she hears from her neighbours that her grandfather passed away, mournful she decided to donate what remained from him. His clothes, shoes, mirror, books are given to the neighbours, and lastly a strange sword remains that is given to the elder of the village. Shortly after, the old man returns the sword horrified as the sword distressed him. Tara attempts to make use of the ancient sword, she tries to cut vegetables and woods with it, treats it like a stick to keep fire at the fireplace, all in vain. She cannot exchange it for other tools at the market either. Meanwhile she recurrently sees a stranger around the main road. Finally she throws the sword away in the river and

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[529] Saeed Talajooy, 'Beyzaie's Formation, Forms and Themes', in *Iranian Studies*, 2013, p. 689.

[530] Talajooy, 'Beyzaie's Formation, Forms and Themes', ibid, p. 690.

[531] Beyzayi, "Interview with National TV" (1979), quoted in Parham, (1999): 26. Quoted in Talajooy "Beyzaie's Formation, Forms and Themes, ibid, p. 691.

goes back to work. Her village is depicted meticulously, the neighbours attend to collective work and as it is the harvest time they work on each other's land one at a time. Then she suddenly meets a man in ancient outfit who claims to be the owner of the sword. It is gradually revealed that he was the head of a defeated army whose history has vanished. He claims that no book has mentioned their struggles and only the wind, the soil and the plant could narrate what occurred to them. Meanwhile, another farmer in the village, Qelich, proposes to Tara and she is attracted to the young man, his desire and love for her. At the same time she also is charmed by the historical man as he declares his love for her and despite the fact that she returns the sword, he refuses to join his people as he could not leave Tara.

The Story is unfolded while the traditional ritual of Taziyeh is taking place at the outskirt of the village. The scenes of Tara's encounter with the historical man is intercut with the scenes of Taziyeh which narrates the struggle, the defeat and martyrdom of the Shia saints implying that what is known as a religious ritual, in fact, could be the representation of the collective memory of the ordinary people of their unregistered fights with the dominant orders. In this way, the film seems to modernize a traditional practice through engaging with popular narratives. While the historical man remembers the anecdotes of treason, betrayal and defeat, close ups of the ritual are inserted in the scene, where beheaded saints, hand-cut youth and blood-stained horses of the legends are prepared and performed in front of mournful crowds of villagers, mostly women and children.

The appearance of Taziyeh practices does not seem to serve exotic interest in ancient ritual. Instead, Beyzayi has emphasized that he regards it as a bridge to the history of the oppressed people. In an interview in 1977 he explains

> One day theater revealed its beauty to me in a Taziyeh performance that charmed my soul. I felt I should raise myself to its challenge, find the causes of its enchanting beauty and the reasons for my fascination. It made me aware of my paucity, aware of what I actually was ... I realized that my historical wounds cannot be healed or beautified with cosmetic borrowing from others. I studied history and found myself the heir to an immense world of atrocity and fear. Yet I gradually began to hear the voice of people, the voice of those who have not been mentioned in historical accounts. [532]

However, the emergence of oppressed forms and forgotten practices does not seem to be a matter of freezing the past. As Talajooy discusses Beyzayi disrupts the linear narratives and static characters of the

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[532] Talajooy, 'Beyzaie's Formation, Forms and Themes', ibid, p. 691.

history. For, the mythical figures are reborn in new shape which indicates the arrival of new concepts and forms that could negotiate between the past, the present and the future. [533]

In *The Ballad of Tara*, the ancient performance of Taziyeh seems to be summoned to observe the village life in a new light. While the rising classes in the country are confronted with media spectacles that promote the history of kings and land-owning dynasties in order to showcase Iran as a model for the rest of Asia, here the forgotten narratives of oppressed people is brought into light. The enigmatic and metaphoric story of a voiceless class is told through the dreams and hesitancies of an energetic young widow –one of the lowest in social hierarchies at the time. The confrontation of Tara with the sword brings up the question of what the use of engaging with the heritage of the past is for the emerging classes who strive to live life fully. Should the heritage be relinquished and ignored or would it be constructive in the present and future struggles.

Meanwhile, a wild stray dog attacks Tara and her children as they rest on the sea shore under the blazing sunlight. Tara hurriedly uses the sword to kill the dog and at that moment the use of the sword is revealed to her. The historical man asks her to join him in the world of the dead. Tara accepts and rushes to the village to ask Qelich to take care of her children. The historical man who did not think that Tara would accept his request, such a grave sacrifice, mounts his blood-stained horse and runs to the waves of the sea to join his people and disappears in the sea. Tara screams and follows him, then angrily attacks the waves with the sword. At the final scene, after Tara reached a new horizon about the past and the present, Qelich arrives and Tara who previously has accepted his proposal welcomes him. While the sword remains with the couple, they decide to hold their wedding ceremony after the harvest season.

It seems that *The Ballad of Tara* constructs a complicated allegory of history told by the oppressed people about their grief, desires and hopes. As I will demonstrate in the rest of this section, the allegorical structure of the film is formed through the gaps that are created through the narration, the visuals and editing. Although, the village life appears meticulously real and familiar, the film's signifying structure does not seem self-sufficient as we need to resort to the scenes, characters and story at another level of the narration. Early on in the film we realize that it is not simply about a woman who mourns the loss of grandfather as she is depicted being able to communicate with him.

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[533] Talajooy, 'Beyzaie's Formation, Forms and Themes', ibid, p. 692.

Moreover, she speaks to the historical man, a figure that is not seen by other members of the village. Tara is able to see the wounds of the historical man and hears about his suffering while the villagers could only communicate with this enigmatic history through symbolic performances in the ritual of Taziyeh. Indeed, the film does not suggest that Tara is a psychopath. Rather, it seems that it is perceived as a metaphor. Tara 'who breaks the border between the world of living and dead and speaks to ghosts'[534], is a textual formation which indicates a form of connection with the community's past, a soul that feels the collective memory, an emblem that perceives the perceptions, impressions, sufferings and dreams of the villagers. Through the creation of this allegorical context, the films attempts to construct a history, not through positivistic accounts, yet, through artistic heritage and emotional recollections.

It would be relevant to go back to the discussion of the influential intellectuals of the 1970s which I explored extensively in chapter four of this research. I argued that it is possible to observe that the counter-hegemonic theories and opinions of the discussed intellectuals gripped the rising classes in the 1970s and enforced a 'moral and intellectual transformation', as Gramsci indicates, in Iran. In chapter four, I assessed the critical perspectives of Ale-Ahmad and his notion of Westoxication. I, also, referred to Ali Shariati and his idea of a 'return to self' and the role of intellectuals in the process of denouncing Westoxication. It was stated that following Sartre, Shariati identifies a social group as assimilated people. They are a type of persons who suffer from deprivation of their collective past, roots and original values due to the growth of consumerism and a tendency to assimilate to the West. Through imitation and assimilation they attempt to acquire an identity. They wear a European mask to resemble them, a type of people who are disconnected from their social and historical background and attempt to survive through humiliation of their collective past.[535]

As I discussed in chapter five, a number of popular films in the 1970s engaged with a sharp criticism of assimilated people and attempted to devalue their beliefs and practices. Here, regarding *The Ballad of Tara*, it is possible to see that Beyzayi has reached a new level of social criticism. The assimilated people do not appear in this film. Instead, we see a village that is faithful to its way of life. The collective labour is not disrupted by the arrival of modern trained agricultural engineers. There is no sign of chic modern hotels and shopping malls. We see no trace of building roads or schools as is a recurrent theme in the films of 1960s and1970s. The consumption of westernized trends such as cloths, electronic commodities

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[534] Zhinous Nazokar, *Naghshe Zan Dar Adabiyat Sinemaye Iran; Az Aqaz ta Sal 1384 [The Role of Women in Iran's Cinema; from the start until 2005]*, Qatreh, 2015, p. 392-3.
[535] Ali Shariati, *Return*, Elham, 2010, p. 93.

and new technological tools do not appear. Indeed, this could be interpreted as a sign of the poverty of the villagers.

However, the poverty and self-sufficiency has endowed the villagers a sense of authenticity. They could not be described as people deprived of their cultural roots. The collective practices of rituals signifies the presence of a lively culture. *The Ballad of Tara* highlights a community which finds the meaning of existence through a re-reading of its history. Not only does it refute the monarchical and victorious history of ruling classes but it illuminates the history of the subaltern that is metaphorically maintained and narrated in the religious rituals. Here it is possible to identify Shariati's idea about the significance of national culture in forming political struggles. Although, I have not encountered a resource which indicates the direct influence of Shariati on Beyzayi, it seems possible to deduce that the production of this kind of film becomes possible only in a context that has come to acknowledge the urgency of 'the return to self'. The film discusses the ambivalent relation that ordinary people feel regarding the question of historical heritage. Yet, eventually, they reach a new horizon and attempt to integrate it in their present life.

In addition, it is possible to deduce that the structure of meaning in this allegory is constructed through a reference to the world of modernisation, consumption and assimilated people that is kept outside of the filmic text. It seems that due to censorship the director is not able to directly criticize the lavish media spectacle of monarchism, westernization and the Pahlavi regime's ignorance of cultural sensibilities. Therefore, an allegory is set up which through depicting the real people of productive classes, the subaltern, the value and dominance of the former is protested and challenged.

Moreover, in chapter four of this thesis, I also discussed that Shariati believes that it is the masses who are the source of knowledge of the intellectuals, and in relation to the community, history and faith the intellectual could develop a kind of awareness of time which is required for the process of civilization-making. However, the intellectual has the responsibility of making people aware of their knowledge. Regarding *The Ballad of Tara*, it is possible to see that such a proposition is placed at the heart of the film. We could see that the text emphasizes the role of Tara as a metaphor for the masses who is able to make a bridge between the suffering and hopes of the past, the present and the future. This uneducated farmer, who does not rely on her learnt science but on her intuition and heritage, is represented as a figure that is capable to sketch a new horizon for the spirit of her community.

Accordingly, it is possible to deduce that the intellectuals and in this context the socially-committed filmmakers developed what Shariati admitted as the awareness required for social progress, a kind of awareness that exists in the people and in *The Ballad of Tara* is brought into light and priorotised as the source of unification for the subaltern classes.

Nonetheless, despite the progressive dimensions of the film regarding the subaltern and the attempt to build a unified history based on the fragmented experiences of the past, the film does raises questions about its attitudes regarding national tradition and heritage. In order to clarify the point it would be useful to return to the chapter four of this thesis again and discuss Fanon's ideas about the three interwoven cultural positions that colonized people experience and go through. As noted previously, the first phase is assimilation whereby the colonized attempt to absorb the cultural practices and beliefs of the colonizer. The second phase is when a fraction of people break away from the assimilated. They return to their native people, their culture, costumes and particularities and value them as original. In this position the intellectual prioritizes the traditions and appearances of the people, yet the resort to the exterior layer of people's life prevents them to recognize and adhere to the dynamism of the culture. The native intellectual returns to the past events, childhood memories, ancient stories in order to re-interpret them[536]. However, Fanon observes that even in this process of extracting the past according to the 'borrowed aestheticism', the native intellectual is applying the techniques and language which is unfamiliar for the people[537].

Fanon 'is critical of this recovery of tradition because it is purely defensive and above all static, fixed and not profoundly grounded in the movements of change, not profoundly grounded in the historical dimension of culture'.[538] He identifies a third position which he calls the fighting phase. In that

> The native, after having tried to lose himself in the people and with the people, will on
> the contrary shake the people. Instead of according the people's lethargy an honored
> place in his esteem, he turns himself into an awakener of people; hence comes a
> fighting literature, a revolutionary literature and a national literature.[539]

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[536] Frantz Fanon, 'On National Culture', in *The Fanon Reader*, Pluto Press, 2006, p. 169.
[537] Fanon, 'On National Culture', ibid, p. 170.
[538] Michael Wayne, The Dialectic of Third Cinema' in *The Routledge Companion to Films and Politics*, Routledge, 2016, p. 14.
[539] Fanon, 'On National Culture', ibid, p. 169.

The question regarding *The Ballad of Tara* is that the adherence to the national and traditional culture would put the film text in the second or third Fanonian position. In the first observation, we find the text devoid of indication to contemporary collective challenges that prevailed at its time. For instance, there is no reference to the struggle with imperialism, the class conflict does not seem to have a signifier, and the force-fields around typical hegemonic spaces such as work place, places of reproduction (such as home), school, and police station are absent. Instead, other places are highlighted which are emblematic of history and tradition. For instance, the location whereby the Taziyeh is carried out is at the valley of an ancient ruined fortress, in open fields. While Tara and the historical man converse inside the fortress. Another example is the choice of clothes. Although, the film distances from the trendy consumerism of the time and demonstrates people in their local outfit, it is also implied that the film, in the words of Fanon, is confining the culture to particularities. For Fanon, the truth of a nation cannot be found in its customs but in its realities.

Despite this first impression of *The Ballad of Tara*, I would like to argue that the organization of space and the visual and narrative structure of the film unfolds the third Fanonian approach towards culture. In order to understand the organization of space, it would be relevant to briefly recount what I have discussed in relation to framing the hegemonic spaces in chapter three and five. In the former, I demonstrated that in the films of 1960s in Iran, the framing of men and women in the hegemonic spaces reveals a close bond between the human and nature, and indicates a form of harmony which is not disrupted by the alienation generated by the growth of the capitalist mode of production. For instance, in *The Sparrows Always Return Home* we see that the grief of the couple for the death of their daughter is conveyed through medium shots of the couple carrying the corpse and a dead dried tree. The cinematic representation of the human conditions acted as if nature could reflect the emotion of human. This approach emphases the harmony between human and nature. Moreover, I particularly highlighted the cinematic representation of women in the hegemonic spaces such as farm, schools, the alleys of village, etc., in order to illuminate the fact that in the films produced in the early 1960s in Iran, it is possible to see that segregated social spaces did not exist in the rural. For instance, In *Shores of Awaiting* we see the women of the fishing village participate in the protest with fishermen and they also participate in the construction of a school with labourers. The women young and old attend the school along with men and freely contribute to the class' affairs.

However, as I discussed the village comedy film series in chapter five, the situation drastically changes during the late 1960s and early 1970s in cinema. The village comedy film series demonstrate that the human is alienated from the nature and particularly from the land. The full shots of human and nature are few and they do not reflect any intimate emotional bond but alienation. In addition, women are increasingly demonstrated in medium and close-up shot whereby they are being confined to household work such as cooking, washing and baking partly because due to massive migration to the cities and high unemployment, no one works on land anymore.

In the allegorical film produced in 1970s such as *Ballad of Tara* the condition radically changes and we witness the arrival of new notions and frames in cinematic productions. In rural films for the first time we see the emergence of a female central figure such as Tara who is the one connecting multiple levels of narration and various visual spaces as a widow, a mother, a granddaughter, a farmer, a healer, a lover and a witness for the community's collective history.

> Tara is an admiring blend of myth and reality, an independent rural woman, beautiful
> and life-loving who at the same time is indifferent to material belongings, and
> benevolence is one of her characteristics. In Ballad of Tara her independence and her
> awareness of her abilities assists her to express her most tangible emotions with the
> most simple sentences, and to refute angrily any limitation regarding her natural
> rights.[540]

Some critics suggests that female film characters could represent the nation: 'Female characters in Iranian feature films produces between 1968-78, depict the self-image of the people as a nation, as well as the possible directions in which they felt that the nation should be heading'.[541]

In addition, the novelty of characterization of Tara becomes more apparent when we consider the fact that in the 1970s despite a few number of film directed by pioneer female directors such as *Marjan* (1955, Shahla Riahi), *The Sealed Soil* (1975, Morva Nabili), cinema constantly reproduced stereotypical pictures of women as mistress, lover, the destroyer of men's friendship, the deceived, the victim and the

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[540] Zhinous Nazokar, *Naghshe Zan Dar Adabiyat Sinemaye Iran; Az Aqaz ta Sal 1384 [The Role of Women in Iran's Cinema; from the start until 2005]*, Op cit., p. 389.

[541] Eldad Pardo, 'Iranian Cinema 1968-1978 Female Characters and Social Dilemmas On The Eve of the Revolution' in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2004, p. 29.

precarious, the sinful but innocent at heart, the murderer, and the ransom taker.[542] Nazokar extensively

and critically assessed these stereotypical image of women in numerous films of that period and

demonstrated that even progressive directors reproduced the stereotypes. Yet Beyzayi could be

observed as an artist who represents an exceptionally distinct profile for female characters:

> Beyzayi is the most distinguished filmmaker of the new-wave who in all his productions
> –scenarios, plays, films- considers the condition of women. He endows a distinct
> character, often central figure to the women and depicts her existence in a symbolic
> fashion … the protagonist is often a positive female character, coming from a working
> class or middle class background. She is often an active and independent person who
> as well as being emotionally sensitive and delicate is smart. She is an idealist who
> experiences disasters in life, and suffers from loneliness, weakness and hesitancies, yet
> she become aware of her limitations, finds the meaning of her life and reaches a new
> horizon.[543]

Regarding the organization of space *The Ballad of Tara* could be seen as a new approach towards the

relation between nature and the human. In this film we are confronted with numerous full shots which

includes the sky, the land, the sea, the forest with Tara as if surrounding her and providing a field for her

action. This new relation of characters and the natural scenes does not repeat the earlier harmonic

connection of the early 1960s films. It does not reflect the interior emotions of the people. Rather, it is

depicted as enigmatic and open to interpretation. It seems to appear as the companion of the

characters. Even sometimes it is in struggle with characters, as the sea swallows the historical man and

despite Tara's anger does not return. The forest does not seem supportive, it is the last battle place of

the historical man where he was betrays. The sea where Tara joyfully rests on its shore instantly

becomes a threat as wild animals like a stray dog could easily attack Tara and her children. Therefore, it

is possible to observe that in this allegorical film the trace of capitalist alienation from land and nature

cannot be identified, yet the earlier harmony that the feudalist social relation cherished is not embraced

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[542] Zhinous Nazokar, *Naghshe Zan Dar Adabiyat Sinemaye Iran; Az Aqaz ta Sal 1384 [The Role of Women in Iran's Cinema; from the start until 2005]*, ibid, p. 255-299.

[543] Zhinous Nazokar, *Naghshe Zan Dar Adabiyat Sinemaye Iran; Az Aqaz ta Sal 1384 [The Role of Women in Iran's Cinema; from the start until 2005]*, ibid, p. 367-9.

either. This new organic relation with nature is based on agricultural production, collective labour and a different sense of ownership.

Following other chapters in this research, both *The Night that it Rained* and *The Ballad of Tara* represent what Raymond Williams named as oppositional practices. In chapter two of this research, I extensively discussed the various practices of incorporation that hegemonic currents go through. In the chapter three, I demonstrated that although my selected films demonstrate some emergent practices (for instance regarding modern education), ultimately they remained residual and alternative. In chapter five, I demonstrated that Samad's village comedy does not go beyond alternative practices. Also, it represents the pre-emergent social, cultural and political practices, since, it is eager to abandon residual practices, yet, is not ready to embrace the emergent collective currents.

However, the films discussed in this chapter demonstrate a break from the previous films. I demonstrated that through epistemological break from conventional cinematic form and creating novel narrative structures, the films call for emergent practices. It is possible to see a new profile of subaltern people whether as workers or farmers. The completely new characters such as Tara emerged which demonstrates emergent social formations would receive positive reception. Also, it is possible to observe the formation of oppositional practices as both films point at the collectivity of subaltern people and how their social and political identity is formed through class characters. We can witness the arrival of collective practices which implicitly transcends individual priorities and ascribe a novel social and political role to the subaltern people.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to discuss the arrival of politically motivated filmmakers, the transformation of hegemonic practices and new spatial significations in films during 1970s in Iran. I discussed that a Gramscian moral and intellectual transformation occurred. The organic intellectuals and artists sought new subject matters and cinematic forms through which they engaged with subaltern classes. Through these oppositional and emergent practices they attempted to shape a unified history for the subaltern masses. The arrival of novel types of films coincided with the bankruptcy and crisis in the private sector which until then functioned through commercializing common sense. As I referred to Gramsci's perspective about common sense, I attempted to demonstrate how politically motivated filmmakers attempted to engage with people's common sense and its transformation. These attempts culminated in the production of protest documentaries and alternative films which endowed an expression and unity

to the disintegrated subaltern masses. This direction encourages the filmmakers to break away from global conventions of Hollywood cinema and like Latin American filmmakers they even break away from European neorealism. Since, like their counterpart in Latin America, they felt that they require new forms of expression that could register their experiences of exploitation, capitalism and imperialism. In order to discuss this emergence, I referred to two films *The Night It Rained* and *The Ballad of Tara*. Referring to the former film, I argued that the epistemological break occurred through challenging the official style of making documentary and developing an allegorical form through which the disintegration of the subaltern and their hardships of labour and social life were conveyed through allegorical gaps and ambiguities.

In addition, through examining *The Ballad of Tara* I provided a historical context for the formation of emergent and oppositional practices. I discussed that the film was made at a time when the Pahlavi regime attempted to represent a history of Iran according to the oppressive history of kings and powerful dynasties. It attempted to offer an image which the history, the experience, the hopes and desires of the subaltern classes found no signifiers in it. I demonstrated that *The Ballad of Tara* challenged this version of history by modernizing people's artistic heritage and collective memories. The film's focus on collective experiences signals the arrival of counter-hegemonic oppositional practices which move beyond individual preoccupations. It also engages with emergent characters and social situations through the distinct life of Tara.

Therefore, in this chapter I examined how the hegemonic processes of 1960s and 1970s culminated in cultural productions that signify the arrival of emergent and novel social and political forms, a phenomenon that called for the grand transformation in practicing politics and culture. The efforts of counter-hegemonic intellectuals eventually lead to the moral and intellectual transformation of the society in general and the cinema sector in particular. It is possible to observe the arrival of a revolution in all aspect through the artistic and cinematic history of these two decades in Iran.

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Conclusion

In this conclusion, I set out to review the main arguments of this thesis and provide an overview of the debates in order to illuminate what the original contributions of this research to the academic field of study are.

The original contribution of this research could be identified as a novel analysis of the significance of space in Iranian films. I examined the films produced during the 1960s and 1970s in Iran in order to investigate the cinematic representation of rural hegemonic spaces. I traced the transformation of the mentioned representation throughout the two decades in Iranian first, second and third cinema productions. I identified that the cinematic frame registers a dynamic relation between the characters, the natural and built environment, the machineries, etc., which demonstrate the effect of rapid industrialisation and the country's transition from feudalism to early capitalism.

In order to assess this transformation in cinema, I drew on Marxist theorists such as Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, Raymond Williams, Fredric Jameson, Franz Fanon, and Ernest Bloch, and, attempted to construct an argument which relies on the methodology of historical materialism. Previously, other film historians and critics attempted to discuss the cinematic currents during the 1960s and 1970s in Iran, but they did not shape their argument according to historical materialism. Therefore, one of the original contributions of this research lies in the fact that the framework of its debates and arguments is chiefly historical materialism and Marxist.

In the first chapter of this research which was the literature review of the major books published in the field of Iranian film studies, I attempted to probe the question related to the mode of production, so that it would be possible to investigate its effect on the process of film production. Previously, this crucial question remained often not addressed. For instance, Hamid Dabashi in his book discusses the formation of a new representation of reality in the Iranian cinema during the period. He probes the new stories, characters and subject matters. To do this, he sometimes resorts to the interpretive methodology of historical materialism, yet he is inconsistent and does not mention the effect of the transition from feudalism to early capitalism on/in cinema.

Hamid Reza Sadr is more attentive to the materiality of the historical condition in which the films were produced. He provides an accurate picture of the forces and relations of production and uses to convincing statistics. However, his deployment of the historical materialist method is problematic. Since, his perception of the forces/relations of production, what is also known as the base in Marxist

terminology, is static and frozen. Through a reference to Raymond Williams's theoretical proposition, I discussed that the base is better treated as the ongoing processes that would induce contradictory and unprecedented outcomes. Also, it seemed that Sadr took the cinematic representation as the reflection of the material condition. Here, by drawing on Williams, I discussed that this model of interpretation seems to be reductive and it would be better to deploy Williams' proposition which is to think of mediating structures between the objective realities and the artistic production. These mediating structures allow for a creative treatment of objective materials.

Lastly, I discussed Naficy's approach towards the question of mode of production which is far more sophisticated than the other two authors. He believes that in the Iranian cinema a sort of hybrid mode of production was dominant, a blend of socialist policies (because the state was involved) and capitalist strategies (because the private-sector was strongly present). In his view the mixture of artisanal practices in the small private studios and industrial practices supported by the state generated what he named as a hybrid mode of production.

However through various references to Marx and Therborn, I argued that Naficy's approach was not theoretically accurate and the dominant mode of production was early capitalism. Therefore, one of the prime conclusion of the first chapter, which makes this research distinct from previous ones, is that I demonstrated that the field of filmmaking was chiefly administrated under the early capitalist mode of production.

Another notable point that the first chapter argues for is the different view towards the problematic of censorship in the Iranian cinema during 1960s and 1970s. All other historians and commentators of the Iranian cinema discuss the issue of censorship as a merely cultural problem which was rooted in cultural characteristics such as Oriental despotism. On the contrary, I attempted to demonstrate that the problematic of censorship, the contradictory practices of the Pahlavi regime which would fund a film in order to immediately ban it from screening, is a modern cultural and political phenomenon. The practice appears to be the outcome of the contradiction between the forces and relations of production according to Marxist terminology. Since, on the one hand, it is possible to detect that the industrial transformation of the infrastructure in cinema (such as new techniques and new equipment) provided fascinating opportunities for the filmmakers to comment on the existing social relations such as class conflict, the discrimination against the various ethnicities, etc.

On the other hand, the social structures did not transform as fast as the forces of production and the banned films were the outcome of the conflict between forces and relations of production. Moreover, I drew the attention to Therborn's perspective which argues that the intervention of the capitalist state into the reproduction and relations of production is a common practice. Therborn suggests that the various modes of state intervention in the process of production and social reproduction does not aim to legitimize its presence yet seeks to have representation in all societal functions and to mediate the fundamental contradictions which form the political struggle. Accordingly, it is possible to observe censorship not as a sign of a hybrid mode of production (as Naficy suggests, he believes that any kind of state intervention is socialist), but as a mechanism through which the capitalist Pahlavi state maintained its representation in the cinema industry and mediated between the competing fractions of the bourgeois class.

Henceforth, through the arguments of chapter one, I demonstrated that the mode of production was chiefly capitalist. Second, I argued that the issue of censorship was not merely a cultural issue of oriental despotism, but the modern outcome of the contradiction of forces and social relations of production. This premise prepares the research for the next stage of investigation which is the appropriate theoretical framework based on the fact that we are confronted with capitalist industry in the 1960s and 1970s in Iran.

In the second chapter, I attempted to map the theoretical discussions that inform the arguments in the proceeding chapters. It was necessary to illuminate what notion of hegemony would be used throughout the research. I started the inquiry about the notion of hegemony through referring to the notion of historical bloc as the ensemble of both structure and superstructure. This perspective proposes that the relation of forces in the base cannot be totally reflected in the superstructure, rather, it contributes to the formation of hegemony. According to the existing scholarship, I constructed a notion of hegemony which is dependent on the Gramscian notion of the historical bloc. This approach regards hegemony as the alliance of certain classes at a particular temporal conjuncture that could produce certain hegemonic force-fields which are fought for through both consent and coercion. Another original contribution of this research could be observed in chapters three, five and six, as I attempted to identify the changing class alliances which also affected the process of hegemonic inclusion on the silver screen and its particular effect on the cinematic organization of space.

The use of hegemony for the Iranian context raises a number of questions whether the study of hegemonic struggle suits the Iranian context as it is more close to the so-called conception of 'the east'.

Here, it is possible to view another original contribution of this research. I identified the operation of a number of Gramsci's core theoretical concepts in the Iranian context such as the formation of a historical bloc and class alliance (chapter three), the emergence and effect of organic intellectuals (chapter four), the function of 'common sense' and the revolutionary demand to break away from it to form a new 'common sense', the existence of subaltern classes and the importance of their awareness, the necessity of a moral and social transformation of the masses as the pre-condition for the revolution. Therefore, this research demonstrated that Gramsci's revolutionary perspectives could be applied to the so-called 'east' in order to analyse the social, cultural and political effect of capitalist development, since, the logic of capitalist mode of production is operative in that field.

In addition, in chapter two, I extensively engage with Raymond Williams' method of hegemonic analysis. He identifies the hegemonic process of inclusion and proposes four categories: residual, emergent, alternative and oppositional. In the proceeding chapters, I drew on this model of analysis and mapped out the structures of feeling in the selected films that I analysed. For instance, in chapter three, I demonstrated that films produced in the 1960s disclose a strong tension between residual and emergent practices in the rural areas where farmers, fishermen and industrial workers live and work. In *Sparrows Always Return Home*, it is possible to observe an attempt to resolve the conflict between the emergent modern health practices and the residual beliefs of religion. Unlike other research in the field of Iranian film studies, I attempted to contextualize this tension and referred to similar circumstances in the global cinema. For instance, I drew attention to the similarities between the Iranian and Spanish cinema. Also, I discussed in detail how the well-known industrial film *The Wave, Carole and Rock* is indebted to Grierson's documentary principles, particularly to *The Drifters*.

Another notable contribution of this research could be observed in chapter four and five when the counter-hegemonic debates of the organic intellectuals were brought forward. I referred to a number of significant concepts and beliefs proposed by these intellectuals which I argue were influential in cinema too, themes such as occidentosis, contradictions of modernism and return to self. Previously, other historians such as Abrahamian, Naficy and Dabashi had pointed out the influence of intellectuals such as Ale-Ahmad and Shariati. However, they did not indicate how they affected cultural producers (in this case the industry of cinema) through a theoretical framework.

In contrast, I attempted to illuminate their efficacy through drawing on the Gramscian theory of hegemony and demonstrated how their ideas formed the emergent cultural currents; powerful debates that could also be observed in film texts such as the village comedy series and the cinematic production

of progressive filmmakers. According to the Gramscian perspective, both people and intellectuals have experienced a passage of connected knowing and feeling. This passage points at the formation of a social cohesion that provides a way from knowing to understanding and to feeling, and, vice versa, from feeling to understanding and knowing.

Another original contribution of chapter five can be found in the proposition that mainstream comedy of the 1970s was indebted to traditional performative arts. Unlike Naficy who observes the mainstream cinema of 1960s and 1970s as being influenced by miniature and visual arts, I argued that it would be more accurate to search for the inspirations and roots of popular films in Iranian traditional performative arts such as Ru-Hozi. I drew attention between the similarities of the village comedy series and Ru-Hozi performance and argued that it could be seen as a modernized form of the old popular practices whereby class conflict has been expanded and developed according to the new forms of authority and the new shape that class conflict has taken.

In addition, another original contribution to the field that I have made is that through this chapter I proposed a critical synthesis, between western Marxist cultural theory and the specificities of Iranian society and culture, including specific Iranian theoretical currents such as ale-Ahmad and Shariati. Chapter five and the discussion of the village comedy series attempted to use films as a form of cultural evidence to reconstruct the complexities of a social and historical situation as it is lived and experienced.

In chapter six, I attempted to put the emerging practices of politically motivated filmmaking in its historical and socio-political context. Through the examples of *The Night It Rained* and *The Ballad of Tara*, I argued that these films attempted to break away from the prevalent common sense perception and to create a socio-political awareness. This new consciousness seems to endow the disintegrated subaltern groups (industrial workers and peasants) a coherent history that is required for their political unity. The original contribution of this chapter could be observed in the way I discuss the two films according to Gramsci's theory of common sense and the importance of its transformation for a revolutionary change in the society. While other film critics and historians emphasized the deconstruction of reality in *The Night It Rained*, and, the mythical signification of *The Ballad of Tara*, I highlighted Gramsci's revolutionary thought in the aforementioned films. In order to do so, I highlighted the role of the form of allegory to break away from the existing common sense. I discussed how the filmmakers created levels of gaps and formed an allegorical structure at the narrative, visual and spatial levels which generated new signifying structures of meaning to convey the experience of the subaltern people. The representation of hegemonic spaces in these two films, accordingly, found new social

meanings. The depiction of characters, built and natural environment moved beyond the residual and alternative practices of previous films and became emerging and oppositional.

Therefore, in this research, I argued how the cinematic productions of the 1960s and 1970s demonstrated a transformation of spatial signification from residual and alternative practices to emergent and oppositional ones.

Appendix One

Interview with Ali Abbasi: his Cultural labour through the mirror of history

The growth and establishment of modern media during the period of 1960s and 1970s in Iran is an issue which has not been discussed in detail. The process of modernization and the consequent industrialization of the sector lead to the emergence of new cultural practices and a new class of professionals who in a dialectical relation produced novel types of film texts. During the two decades of the 1960s and 1970s the division of labour within the media and particularly within the industry of cinema expanded significantly and a national cinema emerged which struggled to become independent in all aspects. In this paper, I explore the above claims through an interview with one of the most well-known, innovative and pioneer film producers of the time, Ali Abbasi. In that, through his memories and experiences within the realm of media and cinema as a producer and the chair of producer's syndicate during the crisis-driven years of the 1970s, I will attempt to follow the development of cinema within its rapid transformation to the field of modern entertainment industry for the growing middle classes and the field of capital accumulation. Mr Abbasi's film studio known as Payam film institute, was among the three pioneer studios who distanced themselves from the commercial cinema and produced films which facilitated the emergence of independent movement known as new-wave cinema. In this interview, I asked questions about his social background, personal motivations, where the capital for filmmaking came from, where he acquired skills as a producer, the development of independent film studios, the industrial crisis in the 1970s and the producer's union.

This is a three hour long interview which was conducted in June 2014 in Paris. It focuses on Abbasi's career before the 1979 revolution, and it has been carried out in such detail for the first time within the last thirty five years since 1979. In this paper, I attempt to draw a picture of him not only as an influential producer but as an individual who made use of the historical changes of his time to fulfil his ambitions and aims in the political and economical space of the crisis driven decades of the 1970s. I attempt to construct his life and work according to the typical opportunities and limitations of his time. For this purpose, I also rely on two short interviews which were written by Iranian film journalists and published in cinema related magazine such as *Film* and *Bani Film* in 2013 which provide interesting and helpful points.

Early Days

Ali Abbasi was born on 1943 in Tehran. He grew up in the capital in a middle class setting and his father worked in the field of construction. Throughout the interview, he did not mention his family and as it would be indicated he earned the starting capital for media activities himself and independent from his family. At high school he made his first work as a pupil in the form of wall-newspaper[544]. Then he made a 12 page magazine for his school which brought him into contact with publishers and journalists. He started to work in *Mehr Iran* magazine as a proof reader, then was allowed to answer readers' letters until the day that the editor left and he accepted the responsibility for everything[545].

After, while still a pupil at high school, he moved to work in another magazine called *filmha va pard*eha. In his time as the editor of this film magazine he offered a free cinema ticket to the readers in order to increase the sale and he thought that it was effective to attract viewers.

While working as a young journalist, he attempted to work in national radio. Radio since its start in the 1920s had become the most popular national modern medium with its diverse and attractive programs[546]. It seems that he idealized famous radio presenters such as Peyman brothers[547], thus through his journalist acquaintances he also started working there. His first work was to produce a literary program whereby he read selective short texts on Friday nights and he said that it was very popular.

In addition, he innovated a live radio contest which was a novel program at the time. Through his connections he found sponsors among advertising agencies who funded this letter-writing contest which accepted thirty contester weekly.

Then, he attempted to work in television. At the time, only a privately own TV existed which was founded in 1959[548]. Through this medium, he moved one step forward and closer to cinema. He produced a fifteen minute program, entitled You and Cinema, whereby three minutes of new films on

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[544] Wall-newspaper is a type of journal which is produced on a vast flat sheet of paper and is typically divided into columns such as news, art, sport, etc. It is common in Iranian high school to produce it especially for the sake of national events

[545] Please note that at the time, in 1930s, the division of labour in the print sector was not as specified and developed as it is in Iran now. And in the absence of professional writers it is possible to imagine a teenager would be asked to carry out multiple responsibilities.

[546] Sade, Iranian Cinema: A Political History, p.23

[547] Ata-o-llah Payman and Asad-o-llah Peyman

[548] The national state TV was founded in 1966.

cinema was screened and discussed by the presenter and sometimes there were interviews with the film crew. Also, domestic and international news about cinema was translated from English and French and collected by him and his college Jamshid Arjoman. In response to my question that how he chose the film he stated that it was related to their time of public screening. In the beginning they mainly advertised foreign films and gradually moved towards domestic productions. The success of the program allowed him to increase the time limit from fifteen to thirty minutes and it ran for a couple of years. The cost of broadcasting such a program on a private TV channel was primarily paid by the film distributers.

It was interesting that Abbasi remembered that since he was too young to appear before the camera, he was not allowed to be the presenter. And as he was eager to distinguish himself and become well-known, he wrote the news text and foreign names in a difficult style in order to challenge the presenter. Eventually, he was allowed to carry out presentation of the program which finally connected him with a few but key figures working in the cinema. I mentioned this story not only to describe his character, but also to indicate the changing social relation of the society in general and the media sector in particular. Throughout the interview Abbasi mentioned that during his career in cinema he found himself the target of jealousy and social hatred because of his successes. It is not possible for me to judge his personal impression yet I think that his individual struggle could point at the larger growing culture of competition which was the consequence of the expansion of capitalist social relations. I described his early days in film journalism, radio and television in order to draw attention to how he moved from simple print media towards the most modern one that was cinema. He gradually moved step by step without the social support of family relations or traditional sources of money. Thus, his movement and growth could indicate how the changing forces of production (arrival of new technologies) allowed him to move beyond the traditional boundaries. Moreover, through the development of new media he became able to gradually make the money necessary for production and become close to the people (such as advertising agencies, distributers, etc.) who could provide him with the first capital that was necessary for his film production.

Abbasi recalled that the work and collaboration with people in the field of cinema encouraged him to become a producer as he saw himself more qualified than other people. He founded an advertising agency called Nemouneh in 1961[549] at the age of 18 and went on to transform the agency to an advertising-cinematic company named Payam Film Institute in 1966. In this way, in 1966 when he was in

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[549] Taken from http://www.film-magazine.com/news/iran/267/

his early twenties he decided to produce his first feature film. At the time he had a BA in Management and in order to postpone compulsory military service he was studying another BA in Law.

Accordingly, he produced *Three Cavaliers* (1967). The script was based on the story of *Massachusetts* which was adapted for cinema by Hadi Khorsandi.[550] It was directed by Bahram Raypour and acted by relatively unknown actors. The film narrates the story of a young woman who is deceived by her lover (a man who had supposedly studied and lived in the developed world) she is driven to commit suicide while three friends realize her intention and rescue her. Helping the woman, the three men disrupt the marriage of the unfaithful lover with a wealthy woman. Finally, one of them falls in love with her and they get married.

Abbasi recalled that it was a great surprise to him that the film was successful in box office, the storyline was not constructed convincingly and as the recorded sequences did not meet the time limit, Reypour took the crew to a green and pleasant area in Tehran called Poll-e-Roumi and recorded scenes irrelevant to the central story. In addition, the final film was screened in February/March[551] yet it successfully attracted a significant number of viewers. Nonetheless, Abbasi did not have a positive opinion about the film and wished to produce a solid film in which the standard of a quality cinema was met. He was interested in the scenario because it somehow reflected a sense of social critique yet it was not materialized properly as film. It seemed like since his first film he sought to work with directors and artists who could transfer that sense of critique in a well-crafted cinematic language.

Another notable motivation for him to support the themes of social critique was to foreground one of the social issues at the time. The issue was about the foreign educated graduates who were always put superior to the Iranian educated youth because they had studied in the developed world.[552] Abbasi, also, in two more films would return to this theme yet he honestly commented that none of these films with the specific social critique were acceptable from cinematic perspective. This idea might shed light on the

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[550] Hadi Khorsandi is a well-known comic writer who wrote for satirical magazines before 1979. After the revolution he has lived as a refugee in London because of his pro-royalist views. Although, Khorsandi later became successful in his work yet Abbasi believed that his collaboration with the young Khorsandi as a script adaptor was not successful.

[551] February/March are generally known as the worst months for public screening of a film since it is a month just before *Nowrouz*, the Iranian national holiday. In contrast, April is known as the best time for public screening because of Nowrouz.

[552] In the film the unfaithful lover attempts to deceive the daughter of a wealthy factory owner by a lie that he had studied and lived in the US.

fact that in his time (and probably in the current time for Iranian youth), the cinematic language was not developed enough to reflect on this ongoing social contest aesthetically effective.

In the year after, he decided to work with a director who actually was familiar with the cinematic language, its potentials, possibilities and details. Samuel Khachikian, the Iranian-Armenian director was known to be able to direct a film based on the global standards of cinema. He pioneered in making detective-thriller film genre and patriotic action movies and is recognized as the key director of film noir in Iran[553]. In order to indicate Khachikian importance at the time, Abbasi elsewhere stated that[554] at the time there were only three distinct film studios: Azhir film, Misaghiyeh Studio and his studio, Payam. And he recalled that all three of them established themselves in the early days of their cinema career through working with Khachikian.[555] Accordingly, he produced *Hengam*eh (1968) and *Nare-toufan* (Storm's Cry, 1969) with him. The first was based on a film by Billy Wilder *Sabrina* (1954) which Parviz Davayi[556] adapted it as a scrip for him.

Abbasi, however, realized that although Khachikian's films were well-made, yet they could not be regarded as Iranian productions, for, the films that he produced with Khachikian did not bear the sign of Iranian culture. If we compare those early two films with his later films in the 1970s, his concern becomes noticeable. It is possible to think of his concern as the absence of a sense of locality that could be represented in the spatial and temporal signifiers. For instance, *Hengameh* could demonstrate this dual tendency; on the one hand the film has a wonderfully constructed story, although its story is not novel but it could absorb the viewer until the end. In contrast with other commercial films at the time, it successfully makes its characters tangible, and although they live far away from the reality of the Iranian society, yet their characterization is realistic. The dialogue is economical and no extraneous and irrelevant conversation or scene could be found. Unlike other commercial films in which terrible editing renders the story incomprehensible, the editing is competent.

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[553] Naficy, H (2011) *A Social History of Iranian Cinema: The Industrializing Years, 1941-1978*. Duke University Press, 2011, p.153.
[554] Interview published by Bani film taken from http://caffecinema.com/home/51-interviews-iran/131081350.html?tmpl=component&print=1&page=
[555] Indeed, there were many more privately owned film studios at the time yet in this way Abbasi distinguished himself and the two other ones (Azhir film and Misaghiyeh studio) from the commercial cinema which was only driven by profit motivation. He believed that the three studios developed and established a kind of respectable and decent cinema since their impetus was beyond profit.

[556] Parviz Davayi was a well-known film critic who later in life started writing short stories too. Abbasi mentioned how a generation of film lovers were influenced by his fair judgment in journals and newspaper. He was not a script writer and writing *Hengameh* was exceptional.

However, *Hengameh* lacks the signifiers that could distinguish the setting of the film from another country. It takes place in a bourgeois family setting in Tehran and narrates the story of their chauffeur's chuffer's son, Behzad, who is in love with the two sisters of the family. In the film many sequences were shot in the private and public urban spaces such as boulevards, parks, airport, military navigation offices, parties, bedrooms, etc. Nonetheless, there is no sign which could distinguish these places from the similar locations in other countries like Egypt or Turkey. What Abbasi described as the lack of Iranian culture could indicate the dominance of the culture of international bourgeoisie as a norm. The standardization of culture as 'a whole way of life' in Williams' language[557], could point at the formation of a hegemony in which the western model was preferred.

Moreover, the social relations of the people do not correspond to the actual and existing relations in the Iranian society at the time and generally the story neutralizes the class conflict within and outside that house. In order to go beyond the class boundaries, Behzad joins the military and becomes a navigation officer. His new social position helps him to go beyond his traditional place and to achieve an admirable position to the extent that both sisters fall in love with him. Thus, one of the ideological messages that film indicates could be that it offers singular solutions to the problem of a class or class boundaries are not fixed and stagnant and could be overcome by individual hard work.

It is possible to conclude that Abbasi realized that for a distinct cinema which would be successful in the box office (so that it would provide sufficient capital for a new film) and to make a distinct visual text, it is better to incorporate Iranian culture, worldviews, costumes and rituals, to visualize locations which are familiar for the majority of its viewers, to represent their outfit, neighborhood and personal origins. I would like to interpret this direction towards national and local culture partly as a growing interest to historicize the collective experiences in a film text. It is possible to deduce that an interest in incorporating national spatial and temporal signs, could be a step towards materializing the historical situation. In this way, cinema appears as a modern apparatus to form a new conception of history whereby ordinary people and places would find a distinct sign that is worth to be registered as a film.

With this new vision he produced *Window* (1970) in which Jalal Moghaddam (1959-1996) was the director. It is a black and white film in 109 minutes and is based on the Hollywood drama *A Place in the Sun* (1951) directed by George Stevens which itself is based on the novel *An American Tragedy* (1925) written by Theodore Dreiser. Parviz Davayi adapted the American film to a scenario and a mixture of

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[557] Williams, R. (1977) *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 19.

cinema stars and new artists formed the crew. In the Iranian adaptation we can see that many changes were applied to make an Iranian story. Now the film was set in both a bourgeois and working class houses and urban setting and incorporated many details of the life of characters which could be identified as Iranian. For instance, the main character Sohrab works in the car-making factory which provides a glimpse into the actual working place in the end of the 1960s in the country. In this way the film produced a picture of historical Iranian couples, and although the theme of love, jealously, murder, poverty, wealth, etc are universal subjects, yet for Abbasi *Window* could be distinguished as an Iranian production.

I asked Abbasi why he chose an American film for adaptation, were the audience more eager for foreign productions. He replied simply that at the time there were no original scripts available for cinema. There were no professional script writers or story material suitable for dramatization. He said that if we return to that time in order to evaluate the story of films we could find three general categories: one which was based on Iranian classic texts such as Amir Arsalan, the other was cheap stories in the style of Hossein-gholi Mosta'an[558] and the last one was the detective films which had an unconvincing story but the image was attractive. In his view, the Iranian cinema was suffering from the lack of original scripts and professionals who specifically could write for cinema. Abbasi asserted that the success of commercial cinema was not rooted in its story but in the fact that it was consumed by the lower working classes for whom seeing films was equal to going to a cabaret, or more specifically cinema had become a cabaret for those who could not afford going to the actual cabaret. Abbasi described their experience of a film as mainly including eating snacks, listening to music, watching dance and scenes of physical fight and observing the final triumph of the central characters. This cinema was not desirable for Abbasi and he wished to go beyond such a limitation and to be able to go beyond that dominant cinema he needed a good story which did not exist. He said that he read many Iranian novels but they were not suitable for cinema. Thus, adaptation from American film remained the only solution. He added that at least he did not borrow from Turkish and Indian cinema. It is possible to observe the lack of original script and the consequent process of adaptation as indicating the state of development in cinema as an industry. It draws attention to the fact that the division of labour was not modernized and professionalized. The task of writing specifically for cinema was not defined and practised and the script was not recognized as an essential and basic form for production. However, the condition of producing this industrial object

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[558] Hossein-Gholi Mosta'an was a journalist and a fiction writer whose novels were bestsellers, his works represented the mainstream literature

went under significant changes and Abbasi could be seen as an example of those few people who enthusiastically professionalized the tasks and took the production one step forward. In this way, Payam Film Institute became a hub for the young educated filmmakers and cinema lovers. Many made their first great films with his support such as Hatami, Kimiayi, Naderi, etc. and those who were in the commercial sector did not approach him for production.

The fact that he imagined a new stratum of viewers beyond the common audience of commercial cinema brought up another question for me, I asked him that when he was thinking of films beyond the commercial cinema, he probably imagined his viewers, I wondered who they were, or to put it another way, who was his ideal viewer? He replied that as much as film had reverence in his opinion, he wished to be successful at the box office. In other words, we could interpret that his impetus for working in the industry was beyond profit making, yet in order to continue he wished a good sell and he could not always meet his criteria. For instance, as the alternative films which were produced in his studio did not sell, he was almost bankrupted by the early 70s, so he asked a commercial film director Iraj Ghaderi to make two films in his studio. Both films sold well in Tehran and other cities to the extent that he acquired enough money to again invest in alternative films.[559] Thus, he could not remain constantly faithful to his criteria of filmmaking and to follow his desire, he sometimes had to ignore his personal preferences.

However, he defined a framework for production that his ideal films should not have scenes of cabaret style dance and violent fights yet, it should work well at the box office. It seems that Abbasi' ideal viewer was someone who was interested to go beyond sole entertainment when it came to cinema, someone who had questions and concerns about the world and had or would like to have an alternative perception of reality. For, Abbasi's films presented a more realistic vision of the world in comparison to commercial cinema which offered rather a phantasmatic perspective to the reality of society. As Naficy pointed out, commercial cinema style was a banal kind of presentation whereas the alternative cinema at the time was concerned with representation and one of its central issues was to find a way to develop a new style of representing national reality. Also, Abbasi emphasized that his alternative films were successful at the box office in Tehran but not in provincial cities. This fact could indicate that his ideal viewer existed in developed urban setting and were conscious of a kind of social relations which was

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[559] Bani Film, 2013, http://caffecinema/home/51-interviews-iran/13108-1350-html?tmpl=component&print=1&page=

developed through modernization. This type of audience which experienced living within the new capitalist social relations, had high expectations which were not met by the commercial cinema.

Moreover, he sought to produce a thoughtful cinema which at the time only existed in conversations and critical writings therefore, it was abstract. He admits that the type of cinema he advocated was an ideal and had not materialized yet. Hence, it is possible to think that the type of audience that he desired was ideal too. It seems like his preferred audience were among the educated middle class, a new stratum of society which through the industrialization began to grow and expand. In a dialectical relation between both sides (the film production team and the middle class viewers) slowly and gradually impact each other's expectation of an ideal cinema. In the dialectical process of making a film Abbasi produced movies that could be categorised as being between the first and the second cinema. He made commercial films such as *Hengame* which were close to the mainstream cinema. On the other hand he made films such as *Window* which challenged the commercial cinema and attempted to go beyond the familiar boundaries of the mainstream cinema and were more akin to the art house movies of the second cinema. During the 1970s and particularly towards the end of that decade he made films based on original script and supported the young directors and as I will discuss later a number of them could be categorized as third cinema. In the next part I will explore his new orientation in detail in order to evaluate the condition of production.

Towards a National Cinema

Payam Film Institute was active in two fields: one was advertising and the other was cinema. It is interesting that many of the young directors who intended to make alternative films were first introduced to Payam Film Institute through advertising. For instance, Kiarostami besides making films designed the institute's logo and made the credit of many of Abbasi's films. Abbasi recalled that Ali Hatami[560] made an advert for him which caught his eyes as it was well-crafted and that was the beginning of their long and fruitful collaboration. Later Hatami gave him the script of *Hasan, the Bald* (1970) which he had written and Abbasi accepted to produce. The film is set in a sort of mythical time and the story has many resemblances to Iranian old literature and folklore stories. Hasan the bald is a

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[560] Ali Hatami (1944-1996) was an Iranian director, screenwriter, art director and costume designer. He was among the first people who paid attention to Iranian traditions. Although not being received in the International festival he was well-known inside Iran for making films based on historical and folklore figures.

young man who in search of a way to meet and free his imprisoned beloved meets a jinn who is eager to help him on the condition that in return for each wish that the jinn fulfils, Hasan would give him one sixth of his life time. During the film Hasan meets many people in search of help and all disappoint him. Finally, he agrees to give all his life to the jinn to become able to free his beloved. In a fight he becomes able to liberate his beloved and they get married. When Hasan goes to give his life to jinn, he does not accept it and simply disappears. The whole film is preoccupied with traditional Iranian culture. For example, the film revisits the old style houses, bath house, garden, Bazar, in order to highlight the traditional costumes and rituals. It is also the first musical film in Iran in which music does not appear in cabaret style song and dance. The film was successful at the box office and made the crew well known. Abbasi asserted that the success of the film was partly related to the fact that he took risks. For instance, *Hasan, the Bald* had an original scenario and none of the crew was sure how it would be received by the public. It was the first colour musical film in the history of Iranian cinema and again the reception of audience was a serious question. The central character Hasan was acted by at the time an unknown actor named Parviz Sayyad. Throughout the process of film making many changes happened to the original scenario because of the close collaboration between the director and producer. During shooting, Abbasi watched the daily outcome every night and discussed it with Hatami. It was said that Hatami had not made a feature film before, so Mr Abbasi appointed Nasrollahe Kani who was an experienced cameraman to shoot the film. His choice of Kani and Hatami, of young and old, proved to be fruitful. What is important to highlight here is that Abbasi as a producer took profound risks which could severely damage his career (as it did in the early 70s) yet he was very proud to do so since taking a risk meant to attract talented youth who made wonderful films for the first time. He mentioned *Shamal-baba*(1971) another musical film that Hatami made with another producer later and he said that film did not sell well in contrast to *Hasan, the Bald* and Abbasi believed that the reason for its defeat was that it was not the first of its kind.

In this way, since the early 1970s the industry of cinema developed to the extent that original scripts began to arrive at his film studio and he even formed a council of writers who included journalists, critics, fiction writers and their main task was to evaluate the script and give feedback in details and general recommend changes. What is interesting about Abbasi's work as a key figure at the heart of the process of production is that his studio was established by taking risks without being supported by big capital or the state. He said that he only relied on the box office to continue working. Meanwhile, he mentioned that he started other small businesses to feed his cinematic career. For instance, with the help of wealthy friends, they started the first traditional restaurant in Tehran named Khan Salar where

its usual customers were foreign guests and diplomats. Also, he stated that he achieved a sort of credibility with the banks that he was working with which helped him to borrow money. The business activities here and there helped him to continue film production despite the failure in the box office.

However, because of other facts they met serious difficulties in the Payam Film Institute throughout the 1970s. For instance, on the most equipped and excellent cinemas of the capital it was American films dubbed to Farsi which were dominant. All the American companies had an office and even cinema in Tehran such as Paramount Cinema, Radio city Cinema, Vanak Cinema, etc. Even the box office was not a reliable source. At the time the ownership of cinema was not centralized and each cinema was owned by individuals who shared the profit of the films with the producer. For instance, the ticket price for a foreign film was 40 Rial and for Iranian film was 30 Rial, 20% of an Iranian production belonged to municipal, the remaining 24 Rial was divided equally (50%) between the producer and the cinema owner. Yet, it was common that the cinema owner would not pay the producer as contracted. Abbasi said that the cinema owner would give him 50% profit as promised in the first week of public screening, but from the second week he would pay Abbasi less and less down to 30% and each week would reduce until it became 20%. Also, the cost of film advertisement was supposed to be equally divided between the producer and the cinema owner which the latter would not usually pay. Thus, Abbasi concluded that from a 30 Rial ticket his share was only 8 Rial which is approximately 21% of the ticket price. This amount of money could hardly pay for the production of the next film.

Thinking about the risky and difficult condition of producing an independent film, I wondered what his motivation was. It seemed that considering the financial difficulties, profit making was not his central desire. Thus, I asked why he persisted in making films in such a crisis-driven sector until the end of the 1970s, whether he had personal, emotional or maybe political impetus which was somehow expressed in his films. His later films such as *Tangsir* (1973) could even be categorized as belonging to the third cinema. He also said that since *Tangsir* (1963) was a novel written by Sadegh Choubak (1916-1998), he bought its copyright from the novelist and because another version of *Tangsir* as a novel existed he bought the copyright of the second too. Such enthusiasm for making a film of the novel could perhaps highlight his passion for anti-colonial themes. He was not eager to talk about politics and said that he despised it and he did not belong to any political front or group, yet he added that he did not despise having principles. His father was a supporter of Dr Mossaddegh and the anti-colonial movement for nationalizing the oil industry. He continued that political independence had an immense value for him.

He considered his ideals not being classified and limited by any political group. Nonetheless, concepts such as justice and resistance against colonialism were important for him.

Moreover, Abbasi highlighted his personal and emotional passion as his prime impetus. For instance, he stated that one of the underlying idea of *Hengame* was the passion for equality since the film advocated egalitarianism, for, the story was anchored on a working class character who studied hard, made progress in his life and became a navigation officer. In other words, the film supported the idea that poverty could be changed for good and class boundaries are not natural and fixed and that people could make progress and change their life. To conclude, I think that Abbasi is a special producer in his own time. He was someone who encouraged risk, novelty and innovation. He embraced young and amateur filmmakers since he trusted their talent and was eager for producing a new vision of the Iranian culture and society. He did not seem to be interested in making profit through films, rather he attempted to transform the dominance of the standards of commercial sector and create a new cinema. This attempt did not solely rely on textual production for it required a different social and political context which led him to engage with the producer's union. In the next section, I will elaborate his activities in relation to the union.

Union of Film Producers

Abbasi was the chairman of the Film Producers' union for nearly eight years. He disliked the responsibility immensely and said that for him it was a very difficult task since the union encompassed a wide range of incongruous people who followed their own interests and were indifferent to the union and other producers' interest. He remembered that, counting him in, only a few numbers of people had a university degree and many of the producers of the commercial sector even had not finished high school. The union was a contradictory and disparate space which included people like Mehdi Misaghiye who was a pioneer in making independent films and someone like Mohammad-Karim Arbab[561].

Despite its difficulty, he continued his activities in the union for several reasons. In the first place, the union was formed in order to defend the rights of producers against the state and ministry of culture.

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[561] Mohammad-Karim Arbab was a film producer who belonged to the commercial sector of cinema at the time. He also possessed several cinemas such as Ferdowsi, news, Azita and Atlas and had a film distributing office named Ferdowsi Films. He produced many commercial and mainstream films frequently to the extent that In 1967 alone he produced six films.

Each month a member of union often Misaghiye would go to the Grand Council of Film in the ministry of culture in order to discuss problematic issues such as censorship. Another task of the union was to defend producers against cinema owners and distributors. For instance, Abbasi recalled that a distributer named Ganjizade had rented two cinemas in a provincial city, had closed one and kept the other open in order to make more profit. This type of dispute would be discussed in the union. Thirdly, the union would solve issues related to the individual film or producer, for example, it frequently happened that a producer would go to prison because of debt related disputes, or a producer would confront problems with a member of production team for financial reasons. Abbasi believed that the union had a role like arbitration in order to solve internal and external struggle. Abbasi remembered that members of the union would be involved in issues which he was not aware of. For instance, in the later years after 1979 revolution, he realized that producers relying on the power of union would intervene in film festivals and their awards. This is an issue which he did not know about and found it outrageous. Altogether, when evaluating the work and role of the union he honestly stated that it was not successful in delivering its tasks and responsibility. I think that its failure could be rooted in the fact that the state, the monopoly and the crisis of the market were far greater than the power of a union which had serious internal issues between the members. However, it was a valuable experience in a time when forming unions and remaining independent under the reign of the Pahlavi dictatorship was extremely difficult. Discussing the union, raised another question for me about the relation between the state and the producers which is an issue I will explore in the next section.

Pahlavi State and Cinema

There are contradictory views about the relation between Pahlavi state and cinema. Some critics and historians believed that the state support for the development of cinema as an industry was central to its establishment. Also, some of best documentaries were commissioned and sponsored by the state. Abbasi, however, stated that the state was indifferent to the fate of national cinema and had never done anything useful for it. The main problem in his view was the unbounded and limitless import of foreign and cheap films which bankrupted the domestic industry. He believed that import and national product had equal value for the state. For many years Abbasi and others attempted to convince the government to recognise and register cinema as an industry so that they could benefit from such categorization, for instance they could borrow from banks as an industry easily. Yet, the state did not

grant their demand for, in Abbasi' view, it was not important. He thought that the state would only remember the national cinema at the time of domestic and international festivals, since festivals would refer to government and the government would refer to Abbasi. He inferred that the state of Pahlavi treated cinema like a display window of culture. Its main function was to mesmerize foreigners with domestic products so that they would be seen as progressive, democratic and modern.

During the mid 1970s when the oil revenues increased the government invited well-known Western filmmakers and actors to make films in Iran. Abbasi believed that many of them accepted the offer since they were interested in the significant amount of money that the Pahlavi state offered. When I wondered about his certainty he said that the middle people to arrange the project were always those who belonged to the royal court and mostly the foreign filmmakers received the offer from Shah' sister Ashraf and his brother in law and minister of culture Pahlbod. For instance, Orson Welles accepted the offer and made the film *F for Fake*(1975) with the help of Iranian supporters. A film like *Caravans* (1978) whose central character was Anthony Cuinn cost the government about one million dollar. Abbasi believed that many better films were made by Iranians yet they did not receive such financial support. At the time Abbasi wrote an essay in the main daily newspaper *Ettela'at* and criticised such lavish budget for foreigners. In the essay he claimed that if the government had put that money in bank, he could have rescued the whole industry of Iranian cinema with its interest solely.

The indifference of the state towards the national cinema ended with the 1979 revolution in Iran. Abbasi believed that the Islamic Republic realized that cinema was an important cultural and political apparatus and supported it seriously. After revolution the Farabi institute was established which its location and equipment was based on the confiscated property of Misaghiye studio. It supported the filmmakers financially so that some of the best films of Iranian directors were shot by people who were not worried for the box office. Abbasi mentioned that although the films were heavily censored yet the support of the state provided a solid platform for the national cinema to flourish and mature.

If 1979 revolution brought respect, support and growth for the national cinema, nonetheless, it brought Abbasi' cinematic career to the end. On a grim late afternoon in 1981 a grey car stopped and parked in front of the office of Payam Film Studio, three young men entered his office and took all its equipment, negatives, films, documents, scripts, poster and everything that somehow related to cinema. Then he was told that he would not be able to make a film again and they forcibly closed the office. Abbasi said that the new government searched everything in order to prove his relation with the royal court, ministry of culture and anything related to the Pahlavi regime to accuse him yet, they did not find a

single evidence of such supposed collaboration. However, he was not permitted to work in the new system. Abbasi himself believed that the reason behind such a ban was that he was always the target of jealousy of the new people in the ministry of culture who could not tolerate him. I would also like to draw attention to the fact that the new system as the Islamic Republic had to denounce all the credibility and progress of the people affiliated with Pahlavi regime in order to acquire legitimacy for itself. Otherwise, its replacement with the royal regime would be seriously questioned. In this way most of property and equipment of film studios especially the commercial sector were confiscated and added to the statist film institute like Farabi.

Today, Abbasi lives in Paris with his family and runs an Estate agency. Since he left Iran in the late 1980s, he completely gave up on all cinematic activity. He does not have a copy of his film, he have not gotten involved with any film production inside or outside Iran and he does not follow Iranian or international cinema. It is painful to see that Abbasi had to put cinema behind himself and leave both Iran and its cinema as a consequent of the sweeping movement of the 1979 revolution. Indeed, Ignoring his profound engagement with cinema, his experiences of production, his commitment to anti-colonial and nationalist ideals, his dreams for a society not bounded by class limits deprived the next generation of an invaluable support. However, his legacy was fruitful enough to knead his name with the progress and establishment of cinema as a cultural labour not bounded by sole profit making. The youth who started their cinematic labour in the office of Payam Film Institute and with his support went on to continue his ambitions and preserve his passion for cinema.

Conclusion

In this paper, I concentrate on the cultural labour of one of the key film producers of the industrialization period of 1960s and 1970s, Ali Abbasi. In the interview, his gradual movement from traditional print media to the technologically enhanced media such as radio, television and finally cinema was illuminated and he described how he moved from journalism to film production. Abbasi highlighted the fact that how the progress of forces of production opened up a space for the young people to grow and follow their ambition without relying on big capital.

Furthermore, through every film that he produced, he shed light on the difficulties of filmmaking such as the absence of original script and script writer in the field of cinema in the late 60s. This indicated the

gradual progress of the modern division of labour. Nonetheless, he overcame the lack through transforming the relations of production: he created an attractive hub for the eager and talented youth who were not supported by the state and the commercial sector. His film production was driven by his personal passion yet because he and his team were engaged in producing alternative films, the reception of audience was not predictable and that made producing a film very risky. He worked through imagining his desirable audience which were educated middle class people who were not looking for cheap song and dance and scenes of physical fights and I probed the dialectical relation between audience and his work.

Through the films that were discussed, he asserted that his criteria for a good film gradually matured. In the beginning he was searching for a professionally well-made film, while in the process he realized that in order to have a more realistic film he needed to incorporate time and space through the cultural practices. He desired to make an Iranian film which the audience could recognize themselves and their society on it. In this way, perhaps Abbasi could be seen as one of the pioneers whose concern was to nourish a national independent cinema driven by ideas, emotions and history of people who strive to be recognized as a distinct nation.

Later in the interview, he discussed the role of state in the productions of film. He believed that the Pahlavi regime did not support the Iranian filmmakers, it also damaged the national cinema by permitting limitless import of foreign movies. That it remembered the national cinema only for the purpose of festivals. And when it came to financial support during the 1970s, it chose to support foreign actors and filmmakers rather than Iranians.

For the first time, in this interview he also talked about his memories and experiences of the union of producers as a chairman. He mentioned that despite the severe discrepancy of people, it was an institute which had to support the producers against the state and cinema owners and distributers. Yet, as a final judgment he asserted that the union did not have power to fulfil its tasks.

To conclude, as a cultural worker, Abbasi spoke about his invaluable memories and experiences which shed light on the process of producing films in the 1960s and 1970s. He pointed out its main difficulties and conflicts and honestly assessed his achievements and failures in the field of cinema. Accordingly, in the proceeding chapters I will discuss a number of his films and their production of space. The interview provided me with a base to construct a historical materialist analysis to identify the dialectical relation between the political economy of the film industry and the emergence of new film texts.

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Appendix Two

Photos of films discussed in chapter three

Figure 1, Workers, From *A Fire*

Figure 2. Lovers talking (*Bride of Sea)*

Figure 3. (*A Fire)*

Figure 4. Lovers meeting. (*Shore of Awaiting*)

Figure 5. Fishers and their family confronting the master and his people (*Shore of Awaiting*)

Figure 6. Defeated and injured fishers (*Shore of Awaiting*)

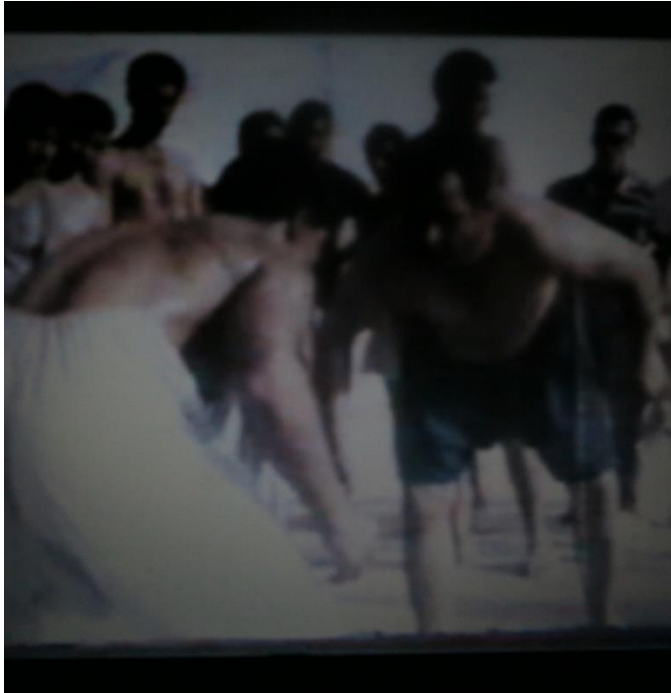*Figure 7. Fishers meet in the village and discuss what to do (Shore of Awaiting)*

Figure 8. The construction of harbor (Wave,
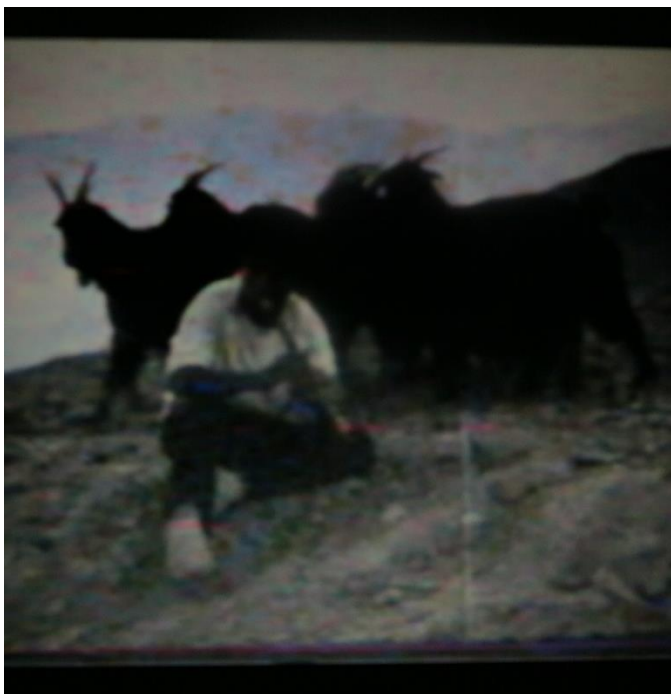*Coral and Rock)*

Figure 9. A worker in construction site (Wave,
Coral and Rock)

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Figure 10. Worker wrestling at leisure time (Wave, Coral and Rock)

Figure 11. Villagers with herd of animals in the mountain where oil is extracted (Wave, Coral and Rock)

Figure 12. Preparing the pipeline's location underground (Wave, Coral and Rock)

Figure 13. putting pipeline in their place (Wave, Coral and Rock)

Figure 14. Workers working in dangerous conditions (Wave, Coral and Rock)

Figure 15. Workers resting in the shadow of pipeline in the warm weather (Wave, Coral and Rock)

Appendix Three

Photos of films discussed in Chapter Five

Figure 1. Samad is seen as returning to his condition in the beginning of film, collecting brambles.

(*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 2. Sami and Lily are seen going Honeymoon waving goodbye to working Samad.

(*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 3. The image of adult students departing the school resembles an attack or an escape.

(*Samad Goes to School*)

Figure 4. Samad mocks the teacher. (*Samad Goes to School*)

Figure 5. Nane-Aqa, Samad's mother bakes bread. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 6. (*Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug*)

Figure 7. Sami and Lily on their way to flee from the city. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily)*

Figure 8. Sami and Nane-Aqa eat without fork and spoon. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 9. Lily sweeps the yard. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 10. Lily joins Sami who is collecting brambles. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 11. A view of a donkey carrying brambles. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 12. A close up of Nane-Aqa doing household activities and feeling sorry for Samad.

(*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 13. A close up shot of the principle of school fed up with students, with a picture of Shah behind him. (*Samad Goes to school*)

Figure 14. A close up shot from Mr. Sergeant at the police Station. The flag sign of lion and sun could be seen at his back next to a map of Iran. (*Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug*)

Figure 15. A close up shot from Samad sleeping in the bushes after work.

(*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 16. A close up from an opportunist psychologist who was asked to cure Samad and Leila while

they were at the bourgeois house. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 17. A close up of Sami in Samad's house as he tries to write a poem about an apple tree but he cannot. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 18. A close up of Samad worriedly hiding behind the wall. In all of these close ups there is an emphasis on the loneliness of characters. (*Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug*)

Figure 19. In this medium shot Nane-Aqa, Mr. Sergeant, Leila's father and a religious authority are engaged in the surveillance of Sami and Lily. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 20. One of the few medium shots of happy lovers as they escape to the city.

(*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 21. In this medium shot Nane-Aqa and Leila's father decide about the fate of their children.

(*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 22. In this medium shot Nane-Aqa is seen next to Mr Sergeant. She asks him to release her son.

(*Samad and Solomon's Magic rug*)

Figure 23. In this medium shot a member of drug gang is arrested by the police.

(*Samad Goes to school*)

Figure 24. There is full shot of lovers with the natural scenery behind them as they plot to escape.

(*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 25. Samad in the garden. The presence of three seems accidental.

(Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug)

Figure 26. Samad in the bushes after work. The natural surrounding does not convey a clue about his state of mind which was tired. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 27. Sami and Lily sleep in the garden immediately after their escape from the city. Yet, the surrounding does not convey their sense of liberation and happiness. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 28. Again Sami tries to write a poem about the apple tree he sat in its shadow, yet he cannot write anything. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 29.Such a full shot of mountains, sky, clouds and agricultural fields would convey the emotions of characters in the 1960s films. Here it does not indicate anything about characters. (*Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug*)

Figure 30. A full shot which demonstrate s fight. (*Samad and Solomon's Rug*)

Figure 31. Sami and Lily's arrival to the village after their escape. They scream happily. The background seems indifferent. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 32. A full shot of the fight between villagers, police and the professional thieves after the antic rug. (*Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug*)

Figure 33. A full shot of the mountains and bushes with the members of professional thieves taking photo from villagers houses. (*Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug*)

Figure 34. A full image of the school bears no resemblance with Iranian architecture.

(*Samad Goes to School*)

Figure 35. The principle discusses his desired discipline. (*Samad Goes to School*)

Figure 36. At the police station and the modern hierarchy. (*Samad and Solomon's Magic Rug*)

Figure 37. The police and the school staff celebrate their cooperation. (*Samad goes to School*)

Figure 38. Modern space of school, students, gang member and a gun. (*Samad Goes to School*)

Figure 39. The gang members occupy the class while the teacher pretends that she is not involved with kidnapping. (*Samad Goes to School*)

Figure 40. Another type of modern spaces is the bourgeois household which bears no resemblance to the Iranian furniture and is based on excessive consumerism. (Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily)

Figure 41. Another example of bourgeois house. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)

Figure 42.Another example of bourgeois house. (*Samad and Sami, Leila and Lily*)